SOME NOTES ON HOUSE STYLES IN A KANKANAI VILLAGE[1]

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In a recent paper dealing with the Mt. Province, William H. Scott classifies the various dwellings in the region into two broad categories of architectural styles.[2] The first of these is what he calls the "northern strain" which is found in the subprovinces of Kalinga and Apayao and of which the typical examples are the Kalinga *kulob*, the Isneg dwelling, and the Kalinga wooden octagonal house. The second one, called the "southern strain," is observed among the Ifugao, Bontok, and Benguet (Kankanai-Nabaloi) peoples and the best examples are the small *abong* of the Kankanai and Bontok and the *bale* or *alang* structures of the Ifugaos. These house styles are known to have a more or less well defined distribution to warrant the classification made in terms of geographical divisions and they differ chiefly in form as well as in manner of construction. Contrasted on the basis of form, the northern type of houses tend to be uniformly rectangular or octagonal in shape with roofs which are arched in Gothic form while the southern strain have a square floor-plan with pyramidal or conical roofs. Compared, further, on the basis of the manner of their construction, the southern type is built in such a way that the roof is supported by walls which in turn are supported by short wooden piles, a technique which differs radically from the northern strain that has its roofs supported by posts completely separate from those which raise the floor so that, as Scott has clearly pointed out, one can have the floor with all its underpinning removed and still have the roof standing with its posts. There are, of course, variations in these techniques and forms; indeed, one may even find some combinations of them in certain parts of the region.

The brief discussion that follows will attempt to give additional data on house types as they have been observed in a small Kankanai village. The native house styles in this village belong to

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[2] W. H. Scott 1962: 186-220.

the southern strain indicated above, but, as will be shown, they also differ in certain features from those of the Ifugaos and nearby regions due to modifications made involving techniques probably adopted from other ethnic groups.

The village under consideration is the settlement of Bakun, located in the central Kankanai area and one of the municipalities of Benguet subprovince. It has a population of about 800 individuals by the latest census and comprises about a hundred households clustered in six sitios or hamlets. The settlement is geographically isolated from the outside world by a series of mountain ranges, for which reason it is accessible only through narrow foot trails which were yet built during the Spanish times. Inspite of these geographical barriers, however, the village of Bakun has never been isolated completely culturally for it has always had occasional contacts with outside cultures through missionaries, traders, teachers, and government officials who used to make visits into the region. Furthermore, relations with neighboring areas has always been maintained due to the presence in such places of kinsmen who would invite their Bakun relatives during important festive events, and during the pre-war period, some natives would oftentimes descend to nearby coastal towns to trade for salt, sugar, and other necessities which they cannot produce in their own village. In recent years, with the construction of a road which extends to Ampusungan, an eastern barrio of Bakun, it has become easier for many of Bakun's inhabitants to travel to such urban centers as Baguio City or the capital town of Bontok. There are today several individuals who visit such places three or more times a year.

House Types

The dwellings in Bakun village may also be divided into two architectural strains, namely, the traditional and the new styles of houses. The first group comprises three types, namely, the *binangiyan, apá* (or *inapá*) and *allao,* and they are believed to have been brought here by the first settlers whose origin, according to old informants, can be traced to certain villages located in the Lepanto district (the villages of Leseb and Pingad near Bauko are mentioned). The *binangiyan* structure particularly was known to have come from Lepanto for it is told that when they were built before the war carpenters from that place were hired to construct them.[3] There used to be more than fifty houses of the *binan-*

[3] Barrows (1902) noted the existence of this house type when he visited the Amburayan region.

giyan type in the settlement but a fire which took place during the later phases of the war destroyed most of them leaving only fifteen houses today. On the other hand, the new house styles were built in Bakun only in 1945 and thereafter. The first to be constructed was the *inalteb* which is reported to have been originated in the Nabaloi-speaking town of Kapangan in southern Benguet (see map). This was later followed with the introduction of the modern bungalow type similar to those constructed in the Christian lowlands. It is believed that the bungalow style was copied from houses found in Sinipsip, a settlement along the Bontok-Baguio mountain trail, whose occupants have probably copied it in turn from houses found in Baguio or, less likely, in the lowlands.[4] Later constructions of the *inalteb* attempted to accommodate certain features of the modern styles giving rise to a "mixed type", which constitutes the third style of the new Bakun architectural strain.

