

Notes on the “Cry” of August 1896

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Introduction

The start of the revolution against Spain has been officially commemorated in recent years as “The Cry of Pugad Lawin.” The supposed site of “Pugad Lawin” is situated in Brgy. Bahay Toro, Quezon City, and is memorialized with this tableau of life-sized, oddly rigid Katipuneros tearing their tax certificates, known as cedulas.



The inscription on the marker at the site says that “In the vicinity of this place, Andres Bonifacio and about one thousand Katipuneros met on the morning of August 23, 1896 and decided to launch the revolution against the Spanish government in the Philippines. They affirmed their decision by tearing their cedulas, symbols of the enslavement of the Filipinos. This was the first cry of the oppressed people against the Spanish nation, and was given force by means of arms.”

In 1896, according to the National Historical Commission (NHCP), the site had been occupied by the house and yard of a Katipunero named Juan Ramos, the eldest son of the famous Melchora Aquino (“Tandang Sora”).¹



Historians agree that the precise date and location are not vitally important. They concur that the “Cry” took place between August 23 and 26, 1896 in what was then the municipality of Caloocan. The doubt about the exact site could be put aside, as Ambeth Ocampo has suggested, simply by calling the occasion the “Cry of Caloocan”.²

¹ Emmanuel Encarnacion, “Origins of Bonifacio Cry”. Paper presented at the “Alay at Laya” conference, Ateneo de Manila University (April 2014), 14; 18.

² Ambeth R. Ocampo, *Bones of Contention: The Bonifacio Lectures* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2001), 80.

But this fudge would not end the controversy. Official history demands precise dates to commemorate and exact places to mark, and historians feel uneasy that decades of debate have not produced any clear answers. Pinpointing the “Cry” is a challenge they have failed to meet. Nicolas Zafra voiced such a view back in 1960. The detail of the “Cry” might seem insignificant in relation to the broader sweep of events, Zafra acknowledged, and indeed it might seem “pointless and unprofitable” to pursue the matter, but the historical profession had a duty to ensure the facts of public history were as accurate as humanly possible.³

These notes have two main aims. Part I seeks to come as close as possible to finding out “what really happened” by taking a fresh look at the primary sources on the “Cry,” particularly the recollections of Katipunan veterans. Part II examines the long evolution of the “official” version of events, and questions the credibility of the National Historical Commission’s present-day “Pugad Lawin” narrative.

Part I – UNTANGLING THE EVIDENCE

What is meant by the “Cry”?

The debate has long been clouded by a lack of consensus on exactly what is meant by the “Cry”. The term has been applied to three related but distinct events –

- the “*pasya*” – the decision to revolt;
- the “*pagpupunit*” – the tearing of cedula; and
- the “*unang labanan*” or “*unang putukan*” – the first encounter with Spanish forces.

When and where the “Cry” should be commemorated depends on how it is defined, because these three events did not all happen at the same time and place.

Many of the older sources on the “Cry” do not say precisely which event they mean. This problem is so embedded in the literature that it is impossible to eradicate totally, but wherever practicable these notes will avoid the fluid, contested “Cry” word, and will seek instead to specify which distinct event is being discussed – the *pasya*, the *pagpupunit* or the *unang labanan*.

The *pasya* – the decision to revolt: (i) when was it taken?

Only one Katipunan document pertaining to the *pasya* has ever been found, and its whereabouts today are unknown. It is a single page from what the historian Isagani Medina calls the “*borador ng pulong ng Kataastaasang Sangunian*,” or rough copy book of the Katipunan Supreme Council.⁴ Since a proper *borador* was not to hand in Caloocan at this

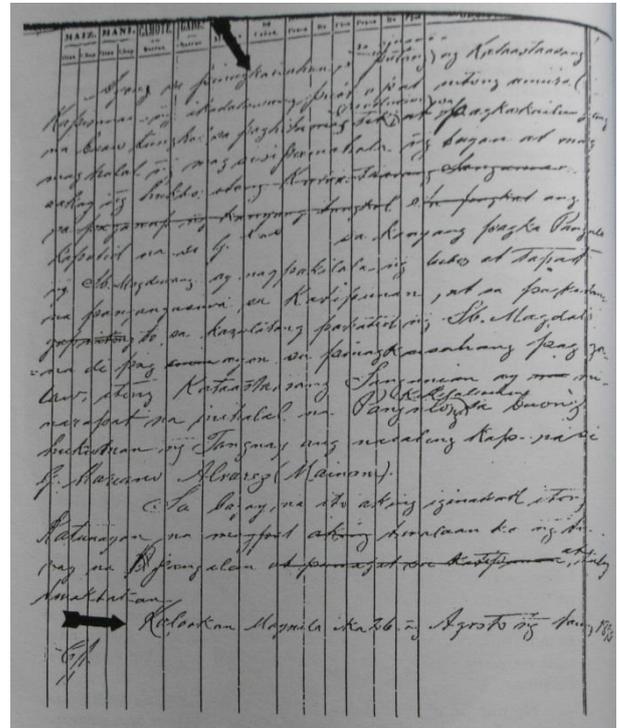
³ Nicolas P. Zafra, “The ‘Cry of Balintawak’ as a Historical Problem,” *Historical Bulletin*, IV:3 (September 1960), 13-4.

⁴ Carlos Ronquillo, *Ilang talata tungkol sa pagbibimagsik nang 1896-1897* [1898], edited by Isagani R. Medina, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1996), 32. [Hereafter, Medina in Ronquillo, *Ilang talata*]; Isagani R. Medina, “Ang Unang Deklarasyon ng Paglaya sa Pugadlawin, Bahay Toro, Kalookan, Agosto 23, 1896,” [1993] in Isagani R. Medina, *May tainga ang lupa: Espionage in the Philippines (1896-1902) and other*

tumultuous moment, the document was drafted in a farm ledger, used under normal circumstances to record crop yields or sales. The text is written across printed columns that are headed “Maiz,” “Mani,” “Camote” and so on.

Apparently penned by Emilio Jacinto, the document is dated “*Kalookan, Maynila ika 26 ng Agosto ng taong 1896,*” and it begins as follows:-

“*Ayon sa pinagkaisahan sa ginanap [...?] pulong ng Kataastaasang Kapisanan [...?] ikadalawang pu’ t apat nitong umiiral na buan tungkol sa pagbibimagsik (revolucion) at sa pagkakailangang [...?] maghalal ng magsisipamahala ng bayan at mag aakay ng Hukbo....*”⁵ [In accordance with the decision taken by the meeting of the Supreme Assembly held on the twenty-fourth of the present month regarding the revolution, and given the need to elect leaders of the people and directors of the Army....”]



What can the “*pinagkaisahan... tungkol sa pagbibimagsik*” mean other than the fundamental decision to launch the revolution? The date had also been agreed – the night of August 29-30.⁶

The “*borador*” document thus seems to settle the matter – the *pasya* was taken on August 24.

Many veterans, however, recalled that the crucial meeting had been held the previous day, August 23. Most probably, though, this discrepancy has a simple explanation – the meeting (or series of meetings) began on August 23 but went on throughout that day, and did not conclude until the early hours of August 24.

August 24 is recorded as the decisive date by various early sources, including:

- The Biak-na-Bato constitution of November 1897, which mentions “the current war, initiated on August 24, 1896.” The constitution’s signatories include at least one participant in the “Cry” (Cipriano Pacheco) and several others who would

essays (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2002), 86. Medina’s acknowledgments in *Ilang talata* (p.816) unfortunately omit any reference to this document, and from his 1993 “Unang deklarasyon” paper (p.86) it seems he did not know its source himself. Perhaps he just had a photograph of the one page. If anyone can find this *borador* and share its contents, they will be making a major contribution to the history of the 1896 revolution, a contribution potentially far more significant than settling the whole “Cry” debate.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Sofronio G. Calderon, “Mga nangyari sa kasaysayan ng Pilipinas,” vol.II. Typescript (Manila, 1925), 212.

have read circulars and messages from the revolutionists in Caloocan in August 1896.⁷

- Carlos Ronquillo, who in 1898 wrote the first chronicle of the revolt against Spain by a Filipino. The revolution, says Ronquillo, was instituted at a meeting held in Balintawak on August 24. (“*Sa isang arao ng pagpupulong sa Balintawak (24 Agosto 1896) kaarawan nang pasimulan ang Revolucion....*”)⁸
- The Liga Filipina memorial erected in Tondo in 1903 by the Samahan ng May pag-asa, a patriotic society named in Bonifacio’s honor whose members included several KKK veterans. The inscription on the memorial lists many of those who attended the Liga Filipina meeting addressed by José Rizal in July 1892, and alongside Bonifacio’s name it records that he headed the Katipunan, “which raised the first cry of the war against tyranny on August 24, 1896.”⁹
- Santiago Alvarez, in his memoirs *Ang Katipunan at Paghibimagsik*, written in 1927 but based, he says, on records entrusted to him by the Katipunan’s first leaders and fighters. Internal evidence suggests that Alvarez’s account of the meeting on August 24 is based on information he obtained from Ramon Bernardo, a Katipunan leader from Pandacan who was a participant in the “Cry.”¹⁰

The pasya – the decision to revolt: (ii) who took it?

