

**GENERATING ENERGIES**  
**CULTURAL POLITICS AND GEOTHERMAL PROJECT**  
**IN MT. APO, PHILIPPINES**

A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Social Anthropology  
School of Oriental and African Studies  
University of London

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**London**  
1999



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*In memory of my beloved father,*  
**Severino M. Alejo**

*and of two great teachers and friends,*  
**Dr. Virgilio Enriquez**  
**Fr. Renato A. Ocampo, SJ**

**GENERATING ENERGIES**  
**CULTURAL POLITICS AND GEOTHERMAL PROJECT**  
**IN MT. APO, PHILIPPINES**

**Thesis Abstract**

**Albert E. Alejo**  
**1999**

THIS REFLEXIVE ETHNOGRAPHY investigates both the practice of cultural regeneration movement and fieldwork engagement in the context of contested development. The setting is Mt. Apo National Park where the Philippine National Oil Company has built a 250-megawatt geothermal power plant. The project aims to reduce government's dependence on imported oil and fuel its industrialisation program. Mt. Apo, however, is an ecologically and politically sensitive site, being a sanctuary of Southeast Asia's rich biodiversity, home to indigenous peoples, and shelter for armed insurgents. The local NGO and Church opposition grew into a massive national and international protest. Despite the hesitant hospitality of the affected community, PNOC managed to transform its image into a corporate environmentalist and pursue its project.

This thesis explores the interaction among the various contextual actors, including social scientists and the sick, the pastors, priests and protesters. It also analyses the politicisation of rituals and the construction of advocacy in Europe. My main focus, however, is the kin-based movement called **Tuddok**. Tuddok aimed at cultural regeneration and territorial recognition. It emerged, apparently, from the failure of both development project and political protest to take seriously the predicament of the host community. Cultural politics research rightly treats this type of movement not simply as resistance, but as struggle for meaning and existence. Even recent literature, however, still equates movement with protest. I highlight, instead, what may be called **cultural energies**---the human capabilities by which people collectively re-animate themselves in face of, but not exhaustively in reaction to, political binary oppositions.

My fieldwork (September 1995--January 1997) consisted mostly in accompanying Tuddok from its revival of Manobo dance, to its retrieval of Mt. Apo history and territory. As Tuddok became central to my research, my research in turn served as resource for the movement. This partnership grew tense as the ethnographer's status as Catholic priest allegedly threatened the peace of the Protestant village. The last section of the thesis reflects on the practice of fieldwork as social intervention before it is transformed into a textual invention.



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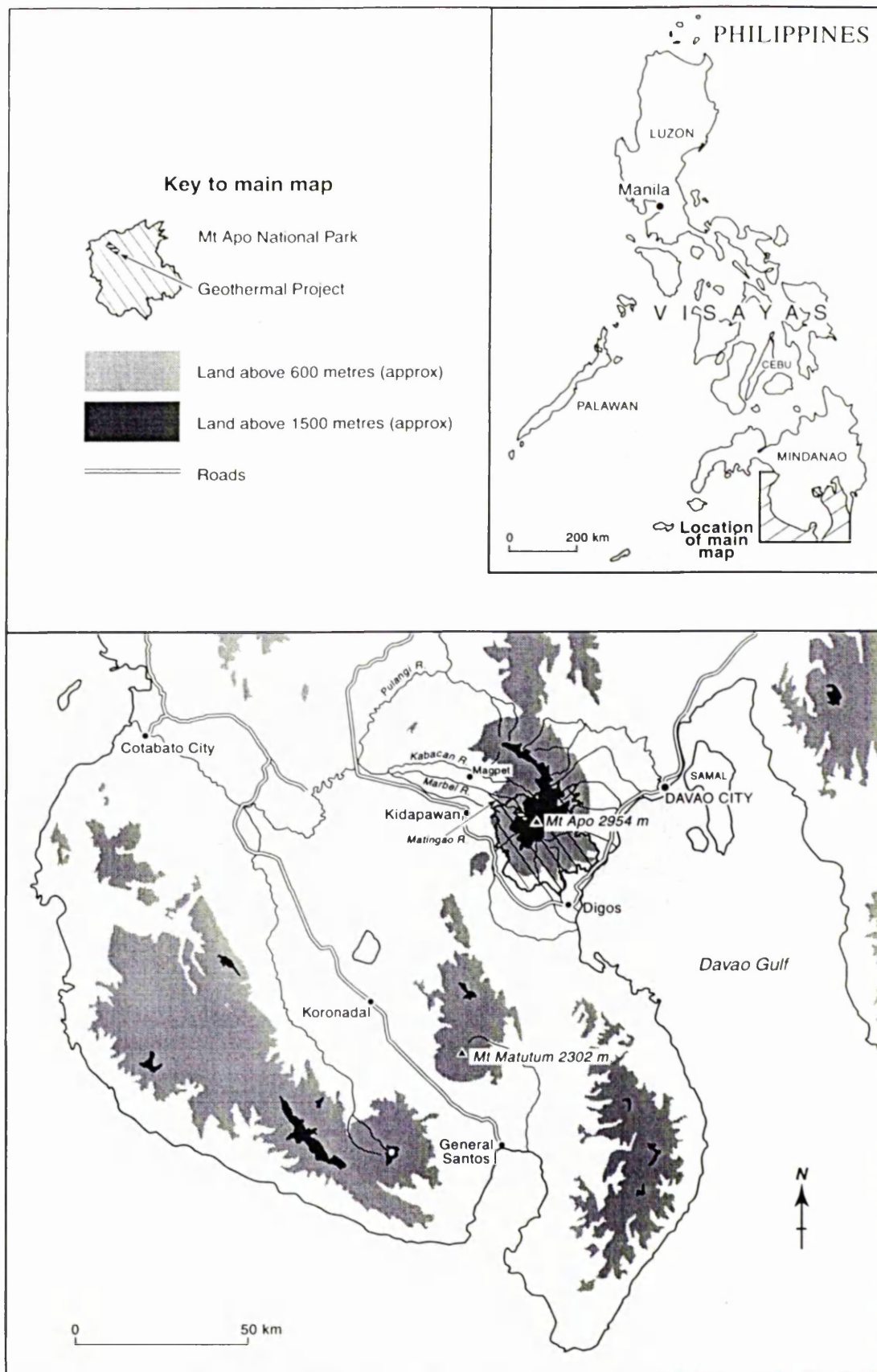
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Map 1. Location Map of Mt. Apo National Park

## Notes on the local languages

In Mindanao, the eighteen major ethnolinguistic groups who refused to be Islamized called *Lumad* (Lumigue 1990; Rodil 1992, 1993). One of these groups is called Manobo. Manobo itself is a generic category that covers various tribal groups. They live in villages spread across Mindanao. Their languages probably came from a common Proto-Manobo root (Elkins 1977; Walton 1979; cf. Lucero *et al* 1994). These various Manobo tribes, however, speak their own dialects with varying degrees of intelligibility to one another (Grimes 1996).

The people with whom I worked on the western flanks of Mt. Apo are the Obo-speaking Manobo (Khor Lee Kee & Vander Molen 1990/1991:3; Cagas 1990:26). Although they refer to themselves simply as Manobo, a number of them have accepted the name **Obo Manobo** as coined by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) (e.g. Walton 1979; Vander Molen & Khor Lee Kee 1991). The Obo Manobo are sometimes called Kidapawan Manobo (Grimes 1996). This is to distinguish them from the Matigsalug Manobo, Ilianen Manobo, Bukidnon Manobo, Cotabato Manobo, and others, which are named after their places of concentration.

Estimates of Obo Manobo population range from 10,000 to 35,000. The SIL literacy brochure mentions a recent survey placing the number at 71,000. Exact figures are not available. This is allegedly because they tend to get mixed up with other ethnic groups, or that some of them have been assimilated to the lowlanders communities, or because they are characteristically a 'scattered' and hidden people' (Vander Molen & Khor Lee Kee 1991:5; cf. Grimes 1996).

Traditional Obo Manobo literature are mostly in oral performance such as the *uwahing* (epic recitation), *ponguman* (stories), *itulan* (history) and *uhan-uhan* (short poems) (cf. Villarico-Ramos 1980). Recent productions have been mostly in the form of translations of Christian songs from English such as 'Amazing Grace' done in conjunction with the SIL Bible translation project (e.g. SIL 1995a, 1995b). Attempts to promote the language are underway. On 15 September 1995, advocates formed the Obo Manobo Association (OMA) under the patronage of the SIL.

I shall adopt the spelling of Manobo words according to the way most 'literate speakers tend to write [them] now' (Khor Lee Kee & Vander Molen 1990/1991:31), that is, with the minimum of diacritical marks or symbols for glottal stops.

I have followed the more popular spelling of Obo Manobo words that are already in circulation, e.g. **Manobo**, instead of *Monuvu* as the local speakers would speak it, **agong** instead of *ahong* (gong), and **batasan** instead of *botasan* (local ways). This rule also operates with proper names. *Umpan*, for example, should actually be written as **Umpon**, according to its original pronunciation, but it would be difficult to alter the existing documents. Similarly, *Bugcal* has definitely transformed the elongated vowel sound of the native *Bugkaa*.

In some cases, however, I have kept the spelling that is closer to the original pronunciation because they serve as markers for local identification. I have maintained *kolivuungan*, for example, despite the fact that *kalibungan* is used as the name of the Kidapawan towncentre festival. Similarly, I keep *Allow't Sondawa*

instead of *Allao ta Sandawa*, spelling for the annual Mt. Apo Festival, imposed on Sayaban by some top OSCC officials. Incidentally, please note in these and similar cases, that the Manobo vowel 'o' often has the sound between 'o' and 'a', somewhat similar to the 'o' in the English word 'upon'.

Other languages circulate in the region. **Cebuano Visayan** dominated the public hearings, NGO meetings, radio drama, and even most of the Sunday preaching, both Protestant and Catholic. Most of the Manobo are at least bilingual, with Cebuano or Tagabawa as second language. **Tagalog**, my mother tongue and basis of the national language called Filipino, rarely comes out in conversations even in the towncentre, and never in Manobo villages. Villagers encounter **Filipino** in the school, in radio newscast, and in dealing with migrant PNOG employees. An old man in a village knew some **Spanish** because that was the only way the natives could talk to the **Japanese** labourers who cut canes on the foothills of Mt. Apo before the war. Traces of Japanese remain in names like 'Enagaro'.

**English** was introduced by the American Protestant missionaries and by pioneer Tagalog and Visayan teachers in the 1940s. Thus, some of the Manobo elders in Kidapawan centre were at home with English. Legal and business documents had to be written in English, although the initial transactions would still have to be done in the language of post-war settlers, **Ilongo**, **Tagalog** or **Ilocano**.

The political tension in the field, as I shall elaborate in Study 2, prevented me from pitching tent in a Mt. Apo village itself. Partly because of this situation, I cannot claim to have learned Obo Manobo with the depth that I sorely wished.

About names, I have only one point to make. Except for a few instances that I clearly indicate, all proper names in this thesis refer to real persons and actual places.

## Glossary

- agong/ahong.** A brass drum with a protruding button at the centre. Though made by Muslims, it is a most important Manobo musical instrument. Syn. **tagunggô**.
- Allow't Sondawa.** Day of Mt. Apo, a festival held in Sayaban every 7<sup>th</sup> of April. It started as birthday celebration of the late Datu Joseph Sibug in mid-1980s.
- anit.** A supernatural punishment for unnatural behaviour such as laughing at animals or marrying a blood relation. Taboo.
- anitu.** Mountain spirits who serve as caretakers of plants, animals, rocks, and trees. Persons possessed of a spirit, e.g. **walian** (priests), are called **anituwon**.
- Apo Sandawa.** Local name of Mt. Apo. **Apo** is a title of respect for an elder or an ancestor, whether man or woman. **Sandawa** comes from '**dawa**' which means sulphur, a pungent yellow element that abounds in volcanic Mt. Apo.
- baî.** Female village leader, female datu.
- barangay.** The smallest political unit, headed by a **barangay captain** and the **barangay council** who are all elected from the community. A smaller settlement within a barangay is called sitio.
- botasan/batasan.** Local ways of doing things, such as settling conflicts, negotiating marriage, choosing sites for building houses, etc. It is generally used as equivalent of the Filipino word **kultura** or culture. The celebration **Kodsompot to Botasa't Monuvu** means 'the return of the Manobo culture'.
- bunnuis.** Traditional way of negotiating boundaries and surveying the land. Improvised maps employed pebbles, leaves or twigs. With the Manobos' exposure to logging, bunnuis has been used for the ocular survey of ancestral domain claims.
- busaw.** Generic term for various evil spirits especially found in the jungle.
- datu.** A tribal village leader endowed with wisdom, wealth and followers. A village could have more than one datu.
- D'yandi.** Solemn oath or pact, usually between two clans or tribes, to restore peace or for mutual protection. In 1989, this included several tribes in defence of Mt. Apo. Related practices are found in most of Mindanao.
- gorô.** Charisma; the capacity of a person to speak with moral authority, as in resolving a conflict or effecting a marriage that does not break.
- hulaw.** Extended period of heat and drought, leading to famine and forest fires.
- itulan.** History; a true account of events in the past.
- kodpotongkooy.** Informal discussion. Recently developed into a special caucus of villagers, mostly elders, for discussing tribal concerns or exchanging knowledge about history. Unlike the official councils (e.g. barangay council), kodpotongkooy has no definite members and the sessions could last for days.
- kolivuungan.** Celebration, as in post-harvest family gathering. Recently adopted to mean 'family reunion'. Kidapawan celebration is called **Kalibungan**.
- konokkaan.** Strength, power, energy.
- kotuiggan.** Knowledge of local lore, local wisdom.
- kovaakkan.** Fear or apprehension. Syn. **allak**.
- kovuhan.** Intense feeling of missing something or someone, especially a relative.



- kristiyanos.** Literally means 'Christians', but actually used to refer to 'outsiders', 'lowlanders', 'settlers', 'foreigners', or anyone who is not a native.
- kulintang.** A set of several gongs of varying size and pitch. They are suspended on a vertical frame or ropework and played by one or more performers.
- lambus.** Magical poison made of pulverised snake bones and enhanced by secret chant. When mixed with coffee, it kills the victim who could be a house guest.
- linubbaran.** Children or descendants of a common ancestor. Syn. **kalubbaran.**
- livuta.** Land or earth. Landmarks are called **potow to livuta**. Cultivated land is **kamot**. Syn. **kaingin, galas, namma.** An uncultivated field is **namma** which could be a piece of forestland that has already been opened but has not been planted. **Komonoy't livuta means** owner of the land.
- Lumad.** Comes from the Cebuano-Visayan term meaning 'native' or 'indigenous'. Since the 1980s, it has become the generic term for non-Muslim indigenous peoples in Mindanao. In Sayaban, lumad is charged with political overtones.
- Monamà.** The Supreme God.
- mopian.** Good, kind-hearted. **Mopian kohi diid potoy** (Good word never dies) is a chant popularised by Apo Salumay in Sayaban.
- osson.** Feeling of hurt or insult, embarrassment.
- Pakaa't Kallo.** Literally means 'feeding the tools of the farm'. Manobo perform this ritual at the start of the year. Knives and bolos are thrust into a heap of cooked rice. The more rice sticks to the tools, the better will be the next harvest.
- pamaas.** A common Manobo ritual for appeasing the spirits, sealing a contract, or resolving conflicts. It consists of some incantation and a ritual shedding of chicken blood. The PNOC-sponsored pamaas ritual in 1992 assumed a more political meaning as it was used to counteract the effects of the 1989 D'yandi.
- pangayaw.** A tribal war.
- pantow.** To look out or oversee. Later, to take care, as in overseeing the land. This is the root of Tahapantau, the new group based in Pandanon.
- panuvadtuvad.** Religious chanting or incantation, usually done by an indigenous priest or priestess. A formula prayer to a deity.
- pohundepdep.** Narrow cliff-path where one has to be extremely careful in negotiating a passage.
- ponguman/pongumanon.** A legend or folktale that is meant to be enjoyed or learn some lessons from, but not to be taken as real history.
- posakkaday.** To form a solidarity or partnership, e.g. **pintakasi**, communal self-help or collective voluntary work, as in tilling a communal farm.
- pusakâ.** Heirloom, heritage. Special objects with sentimental and cultural value because they are handed over by elders or ancestors. Cultural treasure.
- tambaa/tambara.** Manobo or Bagobo altar consisting of a small platform of bamboo strips, mounted on top of short bamboo pole. Some china porcelain may also be used to hold the offerings to the spirits.
- tapid.** That period around 1970s when national government relocated the Manobo into small settlements.
- tohinoppon.** Dreams. Among the Manobo, dreams are sources of knowledge, especially for healing, travelling and decision-making.

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFRIM	Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao
ALUHAMAD	Alyansa sa mga Lumad sa Habagatang Mindanaw alang sa Demokrasya [Lumad Alliance for Democracy in Southern Mindanao]
Apao	Linubaran ni Apao [Descendants of Apao]
ASLPC	Apo Sandawa Lumadnong Panaghiusa sa Cotabato [Mt. Apo Lumad Solidarity in Cotabato]
BFD	Bureau of Forest Development
BADC	Balabag Ancestral Domain Claim
BPA	Bongolanon Porters Association
CADC	Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim
CALC	Certificate of Ancestral Land Claim
CAFGU	Citizens Armed Forces Government Unit
CCW	Citizens' Crime Watch
COMREL	Community Relations Office (PNOC)
CPA	Cordillera People's Alliance
CTCC	Cotabato Tribal Consultative Council
DAO2	Departmental Administrative Order No. 2, Series 1993 (DENR)
DENR	Department of Environment & Natural Resources
ECC	Environmental Compliance Certificate
ECIP	Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples (Formerly
ECTF)	
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ETWTF	Environmental and Tribal Welfare Trust Fund
IBASMADC	Ilomavis-Balabag Apo Sandawa Manobo Ancestral Domain Claim [Coalition between APAO and BADC]
IPs	Indigenous Peoples
IPA	Ilomavis Porters Association
KAMP	Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas [Federation of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines]
KFI	Kinaiyahan Foundation, Inc.
LF	Lifestreams Foundation
LRC-KSK	Legal Resource Centre-Friends of the Earth
LM	Lumad Mindanaw (Mindanao-wide organisation of Lumads)
MAFI	Mount Apo Foundation, Inc. (NGO created by PNOC)
MAGP	Mount Apo Geothermal Project (technically called Mindanao 1 Geothermal Project or M1GP, but normally called PNOC in this thesis)
NABAMAS	Native Barangay Association of Mt. Apo Sandawa
NIPA	NGOs for Integrated Protected Areas, Inc.
NIPAS	National Integrated Protected Areas System
NPA	New People's Army
OCEAN	Organised Campaigns for Environmental Action & Networking

OMA	Obo-Manobo Association
Oxbow	Oxbow Corporation, with subsidiary Oxbow International Power Corporation, constructor of PNOC power plant.
PANAGTAGBO	A Forum of Mindanao Peoples' Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations for the Advancement Indigenous Peoples' Rights
PANAMIN	Presidential Assistant for National Minorities
PANLIPI	Tanggapang Panligal ng Katutubong Pilipino [Legal Assistance Centre for Indigenous Filipinos]
PASAKA	Pasakadday, Kalimudan, Salipungan (Solidarity)
PNOC	Philippine National Oil Company (used here often to refer to the Mt. Apo Geothermal Project)
PNOC-EDC	Philippine National Oil Company-Energy Development Corporation
PO	Political Officer
PRRM	Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement
SBM	Sinabadan Ka Bagobo Mekatanod [Association of Enlightened Bagobo]
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission
SKS	Sinabadan Katigatunan Sandawa
SPCPD	Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development
Tahapantau	Sovokkaddan to mgo Minuvu to Tahamaling, Pandanon woy Tausuvan [Association of the People of Tahamaling, Pandanon and Tausuvan/Sitio Waterfall, Bongolanon]
TFCD	Tribal Foundation for Community Development
TFP	Tribal Filipino Program (Diocese of Kidapawan)
TRICAP	Tribal Communities Association of the Philippines
Tuddok	Tuddok to Kalubbaran ni Apo Ayon Umpon [Pillars of the Descendants of Apo Ayon Umpan]
UGAT	Ugnayang Agham-Tao (Anthropological Association of the Philippines)

## List of Personal Names

*(Without attempting to be comprehensive, this list is meant to help the reader recall basic information about individuals, mostly from the Mt. Apo region, whose identification may have been described elsewhere in the thesis. The researcher is generally represented by the pronoun 'I'. Other interlocutors, including those in the academe, are mentioned in the acknowledgement, in the notes or in the body of the text itself.)*

**Amao.** Mentally handicapped fifty-year old member of the Umpan clan.

**Ambadua Manib.** Manobo tribal chieftain of Bongolanon.

**Ambolugan Dolom.** A Manobo elder in Sayaban who asked 'Why study us?'

**Apao.** The common ancestor of the Manobo in Sayaban. He lived around mid-1800s.

**Aris Apan.** A young Manobo datu in Sitio Waterfall.

**Atawan Bayawan.** Leader of Bayawan clan and organiser of Tuddok movement.

**Beting Umpan Colmo.** Leader of the Tuddok movement which she co-initiated after working for eight years with a nongovernment organisation. With college education, she also worked as my research associate.

**Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos.** Bishop of Kidapawan and outspoken critic of the PNOC Geothermal Plant in Mt. Apo.

**CJ Burleson.** Manager of OxBow company, with 25% N. American Indian blood.

**Crispin Damo.** Protestant pastor who also serves as a CAFGU personnel.

**Domling Andot.** Protestant pastor and brother of the former Sayaban tribal chief.

**Don-Don Lim.** Manobo-Chinese who was elected tribal chieftain in Sayaban. To assert being Manobo, he and his brothers often use their middle name Pandia.

**Edtami Mansayagan.** Leader of the Lumad-Mindanao, who represented the Lumad in Geneva Conference in 1993.

**Ena van der Molen.** American-Dutch Bible translator of SIL in Sayaban.

**Enagaro Bugcal.** Manobo pastor of the Baptist Church in Bongolanon, and leader of Tahapantau. He is well-versed in Manobo history, geography and folklore.

**Era Colmo España.** Elder sister of Beting Colmo, Era was former Manobo secretary-general of the SBM. She is married, with two children, to a Salvadorean farmer whom she met in an agricultural school in Japan. She represented the opposition to PNOC in several forums in London and Europe.

**Ettok Umpan.** Young Manobo artist, sculptor and poet who got seriously ill while working part-time for the PNOC. His sickness posed challenge to Tuddok.

**Ettoy Bayawan.** Young Manobo artist and technician, brother of Ettok. He took the name of the Bayawan family that adopted him.

**Heidi Gloria.** Ethnohistorian from the Ateneo de Davao University who led the PNOC-sponsored socio-cultural research on Mt. Apo.

**Hilario 'Boy' Mahinay.** A pastor in Pandanon, active member of Tahapantau. He is the husband of Melania, daughter of the great Datu Mantawil of Bongolanon.

**Joseph Andot.** Tribal chieftain of Sayaban in 1995. He escaped to the T'boli region because of death threats during the height of the PNOC issue in early 1990s.

**Joseph Sibug.** Mestizo Manobo-Capampangan, he was recognised as a super-datu from Kidapawan, becoming House Representative in the Philippine Congress.

**Jun Embac.** A Manobo patient, whose sickness played pivotal role in Tuddok.

**Kapitan Pablo Iyong.** Barangay captain of Ilomavis, and brother of Salumay Iyong.

**Leah Labrador.** Manobo project officer of the OSCC with office in Sayaban.

**Leah Vidal.** A counsellor and spiritual formator from Manila, now working in Davao. She would play a supporting role to Ettok and the Tuddok movement.

**Lomiyok Umpan.** An elder of the Umpan clan, who was registered in school as 'Romeo' because his teachers could not pronounce his name in Manobo.

**Loy Lacerna.** Director of the Mt. Apo Foundation, Inc.

**Marayuna.** A Manobo priestess and ritual specialist from Calinan, she was invited to perform at the first Tuddok family reunion.

**Montera Sia.** The Sayaban local historian who competed with Apo Salumay Iyong on historical knowledge.

**Omog.** Son and successor of Apao.

**Oto Pontas.** The lone epic chanter in Sayaban could not complete a recital because a 'heavy emotion' for his dead brother would 'make his breast burst'.

**Pastor Rogelio** (not his real name). University lecturer, Pastor, datu and university lecturer in Davao. He served as historian for the protest movement.

**Peter Geremia.** An Italian Catholic missionary belonging to the PIME congregation. He has been serving the Lumad struggle for decades.

**Pinky Cruz.** Mestiza cousin of Beting and loyal supporter of the Tuddok movement.

**Ramon Bayaan.** Veteran Manobo organiser and campaigner of the Lumad.

**Rey Onggona.** Manobo employee of OSCC who became Community Relations Officer of the PNOC.

**Rizal Curotan.** Ilocano long-time forester working with the DENR.

**Salumay Iyong.** Former tribal chieftain of Sayaban, he went away for more than twenty years, but returned to serve as local historian for the Tuddok and Apao ancestral domain claim.

**Santiago 'Lago' Aba.** Founder and leader of Nabamas, he claims to have received a mandate from the successor of Apao, to protect the Mt. Apo forests.

**Sheryl Umpan.** Protestant pastor, PNOC employee, and supporter of this research.

**Simeon Serrano.** Son of Omog, and friend of Datu Aba, he is the leader of the Linubaran ni Apao.

**Tano Bayawan.** A pastor of the liberal faction of the Church of Christ and main consultant of the SIL Bible translation project. He is co-initiator of the Tuddok movement. Pastor Tano has been a constant support to this research.

**Tomas Ito or Datu Birang.** The Bagobo convenor of the D'yandi solidarity pact of 1989. He continues to serve as Lumad resource person for the protest movement.

**Trinidad 'Neneng' Sibug.** Though of Waray origin, she served as national director of OSCC and Tricap, replacing her half-Manobo husband, Datu Joseph Sibug.

**Vera Khor Lee Kee.** Chinese Singaporean ex-Buddhist who became an evangelical protestant missionary working in Sayaban as SIL Bible translator.

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Albert E. Alejo, SJ  
Campion Hall, Oxford

## Orientation

*'[B]ut is it really necessary to just make a book out of human beings? I find the usual account of field-research so boring as often to be unreadable---kinship systems, political systems, ritual systems, every sort of system, structure and function, but little flesh and blood. One seldom gets the impression that the anthropologist felt at one with the people about whom he writes. If this is romanticism and sentimentality I accept those terms.'*

---E. E. Evans-Pritchard 'Reminiscence and Reflections on Fieldwork' (1976)

ENVY GRIPPED ME as I watched Rithy Panh's *'Rice People'* during the 1994 London Film Festival. The film captured the pathetic plight as well as the inner strength of an eight-woman Thai peasant family, following the death of the father. Panh's accumulation of details---from the everyday practice of planting and the occasional rituals of praying, to the improvised exorcism of the unexpected plagues of crabs and sparrows---transmuted the documentary framework into, as one critic said, 'a poetic meditation on the land and the communal relationships which grew from it' (Gillet 1994).

I wondered, then, whether my planned ethnography on the Lumad of Mindanao would similarly do justice to their sense of attachment to Mount Apo as a sacred mountain, to their search for a viable culture that could re-animate their spirits and bodies, and to their long-drawn struggle for the recognition of their ancestral territories. Questions hovered. How does one represent both their conviction and confusion in the face of the ongoing change in their environment as the Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) builds a huge geothermal power plant in what used to be their farming and hunting as well as dancing ground? Is there a way of approximating the intimacy of a character film while at the same time placing this local struggle within the wider network of national and even global politics? And to what extent should ethnography be constructed like a film, a narrative, or an autobiographical account? How can the 'flesh-and-blood' experience of fieldwork be inscribed in black and white ethnographic text?



These questions bothered me as I started my research. The result of the long process is this attempt to present an intimate, though interim, ethnography of cultural politics in the context of contested development. In particular, this research focuses on a social movement for cultural regeneration that seeks to create a new space for freedom and dignity---values that neither the State-sponsored project nor the political protest movement has properly addressed

### **Power from the earth**

The setting is familiar enough for people acquainted with developing countries. A government burdened with debts and pressured to catch up with the neighbouring economies realises the need to harness indigenous resources to fuel its industrialisation program. In the process, some local people are affected and their natural heritage sacrificed. The Mt. Apo Geothermal Project in Mindanao is such a classic case.

Geothermal energy is tapped from hot rocks and water four kilometres deep underground. The heated water is drawn up through powerful production wells. The lower pressure on the earth's surface turns it into steam. It then passes through a turbine connected to a generator that converts it to electricity (cf. Mincher 1993:231). Although aware of the considerable ecological and societal problems that usually accompany the drilling of these geothermal wells, the government decided to continue exploring the 250 megawatt potential of the Mount Apo Geothermal Project. The power plant was needed because of the 'ongoing uncertainties in world crude oil supply coupled with escalating prices mainly arising out of the gulf crisis' (PNOC 1991:14).

But unlike other geothermal areas of the PNOC, Mt. Apo is an ecologically sensitive and politically explosive site. It is the country's highest peak, a national park, a sanctuary of the endangered Philippine eagle, and a recognised heritage site in Southeast Asia for its rich biodiversity. More importantly, it is the home of several thousands of indigenous peoples for whom the mountain was known to be sacred. It is not surprising that from 1987, when the PNOC started drilling exploratory wells at the northwestern flank of Mt. Apo, opposition to the project swelled. From the local initiative, international groups received a mandate to globalise the campaign, employing powerful discourses like environmentalism and

indigenous people's rights. In 1989, a coalition of several datos from different tribes held a solemn ritual called *D'yandi*, vowing to defend Mt. Apo 'to the last drop of our blood'. The strong national and international advocacy that followed stopped PNOC exploratory drills---though not for long. In 1991, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), that initially declared the project illegal, granted PNOC its much-coveted Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC).

To some extent, the government approval was understandable though not inevitable. This controversial move came in the wake of a major national economic crisis. And the recent Iraq crisis reminds was a bitter reminder of the Gulf War in the early nineties that had adverse economic impact on the Philippines. The oil crisis added to the series of ecological and economic calamities, namely, a major drought, a devastating typhoon, an earthquake that killed 900 people, a series of *coup* attempts by mutinous soldiers, and long power outages. All this created the conditions that prompted the Philippine government to decide in favour of the controversial Mt. Apo Geothermal Project (Lamberte & Yap 1991:2, Ote 1993:8).

The protest groups' strategy of demonising the power project failed to halt the PNOC. Learning from and outsmarting its political opponents, the PNOC took the step of 'reinventing' itself by assuming the role of a corporate environmentalist (Viray, et al 1996; de Jesus 1996). PNOC then took centre stage, proclaiming what it called the 'geothermal success story' (Refuerzo 1996; Sokol 1995). According to this development epic, although PNOC took years 'to extricate itself from the negative perception of a development aggressor', the struggle was worth it: PNOC had become the recognised frontliner in the 'green bandwagon' (Ramos & Nieva 1996:28). PNOC won awards from government, business and the academic institutions for harmonising high-technology power development and protection of the environment (Ramos & Nieva 1996). To mark its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the company published a glossy full-colour book called *Celebrating Mt. Apo, The Living Mountain* (PNOC 1996). It contained breathtaking pictures of Mt. Apo's flora and fauna, its people as well as the oil company's initiatives in biodiversity conservation. At face value, the accusation of 'development aggression' against PNOC appeared like an 'anachronism'. It was projected then that 'empowered communities awaken to the pragmatic truth that a clear alternative partnership in development is now

possible with business and industry'. It was then the turn of anti-PNOC activists 'to reinvent themselves or risk irrelevance' (Ramos 1995:28). Power production seemed complete---PNOC had triumphantly installed not just a secure geothermal pipeline but also a strong political storyline. However, such an upbeat narrative could invite suspicions and a wide range of opposing reactions.

I must state at the outset that although this thesis contributes towards an ethnography of a development project (cf. Pottier 1993), it is not a comprehensive social impact assessment. This is not an apologia for the protest movement or a voice of advocacy for the general population of indigenous peoples in the region. And although an ethnographic monograph on the Lumad (specifically, the Obo-speaking Manobo of Mt. Apo) is still lacking, this research does not intend to fill this academic gap. My focus is not so much the 'subordinate' people's tactics and strategies of evading the impact of the powerful or to resist domination. My focus is more on the nuanced appreciation of the culturally mediated collective capabilities by which people try to 're-animate' themselves in the face of, but not exhaustively in relation to, the existing political binary opposition or environmental change.

The heart of this research, then, is the way people generate what I call cultural energies. While it recognises this process in the initiatives of both the political protest and, to some extent, the power project itself, it takes off from the debate between the two sides (cf. Pratt 1998:431). It then explores the new spaces opened up for, or created and occupied by, a nascent indigenous movement for cultural regeneration. This new initiative emerged because of the failure of both the project and the protest to adequately address the collective predicament and sentiment of the most affected communities (cf. Abram & Waldren 1998:2). This new movement is called *Tuddok to Kalubbaran ni Apo Ayon Umpan*, Pillars of the Descendants of Ayon Umpan.

Most of my fieldwork in Mt. Apo consisted in accompanying the *Tuddok* movement that co-started with my research. My reflections here are taken from almost one and a half years of partnership with the movement, between October 1995 to January 1997. I happened to be with the group from its modest launching of the revival of their tribal culture through family reunion, to its more sophisticated ancestral domain claim which covers the portion of the park already occupied by the geothermal plant. As Tuddok became the subject of my research, my fieldwork

engagement in turn served as a resource for the movement. This type of field engagement contributes, I believe, to the modification of existing approaches to the ethnography of social movements.

### **Energy from within**

To be sure, geothermal energy *is* indigenous energy and, therefore, a most promising contribution to the country's energy mix. When the PNOC drills wells several kilometres deep into the underground pool of steam in Mount Apo, it is contributing to the generation of power for industrialisation and in effect making the nation less dependent on the dictates of the world's oil-producing countries. The tension arises when in the process of tapping one form of power, other human resources are sacrificed. This process, however, is not one-way traffic. Sometimes, the very process of suppressing people's participation conditions the transformation of new identities, creating new ways of moving the body and organising space. Out of the hiddenness of the minute acts of daily practices where memories are re-lived and visions revised, new energies---cultural energies---are generated or old ones are redirected.

It is amazing how those who suffer sometimes generate energy not just for themselves but also for those who help them. This is not going beyond the bounds of anthropological discourse. Other scholars observe that at times, 'unexpected creativity' (Turton 1984) arises at the point where one would think the subjugated people would have been crushed. New forms of knowledge are released; even new dances and songs come out, making new relations and definitions of the world, which are at least imaginable if not normally feasible. History is reinterpreted, 'fanning the spark of hope in the past' (Walter Benjamin, quoted in Turton 1991:176). This activates 'reserves of strength, knowledge and imagination' (Turton 1984:63) are what I call *cultural energy*.

Cultural energy seems to be what people need to collectively endure pain as well as to begin a protest or just to sustain their existence. It is partly what they share when supporters are around, and partly what they generate from their moral and cultural resources when external allies have moved to more exciting sites. I suppose it could be associated with power---power being the capacity of amulets to embolden the bearer (Tambiah 1984; Turton 1991; Ileto 1979) or serving as the moral force of

a crowd drawn by an altruistic cause (Uphoff 1996:357ff; Hirschman 1984). But if cultural energy is related to power, it is more like *the power to will* rather than *the will to power*. The will to power is usually associated with the desire for power *over* somebody, constructed as domination, imposition, often at the expense of the other's will (see variations in Lukes 1986). The *power to will* is more of the moral and spiritual and creative resource *to be* or *to remain* or sometimes *to become* a people with self-confidence and self-affirmation (cf. Nelson & Wright 1995). Its close synonyms would be 'collective self-empowerment' (Friedman 1992:66-71) or the 'human ability not just to act but to act in concert' (Arendt 1970, cited in Lukes 1986:76). This is probably what ordinary people or marginalized groups are ultimately trying to keep alive in their struggle against what the poet Dorothee Soelle calls 'the luxury of hopelessness' (1993:109). It is a luxury that, according to the disgruntled Fabian (1990:20), only some 'comfortable postmodernists' could afford due to the wealth their society extract from the ones they purport to study.

At this point, I could only express my thesis analogically. If the PNOC could tap geothermal steam from the bosom of the earth and produce electricity, then I suggest that particular movements could also 'generate' some forms of energy out of their cultural resources. This could be converted into a more satisfying collective existence.

In employing the term energy, I do not mean to derive social power from control of physical energy resources such as has been attempted previously (cf. Adams 1975; Rappaport 1971; White 1943). This evolutionary approach may yet have a point in combining material and mental factors, but its tendency to 'reduce all power relations to control of technology' weakens its analytical value (Uphoff 1996:291).

Some colleagues, however, have dismissed the conceptual value of cultural energy as being 'not analytical enough'. I can only appeal to a similar criticism against the very much-related concept of 'social energy'. Social energy was coined by the respected economist Hirschman (1984), developed by Uphoff (1996) and affirmed by Chambers (1997:195-96). Though 'social energy' may seem such a 'soft' variable, Albert Hirschman found it useful to explain the emergence, in many parts of Latin America, of altruistic social relations that were 'more caring and less private' (Hirschman 1984:97). Working in Sri Lanka, Norman Uphoff (1996:17,

293, 357-87) resonated with Hirschman's concept because he witnessed similar manifestations of 'unexpected effort and creativity' coupled with 'fun' and 'friendship' among the formerly demoralised Sinhalese in the irrigation project in Gal Oya. On a different but still related context of theatre, Greenblatt identifies 'social energy' with the manifest 'capacity of certain verbal, aural, and visual traces to produce, shape, and organise collective physical and mental experiences' (Greenblatt 1994:508). Greenblatt's recognition of the mediation of objects such as costumes and props invested of meaning by the communities of producers and consumers down the centuries brings up the more 'cultural' dimension to social energy.

My preference for the term 'cultural energy' over 'social energy' is simply to highlight the role not just of social arrangements, incentives, or policies, but of the people's cultural resources. Among these resources are their languages and their ways of crafting them, their bodies and their ways of moving them, their tools and material resources and their ways of using them, their stories and their ways of telling them, their memories, rituals, symbols and their ways of interpreting and circulating them.

As I hope to show in my ethnography, this concept of social or cultural energy fits well in describing the dynamics of a cultural movement that aims precisely in redefining the practice of cultural politics as well as its analysis.

### **Reading the Studies**

This thesis is divided into chapters that are called 'Studies'---if only to convey the tentativeness of their exploratory framework and variations in writing. There is no attempt here to imitate 'classic monographs documenting unique and self-contained cultures'; it explores, instead, the form of a collection of essays drawn from a research experience, 'taking its point of departure in those nodal points in the networks of interrelations where there is a mutual cultural encounter' (Hastrup & Olwig 1997:5). This approach is reflected in the diversity of the sources that I explore in this thesis---from notes on conversations to newspaper clippings, from video footages to postcard designs. On this I find resonance with the lively development in fieldwork contextualisation as described, for instance, by Gupta & Ferguson 1997a:

Participant observation continues to be a major part of positioned anthropological methodologies, but it is ceasing to be fetishized; talking to and living with the members of a community are increasingly taking their place alongside reading newspapers, analysing government documents, observing the activities of governing elites, and tracking the internal logic of transnational development agencies and corporations. Instead of a royal road to holistic knowledge of 'another society,' ethnography is beginning to become recognisable as a flexible and opportunistic strategy for diversifying and making more complex our understanding of various places, people, and predicaments through an attentiveness to the different forms of knowledge available from different social and political locations. (Gupta & Ferguson 1997a:37; cf. Gupta & Ferguson 1997b; Marcus 1995; Marcus 1999).