In passing, it is interesting to note that in the southernmost Kankanai town of Kibungan along the Kankanai-Nabaloi linguistic boundary (see map), the *inalteb* style of house was not introduced thereby indicating that it was by-passed in the diffusion of the dwelling to Bakun. The explanation given by informants from that area is that in Kibungan the traditional houses, which are mostly of the *binangiyan* type, were not destroyed so that there was no occasion for the acceptance of the *inalteb* style even though they were aware of its existence. Clearly, we have in Bakun a case of what Herskovits has described as "historic accident," an important aspect of cultural change.[5]

The Traditional House Types. Aside from minor differences in detail, the *binangiyan* is similar fundamentally to the Ifugao *bale* or, more specifically, to the *alang,* which Scott takes as the most representative and probably the oldest type of the compact dwellings under the southern strain of Mt. Province architecture. The main part of the structure is a one room box-like compartment raised from the ground by four or sometimes more wooden posts about five feet high. The roof, which is mortised to the four corners of the upper walls of the house, is high, pointed, and pyramidal in shape. The eaves hang low having been so constructed as to extend downwards to about four feet from the ground. The four walls, which are made of hard wood and rabbeted into a transverse beam at chest high, slant outwards toward the upper

[4] This house type, while undoubtedly foreign to the Mt. Province, appears to be specially built to meet the conditions obtaining in the area.
[5] M. J. Herskovits 1952: 588-594.

ends. Viewed from a distance, the roof appears so low indeed that it totally covers the whole main part of the house giving the appearance of an Indian tent. On one side of the room a narrow passageway with a sliding door is provided but there are no other openings such as windows or additional entrances such as those mentioned for the Ifugao *bale*. Another difference from the latter type may be found in the provision of a small window-like crevice or opening on a side of the roof just above the entrance to the room apparently intended to allow for the escape of smoke that accumulate inside the house and to enable fresh air to enter. To gain access into the dwelling's single compartment, a long and slender bamboo stair is placed snugly at the entrance but this stair is detachable and is usually secured crosswise against the closed door when the occupants are out working in the fields. Descriptions given for the Ifugao *bale* indicate that it is rendered inaccessible to rats and other climbing animals through the improvisation of cylindrical wooden discs called *halipan* which are constructed toward the upper portion of the house posts. This device is absent in the *binangiyan* of Bakun; however, the owners claim that their dwelling is equally protected from rodents by constructing the posts in such a way that it meets the base of the raised compartment at about a foot from the edges. As built, the posts of the house support two transverse girders which in turn support three floor joists into which the floor boards are fitted. The wall boards and studs are also mortised into this structure in the same way as they are rabbeted into the transverse beam above. All of these are of course done skillfully without the use of a single nail so that the resulting joints and seams are airtight and hardly noticeable. Such a technique is considered not only economical, but also as affording further protection from rats. The space under the house is usually not enclosed unlike those of the Bontok and Lepanto Igorots, but it is used similarly as a general purpose living room. Below the house, one may find along the sides some benches and wooden boards which are laid down one after another so that the occupants who stay here can sit with ease as they perform various domestic activities. Here a man may be weaving a basket or making some kitchen utensils from bamboo, or a woman may be sitting beside her husband sewing or weaving some cloth with a back-strap loom. Nearby may be found a pig tied to one of the posts as well as several nesting huts for chicken, while still in another corner, one may find a wooden mortar and several pestles which a woman, alone or with other female assistants, uses in pounding rice nedeed for the day's con-

