

C.N. Flores

**THE CATTLE CARAVANS OF ANCIENT CABOLOAN
(INTERIOR PLAINS OF PANGASINAN):
CONNECTING HISTORY, CULTURE
AND COMMERCE BY CARTWHEEL**

Caravan cultures throughout the world depict stories of real journeys, discoveries and exploits. They also account for the construction of local histories, territories and market societies. At best, caravan routes map the geoeconomic and the ethnohistoric trail of peoples on the road towards venture capitalism in the earlier centuries.

But in the 21st century, the history of caravan cultures remain only in the people's memory as artefact (or artifice?) and which has been romanticized into bioepics or heroic adventures of legendary men caught in the age of material adventurism from the 13th to 16th centuries. In this day of global network and cyber transactions, it is fascinating and at the same time remarkable how the caravan culture still persists in the Philippines. Its persistence as a vestige of feudal past in an era of intensified commercialization and industrialization is indeed indicative of uneven modes of development, as it is symbolic of intersecting diverse cultures where the rural locale ventures into the national and into the global with far reaching implications on issues of ethnicity and cultural import.

The cattle caravans of ancient Caboloan continue to peddle their bamboo-based products from the province of Pangasinan to the highways of Metro Manila. These are the ubiquitous cattle-drawn carriages selling hammocks, bamboo chairs and bookshelves we see in front of SM Fairview, Commonwealth, East and C.P. Garcia Avenues. But not until recently when Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) agents found them illegally parked along national roads thereby considered obstruction to traffic.

More than just a cultural icon for tourists, the cattle caravans trace its origins to the ancient Caboloan, an interior ethnic state in the province of Pangasinan. *Caboloan* refers to a place where 'bolo'

(a specie of bamboo) is abundant which explains why the cattle caravans up to this day peddle goods made from bamboo and rattan. These bamboo-based products are traded in prehispanic times with the coastal villages known then as 'Panag-asinan' or where salt was produced. This interior(*alog*)-coast (*baybay*) dichotomy and its accompanying trading relations was obscured by the colonial mapping of Spanish Augustinian missionaries, who coming from the coastal town of Bolinao named the entire region as *Pangasinan*. This prehispanic cultural relations between the interior-coast dichotomy of *Caboloan-Pangasinan* noted by Scott and Keesing to be vital in the paper of ethnohistories, continue to exist through the living artefact which is the cattle caravan trade.

Locating the cattle caravans of ancient Caboloan, this paper aims at reconstructing local history. Journeying through the caravan routes from the heart of Caboloan to Metro Manila, the cartwheel connects culture and commerce from the village to the metropolis. The cattle caravans' anachronism in today's world market economy becomes an assertion of locality and ethnicity in the face of the hegemonic ethnonational and the reifying global system. While the province of Pangasinan is valued in political terms because of its significant voting population, its ethnocultural history and reality is perceived to be merely subsumed under the mythic kingdom of the Greater Ilocandia. Thus, the cattle caravans serve both as a romantic symbol of an ancient Caboloan culture and as an ethnocultural text amidst the flux of emerging societies and economies.

Caravan Cultures in the World

As man emerges from his foraging episodes to a sedentary life dependent on agriculture, he finds himself as purveyor of domestic goods for an incipient market. Household economics such as carpentry, metallurgy, pottery-making and weaving developed an industry that impelled commercial transport of goods and products. Expanding beyond the borders of the domestic market, *merchant caravans* have accelerated material progress and have also facilitated culture contact between locales.

The word *caravan* was first used in 1588, borrowed from Middle French *caravane* or from Medieval Latin *caravana*, both derived from

Persian *kārwan*. The meaning of covered carriage or wagon is first recorded in English in 1674 from which the British house trailer developed [Barnhart 1988]. Today, a *caravan* is defined as a group of merchants, pilgrims, or travelers journeying together, usually for mutual protection in deserts or hostile regions [Encyclopaedia 2002]. Caravan traders and pilgrims are usually sighted in the desert zones of Asia and north Africa. The *camel* was the most commonly used animal for caravans because of its “catholic appetite, its ability to go without water for several days, and its loading capacity” [Ibid]. *Camel caravans* have been recorded to be the most numerous, particularly those used by Muslim pilgrims from Cairo to Damascus to Mecca. Around 10,000 camels were reportedly used to reach the holy place.

As early as two millenia before Christ, the spirit of *venture capitalism* brought early Cretans to the whole of eastern Mediterranean, with their embroidery products, weapons and ornaments as well as oil and wine contained in very large jars [Koutsoupakis]. Thirteenth century adventurer Marco Polo once wrote about Xinjiang as a fabled city deep in the Taklimakan desert of Central Asia where merchants on *camel caravans* brought to the world (read: Europe) cotton, hemp, flax, grain, wine and other articles through the famed Silk Road as early as the second century B.C. The nomadic Irish people in the 19th century utilized the ‘bow-topped’ gypsy wagon, a *horsedrawn caravan* used to transport their wares throughout Ireland¹.

Merchant caravans have been known to link disparate cultures and to standardize lifeways especially in continental regions of the world. Empires and civilizations flourished as new exciting goods from erstwhile unknown territories reach the market capital. Along perilous routes, some emergent communities mushroomed as the caravans continued to make their trade to some faraway land. Cultures and histories are formed and transformed by vigorous trading attendant in merchant caravans. Caravan cultures throughout the world necessarily

¹ Today as part of its tourist attraction, the horsedrawn caravan is commercially known as the ‘Romany caravan’ which can accommodate 4 persons complete with lodging paraphernalia for tourists’ enjoyment and relaxation. See for example: Carra Caravan and Camping Park, Mayo. Official web-site. URL: www.horsedrawn.mayonet.com/MayoCaravan.htm.

mapped new landscapes and mindscapes of peoples swept by the capitalist spirit as early as Weber's precapitalist societies.

With the opening of new sea routes from Europe to the East, the traditional caravan trade route began to decline. The great Silk Road from China to the Mediterranean gave way to this new alternative sea route which was shorter and more efficient. In the 19th century, with the construction of roads and rail transport, and with the abolition of slavery, the caravan trade had to accede to modernity resulting to its eventual demise. Muslim pilgrim caravans, however, continue to this day in spite of more practical means to reach Mecca because of the religious belief that the traditional slow, long, and arduous route heightens the religious fervor among the believers.

Today, caravans throughout the world had to give way to faster, more modern means of transport. These covered carriages or wagons have been transformed into tourist inns and micro hotels for newlyweds and vacationing families. Caravan trade had seen better days. With the internet and automated machines, commerce and trade are facilitated through the hiways of cyberspace. Yet, the caravan trade in the Philippines manages to survive in spite of the advent of modern means of transport and global transactions, for some reasons beyond its exotic appeal or advantage.