The decision to revolt, says the “*borador*” document, was taken by the Katipunan’s Supreme Assembly (*Kataastaasang Kapisanan*), which Emilio Jacinto described as the primary and paramount body within the Katipunan (“*ang una at lubos na kapangyarihang ay habawakan ng Kataastaasang Kapisanan*”). Any member who failed to follow its decisions, he said, would be committing treason against the whole organization.¹¹

The Assembly comprised the members of the Supreme Council, the presidents of the Sangunian Bayan (popular councils) and the presidents of Balangay (branches) not affiliated to popular councils. In practice, the presidents were often accompanied by one or two other leading activists from their sections.¹²

In taking the decision to revolt, of course, the Supreme Assembly had to have regard to the sentiments of the Katipunan rank-and-file. Without willing fighters, the revolution would be stillborn. The Assembly members had to gauge how their branches would

⁷ “Constitution of Biac-na-bato,” in John R. M. Taylor, *The Philippine Insurrection against the United States: a compilation of documents*, vol. I (Pasay City: Eugenio López Foundation, 1971), 376.

⁸ Medina in Ronquillo, *Ilang talata*, 198.

⁹ *La Redención del Obrero*, December 31, 1903.

¹⁰ S.V. Alvarez, “Ang Sigaw sa Balintawak,” *Taliba*, September 8, 1911; Santiago V. Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution: Memoirs of a General* [1927], translated by Paula Carolina S. Malay (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1992), 240; 254.

¹¹ Kataastaasang Kapisanan, Record of meeting held on November 30 and December 1, 1895 [Archivo General Militar de Madrid: Caja 5677, leg.1.41 bis].

¹² Jim Richardson, *The Light of Liberty: Documents and studies on the Katipunan, 1892-1897* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2013), 61.

respond to a call-to-arms. Hundreds of rank-and-file Katipuneros, perhaps as many as 2,000, had gathered outside the house where the meeting was being held, and their mood, the Assembly would know, was highly belligerent. Some were eager to begin the revolution that very night.¹³

The *pasya* – the decision to revolt: (iii) where was it taken?

Almost unanimously, the Katipuneros who attended and later wrote about the decisive meeting said it was held at the house of Apolonio Samson on the Kaingin Road in barrio Kangkong, Caloocan. In 1917 a Katipunan veterans' association, the Labi ng Katipunan, erected a memorial at the site.¹⁴ “*Sa pook na ito,*” the inscription states, plainly and simply, “*...ipinasya ng KKKNMANB ang paghibimagsik noong ika-23 ng Agosto 1896*”.¹⁵



Ceremony at the Kangkong marker. The Labi ng Katipunan was headed by the veterans Pio H. Santos (who had participated in the “Cry”) and Claudio P. Carreon.

The writer Nick Joaquin described the spot in the early 1960s, a time when it was still

“lonely, obscure, isolated, and very hard to find. It’s in an ‘interior’ reached by no street; you have to use a footpath. And the place itself is pure provincial countryside: giant thick-boughed mango and tamarind and *santol* trees keep guard over the marker, which is always in shadow, and one guesses that this was deep woods in those days.”¹⁶

¹³ Tomas Remigio, “Ang Sigaw sa Balintawak,” *Taliba*, September 9, 1911; José P. Santos, “Ang kasaysayan sa paghihimagsik ni Heneral Cipriano Pacheco,” *Lingguban ng Mabuhay*, December 3, 1933, quoted by Medina in Ronquillo, *Ilang talata*, 676.

¹⁴ Apolonio Samson (1854-?) was a local leader of the Katipunan in Caloocan and the neighbouring town of Novaliches. Later in the revolution he was in Cavite together with Bonifacio, and he remained in the field until 1904, still leading guerrilla units in Bulacan long after the United States had pronounced the war to be over.

¹⁵ Medina in Ronquillo, *Ilang talata*, 208.

¹⁶ Nick Joaquin, “The Eve of St Bartholomew,” [1963] in *A Question of Heroes* (Makati: Ayala Museum, 1977), 91.

Today, of course, the “pure provincial countryside” has been obliterated by Metro Manila’s relentless sprawl, not just in Kangkong but in every other locality mentioned in these notes. The memorial now stands by the entrance to the Apolonio Samson Barangay Hall at the corner of Kaingin Road and Old Samson Road. Its original location, on the same block, is now occupied by a high school sports court.



The Labi ng Katipunan’s identification of the *pasya* site in Kangkong is corroborated by the testimony of individual Katipunan veterans. Appended to these notes is a table that summarizes the location(s) remembered by eight participants in the decisive meeting. This tabulation shows that a very clear majority – 6 of the 8 - recalled the meeting and/or the “*grito*” as having taken place in Kangkong. This was the location specified by Tomas Remigio, Sinforoso San Pedro, Guillermo Masangkay, Cipriano Pacheco, Briccio Pantas, and Francisco Carreon.

Another of the veterans – Pio Valenzuela – also initially recalled (in 1911) that the *pasya* had been taken in Kangkong. If his testimony on that occasion is counted, the tally for Kangkong would be 7 out of 8. As we shall see later, however, he subsequently changed his story, saying it was taken at a place near Pasong Tamo he called Pugad Lawin, where Melchora Aquino (“Tandang Sora”) and her son Juan Ramos had farms. [Note: KKK veterans usually referred to Melchora Aquino’s farm as being situated in or near Pasong Tamo, but residents say (and historians agree) that it was actually in barrio Banlat. The two settlements were only a kilometer or so apart.¹⁷]

The other veteran, presumed to be Ramon Bernardo, recalled that the decision had been taken at Melchora Aquino’s farmstead, which he mistakenly located in “Sampalukan, Bahay Toro”.¹⁸

Unless and until any solid evidence is found to the contrary, therefore, the only possible conclusion to be drawn from the veterans’ testimony is that the “*pasya*” was taken by the Katipunan’s Supreme Assembly at the house of Apolonio Samson in Kangkong.

The *pagpupunit* – the tearing of cedula

Early accounts of the “Cry” by Katipunan veterans are surprisingly silent about the tearing of cedula.¹⁹ That dramatic act of defiance was not mentioned in print, it seems,

¹⁷ Just to add to the confusion: different sources refer to the exact same place not only as Pasong Tamo, Banlat and Pugad Lawin, but also as Sampalukan, Ugnal and Pacpac Lawin.

¹⁸ Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 254. This “*pook ng Sampalukan*” is not mentioned in any other account, and its location is not known. There is an area called Sampalukan in Caloocan, but it is close to the *población*, more than 5 kilometers from Bahay Toro.

¹⁹ In addition to the sources cited in the table, see Gonzalo Cue Malay, “Ang pagkilos ng mga nangahihimlay, 1896,” *Muling Pagsilang*, October 20 and 27, and November 3, 1906; and the series of reminiscences published under the common title “Ang Sigaw sa Balintawak” in *Taliba* in 1911 - Nicolas Delfin (September 6 issue), Damian Gomez (September 7), Pio Valenzuela (September 11), Patricio Belen (September 15), Rafael Dimla (September 16) and Pedro Delfin (September 23).

until 1933, when Cipriano Pacheco's brief memoir was published. (In the same year, the magnificent Bonifacio Monument was inaugurated in Caloocan, amid whose statuary the sculptor Guillermo Tolentino included a Katipunero tearing his cedula. Tolentino's model for the figure was the KKK veteran Guillermo Masangkay.)

As soon as the leaders meeting in Kangkong had voted to launch the revolution, Pacheco relates, Bonifacio wanted to announce the momentous decision to the crowd outside. He led the crowd from Apolonio Samson's house to a place nearby ("*malapit pa doon*") where there was an open field ("*malaking kaparangan*") in which everyone could gather around and hear him.²⁰

Francisco Carreon's account, published in 1936, continues the narrative. Bonifacio told the crowd the momentous news: "Brothers," he shouted, "The decision is to go ahead with the revolution." ("*Mga kapatid, ang pinagkaisaban ay ipagpatuloy ang paghihimagsik.*") It was the decision the crowd wanted, and they cheered. "Do you swear," Bonifacio asked them, "to reject the government that oppresses us?"