The different Studies are differently situated, and so is the position of the researcher. I still hope, nevertheless, to achieve a sense of grip on the Mt. Apo situation.

My aim in **Study 1, 'Politics, Culture and Existence'**, is to present my search for a pre-fieldwork conceptual framework on the Lumad struggle in Mt. Apo based on its portrayal in London in mid-1990s. Using fragments of information from advocacy groups and academic circles, I first explore the political ecology agenda as an initial research guide. To this I add other cultural and existential themes. Most of this chapter was written before my actual stay in Mt. Apo. I am tempted to rewrite some paragraphs and introduce more recent references. For instance, the group of Escobar and Alvarez (1992) that provided a useful research trajectory in my preparatory Study, has recently come out with a revisioning of their earlier framework (Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar 1998; also Fox & Starn 1998). These recent volumes offer additional insights on the dynamics of cultural politics as applied to social movements.<sup>i</sup> I have decided, however, to simply abridge the original document and let it stand to be corrected or confirmed in the course of my narrative analysis. This is to approximate what Schepher-Hughes (1992:24) calls, 'the fumbling paths of the ethnographer in her own gradual process of misunderstanding and misrecognition, occasionally illuminated by small beacons of recognition and clarification.'

**Study 2, 'The Dissent of Mt. Apo'**, reveals the greater complexity of the Mt. Apo area that confronted the anthropological research enterprise. Although I have foreseen a number of the difficulties in getting access to the site, I never expected that after four weeks of self-presentation in the various village and tribal authorities, I would not be allowed to live near the controversial power plant. Instead

of delaying my research, however, the experience of rejection in fact yielded ample points for analysis on the political and cultural pressures the local people were experiencing. Methodologically, this episode is also important in that it highlights the issue of the personality and positionality of the researcher in the fieldwork situation.

More sensitive than the political question was the pain of culturelessness. In Sayaban, as in many Manobo villages, there was a feeling of being at a lowest rung compared to lowlanders and tribal people alike. In response to this 'cultural depression', a counter-movement emerges. **Study 3, 'Dancing on Borrowed Gongs'**, documents the 'simple steps and complex moves' of the *Umpan* clan. Mobilising their kin as a cultural organisation, the leaders prepare a way toward the re-energisation of the tribe and the claiming of their ancestral domain. Promising though this move was, it did not immediately bear fruit. **Study 4, 'Landmarks and Land Claims,'** detours to another area---Sitio Waterfalls and Pandanon. Here, the minute acts of generating a new geography helps the local people not only to reject a neighbouring datu's claim to their land, but also provided the idiom by which they could delineate their territory and claim their rights to it. The highlight of this Study is the subjective mapping of the communal land, with various memories and emotions that the people who formed *Tahapantau* attach to their land.

**Study 5, 'Beyond Collating Histories'** shifts back the focus on the Sayaban ancestral domain claim. While this involves a similar process of public consultation as in Pandanon, the highlight of this Study is the way the Tuddok and Apao members formed a movement and formulated a collective narrative in order to present a legitimate claim for their contested land. Here, individual experiences, informal communication lines, and vernacular strategies combine with paperwork and paralegal tactics to meet the requirements of a viable political move.

After recognising the contribution of the local people in the Mt. Apo cultural politics, I come back to the so-called main protagonists, the power project and the protesters. For this I have chosen the arena of ritual, in particular, the D'yandi of 1989, as the 'nodal point of encounter' between the two. **Study 6, 'The Embarrassment of Rituals,'** interrogates the formation of the protest discourse that flowed from the D'yandi watershed. It also documents PNOC's strategy to play in the same field using the protest idiom for its own purposes. I hope to show that both



the Power Company and its political opponents practically share the same essentialist or even instrumentalist cultural presuppositions about the Manobo of Mt. Apo. This revelation seeks to call greater appreciation of the cultural struggle proposed by the Tuddok movement.

The final Study is an extended reflection on the formation of cultural movement in Mt. Apo and the location of the researcher in witnessing to such a movement, hence its title '**Ethnography and Ethnogenesis**'. On the part of Tuddok, there is a realisation that a movement for cultural regeneration must recognise, to use the Latin American idiom, 'the political in the cultural' and 'the cultural in the political' (Alvarez, et al 1998). Even the most 'apolitical' family reunion, for example, is a hybrid of improvisations that makes Tuddok as much a political player as the protest groups. A parallel learning occurs on the part of the researcher. The researcher's presence in the movement definitely alters the dynamics of the local politics. Fieldwork, for its scientific and objectivist pretensions, is itself a social intervention prior to its textualization. In a sense, both social movement and the ethnographic researcher are engaged in the generation of cultural and political energies. If this is subjectivism or militancy I accept those terms.

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#### **Note to the Orientation**

<sup>1</sup> I appreciate their definition of 'cultural politics' as 'the process enacted when sets of social actors shaped by, and embodying, different cultural meanings and practices come into conflict with each other' (Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar 1998:7; cf. Fox & Starn 1998). This articulation, however, still remains focused on 'conflict' and 'protest'. It thus neglects the many ways that 'individuals and groups selectively engage and influence each other, often across politicised cleavages' (Warren 1998:19-20). Moreover, as my research hopes to show, the interactions among social actors are not limited to cultural meanings and practices. They are also mediated by objects, e.g. papers or musical instruments, and occasioned by cursory encounters and unexpected actors.

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## Study 1 **Politics, Culture, and Existence** London View of *Lumad* Struggle

*'Precise definition of misery is insufficient  
because it cannot perceive the dignity  
of the people. It overlooks the laughter,  
the struggle, the prayers, the music  
of those whom it regards as statistics.'*

--- Dorothee Soelle, 'Celebrating Resistance' (1993)

LONDON, AROUND 1994, was probably the best jumping-off point for a fieldwork in the Southern Philippines. Although the geographical and physical distance between the two places was immense, the relationship between the Philippine protest movement with the UK-based advocacy groups was intimate. Thus, aside from providing the healthy atmosphere for academic discussion, my stay in London gave me access to much of the relevant material on the legal, environmental and cultural issues on the case. This context also shaped the framework for my research. Most of the material and reference persons that I encountered at this early stage dealt with the politics of environmental change and indigenous people's rights, I took seriously the research agenda of political ecology. Soon, however, I had to integrate the cultural agenda as suggested by anthropologists. In addition, I followed my own existential and philosophical concerns. This Study charts the formation of this pre-fieldwork conceptual framework.

### **1. LUMAD VOICES, LONDON VIEWS**

My fieldwork, in a way, started in London. It was from a Minority Rights Group report (Rodil 1993), displayed by the Intermediate Technology Bookshop at Russell Square, that I learned about the Philippine National Oil Company's construction of a geothermal power plant right at the heart of the remaining rainforest of Mt. Apo

National Park. The Philippine Resource Centre (PRC), a London-based nongovernmental organisation, was then the nucleus of international network for Philippine social concerns. Aside from producing an information and action pack (PRC 1994), PRC published a newsletter called *Our Common Ground*. PRC provided me with NGO updates mailed or e-mailed from its Manila office. The Manila office, in turn, was received information from the Task Force Apo Sandawa (TFAS), the Legal Resource Centre (LRC-KSK), and other concerned groups in Manila, Davao and Kidapawan. PRC and other agencies like the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) facilitated the visit to London of a number of speakers from the Philippines who shared invaluable information that was difficult to locate back in the Philippines. Among the guest speakers who came to London was Era España, a Manobo spokesperson of the campaign against the PNOC power plant. Her interview, published by London-based newspaper *The Filipino*, provided personal touch to the dominantly NGO language. I would later meet Era in Mt. Apo and, most importantly, her sister would later become my research partner for the whole of my fieldwork.

The international advocacy provided strong links between local voices and global venues for co-operative action. Thanks to this networking, I got access to material which otherwise would not have been available elsewhere. For instance, I watched two video-documentary films on the issue, 'To the Last Drop of Blood' produced by Old Street Films (London, 1992) and 'Apo Sandawa: Sacred Mountain' produced by protest groups in the Philippines (TABAK 1994). (To my surprise, none of those I had dealt with during my one-and-a-half year fieldwork in the Philippines had ever seen them.) From the London School of Economics, I got hold of the rare eight-volume Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the PNOC (1991) of which even the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) in Davao City had no copy. My visit to the office of *Survival International* made me realise how far the campaign had gone.

In addition, my contact with the magazine *The Ecologist* facilitated my one-month exposure to the Narmada Bachao Andolan in India where I met the noble leader Medha Patkar. A side trip to the Akha villages in Northern Thailand just before beginning my work provided other perspectives on the plight of indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia. These experiences prepared me physically and psychologically for the

Mt. Apo struggle. My fieldnotes on the struggle of the Mt. Apo Lumad actually started from among their London counterparts.

What image of the struggle did I capture from the various materials and communication that I have encountered? The most dominant icon made about Mt. Apo was that of the crying mountain, violently punctured by a metallic and monstrous PNOC drill. The campaign slogan was 'Save Mt. Apo'. The campaign literature during the first five years since 1989 presented a strict polarisation between the government and indigenous peoples. The geothermal project was called an 'assault' on the sacred mountain (Kinaiyahan 1989). It was a devastating instance of 'development aggression' (TABAK 1990), something close to 'ethnocide' (MMNS 1993) against which the mountain had to be 'defended' (Fay, Royo & Gatmaytan 1989/1990; PRC 1994) because PNOC was 'a demon' 'wreaking havoc' (Manlongon 1989) on the lives of the Lumad and their environment. The indigenous peoples, in turn, were hailed as 'original environmentalists' (Tauli-Corpuz 1992) and faithful descendants of their ancestors (Agbayani 1993). A book, greatly inspired by the Lumad struggle, enthusiastically described it as a model for other environmentalist groups to follow. From the beginning of the book, we read:

The resistance of the Bagobo and other Lumad---and the confrontation---escalated. Two thousand Lumad from nine tribes met and signed a D'YANDI, an intertribal blood compact to defend their area from the project. It was an historic occasion: only the third Lumad D'YANDI since the thirteenth century, and the first time in history for all nine tribes here to gather as one. Their solemn words made the event all the more momentous: 'For us...the land is our life; a loving gift of [The Creator] to our race. We will die to defend it, even to the last drop of blood.' (Broad & Cavanagh 1993:34)

I was personally drawn to the general thrust of this campaign. Nevertheless, some descriptions of the situation, as I shall outline below, made me suspect that the situation was more complex than it had been publicly portrayed as being.

My search for a framework to understand the complex land struggle of the Lumad in face of the PNOC had led me to consider very seriously the *political ecology* agenda for Third World studies as sketched by Raymond Bryant (1992; see also Bryant, Rigg & Stott 1993). Bryant's seminal article offers a broad survey of relevant literature and identifying central analytical issues regarding the 'socio-economic impact' and 'political ramifications' of environmental change in the Third World. Nevertheless, I must immediately register my complaint, even at this point,

that the article leaves out so much of the 'cultural' sphere which social anthropologists would insist as important (Croll and Parkin 1992; Milton 1993). Initially, then, my task is to adopt the political ecology agenda but with a sensitivity to local idioms, images and processes.

My earlier interest in philosophical, poetic and liberationist issue (cf. Alejo 1990, 1993) draws my attention to questions of collective action, passion, and sources of strength especially of the subordinated groups in the process of their struggle. I am interested, in other words, in the 'remaking of social analysis' (R. Rosaldo 1989) which integrates the force of emotions (M. Rosaldo 1980; R. Rosaldo 1989) and passions (Robertson 1984; Crawford 1994) especially those connected with pain and suffering (Kleinman 1992). I want to learn how to undertake an anthropological analysis that does not 'flatten out' the 'brute fact' of hardship and hide it under the cover of statistics (Hastrup 1993); one that sees in the agency of the poor something more than mere resistance (Kaplan and Kelly 1994), and one that recognises local knowledge, unexpected creativity, and human energy (Turton 1984:63; Turton 1991:168) which, like pain, sometimes eludes prosaic articulation (Turton 1991a:6; Hastrup 1993). How, then, do I locate this philosophical *focus* within the political ecology *framework*?

First, I shall use Bryant's research agenda to review the existing literature on the Lumad land struggle and energy generation in Mt. Apo. I hope to identify the initial research target along the way. Second, I shall trace the trajectory for further study hinted at by Bryant himself, for which an anthropological job is needed. Finally, I shall introduce my own reflection on the possibility of expanding the discourse of struggle, by taking seriously both the collective experience of suffering and the cultural resources of the subordinated people and their supporters.<sup>1</sup>

# Action



**Urgent Action Bulletin**  
of Survival International,  
the worldwide movement  
to support tribal peoples.

April 1992



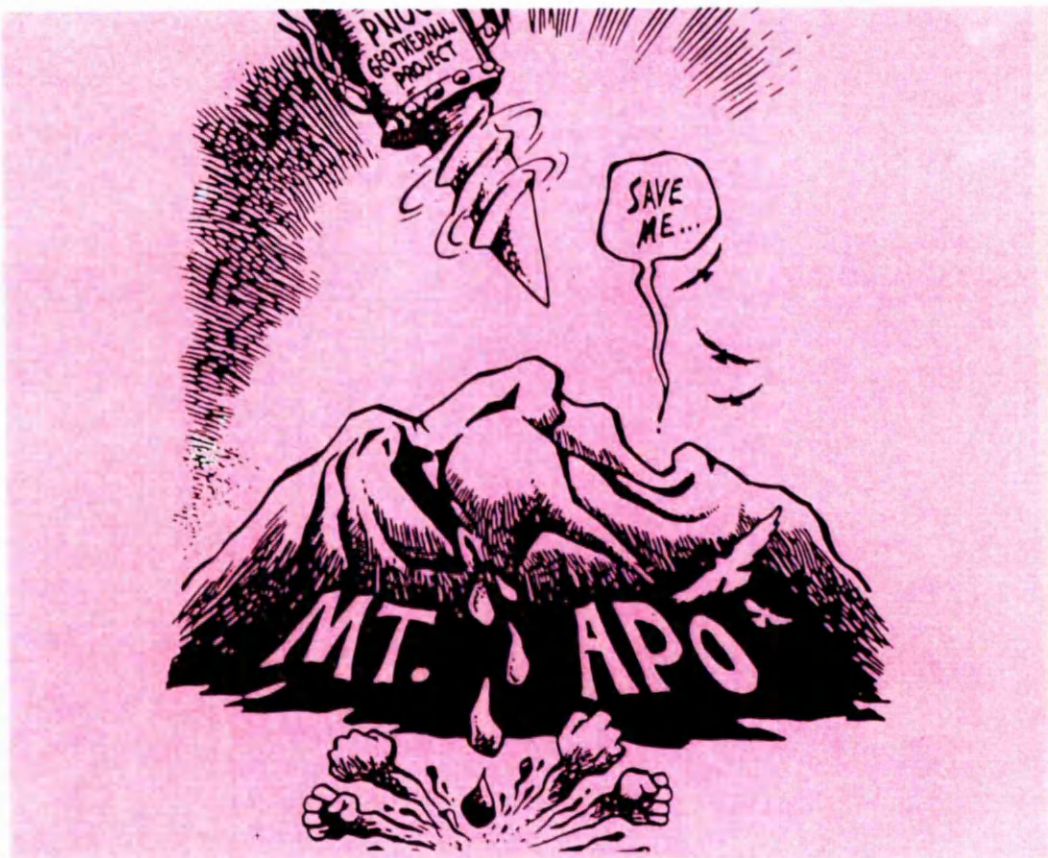
Photo: Neyeluhan Neyasu Grip

Lumad peoples at a 8,000 strong rally in protest at the construction of a huge power plant on their lands.

Philippines

## Drilling violates sacred tribal land

Figure 1.1 Survival International (London) action leaflet. One of the many campaign materials disseminated by advocates in response to the Lumad struggle in Mt. Apo.



**Figure 1.2** Top, Era España, who has been to London to speak against the geothermal project in Mt. Apo, witnesses the fumes coming out of PNOC wells. Such sights are translated into icons of protest (above) showing the sacred mountain as victim of development aggression (PRC 1994).



## 2. POLITICISED ENVIRONMENT

Over the phone, Raymond Bryant admitted that his essay (1992) failed to integrate culture into his framework. During a shared lunch, he even expressed regret for such omission.<sup>2</sup> Culture *is* important! Towards the end of our conversation, however, I understood that perhaps it was not so much a blunder as a gambit on his part to be taking a different offensive. He was avoiding the other tendency among some ecologists to reduce the issue of environment to 'cultural ecology' or 'human ecology'. He wanted to attack the real issue of power politics and its impact---or what he called the 'bite'---on the disadvantaged groups. In the process of environmental change, some people suffer more than others do. Some people even get killed. Not all are equally exposed to danger. So we could not simply talk about values and meanings, or even global statistics and planetary catastrophes. Although environmental discourse can sound universal, the impact is very much local. So are the power-laden practices and policies. It is very much political.

I resonated with him. I realised that what had drawn me to Bryant's article, even more than its schematic research agenda, was its positioned analysis of facing the power relations involved in the alteration of the environment. This critical analysis, with a kind of preferential attention to the 'socially-disadvantaged groups' does not, however, overlook the 'complexities of political and environmental interaction'. His framework 'aims to unify but through an appreciation of plurality of purpose and flexibility in explanation' (Bryant 1992:14). This section, which shall have three parts, is meant to elaborate on the intricate political dimension of the research. The first part is a discussion of Bryant's political ecology agenda for the Third World, supplemented by other authors like Hirsch (1990) and Peet & Watts (1993). The second is a reading of the Mt. Apo materials in light of this framework. I shall end with a short reflection on the tension within this political framework using some ideas from Bhabha (1994), Asad (1993) and others. I hope to develop from this an anthropology *of* and *in* tension.



### The Politics of Environmental Change

It is an understatement to say that the issue of environmental change is complex. There are, as we have noted earlier, influential national and multinational institutions whose policies and practices affect the destinies of lands, rivers and peoples. When the environment is changed, there are also consequences that either reinforce or challenge existing social arrangements. But the complexity of the issue lies not only in the diversity of causes and consequences, but also in the heterogeneity of each actor involved and the discourses developed in the process of their interaction. This may sound too abstract. The point is that reductionism (Bryant 1992:13) or simplism (Wiber 1993:139), whether economic or ecological, has to be avoided. We cannot put all the blame of environmental damage on one institution such as the state, or canonise all indigenous peoples as ecological saints (cf. Lewis 1992). The task is to refine our conceptual tools and to keep on searching for the right questions, localising not only our strategies (Fardon 1990) but also our critique (Hobart 1993).

The first object of investigation is what Bryant calls '*contextual sources*' namely the state and the market. Neither of the two should be treated as monolithic entities. State policies, for instance, are products of different and often conflicting pressures coming from various government agencies, national and transnational corporations and even strong NGOs. Their contents are vulnerable to the intervention of powerful economic and political elite. Corruption in the implementation stage may negate hard-won positive formulation in the policy. The environmental impact also changes according to whether it is implemented directly by the state or indirectly through other social groups. Inter-state relations also affect natural resources, whether through bombing in times of war, or through trade in times of peace. Likewise, the market has to be seen not as a homogenous institution. There are small as well as large industrial and commercial firms. Some have notorious history of carelessness with their toxic waste disposal, while some are more conscientious.

The second area of inquiry---*conflict over access*---deserves more emphasis especially in the carrying out an ethnographic study. There are two aspects here---*historical perspectives* and *contemporary dynamics* of conflict. Certainly, conflict over land and other natural resources predates Western colonialism and capitalism, but these two undoubtedly mark a qualitative change in the history of Third World

countries. It is painful to note that many of the practices of independent states seem to be a mere continuance of the old colonial processes. These colonial processes oftentimes strike at the heart of ascribed identity of marginalized peoples. 'Historically', Phillip Hirsch explains, 'marginal peoples have become defined as such largely as a product of the colonial and postcolonial organisation of national space.' Following Ben Anderson, Hirsch continues. A group is marginal only in relation to the centre. Thus, the imposition of new centres on peripheries, such as Jakarta on Irian Jaya or Kuala Lumpur on Sarawak, at once marginalises people and the territory they occupy as a consequence of incorporation...Tribal groups not only live in marginal territory; they also occupy marginal land (Hirsch 1990:56). An ethnographer should at least be aware that some of the conflicts in the field might date back to colonial structures under the guise of contemporary issues.

The *contemporary dynamics* of ground-level conflicts may touch on several issues. One issue concerns the relation between geography and people's mobilisation. The relative nearness of people to an affected area may influence, if not determine, the shape of their organisations, coalitions or network of support. Spatial fragmentation, difficulty of reaching other groups, and means of transportation may also restrain or promote particular forms of action. Here, the aspect of technology is important. Transnational corporations usually have more access to informational and technological resources than local villages. But it still has to be determined whether superiority in material provisions always effectively outweighs other less tangible human resources. Another important issue is the internal complexity of '*contextual actors*'. A more careful inquiry must unpack common stereotypes like 'the peasant', 'the indigenous people', 'the State' because they are in reality more complex than they are usually represented. Many scholars fall into the trap of simplifying reality because they "assume that local processes of change are 'merely micro-level manifestations of national and international processes' rather than a reflection of complex local political economics worthy of study in their own right." (Bryant, Rigg & Stott 1993:105). On this point, we have to ask whether political and economic *elites* always act unanimously. Isn't state unity jeopardised by divergent personal and bureaucratic interests? Do transnational corporations and the state always concur?

Are the agenda of the local environmentalists locally discerned or uncritically adopted from foreign funding agencies?

Parallel questions can be asked about the subordinate groups: To what extent do the official male, old tribal leaders, for instance, represent the views of indigenous women and the young? To what extent are villagers an undifferentiated mass, united in their destitution? Are they not also caught up in differentiated relations with the powerful and with each other, and does this not translate into differing interests and objectives in conflict over access? Attention to these local processes is extremely important if we are to avoid the facile dichotomization of local versus national, village versus state, etc. (cf. Bryant, Rigg & Stott 1993:106).

There is danger, of course, in making too many nuances that in the end only serve those who are in power. But blanket generalisations can sometimes be more disastrous.

At the heart of this political concern is the way environmental change impacts on the socio-economic life and political processes of the people, especially the poor. What happens when, as a product of various global, national and local actions, the environment is altered? To understand this, the researcher must, first of all, develop a location-specific understanding of the physical and biological processes of change. I must confess that the technical side of this is yet beyond me. But it is enough to recognise what Bryant distinguishes as 'episodic' and 'everyday' change. *Episodic change* refers to massive flooding, drought, and similar disasters, whether manmade or natural. *Everyday change* includes erosion, salinization, deforestation, and pollution which, because they are gradual and spatially dispersed, are usually not well recognised. Both processes result, at times, in the marginality of the land and also its people. One might be led to notice only the episodic change to the neglect of the everyday. One must also take note when the two are combined in the experience of the same community. Some questions may arise: How does the ecological marginality of the land relate to the social marginality of the people? Since not all are equally exposed to these effects, how is existing inequality reinforced or challenged?

To appreciate the profound impact of this process, it is well to realise that when we deal with land, we deal with something more than abstract space. Land is multi-dimensional in meaning and valuation. It is a political territory, an economic

resource and a cultural and even spiritual base (cf. Hirsch 1990:55). Marginalisation, therefore, also means more than location transfer. Those who are displaced due to environmental changes like deforestation or the construction of big dams, unless sincerely done in consultation with them, may feel a whole way of life being negated. This is particularly true of upland dwelling ethnic minorities who have generally shown a peculiar attachment to land (Hirsch 1990:55).

As a reaction, people may form resistance movements. True to his bias, Bryant (1992:26-27) offers some questions for research: In the face of environmental crises, is there space for the most affected people to air their protest? Are their voices heard? Are they strong enough to change the local power structures? What is the powerful elite doing in the face of these protests? What about the support groups? Are environmental movements vulnerable to the manipulation of the local politicians? Or are they imposing agenda coming from their funding agencies? What kinds of coalitions are being formed? How effective are they?

Peet and Watts push the political ecology agenda even farther. In their article, Peet and Watts (1993) use poststructural and postmodernist critique against the environmental consequences of modernity and point to 'new directions in political ecology for the 1990's'. The new agenda involves philosophical critique of classical and traditional paradigms including class-based Marxist analysis and old-fashioned ecology based on stability and harmony. It also recognises new social agents, like women's association, self-help groups, artistic clubs, basic Christian communities, in addition to the well-known contextual actors such as state and the local economic elite. Correspondingly, the new political ecology gives more space for everyday forms of political action, civic movements, and popular protests in line with so-called 'liberation ecology' or 'ecology of the poor'. It also opens the way for new research projects like doing alternative environmental histories, social construction of the environment, articulation of local ecological knowledge, and exploring indigenous forest management. Peet & Watts' more sophisticated use of discourse analysis complements Bryant's framework in that it helps us to recognise more actors in the field and appreciate more actions on the scene.

In addition, there is one point that stands out in Peet and Watts' article---at least for my own purposes. Unlike Bryant, Peet and Watts pay more attention to

culture and the production of meaning. They not only give more credence to Scott's everyday form of resistance; they also acknowledge that social and environmental protest movements are also cultural struggles for meaning, for a whole alternative way of life, for an alternative to development (Peet & Watts 1993:246-7). They get this from other writers, most prominently the Colombian development anthropologist Arturo Escobar who, in turn has enriched his Foucauldian analysis of discourse with Touraine's understanding of social movements. The new political ecology for the 1990's moves towards a politics of the people, not just of the state; an economics of livelihood organisations, not just of global capitalists.

It is interesting that to demonstrate their point, Peet & Watts use as example the account of Broad & Cavanagh (1993) on the Philippine environmental movement. The movement consists of 5-6 million members of various ecological groups 'which arise from the intersection of political-economic plunder and local demands for participation and justice' (Peet & Watts 1993:247). Feel this more positive valuation from Broad and Cavanagh themselves:

In this decade and into the twenty-first century, old and new Philippine movements with novel ideas and a battery of strategies will be creating sustainable-development alternatives that are exciting and challenging not only for Filipinos but for all people seeking new ways to hold the earth together while making life better for its inhabitants. The catalyst: fragile ecological Lumad that have been passed. The actors: one of the most dynamic networks of citizens' groups in the world, building on decades of activity. Key ingredients: enormous amounts of vision, of hope, and commitment. The result: one of the most fertile countries in the world for experiments based on a different kind of people's power. (Broad & Cavanagh 1993:157)

A few good examples immediately come to mind: the protest movement against the Chico River Dam Project in the Cordillera Region, and the Basic Christian Community struggle against illegal logging in Bukidnon (Gaspar 1990) and mining in Marinduque (Rutten 1994). I wonder if this applies to Mt. Apo as well. For a while, the local protest and international solidarity movement were intense and creative. Later, however, I received a letter from a lawyers' NGO working directly with the Lumad and their supporters. 'Sad to say,' the regional co-ordinator laments, 'the multi-sectoral task force of indigenous peoples advocates is not as active as before.'<sup>3</sup> Several other sources confirm this state. We need to explore the complexity of the local situation.

### Political Complexity of Mt. Apo

Instead of literally following political ecology research agenda---from contextual sources, conflict over access, political ramifications, and new directions for the 1990s---I shall limit my discussion in this section to the aspect of complexity of the discourses of various actors. I shall rely on existing printed materials and personal communication. One such personal communication is from a Jesuit historian. While sympathising with the environmentalists in their care for Mt. Apo, he cautions me against a 'simplistic view' of the situation. 'It is not a fight between the native Bagobo on the one hand and the government on the other', he says, but 'between the government development project on one hand and the environmentalist and conservationists on the other. The Bagobo may also be on the side of the latter'. His advice: 'Don't take things for granted, as too many of our so-called sociologists and others have been doing---including some Jesuits.'<sup>4</sup>

This is, indeed, a wise warning, but it does not seem to be liberal enough. It still presupposes the homogeneity of the contextual actors. Judging from the initial reports, even the Lumad people---just like the State---are not of one voice.

First, the Lumad people do not seem to be united against the project. The D'yandi ritual held on 13 April 1989 'attests to the unity of the Datus of southern Mindanao in defending our ancestral lands'. But it also warns the well-foreseen violators: 'Whoever attempts to violate, subvert and betray this D'yandi (pact) will be cursed and punished with death' (See Appendix 1). Less than three years later, on 10 March 1992, an 84-year old Manobo presided over counter-ritual called *pamaas*, sponsored by the PNOC (cf. recommendation of EIA 1991, Main Report). It was to exorcise the evil spirits awakened by the D'yandi. This pro-project stance was followed by another Manobo tribal war ritual called *pangayaw* held on 17 April 1993 to warn those who were against the completion of the development project. D'yandi holders maintained, however, that no matter how the PNOC manipulated the tribal customs, the effects of the D'yandi would prevail because it is the most sacred of all Lumad pacts. So again, on 17 May 1992, opposition led by the 85-year old Bagobo Datu Tulalang Maway, who was a participant of the original D'yandi, performed still another ritual called *kanduli* or *panipas* at the peak of Mt. Apo. This ritual was traditionally done when a group was preparing for a defensive battle.<sup>5</sup> Although this

does not necessarily mean war (Rodil 1993:21), violence may erupt if the government does not clarify its stand on the real issue of ancestral land (TABAK 1994).

Secondly, to speak of 'the government' as if it were consistently one actor is not accurate. The actual body taking the initiative in tapping the geothermal energy in Mt. Apo is the PNOC. In 1983, still under the Marcos regime, this government-owned oil corporation began the exploration by requesting permission from the Ministry of National Resources that immediately denied it because the Revised Forestry Code ruled against commercial exploitation of national parks. On 1 April 1987, the PNOC was given an Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) by the National Environmental Council (NEPC) only for the exploratory phase of the project. PNOC, however, took it as a go signal for immediately constructing roads to the project site. In September of the same year, the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) suspended the ECC of the PNOC which, in turn, defied these moves and pursued its operations. PNOC must have found substantial amount of reserves. It planned to dig a total of 170 wells as part of the ten-year energy development programme of the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR). The local target was to produce 220 megawatts of electricity. By 25 July 1988, two exploratory wells had already been established, this time with the blessings of then president Corazon Aquino.<sup>6</sup> Volume 8 of the 'government' sponsored EIA (PNOC 1991) documents further the various conflicting positions held by other state agencies and local government, vis-à-vis the spectrum of opinions coming from private organisations, academics, NGOs and Church peoples. It is not clear, though, to what extent were the rich and powerful business elite behind the final decision of the government on 23 January 1993---formally signed by the new president at the time, Fidel Ramos.

The military situation is unclear at this point. But it is recorded that when the Communist New People's Army entered the scene during the Lumad showdown of rituals, the government sent police units and army regulars. The more than five battalions already deployed as early as March 1992 was even increased by 1,000 men by the middle of July the same year. In addition, some 500 tribal men were recruited to patrol around the project site (Rodil 1993:22). Tribal opposition then begun to be labelled communists; some of them detained by paramilitary forces (Broad &

Cavanagh 1993:34). 'I asked for help,' cried Datu Mambiling Ansabu, 'the government gave me a warrant of arrest.' (MMNS 1993). A 40,000-peso reward was allegedly offered for the head of Datu Tulalang, the oldest living Bagobo *magani* or warrior (Rodil 1993:22). Two Manobo leaders were killed by the military, 'allegedly because of their efforts to demand promised compensation and benefits from PNOC for their displaced communities' (Mincher 1993:231). Of course, the military had casualty, too, under the hands of the New People's Army (NPA) who in 1992 attacked the drill site (PRC 1994:13; cf. Film, *To the Last Drop of Our Blood* 1992). The NPA, however, had a rather ambiguous presence because we know that as a group, it has been shown to benefit from the devastating logging business not only in Mindanao but also in the rest of the country (cf. Vitug 1993).

One group, which has not been heard enough, is the women. It is not my intention to raise the issue of patriarchy if it, in the end, is not an issue for the Lumad. I believe, at this point of the research, that the Lumad women are contributing more than they are represented. My guess is based on scanty but promising accounts. During the First Asian Indigenous Women's Conference, held in Manila in 1993, there was a workshop on 'The Participation of Indigenous Women in the Struggle for Land Rights and the Right to Self-determination.' The Proceedings recorded that during the D'yandi, women participated---and for interesting reason: 'Women support the protection of Mt. Apo, as it is their source of water and livelihood (Santos 1993:177). Era España---'a child of Mt. Apo'---represented her Bagobo and Lumad people in a talk given at the Philippine Resource Centre in 1993. 'Sturdy of physique' wrote Terra who interviewed her, 'Era España belongs to this new stock of Bagobo activists who have learned to use a variety of methods, short of armed struggle' (1993:22). Rodil also mentions a certain Lingka Ansula, 'a tribal representative for women from the opposition.' When President Ramos signed the final memorandum of agreement among the local officials including (male) tribal leaders in favour of continuing the geothermal project, Lingka Ansula said directly to the President. She said, 'This is a day of sorrow for all people who stand up in defence of Apo Sandawa against the Philippine National Oil Company' (Rodil 1993:22). But like the rest of the people, different groups of women may have different opinions on the matter. The survey of the EIA team for the socio-cultural impact of the project reveals that contrary to the



official opposition stand of the tribal leaders, ordinary households, especially the women, express approval of the whole geothermal plant project (PNOC 1991).

The most complex of all is the question of ancestral land itself. 'We want our ancestral domain recognised,' Jimid Mansayagan reiterates, 'That is the minimum and maximum demand' (MMNS 1993:81). A long list of references backs up this statement.<sup>7</sup> The legal myths and obstacles can theoretically be surmounted in purely legal debates (e.g. Leonen 1991). Advocates, however, still have to contend with the harsher political tussles with big landed elite in congress, some of whom have dismissed the bill that recognises ancestral lands as 'one of the most divisive and emotional bills' (Vitug 1993:148).

The indigenous peoples themselves, however, are not without conflict. Other sympathetic observers and activists could not hide the complexity of the problem. A seminar-presenter who visited Britain to discuss Philippine foreign debt, shared with me a photocopy of the 200-page study made by Philippine Rural Rehabilitation Movement (PRRM) on the EIA of Mt. Apo Geothermal Project. The unpublished document expressed disillusionment because of the 'diatribes' being thrown at each other by the tribal groups who claim legitimacy in representing the Lumad. This left the people confused. PRRM, a member of the Task Force Apo Sandawa, explained:

In the first place, there is no single official Lumad position; secondly, that neither camp can lay claim to a position representative of the true sentiments of the majority of the Lumad peoples...Having established earlier the basis for concluding that tribal groups living around the peaks of Mt. Apo have every right to claim Mt. Apo as their ancestral domain, it does not necessarily follow that these tribal groups do not favour an intrusion into their ancestral domain, nor the sale of their rights of ancestral ownership. Moreover, it does not necessarily follow that concepts translate automatically into practice. This point is especially relevant to the question of how legitimate are the official declarations of various tribal groups on the MAGPP [Mt. Apo Geothermal Plant Project] issue. (PRRM n.d.:160)<sup>8</sup>

I was informed recently that even some of those who participated in the 1989 D'yandi are now beginning to reconsider their stance (i.e. Are they willing to fight it out till the end as they have 'vowed' some years ago?). This is perhaps because of the prospect that the project might after all serve their interests and apparently because they feel their environmentalist supporters have become more enthusiastic than necessary. Some of them seem to be telling the NGOs: 'Please, let us be!'<sup>9</sup>

Lack of applicable and credible research aggravates the situation. Although the law seems clear on its definition of ancestral domain (Gatmaytan, A. 1992). And Philippine law apparently 'goes further than any other Asian countries in recognising the principles of indigenous land rights and ancestral domain' (Plant 1994:24). It remains a problem, however, how to ascertain the particular claims of legitimacy of ownership, considering that apparently many of the indigenous peoples have already changed their customs (PRRM 1994:160). Precisely in the Mt. Apo case, the hype in lobbying has not been matched by careful documentation (Rodil 1995, private communication). Perhaps on this point, Plant's hitherto unnoticed suggestion should be taken seriously. The prevailing 'indigenous paradigm'---which obstinately looks back to the past as evidence and claim ---should yield to a more 'forward-looking' approach which considers 'not so much on historical rights as on present-day need' (1994:34).

### **In-between Spaces**

What we have done so far is to unpack the complexity of the political situation in Mt. Apo. Without pretending to be exhaustive, the preceding discussion has at least allowed us to appreciate the changing (because changeable) character of the contextual actors as they interact with one another in the brief course of about eight years from the late '80s to the present. We find the Philippine government, represented by conflicting interests and corruptible programs, under three different administrations, and continuously vulnerable to economic and political pressures. We see the indigenous peoples themselves as partly the creators of their destiny and partly the creatures of the practices and strategies of both their supporters and their enemies. We get a glimpse of how an intervention in the environment could have ambiguous political effects---forging unity among separate tribes as well as loosening old ties; welcoming external solidarity groups towards a stronger mobilisation, as well as driving them away to allow space for reflection. But how then does this tally with our original preferential inclination to analyse the situation from the worms eye view of the dispossessed?

First of all, despite the nuances of our discursive analysis, it remains a fact that some people have been and will be 'more' marginalized than others in the course of

the project implementation. Some 29,000 people have allegedly been 'driven away from their homes and lands by military operations' (PRC 1994:13). While this report appears grossly exaggerated, it still calls attention to a number of families who have definitely been asked to leave the project area. As Hirsch has already described it, whenever you build a centre in the once marginalized area, you also begin to push some people to the margins. Every creation of a centre produces new peripheries.

Secondly, the split---the resulting division between the Lumad---should be seen as a product itself of the development intervention. Not that there had been no conflict among indigenous peoples prior to colonialism and mobile capitalism. It is just that the present promise---and threat---of development seems to have a qualitative impact stronger than what they have experienced during their fight against Muslim raiders, Spanish conquistadores, and American and Japanese plantation managers during the last part of the 19th century up to the early 20th century (cf. Hayase 1985:150; Gloria 1987:130-32).

Lastly, a sincere attempt to accurately assess the situation is not a disservice to the poor, especially now that there seems to be a lull in the media campaign, and that many external supporters are turning their eyes to 'hotter issues' in the field. To reach the edge of analysis is to simply explore what Homi Bhabha calls the 'in-between space' where 'primordial polarities' and 'originary identities' are negotiated and recreated, according to the particular genius of the people especially the 'minority'. Bhabha underscores the importance of this theoretical point in social and cultural research:

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood -- singular or communal -- that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (Bhabha 1994:1-2)

The 'naive intellectual' Bhabha explains elsewhere, 'will be disappointed' because those whom he protects from change are themselves changing (1994:38-39).