Caravans in the Philippines

It was historian Isagani Medina who first took notice of the presence of caravans in Metro Manila. He wrote about what he called then the *cart caravans* peddling bamboo-based products to different areas in Luzon, including Manila and Quezon City. Medina cited the province of Pangasinan as the origins of the caravans. He however, failed to pursue the caravans' Caboloan roots and the province's history of trade and commerce. Medina's citation focused on the farmer's continuous use of bamboo sleds and carts in transporting agricultural produce [Medina 1977].

In 1986, "Philippine Panorama" featured a hat vendor of San Carlos City, Pangasinan as its cover photo. San Carlos City formerly Binalatongan was once believed to be the nucleus town of ancient Caboloan. Panorama feature writer Margot Bateria wrote about Philippine basketry featuring the San Carlos weavers. She cited the

extensive work done by Silahis Arts and Crafts storeowner Robert Lane who as the story goes, “fell in love with Philippine baskets”. Lane with photographer-friend Jacinto Tee published a 232 page coffee table book entitled, “Philippine Basketry and Appreciation”, in the same year. For Lane, “basketry is the primary craft from which everything starts”, ever since primitive peoples started tying something together as in weaving [Baterina 1986].

In 1990, an undergraduate thesis by Fernando Sepe, Jr. submitted to the College of Mass Communication of the University of the Philippines, was the first serious attempt to document the lives of the caravan traders through photography. Entitled, “Caravan: A Photographic Documentation”, Sepe lived with the caravan traders from Manila to Laguna for over a month. He documented the daily routine of the caravan traders who plied the southern routes. The thesis which was one of the first to use photography as a form of documentation was presented to the public through an exhibit sponsored by Don Jaime Zobel de Ayala.

The cart caravan has been a favorite device in movies and advertisements to add local color to production design. Sepe mentions a 1960 movie entitled “Together Again” produced by Gretas Production which starred Nida Blanca leading the life of a caravan viajero. Selling handicrafts on the road, actress comedienne Blanca meets king of comedy Dolphy in a series of misfortunes and misadventures typical of any musical comedy during that period. In recent years, a number of soap operas on primetime television made use of the ox-drawn caravan as backdrop of romantic scenes to heighten the drama. From the turn of the century Philippine picture postcards² to current television commercials, the caravan is made to pose to symbolize a romantic notion of a nation. The image of a caravan has also been exoticized through fiestas and town anniversaries within the metropolis which showcased the caravan as a vehicle of art in a touristy exhibit and fashion. In all these, the cart caravan serves as a museum piece — an object displayed for viewers’ attention. This exoticization of the

² See pictures of carabao drawn carts used to ferry people and farm products in: [Best 1994]. See also covered carriages of cattle caravan from Luzon to Mindanao in: [Ciriaco 1995].

caravan consequently obscured its historical and cultural meaning. Though ubiquitous in the metropolis, the cart caravan traces its historical and cultural origins in the interior plains of Pangasinan, known then as ancient Caboloan.

Cart caravans and bamboo are almost always synonymous to Pangasinan, particularly, to the city of San Carlos. Every Saturday as it is the '*araw ng tienda*', the entire sleepy town of San Carlos suddenly becomes awake when people from the barrios load all their bamboo work near the plaza frenzy with commercial activities. In the early 70s, the carts or wagons were still roofless. Then, *tambobong-less kariton*³ dominated the market plaza. People from San Carlos used to refer to this means of transport as 'kariton' until Manileños, including foreigners, identified it as 'caravan'. Nowadays, San Carlos folk both from the *poblacion* and the barrios have used this outside ascription to refer to this specific system of trade, curiously, with pride and a sense of achievement. Because it was an English word and sounded modern, the 'caravan' displaced the 'kariton' with a connotation as a vehicle of technological advancement.

Without supplanting the tradition and history of the 'kariton', the paper would refer to this merchant trade of Pangasinan folk as the *Cattle Caravans of Ancient Caboloan* for it is historically rooted to the once upon a time kingdom of Caboloan, a bamboo rich vast expanse of land, believed by historian Zeus Salazar to be an important ethnic state in prehispanic Philippines.

A Brief History of Pangasinan's Culture and Trades

Like most place-names in the country, *Pangasinan* is also toponymic. From the root word '*asin*' with the prefix '*pang*' and suffix '*-an*', denoting place, *Pangasinan* ('*panag-aasinan*'/'*pinag-aasinan*') means 'land of salt'. This only referred then to the coastal villages where *asin* was found. The interior was separately known as the *Luyag na Caboloan* (Place known as Caboloan). According to local historian Restituto Basa writing on the history of Dagupan, ancient folk refer to

³ '*Tambobong*' is a Pangasinan word that refers to the 'roof' of the wagon which is made of bamboo and *sawali*. 'Kariton' is the familiar name of the cattle-drawn caravan.

Caboloan as “*luyag ed dapit-ilog*” which literally means a place near the river. On the other hand, reference to *Pangasinan* was “*luyag ed dapit-baybay*” or a place near the coast. Thus, since *Caboloan* was beside the Agno river which was South of *Panag-asinan*, the description ‘*dapit-ilog*’ eventually meant ‘south’. Similarly, since *Panag-asinan* was a coastal village North of *Caboloan*, ‘*dapit-baybay*’ meant literally ‘north’ [Basa 1997: 1]⁴.

Caboloan is from the root word ‘*bolo*’ (*Gigantochloa levis*), a specie of bamboo which abounds in the interior plains of the province [Cortes 1990: 1-2]. In Baldomero Pulido’s doctoral dissertation, he described this as the *Kingdom of Caboloan* ruled by an *Ari Kasikis*⁵. Basa corroborates Pulido’s statement and pinpoints to *Caboloan* and *Pangasinan* as ancient kingdoms ruled by *Ari Kasikis (Caboloan)* and *Ari Kasilag (Pangasinan)* [Basa 1997: 5-7].

The word *Caboloan* was first cited in Fr. Mariano Pellicer’s 1840 grammar book, *Arte de la Lengua Pangasinana o Caboloan*. He based his paper on an earlier grammar book which came out in 1690. The author of this book however, was not identified. In Wenceslao Retaña’s *Biblioteca Idiomática Oriental* (1906), *Pangasinan* was synonymous to *Caboloan* [Cortes 1974: 1]⁶. In the 1918 Census, *Caboloan* was cited as kingdom ruled by an *Ari Kasikis*. It also mentioned *Sapan Palapar* as the center of *Caboloan* which is now the city of San Carlos. *Sapan Palapar* literally means wide river and actually refers to the mighty Agno river which widens from its mouth in Lingayen to the interior state of old Binalatongan which is now San Carlos [Census... 1920: 233].

Reference to *Luyag na Caboloan* and its *Ari Kasikis* also appeared in the 1957 History of Lingayen by Santiago S. Velasquez [Velasquez 1957: 3]. Similarly, it was also contained in the History of San Carlos

⁴ Pangasinan names for direction can also be found in: [Amurrio 1970].