sumption. After meal time, especially at noon when all the morning work has been accomplished, the family may gather around sitting along the benches and wooden boards and they may be joined by some neighbors or friends who find this part of the day the best time for exchanging gossip. The overhanging eaves of the house, while it is obviously intended to give protection to those who stay under the dwelling, is also used in its interior side for the storing of various tools and implements that cannot be accommodated inside. In addition, the skulls and jaw bones of pigs butchered during important ceremonial occasions are placed under the roof's eaves in obvious attempts to display them so that they can be noticed by visitors. The spacious attic under the house's peak is used mainly as granary, a practice which seems to be true also in many other regions. Immediately after the palay has been harvested and taken from the fields, it is piled up in the attic where it is dried and ripened further by the heat and smoke that come continuously from the stove directly below. The materials employed in the construction of the *binangiyan* are derived from the best available in the region. Among the oldest structures, the lumber used for walls, floor and posts come from the narra tree which is well known for its hardness and durability. The roof materials are derived from the stalks of runo, called *pudong*, and cogon grass. This dwelling is relatively expensive to build and in Bakun village only the well-to-do families construct them. It is also a permanent shelter which with periodic reroofing can last for several generations. The fifteen remaining *binangiyan* structures in Bakun today were all built in pre-war times.

If we were now to inquire into the basic uses of the binangiyan as a cultural item, we may say that it serves as an all-purpose dwelling which embraces the various functions we have indicated earlier for the attic and the space under the house, but its immediate importance is to provide adequate shelter during the night and during the period of cold and rain which is quite extensive in the Mt. Province. The low eaves and the well-enclosed compartment provide sufficient insulation from strong winds that blow during the month of August and lasting to December, and to insure further warmth and comfort inside, a fire in an elevated hearth along one side is kept burning constantly throughout the evenings. These are features of the dwellings which even the modern houses recently introduced there do not have. In general, it can be said that the binangiyan is used for sleeping, cooking, eating, and the storage of utensils and other valuable belongings. Heirlooms like beads, gold rings, or ancient Chinese jars called *putik*,

which have been handed down from generation to generation, are always kept hidden inside to be brought out only during rare occasions. All other important activities of the household which in modern houses can ordinarily be performed inside are done underneath the eaves of the house where there is ample space and light. Visitors are normally received and entertained outside the dwelling.

The second traditional house is called the *apá* or *inapá*. Although it resembles the binangiyan in its general features and there is a strong indication that the latter type may have been used as a model in its construction, it is regarded as only a temporary shelter, lower and smaller in form, and built of lighter and cheaper materials. A house of this type is common among the poorer and younger families who, however, are customarily expected to construct a more permanent one like the binangiyan at some future time when they shall have accumulated some means. There are two versions of *apá*. The first one which is more numerous follows the same design as that of the binangiyan. It is likewise supported by wooden posts at the floor's base and the roof is in turn carried by the upper ends of the walls. Similarly the wall elements consisting of runo stalks and pine wood are rabbeted into transverse beams running parallel above and below. The second variety, a seemingly poorer type of construction, is so built in such a way that the main part of the house is raised above the ground level at three feet high by six or more wooden piles four of which, however, penetrate to the roof of the house at the corner ends. The floor, which is made of split bamboo or runo sticks sewed together by bamboo strings, is then lashed to the four corner posts by rattan twines in the same way as are the wall which are made of pudong and pine wood. Here we find a technique that is quite different from those enumerated by Scott for the northern and southern strains and which is likely an adoption from the neighboring Ilocos coastal plain where pile bamboo houses are built just in this manner. In both versions, runo stalks and cogon grass are employed for roofing materials and the roof is also conical in form but much lower than that of the binangiyan; the eaves are extended even lower to the ground. There is an opening on one side of the dwelling serving as a passageway which can be reached from below by means of a short bamboo stair also removable. There is usually a door fitted to the passageway so that it can be closed in the evening. The peak of the *apá* is also utilized as granary but as the dwelling has no protection from rats the palay placed inside is not as safe as in the first type described above. Also, similar functions can be attributed to the main part of the

house, that is, it is used for sleeping, preparing food, and storage leaving other domestic activities to be done outside. If lack of space for greater movement in the interior of the house is noticeable in the binangiyan, this is more so in the case of the *apá* because it is a smaller dwelling. Because of the lower floor, the space directly below cannot be converted as a living room and so it is often enclosed with bamboo and used instead as stockage of chicken or pigs.