Bhabha, however, is quick to remind us that if this 'postmodernist' gesture lends itself to a kind of 'celebration of fragmentation' and does not expand into an 'ex-centric site of experience and empowerment' of the displaced peasants and aboriginal communities, then 'for all its intellectual excitement, it remains a

profoundly parochial enterprise' (1994:5). Similarly, Talal Asad (1993:10) attacks this crude postmodernist tendency in James Clifford's 'cheerfulness' in discussing the fragmentation of human agency due to global mobility. Mobility and changes in identity, for many people, means 'uprootedness and superfluosity'. Asad hits the heart of the issue: 'If people are physically and morally uprooted, they are easily moved, and when they are easy to move, they are more easily rendered physically and morally superfluous' (Asad 1993:10-11). There, I think, is the violence.

To insist on complexity in critical analysis is *not* to diminish the concrete impact of social and environmental intervention especially on the poor. It is to create space for a better appreciation of the emergent energy of a people in struggle. We expand the interstices between traditional categories to make way for new forms of agency, according to the new world of meanings they are continuously reshaping. When some of the Lumad leaders say to their NGO supporters, 'Let us be!' I get a clue to what might be the next step in this research: to see that the environmental and political movement of the Lumad is somehow linked to their cultural, and even existential, struggle.

### 3. CULTURAL MOVEMENT

It is not accurate to think that the cultural dimension is something one *inserts*, as it were, to fill in the gap gaping in political and economic analyses. It is not something we try to *integrate* after we have already drawn the policies and practices of the state, or after measuring the impact of capitalism on vulnerable villages, or after assessing the logistical strength of a people's resistance against some powerful elite. It is probably more accurate to say that cultural analysis takes seriously what ultimately is at stake in a people's struggle: not just livelihood, but a way of life, and not just difference, but also---and more importantly---dignity. How does this anthropological concern enrich the political agenda?

#### **Anthropological Contributions**

The cultural agenda in Bryant's political ecology framework comes at the end and is apparently not significantly integrated into the political ecology framework. For instance, in his penultimate paragraph, Bryant concedes, almost as an afterthought:

'As this agenda emerges, new issues will need to be addressed---the role of ideology and culture in environmental change seems particularly important' (1992:28). But the importance ascribed to this role is confined to how the perception of the environment and environmental change influences the nature and extent of such change. There is neither a mention of cultural impact nor of cultural resources for political movement. This analysis, according to Bryant, can be enriched by peasant studies and power analysis. I hope to contribute to this aspect in my research.

In the Philippine scene, the cultural agenda is discussed in legal anthropology which often speaks of an 'interface' between customary law and state law (Aranal-Sereno & Libarios 1983; Plant 1989, 1994; Manuel 1976; Gatmaytan 1992; Wiber 1993). This 'interfacing' is also done between environmental studies and field ethnography (e.g. Walpole 1993). Unfortunately, they are mostly on the northern tribes and nothing substantial has been done directly related to the Mt. Apo area (cf. Gloria 1987; Agbayani 1993).<sup>10</sup> I have a feeling that this lacuna in technical literature is symptomatic of the failure of political advocacy due to a concentration on winning political battles to the unfortunate neglect of fundamental cultural research. In other words, the current literature would probably suffice to fill the framework of a political ecology of Mt. Apo, but it stands to be enriched by more reflective anthropological study of the discourses and practices of the Lumad and their friends in solidarity.

This reflective (not just analytical) study of discourses and practices of the actors in the field leads to one of my theoretical points in this paper, namely, that the conceptual poverty of some versions of political ecology is due to insufficient appreciation of the role of culture in understanding environmental and political change. This 'cultural' weakness does not lie so much in the neglect of symbols, myths, cosmologies and other elements termed 'indigenous', as in the facile dismissal of the experience and agency of 'contextual actors'. I know I must substantiate this statement.

Despite the call for greater 'sensitiv[ity] to the social and ecological marginality of the poor' (Bryant 1992:26), there seems to be a deep suspicion as to the net effectivity of the resistance of the subordinate people. Questions like 'How successful is such resistance in overcoming political economic power configuration disposed to perpetrating the *status quo*?' (Bryant 1992:27) are, of course, a warning

against political naivete and readiness to canonise the poor (Mendelsohn & Baxi 1994:11). But to extend this covert suspicion to overt *pessimism* denies, I think, the dignity of the poor. A paragraph from one application of political ecology is disconcerting:

What Scott (1985) terms 'weapons of the weak' are just that---tools which the relatively powerless use to circumvent or attenuate the oppression of powerful elite, but which rarely result in the domination of detested social order... This feeling of pessimism *pessimism pessimism pessimism* was particularly strong with regard to the ability of tribal groups to resist the encroachment of lowland peoples... Not surprisingly, therefore, the workshop kept returning to the idea that the protection of residual forests depends *primarily* on the actions of outside or 'non-local' groups. (Bryant, Rigg & Stott 1993:107. *Highlighting supplied.*)

To say that 'local empowerment' is not enough is to state the obvious (cf. Turton 1984). There is indeed a need for networking and solidarity building, the significance of which I hope to re-establish towards the end of this Study. But to blame the victim for not overpowering the aggressor is not only adding insult to injury; it is yielding to the temptation of intellectual sloth, if not professional arrogance. At the very least, it shows lack of sensitivity to the human experience of being both subject *and* object of action in history (cf. Asad 1993).

But what does it mean to appreciate the action of subordinate people? I shall attempt to respond to this question by first reviewing the analytical value of resistance in understanding people's struggle. I suggest that the usual military metaphor associated with this word conceals the richer dimensions of human agency in general. Secondly, I would like to show that the more culture-sensitive view of human agency allows us to consider not just the efficacy of the actions as such but the energy by which such actions are made possible. Lastly, I would argue that the experience of pain and suffering deserves to be integrated in social analysis as it both qualifies the usual socio-economic and political assessment of social reality as well as grounds human solidarity.

The military metaphors<sup>11</sup> used in describing 'resistance movements' seem to affect the observers' valuation of the people's action such labelled. Placed in the topography of power confrontation, resistance apparently becomes significant only to the extent that it dislodges the powerful or catapults the powerless to positions of power. The focus then turns to the political consequence of the action and hardly on



the significance of the action itself and much less on the process of empowerment. 'Even for those who believed in local empowerment', according to a consensus of concerned political ecologists, 'reform was in part and inevitably a 'top-down' process-- the 'surrender' of powers, rather than their seizure from below' (Bryant, *et al* 1993:107). I am afraid that in the end, the poor would probably find it hard to celebrate whatever victory they might win if this were 'seized' for them by 'outside experts' in the legal, economic or political arena, or if it were grudgingly 'surrendered' by the prevailing power wielders. Call it dignity, or pride, or subjectivity---the point is that something is stolen from the poor who, after being marginalized by their aggressors are now demeaned by their saviours. It is unfortunate that this kind of thinking sometimes comes from those who support the cause of the disadvantaged.

Tauli-Corpuz (1992) could not hide her resentment against what she calls 'tokenism' of some environmental NGOs themselves, especially at the national and international levels. Tauli-Corpuz observes a gap between the beautifully worded principles and the errant practice of these organisations when the indigenous peoples try to 'empower themselves and assert their rights'. For sure, the support of environmentalists and indigenous peoples' rights advocates are 'appreciated' and that 'without such advocacy, they would have had even more difficult battles', but this should not give them license to, as it were, steal the show. The indigenous peoples want to speak for themselves. 'The time is past when experts can be brought in from the outside to analyse and interpret the practice and knowledge of indigenous peoples.' Tauli-Corpuz argues that instead of the advocates imposing their own values and norms, they should instead help in 'enabling and allowing the indigenous [people] to speak out in venues where their fate is being discussed' (Tauli-Corpuz 1992:10-11).

We could go on discussing this growing disenchantment with discourse of environmentalists and developmentalists (cf. Milton 1993; Hobart 1993). But at the heart of the issue, is the working presupposition about human agency. Those who undervalue the resistance of the subordinate people might be expecting too much and therefore get frustrated. Those who tend to glorify it, on the other hand, might be

exaggerating their claims and become disillusioned later. A review of understanding human agency is in order.

Recent reflections suggest that there is more to people's action than what 'resistance' normally implies. Kaplan and Kelly (1994), in their article aptly called 'Rethinking Resistance', advocates a writing of the history of people's 'disaffection' which avoids 'a method that can only find the agency of colonised people under the rubric of "resistance"' (1994:125). They take off from their reading of Gramsci, according to whom resistance, despite its ordinary connotation of people's action, is 'largely passive and unconscious' because the subaltern is merely 'resisting' a will external to itself. It is when the subaltern begins to take the initiative, to act rather than just to react, that the subaltern becomes an 'agent'. Agency, then, replaces resistance. Kaplan and Kelly deny this. The subaltern's action is not a mere 'resistance', not a mere 'thing', nor a mere 'non-responsibility' (1994:126). Resistance, in this light, constitutes only an oppositional moment of a more positive project. People are creating, even as they appear to be merely negating. This is especially seen in everyday life.

### **Theorising Everyday Life**

For all its importance, cultural struggle or cultural politics remains invisible to conventional forms of analysis (Peet & Watts 1993). This section, therefore, aims to show how it can be highlighted. Escobar's works shall be the main guide in the initial task of refining our conceptual tools. Other scholars of Southeast Asia who have developed quite related ideas will also be consulted. Then we can see how this approach may contribute to the ethnography of Mt. Apo contemporary situation.

What seems to be at stake in the cultural struggle of the people is not a set of symbols or myths or tradition, but the recognition of the people as agents. People are acting, albeit in limited but also unique ways, according to their understanding of who they are and what they want. The problem emerges when the categories and practices employed by social analysts, development planners and even environmental activists, do not correspond to the categories and practices of the people. Most often, there is an overlap. Both groups might be interested in some form of development. But it also happens that the perceptions and the practices of the subordinate people are *subsumed*



into the discourses of those that plan for them or support them. This, to my mind, is what is meant by the 'invisibility' of cultural politics (cf. Escobar 1992a:70; 1995). What we need, then, is a set of 'conceptual tools, a grammar' (cf. Ito 1979:23) that would help 'make the cultural dimension more visible' (Peet & Watts 1993:247).

Several social theorists in Southeast Asia have already offered good approaches to this concern. We can mention them very quickly. James Scott has pointed out that the 'everyday forms of resistance', powerfully called the 'weapons of the weak' (1985) (cf. 'hidden transcripts', Scott 1990) of the subordinate groups which 'make no headlines' might in the end be 'the most significant and the most effective over the long run' (1985:xvi). Much of the criticism against Scott seems to focus on the efficacy of such actions as foot dragging, pilfering, gossip, feigned ignorance, etc. But Scott's anthropological and phenomenological approach looks beyond the political weight of such 'behaviours'. Many have missed this point. 'Inasmuch as I seek to understand the resistance of thinking, social beings,' Scott explains, 'I can hardly fail to ignore their consciousness---the meaning they give to their acts' (1985:38). These little meanings given to the little actions of little people must not be seen as 'trivial or inconsequential' (1985:42) for how else can we understand the big, organised rebellions without an adequate account of their shared values and 'offstage talk'? 'How can we understand everyday forms of resistance without reference to the intentions, ideas and language of those human beings who practice it?' (1985:38). Escobar agrees with Scott and perhaps defends this position more forcefully. While it is important to say that not all forms of collective action have similar social, cultural and political value, so-called 'minor forms of resistance' should not be dismissed just because they do not achieve a substantial structural transformations in society. 'Part of the problem', Escobar argues, 'is a certain empirical simplification and political reductionism that leads researchers to focus their attention on the measurable aspects of protest, such as confrontation with the political system and the impact on state policies. Consequently, they disregard the less visible effects at the levels of culture and everyday life. (Escobar 1992a:7). Thus, aside from defending the quotidian practices of the subordinate groups, Escobar more than implicitly questions the political reductionism and empirical simplification prevalent in social analysis.

Kerkvliet (1990) asserts something similar in his study of Philippine peasants. Defining his politics in terms of 'debates, conflicts, decisions, and co-operation among individuals, groups, and organisations,' he says that the 'the activity, not where it occurs, is what makes something political' (1990:64-65). In thus moving away from the politics of big actors, Kerkvliet opens up the analysis to include the apparently insignificant sharing, co-operating, and contesting of values on the level of the ordinary life. Much earlier, Iletto (1979), in his innovative study of the peasant rebellion in central Philippines, argued that some of these values found embedded in folk and religious traditions, 'which usually promote passivity and reconciliation' could have 'latent meanings that can be revolutionary' (1979:13).

Some might object to this seemingly Weberian retrieval of 'meanings'. But the struggle for meaning, it must be remembered, at least in these cases, are 'not conducted in a purely personal, introspective way, nor in a social vacuum, but under definite material and social conditions' (Peets & Watts 1993:248). At the risk of being repetitious, the struggle for a 'sacred land' is not separate from the struggle for economic and political continuation of collective life. That is why we have to understand everyday practices beyond their instrumental function in resistance.

Escobar builds up a programmatic for this understanding. First, Escobar calls for a 'more adequate theorisation of the practice of everyday life'. It is where and how people create and reproduce their culture. It 'involves language, the body, performative rituals, work, and both individual and collective identities' (1992:70).

Second, Escobar picks up the concept of 'historicity' from the French Alain Touraine and Italian Melucci. Touraine says that social movements are not 'dramatic events' that happen to people. They are the people's work upon themselves. Society is the product of the work of society itself. In this context, we might call historicity as a people's historical reflexive agency or the capacity of a people to create itself. Beyond particular laws, customs, organisational forms, what is at stake when people move is their own historicity. This has repercussion on identity. If the people are making their own history, according to their own self-understanding and perceived limitations, then their identity is a process rather than a fact or event.

Accordingly, Escobar (1992a:72) enumerates some guidelines for research. For example, rather than assuming the existence of a relatively collective contextual

actor, one must explain precisely how their collective action is formed and maintained. How do actors construct common actions? How are different elements brought together? How are individuals become involved in action? The researcher is also asked to make visible the network of relationships that underlie collective action before, during and after events. In general, the task is to observe how the people practice cultural innovation or alternative frameworks of meanings in their daily life.

Elsewhere, Escobar (1992b:405) offers follow up questions. 'How is a "political culture" carved out of the background cultural domain within a given society? What in this background, and through what processes, is articulated into political discourse? How are culture and politics intertwined in the practices of the 'new actors'?' Attention to these details might help in understanding how, for instance, meaning and the struggle for meaning, can be linked to group formation as well as fission:

Since meaning---as anthropologists recognise as well---cannot be permanently fixed, but is always changing and contextual, social agents are left with the only possibility of building collective identities through processes of articulation of meaning. Dominant hegemonic practices attempt to achieve some sort of closure of the social, that is, to produce a relatively unified and normalised set of categories to understand reality; in the process of doing so, however, antagonisms emerge, and these antagonisms, in turn, make possible the appearance of new actors and discourses. (Escobar 1992b:406; cf. Escobar 1998:26n1)

This may sound so obvious. But it is certainly miles away from the classical Marxist and structuralist theory where the identities of legitimate social actors are pre-identified, exhaustive and decisive. Laclau & Mouffe (1985) move away from this constriction in their 'radical pluralist democracy'. Escobar, however, detects that Laclau and Mouffe have not escaped their ethnocentrism when it comes to Third World societies. They allow the multiplication of identities and new actors 'in societies which the democratic revolution has crossed certain threshold' (1985:166), but not for the developing countries where the struggle remains between the ruling class and the people. Escobar rejects this, asserting that even in the so-called Third World, there is a 'multiplicity of antagonisms and identities' (e.g. 'peasants', 'urban marginals', 'those belonging to the informal sector', 'women bypassed by development', 'the illiterate' and 'indigenous peoples who do not modernise') (1992b:407). Again, it is in the patient, meticulous observation of the concrete daily

struggle that we see these multiple identities and antagonisms and therefore multiple agencies, as well, which have remained invisible even to reformed activists.

The real thrust of Escobar (and colleagues) comes now to the fore. He is arguing not just for a questioning of the old hegemonic politics, but for a 'new way of doing politics and a new way of sociability', towards a 'construction of a different social power' as manifested in alternative sites of articulation as modest as neighbourhood associations. There is here an unashamed tinge of romanticism which Escobar does not deny---for a good reason: 'Those who proclaimed the end of poverty and the advent of a kingdom of abundance in the 1940s and 1950s, to be brought by development...are at least as romantic as some of the social movement researchers' (Escobar 1992:81).

From this we generate more questions. What new sites the movement is opening? What is meant by realistic? What new categories of actors are mobilised? What forms of power are generated? How, ultimately, do we assess the effects of these actions?

### **Towards an Everyday Sacredness of Mt. Apo**

When she was in London, Era España, spokesperson of the protest, related a poignant anecdote from her youth, which she has treasured since then in her participation in the indigenous movement. It was harvest time. Era overheard her mother saying to a friend who was giving her a hand: 'One day, when we shall have lost our land, so too will our dignity as a people be lost. A hungry people will lose a sense of their own worth' (Terra 1993:23).<sup>12</sup> This intimate conversation portrays an instance of what can be called 'everyday sacredness' of the Lumad land. Sacredness as lived behind, but also as the basis of, the more public pronouncements. The actors: three women doing everyday activity. The setting: the land, at harvest time, time for reaping the gifts of mother earth. The theme: possible loss of the land and dignity, and hunger. The action: elder women talking, and a girl listening. Everything now exists in the remembering or narrating in the contest of struggle. This struggle brought Era España to Europe through networks of solidarity and support. It is unfortunate that there are no books on these kinds of stories. But we can imagine more stories being lived in the silent corners of the fields, 'making no headlines'. They could be stories of traditions being handed on, or stories of doubts and confusion, of debates.

I am aware that there is an element of 'fiction' in this kind of narrative. But despite the abundance of campaign materials during the peak of the protest campaign, not a single description of the way of life or the local everyday interpretation of events has come out. This research will focus precisely on this 'ethnosemiotics,' to borrow from Fiske (cf. Escobar 1992), or better still, 'personal life histories'. This should allow for the description of what Behar (1990:22) calls 'the subjective mapping of experience, the working out of a culture and a social system that is often obscured in a typified account.' Narrative and memory, when attached to landscape, offer a local idiom to people's political action.

Sometimes, these everyday myths are also resourced to give meaning to political events and direct actions accordingly. The *busaw* (malign spirit), for example, is a traditional figure in Manobo and Bagobo folklore. It is associated with curses, with individual or household illness and misfortune (Benedict 1916; Lebar 1972; Manuel 1973:118, 259; etc.). It is 'frequently called upon either to witness the pronouncement or to execute the curse itself' (Manuel 1973:259). Since the coming of the geothermal plant, the *busaw* has taken on a more political personality. The D'yandi Declaration of Principles identified it as the 'demon from the north' whose heart is 'eight dangkal wide, armed with a moon-shaped cane to whip us away from our land.' The local malign forest spirit is now used to label the machinery of development aggression.

A Christmas card I received showed, in full colour, the threatened Bagobo couple, looking at the face of the mountain monster, eating trees and feeding on the smoke coming out from factory chimneys. The caption says, 'The *Busaw* takes a contemporary meaning in the lives of the Bagobo as they respond to man-made activities and so-called 'development projects' which they perceived to be detrimental to their culture and environment. The Bagobo live along the foothills of Mt. Apo---in the midst of the geothermal plant project.' The title: 'Busaw (Evil Spirit).' One may raise the issue of the artist being an 'outsider' or the Manila ritual as being 'constructed'. The more theoretically significant point, I argue, is the determination of the processes of resourcing (not just constructing!) tradition, of recruiting different actors into the development of a common discourse, of negotiating meaning from everyday idiom to political action. Cultural struggle is seen in the micro-spaces of

daily conversations in which meanings are created, negotiated and sometimes translated into action.

#### 4. EXISTENTIAL STRUGGLE

Something more should be said if we are to take everyday life seriously. We would have to deal not only with localised political formation or cultural meanings, but also with internalised 'structures of feelings' (Williams 1977). We would need to discuss not only about altering the environment or contesting the landscape, but also with embodying of memories and energising spirits (cf. Kleinman & Kleinman 1994). We would need to measure not only the damage or gains in industrialising the countryside, but also feel the impact on the tempo of life, the change in routines, the resulting freedoms and boredom in urbanised settings, the bodily suffering and the moral reorientation of the people affected. We would have to connect, or at least try to connect, land degradation (or development) with somatic pains (or healing) and formation of resistance (or celebration of existence).

This section pursues the themes that have been opened up earlier involving suffering and energy. I insist that an analysis of society and environment ought to be enriched by taking into account the existential impact of the institutional and structural factors on the bodily selves of contextual actors and the corresponding sources of their power to act within the Lumad of their situation. In developing this point, I resonated first with Rosaldo's notion of 'force', (1989:2, 225-26n1) which he sustained with the help of Pierre Bourdieu, E. P. Thompson and Raymond Williams (Rosaldo 1989:105-108). The emotions in mourning, for example, cannot be reduced to the structures of funerary ritual, but can partially be understood in the force of the feeling of loss, something which would probably more accessible to a researcher who has undergone some loss herself. Kleinman (1992) and Hastrup (1993) argue against trivialising this experience. This section now locates this force in the socialised bodies and selves, with the help of the more recent works of the Kleinman's (1994; 1995) and of Scheper-Hughes (1992).<sup>13</sup>

## **Bodily Forms of Social Experience**

'About processes that cross social space and personal space,' Kleinman and Kleinman (1994:710) complain, 'all too much is assumed, while all too little is analysed'. The critique is addressed to medical anthropology which they challenge to 'examine how culture infolds into the body (and reciprocally, how bodily processes unfold into social space' (1994:710-11). They therefore set out to inquire: 'How do political processes of terror (and resistance) cross over from public space to traumatise (or reanimate) inner space and then cross back as collective experience?' (1994:711). They admit that there are no definitive answers. But they offer a set of ideas a couple of which are immediately relevant to my task.

The first set is that of *subjective and social suffering* which the Kleinmans locate in everyday practices. The Kleinmans explain the process:

Bodies and selves are axes in the social flow around which social psychological and sociosomatic processes aggregate. These processes transport metaphor from symbol system via event to relationships; they bring meaning into the body-self. Subjective complaint and collective complaint thereby merge, and social reaction and personal reaction unite. So defined, social experience interrelates social suffering and subjective suffering not as different entities but as an interactive process. (Kleinman & Kleinman 1994:13)

Here, 'bodily memory, biography and social history merged' as the 'memory of bodily complaints evoked social complaints which were not so much represented as lived and relived (remembered) in the body' (1994:715). Each complaint, expressed in a story or a metaphor, then serves as 'moral commentary' of one's local world as well as the society in general. Telling stories of pain, expressing suffering, and even the experiencing them itself, can therefore be symptomatic of resistance (cf. Scott 1985). The assertion of the Kleinmans goes beyond saying that these experiences of pain are symptoms or representations of social processes. 'The bodies transformed by political processes not only *represent* those processes, they *experience* them as the lived memory of transformed worlds. The experience is of memory processes sediment in gait, posture, movement, and all the other corporal components which together realise cultural code and social dynamics in everyday practices. The memorialised experience merges subjectivity and social world' (1994:717). This seems particularly strong in the memory of social suffering.

Early in 1995, the Committee on Culture, Health and Human Development launched a project dealing with social suffering, social violence and cultures of

biomedicine. Kleinman's contribution (1995) expands the discussion on memory to include the *mediatization* of human suffering. 'What we do not picture is routinized misery, which becomes invisible' he says, deploring the process translating painful experiences into sensationalised 'infotainment' (1995:16). There is a challenge to study the way social suffering is constructed in media and used in political advocacy.

The second set of ideas should not be missed: *moral capital* and *vital energy*. From their Chinese ethnographic notes, Kleinman & Kleinman point to the interconnectedness of the people in everyday life (*guanxi*) which provide a kind of 'moral capital' and which when properly tapped yields 'bodies energised with *qi*' ('vital energy') (1994:713). In a very restrained but hopeful manner, the Kleinman's do speculate: Can these energies make social change? The answer is probably yes. 'Perhaps transformations that begin in reveries, dreams, painful bodies, and alienating trances, that protect the inner world of the person and the family, that keep social memory alive while they engender the forgetting of the most-self-defeating of images...do expand through cultural-political processes into world transformation' (1994:721).

Veena Das, their companion in the 'social suffering project', puts it more categorically and boldly: 'Where the body is attacked through acts of violence, there can be an attempt to recover agency by converting the suffering into a new social mission, for justice or peace' (1995:18).<sup>14</sup> Well said. In some situations, however, it is enough that the suffering is processed into survival.

### **Everyday Suffering / Tactics for Survival**

With Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) we enter into more existential and ethical issues in contexts of extreme scarcity, in 'a land of cloying sugarcane fields amid hunger and disease, of periodic droughts and deadly floods, of authoritarian landowners and primitive rebels, of penitential Christianity, ecstatic messianic movements, and liberation theology coexisting with Afro-Brazilian spirit possession' (1992:31). In her sprawling 600-page ethnography of the lives of women and children in a Brazilian shantytown, she gives us an example of what her editor Wayne Ellwod calls 'strong gut-level humanitarianism' (Scheper-Hughes 1994). If Kleinman has enough good set of ideas, Scheper-Hughes supplies both rich field accounts and profound---even



disturbing---insights on peculiar ways of being human (and being woman) in an inhuman situation. Page after page, she gives living stories cum reflections on the experience of social and bodily suffering, suffering not merely of marginalization or corporal pain but also dismemberment, of displacement, of shortened lives, of 'death without weeping'. She also goes beyond Kleinman's description of the somatization. She talks instead of 'somatic culture.' By this she means the socio-cultural life of the sugarcane workers which privileges the body as medium of communication, of relationships, of politics and even spirituality (1992:185, 231-32).

But if Scheper-Hughes knows the force of loss and pain, she also has the eye and the heart to witness the people's strength, their *animacao*, their knack for life, their energy. I concentrate more on this point because she articulates for me precisely what I have been groping to express. Even her questions can reveal her passion. They are not simply directions for research but challenge for reflection:

But, where, you may ask, in these dark lives is there space for the Brazilian *joie de vivre*, the celebrated vitality and *animacao* that are captured in Brazilian song and dance, in film and literature, and, most of all in the Brazilian *carnaval*, with its great joy, bounding leaps of the *frevo* and its erotic and life-affirming samba? Have hunger, sickness, and scarcity all but extinguished these expressions of Brazilianity in my alto friends? What makes life worth living for these people? What gives women the strength to go on with their reproductive lives in the face of such adversity?... Where was I to begin to look for the sources of strength, resilience, and relative invulnerability in the shantytown? (Scheper-Hughes 1992:446)

To answer these questions, Scheper-Hughes portrayed life histories, revealing the complex characters of the women and children in Alto do Cruzeiro, and how they 'make sense of their lives' ('cope' would probably be a weak word) in their inhospitable world (1992:400). I have similar questions with regard to the Lumad, and it encourages me in my project since she has also faced similar tensions.

### **On Learning to Dance Again**

I would not like to imply that the situation in Mt. Apo is as stark as the Brazilian shantytown. But it is safe to say that the Lumad have had their own history of struggle. I have already referred to the murder of the American governor during their early occupation. It started when the American and the Japanese penetrated the areas of the Bagobo and the Manobo at the foothills of Mt. Apo. As early as 1919, an American government official reports,

The wild hogs have practically disappeared although there is still enough fallen fruit from the lanzon trees in season to sustain considerable numbers, and deer are almost now unheard of. The disappearance of the large forest and the intrusion of man have driven these animals away. It has also caused the streams to dry up or shrink to such size that they no longer contain the fish they used to furnish. The Bagobo now seldom eats flesh, fish, or fowl, except what he buys in tins, salmon, sardines, etc., from the Chino or Jap stores who fleece him unmercifully'. (Walkup 1919:10-11, cited in Hayase 1985:147)

The occupation did not only destroy the forests; it also "spelled death to Bagobo native ways and traditions. This was made possible because of the connivance of Filipinos and the absence of literate native leaders. Philippine laws did not have any provision respecting Bagobo custom law regarding land rights... The end result for the coastal and midland areas where land-grabbing techniques reached a height of perfection was the gradual despoilage of the patrimony of an aboriginal people with all its concomitant harshness, and the displacement and disappearance of native ways and laws and institutions. Among these was the datuship (Manuel 1973:314).

The attack on the indigenous leadership structure was an extremely sensitive cultural phenomenon. When foreign occupants replaced the local leaders with state representatives, it was received as great blow. 'Traditional Bagobo society,' according to historian Shinzo Hayase, 'was comprised of pioneering cultivators and warriors. It was rare to see a Bagobo unarmed. However, once the colonial government prohibited the carrying and use of arms, the dignity of the tribesmen as warriors was destroyed. Young men came to fear the police, the constabulary and other agents of the law, because of the horrible stories they had heard of the experiences of Bagobo offenders in municipal and provincial gaols.' (1985:150). 'Individual communities ceased to be masters of their own ancestral lands and of their own lives; they have lost their self-determination' (Rodil 1990?).

During that time, a number of new religious movements were organised, revolving around charismatic figures who claimed to have received special revelation from protective spirits and who taught people new forms of dancing (Hayase 1985; Rodil 1991). Part of these movements was Mangulayan who split the head of Governor Edward C. Bolton. When asked later why he did it, he replied, to become once again, 'brave men'. A local version of 'brave men' would literally mean, 'to recover my manhood' (Rodil 1991:17).

New forms of sickness also came with colonialism. Small pox epidemics and influenza outbreaks were recorded during 1917-18. To escape from sickness, the Bagobo temporarily abandoned their lands. But when they came back, settlers have already 'legally' occupied their land. Many were violently driven away from their territory. 'All these actions finally incurred the wrath of the Bagobo.' (Hayase 1985:146). Today the same intrusion continues. Logging, grazing leases and permits, industrial tree plantations, agribusiness plantations, power generating projects, mining, government reservations are made worse by government counter-insurgency (MMNS 1993:50-60; See also Fay 1987; Anti-Slavery Society 1983).

The task of ethnography should go deeper into the every impact of these macro-events. A few quotes here and there can serve as hints at what could be going on behind the big screen of political struggle. Datu Aragasi Manguda makes a sigh, 'With no or limited trees left standing, we have no more place for rituals, no source for dye to colour our dress, food, medicines, musical instruments and war weapons' (MMNS 1993:50). In a nearby province, a young mother pleaded that her child be adopted. 'Please take my baby. I can no longer look after her' the mother told the visitors. The child was born three days before government bombs pounded the forests of Femagas, a village in Katipunan town. The bombs forced hundreds of Subanen Lumad to flee Femagas (MMNS 1993:3). I do not know to what extent the situation has changed in Mt. Apo after the killing of two Lumad spokesmen in the early stage of the geothermal project. But again, the routinized suffering most of the time are hidden.

The little efforts of generating strength have to be appreciated, too. South of Mt. Apo, a 15-year old Pandoma wished to learn the dances of his tribe. But he was frustrated by the events in their life as a people. 'How can we practice our culture if we are always fleeing?' But he did a little great thing. He reached out for a *gong* (a local brass drum) and played it. The children listened (MMNS 1993:3). I will not be surprised if he would later become involved in his people's movement. There is something the powerful becomes afraid of when the powerless, immobilised, subjected selves and bodies begin to feel pain of their bodies, complain of suffering, and worse, begin to run around, and dance. It is my contention that these 'little acts' are not unrelated to the 'bigger movements' of ritual dancing, of new theatre harvest

festivals (cf. Kaliwat 1994), of new mobilisations for environmental and cultural renewal (cf. Gaspar 1990). This is what I want to call *cultural energy*, which is a form of power, but more of power to be rather than power over or against somebody. While I do not deny that the two can get mixed up, and that they can co-exist even in the same group or movement, my research shall privilege the former not in moral evaluation but in ethnographic description.

### **Toward an Ethnography 'of' and 'in' Tension**

One dominant theme that is sure to come out in this ethnographic venture is the tension involved in the portrayal of 'subordinated' people. This is initially a political and epistemological issue. But it can also be an ethical and existential one for an engaged ethnographer. I argue against seeing the people's actions exclusively and narrowly as *resistance*; we should also recognise the suffering which people endure. We have to take special care to notice this because sometimes it is silenced by incommunicability, either by sheer lack of appropriate word to express it or because the victims are not allowed to express it. On the other hand, portraying them as victims and sufferers might simply reinforce their image of being helpless. We might then miss the peculiar ways they are asserting themselves or redefining their political space for action. The other danger is to see only these activities as everyday forms of strategy and not as expressions of cultural energy.

Again, I find resonance in Scheper-Hughes' description of the 'classic double bind' that puts in tension the anthropologist's attempt to deconstruct the discourse of the 'powerful' while giving voice to the struggles of the 'weak'. Magisterially, she says, 'Either one attributes great explanatory power to the fact of oppression (but in so doing one can reduce the subjectivity and agency of subjects to a discourse on victimisation) or one can try to locate the everyday forms of resistance in the mundane tactics and practices of the oppressed, the weapons of the weak...Here one runs the risk of romanticising human suffering or trivialising its effects on the human spirit, consciousness, and will' (1992:533). Scheper-Hughes avoids this trap, which she sees lurking behind the 'pessimism' of Paulo Freire and the 'optimism' of Frantz Fanon. She says, 'If Paulo Freire erred in his unidimensional view of *Nordestino* peasants as mere objects of the rich and powerful so that their knowledge and experience of

themselves as self-reflexive humans was all but destroyed, Frantz Fanon erred in his belief that the victims of colonialist oppression could remain strong throughout their torment and emerge altogether unscathed from cultural and economic enslavement, with their subjectivity and culture intact.' From her experience in the Brazilian slum dwellers, Scheper-Hughes proposes a 'middle ground', one that does not underestimate the 'destructive signature of poverty and oppression on the individual and the social bodies' but 'acknowledges the creative, if often contradictory, means the people...use to stay alive and even to thrive with wit and their wits intact'. I hope to be guided by this approach in my ethnography on the Lumad of Mindanao. I recognise that, together with the *moradores* friends of Scheper-Hughes, the Lumad goal may not exactly be resistance but more fundamentally existence or persistence. If this is true, then perhaps the best response is to appreciate this 'human resilience' and 'to celebrate with them, joyfully and hopefully, if always tentatively' (Scheper-Hughes 1992:533). In this light, I am ready for the ascent of Mt. Apo.

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### Notes on Study 1. Politics, Culture, Existence

<sup>1</sup>My option for the political ecology approach benefited from a conversation with Dr. Philip Stott of the SOAS Geography Department. I am aware that other approaches might be closer to what I am setting forth here, but Bryant's framework presents a program for research and not just problems and debates.

<sup>2</sup>Personal interview on 5 April 1995, King's College, University of London.

<sup>3</sup>Mario Jose B. Talja, Regional Co-ordinator, Legal Rights and Natural Resources Centre-Kasama sa Kalikasan (LRC-KSK. Friends of the Earth) in a letter dated 6 February 1995. This has been confirmed by Queenstein Banzon, of the Centre for Environmental Concern, during our conversation on 22 April, 1995 in London on her way to the South-North Study Visit sponsored by Development Education Association.

<sup>4</sup>Letter of Miguel A. Bernad, SJ dated 31 January 1995. His article (1959) 'The Ascent of Mount Apo: 1859-1958' remains the most comprehensive profile of the mountain.

<sup>5</sup>This historical account relies primarily on Rodil 1993, Philippine Resource Centre 1994:12-13. It is understandable that other accounts exclude the pro-project rituals (Broad & Cavanagh 1993), but it is amazing how Sales' (1994) study of people's participation in the Mt. Apo project could have missed even the D'yandi in his two chronology of events.

<sup>6</sup>For a detailed summary, see the Committee Report No. 980, Committee on Natural Resources and Ecology, signed by Senator Heherson Alvarez, dated 23 February 1990 (EIA 1991, Vol 8). Cf. Rodil 1993:21; Sales 1994:38-39.

<sup>7</sup>For Philippine indigenous peoples in general: Lynch 1982, 1988; Plant 1989; Aranal-Sereno & Libarios 1983; etc. For the Lumad in particular see Fay 1989; Philippine Natural Resources Law Journal 1990; Tauli-Corpuz 1992; Durning 1992; Gatmaytan A. 1992; Gatmaytan G. 1992, 1993; Sumalian 1993.

<sup>8</sup>Eventually, PRRM, whose national director became the head of NGOs for Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS), had to work separately from TFAS. TFAS consistently rejected any program that took the PNOC project as given.

<sup>9</sup>From a letter of Des Mendoza of Popular Eye Philippines, a small outfit producing video-documentary films for NGOs in Mindanao dated 7 January 1995.

<sup>10</sup>Readers may find my references throughout the thesis as heavily slanted towards 'upland' literature. I suggest that this reflects more the state of lowland literature on Mindanao, the region that I concentrate on, and less of the revived interest on lowland Philippines in general (e.g. Mulder 1997, Cannell 1998, Thompson 1996, Rutten 1994, Coumins 1994). Fenella Cannell warns against reinforcing an unhappy tradition of American colonial scholarship on the Philippines that 'reifies' the highland-lowland divide (Personal communication. See also Cannell 1998, 'Introduction: Mountains and Plains'). But perhaps this anxiety itself over the division between the upland and the lowland needs rethinking. James Scott, in his recent reflection on Southeast Asian state formation, invites us to reconsider a paradox. Despite the fact that the upland and lowland peoples have always criss-crossed their boundaries, 'the cultural divide between the hill and valley is stunningly constant as an experienced and lived essentialism' (Scott 1999:45).

<sup>11</sup>For a somewhat parallel, but definitely successful, demystification of unwitting use of military metaphors, see Susan Sontag (1988).

<sup>12</sup>Another Lumad leader, Edtami Mansayagan, visited London after representing Mindanao in the 1993 Geneva conference on indigenous peoples. Among other themes, he stressed the 'need for NGOs to respect indigenous forms of decision making in any partnership between foreign agencies and indigenous organisations.' See Sellick (1993:6).

<sup>13</sup>Dr. John Sidel introduced to me Nancy Scheper-Hughes' powerful ethnographic portrait of the Brazilian shantytown. My colleague John Postil informed me later that the 600-page book has been abridged and was made to occupy a whole issue of *The New Internationalist* (April 1994). Dr. Andrew Turton and Damian Walter drew my attention to a recent project of the Kleinmans and their companions in Social Science Research Council ((1994, 1995). I am aware that Scheper-Hughes has found the Kleinman's work 'exhaustive and generally unenlightening' (1992:185), but it seems to me that Kleinman has already responded with a 'self-critical spirit' (1995:14).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Kleinman, Arthur, Veena Das & Margaret Lock (eds.) 1997. *Social Suffering*. Berkeley: University of California Press. See also Bourdieu, Pierre, et al. 1999. *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Oxford: Polity Press.

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## Study 2    **The Dissent of Mount Apo**

### *Sayaban's Culture of Fear or History of Pain?*

*'These people prevent not only Pagans but Spaniards also from approaching the mountain. According to their religion Mt. Apo is a sacred place, a sanctuary of their god, Mandarangan, and, should the place be profaned, the most horrible misfortunes will ensue.'*

**--Joseph Montano, 'The Ascent of Mount Apo' (1886)<sup>1</sup>**

Why should they want us? Do they? If they don't, what recourse have they?