"Yes!" the crowd roared. "In that case," Bonifacio urged them, "bring out your cedulas and rip them up, as a symbol of defiance!" ("*Kung gayon, ilabas ninyo ang inyong mga sedula personal at punitin, tanda ng pagtalikod sa kapangyarihan!*") The Katipuneros fervently heeded his call, weeping with emotion as they ripped their cedulas to shreds. Bonifacio raised the cry "*Mabuhay ang Katagalugan!*" and the crowd responded as one, "*Mabuhay!*"²¹ Guillermo Masangkay gave a similar account:

[On] the 23rd of August, the famous meeting was held in Kangkong, and then Bonifacio told the crowd what had happened... Those gathered there declared their separation and liberty from Spain, and to affirm they all tore up their cedula, the symbol of their slavery. With tears of joy in their eyes, the crowd shouted, "We are free now from slavery!" and "Long live Katagalugan". ("*[Sa] ika-23 ng Agosto, ay idinaos ang bantog na pagpupulong sa Kangkong. Pagkatapos na ilahad ni Bonifacio sa maraming kabharap ang labat ng pangyayari... Ipinahayag ng nagkakatipon ang kanilang paghiwalay at paglaya sa kapangyarihan ng Espanya, at bilang katunayan nito ang pinagpunit-punit ng labat ang kani-kanilang sedula, na ipinalalagay na siyang tanda ng pagka-alipin. May luha sa mata, sa galak, na ang madla ay nagsigawang "Ligtas na tayo sa pagka-alipin" at "Mabuhay ang Katagalugan".*")²²

Three veterans – Pacheco, Carreon and Masangkay – thus concurred that cedulas had been torn on August 23 or 24, close to where the Katipunan's leaders had just been meeting in Kangkong. The only other veteran who specified when and where cedulas had been torn was Pio Valenzuela, who remembered it happening on August 23 in the place near Pasong Tamo he called Pugad Lawin.

²⁰ Santos, "Ang kasaysayan sa paghihimagsik ni Heneral Cipriano Pacheco," as cited.

²¹ Francisco Carreon, Untitled memoir, in José P. Santos, *Ang tatlong napabantog na tulisan sa Pilipinas* (Tarlac, 1936), extracted in Soledad Borromeo-Buehler, *The Cry of Balintawak: A contrived controversy* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998), 158-9.

²² Guillermo Masangkay, "Unang sigaw, unang paglaban sa paglaya," *Bagong Buhay*, August 26, 1952.

Valenzuela was wrong about the date – the leading revolutionists were still in Kangkong on August 23, not leaving until early on August 24. But possibly he was right that *cedulas* were torn near Pasong Tamo. They may have been torn on different days both in Kangkong and near Pasong Tamo, and perhaps in other places as well, because Katipuneros were arriving in the Caloocan area to join their embryonic army over the course of a number of days, and they may have wanted to proclaim their rebellion, their commitment to fight Spanish rule, in the same way.

The *unang labanan* – the first encounter with Spanish forces

The first battle (or encounter), a skirmish with a detachment of the Guardia Civil, was fought on August 26 at a place about five kilometers north-east of Balintawak, near the settlements of Banlat and Pasong Tamo.²³

Several sources give other dates. Olegario Diaz, the Manila commander of the Guardia Civil Veterana, wrote in October 1896 that the first engagement with Bonifacio and his associates took place in the fields of Caloocan on August 24.²⁴ Governor General Blanco himself, in the “Memoria” he submitted to the Spanish Senate in 1897, reported that the first hostilities had occurred in Pasong Tamo on August 25. An annex to his report, however, contrarily said August 26.²⁵

Blanco’s inconsistency was matched on the Filipino side by Pio Valenzuela. After his surrender to the Spanish authorities, Valenzuela initially told his interrogators that the clash with the Guardia Civil in Banlat had occurred on August 25. Then he said he had been mistaken, and it had in fact been on August 26.²⁶ After the revolution, he again switched back and forth between the two dates.²⁷

One Katipunan veteran – Sinforsoso San Pedro – settled on August 25 as the date.²⁸ One other – Ramon Bernardo – recalled encounters on both the 25th and 26th.²⁹ But most of the veterans who left written accounts – Guillermo Masangkay, Nicolas Delfin, Damian

²³ For a detailed account, see Jim Richardson, “*Unang putukan* - the encounter in Banlat, August 26, 1896” (2019). <http://www.kasaysayan-kkk.info/studies/unang-putukan---the-encounter-in-banlat-august-26-1896>

²⁴ Olegario Diaz, Report on the Insurrection Against Spain, dated October 28, 1896 in Wenceslao E. Retana (ed.), *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino*, vol. III (Madrid: Imprenta de la viuda de M. Minuesa de los Rios, 1897), 437. Government forces (possibly the Guardia Civil Veterana, or local police units) may have exchanged fire with small groups of Katipuneros around Caloocan on August 24 and 25, but not with the main Katipunan force headed by Bonifacio, Valenzuela and others.

²⁵ Ramón Blanco, *Memoria que al Senado dirige el General Blanco acerca de los últimos sucesos ocurridos en la isla de Luzon* (Madrid: Establecimiento Tipográfico de “El Liberal,” 1897), 23; 83.

²⁶ Pio Valenzuela, Declaration dated September 6, 1896, in Retana, ed., *Archivo del bibliófilo Filipino*, vol.III, 222. [English translation in *Minutes of the Katipunan*, (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964), 154].

²⁷ Pio Valenzuela, Letter dated August 26, 1906 published under the heading “Bonifacio no fuè malversador” in *El Renacimiento*, August 31, 1906; Valenzuela, “Ang Sigaw sa Balintawak,” as cited.

²⁸ Calderon, “Mga nangyari,” 213.

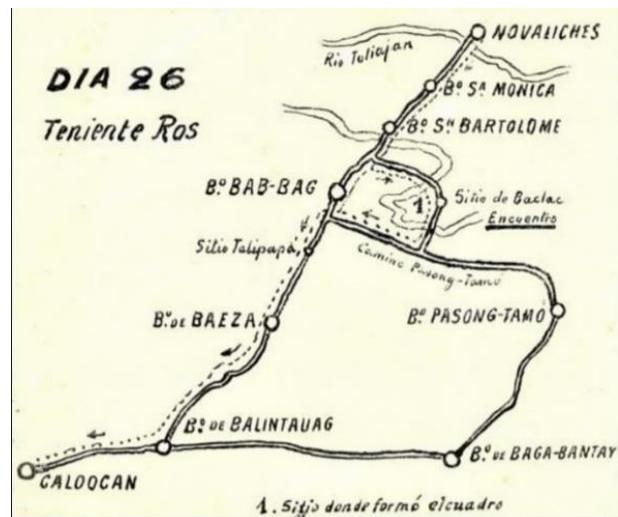
²⁹ Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution*, 244-5.

Gomez, Patricio Belen, Rafael Dimla, Pedro Delfin and Pio H. Santos – remembered they had confronted the Guardia Civil on August 26.³⁰

August 26 is confirmed as the correct date by the most contemporary sources we have – the Manila newspapers for August 27 and 28, 1896. *El Comercio*, in its August 27 edition, reported that a detachment of thirty Guardia Civil had encountered the “criminals” (“*malhechores*”) in Caloocan on the afternoon of the previous day, August 26.³¹

In its August 28 edition, the same paper published the text of a telegram sent from Caloocan the previous evening, August 27, by a Guardia Civil colonel, Francisco Pintos, to the Governor General. Pintos reported he had just led a column to the site of “yesterday’s encounter” (“*el encuentro de ayer*,” i.e. August 26). The “criminals,” he informed the Governor General, had now vanished.³²

Emmanuel Encarnacion cites another contemporary report, from the paper *El Español*, which includes this “*Croquis de las operaciones practicadas*” – a sketch map of the route taken by the detachment of the Guardia Civil on August 26.³³ The figure “1,” says the note at the bottom marks the “*sitio donde formo el cuadro*” – literally meaning “the place where I formed the square,” i.e. where the Guardia Civil commander, Teniente Ros, ordered his men to close ranks against a possible attack.



It is a rough sketch, but it confirms that the skirmish was fought in the vicinity of “Baclac” (Banlat), to the north of the Camino Pasong-Tambo (now Tandang Sora Avenue). This tallies with the accounts of KKK participants, who remembered fighting the *unang labanan* not far from Tandang Sora’s farmstead, where they had been staying since August 24.³⁴

A memorial to Tandang Sora, presumably close to the site of her house, was constructed in 2008 on Banlat Road at its junction with M. Aquino Street.

³⁰ Masangkay, “Unang sigaw,” as cited; Pio H. Santos, “Ang Sigaw sa Balintawak,” *Taliba*, September 25, 1911 and the other accounts, cited above, published in *Taliba* under the same title.

³¹ *El Comercio*, August 27, 1896.

³² *El Comercio*, August 28, 1896. See also Borromeo-Buehler, *The Cry of Balintawak*, 81-92.

³³ Emmanuel Encarnacion, *Ang pamana ni Andres Bonifacio* (Quezon City: Adarna, 1997), n.p.

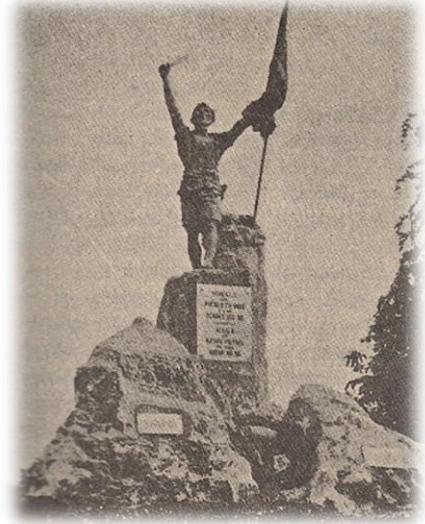
³⁴ Gomez, Dimla, and Pedro Delfin, “Ang Sigaw sa Balintawak,” as cited.