The last of the native dwellings is the *allao,* which is still more temporary than the apá and which corresponds closely to the *abong,* a secondary shelter known to be widespread also in the southern half of the Mt. Province. Here again we find similar materials being employed but the form of the structure is altogether different from the two given earlier in that its floor-plan is rectangular and its roof, gable-shaped. In all cases, the roof is constructed low enough to go down beyond the raised bed-like platform found inside, thereby requiring no wallings on its longer sides. Built in this manner, the roof provides no attic which could be used for storing things. The floor is lashed to the four corner posts that go straight to its roof but it is also supported by wooden piles underneath. There is no stair that is provided for this structure since the floor elevation from the ground is only two feet high. It should be noted that the *allao,* like the Ifugao *abong,* is used in Bakun solely as shelter not as a sleeping dormitory for men as indicated for the Sagada district or as a general club house or meeting place that has been described for the lower Amburayan region.[6] It is mainly the aged or widowed persons who build them although occasionally one may also encounter identical huts in the fields where they are used as shelter by those who spend the day there guarding the palay from ricebirds.

The New House Types. As has been indicated in the earlier part of the paper, the new house styles that can be noted in Bakun today are cultural borrowings which were introduced only after the war. To be sure, the *inalteb* is considered to be indigenous to the Mt. Province although it is certainly not native to Bakun as its place of origin and its time of introduction is definitely known; however, the other two, the modern bungalow style and the modification of the *inalteb* dwelling into a mixed style, are without doubt extra-montane architectures. Once these houses were introduced in Bakun, they were accepted readily and the inalteb, particularly, appears to have spread out to the majority

[6] F. Eggan 1954: 335; C. Vibar-Basco 1956: 169

of the population. It is very probable that these new styles will replace the traditional houses of the village in the future.

The *inalteb,* having been originated from Kapangan to the south of Bakun, shows many features that contrast, readily with the binangiyan dwelling and indeed, it may be considered as a undescribed type which should be included under the southern strain of cordillera architecture. Characteristically, this house is less bulky than the binangiyan for in its construction lighter materials are employed. Narra in some instances is utilized for its various parts but the usual substitute is pine wood which is more easily available in the region. The floor-plan is also square or box-like even though among some later versions one side is made longer in order to give a somewhat rectangular configuration. The main part is also elevated from the ground level by wooden piles, comparatively smaller and usually six in number, but the two transverse girders indicated for the binangiyan are absent. Instead, he posts support directly three wooden joists which then serve for the mortising of the floor woods and wall boards. The wallings are thinner and also they tend to be vertical rather than slant outwards, yet the building itself is just as compact as the traditional house. Compared to the roofs of the binangiyan and apá, that of the *inalteb* is lower and in fact tends to be gable-shaped; the eaves also are shorter. With this features, it is possible to make window openings on one or more sides allowing sunlight to enter the house. This is a significant architectural innovation for with a spacious compartment provided the *inalteb* can serve as a true residential dwelling like those found in the Christian lowlands. Thus, in most of the *inalteb* structures built in Bakun, it is the practice to perform many household chores inside the house which would be difficult to do in the dark and narrow rooms of the binangiyan and apá. Entrance into the dwelling is made possible by means of a single doorway which is connected to the ground through a wooden stair that can also be removed when the occupants are out. In some dwellings of this type, especially those constructed in later periods, a narrow balcony-like structure is added along one side usually where the doorway is found. The function of this is rather vague, but according to some informants it is used chiefly for depositing various implements which cannot be accommodated inside. However, there is also the likehood that this structure is so built in order to give an external decorative design. As the inalteb is equally rat-free, the attic is also used for the storage of palay even though the space below the house is never used as living room. Like the apá,

this latter part is barricaded with wooden planks and used instead for keeping chicken or pigs. The cost of building an *inalteb* dwelling is relatively cheaper than the binangiyan, which explains partly why many has built it in Bakun today.