⁵ The *Kingdom of Caboloan* and the rule of *Ari Kasikis* points to the existence of an ethnic state, in Zeus Salazar’s *kaharian-karahaan-sultanato* matrix. Going beyond the conceptual formulations of *chiefdomship*, Salazar believes that we can identify specific local categories to a generic class of *chiefs* using his matrix. See: [Pulido 1936], cited in: [Nelmidia 1982].

⁶ Cortes cited Wenceslao Retaña’s “*Biblioteca Idiomática Oriental*” in: [Retaña 1906: I, 35].

written by Jose Ag. Muñoz [Muñoz 1990: 4]. In the novel by Fr. Evaristo Marcelino, he referred to *Kasikis* as the Prince of Mabalbalino [Marcelino: 29]. Mabalbalino is a barrio of San Carlos which sits exactly along the river Agno.

But in 16th century when Spanish forces including Agustinian friars reached the shores of Bolinao and consequently moved towards the direction of Lingayen Gulf, the name of the coastal villages which they first occupied, was adopted by the colonizers to refer to the entire region. Pangasinan since then was used to refer to both coastal communities and interior settlements. Albeit, according to historian Rosario Cortes, the name *Caboloan* remained until about 19th century. According to Cortes, the name fell into disuse almost about the same time when indiscriminate cutting of the *bolo* rendered it near extinct [Cortes 1974].

The history of Pangasinan culture and trades can be traced back to pre-hispanic economic relations between the coastal and the interior. The coastal communities traded salt in exchange for bamboo-based, agricultural and forest products from the interior. Studies on local history show that this dichotomous relationship between the coastal-interior or *ilaya-ilawud* (in Pangasinan, *baybayalog*) place the interior settlements as the one more stable and developed. In a Letter of Fray Diego de Rojas to the governor of the colony in 29 March 1591, he forewarned that the indios would rather go to the interior than remain in the *encomiendas* of his Majesty established in the coastal areas because as he said, “the whole land is in a bad state [since] it is all sandstone. Thus, they go to the interior, to the *encomiendas* of private individuals.” [The Philippines... 1994: 162].

What facilitated exchange of goods between coastal Pangasinan and interior Caboloan was the great Agno River at a time when the river was the most important channel for transport and movement. Originating from the eastern towns of Asingan and Tayug, the circuitous Agno river winds its way to the central towns of Camiling (before a part of Caboloan until the creation of the province of Tarlac in 1875), Bayambang and Binalatongan (now San Carlos) before it joins the China Sea through the coastal towns of Labrador, Lingayen, Binmaley and Dagupan. These coastal towns where the river meets

the sea is also referred to as the Agno delta where the legendary Limahong was believed to have dugged a canal used in his great escape from the forces of Juan de Salcedo on 4 August 1575 [Cortes 1974: 59]. This long stretch of Agno river served as the geoeconomic link in the Pangasinan-Caboloan matrix.

Later, riverine movements would give way to road networks so that by the time Governor General Jose de Basco y Vargas encouraged agricultural production in 1778-1787, rice and other farm products for trade were transported via cattle-drawn caravans. Consequently, the opening of the Philippines to International Trade by the British in 1834 saw the opening of the port of Sual in Pangasinan by 1855, allowing the free flow of rice exportation to China from Caboloan's fertile ricefields. In an article entitled "Blazing a Green Trail", written by Lourdes Diaz-Trechuelo and Carlos Quirino, a picture of a *carreta de palay* or carabao-drawn sled is shown transporting rice sheafs, to depict an era of intensified agricultural production [Diaz-Trechuelo and Quirino 1978: 1380].

It is in the better developed interior Caboloan where early Pangasinan folk learned the art of basket weaving and other crafts related to bamboo. Stable agriculture-based economy provided Caboloan settlers the luxury of time to resort to other alternative occupations. It must be reiterated here that *Binalatongan* (now San Carlos) was the center of ancient Caboloan which grew *balatong* or mingo that sustained the basic consumptive needs of its inhabitants. *Binalatongan* is precisely derived from the word *balatong* or mingo. When the Dominican friars entered Binalatongan through the San Juan river, a tributary of the Agno river, they established it as their religious capital confident in its resources to maintain a large congregation of its religious order. Enshrining the Our Lady of Manaoag within its jurisdiction, Binalatongan in Dominican annals was fondly called the "Motherhouse of the Province" [Serraon 1998].

Rich with a supply of *bolo* (*Gigantochloa levis*) and other species of bamboo, *Caboloan* settlers from Mangatarem, Binalatongan (San Carlos), Gabon (Calasiao), Mangaldan, Manaoag, Mapandan, Malasiqui, Bayambang, Tolong (Sta. Barbara), and Gerona, Camiling, Paniqui and Moncada (now part of the province of Tarlac), had

constructed their *bahay kubo* as well as the *tubong* or bamboo tubes used for fetching water, with this ubiquitous grass. Isagani Medina enumerates a litany of the bamboo's practical use for early Filipinos from the household *binulu* or *bulu* (cooking pots) for kitchen purposes to *patibong* (trap) utilized as part of the art of warfare [Medina 1977: 539-545]. But remarkable display of artistry by Caboloan folk which have been transmitted up to the present generation is found in their diverse designs and motifs in basket-making. The folk baskets' primary function was to carry agricultural crops from the fields to the homes. Bigger storage baskets were woven used to store grain, and other similar items or even clothing such as the *baul* in the home. Other baskets served as fishing traps or *talakeb* that come in cylindrical forms.

In the 20th century, urban-led developmental programs such as the NACIDA in the 1960s dictated market demands and thus encouraged a cottage industry based on the production of household furniture such as bamboo sala sets, book shelves, hampers, magazine racks, toilet and bathroom accessories. Eyeing foreign market, the NACIDA identified regional centers to standardize quality-controlled products for export. San Carlos City and the town of Basista (both belong to the Old Binalatongan of Ancient Caboloan) were the first NACIDA cottage industry centers in the province. But since the area of commercial development in the 20th century is concentrated in the melting pot city of Dagupan (from the word '*pandaragupan*' or "where people gather and meet"), two of the biggest exporters of handicraft in the province, as of late, are based in this coastal city.

Undeniably, handicraft manufacturing industry remains to be the top dollar earner in an industrializing Pangasinan. Based on the provincial Department of Trade and Industries 1997 figures, "there are 202 registered firms in Pangasinan with a total employment size of 4,040. On the average, each firm employs a total of 20 workers mostly on a subcontractual basis... About 63% of the total handicraft industries in Pangasinan are considered cottage industries with a capitalization of P150,000.00 and below while 7% fall under the micro industry level with asset sizes ranging from more than P150,000.00 to P15,000,000.00 and are categorized as small industries" [Pan-

gasinan's... 1997] (This researcher is still awaiting the updated figures, at least as of year 2000)⁷.