**---Robert Paine, 'By Chance, By Choice' (1998)**

THE 6<sup>TH</sup> OF NOVEMBER 1995 marks an important day in my fieldwork. On that day, the Sayaban Tribal Assembly, in a rarely convened session, officially rejected my request to stay in their village. In the double-room of the public elementary school, the villagers gathered: the elders, the women, the protestant pastors, the community relations officer of the government power project, paramilitary personnel, and even some children peering at the wooden window blinders. In the midst of the discussion, the outgoing chieftain came. He poked an accusing finger at me and said, 'We don't want any trouble here. We are a peaceful people. Now, you are priest. Priests bring conflicts. Wherever there are priests, there are conflicts. You should listen to me. I am the voice of the village. I am telling you, you cannot live in our village.' He then slipped out of the hall as quickly as he barged into the session. I shall give the details of this event below. Suffice to say, the assembly decided that that I could only be a visitor, but not be a villager.

The rejection of my appeal for residence sent me to live in the parish convent right at the heart of Kidapawan, the rapidly urbanising capital of Cotabato and nerve centre of the protest movement against the Mt. Apo Geothermal Project. That day and that decision cut deeply into my disposition during the entire fieldwork. It placed me and my research under constant interrogation. It must have cost a lot to the family who had been hosting my visits. My research, however, instead of being

dumped or delayed, continued because I had the research permits from the local government. Besides, I had been touched by the dreams of a new movement for cultural regeneration. The event and its accompanying process turned out to be a learning moment. It served as a preliminary critique of anthropological enterprise as well as a revelation of the tribal situation.

This Study offers a narrative of this *critical moment*. Instead of relegating it to a brief preface, I propose to dwell on this 'politics of arrival' in more detail. I hope, thus, to provide a *feel* of the interaction among the contextual actors in the field. Pertierra (1994) rightly reminds anthropologists of the need, despite the difficulty, 'to balance the power of an engaging narrative' with 'the equally insistent demand to present data' (1994:129).<sup>2</sup> So the following narrative also provides an introduction to the different social and political actors and institutions around the area.<sup>3</sup> Towards the later part of the Study, I shall explore the collective fear that people, like Datu Joseph Andot, often mentioned as basis for the people's dissent. I have a suspicion that this discourse of fear has something to do with a history of pain.

## 1. THE POLITICS OF ARRIVAL

### **The Use of Arrival Accounts.**

Let me start by offering some pre-notes on the use of more-than-everyday events and narratives. Anthropologists have studied 'critical moments' or 'ethnographic situations' to arrive at 'structures from events' or to 'make manifest the latent possibilities which enable us to see how a given society may develop in the future' (Gledhill 1994:127ff). Their studies make for interesting 'eye-witness' reports as when Frank N. Pieke 'accidentally' found himself in Tian'anmen Square during the carnage of April 1989 (1995). They could also provoke ethical and methodological concerns when the disruptive sequence of events during fieldwork is triggered precisely, although inadvertently, by the presence or activities of the researcher himself. Chandra Jayawardena's case is a good example. He sparked off a local tug-of-war between the modernist and traditionalist Islamists because he planned to record a Sufistic *rateb* in an Indonesian community (Jayawardena 1987, cf. Gledhill 1994:128-31). Writing up becomes more challenging---painful even---when the



critical moment is the researcher's personal traumatic experience, as in Cathy Winkler's study of rape based on what she herself underwent (Winkler 1995, cf. Moreno 1995). My own critical encounter was not as dramatic. Being placed at the beginning of my fieldwork, it was nevertheless crucial since, both literally and figuratively, my arrival served as a point of departure.

Now I am aware that the use of *arrival accounts*, such as what I have rehearsed above, has been criticised widely and recently, but perhaps unfairly (cf. Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Cushman 1982; Tyler 1987). It has been called under many names: arrival stories, arrival scenes, arrival tropes, opening narratives, or opening view (Pratt 1986:31-47). The main argument against it is its standardised imitation of rhetorical trick often used in travel accounts. This trick has now become a predictable, exoticising convention in modernist ethnographic writing and has thus become a kind of 'subgenre' in itself (Crapanzano 1986:68). Following this critique, my arrival narrative becomes simply a ruse in storytelling or a presentation of credentials for the anthropologist's rite of passage.

I argue, however, following Hervik (1993), that the critics are probably amiss in dismissing the 'narration of first encounters' as serving 'the sole function of establishing the ethnographer's credibility and authority'. 'The critics,' Hervik retorts, 'treat arrival scenes almost exclusively from a literary perspective. They tend to forget that they may reflect important first-hand experiences. Regardless of how the first-hand experiences are used in the text, we can assume that the arrival itself was an important experience...that forever marks off the "field"' (1993:80). My experience of arrival turned out to be a point of departure as I had from then on to shift to a more *peripatetic fieldwork* having been made to live *outside* my research area.

Mary Louise Pratt (1986) does not exactly fit in with the critics whom Hervik is trying to answer. Although Pratt recognises that opening narratives have become a conventional trope, she does not take them lightly. Opening narratives, according to Pratt, involve 'the initial reception by the inhabitants, the slow, agonising process of learning the language and overcoming rejection, the anguish and loss at leaving. Though they exist only on the margins of formal description, these conventional opening narratives are not trivial...Symbolically and ideologically

rich, they often turn out to be the most memorable segments of an ethnographic work' (Pratt 1986:31-32).

Other anthropologists, according to Tamara Kohn (1994), belittle these 'early fieldwork experiences' because they occur at a time when the incoming anthropologists are still 'linguistically incompetent'. Kohn suggests, however, that human exchange and engagement, especially in initial encounters, permit understanding that is not language-dependent. Though still 'ill-informed and impressionistic' these 'early-fieldwork fieldwork' may be 'in large degree responsible for the material that ends up being seen as important or "ethnographically rich"' (Kohn 1994:14).

These reflections inform my use of the opening narrative. In addition I would like to venture a few more points. First, arrival is *processual*. What is presented as a specific first encounter may be a part or moment of a more complex process of negotiation with a group's gatekeepers. The special session of the Sayaban tribal assembly, for example, was a part of a series of consultations and contestations. Besides, there could be multiple arrivals eliciting multiple responses of hospitality and hostility from members of the community. During the four weeks of going in and out of Sayaban, my actions won for me a few friends but they also increased doubts about my motivations. Moreover, my research partner also had to explain her own project. She had lived in the towncentre for many years. Now she herself needed to rekindle old ties. I propose, therefore, to recount the process of my arrival and take it as my point of departure for a narrative analysis.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, arrival is *political*. For this purpose, I follow the 'broader view' of politics as used by Kerkvliet (1990). 'Politics,' he says, 'consists of the debates, conflicts, decisions, and co-operation among individuals, groups, and organisations regarding the control, allocation, and use of resources and the values and ideas underlying those activities...The activity, not where it occurs, is what makes something political' (1990:11). I hesitate to equate this with Scott's 'infrapolitics' that is immediately associated with 'resistance' of 'subordinate groups'--terms which do not necessarily describe the kind of action or groups involved in this situation (Scott 1990). Bryant's discussion on 'conflict over access' (1992) and 'grassroots politics' (1997) should be useful here (except that he missed the role of

the local government). I find resonance with Hilhorst (1998), who follows the 'actor-oriented approach' of Long (1992), in showing the 'multiple realities' and 'diverse social practices' of local actors and their discourses in the Cordillera region; she forgot, however, to account for her own entry and involvement in the local movement she studied. My arrival account unashamedly includes myself as an actor precisely because my research and my own identity as researcher became a focus of contestation.

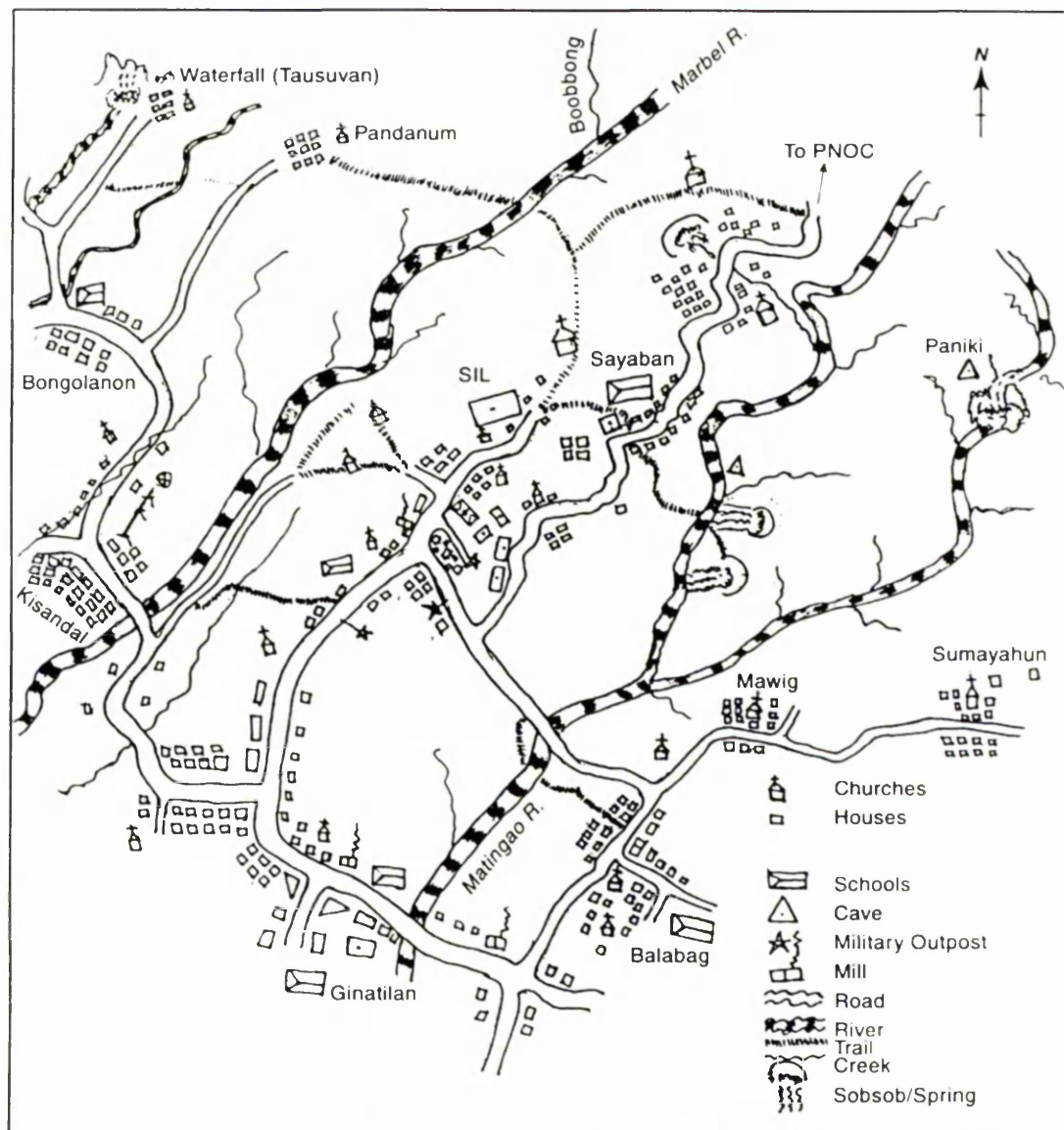
This leads to my third point. Arrival account is *personal*, and that personal narrative is a valid form of social analysis. This is by now a widely accepted ethnographic insight. Still, there is a kind of a lingering oral tradition within the discipline that looks down on personal narrative as a 'second class citizen' (Rosaldo 1989:128). Rosaldo laments that personal narratives 'have been relegated quite literally to the margins: prefaces, introductions, afterwords, footnotes, and italicised or small-print case histories' (1989: 60). It is unfortunate. There is so much to be gained by considering the personal impact of the fieldwork experience on both the researcher and the researched according to their 'subject positions' in society. Robert Paine (1998) appeals for more transparency on how the anthropologists and their research were seen by the research subjects for surely their perspectives influence our own conduct in the field as well as the 'objectivity' of the ethnographic enterprise. This seems particularly sensitive in cases of so-called 'native anthropologists' or those who are supposed to be studying their 'own' society.<sup>5</sup> The entanglement of the researcher with kin and friends and the challenge to his partisan commitment in face of various threats to the community simply unmasks the pretensions of a purely objectivist approach to social science. My succeeding account should reveal my personal attempt to reduce the distance between my research on the Manobo cultural struggle and the Manobo's own search for their respect and resources.<sup>6</sup>

### **Approaching Sayaban**

Sayaban is an Obo-Manobo Village 'under the western shadow of Mt. Apo Sandawa'<sup>7</sup>. Mt. Apo derived its name from the word 'Apo', a reverential title for elders, gods or ancestors, and 'Sandawa' from the local term *dawa* meaning sulphur,



**Figure 2.1** On the way to Sayaban from busy Kidapawan Centre(top photo), the red jeepney is almost unrecognisable because of the passengers in and around the vehicle. Above, a resident writes 'Welcome to Sayaban' as a PNOCLORRY lorry lords it over the PNOC-constructed Tourism Road that leads to the geothermal site.



**Map 2.** Vicinity map of Sayaban, showing settlements and route to the PNOC site.  
(Adopted from the sketch of Pastor Joel Buntal)



an element found in abundance in the mountain's solfataras and crevasses. Towering as the highest mountain in the Philippines at 2,954 meters above sea level, Mt. Apo straddles the volcanic mountain ridge that divides Cotabato on the west and Davao City and Davao del Sur on the east, in the island of Mindanao. In 1936, Mt. Apo was declared a National Park. It has since then been recognised as an important centre for biodiversity by ASEAN Heritage Site Committee, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Bank. After several changes in legislation, especially after World War II, the national park has now a total area of 72,112.59 hectares (PENRO 1995). Sayaban is within the western flank of this national park. I was coming from the eastern side of the mountain.

From Davao City, on 18 August 1995, I took a free but unlucky car ride that picked up the morning newspaper from the Davao Airport. Our rear tyre flung and rolled behind us on the highway. We were not hurt. It was not necessary to take a free ride. Several buses, some air-conditioned, connected Davao and Kidapawan by a three-hour trip. The stop was also fortunate. While we were replacing the tyre, I had my first glimpse of Mount Apo from its eastern side. It was the side of the Bagobo which was more familiar to earlier Spanish, French, German, Danish, American and Japanese explorers (e.g. Montano 1886; Schadenberg 1883; Smith 1908; Hachisuka 1931) and ethnographers (Benedict 1916; Cole 1913; Nakahara 1943; Payne 1985; Gloria 1987). I knew, too, that some fellow Jesuits have been there, from the early Spanish missionaries (Schreurs 1994; Corsino 1997; cf. Gisbert 1892) to the Filipino explorers (Bernad 1959) up to the more recent mountain trippers (Balbuena 1994). I knew I was not coming to an unknown land. But it just amazed me how it happened that I had absolutely no recollection of this mountain from my two years of stay in Davao City during 1985-1987.

I did not notice Sayaban, either, on my first visit to Mt. Apo. When I arrived in Kidapawan, a white land cruiser picked me up and took me straight to Mount Apo Geothermal Power Plant.<sup>8</sup> I met engineer Pim Daza who was a friend of a friend in Manila. Short long distance calls facilitated the meeting. Pim toured me around the plant, boasting about the development of *indigenous* geothermal energy. 'We [meaning we Filipinos] are now second in the world in terms of geothermal energy

production, second only to the United States. All our engineers are Filipinos. We even export some technical people abroad.'

I must confess that I did not know how to feel in seeing the huge production wells with thick white smog bellowing up the cool, forested mountain. I struggled to emote some 'politically correct' feeling for the trees and the air and the water and the wildlife, but perhaps there was something in my being trained in the lowlands that prevented me from immediately empathising with the environmentalists. Instead, the word 'indigenous' as used in energy and technology sounded attractive to me. I never heard this point being appreciated by the protest movement. I felt scared that my research might end up supporting what has been called a 'development aggression' (Tabak 1990) and an 'ethnocide' (MMNS 1993). This same indifference, however, would later give me a clue as to how other PNOC personnel, having come from 'outside', probably felt for and treated the Mt. Apo environment. Pim told me that a number of PNOC staff were worried that a priest was inspecting the area. He told them 'this is different'.

Ironically, I slept that night in the home and office of Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos, the staunchest critic of the geothermal plant. The following morning, I was back at the PNOC but with a great difference. My companions were the leaders of *Apo Sandawa Lumadnong Panaghiusa sa Cotabato* (ASLPC), the province-wide coalition against the PNOC. They were accompanying a Protestant pastor who was a sympathiser of the protest. This time, the PNOC staff prepared a whole explanation package, with audio-visual presentation and snack. It was part of the company's effort to win over the remaining opposition to the project.<sup>9</sup>

One of my companions there was Era España. She was one of the most outspoken leaders of the *Sinebadan Bagobo Mekatanod* (Association of Enlightened Bagobo) who sent the earliest warning signal on the dangers of the power plant. I knew her by name even in London because she went there precisely to lobby for the international fight against PNOC (Terra 1993). She was the sister of Beting, who would later become my research partner and leader of a new movement. Pastor Philip Amman was dropped off at some point. The place was Sayaban where she met Beting in the house of Pastor Tano who would later serve as my host during my itinerant fieldwork. We came back to Kidapawan and met more figures in the protest

movement, some of whom I already heard about when I talked to some NGOs back in Davao. I was shocked, to find out later, that from this supposedly innocent visit, an article criticising the PNOC appeared in a national newsletter for indigenous peoples ( *Tribal Forum* 1995:4-5), and that from its lay out, it 'practically' attributed authorship to me. (At least three NGOs thought it was mine.)

So my first two days of arrival pegged, as it were, the political parameters between which and around which I would find myself criss-crossing during my fieldwork. More importantly, it directed me to the possible middle ground between the two camps.

My search for an area took a different turn when, towards the end of August, my father died. I had to go back to Manila. That visit gave me the opportunity to talk to some PNOC managers as well as representatives of the opposition. I also made new friends who would later play significant roles in linking the local movement to other supporters.

When I came back to Cotabato after my father's death, I looked for alternative contacts. I was surprised to find out that the protesters had no organised base in the most affected areas! Besides, they were not welcome in those areas. So I tried the Mount Apo Foundation (MAFI). MAFI was the NGO created to receive and manage the money to be given by PNOC to affected tribal groups. For my research area, the director proposed Sitio Waterfalls, a village of Manobo living near a beautiful waterfall on the slope of Mt. Apo but not very directly affected by the geothermal plant. I went there guided by a MAFI fieldworker and a tourism personnel who was also working in the area. I found the place apt for my study. I insisted on looking at Sitio Sayaban that was more directly affected and 'run over' by the road constructed by PNOC. I visited both areas on the same trip.

It was during this trip on 4-5 October 1995 that I met the leaders of the nascent cultural movement that will be the main focus of this thesis. On the strength of the initial intimacy of our conversation, I decided to stay in Sayaban. Following the advice of a respected datu, I started securing the necessary research permits. Each stage marked a step in the gradual understanding of the local social and political arrangement.



I started from the office of provincial governor of Cotabato who registered no objection to my research. At that time, the governor had ceased to be opposed to the government power project. The Mayor of Kidapawan, who was an Ilocano medical doctor, welcomed me immediately. Having the signature of the Mayor, the Chief of Police did not even bother to interview me. Datu Eduardo Inda, the provincial officer of OSCC, despite some reservations, backed up my entry into Sayaban. Later, I also went to Capt. Ragil, commander of the Special Forces (SF) in charge of the security of Mt. Apo. He was also a Tagalog like myself. When I needed additional clearance, his signature was respected by the paramilitary. His men would later accompany me to the security office of the PNOC. I had to do this with care, though, because I still had no idea how to position myself with the New People's Army (NPA), the military arm of the Communist Party, who were supposed to be around the power plant.

During this time, I found lodging in the convent of the Kidapawan Catholic Cathedral, some sixteen kilometres down from Sayaban. This allowed me to be in close contact with government officials as well as leaders of the protest movement and their supporters. It cannot be denied that this position of being a new priest in the diocese helped a lot in getting the permits from the above-mentioned government officials who were all Catholics. It was precisely during one funeral mass that I first met Capt. Ragil. Although the Kidapawan clergy had not changed its radical opposition to the government project, government officials seemed to have welcomed a research strategy that respects the official gatekeepers from the very beginning. They were obviously hoping that my research would be 'more objective' as opposed to the predominantly slogan-saturated advocacy of the opposition. This unanimous support from the higher authorities, however, did not guarantee my smooth negotiation with the tribal officials.

Armed with such documents, I presented myself to *Barangay Captain* of Ilomavis. The Barangay is the smallest political unit in the country. The community elects the Captain and his Council. In areas where there are many indigenous peoples, the Barangay Council co-exists with the Tribal Council headed by the Tribal Chieftain. Although the modern Tribal Council approximates the traditional caucus of elders, the native community through the mediation of the Office of

Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC) also elects the present leaders. This dual-seat of power sometimes results in confusion. Normally, the Barangay Council 'defers' to the authority of Tribal Council when it comes to the implementation of customary laws (*batasan*), marriage issues, taboo penalty, and internal conflict settlement; the Barangay Council 'handles law enforcement, matters concerning civil law, community improvement, and questions over land ownership' (Lucero 1994:124).

Kapitan Pablo Iyong was the first Manobo to become barangay captain of that mixed population composed of Ilocano, Manobo and Visayan (hence the name of *Ilo-ma-vis*). He seemed to have understood my aim, but he asked me to come back the following week and explain my intention to the Barangay Council which was composed of both native Manobo and long-time Ilocano and Visayan settlers.

The *Barangay Council* met on 16 October 1995 at the barangay hall adjacent to the PNOC headquarters. Datu Nelson Tula, from the relocation site of the PNOC, said that perhaps my presence in the area might be useful to the people. I could document 'the wrongs the leaders might be doing, and perhaps document as well whatever wrong the PNOC might be committing'. Smelling potential dangers in terms of security, however, the Barangay Council decided to transfer the responsibility to the Tribal Council that Kapitan Iyong convened.

The *Tribal Council* meeting was held on 21 October 1995 this time in Sayaban itself. It was attended by *datus* and officers not only of Sayaban but also of the neighbouring Kisandal, Balabag, Sudsuhayan, Nabunturan, Kollay and Agco. There was also a member of the CAFGU (Citizens Armed Forces Government Unit), together with some tribal elders and several pastors of the local Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA), Church of Christ and Pentecostal Church. Many questions revolving around my possible link with the Communist New People's Army and the protest groups came out during this session. Guest from Office of Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC) was Sammy Asicam (former provincial officer, now regional co-ordinator). He expressed his apprehension for social disorder should the people rely on the priest instead of on the Barangay or Tribal Council or the OSCC. Ms. Leah Labrador, the local OSCC project officer, was

absent during this meeting. This session was probably the most serious discussion ever on the subject of my entry. We shall have to elaborate on this below.

Despite the heaviness of apprehensions and fear expressed by the participants, the meeting ended with a promising note. They would call a *Tribal Assembly* meeting in order to determine what conditions would accompany my prolonged research in the area. The assembly was set the following week. In the mean time, I was gaining friends. One of them was the resident but repressed artist-singer-musician Oto Pontas. When I visited him in his house, he showed me his *kuglong* (Manobo sitar) and pointed to me the only remaining native *kaasag* (shield) and *pana* (arrow) in Sayaban, hanging on the makeshift wall. Oto was apparently the only person in the community who knew how to chant the *uwahing* (epic song). Since the death of his twin brother, he simply could not chant because 'my breast will burst'. With my interest in things Manobo, he said he could not understand why people were afraid of letting me live with them.

The tribal assembly was scheduled on 21 October. Kapitan Iyong was there. There were not enough people, perhaps because of the heavy rain. The political delaying tactic could not be ruled out. Kapitan Iyong wanted the small congregation to be immediately dismissed. I wanted to take advantage of that occasion to win a few more friends. This short session turned out to be important. It was on this day when Apo Ambolugan asked the most provocative question I encountered, 'Why do you still want to study us, Father? We have no more culture here.' (Cf. Study 3) It would not be an exaggeration to say that my whole research project was a way of coping with this profoundly critical question. After the session, Oto Pontas picked up his long unused *kuglong*, and started playing. Old woman Apo Ambaning---the wife of Apo Ambolugan---could not help it. She stood up and danced to the tune of the *kuglong* crying, 'My knees! My knees!' That simple post-meeting performance gave me a glimpse of what the tribe could still retrieve. The final step was the Tribal Assembly itself.

### **Assembling Rejection**

Two activities coincided on the same day: the election of the new tribal council and the deliberation on the researcher's residence. The Manobo from neighbouring

villages of Nabunturan, Sudsuhayan, Kollay, Inanapo, and Relocation Site, and even from Barangay Balabag, joined the Sayaban folks. Perhaps the OSCC wanted that all those who would come to choose the new leaders could also decide on the fate of the newcomer. Unfortunately, the polls opened at four-thirty in the morning and as a result many had gone home after casting their votes. A good number still lingered in front of the small stores that had recently sprung up along the side of the new road. They slowly moved in at the start of tribal assembly. Others who remained in the concrete office of Cotabato Tribal Community Council (CTCC) to wait for the election results were summoned, too. Soon, the double-room with collapsible middle wall in the public elementary school was converted into an auditorium packed with some invited government officials and local Manobo elders, women and children.

Chosen to facilitate the session was a Manobo with Chinese blood. He was a Protestant pastor in local Church and used to be in-charge of the now bankrupt co-operative store. Leah Labrador, the project officer of the Office of Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC) assigned in Sayaban, directed the performance by standing in front of the assembly and giving orders to the facilitator. The facilitator opened the session by immediately asking for a vote: 'Those who do not want Father to stay here in Sayaban, raise your hands, raise your hands!' There was an instant reaction to such an introduction.

Kapitan Pablo Iyong, the barangay captain raised a point of order. He said that there must be some discussion before the vote because the researcher had written permits from higher government officials. He himself recommended that the community be open enough to accommodate the visiting researcher.

Rey Onggona, of the Community Relations Office (COMREL) of the PNOC, stood up and allayed the fears of the people. He clarified that the Company was not opposed to the coming in of 'Father'. 'Perhaps some of you are afraid of what the PNOC might say or do if you allow Father to live in Sayaban. It is all your decision. The Company is neutral. It is not opposed to Father's research. As a matter of fact, he had already made contact with our office. Don't ever think that PNOC wants to dictate on the community.' The fact that he said this implied that many were

calculating their move according to PNOC's word. As the events would show, however, Onggona's statement was not enough to calm down the people's fears.

I think it was Kapitan Iyong who suggested that my research permits be read and translated so the people might understand. So Leah asked Datu Eduardo Inda, the provincial OSCC director, to render the English documents in Manobo. (Datu Inda was one of those who granted me clearance for research.) When he could not continue, Leah herself took over and gave each line her own translation that reversed the whole tone of the preceding speeches. She said, for example, 'Would you agree to be the object of his research? What does it mean? He will take pictures of you. He will take your pictures in different positions. Where will he bring them? It says here that he is studying in London. And where is London? It is very far, far, far. So he will take your pictures and bring them to a very far away place. You will not be able to see them.' From where I sat squirming, I could see a number of people shaking their heads.

Leah also raised an issue of my use of the term *lumad*, the generic term meaning 'native' to refer to all indigenous peoples in Mindanao. The term was introduced and had been very much associated with the progressive groups. By using the term 'lumad', I was linked with the progressive movement represented by ALUHAMAD [Alyansa sa mga Lumad sa Habagatang Mindanaw alang sa Demokrasya --Alliance of Lumad of Southern Mindanao for Democracy). Although a number of Sayaban residents have been involved in Aluhamad activities earlier during the campaign against PNOC, all of them have backed out.

The facilitator motioned again for the raising of hands. Somebody insisted that I should be allowed to speak. He reluctantly agreed to give me 'one minutes' that I mistakenly thought was simply a slip of grammar. Other people bargained for 'five minutes'. So I had to clarify many issues and at the same time present my proposal in five minutes. I spoke in Visayan:

'Thank you for giving me this opportunity to talk to you as a community. I understand that even an alien suitor is given in your culture some time to be with the family of the woman to prove his intention. I ask you to allow me to live here in your village for at least six months and then we can decide later if you want me to go on till one year. I know you have problems with my coming in. That is why I have approached our government officials to give me the necessary permits, from the Provincial Governor, to the Provincial Officer of the OSCC, down to the Municipal Mayor and the Chief of Police.

'I must declare directly that although I am a priest, I have no connection with the Kidapawan clergy. I have no intention of preaching Catholicism. I am not linked with the protest movement. I am not a communist. I am not a member of the New People's Army. I promise to leave a copy of important photos, recordings and documents taken from my research. I will not leak any information to the media, and if necessary, I shall not accept visitors from outside your tribe. If you assign one person who would keep an eye on what I shall be doing and whom I could also consult periodically, then we can avoid any blunder in the process.'

I had no illusion that my explanations would alter what inevitably would happen. I tried to drive home my point that mine was a well-intentioned ethnographic research.

Just as the people were raising their hands, the outgoing tribal chieftain suddenly barged in at the hall and started shouting. 'I am the chieftain here,' declared Datu Joseph Andot who was conspicuously drunk. 'You cannot stay in our village.'

Some elders attempted to stop him, but quickly decided to just let him finish. As soon as he did, Datu Joseph slipped out of the assembly hall apparently not caring what went on before and after he intervened.

Finally, the decision came. An overwhelming majority raised their hands against my staying in the village. Some people immediately went out of the hall after the count. This gesture, I heard later, was a form of protest against the manner that the meeting was conducted. Kapitan Iyong expressed disappointment at the result but he said he could not overturn it. He then asked me to convey my feelings. I had to restrain my emotion. I was prepared for the rejection, but not for the way it was handled. I started by clarifying one point: 'Kapitan, does this mean I can never visit Sayaban whatsoever? In other words, am I allowed to drop by if I find an open door for me?' The answer was yes. As a matter of fact, a number of individuals offered hospitality even during the meeting. Somehow, I did not find it a contradiction that they could reject my stay while welcoming me for a visit. Then, with a tone mixed with disappointment as well as dignity, I declared, 'Then my research goes on because I have the proper research permits. The only difference is that I cannot pursue my plan of putting up a small hut here, and that all the conditions I offered---leaving copies of recordings, not leaking to the press, etc---are not accepted and

therefore withdrawn.' I could hear murmuring around to this effect: 'Perhaps it was a bad decision after all! Now we don't have control over his research.'

Only one woman from the assembly stood up. Beting Umpan Colmo, the one who was beginning to serve as my research partner and who would play a big role in the new movement. She could not hide her disappointment. She spoke not so much of my credentials as her own. She felt she also had to defend herself for being associated with my research project. Beting has been away for the past eight years. To some extent, she also had to explain her own arrival in the village. Beting would turn out to be a major actor in the scene later.

### **Reviewing Process, Revealing Fractures**

It would have been easy enough to accept that 'Sayaban people did not want the researcher to stay in the village' if it was clearly and definitively said so. Immediately after the Tribal Assembly, various individuals approached me hinting at competing views of the matter. One protestant pastor said, 'I am sorry for the decision of my people, but maybe God has a message for us because he wants peace.' Another young pastor, who was a member of the local intelligence unit, praised me secretly for 'at least showing respect to the tribe by going through all the proper channels of the local government'. On the other hand, a more well off local labour subcontractor of the PNOC dismissed this effort as a waste of time. 'You should not have gone through the process of asking permission. The more native way is to just stay here and let them adjust.' In a slightly similar vein, a number of people opined that 'it was in the hands of Kapitan. If he simply said yes, then people would have obeyed.' That was confusing because Kapitan admitted both that he welcomed my research but he could not overrule the community decision. I also gathered from other interlocutors that the whole process of going from the Barangay Captain to his Council and then to the Tribal Council and Tribal Assembly---which I thought was ordinary procedure---was in fact applied only to my case. Somebody said, 'We did not do this with the PNOC though it was a more serious matter.'

Things would have been less painful were it not for a private remark by the OSCC project officer after the whole thing was over. Leah, whose candidates for the new tribal assembly were winning, whispered to me: 'You're just stupid, Father.'

You went to the big men at once. You don't understand the situation. Had you approached me in advance, the results of the assembly could have been different. Now, when do you want to see me?' I decided I would not approach her. Several events prevented me from talking to her, the most important of which came soon after the election of the new tribal council.

A group led by Oto Pontas, the resident musician, protested against the results of the election of the tribal council. They claimed that the OSCC project officer, in favour of her candidate, Alfredo 'Don-Don' Pandia Lim, a Chinese mestizo, rigged the election. Apparently, the early casting of votes was meant to make possible the inclusion of young children to go to the polls that were allegedly coached to vote for Lim. Labrador also served food at the house of Don-Don Lim which was adjacent to the voting centre. It could have influenced the people's choice, according to some protesters.

Instead of being entertained properly, Oto Pontas was accused of being 'used by the priest'. Not able to read or write (he was taking the literacy course of the SIL), Oto Pontas could not have had the courage, according to the accusation, to stage such a protest without the priest backing him up. The fact was that immediately after the meeting of the tribal assembly, Beting and I went with Datu Inda to attend the funeral of the great Datu Gawilan of the Matigsalug tribe in Bukidnon. The initial rejection and the following turn of events prevented me from going back to Sayaban for a long while.

After reaching the provincial office of the OSCC, Pontas' protest reached a curious resolution. Those who lost in the election, like Pontas, were formed into the local chapter of the nation-wide organisation called Tribal Communities Association of the Philippines (TRICAP). TRICAP, like OSCC, was under the same national leadership of Trinidad Sibug, of whom we shall have much to say later.

Witnessing all this, I thought that the decision against my stay was the result of confused and to some extent manipulated local social structure. I felt that I was being used as a scapegoat. All the traumas and hang-ups of the community seemed to be unfairly projected on me. Upon reflection, however, I realised that that experience could itself be productive of understanding. Perhaps I was more of a *sounding board* than a *scapegoat*. As a sounding board, I should, with sensitivity, be



able to hear as it were what they were trying to say about their situation. When I had a chance to tell a friend about this encounter, he thought I wasted a lot of time and that my research was thus delayed. On the contrary, I argued, this 'rite of non-passage' served as an instance of self-revelation of the community (cf. Kavouras 1994). At the very least, it unfolded for me the mechanism---or its cleavages---of the present political system. It identified most, if not all, of the local and contextual actors from government officials, to church pastors, to paramilitary groups and PNOC personnel.

In such a short time, within such a small village, I had touched on a gamut of contextual actors with different interpretations of their positions. The traditional *datu*s were there but the State-designed Barangay system (cf. Castro 1997) and the State-imposed Office of Southern Cultural Communities had undercut their central position in the village. The choice, for example, of tribal council members was not traditionally done by monitored election. Even the terms 'Tribal Council' and 'Tribal Assembly' exist only in English. If the uneasy juxtaposition of the *datu* system and the State structure was disruptive enough, the coming of Christian churches apparently made it more complex. The tribal chieftain who claimed to be the voice of the village had to intercept the assembly that was being presided over by a protestant pastor. Looming above all was the PNOC. Officially playing neutral, PNOC was the unmoved mover in the area, whose presence and protection translated into people's concern for source of subsistence and internal security.

Without the benefit of checking the 'real reasons behind' the actuation of the individuals involved, I shall now explore some ways of understanding Sayaban's predicament itself through a 'careful attention to the way past [and also recent] historical processes structure present patterns of behaviour' (Jayawardena 1987; cf. Gledhill 1994:128).

## 2. CHRONIC FEAR AS CHRONICLE OF PAIN

Wittgenstein's famous dictum, which has two parts, reflects the concerns of this Study: 'Don't apologise for anything. Don't leave anything out; look and say what it's really like---but you must see something that throws a new light on the facts' (Wittgenstein 1980:39e). The preceding narrative might correspond to

Wittgenstein's advice to tell what the arrival encounter was like---perhaps with more details than necessary. The following analysis, in turn, hopes to throw 'new light' on what was narrated above.

This new light does not come from the revelation of the inner consciousness of the actors involved, nor does it claim to be comprehensive. It just offers an additional, though still provisional, engagement with the alternative ways of talking about what happened. If reflective distance in space and time is sometimes *a* value, then this analysis could also be said to have the benefit of a shift in perspective, at least from my own initial perception in the field. More concretely, this analysis is now aided by the retrieval of some materials which I 'discovered' only lately from my boxes of notes, as well as by a precious consultation session which I had with my Mt. Apo friends during my return trip in mid-1998.

Despite the ambiguous process and the confused social structure that was involved in decision-making, the fact remains that a decision was made. In this section, what is of interest is not who made the decision or what precise motivations were behind the minds of those who did it. What is treated here is the discourse that went with the decision of rejection, or more precisely, the conditions that supported that discourse. I am led to admit that the dominant discourse then was the discourse of *fear*.

Looking back, the presider of the Tribal Assembly had some reason for not wanting any more discussion on the matter at hand. I had already said enough and, perhaps more importantly, they have said enough during the past consultations. I, therefore, should have understood enough, namely, that they could not accept me because of fear among the people.

Crispin Damo, a member of the Citizens' Armed Forces-Geographical Unit (CAFGU) in Sayaban, articulated these fears quite poignantly during the tribal council deliberation, two weeks before the tribal assembly decision. Damo's speech is interesting because it is an attempt to present the 'situation' of the people of Sayaban and why they are apprehensive of hosting priest-researcher. I privilege this speech in this Study also because it is addressed to me and shows as well his struggle to understand the 'intention' of the researcher. It is also important in offering hints on the 'ground or root' of the people's discourse. From this discourse

we could reconstruct not the essence of the Manobo culture but perhaps some aspects of what they have been through.

Instead of relegating the text of Damo's speech as an appendix, or summarising its content, I shall run down the bulk of the speech, approximating even some of the stammers, and pausing periodically to insert my own belated annotations.<sup>10</sup>

### **Fear of Conflict with PNOC.**

Immediate context: tribal council. Most of the pastors and tribal leaders have given one or two points or questions. Then from the doorway, Damo slowly inched his way into the session and, speaking on a normal tone, established his motivation to speak out (underlined words are originally in English).

'Good afternoon. I have heard the other statements and apprehensions (kabalaka) apprehensions. Father, I am Crispin Damo, a member of CAFGU assigned here in Sayaban. In my view, I don't look at only one but I consider the majority. Many questions here are focused on you and as I understand it, your intention is good which is a looking forward to the future of the natives in terms of education. My kabalaka (fear) is in behalf of the majority. Your (intention) is good but what about the (effects on the) rest? My fear is about the majority. Here in Sayaban those who were given charge of the government (nahitungdan sa goberno) are jealous...

'Although PNOC is already in place, we suffer from the false accusations from our relatives. I answer them: Why complain only now? You should have done that from the beginning. For two years the PNOC machinery has been lying there in Kidapawan, but nobody opposed it. Opposition comes now when the PNOC is already here; but we're already stuck with it. We now find ourselves inside the compound, so how do we escape?

'We the people here are like crushed in between; anybody who comes in immediately becomes suspect. We who are the watchers get confused (mabalaka) on where to go. On your part may be you're good, but we on our part get worried of being crushed towards the end especially that you are now well known [read 'known in the community'] as a priest, and therefore, this place shall become a hot target [for the military].'

Very often, anthropological talks about being 'in-between' sound celebratory. People who are in 'cultural borderlands' or 'contact zones' are said to be straddling between two cultures and defy traditional categories of identity. Being in-between, however, could also mean being crushed by contending forces. This is true of indigenous peoples who are 'caught in the middle in the war between the government and the insurgents and in many cases suffer the brunt of the bombings and military operations' (Magpantay 1994:9). Crispin Damo conveys this difficulty of his people. Damo feels the crunch even more so because as a paramilitary

personnel, he is placed at the very execution zone where the direct implementation of the project regulations meet the most intimate complaints of his own relatives.