Turning now to the modern styles introduced in the village, one finds features that are similar to those built in many parts of the country so that it is not necessary to give elaborate descriptions here. The two earliest modern houses erected in Bakun were of the bungalow type. The framework of these houses is made of lumber while the roof and walls are made of galvanized iron, a material which has to be bought either in Baguio City or Bontok. The preference for galvanized iron rather than lumber for the construction of the walls is quite surprising since the resulting structure usually has an interior which is colder especially during the months of November and December. However, the natives attempt to overcome the discomfort by hanging cloths all around the room to provide warmth. Thus, from the point of view of the natives, the modern styles, particularly the one under discussion, lack certain desirable features of the montane architectures, but this, they realize, is compensated by the provision of a wider floor-plan which allows for more living and working space that is absent in the native types. In one of the bungalow types there are four compartments in the dwelling, the first serving as a private room, the second used as an all-purpose room, the third employed as kitchen, and the last located in front modified to serve as a small store. With the exception of the private room which has two windows, each room has one window opening. The other bungalow has three compartments. One room is converted into a store also, another is used as private room, and the last is used as both dining room and kitchen. More recently built houses of the same style are raised above the ground by wooden piles similar to the pile native dwellings described, and in these cases a permanent wooden staircase is provided so that the occupants can go up and down the house with ease. While the modern styles are also provided with an attic, sometimes even more spacious, this part of the house is not used as granary. The owners prefer to utilize a separate structure for this purpose apparently to avoid the inconveniences encumbered by such a practice. As is often the case, when a man has a new modern house constructed, he converts his old dwelling, an inalteb or binangiyan, into a granary since it is these dwellings that are protected from rats. If this is not possible, a new one is built for the purpose.

The last of the new style of houses combining the characteristics of the inalteb and modern types is called by the natives *tinabla,* a term which is apparently derived from Spanish word *tabla* and which indicates that it may also have been copied after some of the versions found in the Nabaloi areas where house types from the lowlands have been introduced long time ago and where attempts at modification of house designs have also been observed. As it appears, the form of this house is patterned after the inalteb model except that the roof is made of galvanized iron and the same material is also employed along the external edges of the wooden walls to give it more durability and strength. There is the provision of an equally wide-floor plan making it possible to construct two or more compartments inside. One of those built earlier is painted green and yellow, the only house painted in Bakun district. Other recent constructions have two stories built in such a way that the first floor which is also elevated is used as a living room while the upper floor is reserved as a private compartment. It scarcely needs stating that attempts at innovation in house designs is evidently brought about by the necessity to incorporate the desirable features of the old and the new, and the resultant structures as they are observed in Bakun seemingly have all those qualities wanted, namely: compactness, durability, spaciousness, protection from rats, and the comparatively lower cost of building them. There is, therefore, an indicated preference for this last style and their increased construction in recent years over those of the bungalow type can attest to this fact.

Summary

Of the various house types in Bakun village, the traditional styles, specifically, the binangiyan and the allao, belong to a characteristic strain of montane architecture which Scott identifies for the southern half of the Cordillera mountains. The binangiyan is also reported as being present in Sagada, but there it is described as a "three-story house." This and the one which is found in Bakun may prove to be different versions of the same fundamental plan of which the Ifugao bale is the prototype. The fact that the Bakun binangiyan is originated in the Lepanto district suggests this very strongly. The same holds true for the allao. It corresponds to the abong although its use tend to approximate the Ifugao hut rather than the larger club houses of the Sagada and Amburayan peoples. The apá cannot as easily be classified because it involves two versions of fundamentally different cons-

tructions. The first version, because it is patterned strictly after the binangiyan model, can be placed under the southern strain, but the second version is a variant type which suggests an intrusive technique that is most likely originated from the Ilocos Coast.