The Balintawak monument

The *unang labanan* was commemorated by the first monument to the “Cry,” unveiled before a huge cheering crowd in September 1911. Beneath the main inscription on the plinth - “*Homenaje del Pueblo Filipino a los Heroes de '96 / Ala-ala ng Bayang Pilipino sa mga Bayani ng '96,*” a smaller plaque bore the date of the “*unang labanan*” - “26 Agosto 1896”. The statue represented “a crusader for the Cause, one of the first who took to field of battle under the orders of Andres Bonifacio”.³⁵

The statue was erected in Balintawak, the largest and best-known barrio in the general area where the Katipuneros had congregated in August 1896. The name “Balintawak” was often used as shorthand to denote the general area to the east of Caloocan *población*, and the “Cry” had become popularly known as the “Cry of Balintawak” even before the monument was erected.³⁶

Nobody professed in 1911, though, that the statue marked the “exact spot” where the first battle had been fought. It was simply in Balintawak, on a plot donated by a local landowner.³⁷



Part II – THE SAGA OF PUGAD LAWIN

Two decades after the revolution, the celebration of the “Cry” was not a contentious issue. Ceremonies were held both in Kangkong, where the *pasya* had been taken on August 23-24, and in Balintawak, where the statue of a bolo-waving, flag-holding Katipunero stood to commemorate the *unang labanan*, fought a few kilometers to the north-east in Banlat on August 26.

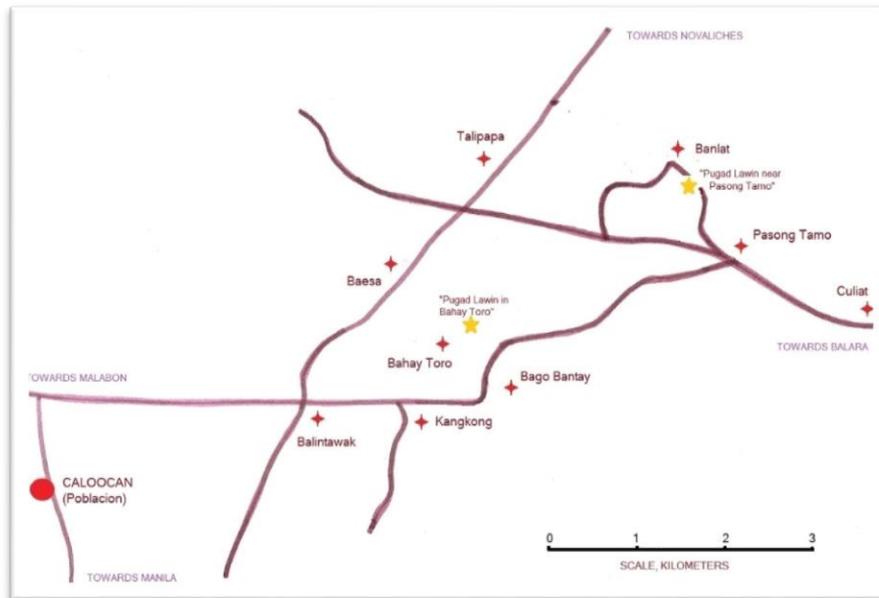
How then, has it come to pass that the “Cry” is commemorated today as the “Sigaw ng Pugad Lawin” at a site in Bahay Toro where not a single KKK veteran ever located either the *pasya*, the *pagpupunit* or the *unang labanan*?

The saga of Pugad Lawin, regrettably, is long, tangled and hard to unravel. It is also a case study in the hazards of oral history, and of memoirs written long after the event. Memories fade. Veterans disagree. Their stories change from one telling to the next. And then reporters and historians misrepresent what the veterans said.

³⁵ “La manifestación popular de 3 de septiembre,” *Renacimiento Filipino*, September 14, 1911.

³⁶ Medina in Ronquillo, *Ilang talata*, 676.

³⁷ “La manifestación popular,” as cited. The original statue was moved to Diliman in the 1960s due to massive road works in Balintawak, but another was later erected in its place.



“Pugad Lawin near Pasong Tamo” [1920s-1940s]

The story begins in the late 1920s, when a small group of senior Katipunan veterans began to press the case that the term “Cry of Balintawak” was a misnomer, and should be discarded. Balintawak, they argued, in the strict, precise sense – a particular barrio to the east of Caloocan – was not where the “Cry” had occurred. This was true, but nobody had argued otherwise – the name “Balintawak” had been used to denote a general locality, not an exact spot.

More controversially, this group of veterans said the “the exact spot” had been a place they knew as “Pugad Lawin,” a toponym meaning “Hawk’s Nest”. Most other veterans, however, and even local residents, had never heard of a place by that name. In contemporary records, and on contemporary maps, the name Pugad Lawin cannot be found anywhere. “*Isa[ng] ... pagkakamali... ang sabihing mayroong Pugad Lawin sa Kalookan,*” the scholar Sofronio G. Calderon decided after a fruitless search way back in the 1920s.³⁸

Pugad Lawin’s foremost proponent was Pio Valenzuela, who had been the supreme fiscal and physician of the Katipunan and who had latterly, in the early 1920s, been the provincial governor of Bulacan. He was a prestigious figure, but not a good witness to history. In 1911, as noted earlier, he said the decision to revolt had been taken at Apolonio Samson’s house in Kangkong.³⁹ In 1917, however, he testified in court that it had been taken at Melchora Aquino’s house on the road known as Daan Malalim, in Pasong Tamo, “also known as Pacpac-lawin.”⁴⁰ And in his “Memoirs,” which Agoncillo

³⁸ Calderon, “Mga nangyari,” 215.

³⁹ Valenzuela, “Ang Sigaw sa Balintawak,” as cited.

⁴⁰ “Testimony of Dr Pio Valenzuela in the Case of U.S. vs Vicente Sotto for Libel,” [1917] in *Minutes of the Katipunan* (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964), 234.

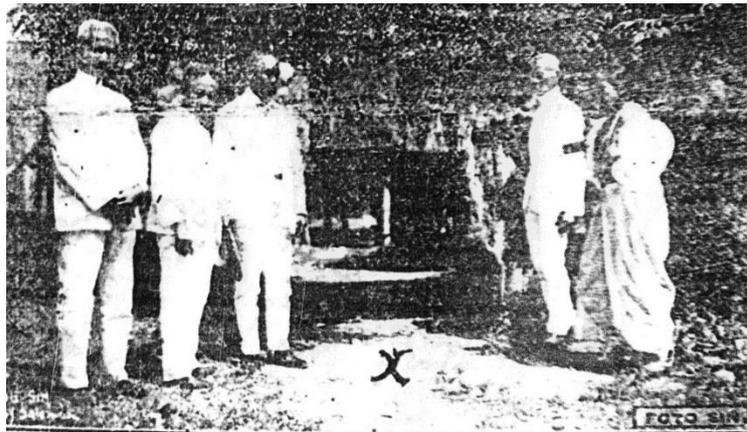
says date from the early 1920s, Valenzuela said it had been taken at the place of Melchora Aquino's son, Juan Ramos, in "Pugad Lawin".⁴¹

Some of the discrepancies in Valenzuela's accounts, however, are more apparent than real. His reference to "Pacpac-lawin" in 1917 was presumably just a memory lapse. From the 1920s till his death, he consistently remembered the site as "Pugad Lawin," and more importantly he consistently located the site at Melchora Aquino's place in Pasong Tamo – "sa loob ng nayong Pasong Tamo".⁴²

In 1928, Valenzuela went to the Pasong Tamo site to commemorate the "Cry" together with four other well-known KKK veterans – Gregoria de Jesus (Bonifacio's widow),

Briccio Pantas and the brothers Alfonso and Cipriano Pacheco. The newspaper *La Opinion* carried this

photograph of the group, who according to the caption were standing around the exact spot (marked with an "X") where 1,000 bolos had been stored just before they were used in "el famoso grito".⁴³ On this occasion, "the Cry" was



therefore taken to mean the *unang labanan*. Pio Valenzuela, it is true, believed that the *pasya* as well as the *unang labanan* should be commemorated at or near this site in Pasong Tamo, but there is no evidence that the other veterans in the photograph took the same view.

The association of Pugad Lawin with the *unang labanan* in the veterans' minds is made explicit in a joint statement issued by Pio Valenzuela, Briccio Pantas and Cipriano Pacheco to the effect that the "Cry" had taken place not in Balintawak, where the monument had been erected, but in "the place known by the name of Pugad Lawin".⁴⁴ This is the statement, as published in the *Philippines Free Press* in November 1929:

⁴¹ Valenzuela wrote part of his "Memoirs" (the section recounting his famous meeting with Rizal) in 1914, and citations often ascribe this date to the work as a whole. The other sections, however, including the lines on the "Cry," were written later. Pio Valenzuela, "Memoirs" [c.1920s], translated by Luis Serrano, in *Minutes of the Katipunan*, 102; E. Arsenio Manuel, "Did Rizal Favor the Revolution? A Criticism of the Valenzuela Memoirs," *Philippine Magazine*, 31:1 (December 1934), 540; 562; 566; Gregorio F. Zaide, *History of the Katipunan* (Manila: Loyal Press, 1939), 16; Teodoro A. Agoncillo, "More on the 'Cry' of 1896," *Historical Bulletin*, IV:4 (December, 1960), 19.