With an export-oriented economy, Caboloan's bamboo-based arts and crafts have been remodeled to suit the ever changing tastes and demands of the foreign market. These products find their way directly through the hands of local exporters while reject materials are the ones that trickle down to the local market. These 'rejects' are those which are bought and brought by *viajeros* in their cattle caravans to peddle to local consumers in different towns and barangays as they ply their route down south of Luzon.

Locating the caravans in the context of globalization, it is both ironic and heartwarming to find struggling *viajero* families go on with their age-old trade in spite of severe competition against the advent of plastic wares and the mall culture.

The Cattle Caravan in the Metropolis

In Metro Manila, a number of caravan-*viajeros* situated at the C.P. Garcia Avenue are now stationed at the SM Fairview and scattered along Commonwealth Avenue (particularly beside the Shell Station in front of the Paskong Pasiklab grounds) since the road widening of C-5⁸. According to thirty-six year-old Ubalde 'Aday' de los Santos and his assistant 19 year-old Arnold Payopay of *Barangay Turac* in San Carlos, the metropolis is slowly becoming hostile to their kind.

Aday who has been travelling since he was 15 years of age reports that C.P. Garcia has long been a favorite destination of most *viajeros*. He remembers it as a quiet place perfect for pasturing his cattle beside the grassy UP Stud farm. Nowadays, it has become a congested alternative route by motorists after having it asphalted as extension of

⁷ Pangasinan's Handicraft Industry: Top Dollar Earner // Panangidayew '97. A Project of The Department of Trade and Industry, Don Alipio Fernandez, Sr. Sports Complex, Dagupan City, 24-28 November 1997. As of this writing, "Panangidayew 2000" is ongoing at the Mega Trade, 3rd floor, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong. See also "The Profile of Cottage Industries in the Ilocos," published by the NACIDA, 1977; the "5-Year Accomplishment Report CY 1987-1991" by the DTI, Pangasinan Provincial Office.

⁸ Interview with Ubalde 'Aday' de los Santos and Arnold Payopay in front of SM Fairview, 10 February 2004.

C-5. *Viajeros* use this now as their stopover before continuing their journey down south; their final destinations are Cavite, Laguna, and Batangas. Lately, however, the *viajeros* at the C.P. Garcia are forced to transfer because of two reasons: road officials who find them obstructions to traffic and the loss of greener pastures for their cattle after having the grassy areas paved as part of road widening.

Santi Benitez Tagulao cannot but agree with Adoy. Santi's cart is next to Adoy's. Thirty-one year-old Santi recounts how his distant uncle (whose name he could not remember) would describe the old C.P. Garcia as a rugged terrain with wild shrubs and tall grasses adorning few nipa-thatched houses in the 1960s. Santi is from Barangay Dumpay of Basista.⁹

Adoy and Santi enumerated several places in Metro Manila where cattle caravans used to occupy: Agham Road near Philippine Science High School, a portion of East Avenue near the Medical Center, a grassy area beside the ABS-CBN network in Mother Ignacia, SM Fairview, Marikina, the former Q.I. Bldg. which now houses Philippine Sweepstakes, a Project 4 site, somewhere in New Manila, and of course, C.P. Garcia within UP Diliman Campus. According to the two, it was their practice to exchange locations with other *viajeros* as in a rigodon to let their cattle move around Metro Manila. Nowadays, we see less of the cattle caravans in these enumerated places. The surroundings have been hostile to the *viajeros* and their cattle resulting in the transfer of pasture towards the southern districts like Cavite and Laguna which have become now their final destination. In Metro Manila today, the cattle caravan's stations can be found in Marikina, Commonwealth Avenue, Jordan Plains in Novaliches, and Better Living Subdivision in Parañaque.

Still according to Adoy and Santi, the cattle caravans in Metro Manila will likely dwindle in number if not totally disappear in the next few years because of the unpredictability of the market and the hostilities they receive from the urban population.

Based on Sepe's interview with Mang Pidong from Barangay Basista of San Carlos City in 1990, the earliest travel to Manila from Pangasinan started in the 1950s. There were then about 6 carts

⁹ Interview with Santi Benitez Tagulao in front of SM Fairview, 10 February 2004.

composing a caravan. These were still roofless (or without *tambobong*). The *tambobong* karitons or covered carriages began when journeys were extended for days, and roofs were built for shelter and protection. According to Mang Pidong, the first trip he could remember was in 1954 when the viajeros reached Bulacan from Pangasinan in 3 weeks. In 1962, a permanent station was established in Meycauayan. This enabled the viajeros to station their carts, load and unload their wares through the first 'paktura' system (or the loading of wares through modern transit) via trains in the 60s. With a change in marketing strategy, the viajeros need no longer travel back to Pangasinan to replenish their depleted stocks.

But in the same year, the viajeros moved on to Manila and transferred their post from Meycauayan to the grassy area beside the Pantranco bus station in Quezon City. The mode of the 'paktura' system also changed with the Pantranco bus now loading the viajeros' wares. Sometime in 1965, the viajeros transferred their post to the then grasslands of Ortigas Avenue. Their permanent station here required them to order their wares via trucking. And since this time, viajeros through the years have been using the truck as the mode of transport for their wares through the 'paktura' system. But with the construction of office buildings in Ortigas in 1972 and the eventual reduction of grassy space for their cattle, the caravan broke into small and scattered groups. In 1978, they reestablished themselves as a big group again in Valenzuela. But in 1983, they came back to Manila since the market was here and found a veritable station in what is now the commercial area near the SM North. SM City opened in 1984. The place did not only serve as their permanent station but also as center of operations that eventually became retail outlets for their goods.

According to Mang Pidong, the 1980s was the most financially rewarding decade for the viajeros. During this decade, subdivisions of middleclass homes mushroomed in the metropolis and these middle-income families were the market for their wares. This was also the same period when viajeros ventured into southern destinations such as Laguna, Cavite and Batangas.

This recollection of Mang Pidong in 1990 is corroborated by Ricardo Solar and Mario Banaag of Barangay Turac, San Carlos

City¹⁰. The Solars of Barangay Turac, the Bravos of Barangay Anambongan, and the De Veras of Barangay Gamata have all been considered the patriarch of the caravan culture in their respective barangays. They have lived through what Mang Pidong considers the most prosperous years for the caravan viajeros. Now all retired as viajeros, they have passed on this family tradition either to their sons or to the sons of their village friends. Caravan trading since the 1990s have never been the same. With the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in the 1990s which altered the age-old trade route from Pangasinan to Pampanga, and with the advent of globalization by the turn of the 21st century, caravan trading is now in its lowest season. Its existence today is very much threatened by aggressive urbanization and cosmopolitanism. The caravan in the metropolis is gasping for more space in an environment directed towards citification at a time of local and global uncertainties.