Of the three new Bakun styles, the inalteb is of montane character which diffused to Bakun after the war. It is not mentioned in Scott's survey and therefore should be added as another southern strain variety previously unknown and characteristic of the northern Nabaloi region. The bungalow style, needless to say, is modern and must be considered as the product of an entirely different technology. On the other hand, the mixed style shows the result of attempts to incorporate the various features of the original types. The innovations, however, cannot be said to be unique in Bakun village since similar practices are known to be present in the more acculturated part of the Mountain Province. Moreover, that the structure itself is called by a term foreign to the native language indicates further that it was introduced in Bakun only in recent times.

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Plate 1. The roof of an *apa* dwelling under construction.

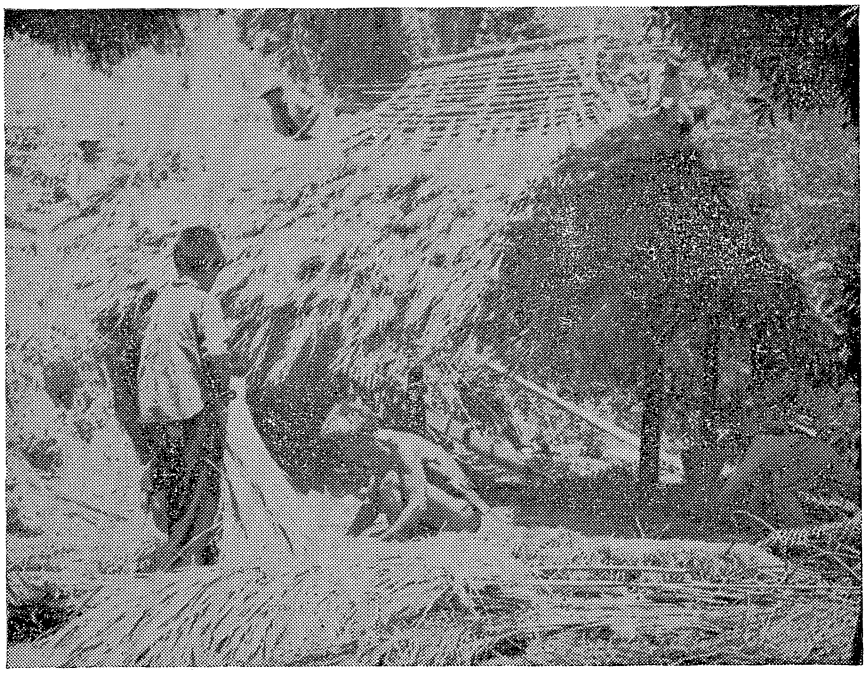


Plate 2. Picture shows the same *apa* dwelling with posts and roof.

Plate 3. Bakun traditional house types: the third and last are of the *binangiyan* type; the rest belong to the *apá* type.