To express this difficulty, Damo speaks repeatedly of 'fear'. The word 'fear' is probably a strong translation for '*kabalaka*' that in his original Cebuano mostly means 'concern', 'worry' (Wolff 1972). In speaking in Cebuano during the consultations, I presume that Damo and other council participants were thinking of the Manobo cognate word '*kovaakka*' which has always been equated with the real Cebuano word for fear, '*hadlok*'.<sup>11</sup> The word *kabalaka* would frequently be used to express various shades of fear, worry, and apprehension. Perhaps the best exegesis of the term its application within the recently lived experience itself of the people in Sayaban. Damo was expressing fear of being crushed again between the government military forces and the armed supporters of the opposition to the geothermal project.

Barely eight years ago, in 1987, after years of exploratory work, the Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) succeeded in drilling two production wells near the revered Lake Agco, thus confirming the existence of commercial reserve of geothermal energy from the bosom of the dormant volcano.<sup>12</sup> The resulting power plant was called Mt. Apo Geothermal Project (MAGP). It promised roads and jobs for Sayaban people and other local population, as well as 250MW of electricity for a growing Mindanao.

Soon after, triggered by the warning of a group of critical Manobo and Bagobo from both the western and eastern sides of Mt. Apo, protest groups filled the streets of the municipal centre of Kidapawan. They also mobilised various discussions and demonstrations in the cities of Davao and Manila, as well as in international advocacy arena. The exhausting tug-of-war involved not only the proliferation of consultations and debates in the media and the academe, but also the politicisation of indigenous rituals and the militarization of the local scene. From 1989, Sayaban had to bear the brunt of the conflict between the state-sponsored power company financed by American and Japanese agencies, and the non-government protest movement which had found a consistent ally in the outspoken Catholic clergy.

1992 was probably the most difficult year for the Sayaban Manobo. The Communist New People's Army entered the scene and the government sent police

units and army regulars. The more than five battalions already deployed as early as March 1992 was even increased by 1,000 men by the middle of July the same year. In addition, some 500 tribal men were recruited to patrol around the project site (Rodil 1993:22). Tribal oppositors were then labelled communists, some of them detained by paramilitary forces (Broad and Cavanagh 1993:34). Datu Tulalang Maway, a traditional warrior from the region, was detained (May 17, 1992) by the military with forceful interrogation for one night. 'The Indigenous peoples organisation (IPO) and the non-government organisation (NGO) which opposed the PNOG geothermal project were forced to link to the activities of the New People's Army' (ASLPC overview).

In early June, an army soldier and a CAFGU member were killed while two army officers and another CAFGU auxiliary were wounded in landmine explosion the other day at barangay Ilomavis, Kidapawan, Cotabato, site of Mt. Apo geothermal project (*The Mindanao Daily Mirror* 7 June 1992.)

Of course, the military had casualty, too, apparently under the hands of the New People's Army (NPA) who in 1992 attacked the drill site (PRC 1994:13; *To the Last Drop of Our Blood*, 1992). The NPA, however, had a rather ambiguous presence because it is known that as a group, it has been shown to benefit from the devastating logging business not only in Mindanao but also in the rest of the country (Vitug 1993).

Crispin Damo speaks of a 'confused' 'we who are the watchers'. Evidently, he was referring to the Citizens' Armed Forces—Geographical Units (CAFGU) who had a bad reputation. Created by the President Corazon Aquino when she rose to power, the CAFGUs did not change the bloodstained image of its Martial Law precursor, the Civilian Home Defence Force (CHDF). Both the CHDF and CAFGU were used for counter-insurgency programme of the government (Human Rights Watch/Asia 1992, 1996).

Throughout these years, the Catholic clergy, together with mainstream Protestant church activists in the neighbouring cities and municipalities, was in the forefront of action and advocacy work to which the Church was no stranger since its fight against the martial law dictatorship of Marcos until 1986.

By 1995, the military presence in Sayaban has decreased, but so has the number of local residents employed by PNOC. During this time of discernment on the net effects of hosting a government development project, was there wisdom in welcoming a potential critic?

### **Religious question**

The issue against priests was not limited to their opposition to the particular PNOC project. Observations from the experiences of other tribal groups led many of the Sayaban people to generalise on the tendency of priests to become very critical of the existing situations and thereby 'create trouble'. Damo continues:

'Over the radio, whenever the priests preach, they attack (bombahan) Sayaban...So, when I heard that a priest was coming, Kapitan said 'Attend'. I told him I would attend to see what good can be done, but what was in my mind was fear. Because somebody said that in the many places where priests were assigned, there were always conflicts. Priests seem to have been well known for bringing conflicts, but I hope that according to you, you have no connection whatsoever with those conflicts...

'There was the case of Fr. Weixelman. The Barangay Captain himself [Pelonio] decided that he should go. Something happened so the OSCC filed a case against him in Kidapawan and he was summoned. There was another case, in Lake Sebu, where our office was also involved because it concerned the Tiboli tribe. Towards the end, it even reached the Under-secretary himself, Secretary Lopez. There is yet another case where the provincial officer who was a B'laan had to send the priest away because the Under-secretary saw that the presence of the priest, like what you told about studying culture of the Tiboli, usually becomes a target. It was clear to me, but according to what they said, there was indoctrination going on, apparently, new doctrine. One family is given, and then another is given, until the whole tribe now has misunderstanding.'

DXND, the dominant radio station around Kidapawan, is owned and operated by the Catholic congregation, Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI). It has consistently been the loudspeaker of the Kidapawan Diocese and of the protest itself. During the campaigns against PNOC, radio newscast and short spots repeatedly voice out critiques against the military and against some government projects. Sunday masses are heard on the air. Live homilies were many times a frontal attack not just on the power projects itself but also on the people who welcomed it into their territory. A mild example of this kind of message aired over the radio appeared in the Diocesan Yearbook:

'We consider these [gigantic development] projects immoral and sinful. Our conscience cannot approve of them. In particular we single out the issue of Mt. Apo versus PNOC. This kind of project has all the characteristics of the big projects of exploitative development... Mt. Apo is sacred to many natives, *even though some can be pressured to give up all sacred*

*values for money. Mt. Apo is sacred also for many Christians. That's the heart of Mindanao, the source of life.'* (*Diocese of Kidapawan 15th Anniversary Yearbook 1991:17* Highlighting supplied.)

Clearly, the message referred to the Sayaban residents who allowed themselves to be duped to sell their lands for the sake of quick cash. I heard a more explicit accusation against Sayaban a number of times during my fieldwork in 1995-1996. Because of this, I refused to say mass on the air in the beginning of my fieldwork.<sup>13</sup>

By the late 1995, the protest movement had grown weak. Militarization in the area meant only a few checkpoints along the 'tourism road'. Sayaban folks, however, could still hear the protesters over the radio accusing them of selling their souls to the company. One of the most vocal among the protesters was, in fact, the sister of my research partner. Era was so articulate in her stance that she represented the whole protest movement in international advocacy that led her to London in 1993 (Terra 1993). It certainly reinforced the idea that this particular research was simply part of the protest.

The radio station was the DXND owned and operated by the Oblates Fathers who, together with the majority of the diocesan local clergy, led by the bishop himself, maintained a hard-line position against the geothermal project. For the Sayaban Manobo, the constant radio spots and negative commentaries hurt because as PNOC's construction was nearing its completion, the same local people were also losing their temporary manual jobs to more skilled outsiders.

Damo also talked beyond their experience in Sayaban. Elsewhere in his speech, he mentions the case of a religious missionary. Fr. Weixelman had to leave the tribal village in the town of Magpet. Damo must be referring to the American Oblate missionary who worked in the nearby Barangay Manobo (formerly Barangay Tico). The Manobo population was religiously Catholic. They could not allow, however, that their legendary leader, Mayor Pelonio, to be outstripped by a foreign priest. The Mayor, whom many believed had extraordinary powers, had to ask the priest to go because he was causing division within the community, which the mayor has established.<sup>14</sup>

Damo also invoked the sad experience of the Tiboli tribe in South Cotabato. Of this I was more familiar. The Belgian Passionist missionary Fr. Rex Mansmann

did a good job in championing the rights of the Tiboli against the government dam project in Lake Sebu, the heart of the Sta. Cruz mission. He bought the land usurped by outsiders, and re-established the tribe. The mission's livelihood projects and crafts' development earned for the Tiboli a fame that few other tribes in the Philippines could match. With huge funding from Europe, the mission had built schools and a huge hospital for the natives. Eventually, though, the missionary's reliance on his Ilongo assistants led to a series of moral and financial scandals. His religious superiors had to ask him to leave both the area and the congregation itself after several decades of missionary work.<sup>15</sup> Again, the effect on the tribal people, according to Damo, was division.

Apo Ambolugan reiterated this apprehension. 'The people...are wondering why there's a priest here when there is no Catholic Church here in Sayaban. This is my question because there is fear among us because there might be anomalies. Eversince, Sayaban and Ilomavis have not undergone any trouble because it is peaceful here. From Ilomavis up to Sayaban and even farther up, we are all of Iglesia [Church of Christ] and Alliance [Christian and Missionary Alliance], and we have no mixture from any other group. This is our *kabalaka* (fear).'

What neither Damo nor Ambolugan dared to talk about was the religious image attached to the notion of Catholic priesthood as taught by some of the pastors from the fundamentalist factions of the evangelical tradition. Up to the very end of my fieldwork, gossips circulated that as a priest, one of my tasks was to brand the people with '666', supposedly the fatal omen of the second beast of the 'Anti-Christ' (cf. Revelation 13:11-18). Some interpretation linked the Anti-Christ to Communism. This image seemed to have sunk deep in ordinary consciousness. Once in early part of October 1995, I had a joking conversation with some women in the kitchen about Catholic celibacy. Some of the women were surprised that a person like me could talk casually to them. With light laughter they confessed: 'We were taught that priests were communists.'<sup>16</sup>

The icon of the 'beast' was given a local and indigenous counterpart, the *busaw*. The *busaw* has long been identified in ethnographic literature in Mindanao as the malignant spirit (e.g. Benedict 1916; Lebar 1972; Manuel 1973). According to Handoc (1973:51), the *busaw* of the Manobo in Kidapawan was 'the evil spirit





**Figure 2.2** Some Sayaban residents slowly move towards the double-room primary school building (top) where public discussions, such as a Tribal Assembly, are usually held. Above, Pastor Tano Bayawan (at the centre) poses with his flock and family in his Church of Christ mission in nearby Sirayan.

which was very much feared of by the entire community. It had the power to inflict injury or to take the life of any man.' Even the environmental activists used this image of the treacherous monster to describe the Mt. Apo Geothermal Project (Manlongon 1990:6-7; Busaw 1993). To my surprise, some opinion makers in the area according to my confidants equally applied it to me. I recognised the 'creativity' and internal resourcing of local knowledge on the part of those who employed this labelling. I had to admit, though, that like Robert Paine, 'what the people thought of me certainly influenced my research and its objectivity' (cf. Paine 1998: 134-35).

This 'persistent image', to use a term from optics, is not solely a religious issue as I thought. It goes back to the issue of being crushed in between contending forces, this time not just between churches but between the State and institutional Church. A Baptist pastor and at the same time a tribal datu offers a corrective to a simplistic religious reading of the situation.

Datu Enagaro Bugcal, (whom we shall know more about in a later Study), suggested that the deep prejudice against Catholic priests was a product of military indoctrination exploiting both religious difference and tribal fanaticism. In our consultation session, Datu Bugcal recalled the names of the 'Catholic' military officials who gave instructions to the Protestant Manobo. According to these military officers, their communities were like a river that they should drain in order to catch the bad fish. The bad fish was the Communist New People's Army, hiding behind the guise of Basic Christian Communities (BCC) of the Catholic Church in the 1980s. Without denying the prejudiced crusade of the pastors themselves, Bugcal claimed that in Kidapawan (including Sayaban) the anti-Church propaganda of the military was most vehement. One result of this is in the number of Catholic Church workers who were summarily killed or abducted during the last years of the Marcos Dictatorship. In 1991, when the Diocese of Kidapawan celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, its *Yearbook*, listed down at least eighty-nine 'martyrs' who died for their faith and for their 'community involvement'---all succumbed in the hands of government forces.

### Protesters' language

Damo insists that, being a member of CAFGU and pastor of the Christian Alliance Church, his concerns are both 'material and spiritual'. He also takes seriously the complaints of his relatives whenever there are problems on peace and order in the community. In the following paragraphs, Damo brings out the case of double murder in Sayaban. In this context, he was alluding to the effects of people like themselves being associated with Church progressivist ministries.

'People always become suspects for always staying here at the outskirts (hilit-hilit nga lugar); these outskirts are often used as passageway by those who, shall we say, have lost their way [communist rebels]. It's not the fault of the tribe that these things happen. Many went to jail during that time. There was so much hatred then...Until we decided to tell the chief of police that it was unfair to jail the people who knew nothing of the crime attributed to them. This suspicion, before, somebody died because of these suspicions. Because of suspicions, Father, they died. They died because of joining these religious groups. Don't take this personally, Father. 'Actually' this should not be alien to you. The places where priests work become the objects of military's ire. We, however, don't know what the reasons are. They have many reasons because some of the groups are just being used. They are exploited. So there follow the problems of the tribes. Some take one side. Others will oppose it. The tribal people then engaged in war against one another. The objective may be good, but because people misunderstand, they get into conflict.'

Damo expected me to know (indeed I knew) what to them was a 'public secret'. A public secret is common knowledge but seldom talked about (cf. Taussig 1992; Green 1995). It was the murder of two Sayaban Manobo on 17 August 1992. The military killed them 'allegedly because of their efforts to demand promised compensation and benefits from the PNOC for their displaced communities' (Mincher 1993:231).<sup>17</sup> Miguel Aguia (son of the owner of the 1-D geothermal site) and his cousin Medy Diansig were gunned down with M-16 rifles. The suspects were members of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU). Aguia and Diansig were complaining about their living condition in the relocation site. Sixteen families shared tents made of recycled old rice sacks. They wanted just compensation for the land that the PNOC occupied. Armed men killed them the night before they planned to air their complaint over the radio.

On 4 October 1992, during a press conference in Davao City, PNOC President Raul Manglapuz apologised for the 'mistakes' committed by PNOC. 1st Lt. Giovanni Dumulong of the 35th IB and commander of CAFGU in Mt. Apo were more explicit. He admitted that it was his soldiers who killed the two Manobo

residents (referring to Aguia and Diansig). They did it upon receiving intelligence reports that the two planned to kidnap the PNOC manager (LRC-KSK 1992; Arquiza & Mercado 1997:219).

I wondered then what exactly linked me to their image of the priest as harbinger of conflict. Were there any signs that I was no different from the people whom Damo feared? One hint was my use of the word '*lumad*' to refer to the 'natives' both in my oral and written communications. The Visayan word '*lumad*' has been in use for at least a decade now among those who deal with the indigenous peoples in Mindanao. It simply means 'native' or 'natural-born citizen' (Wolff 1972). I also used it because I thought the word '*netibo*' (native) connoted 'primitiveness' or 'backwardness'. To my surprise the Manobo of Sayaban preferred '*netibo*' to Lumad'. The generic term became more politicised with the prominence of the Lumad-Mindanao, the umbrella organisation of progressive indigenous peoples. It grew out of multi-sectoral solidarity work of Church workers critical of the Marcos dictatorship. My casual use of '*Lumad*' aligned me with the progressive, Church-backed, tribal movement. It would be useful to explain how the word lumad evolved into an ideological password (but see Study 6).

In Cotabato, Lumad-Mindanao became more known for its regional cluster group, the ALUHAMAD or the Alyansa sa mga Lumad sa Habagatang Mindanao alang sa Demokrasya (Lumad Alliance for Democracy in Southern Mindanao). It consisted of eleven tribes in the five provinces of southern Mindanao. Aluhamad was already set up when the issue of the Geothermal Plant erupted. Combining both traditional and non-traditional means of organisations, Aluhamad gained prominence as the viable protest action arm of the Lumad-Mindanao to lead the Mt. Apo struggle. The word '*lumad*' then became identified with the critics of the government.

The partnership between Lumad-Mindanao and its support organisation went well until in late 1988 or early 1989. During that time, the political agenda and hegemonic strategy of some Kaduma members started dominating the orientation and organisation of Lumad-Mindanao. Lumad-Mindanao received 'orders from above'; the Mindanao-wide umbrella organisation was 'assigned' to cover some small districts in Davao and was not allowed to 'conduct activities outside this

region' (Gaspar 1997: 36). They had to abandon the more basic local organising and regional consolidation in favour of 'big campaigns' advocating nationalist issues like the presence of the US military bases in the Philippines. ALUHAMAD carried these nationalist issues and slogans in its campaign against the geothermal plant in Mt. Apo. Thus, the politicisation of term 'lumad' was completed. 'Lumad', to be sure, had already gained a legal standing (Rodil 1992a:30). It was the activist image of 'lumad', however, that persisted in the minds of the Sayaban people when I unwarily continued to speak with the language of outsiders. I have heard it many times that the word 'Lumad' had a derogatory meaning. Calling the Manobo 'Lumad' supposedly mocked them as being both '*low*' and '*mad*' in English sense.

The irony was that by 1995, when I was suspected of being a member of Aluhamad, Aluhamad was practically dead. Its mother organisation, Lumad-Mindanao, was heroically gasping for survival. Lumad Mindanao refused to serve as mere 'campaign machinery to advance the cause of the national liberation movement' (Gaspar 1997:38). As a result, the Kaduma withdrew its assistance to their defiant partners and allegedly subjected the leaders of Lumad Mindanao to 'character assassination' (Mansayagan 1997:12 cited in Gaspar 1997:36).

Lumad Mindanao had started the revitalisation of its ranks by focusing on local base building. The stigma of being one of them in their past image never ceased during the rest of my fieldwork.

### **Anthropological Research and the Media.**

Damo now shifts his critique to the dubiousness of the anthropological enterprise itself. The words may be crude, but they show his sensitivity to the production of ethnographic representation of so-called 'diminishing tribe,' a term he mentions in English:

As I see it, your professors asked you to concentrate on anthropology, which is a study of the native ways (kinaiya) of the people. This is part of your thesis. They ask you to study our traditional ways and living situation. What are these so-called cultural communities and why are they being called diminishing tribes? I cannot probably agree that they are diminishing tribes because they keep on increasing!

You know, Father, they do not understand what anthropology is all about... Maybe that is your first task when you live here, if for instance the tribe grants it.

Damo sees my thesis as an academic project, involving not just myself but my 'supervisor' under whose 'order' I have to study them. He also understands that the work of anthropologists goes beyond mere recording of 'native ways'. It also involves an analysis of the 'living situation'. This second part makes my research a potential problem. I shall not be dealing with the harmless past of an exotic culture, but also with the delicate and politically sensitive present conditions. Some aspects of my fieldwork could turn out to be what Apo Ambolugan calls 'anomalies'. There are two things, therefore, which Damo fears in research. The first is the representation of the tribe as a relic to be saved. The second is the entanglement of the researcher into the local political tension once he or she begins to investigate their present living conditions. These two points deserve some reflections.

*1. Anthropology and the imaging of the tribe.* The practice of portraying indigenous peoples as 'diminishing' does not make sense because, according to Damo, they 'keep on increasing'. Given the strong external pressures and internal problems of poverty within the tribes, there is a real temptation to (fore)see them as doomed to cultural and biological extinction. Damo's assertion can in fact be substantiated. A leading demographer pursued this hypothesis that the tribals are on the road to extinction. He gets a different result:

The case of the tribals reveals serious problems of poverty, malnutrition and forcible expatriation from their original homelands. This raises the possibility that they may be dying out. The loss by many tribal groups of their cultural heritage and their subsistence base, increased intermarriage, and the spread of Christianity have also led to a pattern of detribalization. One may therefore hypothesise that a long-term cultural and biological amalgamation between the tribals and the majority population of lowland Christians is now under way. Despite the wildly fluctuating figures found for the Manobo and the Subanon, the overall impression must be that Mindanao's tribal populations are not diminishing in numbers; indeed, their rate of growth may well match or exceed that found in the country as a whole. (Costello 1992:35-36)

Damo's assertion is not simply a matter of correcting statistics. The 'diminishing tribe' discourse has serious political and even philosophical implications. It undermines precisely the people's collective and historical agency. 'Diminishing tribes,' or its synonym 'vanishing tribes,' is used to call attention to the plight of the threatened indigenous peoples. It leads other people, however, to think of the tribes as 'victims' of a one-way development process, or as a kind of

'endangered species'. It often invites urgent intervention from outsiders. This leads to the second point, namely, the entanglement of the research in local politics.

2. *Research and local politics.* Although Damo did not mention the source of his insights, it was most probable he was thinking of the case of Florentina Lasaka (1995; 1997) who did an anthropological fieldwork at the relocation site of the PNOC. According to Datu Nelson Tula, the leading elder in the relocation site and a member of the Ilomavis barangay council, Lasaka played the role of a social critic. 'When the natives had complaints against the PNOC, they made her intermediary between PNOC and the relocatees; the result was disorder.' Kapitan Pablo Iyong seconded Datu Tula saying, 'Dr. Lasaka in the end felt free in reprimanding PNOC.' Again, the result was '*gubut*' (trouble). SIL translator Pastor Buntal, the PNOC community relations officer, and others shared the same impression.

The force of their sentiments only hit home to me when I attended a conference on 16 November 1995 Davao City.<sup>18</sup> Lasaka read the initial results of her six-month fieldwork in the PNOC relocation site. What she calls 'the danger of Bisayanization' echoed what Damo and others were saying earlier about the condescending view of the tribes:

Presently, they [relocatees] are undergoing a process of modifying their culture to meet the external forces of encroachment of the lowland westernised culture that could easily displace their own. They need to safeguard against their assimilation into the Cebuano or Bisayan culture and society. Assimilation is essentially a unilateral approximation of one culture in the direction of the other culture. It is a one-way process wherein the dominant group imposes itself over the other group. The cultural heritage of the Manobo and Bagobo can still be preserved...with the help of PNOC and other groups. (Lasaka 1995: 14)

By 'other groups' Lasaka meant anthropologists in particular. She recommends that the natives 'be made to appreciate the beauty and richness of their cultural heritage' (p.13). Lasaka also turns to PNOC staff saying they, too, need to undergo a 'cultural orientation' that requires the assistance of experts.

The cultural orientation should be on-going, objective and wholistic [sic]. It must be carried out by an outsider preferably a social scientist who has an objective view of the cultural pattern, personality and conduct of the natives. This is vital in the operation of the cultural orientation so that it will not gravitate into biases and prejudices. (Lasaka 1995:7)

It still baffles the mind that such a view of the 'native culture' and agency is perpetuated to this day and age!

This condescending attitude towards the people confirms what the tribal leaders have reported. One paragraph of her report reveals the basis of her taking more intermediary role on behalf of the people who still cannot stand on their own feet. 'The natives grumble and complain among themselves but never to the proper authority,' Lasaka laments. 'It was suggested [read: I suggested] to the relocatees to speak out during meetings and actively participate in the deliberation of the problems. But it is still a long way for the relocatees to appreciate the value of participation' (Lasaka 1995:10).

As a resident researcher, Lasaka did not limit herself to the study of 'native ways' but went into a confrontational critique of the 'living conditions' within the PNOC sponsored relocation site. This placed her in conflict with the official grievance machinery, either through the barangay council or through the Community Relations Office of the PNOC. This consequent 'disorder' was something the tribal leaders feared would be repeated if I took residence in Sayaban.

3. *Ethnography, media and international advocacy.* A funny conversation outside the barangay hall reveals a similar critique by a Manobo employee of the PNOC. Boy Aguan was a cousin of Beting. While waiting for the end of the barangay council meeting, Beting and I talked to some Manobo men applying for a job. Beting tried to explain what our research was trying to achieve. 'We are writing a book about our tribe,' Betting explained. Boy Aguan replied, 'I am afraid that you will put tail in our pictures in the book you are writing.' Betting appreciated the answer. She then showed my copy of a well-illustrated Badjao ethnography, *Celebrations with the Sun*, written by an Italian anthropologist (Bottingnolo 1995). Betting tried to win some empathy: 'Good for the Badjaos.' They already have a book about them. It is even with full of coloured photographs. We also have to have book on the Manobo.' This time, Boy Aguan challenged Beting.

'What if I find in that book a person with a tail?'

'Then I shall buy you a case of Coke!' It was probably too optimistic of Beting to have said that. After a few minutes of investigation, Aguan burst into laughter. Other onlookers followed suit. 'I told you. These books put tails to tribal peoples.' Aguan opened the ethnographic book on page 161. There is a naked Badjao boy with 'something dangling between his thighs'.



Boy Aguan smiled, and then he became more serious. 'I was just joking', he said. 'But maybe I'm not. I am no scholar. Sometimes I see these kinds of books. I don't like the way they portray the tribes. They compare us to monkeys. I know you will do better.'

Beting, celebrating her defeat, promised to buy a case of Coke provided her cousin came to her home. Aguan, noticing that he was in the process being recruited by his cousin, inquired about what we were doing in the barangay hall. We were asking permission to do research. Aguan's follow up question had come to be prophetic, 'But what if Mount Apo refuses?' Beting was quick in exploring that kind of 'figurative' statement, 'Why, what does Mt. Apo say?' Aguan was much smarter. He just smiled.

Not all grassroots critique on research ends on a funny note. Japanese scientist Dr. Hiromi Hironaka performed a series of tests on the water samples taken from the rivers in Mt. Apo. Reports claim that Hironaka found poisonous levels of arsenic in the mountain rivers near the geothermal plant (for example Linao 1993). The merits of the research and the use of its results ignited serious debates. When I came to Kidapawan, Hironaka returned there for a short visit. Apparently, his research had not yielded definite conclusions, yet. The media, however, picked up Hironaka's research. The Manobo did not welcome the media representation.

Sometime in November 1995, the ABS-CBN television showed a feature on the rumoured skin poisoning around the geothermal plant. It broadcast footages of the Manobo with skin itches. Those who saw the broadcast were furious. Someone asked, 'Why do they always portray us as dirty?' I phoned *the Kinaiyahan Foundation, Inc* (KFI) in Davao City, and asked them for a copy of the features that they helped shoot. Even they had no right to get those footages or to share them with others.<sup>19</sup> There was no way to check now how the media would use the images that they got from the tribes. To a greater or lesser extent, ethnographic research shares the same power-laden, image-producing dominance.

Related to the anthropological and media enterprise is what Damo refers to as the internationalisation of the local issue. We can understand that towards the end of his long speech, Damo could say that 'their fear, the ground or root of the people's situation' is that it 'might become an international issue. This PNOC, for

one, is not just a local or national issue. It has become an international issue. This is what the people fear.' Perhaps what is common among research, mass media and international advocacy is the growing loss of control of the local people on the scope and mechanics of these practices.

I learned the reasonableness of this fear of media exposure. Shortly after my initial visit to PNOC, an article came up in *Tribal Forum* (Vol. 3(1):4-5), the international gazette of the Episcopal Commission on Indigenous People (ECIP). By its layout, at least two NGOs believed I was the author of that 'Update on the PNOC Geothermal Project in Mt. Apo: The Destruction Continues'. International advocacy, such as what I had seen in London, uses this type of article. Regardless of my views of its content, I felt manipulated. If this loss of grip of one's own representation could happen to me, then the Manobo had reasons to fear of similar predicament from outsiders like myself.

### **Fear as memory of pain**

Ostensibly, this is just another case of suspicion that is fairly common to most fieldworkers when they start their research in sensitive areas (cf. Lopez-Gonzaga 1986:187; Green 1995:121 n2). More significant, I suggest, are the things we learn about what the people have been through precisely by what they are now trying to avoid. For the Manobo, fear seems to be at this point, an accessible idiom by which to convey their memory of past pains. This is true whether they are dealing with the military or some clergy, or with the embarrassment of having to host a domineering development project. This idiom is accessible precisely because it resonates with the collective experiences that have been lodged in their collective memory. Linda Green has similar insights from her fieldwork in Guatemala. '[R]ather than being solely a subjective personal experience, [fear] has penetrated the social memory. Rather than being an acute reaction, it is a chronic condition.' (1995:105).

It is in this light that I now see the predicament of the tribal chieftain, Datu Joseph Andot, whom we met at the beginning of this Study. When the Tribal Assembly adjourned, Pastor Domling Andot approached me and begged for understanding on the conduct of his brother. From various sources, one could understand that Datu Joseph had been through hard times, indeed.

I gathered from Kidapawan activists that Datu Joseph Andot used to be an active participant of rallies and seminars against the PNOC project. Perhaps his protest had something to do with his small piece of land near Lake Agco, site of the PNOC power project. The first Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the PNOC contains some information about Joseph Andot. According to the 1986 PNOC survey, Joseph Andot had 1.28 hectares of kaingin considered as 'illegal'. The following year's survey also indicated that Joseph Andot had 0.16 hectare of kaingin, again considered as illegal and for which he was charged with a legal case under the Bureau of Forest Development (BFD). A funding arm of the protest movement offered to help him, but unfortunately it did not succeed. He received death threats from some unknown sources. We get a glimpse of what happened through an interview that his wife Noemi Andot gave to a journalist. 'Noemi Andot, whose husband Joseph joined a group which lobbied against the geothermal project in Manila last year, says instances of harassment forced her and her family to flee Lake Agko and settle in far-off T'boli town.' The report continues, 'ALUHAMAD officials claim that 12 other families who opposed the project have likewise evacuated the area.' (Arquiza 1990b). A human rights lawyer confirmed to me that she processed Andot's affidavit claiming he had to evacuate because of threats to kill him.

Then things changed. Datu Andot was not part of the celebrated *D'yandi* solidarity pact against the geothermal plant. On the contrary, on 5-6 May 1989 he joined the 15 datos who went on a field trip to PNOC project in Tongonan, Leyte, all expenses paid by the Company. PNOC treated the participants very well. Government documents also record that on 11 July 1989 he was a 'tribal representative' for the joint special session of Kidapawan Sangguniang Bayan and Cotabato Sangguniang Panlalawigan. The resulting resolution condemned the bill of House Representative Andolana, a leading opposition that sought to stop the PNOC in Mt. Apo.

According to the same newspaper interview, Noemi continued to visit their house in Lake Agco. She feared that her children would lose their heritage once the geothermal project takes over the land. 'If the development project continues and our livelihood is assured, it's okay with me,' she says in Cebuano. She adds that

although the majority of the villagers appear to support the project, many of them are simply afraid to defy the wishes of the influential Office of Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC)' (Arquiza 1990b). The theme of fear is present again. Somehow, Datu Joseph Andot drew me closer to the Manobo tribe because of the story he embodied.

### **Challenging Standard Ethnographic Synthesis**

In the preceding account, I hope to have introduced the various contextual actors in Sayaban who became involved in the deliberation process leading to the rejection of my stay. Instead of a summary, I add this last section to show how an appreciation of this politics of arrival has led this research to its critical points of departure.

The opening account discussed above invites a re-appraisal of the closing synthesis of the standard Manobo ethnography, namely, E. Arsenio Manuel's *Manuvu Social Organisation* (1973). Towards the end of his 400-page description of the tribal organisation, kinship, and leadership, Manuel felt that there was 'nothing left' except to produce a 'synthesis abstracted from general Manuvu' behaviour and ethnohistorical material'. Manuel noted that such an operation was 'delicate'. He did it, nevertheless, 'to see how the cogs of societies calibrate and what elements, if any, oil the machine to run smoothly in spite of the grit' (p.380). Two major 'conclusions' emerge from this 'holistic' view. First, Manuvu society is 'characteristically anarchistic' but with its 'own system of order'. Second, 'in spite of the apparent structural weaknesses' there are enough 'social and cultural forces', namely forces of fear, that 'make the social organisation work' (1973:380-81). Manuel's anarchic and phobic characterisation of Manobo seems to 'explain' the confusion of powers on the part of those who took part in politics of my arrival. It also accounts for the prevalence of fear in the discourse accompanying the decision. I suggest, however, that we need to make some crucial qualifications.

Before going further, it is necessary to show that the *Manobo* in Mt. Apo and whom the SIL labelled as *Obo-Manobo*, belonged to the same ethnic group that Manuel called *Manuvu*. Only then would any comparison make sense.

*a. Manobo, Manuvu, or Obo-Manobo?* Manuel conducted a series of short periods of fieldwork to the 'Manuvu' between 1956 and 1964. He launched his

investigations from the Bagobo of Davao. He went farther westward into the interior of central Mindanao, reaching the 'untouched' heartland of the *Manuvu*. The Manuvu, according to Manuel, are a distinct people not quite Bagobo as he himself mistakenly thought, and not even to be subsumed under the generic term Manobo as most ethnographers do. These 'historyless people' are 'nonliterate' and 'their country has never been reached by writers nor students of society before' (1973:3. 13-14). If they were not Bagobo, are they the same as the Obo-Manobo who, like Manuel's Manuvu, had not been named as such in ethnographic literature? I suggest they are.

Although his map allocates the whole Mt. Apo region to the *Tahavawa*, his text explains that the Manuvu land extends up to the 'undulating and hilly lands north of Kidapawan' in Cotabato (cf. Manuel 1973:1.6a). The vocabularies he italicises in his book are quite similar to the ones I encountered in the field. The Obo-Manobo elders know the hero in the Manuvu epic, which Manuel recorded. In addition, the whole expanse of territory of the Manuvu according to Manuel is, to my initial reading, could be superimposed to most of the Obo-Manobo region according to SIL (1992). While I am uneasy with SIL's hyphenated Obo-Manobo, I also recognise, together with other observers, that Manuel's insistence on Manuvu as totally different from Manobo can be 'confusing' (cf. Payne 1985:471n.1). For the purpose of this study, I use *Manobo* to mean both Manuel's *Manuvu* and the SIL's *Obo-Manobo*.<sup>20</sup> We may now begin to ask to what extent the synthesis of Manuel applies to the Manobo of Mt. Apo.

*b. Anarchic social order.* Manuel offers, with care, his first generalisation with some immediate qualification:

If we are asked to describe Manuvu' society briefly, I would say that it is characteristically anarchic. But I should hasten to add that the society is an anarchy with its own system of order. This statement can be justified for three reasons: first, retaliation is the supreme law of the society; secondly, Manuvu society has a loose political organisation; and lastly, its concept of authority and power is weak. (Manuel 1973:380)

Trained in the legal profession, Manuel observes that in Manuvu society, the law is in the hands of the aggrieved, and therefore, despite the strong position of the datu, retaliation is always possible. Legal sanctions and coercive use of force are also weak (p.387). Even the status of the datu, who is the central figure of the

community, is not well protected because of the possibility of other aspiring datu rising into power or when his clientele 'simply ignores' him (p. 389). The loose political organisation makes society unstable and, perhaps we can add, manipulable.

The confusion about who should decide on my application for residence seems to reinforce Manuel's statement. We have seen how the local barangay captain passed me on to the tribal council, which in turn turned me over to the ambiguously constituted tribal assembly. Datu Joseph Andot, who was still the tribal chieftain, could be an example of datu ignored by his people. That he had to barge in the session only showed that the present assembly was neither convened nor presided by their legitimate traditional leader. At the end of the day, it was not clear who made the decision and who would enforce it.

Where Manuel was less careful was in bracketing historical forces in his synthesis, something that the bulk of his ethnography amply provides. Manuel insightfully shows the weakening of the datu system as the result of the pressures from colonialism and state formation, but he translates this historical product into an essential 'characteristic' trait of the Manuvu or Manobo societal machinery. He stresses this point in his functionalist evaluation of fear.

c. *The functional force of fear.* 'In the face of this', Manuel heaves a sigh, 'the Manuvu people have somehow survived on this earth'. Manuel attributes this relative success to 'social and cultural forces' that compensates for the 'apparent structural weaknesses' of Manuvu society. These forces consist of a variety of fears. These apparently are the fear of retaliation, fear of fines and damages, fear of loss of honour, fear of ostracism, fear of the outside world, fear of the supernatural powers, fear of datu power. And, more recently, there is fear of established government, its agents and personnel (1973:381). Manuel presents his thesis, thus:

Fundamentally, these are the forces that make the social organisation work, the cog system calibrate and run normally, first in the village and later in the larger society, paving the way for the unification of the different village communities into a tribe. These fears shape and regulate Manuvu' life and make the individual live in a kind of social order among fellow men. (Manuel 1973:381)

Again, my early encounter with the Manobo seems to confirm Manuel's anthropological insight. Manuel's treatise explains why Crispin Damo repeatedly mentions fear to express how his people feel. It appears now that the only

modification we could make is to add to Manuel's litany of fear the more recent objects of fear, namely, protesters, priests and researchers.

This possibility of simply adding a new item in the list of fears without destroying the equilibrium presupposed in his functionalist synthesis is precisely what makes Manuel's closing notes uncomfortable. This dawned on me as a result of my conversation with a Manobo local observer, Atawan Bayawan.

*Tiyo* Atawan, who would emerge later as an important figure, offered an alternate analysis of fear in Manobo society. In one consultation session that I arranged during my 'post-fieldwork fieldwork', I summarised to the group the conclusion of Manuel. Manobo society stays in place because of the whole system of fear. At the heart of the Manobo 'culture' is 'fear'. The group had serious reflection on this point. Later, Atawan unpacked the other Manobo words for fear. I then realised that Manuel, despite his elaborate articulation of the local terminologies, never indicated the Manuvu words that he lumped together in a generic term 'fear'. Atawan added the more nuanced terms '*allak*', *pannu*, and *goro*.

'Fear', Atawan enlightened us, 'should not be taken only in its negative sense, that is, dread, lack of courage or passivity'. A related concept, he said, is '*allak*'. It is also fear but it involves respect. Manuel apparently missed the point behind the 'fear of the spirits' or 'fear of the datu'. Atawan gave a lecture that argued along the following line: If it was just fright, then people would not appear before the datu or the spirits, but would simply hide. '*Kovaakan*' therefore should be understood together with '*allak*' that includes respect. We follow the datu not just because we fear him, but because we respect him. The same is true of the mountain spirits and the government. We have what we call '*od pannu*' which means 'becoming aware of the presence of someone'. We consider the presence of the datu or the spirit. This is true if the datu has '*goro*' (power of the word). A datu with '*goro*' commands respect and reverence. We listen to him and hang on to his words.'

Atawan calls for a more careful appreciation of the actual local idioms used by the people, thus challenging a tendentious, though tidy, functionalist synthesis.<sup>21</sup>

*d. Fear as discourse of dissent.* Unlike Manuel, Damo sees fear not as a centripetal force binding his society, but as a result of communication among people who have varying access to knowledge and power. Damo describes, for example,

what happens when the priests broadcast anti-PNOC homilies over the Catholic and only high-powered radio station. They reach the homes of the tribal families who start reacting in different ways. 'Some will take side, and some will oppose it, until the tribal people war against one another.' He illustrates how fear emerges. 'This is where doubts begin. Somebody reports a plan like this or like that. This becomes the basis of fear, namely, that the same might happen here in Sayaban, or that there might be social disorder and the people would not know where to go.' Again: 'One family is given [some new doctrine], then another is given [another set of beliefs], until the whole tribe now has misunderstanding.' According to Damo, it is not a question of the motivation of those who express their opinions, but his concern is on the unforeseen effects of circulating those statements. 'Your intention may be good,' Damo pleads, 'but I fear for what will happen in the long run'. The process may involve unwelcome twists. 'I do not want any consequent division among my relatives to the effect that we will become tempted to say 'We do not want the Barangay Council or the Tribal Council because there is Father to help us'. Fear, then, is not so much a 'fundamental' and 'characteristic' trait of the Manobo people, but a product of discursive interaction and negotiation, often involving unequal positions of power.