The Heart of Caravan Culture Within Caboloan

Of the several towns within the heart of Caboloan, it is in the city of San Carlos (formerly Binalatongan) where the majority of cattle caravan traders nestles. San Carlos was the biggest town in Pangasinan (which is 6.47% of the total area of the province) which became a city on 1 January 1966 [Guide 1995], only on the basis of land mass and population figures, and not in terms of revenues or industrial potential. As a vast expanse of agricultural lands with a very small *poblacion*, one has to take the trouble of getting into the innermost barrios of San Carlos and its neighboring town of Basista (formerly a barangay of San Carlos) to locate the cattle caravan traders. These barrios are often than not in the middle of rice paddies cradled by the boundless agricultural fields of the interior Caboloan.

Barangay Anambongan, Basista

'Tinong Bravo' is a famed leader of *vijeros* in Barangay Anambongan, Basista. It takes an hour and a half to reach this remote barangay. Tinong Bravo's house is the biggest in the area. It is a two-

¹⁰ Interview with Ricardo Solar and Mario Banaag, October 28, 2004, Barangay Turac, San Carlos City.

storey concrete house with marbled floor, and a cemented front area where a *kuliglig* (motorized vehicle for transporting *palay*) usually is parked. A tv set and a component occupy a visible space in the sala while cavans of palay and other bamboo materials lay unattended in its corners. Faustino 'Tinong' Bravo is considered the leader of the caravan trade and the most successful trader among the Bravos which include his brother Victoriano Bravo and children Jessie and Lourdes who have all been engaged in the caravan trade.

Victoriano Bravo who is now 67 years of age admit that it is his kuya Tinong who rallied his clan to try the cattle-caravan trade. This was in the 1970s when harvests were not so good at a time when stories about rice being imported in the *poblacion* market began circulating. Their first capital was P3,000 with quick returns only after 2 weeks of trade. Still halfway through their journey, their caravans had already been emptied while only in Tarlac so they returned in no time to Pangasinan to buy more goods. Back in the 1970s, they were content to reach Pampanga or Nueva Ecija because the demand for their goods was astonishingly high. But lolo Victoriano boasts for having reached Naga in Bicol, together with Tinong's other men just to check how far they could go. This was a one-time affair however, since the long trip was not worth their cattle's maintenance. The Bravo caravan would usually set forth during the dry months of December to April after the harvest season because most of their clientele belonged to the rural mass. Victoriano ceased transporting goods in early 1990s when the going became rough.

Jessie Bravo, the 28 year-old son of Tinong attempted to carry the family tradition but was dismayed by the slow return of capital. Approximately 6–8 years ago, Jessie released a capital of P15,000 but it took him more than 4–5 months to get it back. Since that time, he opted to stay in the house and help in the farm. According to Jessie, his fellow young *viajeros* nowadays are forced to borrow P20,000 and above worth of capital goods from middlemen whose return may not even be certain at all.

Jessie's 41 year-old sister Lourdes once had a retail outlet in front of SM North EDSA until it was demolished together with other Pangasinan retail handicraft business in early 1990s to give way to a Shopping Mart. Today, Lourdes stays in a squatter area near the

place still receiving intermittent orders from previous *suki*. According to Lourdes, it was the advent of plastic chairs which competed with their *bamboo bangkito* that spelled doom for this kind of business. Victoriano and Jessie emphasized this point by saying that it is the plastic business which is killing the *viajeros*' merchant business resulting to unprecedented losses in the past 12 years.

The Bravos attribute this trade to tradition, i.e. "*abangonan*" or something that they were born into. Victoriano's best recollection points to his grandfather Romulo 'Lolong' Bravo who was originally from *Barangay Dumpay* in this same town of Basista. According to him, it was probably in the 1950s when Romulo 'Lolong' Bravo, the patriarch of the *Bravo caravan family* started plying his wares to other towns. Prior to Lolong's venture trips, the Bravos have no idea who came before Lolong. As far as caravan trading in Barangay Anambongan is concerned, it is only the Bravos and their kins who have been long-time *viajeros*. Lolong's son Evaristo who is father to Victoriano and Tinong only tried a few number of times to join his father in his caravan but remained "*dumaralos*" or a farmer up to the end¹¹.

Barangay Turac, San Carlos

If Barangay Anambongan, Basista is a long and winding rocky path, the innermost sitios of Barangay Turac of San Carlos is a muddy carabao trail difficult to negotiate on a 4-wheeled vehicle. The well-known *viajero* family in this barangay is the Cayabyab-Solar clan. Cayabyab is a big clan in the city of San Carlos of which the maestro Ryan Cayabyab is a part of. The caravan trader's residence in this barangay could be reached through a narrow path where mud is almost knee-deep high in the middle of endless clumps of bamboo and rice paddies.

Kagawad Ricardo Cayabyab Solar and his brother Freddie are the known *viajeros* in this Barangay in the city of San Carlos. Kagawad Ricardo is the elder brother of Freddie who was recognized as the forefather of caravan trading among the Solars. The Cayabyab-Solar compound contains several structures. Freddie's house is just beside

¹¹ Interview with Victoriano Bravo and children Jessie and Lourdes, April 16, 2004, Barangay Anambongan, Basista.

Ricardo's while the rest of the structures are occupied by the other Solars. The 58 year-old Ricardo enthusiastically narrated how he began as a young, independent *viajero* in the 1960s. Only 16 years of age, Ricardo with 3 cattle-drawn kariton took on his first adventure and arrived in Tarlac which became his first base. Later, he would reach Pampanga and Nueva Ecija with his supply of bamboo products such as *bigao* (rice thresher), *anduyan* (crib for babies and hammock for adults), *paypay* (fans) and *bangkitos* (small chair). He was able to experience trading in Manila but left it to his younger relatives to manage sometime in the 1980s.

Ricardo recalls that way back in the 60s, business was good then. He only spent around P45-P100 in his first ventures. With this amount, his kariton was already full-house where goods were easily consumed in less than 2 weeks. Like the Bravos, Ricardo laments that what used to be a booming business is now imperilled by the manufacture of *plastic wares* which is preferred by most Filipino consumers because of its fine features and colorful selections. Recent estimates show that an average capital outlay per *viajero* in the latter part of 1990s is P15-20,000. This huge amount, Ricardo confesses, does not guarantee money back even after 2-3 months of trading. Ricardo stopped plying his route in 1994 together with his brother Freddie. However, the younger Solars — his nephew and other distant relatives continue the tradition, in spite of its very modest returns.

Of the many *viajeros* from the 60s to 90s, it is only the Solar family according to Ricardo who still make that real journey from the heart of Caboloan to metropolitan Manila. Others like Aday, Santi, the Bravos have ceased doing it because of the following reasons: slow return of capital, dangerous roadtrip after the Mt. Pinatubo eruption, the construction of supermarkets and malls in the urban centers from Pangasinan, Tarlac and Pampanga which sell plastic wares, and the hostile environment especially in the metropolis.