⁴² *Taliba*, September 5, 1932, quoted in Encarnacion, "Origins of Bonifacio Cry," 15, citing Emiliano L. Laus (comp.), "The so-called 'Cry of Balintawak' from various sources," *14th National Heroes Day* (University of the Philippines Souvenir Program, 1940), 14-5.

⁴³ *La Opinion y El Comercio, combinados*, August 25, 1928, in Encarnacion, "Origins of Bonifacio Cry," 12; and *La Opinion*, January 11, 1930, (when the paper reprinted its 1928 photo), reproduced in Milagros C. Guerrero, Emmanuel N. Encarnacion, and Ramon N. Villegas, "Balintawak: the Cry for a Nationwide Revolution," *Subyap Kultura*, 2, (1996). The photo is also reproduced, together with its 1930 caption, in Borromeo-Buehler, *The Cry of Balintawak*, 76.

⁴⁴ José P. Santos, "Rectificaciones históricas," *Philippines Free Press*, November 30, 1929.

ISANG PAGUNITA

Upang Matuwid ang Paniwala sa Unang Sigaw sa
Panhihimasik Kaming Naguing Kasanguni ng Pangulo ng
Kataas taasan, Kagalangalang Katipunan ng mga
Anak ng Bayan na si Andres Bonifacio.
Kaming nalalabi pang Kasama sa unang labanan iyon.
Alang-Alang sa Ikapapanuto ng mga Mananalaysay at ng
hinaharap

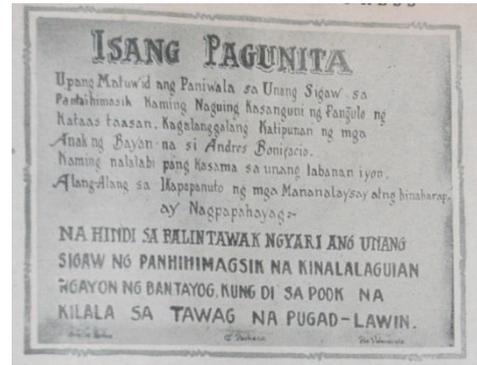
ay Nagpapahayag :-

NA HINDI SA BALINTAWAK NGYARI ANG UNANG
SIGAW NG PANHIHIMAGSIK SA KINALALAGUIAN
NGAYON NG BANTAYOG, KUNG DI SA POOK NA
KILALA SA TAWAG NA PUGAD-LAWIN.

Briccio Pantas

C. Pacheco

Pio Valenzuela.



Pio Valenzuela again confirmed that he identified Pugad Lawin with Pasong Tamo, and specifically with Melchora Aquino's place, in August 1940, when together with two other Katipunan veterans (Genaro de los Reyes and Sinforoso San Pedro) he returned there with Eulogio B. Rodriguez and Luis Serrano of the Philippine Historical Committee (a forerunner of the NHCP) to verify the location. Before posing for photographs, the party marked the site of Melchora Aquino's house with a thin wooden stake, on which somebody placed their hat.



Spot at Pugad Lawin (Sitio Gulod, Banlat, Caloocan City) where once stood the house of Melchora Aquino, the aged patriot who fed 2,000 Katipuneros as they gathered there from August 22 to August 25, 1896 to make the historic "Cry" and start the Philippine uprising. The precise spot (marked by a stake and a hat) was determined on August 23, 1940 by (from left to right) Luis Serrano, of the Philippine Historical Committee; Col. Sinforoso San Pedro, Pio Valenzuela, and Col. Genaro de los Reyes, katipuneros; Monica Ramos, granddaughter of Tandang Sara; Eulogio B. Rodriguez, Chairman of the Philippine Historical Committee; and a guide.

The photograph's caption is not contemporaneous, because Caloocan did not attain the status of a city until 1963.⁴⁵ The description of the site – "Sitio Gulod, Banlat, Caloocan

⁴⁵ *Minutes of the Katipunan*, with a preface by Carlos Quirino (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964; and Manila: National Historical Institute, 1978, 1996 and 2011).

City” – reflects how the location was known in the 1960s rather than in 1940. Fortunately, though, in 1962 Luis Serrano wrote a detailed account of the 1940 expedition which makes it absolutely clear that Valenzuela and his companions believed the “Cry” took place at or near Melchora Aquino’s place, a spot they remembered as Pugad Lawin, and that their geographical point of reference, their starting point for locating the exact spot, was Pasong Tamo.⁴⁶

The trip to Pugad Lawin in 1940, Serrano recalls, was organized by Eulogio B. Rodriguez, the chairman of the Philippine Historical Committee, “for the purpose of first, verifying the date of the ‘Cry,’ second, ascertaining the truth of a report that Bonifacio and some members of the Katipunan had buried certain important documents of the Katipunan there, and third, locating the exact spot where the house of Tandang Sora stood.” After picking up the three veterans, Serrano says, the party “negotiated the distance by car up to Pasong-tamo and hiked about an hour to Pugad-lawin.”

“We found that Pugad-lawin was a knoll of about 30 or 40 feet higher than the surrounding territory. As the remaining vegetation indicated, it must have been well covered with trees during the revolution. It was a good observation point from a military point of view because it commanded an excellent view of the whole country to the south and west, the only directions from where the Spanish forces could be expected to come. Some of the big trees which formed landmarks of the place were still recognized by Dr. Valenzuela.”

Two local men, Serrano relates, aided the party in digging around an ancient tree stump in an attempt to find the buried Katipunan records, but their efforts were in vain. Otherwise, though, the expedition had been highly successful, because it confirmed:

“first, the so-called First Cry took place at Pugad-lawin..., and second, it was from the house of Tandang Sora that Katipunan members sallied forth to challenge the might of Spain...Tandang Sora’s son, Juan A. Ramos, was a member of the secret organization; hence it was natural for the Katipuneros to seek refuge there.”⁴⁷

Serrano’s account shows that Valenzuela still associated Pugad Lawin with Melchora Aquino’s house in 1940, as he had in the 1910s and 1920s.

Except, that is, when he wrote his “Memoirs”. In his “Memoirs,” as already mentioned, in a single line that has befuddled the entire debate, Valenzuela relates that the decision to revolt was taken at the “house, storehouse and yard of Juan Ramos, son of Melchora Aquino, in Pugad Lawin”.⁴⁸ Did he mean Juan Ramos lived at a different Pugad Lawin, or at the same Pugad Lawin as his mother, near Pasong Tamo?

⁴⁶ Luis Serrano, “Event observed on wrong date,” *Manila Times*, August 26, 1962.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Serrano’s article – ironically, given its title – gets key dates wrong. It says, for example, that the Katipuneros arrived at Tandang Sora’s house on August 22, not on August 24 as Valenzuela had correctly remembered in 1911. These erroneous dates have been omitted from the passage quoted so as not to make the waters any muddier than they already are.

⁴⁸ Valenzuela, “Memoirs,” 102.

Luis Serrano, who personally went on the expedition with Valenzuela in 1940, and who later translated his “Memoirs,” clearly believed that Valenzuela was referring to the same Pugad Lawin. Valenzuela did not expressly repeat in his “Memoirs” that Pugad Lawin was near Pasong Tamo, but neither did he specify any other location. There was no reason for Serrano, looking back in 1962, to suppose Valenzuela’s mental map of the area ever changed, or to think the “Pugad Lawin” of his “Memoirs” was any different to the wooded knoll (a likely place for a hawk’s nest) to which they had hiked together from Pasong Tamo in 1940. Whether it was Melchora Aquino or her son Juan Ramos who owned the farmstead near Pasong Tamo where Valenzuela remembered cedulas being shredded was just an incidental point of detail, not of basic geography.

Teodoro Agoncillo – initiator of Pugad Lawin’s relocation

Valenzuela’s name for the “Cry” site, Pugad Lawin, acquired greater currency with the publication in 1956 of Teodoro Agoncillo’s *Revolt of the Masses*, which remains to this day the standard work on the Katipunan.⁴⁹ Agoncillo acknowledged that he had “relied mostly” on Valenzuela’s testimony when writing about the “Cry.”⁵⁰ He justified his decision by saying that Valenzuela had been an eyewitness to the historic event, that his “Memoirs,” though written many years afterwards, had been “based on notes scribbled in 1897,” and that “events, complete with details” were still vivid in Valenzuela’s memory even in his old age.⁵¹

Agoncillo does not mention, perhaps never read, Valenzuela’s testimony in 1911 that the *pasya* had been taken in Kangkong, or his discrepant 1917 court testimony that it had been taken at Melchora Aquino’s place in Pasong Tamo. Nor does Agoncillo mention Valenzuela’s visits to “Pugad Lawin near Pasong Tamo” with other veterans to commemorate the “Cry” in 1928 and 1940.

