

A Report on the Communal farm of Catigbian

A visit to the Palaymanan Farmer-Partners Association

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I have gotten back from a six-hour excursion last March 17th. I wanted to check if the reports from a Facebook post about the existence of a communal farm was true—this was in fact true. But in order to get to where we are right now and to summarize the longest road trip I had so far, we need to get back to where it all began. Let us start with the basics and work from there.

First, let's talk a bit about Catigbian. It is a 4th class municipality in the province of Bohol, Philippines. It is an interior town north of Balilihan, south of Sagbayan and Tubigon, east of San Isidro and west of Batuan.

Formerly known as San Jacinto, it changed its name to a certain group of seed-bearing plants named "Katigbi" (*Coix lacrymajobi*), which grow abundantly. The town was founded in 1829 as one of the villages where rebels resettled after the Dagohoy Rebellion had been suppressed. This is where we could assume the legacy of that Rebellion could be quite felt and seen.

When I went there, the communal farm of the Palaymanan Farmer-Partners Association was quite successful in terms of agricultural resources. The land was abundant. As summer came along, the sacks were almost overflowing in one of the farmers' fields. Even without any official sort of communal farming, the Katigbawanon practice a form of Collectivist Georgeism wherein individual plots—even though connected—are their own. The difference being their split in profits, which is the collectivist aspect. Due to this even system of sharing, the town shares as well in the abundance. Their transparency and good governance rates has helped the farmers in projects with the local Department of Agriculture (DA).

The main problems addressing the town today are the recent El Niño and the Rice Liberalization law. While I was there the rivers that had usually overflowed now were only flowing in select creeks, or if you were a *haciendero* in the nearby town of Balilihan, literally flowing through a dike in front of their house. Another problem is the Rice Liberalization law as a response to poor harvests in 2018. The law's effects can be seen in the mounds of rice that riddled throughout the area as well as some patches where vegetables were rotting in the street. These patches were smaller in comparison to 2018 however.

These two combined were the conditions that set the stage for the interview. I would give a full transcript eventually in a blog post, but here is the gist for now:

The organization today called the Palaymanan Farmer-Partners Association was organized on November 8, 2018. This was during the rice shortage due to some unforeseen NFA consequences that left the Marcoses nervous. For those who do not know, the entire KBL (Marcos' Party) platform was how they improved agriculture through the methods Marcos implemented and new agencies like the NFA that his father is said to have created. If this is one of their bets, they are playing on a weak chance. In the wake of this, Palaymanan was born. Today, they host around 44 farmers who collectivized mostly on vegetables however are now expanding into the rice market. They help each other on a collectivized patch of land containing the vegetables but the rice is on individual plots. The man I have talked to, a certain Ramil, has a half-hectare or 5000 square meters. He could produce 50 sacks a cropping with 36kg in each bag. His is not the biggest one however. In terms of their vegetable farm, they can produce 280kg of fruit per croppings. The fruits produced on the communal plot are eggplant, string beans, squash, lady fingers (okra) and oyster mushrooms.

They are frequently aided by the DA for several reasons. This included screwing the farmers over with the government's Rice Liberalization Law, which was a response to inflation brought about predominantly by TRAIN, which was also their fault. The Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Act, officially called as Republic Act No. 10963, is the initial package of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program (CTRP) signed into law by Duterte on December 19, three years ago. The inflation rate in June the next year—which exceeded both government and market expectations—was the fastest pace in at least five years due to this. Year-to-date, inflation averaged 4.3 percent, above the BSP's 2–4 percent target range, said by an Article by Ian Nicolas Cigaral. Government data says further, "It peaked at 5.2 percent for the same month. For the previous months, inflation was pegged at 4.6 percent and in the same period in 2017, 2.5 percent."

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia claims that the inflation will most likely peak on the third quarter of the year and start tapering off by October. They are being aided heavily especially in these trying times. They registered for government aid in a program known as the Agricultural Competitive Enhancement Fund (ACEF). They signed a form and a letter of intent with the proposal discussed in the 2021 budget. The point of the fund is to advance the technological capacity of the agriculture of both the agricultural capabilities of the country in general and the Association in particular, as compensation for the Rice Liberalization Law and the effects of TRAIN. The program is said to provide a floating tiller, a rice transplanter, a combined harvester, a mechanical dryer, and a mobile rice mill, but I doubt if it will be provided.

Analyzing from what they asked for from the government, they are bound to get some aid to actually industrialize this communal project, however small as of the moment. The machines are going to be useful once they can actually gain enough rice fields for the usage of such works. Depending on if the government can actually give these, especially that most of the money is going to be allocated for the COVID-19 response, I don't see it likely. The budget allocation probably would not happen by the planned 2021, since recently the country had asked for an IMF loan which would cripple our nation once more as it did before.

In an Anarchist lens, the thing that would strike one the most is the lack of any hierarchy in how they organized. There is a form of horizontal hierarchy as the members slowly grow in number. However as for now, it's a workable form. They do not have a *hacendero* nor are they indentured rather, they pulled their own weights. Their decisions are made in monthly meetings where policy and action are decided. This method of organization is leaning towards a more independent form of Syndicalism. Although many people could say that such methods of organi-

zation is reformist and heavily reliant on state powers. I would agree at some point, but however you put it. In order to sustain the communal farms within the province as well as other provinces would require that the state handing over increased powers to bureaucrats and eventually the working class in general through a gradual revolution. On the other hand, disappointing a good few can muster up support for the creation of cells and groups that are sympathetic to local causes that in turn lead to the inevitable socialist revolution. I want to know what you would think of this however.

In conclusion, it is ironic to see government helping out in potentially Anarchist projects although it is one theme that I can trust be found everywhere I go. Before I left, I gave them the pamphlet *To Change Everything* in Bisaya as a token of peace. It is also worth noting that these farms are growing as a way of life throughout Bohol. When on the trip, most of the businesses were actually cooperatives or subsidiaries to them for raw materials. It felt like, just for a time being, that the world had to adjust to a small island for it to progress. Where the world fails, the next generation steps in.

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