Like Manuel, Damo is also making generalisation about Manobo society. Both employ the discourse of fear. Between them is a crucial difference. Manuel translates, and reduces, a whole variety of statements, activities, practices, and emotions into a more or less bounded concept of fear as socio-cultural force to create an image of a well oiled, smooth-running social machine. Manuel even goes so far as saying that the 'vigour and efficiency' of this force of fear is clear to him, although not to the local tribal functionaries (Manuel 1973:383). Damo, on the other hand, generates a discourse of fear from the Manobo collective memories, from historical hurts that the tribe has endured. He does not pronounce general statements on his tribe. Instead, he places his tribe in a protective dialogue with the practice of research that is backed up by documents of permits from higher government officials. I see now Damo's discourse of fear as an indigenous form of critique, a culturally generated discourse of dissent.



Perhaps one reason for the differences in the handling of discourses lies in the operating presuppositions of Manuel and Damo. Manuel sees 'his' community of 'primordial man' almost as passive 'targets of change' and therefore a 'veritable living laboratory' in which an anthropologist can 'test one's theories'. Fieldwork in this 'pristine setting' offers to a reflective researcher, a kind of 'sociological flashback' of the beginnings of 'our own communities' (Manuel 1973:vii). Such a classical, objectivist approach stands now to be challenged by more sensitivity to people's historical agency in society. Damo, on the other hand, considers his people as 'relatives' whose feelings he has to check and whose voices he would heed. He sees them as 'flocks' of his church, or as contemporaries and potential critics. His long speech, therefore, is not only a text of community's self-revelation, to be interpreted only for theory building. It was precisely a living discourse that is critical of academic ways of talking about other people as a static community. 'The point, however, 'is not to discard classic norms but to displace them so that they become only one among a number of viable forms of social description rather than the one and only mode of writing about other cultures' (Rosaldo 1989:54).

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#### Notes on Study 2: The Dissent of Mount Apo

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Montano was a French scientist who joined the first recorded successful expedition to Mount Apo on 5-13 October 1880. The Spanish Governor Joaquin Rajal, accompanied by missionary Fr. Mateo Gisbert, SJ among others led the trip. Montano's report is published in his *Voyage aux Philippines et en Malaisie* (1886; cf. 1881, 1883, 1885). Chapter 9 of the book, entitled 'Ascension au Volcan Apo', was translated by Fr. John Bauer, SJ. for Bernad's 'The Ascent of Mt. Apo' (1959). Although Bernad quotes lengthily from Bauer's manuscript, a substantial portion of the chapter remains unpublished, including the above quote. For a history of the various expeditions to Mt. Apo, Bernad (1959) has never been augmented or superseded (cf. Payne 1985:21ff), but see also Schreurs (1994) and Whitmarsh (1900) which bears the same title 'The Ascent of Mount Apo'.

<sup>2</sup>Part of the problem, Dumont says, is that ethnographers have 'great difficulty in operationalizing the programmatic statements of the theorists'. When they try to produce ethnographies out of their fieldnotes, they 'sacrifice most narrative demands at the altar of discursive coherence'. Even the celebrated monographs usually 'remain long on theoretical promise and short on ethnographic performance' (Dumont 1992:2-3). Dumont, however, has been criticised for being strong on narrative but weak in presenting a 'pattern for the provision of information' (Pertierra 1994:127).

<sup>4</sup>I am especially inspired by the arrival account of Smadar Lavie, which she marvellously sustained throughout her ethnography of the Mzeina (1992). For a more straightforward and development-oriented narrative of the arrival of a project, see Uphoff (1996).

<sup>5</sup>This issue of 'reflexivity' and the study of one's own society is dealt with in my MA dissertation entitled 'Homing Anthropology: Theoretical and Political Issues in Doing Anthropology in One's Own Society' (SOAS). For an early though still relevant discussion on personal commitment in anthropological research, see the various articles in Huizer and Mannheim (1979).

<sup>6</sup>The theoretical and ethical issues in the involvement of the researcher with the social movement he is studying will be discussed in Study 7, using Melucci, Touraine, Escobar, Schepher-Hughes, among others, as dialogue partners.

<sup>7</sup>*Sayaban* literally means 'anvil' reflecting the earlier trade the place used to be known for. It is now a *sitio* (small village) within the *barangay* (official smallest political unit of the State) Ilomavis. Sayaban's land territory is still being defined through the process of ancestral domain claim, which shall be the subject of a later Study. The tribal council, however, covers also the other sitios of *Sudsuhayan*, *Navunturan*, *Inanapo*, *Kollay*, and what is now known as 'Site' referring to the relocation site near Lake Agco reserved for the remaining former occupants of the Geothermal Reservation Area. Together, the population of these sitios, including Sayaban itself, would reach a thousand (SIL 1991).

<sup>8</sup>This project title was later changed to Mindanao 1 Geothermal Project (M1GP) (Delfin, *et al* 1992). We shall refer to it according to its more popular name 'PNOC' after its proponent the Philippine National Oil Company-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC). The Manobo sometimes pronounces PNOC as pee-nok.

<sup>9</sup>We were among the 9,953 visitors PNOC received during the period 1992-1996, as part of the company's program towards openness and maximisation of information. (PNOC Forum materials 1997).

<sup>10</sup>Crispin Damo's speech does not appear in my notebook. It came out only when I was reviewing the transcription of my tapes. I am amazed how such an extended account of people's sentiments, which influenced my conduct of fieldwork, could be so unnoticed. But for a discussion on the impact and use of 'post-fieldwork' reflection and of non-textualized and 'forgotten' 'early fieldwork experiences', see Cohen (1992) and Kohn (1996).

<sup>11</sup>For example, in the SIL phrasebook, we find this question: '*Dii ka vod kovaakkan nod undinit ingod doy no usahay diwon man mgo samuk nod pongkorinog?*' translated in Cebuano as 'Dili ba ka *mahadlok* nga moanhi dinhi sa among nasod nga may mga ibalita man nga usahay adunay mga samok?' The Tagalog equivalent 'takot' is also used. In English it means, "Aren't you afraid to come to our country which sometimes is heard to have troubles?" (SIL 1994:6-7). SIL's unpublished grammar book, *kovaakkan* is also read as fear: '*Odkovaakkan sikandin taddot duma rin*' means 'He will be afraid of his companion.' And '*Yo kad od kovaakki ondak od koka-an dow*' is translated as 'Don't be afraid of what you will eat.' Fear in these cases could also mean worry. SIL's bilingual edition of the Gospel of Mark (Markus 1995) is also instructive. The word 'afraid' in 'They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid (Mk 16:8),' is rendered in Manobo as '*nongovaakkan*' which is in the parallel Cebuano text is rendered '*nahadlok*'. See also a similar equivalence in Mk 9:32. The draft Obo-Manobo Dictionary of SIL, sad to say, does not include *kovaakkan* in its list (SIL 1993).

<sup>12</sup> 'The prospect area was delineated after the study inventory of alternative sites in Mindanao from 1978-1984. Thermal areas of Amacan, Davao del Norte; Mainit, Surigao del Norte; Balingasag, Misamis Oriental; and Malindang, Misamis Occidental have been initially surveyed without significant success' PNOC (1990 Information Paper on the Mt. Apo Geothermal Project). Actual exploration work in Mt. Apo started in March 1983 (Delfin, et al 1992:107). The more visible and audible signs of the exploration came when the company drilled two wells in 1987.

<sup>13</sup> I later decided to accept offers of preaching on the air when I was more sure of the calculated risks and possible gains in doing so. This was especially during the Tribal Filipino Sunday in 1996.

<sup>14</sup> Mayor Pelonio, during an interview on 15 April 1996, however, claimed that Fr. Weixelman was like a brother to him. He blamed the priest's staff for magnifying what was otherwise a small point of disagreement.

<sup>15</sup> Based on my conversation with the Provincial Superior of the Passionist Fathers on 2 June 1996 in General Santos City.

<sup>16</sup> From the house of another relative of Beting, I saw an old apologetics book by Arthur Maxwell. Published in 1943, *Great Prophecies for Our Time* narrates the scandals in the history of the Catholic Church and the dangers of Communism. It reserves a special chapter on the Pope as the Anti-Christ. According to Beting, herself a member of Four Square Church, the book remains a popular handbook of a good number of pastors in Kidapawan.

<sup>17</sup> This case, which reached an out of court settlement with the payment of some a few thousand pesos was documented in the film *To the Last Drop of Blood*, produced in London in 1992. See Anderson & Jenkin 1992.

<sup>18</sup> Florentina Lasaka spent six months living with the twenty-one relocated families within the PNOC compound in Lake Agco, some two kilometres near Sayaban. The study forms the 'ethnographic part' of the controversial PNOC-sponsored research on ten indigenous communities around Mt. Apo.

<sup>19</sup> Unedited footages of this visit are available in KFI's office in Davao City.

<sup>20</sup> My informants, principally Pastor Tano Bayawan, who works as the main resource person of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Sayaban, prefers the more local-sounding name 'Monuvu' (cf. SIL 1992: 142). He has expressed uneasiness not just with the hybrid name Obo-Manobo, but more with the fact that other people are taking it upon themselves to determine how they are called. During our consultation, he and his other companions settled for 'Manobo' since 'that is how we are told who we are' and because 'it is more convenient'. For the same reason, I use the name Manobo, following the earlier tradition of local observers from Kidapawan, e.g. Eleosida (1961), Yuag (1969), and Handoc (1973). See *Notes on the local Languages*.

<sup>21</sup> Renato Rosaldo registers a similar 'unease' with the way that some Girardians generalise on 'envy' and 'violence'. See Rosaldo (1987).

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## Study 3 **Dancing with Borrowed Gongs**

### *Tuddok* Movement for Cultural Regeneration

*'When the time and space and energy  
to be creative is stripped or stolen away,  
then people become alienated... A creative process  
can be the starting point for involving the people  
in the process of social change. It can put them  
in touch with themselves. It can give people  
a voice which validates their own experiences and builds  
a sense of confidence and power.'*

---Kaliwat, 'Where Rivers Speak of Manobo's Living Dreams' (1996)

'IF IT'S MOVING, it isn't cultural.' Such was the 'broad rule of thumb' of the classical tradition of anthropology that Renato and Michelle Rosaldo imbibed before they did fieldwork among the Ilongot in Northern Philippines (Rosaldo 1989:209). But the Rosaldos were more innovative. Together with other reformers in the discipline, they called for the remaking of cultural analysis. Here the dominant concern for fixed social structures, homogenised identities and ritualised behaviours should open up space for the alternative study of the blurred 'cultural borderlands' in which identities and norms were contested or co-opted, invented or improvised. Thus cultural boundaries and borrowings, interfaces and interstices, seams, sutures and all kinds of in-between sites have now become the preferred focus for the exploration of what is cultural and moves. Silently, however, in some crude form that the call for the new ethnography has been heeded, a new set of presuppositions has also become operative: that the 'traditional' categories are static and that any identity assertion smacks of essentialism (Mendoza, forthcoming; cf. Hall 1996:4). When the attention shifted to new objects of research, the evaluation of researches itself also changed: if you are not crossing borders, then you are not at the cutting edge. If your topic is not moving, it is not cultural.

This issue of what *is* cultural becomes crucial when it slides into the question of who *has* culture. To astute ethnographers like Rosaldo, this notion of some people

having *more or less* culture does not make sense. All the more absurd is the idea that some people are *without* culture. Much of this type of talk is relative to 'outside observers' like ethnographers and their readers, who brush aside the darker ratio of power. Those who have more culture have less power (Rosaldo 1989:202). The *force* and the *reality* of this question hit me, not in the debates among anthropologists, but precisely in the beginning of my fieldwork. Some people at some point *think* and *feel* themselves as having no culture.

I encountered this *sentiment* during a special session of the Tribal Council in Sayaban. Apo Ambolugan, in his attempt to understand my anthropological project, asked me: 'Why do you still want to study us? We have no more culture here.' This question from a gentle elder hit me hard. To what extent did Apo Ambolugan represent his tribe's predicament? How could such a community be re-energised?

In this Study, I shall scan this discourse of 'culturelessness'. Then I shall document the counter-discourse or, better still, the alternative practice of 'cultural regeneration' initiated by the leaders of what I call the *Tuddok Movement*. This will be followed by a reflective assessment on the beginning of this movement, starting from the leaders' own expressed views to which I add my own. The last section concretises the Tuddok struggle by focusing on the case of Ettok who, in his sickness, has challenged the prevailing perception of culturelessness in the tribe. I hope to show, in this as well as the next two Studies, that a view of culture as energy contributes to the recognition and appreciation of the 'modest moves' of people considered without culture.

## 1. EN-COUNTERING CULTURELESSNESS

Was Apo Ambolugan's question just an oblique way of driving me out of their tribe? Apparently not. He was one of those who maintained friendly relations with me until he died in the middle of my fieldwork. When he elaborated his query, he revealed his notion of culture and how humbled his tribe felt about its loss.

'Why us? Why not the T'boli of Lake Sebu? Or the Matigsalug of Bukidnon? They still have *agongs* there. They still wear our native clothes. We have nothing.'<sup>1</sup> 'My only fault', I said, 'is that I believe you still *have* culture.' I immediately

translated it into figurative terms. 'There are still hidden springs of tradition which the tribe keeps alive'. Some people murmured. I was convinced that I said something they could accept and probably believe in. At least nobody tried to prove me wrong. Some even nodded. It was the minimum that I needed to go on. Otherwise I would have been crushed, because Apo Ambolugan's representation of the tribe found an exact parallel in the stereotypic imaging of the Filipino collective psyche which one observer damagingly called 'damaged culture' (Fallows 1987).<sup>2</sup>

At that moment, I remembered, vaguely, how Renato Rosaldo (together with his wife Michelle) began his career with a similar encounter. His account warned me before starting my own fieldwork. I can now quote it here in full.

I was a graduate student contemplating fieldwork in the Philippines. A teacher warned me that Filipinos are 'people without culture'. Meaning to be helpful, he suggested doing fieldwork in Madagascar because people there have 'rich' cultures. Once in Manila, I found that his prophecy appeared to be confirmed by the standard Filipino half-joke about their 'poor' culture. Unlike Indonesia, they explained, the Philippines never had Hindu-Buddhist temples and other signs of ancestral high culture. What could one expect, they added with a faint twinkle, from a people who had spent more than three hundred years in a monastery (Spanish colonial rule) and nearly half a century in Hollywood (American colonial rule)? My first encounter with the Ilongots was much as predicted. They appeared to be 'people without culture'. They lacked the ethnographic staples of the day: lineages, villages, men's houses, elaborate rituals, and matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. (Rosaldo 1989: 197; cf. 1988)

The fact that the Rosaldos later contributed much to anthropological theory and ethnographic writing---despite, or because, of their 'depressing' Philippine experience (Rosaldo 1989:208)---alerted me to the possible equivalent in Manobo cultural improvisations. The difference lay, in my readiness to invest belief in what still remained to be achieved. I was not simply intent on contributing some nuance to the *poetics* of ethnographic writing; I wanted to live out an ethical *praxis* of fieldwork engagement.<sup>3</sup> As fellow Filipino, I felt (but I would not say naturally) that I wanted to narrow the gap, at least during fieldwork, between my cultural research and their search for culture.

After the tribal meeting, the longhaired resident artist Oto Pontas brought his *kuglong* from his hut and started playing ethnic music. It turned out there was at least one more Manobo sitar left in the area. More children and women peered through the window and the doorway. After hesitating a bit, Apo Ambaning, the wife of Apo Ambolugan, started dancing.

'I didn't know I could still dance! My knees! My knees!' she cried in Manobo. Apparently, she had not danced in many years.

I asked her in Visayan why she danced. (A stupid question amateur researchers are allowed to ask.) She answered, 'How can I resist it? The *kuglong* is being played. Somebody should dance.'

It was not the time for dancing, however. There was no big authorised celebration like the *Allow't Sondawa* when people from the Manila office of OSCC come, bring some dancers, watch, eat and leave. It was not the right place, either. The venue was the concrete CTCC (Cotabato Tribal Consultative Council) office, too small for community movement. But the memory of the body inspired by the long unplayed music unleashed a spontaneous performance.

That small event encouraged me to explore my initial presupposition that culture is not primarily a matter of habit of maintaining institutions and practices, but a living out of a desire for collective self- and world-affirmation. Culture is linked not just with identity, but with energy. Part of this energy is 'stored' in the body interacting in community. I felt a confirmation of my interpretation of the people's silence during the meeting. I knew *we* still had culture.

### **Depressed Culture, Bulldozed Environment**

How could Ambolugan imply they were not worth studying as a people? He was not alone harbouring such thoughts. Among the Manobo themselves, there was a prevailing feeling of '*pagkaubos*', of collective low self-esteem not simply in relation to the Visayan settlers but to other tribes as well. The (SIL), which had been in Sayaban for almost a decade now, recorded an unguarded prayer of a Manobo praying to the spirits at Lake Agco. The man pleaded to the spirits in behalf of his people who were at 'bottom of all the tribes'. They perceive themselves at the 'bottom rung' and are ashamed of admitting they are Manobo' (SIL 1991:31). 'There is oppression which, to some degree, Manobos have put on themselves by seeing themselves as not important and embarrassed to admit they are Manobo (i.e., in Kidapawan), thereby perpetuating a negative self-image. A healthy pride of cultural heritage, roots seems to be missing' (SIL 1991:32). Elders complain, for example,

that Manobo passengers shift their conversation to Visayan when their jeepney approaches the towncentre.

Some neighbouring language groups also perceive them as being on the 'lowest rung'. 'They are either ignored or forgotten by those in positions of power in Kidapawan. They tend to be 'used' only as a 'showcase' by OSCC because the Manobo are their (OSCC's) 'reason-to-be', but when the Manobo need help, hands seem to be tied (SIL 1991:32). Even the research permit that I secured from the Office of Southern Cultural Communities maintained the same attitude. In a written document, Datu Eduardo Inda, then Provincial Officer of the OSCC, discouraged me from doing fieldwork in Sayaban. He tried to persuade me that 'Arakan Valley is the best area where the Manobo have a complete resources'.

NGOs and protest groups chided the people in Sayaban for having sold their souls to the PNOC. This critique used to be aired over the dominant radio DXND. The reality, some people explained, was that they could do nothing to prevent it. Their leaders had signed the agreement and who were they to oppose it? The company, they said, promised they would be top priority in hiring, but they turned out to be on top priority in firing.

Part of this feeling marginalized is due to the marginality of the land itself. The terrain is mostly steep and sloping. The climate is too cold for the lucrative fruit crops like Durian and Marang to grow. Many forms of diseases plague bananas. Other possibilities like strawberry and cut flowers are still at experimental stage. The only regular source of income is soft broom production using tiger grass or *Tahiti*. Coffee would have been good if they had they not been abandoned in favour of the PNOC employment. The PNOC road promised access to big markets for the natives' products, unfortunately more goods come up to the village than go downtown.

Aside from these standard indicators of marginality, the old people identify local apprehensions. I have heard a number of times that the social malady befalling the tribe is caused by '*anit*': kin get married to one another because of ignorance of their blood ties. This has cosmic repercussions. Even the land and its waters are affected. The tribe disintegrates.



The old men are not consulted as much as they used to be. Their stories are not circulated. Young people have Christian names, and they do not know the original names of the various landmarks around them. There is now timidity on the part of the elders to warn the children about pointing directly to Mt. Apo because it is the home of *Manama's* caretaker spirits. They seem more hesitant to speak about their dreams nowadays.

The original centre of the tribal community, an open space that served as a basketball court and cultural arena, was abandoned when the new PNOC road was constructed. Many houses transferred to the side of the new road, thus symbolically and literally splitting the village to give way to the huge trucks that connect the geothermal plant to Kidapawan *poblacion*.

Some local thinkers even go as far as tracing the problem to the 'sin' of their elders. Mt. Apo used to be the source of everything, including fine dress for attending weddings. The *komonoy* or owners of the forests used to lend garments and body ornaments for special occasions. Somebody a long ago did not return what he borrowed. That started the disruption of the relations with the mountain spirits.

Finally, Apo Apao, the first ancestor remembered by the local people, was himself a poor man. He was so poor he had to borrow garden tools from the *Tagabawa* on the Davao side of Mt. Apo. The name Apao itself meant 'a tiny flea'. Apao left no legacy of handicrafts, fine dwellings, or even songs. He was not even known to some old *datus* in Kidapawan.<sup>4</sup>

Apao had two wives and many descendants who now occupy most of the Sayaban area. They like talking to each other and they have dreams. For at least two people, these were enough to start with in regenerating their culture.

## 2. TAPPING FAMILY ENERGIES

I had said I knew Sayaban had springs of living energy because on a fortunate night, on 5 October 1995, my first visit to Sayaban, I had a talk with the two would-be leaders of a cultural regeneration of the tribe. They were the cousins Beting Umpan Colmo and Pastor Tano Umpan Bayawan. Even before I arrived, they had already

dreamt of what they called 'cultural regeneration' movement. The following section documents the beginnings of this movement.

### **Critical Clan, Creative Plan**

It was an accidental meeting. I had a daylong hike from another Manobo village, Sitio Waterfall, with a tourism personnel and a fieldworker of the Mt. Apo Foundation, Inc. (MAFI). The rain was pouring. We were all wet. One was sick. We could not decide whether to go back to the towncentre or to proceed to Sayaban. We agreed to take whichever jeepney came first. The cranky red jeepney from Kidapawan stopped in front of us and took us to Sayaban. In the jeepney, my companions recognised Beting and introduced her to me. Beting was the sister of Era, the Manobo woman who reached London to represent the protest movement against the geothermal plant. Era knew I was coming because I had written to her earlier from London. Beting had heard about me. Era wanted Beting to be my guide since Era was already busy attending to her family and the work of the protest movement.

Beting offered to host us in the house of her cousin Pastor Tano Bayawan. It was already late in the evening. The short conversation I had with our hosts, however, made a lasting impact on the rest of my fieldwork. I explained to them my proposed research. Impressed that I had no prepared questionnaire, they, in turn, revealed their plan for their tribe. There was an instant, though initial, fusion of interests between what they called 'cultural regeneration' and my ethnographic research on 'cultural energy'.

'What is your timeframe?' I asked them.

'Maybe five years.' I suddenly realised the shallowness of one-year fieldwork and the short-sightedness of the so-called data-gathering field trips.

'Do you have an overall plan?' The answer was negative. 'What is your first step, anyway?'

'A family reunion. We envision a lively tribal culture. Since we are not in any influential position to do so---we are not the barangay, we are not datu, we are not wealthy---we will start with our family or clan. The Umpan clan. If we could bind ourselves together, and then later play the agong, and dance as a family, then we can

be the model for the rest of the clans to follow.' It sounded extremely modest. Considering the entropic situation as I was beginning to understand it, it made a realistic sense.

'When do you hope to hold your first clan reunion?' I was, of course, checking whether *their* program could fit into *my* research timeframe. Usually, the researcher's time is attuned more to the academic calendar than to the life cycle on the ground.

'In two years time. You know we are poor. We still have to prepare the people and find resources.'

Their timeframe did not fit mine. I felt this was the kind of movement I was looking for. In the midst of a general social paralysis, here was a source of energy. They told me they did not want to become involved with NGOs or to be manipulated by them. They wanted a movement of their own, addressing the tribal situation according to their own reading of the situation. It would not be an action directly or primarily against PNOC. It would have something to do with their dignity as a people. It would definitely touch on the land as it was much tied to their culture and future.

Tano and Beting came from quite different backgrounds. Tano Bayawan, in his late thirties, was a pastor of the more liberal faction of the Church of Christ. His work as a Bible translator under the SIL was for him a spiritual devotion and a contribution to the development of his native tongue. There seemed to be something more the SIL was not addressing: the development of their culture. To this Pastor Tano was equally committed. A member of the tribal council, Pastor Tano was a consistent choice for treasurership in various organisations, including the Obo-Manobo Association (OMA) and the Tribal Council itself. Despite the apprehension of many tribal leaders and pastors, Pastor Tano offered his house as my regular headquarters. Only the final decision of the Tribal Assembly stopped our plan to construct a hut for me in his backyard.

Beting, also in her mid-thirties, had lived in Kidapawan since childhood. Her Visayan father already had children when he settled in the nearby Muaan. Her Manobo mother died when she was six. From then on her Visayan half-sisters and -

brothers who, aside from inheriting more lands, attempted to instil in her a disgust for her tribe reared her. She was articulate in Visayan, Tagalog and English, but needed then to brush up her Manobo. Her sister Era had more experience with the tribals and later became an outspoken opposition of PNOC---which she still continues to be. Together with her Visayan family, Beting attended the religious services of the Four Square Church, but was liberal enough to also spend hours of prayer in some Benedictine monastery in Digos or in the parish adoration chapel in Kidapawan. For eight years, Beting worked with a human rights law office and with a foundation for the children victims of war. She went to college with the support of a German institution that recognised her invaluable work with the distressed children (cf. Rohde-Enslin 1994). After seeing how various NGOs worked and how much the situation of her fellow Manobo had deteriorated, she decided to go back to her tribe. It was just in time that I met her accidentally on a jeepney ride.

Beting's mother Dangayan and Tano's mother Undingay were both daughters of Ayon Umpan, son of Umpan, and grandson of their ancestor Apao who must have lived on the western flank of Mt. Apo during the middle of the last century. Both of them had contemplated on kin-based cultural movement. They thought that my research could fit in with their plan. Even without a formal contract, the three of us worked as partners. We shared common apprenticeship in understanding local knowledge and extra-local issues. A few of our joint activities deserve to be mentioned here.

Pastor Tano introduced me to some elders, including Tiyo Lomiyok, Akwas Bayawan, and historian Montera Sia. Beting and I took notes as we interviewed elders, attended public hearings on ancestral domain (e.g. among the Aromanon-Manobo in Carmen) and travelled to visit other tribal villages (e.g. during the funeral of the great Datu Gawilan of the Matigsalug in Bukidnon). Tano's younger family members soon became involved as well, but in their own way. Upon hearing that I had written some poetry before, Ettoy requested a poetry workshop that I gladly facilitated. The poetry workshop did not only produce promising Manobo poems on Mt. Apo, but also slid quite smoothly into the staging of a dramatic performance

which Pastor Tano and Beting scripted and directed for the Christmas celebration of the Christian and Missionary Alliance on 31 December 1995.

There were plenty of skits and dramatic presentation in different churches during this entire Yuletide season. Most of them dealt with themes of hell, the salvation of souls and change of heart. The drama sequence of the Tano and Beting's family was unique. It portrayed their analysis of the land problem and cultural crisis of the Manobo in Mt. Apo, and how they proposed a family reunion could help remedy the situation. To celebrate the successful performance, the group gathered in the house of Tano on the New Year's Eve expressed their initial commitment to their planned movement. Beting instinctively took a wooden bench, turned it upside down, and started signing using pentel pen. Soon, the underside of the bench was full of expressions like '*Od porumannoy ki!*' (Let us join together!), '*Ponayon ki!*' (Let us continue what we have started!), and '*Od possokkadoy ki!*' (Let us unite!). Later, Beting would refer to the *bangko* (bench) whenever she wanted to remind people of their commitment.

Perhaps the most important exercise during this period (November-December 1995) was the construction of the Apao genealogy in preparation for their family reunion. I showed Beting and Tano the rubrics of a family tree drawn by an earlier PNOC-sponsored research. The omissions and inaccuracies in the chart triggered in them a desire to know the real story.

Beting talked to her uncles and aunts who eagerly dictated the names of the relatives as far as they could remember. She described her strategy as '*inato ra god*' (literally, 'just in our own casual way'). This informal, face to face, half-joking, half-serious, almost cursory conversation, coupled with tapping on shoulders or hugging, particularly with elder women, won many hearts. The attention given to the tribal history and genealogies of the families attracted the elders one of whose favourite pastime turned out to be the tracings of kin. We later found out that this was called '*pongykuu*' in Manobo (also called *bilangan*, cf. Manuel 1973:99-100). Somehow the talk of kin stoked the fire of longing for relatives. The process penetrated even families with members working in PNOC. Soon, a kind of a provisional genealogy emerged. Eager to meet their kin in a celebration, they could not wait for the long-

term plan. The planned family reunion was held, not in two years as they originally imagined, but on 5-7 January 1996, exactly three months after our first meeting in October. I end this section with a portion of my fieldnotes describing the event that launched the new movement:

*About fifteen families were present or represented. One was not around partly for financial reason. Mt. Apo was hidden in the mist. It was drizzling the whole afternoon. The mood was lively. For many old people, it was their first time to play the kulintang and the agong in decades. It was time for the young people to recognise their kin. They also marked the burial site of the two cousins who died in the river. The rain was understood as the participation of the spirits. This was the interpretation even of the protestant pastors who probably forgot they had renounced these beliefs (or have they developed a new way of integrating Christian and tribal ways of believing?) The poems of Ettok and Ettoy, all in Manobo language, were read and applauded. We had a taste of the traditional uwahing (epic chanting) towards the end of the evening. Curious: during the morning protestant bible service, the cooks in the kitchen listened to a Catholic mass over the radio. To think that they have just had a native (animist or naturalist) incantation. Then, the picture taking, an absolute requirement for any Filipino celebration!*

*A new naming ritual. This ritual has not been named yet. It was about naming. Those who already had 'Christian' names were given 'native names'. Where did they get their native names? From the unfinished genealogy that Beting presented on a table. There was no traditional ritual for baptising people or giving names. With an innovative use of incantation, blessing of water in a bamboo jar, offering of leaves and nuts in groups of seven, and killing a red chicken, people were given names. Even I was given a Manobo name!*

*During the kolivuungan (celebration) they selected the leaders of the 'Tuddok to Kalubbaran' or Pillars of the Clan. Tiyo Lomiyok, as leader of Tuddok appointed Beting as leader of the organisation. Then they formed committees to handle concerns like financing marriages, assisting the sick members of the family, establishing communal farm, sponsoring a child of two to high school (because they*

said lack of education made them vulnerable to manipulation), and working for the retrieval of their ancestral land.

*When all were ready to leave, Chieftain Joseph Andot, who initially declared I was not welcome, requested another chance to dance. I un-sacked the brass drum and gave it to him. He took it to an open ground. As the people watched, he danced with a rare solemnity. Apo Ambaning joined him. Other people followed. Apo Ambolugan watched his wife dance.*

*They promised that the next kolivuungan would be more touching and more empowering. A new movement is born---Tuddok to Kalubbaran ni Apo Ayon Umpan.*

Part of the activity was a collective assessment of what they have done. At the end of the *kolivuungan* (celebration), the elders of the group sat down, surrounded by the rest of the clan, to clarify the objectives of their action and to choose the leaders of the nascent organisation. Pastor Tano Bayawan led the discussion that yielded the group's valuation of the family reunion. Basically, the reunion provided space for knowing their relatives, expanding their network for mutual help, and for reviving their culture.

1. *Pag-ilhanay* (Visayan, 'knowing each other'). The most mentioned term during the discussion was '*pag-ilhanay*' or getting to know each other. In a series of refrains, elders attached great value to knowing their relatives. It was primarily because of what they call '*kovuhan*', a deep attachment to and longing to see one's relatives. (A mother once consulted me whether she should send her young daughter to high school. Why not, I said. She said she would miss her a lot---to think that the school was just in the next village. I heard some women explain this was the reason Manobo do not live abroad.) The family reunion brought the families who were forced to go outside of their original community, and to see their young nephews or nieces or grandchildren, and to continue that old Manobo pastime of *pongeykuu*, tracing down of descendants and kin.

*Pag-ilhanay* also served a different purpose according to the elders: it was to avoid the terrible effects of *anit*. *Anit* was the punishment that followed when a person committed an unnatural behaviour such as playing with animals or incest

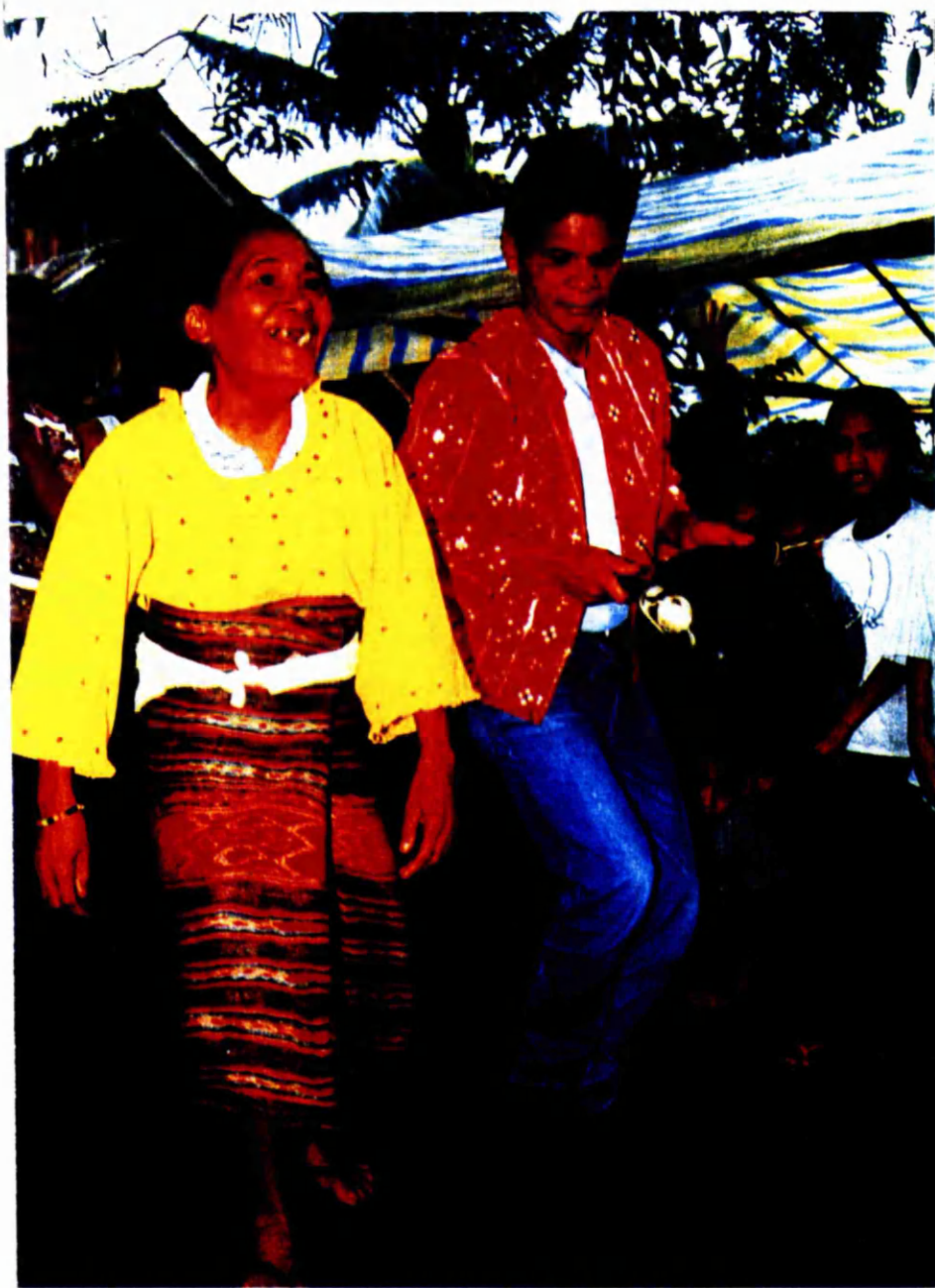
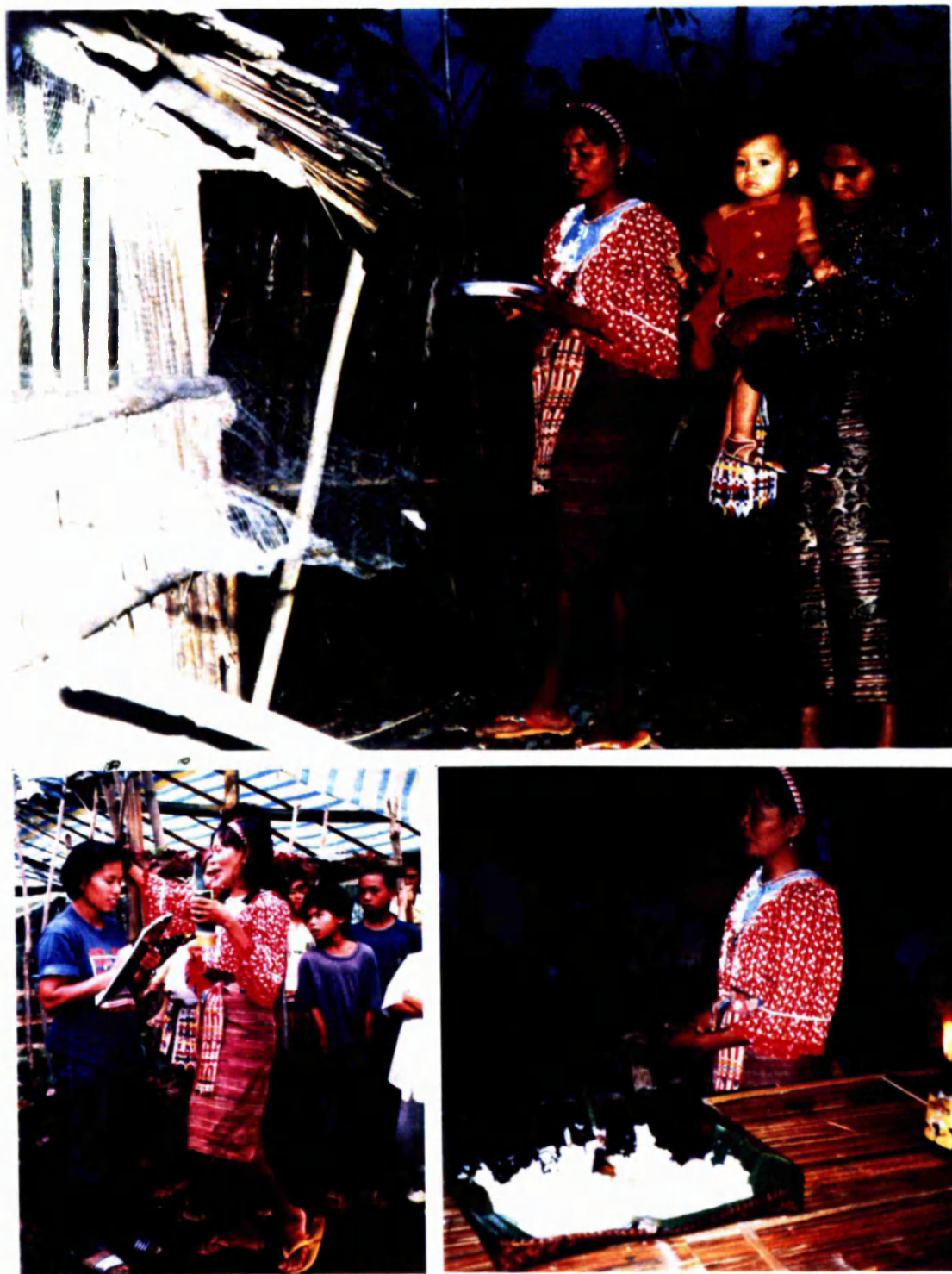


Figure 3.1 Dancing again. Apo Ambaning dances with joy as Datu Joseph Andot plays the gong. Young onlookers later take over the instruments and try dancing as well.