When narrating the story of the “Cry” in *Revolt of the Masses*, Agoncillo follows Valenzuela’s “Memoirs” in saying the *pasya* was taken at Juan Ramos’s place in Pugad Lawin. Agoncillo does not, however, adhere fully to Valenzuela’s version of events. In the present context, one of his departures is crucial. Valenzuela believed Ramos and his mother both lived in “Pugad Lawin near Pasong Tamo.”⁵² Agoncillo, on the other hand, says in *Revolt* that Ramos lived in “Pugad Lawin” (without specifying where it was) but

⁴⁹ Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses: the story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1956).

⁵⁰ Teodoro A. Agoncillo, “Four Girls and a Man,” Part IX, *Manila Times*, October 27, 1956. This was the final instalment in Agoncillo’s serialized response to a critique of *Revolt* by Nicolas Zafra. The “four girls” of Agoncillo’s title, who had collaborated with Zafra on the critique, were Prof. Guadalupe Fores-Ganzon, Prof. Josefa M. Saniel, Donata V. Taylo, and Justina A. Saltiva. Nicolas Zafra, “*The Revolt of the Masses*”: Critique of a Book,” *Philippine Studies*, IV:4 (December 1956), 493-514. For further expressions of skepticism about Agoncillo’s treatment of the Pugad Lawin story, see Gregorio F. Zaide, *The Philippine Revolution*, revised edition (Manila: Modern Book Co., 1968), 111-2; Ambeth R. Ocampo, “Heads Balintawak, Tails Pugad Lawin: Where did Bonifacio utter the first ‘Cry?’” [1989] in Ambeth R. Ocampo, *Looking Back* (Pasig: Anvil, 1990), 78; Borromeo-Buehler, *The Cry of Balintawak*, 7-8; and Guerrero et al, “Balintawak,” as cited.

⁵¹ Agoncillo, “More on the ‘Cry,’” 19.

⁵² Valenzuela, “Memoirs,” 102; Serrano, “Event observed on wrong date”.

that his mother lived in Pasong Tamo, and that the two places were a significant distance apart. When the Katipuneros were at Ramos's place in Pugad Lawin on August 23, Agoncillo writes, the Katipuneros got word the Guardia Civil were approaching, and so they hastily marched off in the dark to Pasong Tamo, and did not arrive at Melchora Aquino's house until the next day.⁵³ Agoncillo repeats this story in an article he wrote in 1960, saying that from Pugad Lawin the "rebels walked pell-mell through the night to Pasong Tamo."⁵⁴

Agoncillo does not explain why his rendition differs from Valenzuela's recollections. Nor does he offer any clue in his endnotes.⁵⁵ He candidly admits that his reconstruction of events is "speculative."⁵⁶ He does not indicate in *Revolt*, or in his 1960 article, exactly where he thought Pugad Lawin was situated, merely that it was a considerable distance to the west of Pasong Tamo.⁵⁷

Subsequently, however, in 1962, Agoncillo claimed he had identified the exact spot where Juan Ramos's house once stood, and together with members of the UP Student Council he placed a marker there. When he revisited the locality in the early 1980s, however, he found the marker had disappeared.⁵⁸ Nobody now remembers where it was, and nobody knows what documentary or oral evidence had persuaded Agoncillo he had found the correct spot.

It is unlikely Agoncillo placed his marker in the same place as the present-day "Sigaw ng Pugad Lawin" memorial in Bahay Toro. The present-day memorial is about two kilometers from Balintawak – perhaps half an hour's walk along a road or track in 1896, perhaps an hour across fields or grassland. Agoncillo, though, says Pugad Lawin was a "big distance" from Balintawak. It took the rebels the best part of a day, he indicates, "to negotiate the distance between the two points."⁵⁹

Official recognition of "Pugad Lawin, wherever it was" [1963]

Agoncillo was the pre-eminent historian of the day, and the 1896 revolution was among his special fields. It was mainly upon his advice, it is said, that the government's historical agency (then called the National Heroes Commission) agreed in 1963 that the term "Cry of Balintawak" should be discarded in favor of "Cry of Pugad Lawin."⁶⁰ This change was formally proclaimed by President Diosdado Macapagal, who declared the supposed

⁵³ Agoncillo, *Revolt of the Masses*, 148.

⁵⁴ Agoncillo, "More on the 'Cry'," 25.

⁵⁵ Agoncillo, *Revolt of the Masses*, 348. The only sources Agoncillo cites apart from Valenzuela's "Memoirs" at this juncture are two other KKK veterans, Guillermo Masangkay and Francisco Carreon, neither of whom ever acknowledged the existence of a place called Pugad Lawin.

⁵⁶ Agoncillo, "More on the 'Cry,'" 17; 24-26.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁸ Guerrero et al, "Balintawak," as cited.

⁵⁹ Agoncillo, "More on the 'Cry,'" 25. Agoncillo said in effect that "his" Pugad Lawin was between Balintawak and Banlat, and yet was a big instance from *both*. As the crow flies, the two barrios were only five or six kilometers apart.

⁶⁰ Borromeo-Buehler, *The Cry of Balintawak*, 55; Guerrero et al, "Balintawak," as cited.

anniversary of the “Cry of Pugad Lawin” – August 23, 1963 – to be a special public holiday in Quezon City, “where the event took place.”⁶¹

The government’s scrapping of the “Cry of Balintawak” in favor of the “Cry of Pugad Lawin” entailed not just a change of location, but also a change in how the “Cry” was officially defined. “Balintawak” signified the *unang labanan*, fought on August 26; “Pugad Lawin,” signified the *pasya* and the *pagpupunit*, which in Agoncillo’s telling both happened on August 23. Agoncillo’s definition of the “Cry” had become the official definition.

For some reason, though, Agoncillo’s initiative in marking the supposed “Cry” site did not attract much attention. His marker was not recognized, so far as is known, by the National Heroes Commission, or replaced with an official marker, or even maintained. Why did the government give its stamp of approval to the “Cry of Pugad Lawin” story, but not to Agoncillo’s marker? Perhaps the government realized the evidence for marking the site was too thin. Other historians had probably been telling the National Heroes Commission) they thought that Agoncillo had got the location wrong, or that nobody was really sure.⁶²

The “Cry, therefore, was officially redefined, and the “Cry” site was officially removed from Balintawak (though the Balintawak monument did not stand at any “exact spot”) and reassigned to “Pugad Lawin, wherever it was,” not yet to a particular designated spot. The problem this presented to the organizers of the annual “Cry” commemorations was solved by the simple expedient of sticking to what was familiar. The crowds gathered, rites were observed, and politicians delivered their speeches at Balintawak, as before, as if nothing had happened.⁶³

“Pugad Lawin in Bahay Toro” [1983-84]

What had now become officially known as the “Cry of Pugad Lawin” continued to be commemorated at Balintawak until the 1980s. In 1983, however, the mayor of Quezon City constituted a “Pugad Lawin Historical Committee” to examine whether the “Cry” site could be definitively identified at last. The Committee accepted Agoncillo’s position that the yard where cedulas were shredded had belonged to Juan Ramos, not to his mother, Melchora Aquino. The search for Pugad Lawin thus boiled down to a search for where Juan Ramos had lived.

The Pugad Lawin Historical Committee did not discover any fresh documentary evidence in its 1983 investigation, but claimed to have identified the former site of Ramos’s place on the basis, it seems, of oral testimony from one of Juan Ramos’s grandsons, Escolastico Figueroa.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Web ref <http://www.gov.ph/1963/08/22/proclamation-no-149-s-1963/> (Accessed November 13, 2014).

⁶² Gregorio Zaide suggests the issue was scarcely debated. The National Heroes Commission, he writes, took the decision “without consulting the historians who were not employed by the government and without public hearings.” Zaide, *The Philippine Revolution*, 111.

⁶³ *Manila Times*, August 24, 1963; *Sunday Times*, August 23, 1964; *Philippines Daily Express*, August 23, 1985.

⁶⁴ Guerrero et al, “Balintawak,” as cited.

The Pugad Lawin Historical Committee relayed its findings to the government's historical agency (then called the National Historical Institute), which despatched someone to visit the site, deliberated on the matter, and declared the Committee to be right.

On the occasion of the next commemoration of the "Cry," on August 23, 1984, the NHI placed its marker at the site in Seminary Road, Bahay Toro where it has since remained.⁶⁵ Two years later, the NHI reinforced its decision by declaring the site a National Historical Landmark - "the actual and exact site where the 1896 Philippine revolution started."⁶⁶

Isagani Medina's case for "Pugad Lawin in Bahay Toro" [1990s]

Understandably, not all the protagonists in the debate accepted the NHI's verdict. Some found the evidence submitted by the Quezon City mayor's Pugad Lawin Historical Committee to be too tenuous, the case too dubious. For a while, though, the controversy subsided.

It came to life again in the mid-1990s, before and during the centennial of the revolution, when various forums were organized at which historians and veterans' descendants voiced their contending views.