Majority of *viajeros* in recent times, resort to the *paktura* system where cattle carts are permanently stationed in Manila and goods are replenished through truck loading from its origin in Pangasinan. The carts now serve as retail outlets for bamboo-based products from interior Caboloan. In this way, the *viajeros* simply await the cargo in Manila without necessarily having to travel back with their cattle and wagons.

The Solars now make this long journey only once a year. Every month of September, the Solar *viajeros* leave Pangasinan and come back by bus during All Soul's Day, after which they go back to Manila after a two-week vacation where they dispatch a truckload of goods to their Manila base. Ricardo is alarmed by the implications of the *paktura* system as a replacement to the traditional caravan journey. Though he has stopped his caravan trade, he assumes responsibility for his younger family members whom he believed inherited his business. For the Solars and the rest of the *viajeros*, the trend of events does not augur well for both business and tradition. This long-time tradition may be lost in the very competitive world of global commerce.

Ricardo Solar who was joined by his brother-in-law Wilfredo Frias and sister-in-law Rebecca Manzon were quick to point to Ricardo's uncle Romulo 'Lolong' Bravo of *Barangay Dumpay* as the forerunner of the caravan trade. Lolong died in 1998. Romulo's half brother (maternal side) Juanito who was father to Ricardo was also a *viajero*. Romulo is the grandfather of Victoriano Bravo of Barangay Anambongan which makes him cousin to Ricardo Solar. Thus, the Bravos of Anambongan in Basista and the Solars of *Turac* in San Carlos belong to one family tree whose common lineage can still be traced to Romulo Bravo of Dumpay in Basista. No wonder why the *viajeros* are always associated with these barangays which is the heart of the caravan culture.

With Romulo Bravo gone, Ricardo Solar serves as the culture bearer among the Solar-Cayabyab clan. As far as his memory can remember, Ricardo notes that even before the 1950s, cattle caravans had been transporting agricultural and bamboo products to other towns. But he could not be certain anymore of names or if they were already plying the famous route to Manila. Beaming with a hint of pride, Ricardo showed his first wagon with the family name etched in black to identify its owner. It is indeed a vintage vehicle of art that has fed several families and that has sustained a rural economy amidst an export-led industrialization program of the government.

Leaving the Solar compound near dusk, one is led to a forest of bamboo after a clearing. Ricardo Cayabyab Solar, the cattle caravan trader served briefly as a police officer and then later became a Kagawad in Barangay Turac of San Carlos City.

Barangay Gamata, San Carlos

The De Vera and the Tagulao clans of Barangay Gamata are also well-known *viajeros* of the kariton. From Barangay Buenglat, a crossroad would lead either to the De Veras to the left or to the Tagulao' village to the right. *Viajeros* in Barangay Gamata are famous for their unusual caravan route which is to the northern Ilocos instead of the usual southern destinations.

Alfredo de Vera is a picture of a jaded veteran *viajero* who has lost interest in the trade and in life after his eldest daughter died of a mysterious disease after arriving from Singapore and Taiwan where she worked as an OCW. Her beautiful pictures decorate their modest living room. Her well-chiselled face, fair skinned *mestiza* features contrasts with the sun-drenched fields of Barangay Gamata. Alfredo's trading days, to him, have all been in vain.

Forty-six year old Alfredo humbly recognized the De Veras as one of the first *viajeros* in Barangay Gamata¹². He mentioned the Tagulaoes as another prominent *viajero* family. But according to him, the De Veras and the Tagulaoes have long ceased operating the caravan trade. Starting in 1977, Alfredo paid P6,000 for a fullhouse cart which returned instantly. Contrary to the information gathered, Alfredo like other de Vera *viajeros* peddled their wares down south. Bataan and Olongapo were their favorite destinations. But after 10 years as *viajero* in 1987, someone lured him to try fishnet business in the Ilocos. A number of his kin joined him but later fled the place after his brother impregnated an Ilukana which angered the entire Iluko village folk.

Alfredo however admitted that *viajeros* tread the uphill Ilukos mountains but not through cattle caravans. Instead, *viajeros* use horsedrawn carts or *caromata* because they believe it's faster but not necessarily stronger than cattle. Horsedrawn carts however have small compartments to accommodate goods and to shelter the *viajero* at night. Alfredo points to Barangays Pangoloan and Quintong where one can find a significant number of horsedrawn caravans.

He attributes his inherited trade to his grandfather Daniel Cayabyab who in the 1940s — 1950s was already transporting agricultural and

¹² Interview with Alfredo de Vera of Barangay Gamata, 19 April 2004.

farm products to nearby towns such as Mangatarem and Labrador. But Alfredo explained that his grandfather's cart had no *tambobong* yet. He believes that it was only around 1967–70 when *tambobongs* were fashioned as roofs to protect the goods and the *viajero* on long journeys. His grandfather Daniel Cayabyab used to sell *belas* (rice), *larac* (coconut oil), *niyog* (coconut) and *asin* (salt) through his *tambobong*-less *kariton*.

Alfredo has heard of the Bravos of Anambongan or the Solars of Turac, but he did not know them personally. Alfredo also cited the town of Basista, Barangays Turac and Dumpay as places where veteran *viajeros* can be located. After almost 13 years after his last trip, Alfredo's family continue to create *obong* or chicken nests which they sell at the *poblacion's palengke*.

Just a few years back, the bamboo handicraft business center had been relocated at the back of Central I Pilot School from the original *palengke* site near the plaza. Several middlemen constructed their own shops at the new site where handicraft products are now concentrated. Like in the old days, Saturday, being the 'araw ng *tienda*', handicraft makers from the barrio still flock to the *poblacion* loading their products, but now on a new site through 'arkilado' jeeps and tricycles. Foremost middleman is Pepe Ferrer who lives just a few blocks away from the plaza.

Nobody from the old residents of the *poblacion* remember Ferrer as member of the community. Some *pueblo* folk consider Pepe Ferrer as a successful entrepreneur from the barrio who is a parvenu in the city. But Ferrer's large commercial trucks which are frequently parked in front of his residence only indicate that he has conquered this agricultural city.

Pepe Ferrer according to the Bravos lend money to *viajeros* for as much as P30,000 with a monthly interest of approximately 10–13% in 1998. (This was the last year the Bravos borrowed money from Ferrer. This researcher set an interview with Ferrer but was always said to be out of town. 'Recent figures' is still being pursued by this researcher as of this writing.) Through the system of '*paktura*', *viajeros* buy bamboo products from Ferrer's shop then load this to his truck which will be unloaded once it reached Manila. This way, the *viajeros* no longer have to bring their cattle and cart back to Pangasinan to

replenish their wares. According to the Bravos, it is Pepe Ferrer who is getting richer in this trade while the *vijeros* can only hope for a windfall.

