



JUDY CAMPUS Hired Labor



Judy is part of a four-man team working along the Road 25 area, locally referred to as *hornal* or *limpiesa* (labor for hire). This hornal team is called in to do *lampas* (area clearing) and *tumbada* (grass cutting) before the *falcatta* trees are cut. Judy's team also does levels of post-cutting maintenance. His team prefers to work under a *pakyaw* system and not on a daily system. His team can do a tumbada in one hectare within two days, earning PhP1,500, which they will split amongst the four of them.

Another clearing method that applies to open access areas is the *lampas-tumbada-sunog tanim* (burn-plant) system. But they do not do much of this kind of work.

Judy and his team are well-known in the area and they are the first team to come and work in an area once a transaction for cutting is done. They are under the payroll of the Assistant CENRO (Community Environment and Natural Resource Officer of the DENR) who also has a large *falcatta* plantation. This Assistant CENRO is a son of a former mayor who was able to obtain 100 hectares of land for a pack of cigarettes.

When they are not "hired," they all go back their farms. Judy is in his 30s and still *ulitao* (single), with no family and children to feed; he

has a younger sister in a nearby barangay he cares for, but not many expenses. His colleagues are married in the area and are hungry for work within easy reach.

Judy appreciates the *lauan* that can still be found and knows the cooling effect that forests give, “*landong, pero kung wala ng lauan, walay kaboy, init.*” (It’s shady and cool, but when the lauan is gone, the trees are gone, it’s hot.) They ensure that the *lauan* is not touched, along with other important trees such as *apitong*, *narra*, and *indang*.

There are some *gmelinas*, but only a few people are interested in planting *gmelina* as there are no buyers. It’s very cheap. There are some *mangium* (*Acacia mangium*), but Judy understands that this is PICOP’s, so nobody plants *mangium*. *Mangium* is heavy to haul and load, and is cheap too; only PICOP buys. Rarely can they find buyers outside of PICOP. There is one buyer from Davao, but he prefers to buy the big ones, as he cannot export the small *mangium*.

In this sense, *falcatta* is better than *mangium* and there are many buyers of *falcatta*. *Falcatta* is easy and fast to grow, does not damage the soil, is lightweight and easy to carry and load.

There is also *lumbia* (sago palm), which is used locally as walls for housing. It is a good material, which is not sold. If there is an emergency or crisis during the rainy season, then they cut the *lumbia*, open the trunk, and get some food.

The *lauan* that’s sold comes from the higher areas where there are still forests. Ten-wheeler trucks go in and come out of these forests regularly. These trucks are called *sadam* locally (attributed to the late Saddam Hussein), as they came from Iraq.

If these roads are on steep areas, the drivers put rocks and wood in the deeply-rutted part of the roads to allow the trucks to pass



through. “*Ang driver nay fighting spirit, didto lusot basta kwarta.*” (With the driver’s fighting spirit, and as long as there’s money, the drivers will make sure their trucks will make it.) And this should be done without the logs falling, as there is no money when logs fall off.

When asked if there are many people involved in the operation, Judy says he does not know. But the military does not catch the trucks, who come in during the night. He does not know much about the forest areas where the sadam come in and leave, he only knows the area he works in and sees the tire tracks in the morning.

The lauan around him will soon grow and he will probably cut these as well. He confirmed that lauan grows larger in the higher areas, but actually does not select a specific area to grow. It can grow on both flat and steep areas, but not in water or on rocks. *Yakal* can grow on rocky areas. Both *yakal* and *tangile* are found in the area.

Judy knows that the forests in this area (Kabantaw) and in Latay are still big, and he wants to ask some questions. “The Lumad are good people. But why is it that those who own the land and have a chance to make some money out of the land, have no rights to cut, unlike those doing illegal logging. If I get the wood myself, I will be arrested, while the illegal loggers get away free? Then perhaps it is better to sell to the illegal loggers so that I will not be arrested. If I sell the wood I cut, I will be arrested, but if I sell to illegal loggers, I will get away free.”

As the plantation cycle continues to be irregular labor is needed; meanwhile, almost silently, the forests are dwindling.





LITO ARESA

Migrant

Last year, Sitio Road 25 where Lito Aresa and his family are now settled, had a single house. Now, there are nine houses. Lito is a Manobo, but distinct from the Manobo from the forest who are called Banwaon. His mother is from Cebu, while his father is from Cantilan, Surigao del Sur.

He moved last April to Barangay Marfil, coming from another village, Bayugan, and bought his house from a woman named Lydia for Php3,000. His father bought the one-hectare farmland for Php7,500 (without title), went back to Bayugan, and asked Lito to tend the farm. The farmland had no crops, but there are some falcatta growing there and it is near the road. It is also near enough for a buffalo to haul wood. Lito says it is really important that one's area is near the road.

His main sources of livelihood here are rattan collecting, farming, and the seasonal hauling of cut wood.

Wood Hauling

Sometimes trucks come in, collecting both cut wood and roundwood. Lito's earnings do not come from hauling cut lauan, but only the smaller cut wood. He is not strong enough to carry the larger logs. He only learned to do hauling when he came over



to Marfil. In his place in Bayugan Uno, he was just farming. Hauling gives him around PhP25 per haul. To fill up a 10-wheeler, he has to make around three trips. If people cannot do it anymore, the buffalo takes over.