The foremost proponent of "Pugad Lawin in Bahay Toro" in this renewed debate was Isagani R. Medina. He presented the case for Bahay Toro more fully, and with more documentation, than anybody else has before or since, first in a paper he delivered at a conference in 1993 and then in his annotations to Ronquillo's memoirs.⁶⁷ He patently wished to make his case as forceful and persuasive as he could, and it seems unlikely he omitted any evidence he felt to be significant. We now need to examine the case he made.

Medina found official documents from 1896, the *vecindarios* or lists of residents for the municipality of Caloocan, which show that Melchora Aquino and Juan Ramos, mother and son, were listed under different *cabecerías*. This strongly suggests they resided (officially at least, in terms of registration) in different places. Melchora Aquino lived with her youngest daughter, Juana Ramos. Another of her daughters, Estefania Ramos, was living with her family nearby. Her son Juan Ramos, however, was registered in another *cabecera*, of which he was himself the *cabeza de barangay*, and was living with his wife, Alejandra Alcantara, and two young children, Filomena and Canuta.⁶⁸

Medina includes photographs of the relevant pages from the *vecindarios* in his annotated edition of Ronquillo's memoirs. Unfortunately, though, he does not explain how he jumps from the evidence that Ramos and his mother lived in different places to the conclusion that Ramos's *cabecera* was located in "sitio Pugad Lawin." On his photograph of Ramos's *vecindario*, Medina (or someone) has written "Pugad Lawin, sitio of Bahay

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ National Historical Institute, Resolution No.2 (1986) dated August 14, 1986, in Encarnacion, "Origins of Bonifacio Cry," as cited, 14.

⁶⁷ Medina, "Unang deklarasyon"; Medina in Ronquillo, *Ilang talata*, 664-82.

⁶⁸ Medina in Ronquillo, *Ilang talata*, 209; 211.

Toro,” and his caption says likewise.⁶⁹ But elsewhere in his annotations he frankly acknowledges that such a place cannot be found in nineteenth-century records.⁷⁰

It is possible Medina identified the location on the basis of what Ramos’s grandson, Escolastico Figueroa, had told the Quezon City mayor’s Pugad Lawin Historical Committee in 1983. Medina himself notes, however, that other family members told contrary stories. The weightiest is the testimony of Ramos’s daughter, Monica Ramos-Figueroa. She had come out to meet Pio Valenzuela and the others when they visited Pugad Lawin in 1940, back when it was a “wooded knoll” not far from Pasong Tamo. She had posed with the rest of the party for picture-taking around the “exact spot,” marked by a stake with a hat on it, where her grandmother’s house had once stood. And four decades later, towards the end of her long life, she told a news reporter the historic “*pagpupunit ng sedula*” had been where her grandmother lived.⁷¹

The other evidence Medina presents to support his “Pugad Lawin in Bahay Toro” position might be described as equally insubstantial. But that would be too kind. His other evidence, to be blunt, borders on the spurious.

Medina claims his position is corroborated by the recollections of five Katipunan veterans who witnessed the “Cry” and one other who was very close to the events of August 1896. This is what he writes, very clearly and precisely, about four of the witnesses: “*Ang pagpupunit ng sedula... nga’y nangyari sa may sityo Pugad-lawin, sa nayon ng Bahay-Toro sa bayan ng Kalookan... noong Agosto 23, 1896. Ito’y pinatutunayan ng apat na saksi: Dr Pio Valenzuela, Briccio Brigido Pantas, Cipriano Pacheco at Domingo Orcullo.*”⁷² The fifth “*saksi sa mga pangyayari sa Pugadlawin,*” he says, was Mariano Alvarez.⁷³

In reality, not a single one of these five men left any written testimony to the effect that Pugad Lawin was situated in the barrio of Bahay Toro. Valenzuela, Pantas and Pacheco, as we saw, commemorated the “Cry” near Pasong Tamo in 1928, and Valenzuela did so again in 1940. Orcullo, the delegate sent by the Magdalo council in Cavite to the decisive meeting of the KKK Supreme Assembly, did not leave a memoir himself, and the little we know about his mission comes from Emilio Aguinaldo’s *Mga gunita*. Aguinaldo says the meeting that Orcullo attended was summoned in “Balintawak,” and does not refer to either Pugad Lawin or Bahay Toro.⁷⁴ Nor does Mariano Alvarez, who simply mentions a “*pulong ng mga pangulo ng Katipunan sa Balintawak sa araw ng Agosto 24, 1896.*”⁷⁵

Medina also says the “*sigaw sa Pugad Lawin*” story was endorsed by Gregoria de Jesus.⁷⁶ He makes this claim on the basis of a single sentence in José P. Santos’s short 1935

⁶⁹ Ibid., 209.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 677

⁷¹ Joel Paredes, “Search for ‘Cry’ Site Takes a New Twist,” *Times Journal*, July 11, 1983, cited in *ibid.*, 678.

⁷² Ibid., 668.

⁷³ Medina, “Unang deklarasyon,” 77.

⁷⁴ Emilio Aguinaldo, *Mga gunita ng himagsikan* (Manila: Cristina Aguinaldo Suntay, 1964), 57.

⁷⁵ Mariano Alvarez, “Pahayag ukol sa pagsiklab ng Rebolusyon,” n.d., Appendix, 146. [Anita Garcia Collection, PNL], cited in Medina, “Unang deklarasyon,” 79-80. This source cannot be located at the present time, and its provenance is not known.

⁷⁶ Medina in Ronquillo, *Ilang talata*, 673.

biography of Bonifacio: “*Ang pagunita nina Dr Pio Valenzuela ay kinakatigan ng Balo ng Supremo na si Ginang Gregoria de Jesus.*”⁷⁷ Nobody can be sure what this means, but it might possibly allude to the occasion in 1928 when she joined Valenzuela, Pantas and Pacheco in commemorating the “Cry” near Pasong Tamo. Like her companions on that occasion, Gregoria de Jesus never placed anything on record about Bahay Toro.

Medina’s creative handling of the evidence is again manifest in a remark he makes about the memoir of the KKK veteran Francisco Carreon. Medina studied the weather conditions in Manila in August 1896, and found it had been mostly wet. But the day the cedula were shredded, says Medina, it must have been dry, because Carreon’s memoir relates that “*namuti ang harapan ng babay at looban ng mga cedulang punit’ nangangahulugan na tuyo ang lupa sa bakuran ni Juan Ramos.*”⁷⁸ All that needs to be said here is that Carreon’s testimony is being misrepresented. Sun or rain regardless, Carreon did not locate the cedula shredding in the yard of Juan Ramos. He said it happened in Kangkong.⁷⁹

Medina, in short, renders every reference to Pugad Lawin as meaning “Pugad Lawin in Bahay Toro,” and when citing Carreon’s memoir he even transports the *pagpupunit* to Bahay Toro from Kangkong. Medina, we are sadly forced to conclude, persistently distorts the veterans’ testimony to make it bolster his own version of events.

“Pugad Lawin in Bahay Toro” officially reaffirmed [2001]

The publications of Medina and others around the time of the 1996 centennial thus brought to light some fresh sources on the “Cry,” but did nothing to resolve the debate. Five years later, in 2001, the National Historical Institute decided to review the evidence again.

To conduct the review, the NHI constituted a special Panel, comprising three historians – Bernard Karganilla, Doroteo Abaya and Rene Escalante - and (as chair) a retired Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. The Panel members read some of the voluminous literature on the subject, and heard testimony from some of the main protagonists. After due deliberation, the Panel submitted a 15-page report to the Institute which concluded as follows:-

“In its search for the truth, the Panel did not find any document that could challenge the decision that was rendered by the Philippine Historical Committee in 1963. Therefore, the Panel respectfully recommends that the National Historical Institute re-affirm said position that the ‘First Cry’ took place in Pugadlawin on August 23, 1896.”⁸⁰

The wording here is slightly misleading, because in 1963, as noted, the Philippine Historical Committee had not yet identified the supposed site of the “Cry.” It had agreed only that the location should be shifted from Balintawak to “Pugad Lawin, wherever it

⁷⁷ José P. Santos, *Si Andres Bonifacio at ang Himagsikan*, (Manila: n.pub, 1935), 25.

⁷⁸ Medina, “Unang deklarasyon,” 84.

⁷⁹ Carreon, Untitled memoir, as cited, 158-9.

⁸⁰ NHI Panel, “Report,” 14.

was”. It is clear from the body of the 2001 report, however, that the Panel’s recommendation is really that the NHI should reaffirm the later, 1984, position of “Pugad Lawin in Bahay Toro.” This might seem like a petty and pointless quibble. In isolation, it would indeed not be worth mentioning. Regrettably, though, the slight inaccuracy is emblematic of the 2001 report’s fundamental misrepresentation of the “Cry” debate’s long backstory. In the Panel’s perfunctory retelling of the saga, Pugad Lawin’s first incarnation as a spot near Pasong Tamo is never mentioned. The report cites the testimony of Valenzuela and other veterans who spoke about Pugad Lawin in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, but is completely silent about where they located the site in those decades.