**Figure 3.2** Renewing rituals. Top. Tiya Marayuna officiates at the blessing of the **tambaa**. With her daughter Ikoy, Era stays close to the priestess to hear what she was saying. Beting (above left) takes down notes while being ‘baptised’ as ‘Bodê’. Above right, the priestess explains the symbolism of the ritual **Pakaa’t Kallô** or ‘feeding the tools of the farm’.



Figure 3.3 Pastor Tano and Beting (above), primary initiators of the Tuddok cultural regeneration movement (top) in Sayaban, Mt. Apo.

(cf. SIL 1992:8). The latter was a serious taboo. Knowing your relatives in principle prevented endogamous marriages that cause not only physical deformity in the guilty individuals but also ecological imbalances and catastrophes in the environment.

2. *Pagtinabangay* (Visayan, 'mutual assistance'). Knowing other people *as* relatives added value to ordinary acquaintanceship. The family reunion expanded their network for mutual assistance. 'I always see them around. I didn't realise they are my relatives. Now I know where to go when I need help.'<sup>5</sup> Help here often meant not only food in extreme hunger but also various types of assistance during weddings, sickness and for the education of children. The feeling that one belonged to a big family was a value in itself, but it also brought an additional feeling of security in emergency situations. To institutionalise this, the group formed committees to handle marriages, education and emergencies. They agreed to a minimum amount, for example, that a family should donate when a member of the family gets married. They did the same thing for accidents and emergencies. Education, however, remained in the planning stage. Although education was a top priority, generating enough resources for the sending one or two youths to college was still beyond their means.

3. *Kodsompot to Botasan* (Manobo, 'retrieval of culture'). One big gain was the initiation of a collective action for cultural regeneration. It went beyond being able to play the gongs and kulintang back. The family reunion occasioned a new urge for self-affirmation as well as critical discernment of what in their culture could be sustainable and what should remain unrevived. The repeated exhortation, especially coming from the pastors, was to 'select that which is good in our botasan and leave behind those which were incompatible with their Christian belief or the modern ways'. Traditional practices like slavery (*uripon*) or polygamy, for example, should not be seen again. The dancing and the retrieval of Manobo musical instruments should be given priority in the next family reunions. This revival of dancing led to an important pivotal step. 'How could we continue to dance' somebody asked, 'if we are not secure in our land?' This 'harmless' cultural regeneration initiative then turned into a more 'political action', that is, preparing to file an ancestral domain claim.

The family of Ayon Umpan then formed itself into an organisation. After the suggestion of Tiyo Lomiyok, it was called *Tuddok to Kalubbaran ni Apo Ayon*

*Umpan*, or *Tuddok* for short. It literally meant 'Pillars of the Descendants of Ancestor Ayon Umpan. Beting was chosen as the head of the leadership. Her sister Era was treasurer. More importantly was the formation of the caucus of seven respected elders. This core later became the knowledge pool especially for the production of history and genealogy of the Manobo in Mt. Apo for their ancestral domain claim.

### **Simple Steps, Complex Moves**

I shall now explore some of the themes and tensions faced by Tuddok during these first steps of their movement. This is to appreciate the complexity of their seemingly simple struggle of regenerating a tribal culture by starting from a clan. There is no attempt here to be comprehensive or systematic. I present, instead, an intimate account of some sensitive moments that are only hinted at in the quoted fieldnotes narrative.

1. *Dancing and collective existence.* The three-day *kolivuungan* was set in Muaan, in the house and lawn of Beting's sister, Era, who was married to an El Salvadorean farmer whom she met when she received a grant to study agriculture in Japan. Around the big, traditionally constructed house were bananas, corn, and some vegetables. Not far from their lot were rubber plantations belonging to their Visayan brothers and sisters on the father side. Near the front of the house was a small enclosed hut; it was a dwelling place not for human beings but an altar for the ancestral and mountain spirits.

Fifteen families belonging to the Ayon Umpan clan pledged their own contribution. Individuals took assignments, from fetching water from the barangay centre to the cutting of bamboo poles and building the hall. The PNOC employees among them filed their own leave of absence. Era secured the leaves, combs, and animals to be used during the rituals. She also invited a priest and a priestess from different villages to bless her altar. Beting and Tano co-ordinated the entire program and division of labour. Tiyo Lomiyok served as adviser.

There was a problem, though, during the preparation. They did not have the most important musical instrument to make their planned celebration complete. They then asked me if I had access to traditional Manobo drums, the *agong* and *kulintang*.

The agong is a bronze or brass drum, with a protruding button at its centre. It is played by one performer, and is heard 'alone or in ensemble' (Pfeiffer 1965:9). Though normally bought from the Muslims, the agong has occupied central position in Manobo life. The Manobo have developed 'a system of broadcasting messages by beating gongs' and through these messages, 'distressed families or groups could receive assistance' (Manuel 1973:157). Many old settlers that I have talked to in Kidapawan recalled hearing the gongs being played from the highlands in different parts of the day and on different occasions. Related to the agong is the *kulintang*, is a set of smaller gongs of varying size and pitch. It is usually suspended on a web of strings and played by one or more persons. Without these instruments, the *kolivuungan* would be not be as fruitful as the initiators it could be.

Without a real appreciation of their importance on the Manobo community formation, I searched for the instruments. Luckily, through some parish workers, I convinced a Manobo family, who had settled in Kidapawan towncentre, to lend their set of drums. Intermediaries as well as gifts of sugar, coffee, and dried fish helped overcome the family's fear of losing their heirloom.

Because of an emergency meeting related to land issue (cf. Study 4), I came late for the first day of the *kolivuungan*. From afar, I could hear the sound of the gong. I arrived with a few others who expressed delight in hearing the inchoate music coming from the inner farmlots past the rubber tree plantation, past the winding creek and the muddy footpath. The sight of the *kulintang* drums suspended on a net of ropes was a delight. The hall, supported by strong green bamboo poles and covered by light-coloured plastic tents, was airy. The centre was an open space good for a hundred people. Around the area were fixed bamboo benches. On the stage, a *karaoke* set had been installed. Behind it hung a huge lettering saying '*Family Reunion: Kahubbaran ni Apo Ayon Umpan*'.

I said that the sound of the gong and the *kulintang* was inchoate because, as some admitted later, there were no experts among those present. They could only wish that so and so musician of old were there. Some of them bragged about knowing two hundred tunes, but had already forgotten many of them. Luckily, a visiting relative participated in with her bamboo *saoroy* guitar. It could have been

enhanced by Oto Pontas' *kuglong* (two-stringed Manobo wooden sitar), but its strings snapped just while he was rehearsing. Nevertheless, what the elders there knew was enough to impress the children and the youth who immediately took over the musical interments as soon as their elders got tired.

Apo Ambaning, the wife of Ambolugan, led the dancing. Datu Joseph Andot, holding the gong, danced with her. They made a good pair. Other relatives followed. Elders complained that the steps of some dancers were not original and that they were just making them up. It could only be answered with a promise to do better in the next family reunion.

There was something in the dancing that was generative of collective enthusiasm. I did not think the sophistication of choreography as such had much to do with it.<sup>6</sup> Apo Ambaning's steps, for instance, were extremely simple. They conformed to what a cultural chronicler sensitively observed in most of the native dances in the Philippines: much of it was a restrained but rhythmic flexing and swaying of 'the knees below and the shoulders above...The movement of the head and the arms [were] secondary' (Alegre 1994:89). There was neither clear entry nor climactic exit. But it could also be solemn, as when Datu Joseph Andot capped the program by dancing alone with the borrowed gong. The people instantly formed a circle around him. With his denim pants and rubber shoes, he danced to the tune of his own music. People explained to me later that the dancing made Datu Joseph remember the many months when he was exiled to the Tiboli area because of a death threat related to the protest against the geothermal plant. Whether in casual celebration of tradition or in solemn, almost therapeutic, dancing out of a traumatic experience, dancing in community, even with borrowed musical instruments, proved to be energising.

This is not the space for a sustained meditation on how communal dancing, in some contexts, generates a feeling of solidarity and stimulates collective action (cf. Lockard 1998; Martin 1998). We can, however, mention certain authors who offer some directly relevant proposals. Blacking, for example, argues that some particular forms of dancing 'stimulate people's imagination and expand their consciousness, because of what they involve in terms of body movement, social interaction, and a



challenge to previous experience. Just as some dance teachers insist that one moves as one thinks, so a change of movement may generate a change of mind' (1985:69). Brinson adds emotion as mediation between body movement and social action: 'Dance can generate feelings and emotions leading to the creation of ideas for action...[it] can create a climate leading to community action because it helps to generate feelings of strength and can disseminate a collective awareness' (1985:208). From her Philippine experience, Sally Ness sees dance as a privileged ethnographic revelation and the dancers as 'culture-bearers'. Dance then comes to represent 'the recent findings of culture bearers, findings about the society they embody, findings about what it means to be living, breathing being in their particular place, in their historical moment (Ness 1992:233).

More recently, Frith (1996:110-111) calls attention not so much to the values or emotions 'expressed' by the community in dancing or playing music, but to the self-creative act of the community itself. It is not that 'social groups agree on values which are then expressed in their cultural activities' but that 'they only get to know themselves *as groups* (as a particular organisation of individual and social interests, sameness and difference) *through* cultural activity, through aesthetic judgement. Making music isn't a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them. It is, too, a way of being themselves as well as changing their society (cf. Kaliwat 1996:230).

Perhaps what these reflections on music and dancing miss is the value of the instruments themselves to a particular community like the Manobo (cf. Hoskins 1998). In this case, the gongs are, what Bourdieu calls, 'symbolic capital' (1977). For the Manobo, the gong was an icon of their self-presentation. Somehow, the gong's sound could not simply be taped and replayed. The people needed actual gongs to be beaten in particular ways and to be possessed by the community. But the gong was at the same time real capital resource. It played an economic and social role. It was used to pay debts, to settle conflicts, to contract marriage. A datu without gongs was almost inconceivable. Given this kind of valuation, the loss of the gong in the community appears to me as bewildering. Its retrieval, however, loomed large as an important communal project.

2. *Feeding the tools of the farm.* The first highlight of the *kolivuungan* had to wait for the twilight of dusk. It was the celebration of the *Pakaa't Kallo*. This was reminiscent of the days when the Manobo used to grow rice on the lower flanks of the mountain now occupied by lowlanders. Because there was no resident ritual specialist in the area, Era invited Tiya Marayuna Inangcob and Tiyo Matuti from neighbouring districts to lead the ceremony.

Tiya Marayuna donned her brown *detdet* skirt made of woven abaca fibre and her red *umpak* blouse outlined with sequins and beads. Era also wore her own *detdet*, said to be a hundred years old, which she received as *pusaka* from Datu Tomas Ito. Carrying her conspicuously fair-skinned baby, Era acted as assistant to Tiya Marayuna. Together, they offered boiled eggs placed on white porcelain that was mounted on a bamboo altar called *tambaa* or *tambara* (cf. Benedict 1916). Tiya Marayuna chanted her *panuvadtuvad* to the mountain spirits, to the amazement of the rest of the relatives watching the event.

The *tambaa* in Era's lot deserves special mention. A *tambaa* usually consists of just one bamboo-prayer stand supporting on top of it a china bowl or a small platform made of interlaced bamboo slivers. (I later saw a few of these individual *tambaa* in the forest, presumably used in intercessory prayers for hunting.) Era's *tambaa* had three separate poles, the centre being higher than the two at its sides. This was rare practice. Having a family *tambaa* was a common among the ancient Bagobo; but having three prayer-stands was rare even during those early days (Benedict 1916:87-88). Era's three prayer-stands were housed in a small hut built exclusively for the 'shrine'. The poles and the fence-like walls were live *kakawate* shrubs with their leaves acting as both shelter and decoration around the hut. The whole structure stood on top of a huge rock protruding near the front of Era's house. Era explained to me that even the positioning of the *tambaa* was the result of some kind of geomancy. For instance, the hut had to face the east because it was from there that light came to the world.

Meanwhile, as the materials for the next step were being prepared, the elders took turns in playing the *kulintang* and the *agong*. Tiyo Matuti, a guest Manobo priest, then exhorted the people to value the many good things in their culture. He



hoped that this celebration 'would help revive the things that had been forgotten' by the new generation of Manobo. He also praised Era for struggling to keep some of the Manobo symbols alive, like her tambaa which was probably the only family tambaa existing in the whole of Mt. Apo.

The table was then ready for the *Pakaa't Kallo* proper. On the long dining table were a number winnowing trays called *nigo*. They were covered with banana leaves and were full of cooked rice sprinkled with chunks of hardboiled eggs and shrimps. According to tradition, there should also be a roasted chicken, but they failed to produce one for that occasion. The men brought out their farm tools, specially their long knives and sickles, and thrust them into the heaps of rice. Thereupon, Tiya Marayuna again delivered a most solemn chant. Many people said that she was in a trance while chanting. Era, who seriously observed the ceremony as well as interviewed Tiya Marayuna, recorded her account of the event in as follows:

During the *panuvadtuvad*, [Tiya Marayuna] called on *Pamuwa*, the *anito* caretaker of plants, *Ibasok* the spirit of hardwork, *Kayag* the spirit of good harvest and *Pantivug* the spirit of strength and endurance.

After the chanting, the result of the next harvest was known by the amount of cooked rice that stuck to the tools. Their owners then consumed the rice that stuck to the tools.

Every edible thing that was placed on top of the rice had meaning. The egg, for instance, had the form of the heart. It was white outside and round yellow inside. The colour white referred to the *Uhis na Manama* [Holy Lord] who had a good intention. The colour yellow, which was the colour of the sun, the stars, the moon and the lightning that formed part of the help and the guide of the natives in their farming; it also resembled the colour of fire that helped people in clearing their farming lots quickly.

The *ulang* or shrimps were chosen because they were animals that could swim upwards and downwards using their tails. Even heavy floods could not carry them away because they would just whisk their way through. These were all wishes that the people's livelihood, like that of the shrimp, would not get washed down by the storms of difficulties.

The chicken (which, unfortunately was not produced this time) would have driven away by its flapping wings all the evils threatening the people's farm'. (España 1996a:2 Translated from Visayan.)

These meanings, however, were not explained before the ceremony itself. People had a good laugh, for instance, when some, including Pastor Tano Bayawan who was a leader in the cultural regeneration, thrust their knives. They shook their knives as soon as they saw rice sticking to them---only to find out later that the more rice sticking to their tools, the better would their next harvest be. There was no other recourse than to thrust them all over again for a thicker yield. When the master of

ceremony asked Pastor Tano to say something about Pakaa't Kallo, he could not say anything; it was his first time to witness such an event.

Behind the graceful ritual of 'feeding of the farm tools' was a clash in understanding of politics and culture between the sisters Era and Beting. Era has her own version of cultural regeneration. She had revived the ritual called *Pakaat Kallo* since three years ago. Previously, she had invited 'political figures' among the tribal leaders known for protesting against the geothermal plant. She wanted then to *combine* the Pakaat Kallo with the new-found kolivuungan. Beting, who tended to have a different opinion and strategy from her sister, insisted that the two rituals had to be separate, at least at this point. Many members of the family would not welcome 'politics' to meddle into their 'cultural' affair. Tano shared Beting's view. They did not want to be 'contaminated' by the objectives and the strategies of the protest and other progressive movements. It turned out that the so-called political figures could not make it. Pakaat Kallo then was moved from 1 January to 5 January, quite close to, but not exactly coinciding with, the kolivuungan officially set on 6 January. The ritual, however, turned out to be an enrichment of the reunion event.

3. *Nameless Rite of Naming.* Early on the third day of the *kolivuungan*, 7 January 1996, the group performed a ritual of giving Manobo names to those who had Christian names. The ritual had no native name because it was just a recent invention to meet a present concern, that of the loss of pride in one's identity. They often mentioned the example of Tiyo Lomiyok. When he went to school, the teacher could not pronounce (*litok*) his name and so the teacher changed *Lomiyok* into *Romeo*. Tiyo Lomiyok himself admitted that this kind of experience made him and his fellow Manobo feel ashamed of their own kind. They feared that there was something wrong or ugly not just about the names their parents gave them, but in their whole way of life in general. A re-naming ritual might contribute to reverse the trend.

Before they started, however, they thought it wise to conduct first a Bible fellowship and prayer, that day being a Sunday and therefore a day of *Christian* worship. The women, who had to stay in the kitchen preparing the heavy breakfast, contented themselves to listening to the Catholic radio-mass aired over the lone radio station owned by the Oblates Fathers.

After the Christian prayers, the guest priestess asked the people who wanted to be 'baptised' again to form a single file, but in groups of seven. She then started the *samaya*, which was a form of ritual to request evil spirits not to disturb the activity to be performed. Although the purpose was new, the ingredients were traditional. The priestess prepared a *bakkat*, a piece of light bamboo made into a winnowing pan. Seven lumps of sliced betel nuts, betel leaves, tobacco, and a pinch of *apog* (lime) were placed in it. A raw chicken egg was put in the middle. A separate set of materials for the naming proper consisted of a comb, a bamboo cup filled with water and wrapped around with *Pamuon* leaves, symbolic of the sources of the Manobo livelihood and character (cf. España 1996b).

Then Tiya Marayuna held the chicken by its feet and swung it towards the participants of the ceremony. As the priestess continued with the chanting, a male assistant slit the neck of the chicken and let the blood spurt into the *bakkat*. Tiya Marayuna then took it to the western part of the yard and placed it on top of a rock. Coming back, she invoked the spirits to witness the ceremony. She called on *Tahavika*, the spirit of treasure and power, *Pamayagan* the spirit of honeybee and good living, and again *Pantivug* the spirit-caretaker of the formation of children in the womb as well as of strength.

On the actual giving of names, Tiya Marayuna pronounced the native name for each person as she combed their hair. Combing, in recorded traditional installation of a new *datu*, represents 'the act of smoothing and disentangling and are therefore symbols of peace and order' (Lucero 1994:123-24). A number of the names were taken from the names of plants, crops, or stars. The majority, however, revived the names of relatives or ancestors. Those who had problems in finding alternatives consulted the Apao genealogy that Beting and I had just started constructing. Beting's niece Maphel, for example, took the name 'Sabila' after the sister of Ayon Umpan. Beting herself was 'baptised' as 'Bodê'. Even the rudimentary research materials had already served as resource for their cultural renewal. (For some reason, Pastor Tano did not ask to be 'baptised' under a new name.)

Tiyo Lomiyok and other elders in the clan gave me a name. When I lined up for the 'baptism', the Umpan elders had already chosen *Allowon* for me. I was

surprised to find out that it literally meant 'sun-like'. More technically, the *allowon*, during the old days, was the head of the tribal class of warriors. With a rank equal to the *datu*, he could call a meeting of the elders or even of several *datu*s.

The dead also had a part in the event. Despite the rain, a good number of the family members went to plant two trees to mark the burial site of two cousins who drowned in the nearby river. The rain, in fact, was understood as the participation of the spirits. This was the interpretation of protestant pastors who forgot that they were supposed to have renounced this way of explaining events. Behind the simplicity of the rite was a political statement that I did not pick up during that time. A later discussion revealed that the burial site was within the area now 'owned' by a Visayan settler who was taking care of the children when they drowned. The cause of the death of the two young Manobo, therefore, was under suspicion. Planting a marker in the area served as a silent reclamation of the land.

4. *Mt. Apo in verse*. The reunion was also a festival of new Manobo poetry. The brothers Ettok and Ettoy wrote in Manobo language. Their cousins Janice and Ruth versified in Cebuano and Tagalog. They deserve a separate Study in themselves. One poem by Ettok deserves mention. Entitled 'Receive this love of mine', the poem moves in a dialogue between the anthropomorphised Mt. Apo and the persona. In the middle of the poem, the poet contemplates the mountain:

Ko-ungkay su id lukatan dud man	Now that you have opened up for me
od pominog a to dinoggan	I shall listen to the revelation
diyon to kikown' kovonaan	of the truth that you possess:
no sikkow en iddos kovukaran	that you yourself are the flower garden
no siyak en iddos od ollob	and I shall be the one to relish it,
nod poko-iling to tomeng	that like the small honeybee
nod ossop taddot mamnis no kovukaran	I shall taste the sweetness of the blossom.

Some parts of the poem were deceptively simple, but it was probably the first time the Manobo language had been used thus:

Su sikkow en iddos timbang buwan	Because you are also like the moon
woy mgo bitu-on	and the stars
nod pokotaddow ka-ayt lawa ku,	that shine here on my body
nod se-aa ka-ayt pusung ku.	that beam here in my heart.

There was no attempt on the part of the young poets to stick to traditional forms of poetic recitation. Perhaps they have not been initiated enough to the

uwahing (epic chants) that the older members of the clan could barely remember hearing. It was interesting that the elders appreciated the poetic readings and did not complain against the young Manobo trying out new poetics. Ettoy and Ettok would later become prominent as promising Manobo artists. They explored not just poetry, but also painting and pottery.<sup>7</sup>

5. *Ancestral Ties, Religious Links.* Though not highlighted, Tuddok experienced tension between their renewal of their ancestral ties and their Christian affiliation. This aspect deserves a separate treatment. For the moment, let a simple discussion suffice.

Together with 'cultural regeneration', the phrase 'family or clan reunion' was originally coined in English. The Manobo translation 'kolivuungan' simply means celebration. One immediately suspects that this is a recent project with an equally recent pedigree. Tuddok is re-inventing, or re-injecting, the Manobo practice of family life. What they call 'family reunion' is a gathering of multi-generational lineage group that could clearly trace their origin to a common ancestor. Here, the term 'family' includes the descendants of Ayon Umpan, the father of Dangayan, the mother of Beting. Ayon Umpan is also the father of Undingay, the mother of Tano Bayawan, and sister of Dangayan. That is why Tano and Beting are cousins. Tuddok's 'family' therefore is a lineage (cf. Winthrop 1991; Barnard & Spencer 1996) or a 'clan' in its less technical usage in the Philippines (Cabonce 1983).

When I ask elders what is the Manobo word for 'family', they find it difficult to answer. The word for clan, *linubbaran* or *kalubbaran* comes readily from the root *lubbad*, which means offspring or descendants. *Linubbaran* can then be translated as lineage or clan. Despite the Manobo tendency to be close to the 'family', there was no familiar word for a nuclear family composed of the parents and their children. The word *aunggun* later came out, but not one of them expressed any interest in the word. The published phrasebook of the SIL used *pomilya*, which is evidently derived from the Spanish *familia*, and nowhere does *aunggun* appear in the SIL phrasebook. Closeness to family therefore translates into a broader inter-connectedness with a clan.<sup>8</sup> This is the level at which Tuddok is operating.

To appreciate the significance of this move, it might be good to learn from the work of E. Arsenio Manuel whose detailed analysis of Manobo or Manuvu kinship has not been surpassed. He says:

If there was any steadier and more dependable means upon which some better assurance of protection, or discouragement of enemy action, could be secured, it was their kinship system. For it is the kindred who were most concerned in taking retaliation once a tragic event had occurred, or life was staked. Folks did not put much reliance upon other people other than kindred...The kindred as a group still exercises potential power and authority today. While conditions have materially changed in the upland area with respect to peace and order, the kinship system is still a *potential force* to reckon with in Manuvu' social and community life. (Manuel 1973: 158, highlighting supplied)

Tuddok's decision to base its movement on kinship aims exactly at tapping this potential *force*. How? According to Manuel, this kinship-based network is 'amorphous and has no formal organisation' (1973:155). Tuddok's intervention is to harness its potential force by transforming it into a functional organisation for ancestral domain claim. It remains, of course, to be seen to what extent Tuddok will succeed and what ideological principles it would embody beyond being a social capital (cf. Putzel 1997).

Another challenge lies in the tension between re-rooting one's practices to some ancestral heritage and deepening one's Christian commitment. We have seen some curious juxtaposition of Christian morning prayers and animistic practices during the family reunion. An illustrative encounter could drive home the point more forcefully.

Beting and I visited the SIL office after the family reunion. One of the two linguists there welcomed us. I asked for a phonetics book. She showed me their study of Sayaban stories. Almost all the stories there had something to do with dreams. Beting, the dreamer, expressed surprise that some of the dreams there corresponded with hers. The linguist immediately advised Beting to 'renounce her ancestral ties' to the spirits of the occult. She grew up as Buddhist. Her family in Singapore is still Buddhist/Taoist. She told Beting, that 'especially in uncivilised cultures, you have ancestral ties to evil spirits. It could happen that you have the same dream as your ancestors because the demons could allocate these dreams to particular tribes. Maybe, once upon a time, your ancestors made a deal with the evil sprits and that deal is carried on and passed to descendants.' When asked what Beting should do,

the SIL linguist advised her to 'cut her umbilical cord with her ancestors'. Towards the end of our conversation, the linguist made an interesting slip of the tongue: 'We need to be liberated. Usually, people start with liberating themselves from their ancestral domain, sorry, ancestral ties.'

The thing to do, according to the Bible translator, was to renounce all their ancestral ties by means of 'spiritual warfare'. She then showed and lent us some books on spiritual warfare. Among the books readily available on SIL shelf were the following: Dave Hunt (1990) *Global Peace and the Rise of the Anti-Christ* [lumps together Catholicism and communism]; C. Fred Dickinson (1990) *Demon Possession and the Christian: A New Perspective*; Neil T. Anderson (1992) *Released from Bondage* [stories of liberation from evil spirits]; Timothy Warner (1991) *Spiritual Warfare: Victory over the Powers of this Dark World* [methods and strategies in combating evil spirits and liberating those possessed of demons]. For the Philippine experience, she suggested *Assignment to Cuenca* by an Indonesian missionary, Hanna Handojo (1994), who wrote on her experience of exorcism in the Philippines. The other resident SIL linguist, we were told, belonged to a more conservative type.

From the house of another relative of Beting, I saw an old apologetics book by Arthur Maxwell. Published in 1943, *Great Prophecies for Our Time* narrated the scandals in the history of the Catholic Church. It also attacked the Pope as the Anti-Christ. According to Beting, the book was still a popular handbook of a good number of pastors around.

To be fair, Pastor Tano Bayawan belonged to a different breed of protestant leaders. Somebody identified his 'faction' of the Church of Christ as 'liberal'. Besides, during my stay in the Kidapawan convent, I, too, was asked to perform some rituals to drive away 'evil spirits' in a house near the activist radio DXND. A man asked me to bless their house because visions and auditions of dark creatures, white ladies and floating niches had bothered the members of the family including the helpers. I agreed. I did some prayers. The man later invited me for a thanksgiving meal. I feel I have to explore these theologies, combined with local syncretic strategies.

In sum, Tuddok leaders have succeeded in starting a movement by tapping a most potent cultural resource, the family and the body energised by performance of traditionally charged gong music and dancing. They started small to avoid going beyond their capacity for political manoeuvre. Even here, some tensions have already crept in, including local politics and religious encounters. One attempt Tuddok leaders made to have a handle on the new formation was to limit the attendance to the reunion to the direct descendants of Ayon Umpan. Beting, for example, explicitly told the other descendants of Umpan to wait for the next reunion. During the actual reunion, however, the family of Inangcob worked the hardest in most aspects of the preparation. Representatives from other clans also came to witness the event. While this was a happy turnout, it also meant additional expense. From then on, Tuddok leaders had no other course but to expand. Expansion, however, also brought new conflicts. Tuddok's greater visibility as a clan provoked ambivalent and sometimes hostile reactions from the elders of the bigger clan Apao. That would be jumping ahead of the narrative.

### 3. MOBILISING BODIES: TUDDOK AND ETTOK

The Movement that chose to start from the family and the body had to encounter its ordeal precisely there---in the weak family attending to a sick body. This was illustrated in the case of the young man Retchor Umpan. I met Retchor---or more affectionately *Ettok*---on my first day in Sayaban. He was sixteen. He had an infected wound in his left thighbone, but he could walk quite briskly for someone who limped. Ettok took a break from his high school class to take a part time job in the PNOC. One day, he came home with a smarting wound. He stopped going to school. Ettok, and to some extent, Ettoy, his brother, would later play an important role in the movement for cultural regeneration, not as movement entrepreneur, but as 'energiser'.

#### Interpreting Illness

According to Tano and Beting, Ettok's father *Tiyo Lomiyok* immediately interpreted it as the work of the mountain spirits. He brought Ettok to a *walian* or tribal



medicine person. For a while, Ettok felt better. That reinforced Tiyo Lomiyok's belief. SIL offered hospitalisation assistance, provided Ettok went to a regular hospital. Tiyo Lomiyok, however, refused gently but firmly. He sincerely believed the local healers could cure Ettok's illness better because the source of the illness must have been a mountain spirit that Ettok had disturbed during his brief work with the PNOC.

Through Era, the story of Ettok reached the progressive groups. *Samin News*, the newsletter of progressive nuns in Davao, picked up Ettok's case and used it in their anti-PNOC campaign. In its January-March 1995 issue, it said: 'The TFAS [Task Force Apo Sandawa] reported that Retchor Umpan, a Bagobo whose parents were bribed by the PNOC but are now jobless, has become lame because of a 'mysterious sickness' believed to be caused by the poisons emitted by the project.' This account angered Beting because Ritchor's family was one of the few who did not sell their souls to PNOC.

Soon, Ettok's body deteriorated. He developed another cyst in his right leg. Pastor Tano sent him to the Provincial Hospital. The doctors, according to Pastor Tano, could not understand what exactly was wrong. They feared it could be cancer of the bone and that Ettok's leg might have to be amputated. Ettok himself rejected that kind of diagnosis.

The work of research and organising increased in tempo. Ettok was almost forgotten. On my part, I visited Ettok and upon his request, gave him old calendar sheets for his drawing exercises. I encouraged him to write more Manobo poems and to continue painting. In both art forms, Ettok was good. When he saw Oto Pontas playing the indigenous guitar *kuglong*, Ettok also displayed interest. On the wall, his father displayed Ettok's school medals. He was an honour student. It was difficult to imagine him dying. In the midst of research and cultural movement, Tuddok leaders thought seriously how to save him.

### **Resources for Hospitalisation**

Pastor Tano asked Tiyo Lomiyok if he could now let Ettok be hospitalised. Tiyo Lomiyok yielded. I guessed part of it was the fact that he himself went to the hospital

for his breathing problem. Tiyo Lomiyok's problem, this time, was more on the expenses. The family was short on cash, even on food as a matter of fact. Besides, they got some signal that SIL would not subsidise the hospitalisation this time around. Pastor Tano, though, capitalised on their church's 'mission' in Davao. An American missionary promised to take care of the hospitalisation, provided that Ettok went to the government Regional Hospital.

I myself had to see a physiotherapist in Davao Doctors' Hospital. I got a sprain in my left shoulder when I slid down a slope during a hike. I took that opportunity to talk to my doctor about Ettok. He agreed to recommend Ettok for charity treatment. Pastor Tano, however, had to choose. If they sent Ettok to Davao Doctors, the 'mission' would not support Ettok. Since I could only guarantee free check up and possible recommendation to the charity ward, Tano opted for the 'mission' arrangement.

Beting arranged for a car service to bring Ettok to Davao. Whose car service could be tapped? PNOC's. Rey Onggona of the Community Relations Office (COMREL) reserved two seats in a car going to Davao. The trip was postponed because the family did not even have money to buy food for the caretaker. Ettok finally managed to go to Davao a few days later.

Ettok was operated on early that week in the beginning of May. The Church of Christ mission took care of the counterpart for the subsidy of the Department of Social Welfare. The first few days' expenses were enough to exhaust the resources of the family. Other problems surfaced.

The first problem, second to money obviously, was who would/could/should accompany Ettok in the hospital. People were either too busy trying to eke out a living, or too inexperienced to make spontaneous decisions. Pastor Tano accompanied Ettok during the first three days. He had to talk to the missionary and to the government social welfare office. He could not afford to miss more working days. SIL pressured him to speed up his Bible translation. A niece, Janice, took over, but eventually had to leave because she got sick herself. Ettok was looking for his mother.

Where was his mother? Ettok's mother was now living in with another man. For some reason, she had abandoned her children. Tano's family adapted (Ettoy, Ettok's brother, Ettoy now is a Bayawan, instead of an Umpan like his father Tiyo Lomiyok Umpan.) Her present 'husband' would not allow her to go to Davao. Tano and Tiyo Lomiyok almost, but not quite, agreed to approach the man to let the mother go. That would have been too much for them to do if they still had a sense of their *culture*.

Beting visited Ettok. When she came back, she told the family how difficult it was to stay in the hospital. Janice left because she could not stand the stench. Beting had to fight the nurses because they were not giving Ettok the proper prescription of antibiotics. Her presentation was an expression of her own struggle. It resulted, however, in discouraging people to play the role of caretaker.

With restrained voice, I offered to spend one or two days in the hospital. I meant it. I considered Ettok as a precious young man. I had no problems with the hospital environment. (I had stayed in that section of that hospital five days a week for three months when I accompanied my high school students in their 'exposure' program way back in 1987. Unfortunately, nothing has improved in that hospital since ten years ago.) Understandably, they surveyed their relatives who could do the job.

Another close relative, Pastor Sheryl (supposedly Cyril) risked his job by volunteering to spend two days with wife Marissa in the hospital. Both of them got sick. Pastor Sheryl was a contract worker of PNOC. As the construction phase neared its end, more and more workers were laid off, starting in mid-May, down to December (as per conversation with OXBOW Company Manager). Missing a day or two could spell the loss of his job. He could not stay long in the hospital.

Why not Tiyo Lomiyok himself? Tiyo Lomiyok was also sick. He had breathing problems. Besides, he did not want to go if he had no money. Besides, Tiyo Lomiyok also had other thoughts---which surprised Tano during a serious, heart-to-heart talk among the concerned family members. 'We all have to die anyway,' Tiyo Lomiyok had told Tano. 'If we don't have the resources, why force it?' It somehow made some sense. It was the logic of poverty. Beting broke down:

‘What has happened to my tribe?’ She turned to Tano whose head, too, almost reached his knees in depression. ‘Is this the same tribe that I came back for? Where did this kind of thinking come from?’

Sometime during the reflection, not exactly at the end, Beting remembered Ettok's words of confidence while he was talking to his mother: ‘Abi nimo mamatay na ko. Di pa oy! Daghan pa kong buhaton.’ (You think I'm dying soon? Not yet, oy! I still have many things to accomplish.) I thought that statement gave them consolation.

### **The Economics of a Miracle**

The case of Ettok became more complicated. Ettok had to undergo a second operation. His antibiotics and food alone cost almost a thousand pesos (=£25) a day which was the equivalent of a family income in one month. Tiyo Lomiyok began to think of selling a piece of land for a meagre P5, 000. I told him that would last only for five days. (I have known at least three families who sold their lands because of a similar predicament.) In the midst of their struggle to claim their ancestral domain, they are forced to do what they hated most in their forefathers' mistakes.

The locus of activity shifted now to Davao, where Ettok was confined. I described Ettok's situation to my fellow Jesuits. One gave me a thousand pesos and another five hundred. What was that compared to the daily hospitalisation expenses? Then something happened which the family considered later as a miracle.

I once had a casual conversation with Leah, an old time friend from Manila and who is now starting a new counselling service in Davao. I mentioned Ettok's case in passing. Another acquaintance, Ronie (not his real name), who was financial consultant of the new posh hotel in Davao City happened to stay with Leah. Leah thought of soliciting Ronie's help for Ettok, but was too cowardly to open up. Surprisingly, Ronie himself approached Leah and handed over a check worth several thousand pesos to be given directly to the needy without passing through any institution, church or NGO. Leah went to Kidapawan to break the news. The question then was how to give the money without creating unwanted tension.

By this time, the family of Tano was becoming uneasy with their 'mission office' in Davao. Two of the caretakers of Ettok received scathing remarks from the person in charge, saying, 'Why do you keep asking for money?' I told Tano about the money without knowing how much the cheque amounted to.

Back in Kidapawan, Tiyo Lomiyok began feeling again his ulcers probably because of the tension. So I had to tell him why he did not have to sell his land. He saw it as God's answer to his prayer for Ettok. Only, he did not expect it to come through somebody like me. He then became zealous in teaching me about their *batasan*. He spoke about the way they contracted marriage, the way they opened up a farm from the forest, and how the forest once cleared never returned again, and how Mt. Apo was sacred because it was like a market. Tiyo Lomiyok gave me suggestions on what to include in 'my' book.

Earlier, I thought of making a poster out of Ettok's poems. My plan was to translate one of his poems into either English or Tagalog and print it with Ettok's drawing. I sold the idea to Tano, Beting and Tiyo Lomiyok. Even Ettok himself was high on the idea. I just thought that 'resourcing' their 'simple' treasures would be 'empowering'. To be a patient did not necessarily mean you were totally helpless. This project suddenly coincided with the surprise donation through Leach. Now, the money can be given but the recipient, especially Ettok, would not feel diminished. In Beting's words, 'At least we could say that we asked for help because we deserved to be helped.'

In the mean time, the representative of the 'mission' started paying visits to Ettok. According to Beting, they were worried that the family was becoming too intimate with a Catholic priest. I had to reassure Tiyo Lomiyok that I had no hidden motives in helping Ettok. I told him that since our first meeting, way back in October, I already sensed that Ettok was meant for greater things. Besides, he became a friend and I his admirer. My help should be seen instead as a sign of gratitude. Of all the families in the tribe, and in the midst of all the tensions within the community, they stood behind me, supporting me, sheltering me. Besides, the money spent for Ettok came from somebody else, almost from nowhere.

Before the 'miracle' happened, Beting and I had to make a conscience decision to approach the manager of OXBOW, the contractor of PNOC to build its power plant. The manager who claimed he was 25 percent Indian from Canada. He visited me twice in order to know the 'real situation' of the natives in Mt. Apo. He wanted to help by giving computers to school in Sayaban 'to connect the village to the world'.

After two hours of conversation, the OXBOW manager handed his donation for Ettok. We were nervous. Was it politically correct to approach a PNOC-affiliated manager for help? Beting seemed to have felt victorious over possible critique from the protesters. She murmured, 'I know for sure that this is correct. I have never felt surer in my life than now!' Other contributions followed suit. Ettok's surgeon promised to donate the stainless steel to be used in supporting Ettok's hipbone during the second operation. Another friend handed P1, 000. SIL gave P5, 000. A former student of mine, who worked with copying company volunteered to produce 50 laser print outs of the poster. Again the tired Beting exclaimed, 'Since good things are happening us, we must be doing things right.'