Alfredo de Vera's *obong* only commands so little from the local marketplace so he depends entirely in his farm for daily sustenance. His aging mother continues to do *obong* however, as it is the only thing she said she knew how to support his son's family. The jaded and lugubrious Alfredo De Vera somehow prefigures the cattle caravan as an outdated and forlorn vehicle of trade at a time when the global market demands OCWs (as in his daughter who died as a domestic helper) rather than actual goods and products. Like the house and the looks of Alfredo, the cattle caravan has indeed seen better days.

Barangay Pangoloan, San Carlos

Barangay Pangoloan is an adjacent barangay after Gamata, and is said to be the home of the famous *tambobong* maker, Macario 'Ariong' Ramos. Ramos lives alone with his wife in a rather spacious house near the barangay high school. With a colored TV set and a mini component (status symbols in most homes in the barrios), a revolving ceiling fan with lamp and 2 sets of electric fan, the Ramos couple seems to be living comfortably. The septuagenarian Ramos couple even look younger than their age. Ariong credits their relatively well-off life to his children working in the city who periodically send him money.

Curious why the caravans' *tambobong* all look the same, Ariong believed it was a tradition and commerce handed down either through friends and families or through paid learning sessions by a master weaver. The latter one was how Ariong became the next master weaver in the area. According to Ariong, someone from Barangay Gamata invited him to a training session of sorts on how to make a *tambobong*¹³. This was in the 1950s when there were still a number of *tambobong makers* in Gamata. Two decades later, Ariong survived them all and had become the only *tambobong maker* in the place. The De Veras all went to him in the 70s for their *tambobongs*. Ariong remembers the

¹³ Interview with Macario 'Ariong' Ramos and wife 'Esting' of Barangay Pangoloan, 19 April 2004.

measly P2 a day payment for his artwork. The craft could be completed in a week's time with 2–3 co-workers. He charged P5 a day in the 1970s and when he stopped making *tambobongs* in the 90s, he was already charging P200 a day. Since '*pakyaw*' or orders became rare, he retired himself from making *tambobongs*.

Ariong has never heard of a Tony Ferrer who is the renowned *tambobong* maker in Anambongan. He believes however that the basic design of the *tambobong* could have originated from Dumpay, Turac and its contiguous barangays whom he considers as the heart of caravan culture. Ariong admits that his Barangay Pangoloan was more into the *caromata* trade rather than the *cattle caravans* with the signature *tambobongs*.

Ariong relates how his son-in-law from Barangay Gamata attempted to try the cattle caravan trade during the early 1990s. Borrowing money from a middleman, Ariong's son-in-law became indebted to him and was forced to sell the kariton to someone from Barangay Palaming for the amount of P1,500. The 10% interest according to Ariong burdened his son-in-law who went back to farming after a dismal attempt at caravan trading.

Ariong's signature *tambobong* went beyond the aesthetic value of the 'kariton' as a vehicle of art for it was primarily a roof and a shelter for the *viajeros* day and night under a moonlit sky or in a raging storm.

Under the Yoke: Travails of a Travelling Life

There are basically two stories about the life of a *viajero* within crossroads at the market capital of the Philippines. The younger generation through Adoy de los Santos, Arnold Payopay, Santi Tagulao and Jessie Bravo have experienced hostilities in Metro Manila either through '*pangongotong*' by the police or by rude street gangsters. For the earlier batch of *viajeros* such as Victoriano Bravo, Ricardo Solar and Alfredo de Vera, they were generally received warmly by people from the city. The elder *viajeros* perceive Manila not only where lucrative trade beckons but as a place full of grandeur and wonder. They all marvel at the skyscrapers, movie houses and other infrastructure as something that is synonymous to progress or development. For the younger crop, they are here because of the pragmatics of doing business in a capital city. While they momentarily enjoy

watching movies or stroll inside a mall, which happens rarely, they seem indifferent to the enticements of visual advertising or of the urban setting.

When the squatters area at East Avenue (where families of *viajeros* were ensconced) was burned in 1997, *viajeros* felt greater hostility and a sense of alienation from city dwellers. This increased the number of *viajeros* going farther south such as in Cavite, Laguna and Batangas as their alternative destination. Few years earlier, the caravan traders stationed beside SM North Edsa were displaced by a commercial enterprise which sought to compete with the giant SM. Again, after the great fire in 1997, the cattle caravan situated at Quezon Boulevard were ordered to relocate to avoid traffic in that busy area. And recently, *viajeros* in the C.P. Garcia and Commonwealth Avenues were apprehended for illegal parking and obstruction to traffic on national roads. These events affected the morale of many *viajeros* although some were able to doggedly transplant themselves to other more hospitable places.

Jessie Bravo also experienced being robbed 4 cattle while in Cavite. This dampened his spirits and never recovered after that. Ironically, his uncle Victoriano however had fond memories of Cavite and La Pacita in Laguna where according to him, he was chased by women. He could not recall anyone who had taken advantage of his caravan back in those years.

But the common problem all *viajeros* face is '*iliw*' or separation anxiety from their loved ones. Ricardo Solar said he couldn't manage to be away from his family more than a month. Adoy and Santi would rather not talk about '*iliw*' to avoid the pain since they both have babies left at home. Though most *viajeros* interviewed attest to the presence of many beautiful women in the metropolis as likely temptation, it has not in any way diminish their relations with their provincial wives.

Life in the city for these *viajeros* is spent in '*tongtongan*' or small talk among themselves which serve as their socialization in a foreign territory. While all *viajeros* interviewed are Roman Catholics, they are not regular churchgoers. The reason is that even in the province, seldom would they be able to attend Sunday mass since the travel to the *poblacion* church from their barangays already requires money,

time and effort. The only time they go to church is when they attend weddings, baptisms, and funerals.

There is a consensus among all the *viajeros* interviewed that what constitutes a good Catholic is when he does not take advantage of another, as in trading. Life must not be lived as '*makilot*' or dirty (read: shrewd) because honesty is the highest Catholic virtue. According to them, though they are poor folk, they know how to live honestly. Family is also their top priority. They say they opt to become *viajeros* not necessarily to see the world but because they want to provide for their families. Thus, they speak of '*iliw*' as the greatest compromise of their semi-nomadic life as traders. Although, what influenced them to become *viajeros* are their elder *viajero* relatives who lured them into this enterprise. For most, its '*tawir*', or an inherited business from forebears.