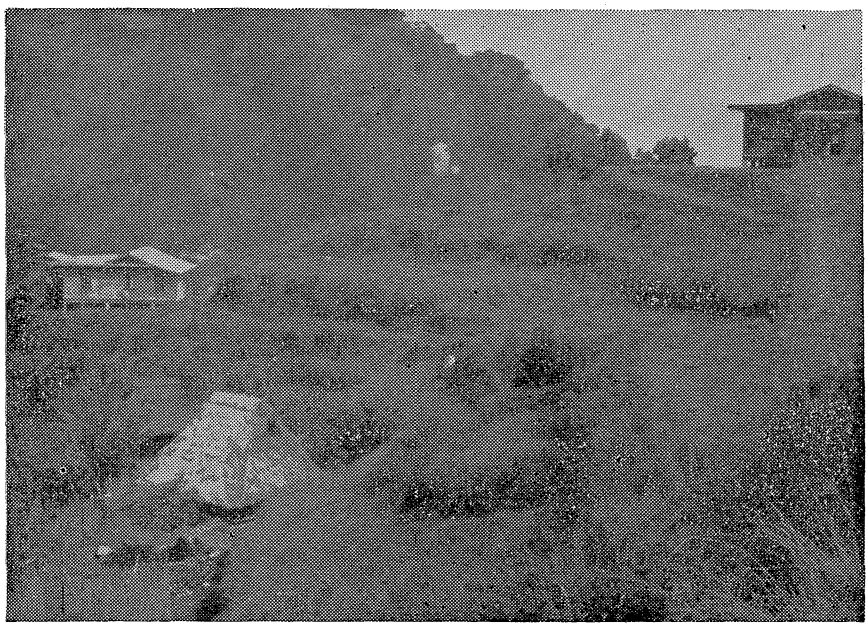
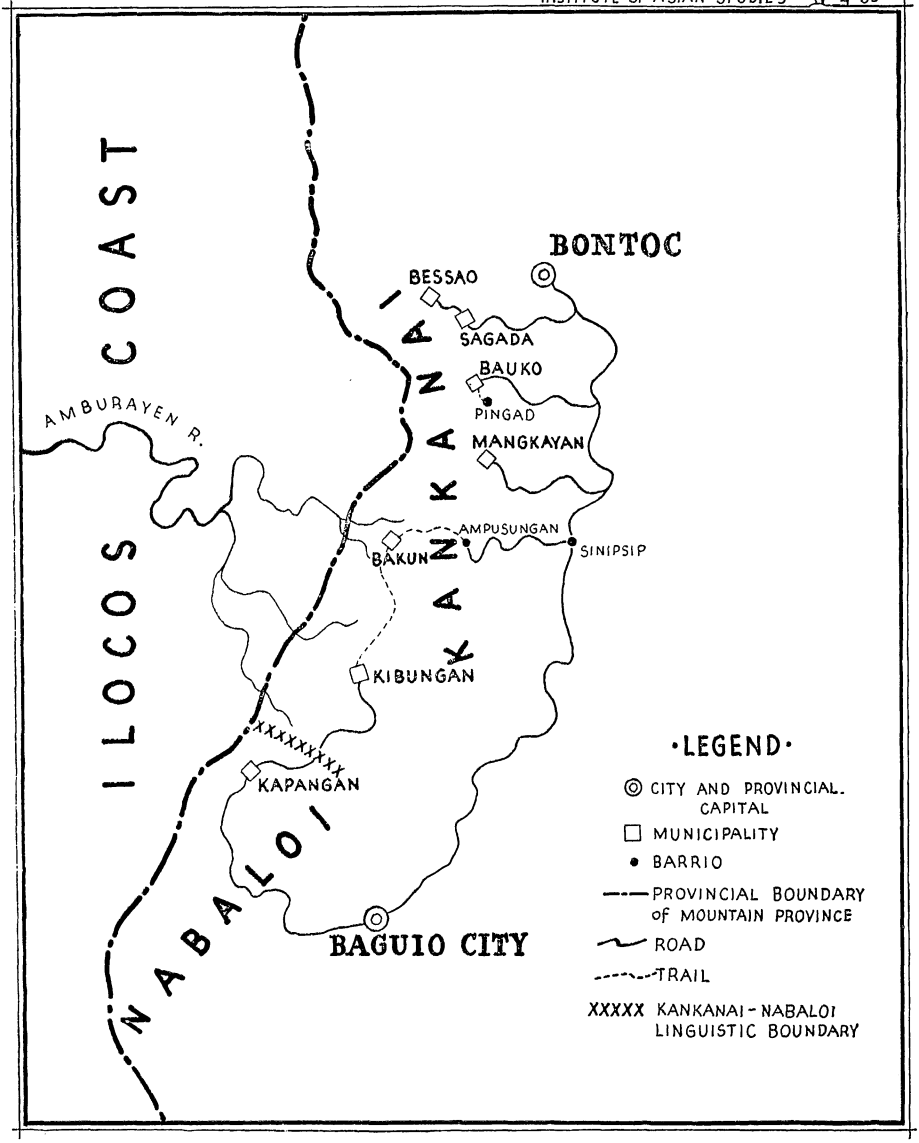


Plate 4. Traditional and modern types of dwellings: the first in foreground is an *allao,* the second a *binangiyan,* the third an *apá,* and the last of modern bungalow type.



MAP OF MOUNTAIN PROVINCE SHOWING BAKUN DISTRICT AND NEIGHBORING REGIONS.