He hauls the wood up to where the truck is, unloads, then brings another load onto the truck until it is full. This gives only around PhP1,000 and it is cheap. The buyers do not bring their own haulers anymore, as this has to be done fast. For a single truck, it takes around 10 to 12 haulers. At the end of the day, they split the earnings and each of the haulers gets around PhP100-105 each. It is difficult, heavy work. Free meals are provided, with some *ginamos* (fermented shrimps in salt) and *tinapa* (smoked fish). Lito says the ginamos are good for them as they give them strength in hauling.

Falcatta hauling is better, as each transaction is worth PhP15,000, but this is because these are big logs. One can earn well, but the problem is the length of time as the hauling goes on until early morning.

He earns PhP1 per board foot when he hauls straight from the cut tree to the loading point. A day's haul can give him PhP200+. This is alright as long as he has the strength to carry, otherwise the buffalo takes over. Sometimes somebody comes over to get some yakal, but yakal can only be taken very far from the area. Lauan is more commonly taken out of the forest.

One cannot hear the chainsaw from Lito's place, as the work is done farther away. Last week, Lito said some wood was taken out during the night and a dump truck was used, not the usual *sadam* (a 10-wheeler). It was a white and green truck; Lito says it was Alvin's wood (a known logging operator).

Rattan collecting

If there is no hauling, they always have rattan, and as Lito puts it "*Kining uway, mo na ning forever sa ila.*" Lito only learned to do rattan collecting





when he settled in Sitio 25 last April. There are ready buyers for rattan where it is delivered. He binds 15-100 strips and bundles them, and this is worth PhP40 already. He deducts PhP2 for transportation when the rattan is delivered, leaving him with PhP38 net.

Lito says he can do around 20 bundles in a week. The others can do better, their rattan is older and they are the more traditional Lumad, because their mothers and fathers are both Lumad.

The big rattans are disappearing, and they are only collecting the smaller shoots. To get to the bigger ones, they walk five kilometers. It takes about a day, leaving in the morning and returning late afternoon. Lito can only carry a bundle worth about PhP50, and he is not strong enough to carry anything heavier than that. The stronger ones can carry rattan worth PhP200-250 pesos. If he can grow bigger, perhaps he can carry more.

Farming

On Lito's hectare of land, he is planting some sweet potato, as there is a buyer. But he is clearing the whole hectare so he can plant other crops, such as bananas, coconut, and cassava. It is difficult as he is just starting, so they cannot be eaten yet. He does a lot of these things, because if he does not and just continues working but having nothing to eat, his family will not survive. "*Pamugas, kay kung di ko mamugas, unya sige ra ko ug trabaho, wa man koy makaon, di sari sari na lang ug trabaho, babala ug unsa diha, basta mamugas lang.*"

There is a little area of forest and a small river. Lito learned that the previous owner of the place was able to hunt a wild pig, and they were invited over. He was scared to go, as he thought he would end up roasted like a pig due to the owner's use of firearms. Apparently, the previous owner used a long-barreled gun to hunt the wild pig. No people were harmed and the pig was shot dead. Sometimes there are hornbills to eat, as they taste like chicken; his own chickens have little flesh.

They get fish from the river where there is a deep pond caused by the construction of the old logging road. Sometimes they get some big carp. The fish are able to grow larger because they are left alone, as the people there really do not know how to fish. His family finds it good to eat fish, as it is fresh. It would be easier to fish if they had a net.

Lito's comparison of his life in Bayugan Uno and now in Marfil

He went to Sitio 25 in Marfil because life is harder in Bayugan Uno, closer to the town. Farming is difficult where he came from. "You see your ricefield while it's growing, and when the truck comes, your harvest disappears. I harvest more than 100 sacks, and when the truck comes, everything is loaded because of the debts I owe. My fertilizer costs are huge and I buy it through financing. So I don't have any earnings at the end."

It was a good farming area, as there was irrigation. But comparing his life here with Bayugan, his Bayugan farm gave them rice to eat daily, while here they eat corn. "But in Bayugan, I was out under the sun every day, and my hands were so worn out from the cramps."

It also seems better now in this place as they have no debts. "If I have something to sell, I have cash. If I have nothing to sell, I have no money, but also no debt." There is nobody in the area providing loans. With some bananas, he can get a loan from the barrio and the loans are approved if he has a guarantor. "When we were newcomers, nobody wanted to give us loans, because nobody knew us yet. Nobody trusted us then." So they work with a cash system, generated from the small rattan sales and the small investment from the farm.

So, Lito says that while farming is more complex, life is a bit better as long as one is not lazy. "It is a life and livelihood that are difficult but what can we do? We really have to sacrifice, there's no other way." (*Mao ning hanapbuhay na pirting lisura unta pero unsaon man naa naman ta ning lugara, antuson nalang wa namay lain.*)



The Aresas farm and hunt for food when rattan is scarce

“People depend on rattan, but nobody’s planting. So if there’s no more rattan, there’s only farming left. That’s why you need your farm, so that even if the rattan is gone, you can still go back to farming.”



His children are in school in Marfil, about four kilometers from their sitio. There are no other schools.

Lito and the forests around him

“The forests are still large. I don’t trust myself to go in, as I might get lost. The military came in the other week and they went inside the forest, hacking their way through to be able to go in.

“There is still falcatta there. And there’s rattan everywhere, so that’s still a main source of livelihood. Large areas are gone, but if you go deeper into the forest, one can still find the big rattan, but you have to look. People depend on this rattan, but nobody’s planting. So if there’s no more rattan, there’s only farming left. That’s why you need your farm, so that even if the rattan is gone, you can still go back to farming.”

Daily, the different turns in life are absorbed, but there is no plan that can help to get out of the present situation, there is no basis to collectively move, and all resources are used to meet the daily food requirements.