This omission is startling, not least because the NHI was descended from the Philippine Historical Committee, and so had presumably inherited its records. Yes, most of the pre-war records might have been destroyed or lost. But the photograph of the 1940 expedition to Pugad Lawin survived. Not only did it survive, it was printed in one of the NHI’s own publications, the bogus *Minutes of the Katipunan*. Printed and reprinted, together with the caption saying unequivocally that it shows Valenzuela and the others gathered at Pugad Lawin in barrio Banlat, “where once stood the house of Melchora Aquino.”⁸¹

Did the NHI Panel miss out the initial Banlat-Pasong Tamo chapter of the saga for the sake of brevity, or had they not researched the subject in sufficient depth? Either way, the result is that the Panel skews the evidence, as Medina had done, in favor of the current “Pugad Lawin in Bahay Toro” official status quo.

The NHI Panel cites the historian José P. Santos as being a proponent of Pugad Lawin in 1929, for example, without adding the necessary caveat that nobody had situated Pugad Lawin in Bahay Toro back then.⁸² In later years, the Panel also omits to say, Santos avoided taking a position for or against any version of the Pugad Lawin story, being content to present the range of different versions and to leave the question open: “*Samantala’y maghintay tayo ng lalong malilivanag na ulat at mga patibay ng iba pang nangakasama sa unang sigaw ng Himagsikan sa Pilipinas.*”⁸³

On another page, the Panel says the KKK veterans Alfonso Pacheco, Sinforsoso San Pedro, and Genaro de los Reyes corroborated the Pugad Lawin position because in 1928, together with Gregoria de Jesus and Monica Ramos (the granddaughter of Melchora Aquino) they “pinpointed to Eulogio Rodriguez and Luis Serrano of the National Historical Commission the spot in Pugadlawin where the Katipuneros tore their cedula.”⁸⁴ Here again there is not a word to suggest the spot the veterans pinpointed was near Pasong Tamo, not in Bahay Toro. This passage, furthermore, is garbled. Adding to the unfortunate impression the report gives of institutional amnesia within the NHI, it mistakenly conflates the 1928 and 1940 commemorations at Melchora Aquino’s place into a single event. The Panel also misconstrues the memoir of the veteran

⁸¹ *Minutes of the Katipunan*, 169.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸³ Santos, *Si Andres Bonifacio at ang Himagsikan*, 25.

⁸⁴ NHI Panel, “Report,” 11.

Francisco Carreon as a “corroborative account.”⁸⁵ In reality, not one of the veterans cited by the Panel ever located the “Cry” site in Bahay Toro. By the time the NHI installed the marker at Bahay Toro in 1984, the veterans had all passed away, and could not object.

These mistakes and elisions matter because the 2001 report is the basis of the official position as it now stands. As the Panel recommended, the National Historical Institute reaffirmed its existing position on Pugad Lawin, and there the matter still rests today. The “Cry” continues to be officially marked in Bahay Toro almost by default, by the force of inertia. “Pugad Lawin in Bahay Toro” retains its official status not because there is any supporting evidence for that site, but because nobody has pushed the case for the actual site, the site that Katipunan veterans marked a century ago, the site of Apolonio Samson’s house in Kangkong.

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APPENDIX – THE TESTIMONY OF KATIPUNAN VETERANS

Source	Locations mentioned	Notes
Pio Valenzuela (1911)	Kangkong	Says the decision to revolt was taken at the house of Apolonio Samson in Kangkong on August 23. Does not mention cedula. Pio Valenzuela, “Ang Sigaw sa Balintawak,” <i>Taliba</i> , September 11, 1911.
Ramon Bernardo [attrib. JR] in Alvarez (1911 and 1927)	Kangkong	Says the leading revolutionists met at Apolonio Samson’s house in Kangkong on August 22. On that day, Bonifacio dispatched letters calling KKK branch presidents there “ <i>upang usapan ang pagbabangon</i> ” and ordering them to bring the funds held by the branches “ <i>natutungkol na gugulin sa pagbihimagsik</i> ”. Says however that the leading revolutionists left Kangkong on August 23, and that the decision to commence the revolution on August 29 was taken on

⁸⁵ Ibid.

	Bahay Toro	<p>August 24 in Sampalukan, Bahay Toro, at the house and sugar mill yard of Melchora Aquino.</p> <p>Does not mention cedulas.</p> <p>S.V. Alvarez, “Ang Sigaw sa Balintawak,” <i>Taliba</i>, September 8, 1911; Santiago V. Alvarez, <i>The Katipunan and the Revolution</i>, 254.</p>
Pio Valenzuela (1917)	Pasong Tamo, also known as Pacpac-lawin.	<p>Says the decision to revolt was taken by the Katipunan General Assembly on August 23 at the house of Melchora Aquino on Daan-malalim, “in Pasong Tamo, also known as Pacpac-lawin.” Does not mention cedulas.</p> <p>“Testimony of Dr Pio Valenzuela in the Case of U.S. vs Vicente Sotto for Libel,” [1917] in <i>Minutes of the Katipunan</i>, 233-4.</p>
Labi ng Katipunan marker (1917)	Kangkong	<p>Says the decision was taken at Kangkong on August 23 - “<i>Sa pook na ito...ipinasya ng KKKNMANB ang paghibimagsik noong ika-23 ng Agosto 1896</i>”. Does not mention cedulas.</p> <p>Medina in Ronquillo, <i>Ilang talata</i>, 208.</p>
Tomas Remigio (1917)	Kangkong	<p>Says the decision was taken at the house of Apolonio Samson in Kangkong – “<i>nandito’y amin na ngang pinasiyabang ituloy ang revolucion...</i>” Does not mention cedulas.</p> <p>Tomas Remigio, Untitled memoir [c.1917] in Borromeo-Buehler, <i>The Cry of Balintawak</i>, 178.</p>
Pio Valenzuela (c.1920s)	Kangkong Pugad Lawin [location not specified]	<p>Says the revolutionists met at the house and yard of Apolonio Samson in Kangkong on August 22, but the decision to launch the revolution on August 29 was taken on August 23 at the “house, storehouse and yard of Juan Ramos, son of Melchora Aquino, in Pugad Lawin,” and that after the meeting “many of those present tore their cedulas”.</p> <p>Pio Valenzuela, “Memoirs,” [c.1920s] translated by Luis Serrano, in <i>Minutes of the Katipunan</i>, 102.</p>
Sinforoso San Pedro (1925)	Kangkong	<p>Says the decision to launch the revolution on August 29 was taken at Apolonio Samson’s house in Kangkong on August 23. Does not mention cedulas.</p> <p>Sofronio G. Calderon, “Mga nangyari sa kasaysayan ng Pilipinas” (Typescript, 1925), 208-12; 245-8.</p>

Cipriano Pacheco (1933)	Kangkong Pugad Lawin (location not specified)	Says the decision was taken at the house of Apolonio Samson in Kangkong, (“ <i>nang ipabayag na ang pinagkasunduan...</i> ”) but that the revolutionists then went to a place nearby (“ <i>malapit pa doon</i> ”) known as Pugad Lawin (location not specified), where Bonifacio announced the decision and cedula were torn. José P. Santos, “Ang kasaysayan sa paghihimagsik ni Heneral Cipriano Pacheco,” <i>Linggubang ng Mabuhay</i> , Disyembre 3, 1933, quoted by Medina in Ronquillo, <i>Ilang talata</i> , 675-6.
Briccio Pantas (c.1935)	Kangkong	Says he witnessed the debate at Apolonio Samson’s house in Kangkong on whether the revolution should be launched, but left before the decision was taken. Briccio Pantas, Undated declaration [c.1935], in José P. Santos, “Si Andres Bonifacio at ang Katipunan,” 1948, quoted in Borromeo-Buehler, <i>The Cry of Balintawak</i> , 144.
Francisco Carreon (n.d.)	Kangkong	Says the decision was taken at Apolonio Samson’s house in Kangkong, and that cedula were torn when Bonifacio announced the decision to the crowd outside. Francisco Carreon, Untitled memoir (n.d.), in José P. Santos, <i>Ang tatlong napabantog na tulisan sa Pilipinas</i> (Tarlac, 1936), in Borromeo-Buehler, <i>The Cry of Balintawak</i> , 156-8.
Guillermo Masangkay (1947-57)	Kangkong	Consistently says the decision was taken in Kangkong, but gives different dates – Says in 1947 that the decision was taken in Kangkong on August 24, and that cedula were torn after the meeting. Teodoro A. Agoncillo, “Pakikipanayam sa Kgg. Guillermo Masangkay, noong ika-11 Oktubre 1947,” in Borromeo-Buehler, <i>The Cry of Balintawak</i> , 182. Says in 1952 that the decision was taken in Kangkong on August 23, and that cedula were torn after the meeting. Guillermo Masangkay, “Unang sigaw, unang paglaban sa paglaya, <i>Bagong Buhay</i> , August 26, 1952. Says in 1957 that the decision was taken in Kangkong on August 26, and that cedula were torn after the meeting.

		Arturo Ma. Misa, "Living Revolutionary Recalls Freedom 'Cry,'" <i>The Saturday Weekend Mirror</i> , August 24, 1957, cited in Borromeo-Buehler, <i>The Cry of Balintawak</i> , 36-7.
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