Generally, caravan *viajeros* have been receptive of Tagalog and its accompanying culture. They show no aversion to the Tagalization of most schools in the province where schoolchildren are penalized in speaking vernacular instead of Tagalog or English. But in spite of this openness to Tagalog or Manila culture, the *viajeros* still look at themselves at the margins of the Tagalog community in Metro Manila. For them, it is enough that they get respect from Tagalog city-dwellers as poor folk from the province. *Viajero*'s relatives (usually the women) who put up small retail outlets in the metropolis are the ones easily assimilated than the male *viajeros*. This assimilationist tendency of Pangasinan women into the fabric of Manila life is interesting as it may be informative of something that is perhaps, gender-related in the paper of ethnicity, trade and migration. One reason maybe is the fact that it is the Pangasinan women as retail mainstays in the city who encounter the Tagalog-speaking clientele on an everyday and regular basis while the male *viajeros* still manage to go home for several months.

In spite of the unprofitability and dangers accompanying the caravan trade, younger *viajeros* seem to be resigned to the fact that prospects of money can only be pursued in the big city. Elder *viajeros* could only reminisce of the time when caravan trading was at its peak in the 70s up to late 80s. Tinong Bravo's marbled-floor house for instance is a reminder of that era. Admirably, all the *viajeros* inter-

viewed never complained of the discomforts of travelling under a *tambobong* which shelters them from rain, storms and cold. Except for *'iliw'* or separation anxiety, *viajeros* are inured to the travails of the travelling life.

Connecting Culture and Commerce by Cartwheel

The Philippines is said to be a 'bamboo country' because of its swampy coasts and rivers. Historian Isagani Medina lists several place-names which pay tribute to the bamboo such as Meycauayan in Bulacan, Pasong Kawayan in General Trias, Cavite, Cauayan in Negros Occidental and Caoayan in Ilocos Sur [Medina 1977: 545]. To add to this list is Caboloan of the interior plains of Pangasinan. While the bamboo industry is spread out in different parts of the archipelago, it is only in Caboloan where the tradition of transporting bamboo-based products through the cattle caravan persists up to this day and age.

Tourism takes delight in this seemingly quaint, exotic, museum piece of cattle caravans parading at the outskirts of Manila which are occasionally used to attract foreign tourists. The Tourism office however fails to look at the caravan beyond its cultural significance.

In Pangasinan alone, handicraft industry is boasted as the top dollar earner. Ironically, the industry does not translate to the upliftment of small handicraft family businesses, more so, the mercantile needs of *viajeros* of the cattle caravan. It is the class of middlemen and big-time exporters who benefit from its economic advantages, citing Pepe Ferrer's phenomenal success. *Viajeros* and handicraft makers alike succumb to loans with interests which middlemen force on them. In the end, they become indebted for life.

The cattle caravan is merely a recipient of reject products which did not pass the export standard NACIDA has established during Marcos time. Today, young, aggressive and mostly Chinese entrepreneurs are the ones which replaced the NACIDA, as exporters of bamboo-based products. The rejects from this exporting companies are the ones which trickle down the local market including those peddled by the caravan traders. The debilitating effect of the plastic wares' competition against the bamboo in recent times heightens the already disadvantaged position of small merchant traders.

How will globalization affect the **cattle caravans of Ancient Caboloan**? Will the world economic system submerge it by its gigantic tentacles from first world capitalists? Will it be obscured by dominant cultures? Or will its recuperative nomenclature '*glocalization*' recognize the distinctiveness of its existence? Locating the caravans of Caboloan in the context of globalization, this researcher finds the persistence of feudal culture in an age of robust commercialization and industrialization.

Ricardo Solar's nephews and relatives continue the age-old tradition of adventure in spite of its minimal returns. Since it is '*tawir*' or inherited, for the Solars, it is the only business thing they know. Though there is only a hint of a little art/cultural appreciation on their part, they all recognize its economic importance because the Solar caravan has fed their families through the years and has sustained them in times of crisis. Perhaps, this recognition can explain why *viajeros* remain loyal to their roots in spite of the lure of enterprise and cosmopolitan living in Manila, it being the market and cultural capital of the Philippines. But the question still remains, is the long and winding caravan route the road to progress? Or is their return trip by truck indicative of marginality and alienation?

Whether the cattle caravans of Ancient Caboloan signifies an underdeveloped economy, it is nevertheless a cartwheel that connects history, culture and commerce for the Filipinos.

The Last Actual Journey from the Heart of Caboloan to Metro Manila

With the '*paktura*' system as a more efficient, practical and convenient means to load bamboo-based products and wares to the stationed carts in Manila, real journey from Pangasinan has been supplanted and considered dated. The ubiquitous cattle caravan that we see in the metropolis are rolling stores that go around their favorite grassy spots from Marikina, Commonwealth Avenue to Jordan Plains in Novaliches. The *viajeros* could no longer afford to go on an actual journey using their cattle from their place of origin in Pangasinan to the metropolis.

First, there is a significant reduction of buyers from the old towns and municipalities which they used to roam from the province of

Pangasinan to Pampanga. The old folk who used to patronize the 'bangkito' now prefer colorful plastic chairs which are sold at the very enticing provincial malls.

Second, since the trade has been most attractive to foreign tourists, the caravan traders ceased to become viajeros and have thus become merely vendors in the metropolis. The bestselling products nowadays are the lounging chair made of rattan using colorful plastic tapestries and the cloth hammock for newly born babies. These items have evolved from purely bamboo based products to the use of plastic and cloth materials which are the preferences of modern day buyers.

And third, the age-old route has been altered by the Mt. Pinatubo eruption making it a laharscape difficult and longer to traverse. It is the viajeros' cattle which suffer the brunt of a long winding and punishing road. The past decade changed not only the tastes of a cosmopolitanizing Filipino but also the attitude towards the viajeros living a gypsy way of life. While the old folk of yesteryears were very hospitable as to offer them water for drinking and cooking, the viajeros today had to buy their own water by gallons. No viajero today would risk his cattle and his life on the road under the conditions of lahar, inhospitable folk and hostile environment.

For Adoy de los Santos and his group, the last actual journey was in 1995. Santi Tagulao and his group in 1992. For old patriarchs and leaders of the band Solar, Bravo and De Vera, in the late 80s. No one dared to venture the old traditional way during the turn of the 21st century except for Mario Banaag who wanted to make a name in history as the last viajero to go on the long arduous journey from Barangay Turac, San Carlos City of Pangasinan to Metro Manila. His real journey started on November 15, 2004.

Mario Banaag, 43 years old is the assistant of patriarch viajero Ricardo Solar of Barangay Turac in San Carlos City. He was very active on the road until the 1990s. He stopped joining the caravan in the early 90s and became a tricycle driver. He would intermittently be part of the caravan again in the late 90s. He never thought he'd make this historical journey alone with only his son Michael, 15 years old, as his companion, and of course, his trusted bull 'Junior'. The story of his journey is a story of the Philippines grappling with the effects of globalization and its consequent import on issues affecting ethnicity,

identity, and the survival of a nation. Mario Banaag's story is also the story of all of us who take risks on the road, venturing into dangerous zones, looking for destinations where adventures have no beginning and ending in a perpetual journey that is life...

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