At one point, at 10:30 in the evening, Beting called up from Davao City. I was feeling sick. I could not welcome such a call---a collect call at that! It was, however, a big news. Beting said she was happy. She was 'energised' by what she saw that day. Ettok borrowed a wheelchair and started roaming around, talking to fellow patients and their nurses. People flocked to his drawings. Among his drawings stood out Manobo old folks playing the traditional bamboo guitar called *sauroy* and faces of national heroes that he copied from paper bills. Beting then could no longer hold her depression. She realised, she said, how silly of her to brood over petty things. There was Ettok, the supposedly lame man, arousing in people new energies. I was conscious, even suspicious of myself overinterpreting these things. I could be accused of imposing a priestly interpretation of these events. It was Beting's interpretation, however. When she was talking I could only think of the telephone bill. I realised later what this could possibly mean---new sparks of hope, new ways of moving the body, new affirmation of dignity and self-worth.

## Risks and Gains

From conversations, cursory and semi-structured, I gather more than a few 'gains' from this experience on the part of the Tuddok family.

1. *Close encounter with city medical milieu.* It means even physical exposure to medical system of hospitals, with all its different actors---doctors, nurses, fellow sick people and their companions, the food vendors inside the wards, the visitors, the telephone operators, the guards and their moods, the drivers and pharmacy store keepers. During the more than one-month of Ettok's confinement, some eight or nine relatives experienced staying in the hospital for at least two days. Out of the nine, only one did not get sick. Most of them complained of '*kalintura*, the local term for ordinary fever. It also included all sorts of bodily complaints and emotional depression.

2. *First experiences.* The locus of attention shifted from Sayaban to Davao. The problem though was communication. The experience provided for some first hand experiences of making *long distance calls*, running for 500 cc of blood in a blood bank, canvassing for cheaper medicine and negotiating discounts with store keepers, learning what anti-biotic means, etc. It was the first time for Tiyo Lomiyok to go to Davao. It was the first time for Ettok to make a long distance call from Davao to Kidapawan. For Beting, it was the first time to solicit money from strangers. She used to be in a position of giving aids to the clients of the former law office that she was connected with. It was also my first time to delicately handle ecumenical issues with an actual Protestant mission group.

3. *Risking and testing one's identity and dignity.* There was once a dramatic moment Tiyo Lomiyok and Ettok and even Beting experienced in the hospital. The surgeon promised to donate the stainless steel for the second operation of Ettok's hipbone. In gratitude, we thought of bringing from the mountain some of the native products. Tiyo Lomiyok brought half a dozen soft brooms made of *tahiti* grass, a bunch of young onion leaves, a few kilos of sweet potatoes, and few more fruits of the land. It was, to them, an extremely risky attempt to show who they were and how they were trying to show gratitude. What if the gifts were not accepted? That was the paramount question in their minds. They would feel all the more humiliated. The

moment came. The doctor passed by for the morning rounds. They opened the sack of gifts. To their amazement, the doctor expressed delight. I was not there to document the event. I could imagine their joy then by the way they narrated it to me. Identity and dignity risked and regained in a gloriously fragile moment of exchange.

4. *Fellowship in suffering.* It's funny how, when we asked if Tiyo Lomiyok was eating well in the hospital, he said some of his food went to Ettok's neighbour. The other patient was a fellow 'tribal'. He belonged to the Jangan, a sub-tribe of the Bagobo. He was probably more in need than Ettok. When Ettok's second operation was postponed, the doctor requested from Ettok to use his reserved blood for another patient. Ettok signed a paper that practically gave the thing away. Ettok spent his time making drawings. His skill had impressed his fellow patients. They praised his sketches of native women dancing with their full gala costumes, faces of national heroes copied from peso bills, and images of patients in the hospital. He sometimes went around in borrowed wheelchair and surprise patients and nurses with an unexpected visit. Was he not used to visiting houses in Sayaban, anyway? Ettok's hospitalisation had certainly sharpened their sense of financial poverty, but it at the same time dramatised their capacity for cultural integrity. In the eyes of Beting, and of myself as well, this called for a difficult, fireworksless celebration which cannot be trivialised despite its tentativeness.

Only later that I appreciated the excitement of Ettok's family in buying an *agong* to be played when Ettok gets back in Sayaban. Ettok's sickness forced his family to face their poverty, both in material things and in spirit. Tiyo Lomiyok almost surrendered to Ettok's death. Ettok's high spirit, however, summoned their energy for survival.

At those moments during fieldwork, I refused to be optimistic. Which 'I' was this? Perhaps the anthropological 'I' or the professional 'I' that asked: What if everything fizzled out? What could I write about? The human being in me celebrated these little victories. It was my conviction that both Ettok's illness and recovery would have something to do with their society and culture. At least in this case, the personal and familial was social and the physical, cultural.



### Notes on Study 3. Dancing with Borrowed Gongs

<sup>1</sup> I had visited those two places many years ago. The T'boli have been famous for their handicrafts, costumes and festivals as well as for their fight against the damming of their river. As mentioned in Study 2, the tribe suffered from scandals related to the work of a Catholic European missionary. The Matigsalug people have been known not just for their customs and costumes but for their great leader, Datu Gawilan, who started a rebellion for their land during the regime of President Ferdinand Marcos. They have just recently won their ancestral domain claim for several thousands of hectares of land. Incidentally I was informed, on the day of the Tribal Assembly, that Datu Gawilan had just died. Datu Inda, OSCC provincial director, invited my research partner and me, to go for the funeral rites. This, and a later trip to T'boli village, would influence the Tuddok movement.

<sup>2</sup> Fallows' article created a stir in the Philippines. Although published in an inaccessible American monthly, it circulated in the Philippines in photocopied form until it became a source of exhausting debates in newspapers and journals. This theme of cultural loss remains in circulation and crosses traditional categories of upland or lowland societies. For a variety of 'culturelessness', see for instance the ethnographies of Cannell (1998), Brown (1996) and Eder (1987). For an 'artifactual' approach to culture loss as nostalgia, see Pertierra (1997a).

<sup>3</sup> Raul Pertierra, who admires Rosaldo's contribution to the poetics of ethnography, regrets his politics of non-participation in the local (Philippine) concern for cultural development. He writes, 'Rosaldo has been less accessible to Filipinos and despite his own awareness of cultural domination, he has been reluctant to contribute to the debate about the nature of Filipino identity from the perspective of his Ilongot experience' (1994:133). But see Rosaldo (1996).

<sup>4</sup> This is based on an interview with Datu Amado Pinantao on 17 November 1996. Datu Pinantao, who lives in Sudapin, Kidapawan, was born on 30 December 1902.

<sup>5</sup> Albert Hirschman (1984) considers this development of friendly relations as one of the 'intangible benefits' of collective action. For a parallel account of the development of this 'cultural capital' among migrant communities in America, including Filipinos, see Hirabayashi 1993.

<sup>6</sup> 'Not the way they move, but what they are doing, is what counts' says Sparshott in his engaging philosophical meditation on dance (1988:364). See also Sparshott 1995.

<sup>7</sup> For a good discussion on creative personae in anthropological studies, see Lavie, Narayan & Rosaldo 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Manuel (1973) mentions four related Manuvu family terms differentiated by the number of children and in relation to residence. *Ta:anak* is used to refer to a family with one child. It becomes *tata:anak* when the family has two or more children. The emphasis in these two terms is relationship, not residence. When residence is factored in, the family living together is called *sanga'aunggun*, or *sanga'aunggunan* if the family has 'a house of their own, and hence indicating independent residence from parents' (Manuel 1973:56). Apparently, the Obo-Manobo do not make such distinctions. They stress the multi-generation kin group *limubbaran* which, surprisingly, does not appear in Manuel's detailed kinship analysis.

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Study 4 **Landmarks and Land Claims**  
*Tahapantau* Mapping of Ancestral Domain

*'Landscape is never inert. People engage with it, re-work it, appropriate and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed, whether as individual, group, or nation-state.'*

---**Barbara Bender, 'Landscape: Politics and Perspectives' (1993)**

SAYABAN'S REJECTION of my stay prompted me to take a pragmatic, but also strategic, detour to a nearby village called Sitio Waterfall. It was a pragmatic fallback position in the sense that there my research was more welcome and needed. It was also strategic in that Sitio Waterfall itself could be a training ground and a demonstration area for the intimate partnership between research and ancestral domain claim. If I could show that my research was more useful and less threatening than what some Sayaban folks thought, then I could work more effectively with Tuddok and Apao. With Sitio Waterfall, I hoped to make a temporary detour which was in itself a proper destination.

This move proved fortunate. My fieldwork became an active witnessing to the emergence of a new tribal formation called TAHAPANTAU. Tahapantau was formed in response to the political opportunity opened up by the State's provision for ancestral domain claim, but also in reaction to a rival group NABAMAS who threatened to include a portion of their territory in its own claim. The process and the gains of this movement 'spilled over', as it were, to my first interest, the more critical movement of TUDDOK and APAO in the neighbouring Sayaban.

This Study describes the blending and clashing of agency and contingency in the formation of this new ancestral domain claimant community. As I present the 'political ramifications' in the 'conflict over access' to land (Bryant 1992), I also try to understand how a 'vernacular landscape' (Jackson 1984) becomes politicised. This requires an intimate knowledge of the people's perception of the land, a knowledge that is close to what Ruth Behar calls the people's 'subjective mapping of experience' (Behar 1990; Escobar & Alvarez 1992; Peet & Watts 1996). In the

end, I offer a reflective assessment of such a micro-social movement, celebrating its expression of what can be called cultural energy, as well as pointing out the limits of its conversion to political power.

I am aware that compressing events and accounts into one chapter might give the illusion that they happened separately from the other movements. A quick checking of the dates of these events (October 1995 to August 1996) should reveal that this chaptering of experience is in itself a textual detour.

## 1. LOCALISING ANCESTRAL DOMAIN DISCOURSE

### **Sitio Waterfall**

Tausuvan, or Sitio Waterfall, is another Obo-Manobo village of some three hundred and fifty inhabitants. It is at the end of the rough road that goes up from the centre of the barangay Bongolanon, in the municipality of Magpet, which, like Ilomavis, is also a town of Cotabato. There are two ordinary ways to reach the area. The first is by taking a jeepney ride from Kidapawan to the sleepy towncentre of Magpet. From there you negotiate an hour of rough ride with taxi-motorbike called 'skylab'. The skylab normally takes two to four but sometimes even six passengers up the slippery slopes of Sitio Pandanon, an adjacent community of the same size of population. How the number of passengers and their loads could be made to 'fit in' a single motorbike is certainly beyond any engineer's calculation. From Pandanon one has to hike for some thirty minutes on rocky road past some farms of rubber, corn, onions, tiger grass and wild but edible ferns, past some shallow creeks. The width of the road hints that it was once accessible to logging trucks that came in during the 1960s, but its roughness reveals its neglect, probably since the big logging concessions have stopped in the 1990s. I seldom used this path because the waiting for Magpet jeepney was longer, the 'skylab' fare was higher and the trip was much more dangerous.

I would usually take the second route, via Ginatilan. Ginatilan is an important junction. The main road normally leads to Ilomavis and the PNOC Geothermal Plant. The left turn from Ginatilan leads to Kisandal and then to Kiahoy, Bongolanon and Pandanon, and then up to Sitio Waterfall. I found it safer to take a two-hour hike from Ginatilan than an hour of skylab trip to Pandanon.



**Figure 4.1** Waterfall and basketball. Top, a basketball court occupies the centre of Sitio Waterfall or Tausuvan. Above, children pose at the stairway leading to the scenic waterfall. Behind them are cottages constructed by the local DENR, in co-ordination with the Department of Tourism. MAFI has an 80-hectare forest restoration project in the area.



Figure 4.2 From the door of his hut, Datu Enagaro Bugcal, pastor and secretary to the Barangay, usues his local knowledge and exposure to logging companies in documenting the ancestral domain claim of the Manobo of Pandanon, Tahamaling and Tausuvan (Sitio Waterfall). Datu Bugcal is a local historian with adept knowledge on Manobo folklore, landmarks, law and language. He also helps in the translation of the Bible into Obo-Manobo.

Turning left towards Pandanon made you feel you were leaving the political controversy of the geothermal plant. Aside from the hidden short cut route that connects Pandanon and Sayaban, later events would prove that they were more connected than their first impression.

Most of the inhabitants have constructed their huts around the bumpy basketball court, at the foot of a hill that hides a circuitous but wonderful route to the peak of Mt. Apo. At the opposite side is a cemented stairway down to the base of the thirty-meter high waterfall. There are ten open cottages with tables for picnickers. The DENR constructed them recently and the Department of Tourism helps in maintaining them. Further up the hills, a number of houses are scattered. That is how they originally lived before the Presidential Authority on National Minorities (PANAMIN) 'clustered' them into a village way back in 1979.

I first went there on 4 October 1995, on the same exploratory trip to Sayaban. A Tourism personnel and a fieldworker of the Mount Apo Foundation, Inc. (MAFI) accompanied me. MAFI had an ongoing 80-hectare forest restoration project, which it had subcontracted from the DENR. We stayed in MAFI's rented hut. Behind it was the chapel of the Baptist Church, whose pastor was Datu Enagaro Bugcal.

Datu Bugcal could be called a local historian. Although he was originally from Calinan, he had stayed in the area for more than thirty years. He came here as a young man of twenty-five in 1962. From that time on, Datu Bugcal shifted from being a surveyor and photographer of a logging company to secretary and acting captain of the barangay council and even president of the local porters association. He was the most articulate person in the community in narrating stories about the clashes between Christian and Muslims or between the government forces and the Communist rebels in early seventies. He could remember to the date the droughts and epidemics which the tribe had suffered in the last decades. He always carried a folder of files, which included a notebook for tourists and visitors. He kept records of important documents regarding the community, which he gathered from visiting government offices in the towncentre and provincial capital. Datu Bugcal was respected and was sought for a person who could handle paperwork. His extreme poverty, however, deprived him of the reverence and following proper to the well-



endowed status of traditional Manobo datu. He would later play a very significant role in the community as leader of a new tribal organisation.

Datu Bugcal welcomed me as a researcher. He asked me to sign his notebook for visitors. It bothered me then that he volunteered to teach me the Manobo language for a fee of P130 per day. I realised that it was the amount which the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) was giving him for a day of consultation on Bible translation. I later received lessons from him on Manobo language and traditional folkways. It was he who advised me to get the necessary research permits from the local government, which turned out to be a useful suggestion.

I also met Kagawad Aris Apan who was then running a small co-operative store, selling sugar, rice, noodles, coffee, kerosene, candies and biscuits. *Kagawad* was the term for the elected members of the local barangay council. He is also called Datu because of his leadership position and quality, and perhaps also because of his direct bloodline to former ruling datus in the area. He boasted that his grandfather blazed the trail towards the peak of Mt. Apo, which the government now uses in its tourism promotion.<sup>1</sup> Close to Apan's house was a better-managed store belonging to Rolly Baylon, one of the few non-Manobo residents and the only Catholic among the predominantly Baptist community. Baylon plants spring onions and retails more items in his store than the co-operative shop. Baylon had the first TV set in the sitio. It was, of course, run by battery since there was no electricity yet in that area.

In my subsequent visits, I brought Beting, my research partner and leader of the Tuddok movement in Sayaban. She was hesitant at first to come because of the enormous task in her own clan organisation. When she knew about the Tourism's plan to relocate the people in Sitio Waterfall, she gave it a try. She then discovered that she had many relatives in Pandanon. Among them was Boy Mahinay, a pastor of the Church of Christ. Mahinay would later play host to the succeeding meetings and movements on ancestral domain claim. The women welcomed her affectionately. They told Beting stories about her landed mother who died when Beting was still a small child. The hard-working women also shared comments on Beting's Visayan father who served as barangay official in Muaan for three decades.

In our conversations, both Aris Apan and Secretary Bugcal mentioned their repeated attempts to conduct a meeting on ancestral domain claim. They had

attended a seminar on what had been called DAO2. DAO2 is the Departmental Administrative Order released by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources which details the legal procedure by which a tribal group could lay a claim on their 'ancestral domain'. Bugcal and Apan's initial attempts failed, however, because the government officials they had invited never showed up. Datu Bugcal and Aris Apan decided to make use of my research as a useful instrument for the documentation they needed to substantiate their land claim. I found this partnership of mutual benefit to both of us. By the first week of December, we started taking photographs of the nearest landmarks around Sitio Waterfall and collecting stories about them. It was the beginning of new process that will eventually change the political configuration not only of Sitio Waterfall but also of the adjacent Pandanon and beyond. A short explanation of DAO2 is necessary at this point.

### **DAO 2 and the Discourse of Ancestral Domain Claim**

On 15 January 1993, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) released the Departmental Administrative Order No. 2 entitled 'Rules and regulations for the identification, delineation and recognition of ancestral land and domain claims'. As the title suggests, the document outlines the procedure whereby an indigenous cultural community may lay a claim to the territory that it has traditionally occupied. The community that produces and submits a substantial 'documentary proof', according to the set procedure, receives from the DENR a legal recognition called 'Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim' or CADC. The successful claimant community is empowered to design its own management plan for the occupied territory in collaboration with the concerned government authorities.

While this political opportunity may sound good news to the indigenous peoples, some observers and activists saw it as, at best, inadequate. CADC's, they argued, were simple certificates of a claim, and a certificate was remotely akin to a legal title. According to a recent advocacy paper, 'DAO2' and CADC's are not laws, they are merely procedures' (San Pedro 1996). As a legal instrument, DAO2 'falls short of the meaningful recognition of ancestral land rights' (Caringas 1995:59).



Many of the protest groups I have encountered among the NGOs working for indigenous peoples shared the same sentiment about DAO2.

A growing number of support groups, however, had welcomed the DAO2 innovation as a more realistic and pragmatic legal and political instrument for the indigenous people's recovery of at least a portion of their ancestral territory. Lynch and Talbott (1995:89-90) argued that DAO2 was, in the first place, the result of the government response to the pressures coming from grassroots activists themselves. Prill-Brett would also argue that the merits and limits of the DAO2 should be appreciated in the historical context of the office under scrutiny. Considering that the DENR's identification with so much injustice committed against the forest dwellers for the past years, 'this move on the part of DENR appears to usher in the beginning of a new land reform' (Prill-Brett 1997:65). CADC may not be 'perfect', but it is not simply a 'piece of paper'; it could lay 'the groundwork for the push towards the legislation of AI and AD rights with provisions for the issuance of communal title' (1997: 66).

The theoretical and policy debates were reflective of the mixed experiences of indigenous peoples themselves. A recent consultation on the experience of indigenous peoples in exploring the possibilities of DAO2 could be instructive. While most welcomed the generally positive intent of DAO2, they found lots of problems in its implementation. Problems revolved around dissemination of correct information on the DAO2 provisions, funding and technical assistance for producing the documentary proofs, manipulation of claims by local officials who had vested interests in the land, incompatibility of the either tribal political structure or other government programs, and even the emergence of 'fake' indigenous people's organisations who laid spurious land claims (PARFUND 1996).

The debate and the discussions had not ceased. In practice, however, even those who were cynical about DAO2 supported directly or indirectly the local people's organisations that opted to explore its possibilities. The militant Apo Sandawa Lumadnong Panaghiusa (ASLPC), for example, provided organisational and even legal counsel to some eight ancestral domain claims in Cotabato between 1993-1994.

Perhaps, the attraction of DAO2 might be found in what could be called 'vernacularity' of the idioms used in the list of requirements for documenting one's claim. DAO 2 requires written and photographic documentation of 'any' of the following: (1) indigenous community's customs and traditions; (2) indigenous community's political structure and institutions; (3) long term occupation such as old improvements, burial grounds, sacred places and old villages; (4) historical accounts; (5) survey plans and sketch maps; (6) anthropological data; (7) genealogical surveys; (8) descriptive histories of traditional communal forest and hunting grounds; (9) pictures and descriptive histories of traditional landmarks such as mountains, rivers, creeks, ridges, hills, terraces and the like; (10) write-ups of names and places derived from the native dialect of the community. It cannot be denied that this list lends itself to a technicalist interpretation such that only a 'scientific' evidence could be accepted as evidence (cf. Resurrection 1997). The production of such knowledge as indigenous form of organisations, stories behind the naming of rivers, ridges, trees and other local landmarks, and the construction of local history from oral testimonies and genealogies, could in itself be empowering (cf. Perks & Thomson 1998:ix). It is not farfetched to argue that the use of local idiom for people's assertion might prove to be more efficacious than the issue-based advocacy of cause-oriented groups.

By June 1996, three years after the promulgation of the DAO2, the Cotabato Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) had awarded CADCs to seven indigenous communities, covering 9,085.03 hectares. Four other applications covering another 8,000 hectares had been forwarded to the Central Office and were waiting for issuance of CADCs. Two more applications with an aggregate area of 4,550 hectares had been surveyed but with incomplete documents. Twenty more groups were preparing their documents. (Updates of the Provincial Special Task Force for Ancestral Domain, June 1996).

Surely, despite its imperfection, DAO2, especially under the liberal implementation of the Provincial Officer of DENR, was received as both favourable and manageable legal provision in the hands of the indigenous peoples. The question, now, was whether indigenous peoples could also claim as ancestral domain a portion of a national park.

### **Localising DAO2: NABAMAS and DENR**

In Mt. Apo National Park, the first to take seriously the attractiveness of DAO2 was Datu Santiago 'Lago' Aba, founder and leader of the Native Barangay Association of Mount Apo Sandawa or Nabamas. In November 1995, while the Pandanon and Waterfall leaders were still trying hard to hold an initial meeting on ancestral domain, Datu Aba had already registered his Nabamas in the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) and filed his four-thousand hectare claim at the north-western flank of Mt. Apo. I first heard about Datu Aba's claim during a consultation that I attended on the ancestral domain problem in Carmen at about the same time. The rumour was proven true when I talked to Datu Aba himself in Sitio Waterfall in mid-December, during the consultation on the planned relocation of people for tourism purposes. I was greatly impressed by his passionate love for Mt. Apo.

Two weeks later, I visited Datu Aba in his Kisandal residence. He explained to me his plans for the protection of the Mt. Apo environment and showed me the map of his claims. I then realised that Pandanon was part of his claim. Towards the end of December, my mind was focused on the forthcoming family reunion of the Tuddok in Muaan.

On 4 January 1996, on the eve of Tuddok reunion, PENRO Jim Sampulna himself informed me that 'our' ancestral domain claim was already approved in principle by the PSTFAD. When I told him that I had nothing to do with Datu Aba's claim and that I thought his inclusion of Pandanon would be problematic, Sampulna invited me to attend the PSTFAD meeting the next morning. The members of PSTFAD, composed of local government officials, representatives of non-government organisations and tribal leaders, were present. It was clear that the meeting was especially called to settle as quickly as possible, the remaining the issues in Cotabato. It was because Sampulna was being transferred to the regional office of DENR, a post which was nominally a promotion but which was practically powerless in terms of approving ancestral domain applications. Sampulna therefore would like those who were ready with their documentation and had no oppositions to be approved while he was still in office. I saw some groups hurriedly writing up two-page histories of their territories to beat the deadline. Meanwhile, Engr. Lacerna

of MAFI prepared a resolution asking the national government to reinstate Sampulna as provincial officer because he was doing well to the indigenous peoples. This was a case where the whole spectrum of support groups for indigenous peoples, from government officials to non-government leaders and protest lawyers were signing a single document in support of the head of the office known for corruption.

I should add here a note on the post of the PENRO. The Provincial Officer of the DENR was technically the person who could convene the Provincial Special Task Force for Ancestral Domain or PSTFAD. When Datu Aba's claim was submitted to the PENRO, the PENRO passed it on to the PSTFAD. There were two problems. Datu Aba's claim included not only portions of Cotabato province, but also portions of Davao. The claim was also being made within a national park. Now, the Mt. Apo National Park was under a special body called the Protected Area Management Board or PAMB. So the case was passed on to the PAMB in Davao who, in turn, sent it back to the PSTFAD for review. This process cost Nabamas a lot: its original documents got lost along the way. So Datu Aba had to produce another set of papers. When it landed again in PSTFAD, PSTFAD must have felt it really had to serve justice to the claimant.

The PSTFAD was worried, however, about the potential problem of Pandanon. During the meeting, Sampulna asked me what should be done, considering that I was in contact with the people of Pandanon. I avoided suggesting any partial action. Engr. Lacerna joined me in the proposal to simply follow the instruction of DAO2 to hold consultations in case of conflicting claims. So, even with the mood of speeding up the process of awarding CADCs, the PSTFAD decided to delay its decision on Datu Aba's claim, pending the result of the consultation that should be held in the affected area.

Some staff members of the DENR office considered the resort to consultation as unproductive. It would simply slow down the process for otherwise a very good and well-substantiated claim of Nabamas. Nabamas, after all, has worked with the DENR as partner in forest conservation. It has submitted a convincing history of the legitimacy of Datu Aba as claimant, with the corresponding pictures and stories of the landmarks within the claims perimeters (cf. Aba, n.d. *The Story of Sandawa*). The delay might even be prolonged with the coming of a new PENRO who would

certainly take time first to make any major decision. Nevertheless, PSTFAD preferred the settling of disputes before granting CADC rather than after.

We spent time in presenting the last episode with some detail to show the complexity of the actors' positions and the contingency of factors involved in decision-making at the local government level. DAO2 provided a political opportunity for a Nabamas to be formed and to claim a territory based on Datu Aba's story of legitimacy. Datu Aba's long-time working with the DENR facilitated the DENR's acceptance of his story as true. The presentation of pictures and testimony-type of history proved impressive and certainly fulfilled the requirements of DAO2. No such presentation had been submitted to the DENR so far.

Blanket talk of 'the government' or 'DENR', therefore, cannot be sustained. First of all, the PENRO may be in charge of the province, but the PENRO had to consult a multi-sectoral board PSTFAD where even anti-government NGOs were represented. Moreover, since Mt. Apo was a national park, another office, the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), had to be consulted. Secondly, DENR had earned the reputation for conniving with illegal loggers and for neglecting the plight of indigenous peoples; Sampulna, however, was well received even by protest groups. (I met Sampulna precisely in the home office of the province's fiercest lawyer critic of DENR!). Perhaps one thing that made him acceptable to indigenous people's organisation was his relative 'leniency' in approving ancestral domain claims. His achieved popularity, however, was rewarded by a promotion which, at least to some people, looked like a punishment for being too close to the poor.

Jim Sampulna's imminent transfer added urgency to the processing of applications. (His successor would later complain that Sampulna generously approved even underdocumented claims.) Sampulna's excitement in Nabamas caused him to leak the information to me just in time for the PSTFAD's decision. So my attendance in that crucial meeting was a product of accidental convergence of several factors. The resulting plan for a consultation opened up new possibilities for the people of Pandanon and Sitio Waterfall. It was, however, an unexpected twist on Datu Aba's project. We shall see in the next section how this new space would become a stage for people's action, again within the limits and possibilities of their situation, as they understood it.

## 2. THE POLITICS CONSULTATION

In calling for a public consultation, the PSTFAD was following the instructions of DAO2 (DENR 1993) that states that 'where there are conflicting claims among indigenous peoples on the boundaries of ancestral domain claims, the PSTFAD shall cause the contending parties to meet and assist them in coming up with a preliminary resolution of the conflict...' (Section 7, Article III, *Identification and Delineation of Ancestral Domains*). DAO 2 further indicates that as much as possible, this settlement process should be made 'in accordance with customary laws of the contending parties' (Section 3, Article IX, *General Provisions*). This move effectively delayed the processing of Nabamas' claim and offered an incentive to the people of Pandanon, or any other group for that matter, to put forward their own positions. Pandanon folks, ironically, were not ready to grab this political opportunity. The whole area was in a terrible economic crisis.

### **But where are the People?**

The PSTFAD scheduled a consultation on 23 January. When I relayed the plan to Pandanon, Datu Bugcal said the date was not feasible. So many of the people had migrated to the Muslim region of Tibudok to cut sugarcane. Whole families from Sitio Waterfall and Pandanon had left their houses in eerie silence. A number of those who stayed were sick. Datu Bugcal and his son were two of them. Apparently, this crisis period regularly happened twice a year: first, beginning in February lasting up to April, and then again around the month of July. During these periods there was hardly any source of income in the area. The price of brooms would plunge to intolerable low, and vegetables were not worth bringing to the market. The single-room elementary school, however, should be most available for a public consultation because even the children had to go away to cut canes or work the land.

The forest restoration project of MAFI was supposed to be their hope. According to Datu Bugcal, even this was collapsing. One MAFI fieldworker had resigned. The other was now seldom seen in the area. MAFI budgeted P2.00 per seedling to be planted in the 80-hectare restoration project. MAFI had given out the first P1.00 but was waiting till the seedlings were planted to complete the balance. The people were not interested anymore. At least 20% of the seedlings had died. I

asked one of the leaders what would happen if the restoration project did not materialise. He answered, 'All the better, so that we can now own the land.' Rolly Baylon, the Ilongo Catholic in the area, shared the same sentiment. They were against the MAFI restoration project. The big question had not been answered: 'Where would we be when the trees had grown up?'

In the mean time, many things needed to be done. Energised by her initial success in Tuddok, Beting Colmo pursued the minimum in Pandanon: to conduct an informal meeting with those who were left in the area regarding ancestral domain claim before the eventual public consultation. On 26 January, Beting herself picked up Datu Inda, the Provincial Officer of the OSCC, from his house in far away Amas and accompanied him to Pandanon. Beting was making sure that the earlier frustration of being snubbed by guests would not happen this time. Unfortunately, Datu Bugcal himself was away in Davao looking after his hospitalised son.

During the meeting with Datu Inda, the people minced no words in opposing Datu Aba. The formation of the special committee, however, was still far from coming. Those who were late simply listened to the tape-recorded discussion in Boy Mahinay's karaoke. The clear gain was the new active participation of Datu Ambadua Manib together with other elders and youth. The use of Boy Mahinay's house and church karaoke signalled a slow shift of the political venue from Sitio Waterfall to Pandanon and the participation of younger men like Mahinay himself and his cousin Robin Inangcob, both relatives of Beting. Mahinay's house became our headquarters whenever we made a visit to the area. (Datu Inda promised to help resolve the conflict. What he remained silent about was that he was a board member of Nabamas.)

### **Murmuring**

Towards the middle of April, the people started coming back. Thus, the First Consultation was held on 20 April 1996 in Sitio Waterfall. On the eve of the historic consultation, I wrote in my fieldnotes---

*People were wondering whether Datu Aba would come. In the mean time, we discussed the consequences if Datu Aba comes, and if Datu Aba does not come. The discussion revealed why the local residents refused to align themselves with Aba.*

Lumawig (not his real name): *I had some land before. Just one hectare. It was near Tagbakon. I wanted to sell it because we needed the money very badly. Datu Aba promised to buy it. He delayed it until it was already three years. So I sold it to another person. Then he said, 'Now, that land of yours, you cannot get anything from it because it is part of the DENR project.'*

Lumawig flared then. *'It seemed like Aba wanted to get the land without paying for it. He was squeezing us.'*

An old man added, *'I also had a piece of land. It was divided into two because it was hit by Lago's claim.'*

At this point, Lumawig aired a deeper sentiment against Lago. Quite recently, Datu Aba passed by Lumawig's house and told him: *'Hoy, don't let your foreign researcher roam around to look for gold. I have five men up there.'* It was a real challenge and threat.

I suggested that we focus more on the claim of Aba. I wanted to diffuse the tension a little bit by getting more technical. I spread out on the floor the map of Aba's claim. They realised the extent of Aba's claim. Although I'm sure, the technical map was not exactly the proper image or idiom for them to see the situation. So I told them, *it's just paper. I think it would be better if the people get together and try to understand what is happening and then you can decide.*

*'When Datu Aba arrives, you may want him to explain his claim and then later you can decide.'* I explained that there was a possibility of following Aba's suggestion, i.e. support Aba's claim and then you can make a deal with the local boundaries afterwards. *It might even prove to be less expensive.'*

*'If this is not resolved, gubot (trouble).'*

*'Whether it is good for you or not, my suggestion is to listen very carefully. Try to understand what exactly he is saying, and then you ask for another meeting. You don't have to make the decision immediately. You can tell them, if you want to, that you will still have to study his proposal and then you can meet again later.'*

Barangay official: *'Good. Because if we rush into the protest, it might mean trouble.'*

Lumawig: *'I had the same idea before, but some people wanted to file a protest as soon as possible'*



*The group decided to postpone the final decision, whether it was in favour or against Aba's claim. In a few seconds after the caucus, Lumawig and others present rushed to different houses, explaining what has been reached in the caucus. I could see that on this small-scale meeting, people could be mobilised. I just hoped that I was not going out of bounds. It was still quite difficult. So many people were away. People were made to think that because there were papers on the side of Aba, things could not be changed anymore.*

*My own position was really to assist the people of Pandanon and Tausuwan to understand Aba's claim, something which Aba himself should have done before launching his claim. Even at this point, I was open to the possibility of a joint claim. Although, of course, the fact that Aba did not consult these people beforehand suggested foully from the very beginning. As a strategy, I gave the idea that they need not be pressured to decide immediately. It was a suggestion to create some space for deliberation, and for owning up of whatever decision they may have to make. In addition, it was reasonable and just to delay the decision-making to wait for a few more people who worked in sugarland to come back and participate as well.*

This is intervention, I admit. But not to intervene, not to share information would also be a decision, which could make me equally responsible for my hosts (cf. Scheper-Hughes 1992:28).

### **The Public Consultations**

*First Consultation, 20 April 1996, Sitio Waterfall.* There was a wide gap between the consultation as a policy requirement in the eyes of DAO 2 and consultation as an actual process in the hands of its implementers. During the consultation itself, DENR was represented not by Sampulna, but by veteran forester Rizal Curotan who, together with Municipal Councillor Eduardo Banda, campaigned for Datu Santiago 'Lago' Aba's claim, instead of consulting the people. Datu Aba himself was there. He, like the other guests, spoke for at least one hour and thereby practically leaving no time for any semblance of an exchange. By the time they finished it was already lunchtime. They all spoke to convince the people that they should join Datu Aba and the Nabamas.

Datu Aba even made a remark that hurt the people. He challenged them, '*Ondoy vos lider ka-ay?*' 'Who is your leader here? Do you have any?' This question was repeated many times during the discussions after the consultation. It was probably painful because it was true. There was no veritable leadership in the area as a whole since the death of the former strong man Mantawil.

A number of local people still managed to speak out, however, and expressed opposition to the proposal to join Nabamas. So the matter was not decided upon and another consultation had to be called. Boy Mahinay and company wanted it immediately the week after. In silence, I personally thought it would be better to give it more time. (Besides, I had already scheduled my trip to Mt. Apo immediately after this consultation, and that I would need some rest afterwards.) They seemed, however, to need no further discussion. Tension was building up. Only after the public meeting did some of the other unsaid reasons come out. People associated Aba with the Muslims, with treasure-hunting and with violence. The minimum accusation, apparently, was that Aba did not consult them before. How could the people be assured, therefore, that he would consult them later when he would have had the land under his name?

*Second Consultation, 27 April 1996, Pandanon.* The second consultation was held this time in the single-room elementary school of Pandanon. A karaoke of a Protestant church was in front of the blackboard. Around the classroom were arranged the home-made wooden chairs contributed by the pupils. The chairs were in different shapes and sizes. Some were obviously made for a small child, some for left-handed pupils, and there were even a few double-chairs for siblings.

The bell, which was a hollow bombshell, was rung, and people gathered slowly inside and outside the hall. Together with the elders were local children of various ages and Visayan farm owners who were living in nearby Muaan, Kiahoy, and other villages, and who felt they had a stake in the meeting.

Datu Aba was present again, as well as forester Curotan of DENR. There were a few other guests from the municipal DENR office. The consultation remained as a campaign for 'unity' under the Nabamas claim. The long speeches dominated again. The blackboard became a new arena for the battle of signs. One

speaker filled the board with many legal citations from the Philippine Constitution, from Executive Orders, Administrative Orders, Forestry Programs, and Social Reform Agenda. With literacy as one serious concern in the area, one could only wonder how much ignorance such an avalanche of information generated among the crowd (cf. Hobart 1995).

Then forester Curotan wrote on the blackboard the names of the seven (7) sites covered by Aba's claim:

1. Muron (Davao side)
2. Bobbong (the great plain)
3. Venado (lake just below the peak)
4. Tawasan
5. Disok no Sondawa (small Mt. Apo)
6. Uwayan
7. -----

People noticed, however, that Curotan did not write down 'Pandanon' as the seventh area. A number of people demanded that the name 'Pandanon' be written down. Curotan obstinately refused, saying it was already understood. I sensed that some people wanted to see it for themselves that the name of their place was implicated by Nabamas' claim through the inscription of its sign on that public text. I wondered why Curotan really struggled not to yield to this popular desire. Was it perhaps because writing down the name 'Pandanon' would make the issue more concrete and tangible to the people? Or was it simply a symbolic gesture of asserting power by trying to be invisible? Why, on their part, did people want 'Pandanon' to appear on the board? We shall reflect a little more on this towards the end of this section.

We could now ask, 'What was the point of Nabamas-DENR team-up?' Speaking in Tagalog with simplified tenses for Visayan ears, Curotan explained that Datu Aba's claim is unique and credible. Datu Aba started his mission to protect Mt. Apo since 1969. While this date might be too advanced, we also know that Datu Aba's group (not yet known as Nabamas) was seen heroically fighting the forest fire in 1983. When PNOC was drawing the perimeters of its reservation, it was Datu Aba who detected the Company's covert moves to expand its boundaries. His group pressured the PNOC surveyors to pull out and stick to the legal perimeters granted to the company. According to Nabamas' records, Datu Aba actively attended the

DENR's Second Mindanao Ecological Network Assembly in Makilala (8-9 June) and even led the signing of the Declaration of Peace held precisely in Pandanon on 27 August 1993. Another document reveals that DENR and Nabamas had a joint project in protecting the Mt. Apo forests. This was reflected in jointly-signed billboards in many parts of the national park, warning people against illegal logging or appealing to them to refrain from treasure-hunting. (I had seen signboards like these in Kisandal, in Pandanon as well as in the Mainit climbers' respite on the way to the mountain peak.). Nabamas had shown a good record to the DENR.

This record, however, was then used against the people of Pandanon and Sitio Waterfall. While Nabamas had manifested a strong active commitment to Mt. Apo conservation, the people of Pandanon had yet to prove that they could do likewise. On the present score sheet, it looked like they had to do a lot of catching up. The fact that they had no lucrative products to boast of implies that they survive by means of clandestine trade of timber. The fallen trees in nearby forests could only reinforce this accusation. Thus, the DENR (and Tourism) personnel were afraid that Datu Bugcal's people might just be equating the ancestral domain claim with the license to continue logging the forest.

In contrast, according to Curotan, Datu Aba's ancestral domain claim was exclusively for environmental protection. According to Datu Aba, 'Maybe we are the people chosen by God to protect the environment'. So Curotan urged the Pandanon folks to simply join Nabamas. 'If you do not join, it would be very difficult for you to claim your own. If you join, then surveying would become simpler. You don't have to work for your own documents. If you want, you can even change the name Nabamas.'

Despite the pressure, however, the people of Pandanon refused to join Nabamas. DENR then set another consultation with a proviso that 'outsiders' like 'Father' should not be allowed to intervene. I did not see the need to defend my own presence in the meeting to a 'fellow outsider'. I trusted the people's own sense of judgement. This is what we could try to understand next.

### Understanding People's Rejection

Pandanon people refused to join Nabamas for several reasons ranging from economic, cultural, territorial and personal. Some of the reasons manifested early enough. The more subtle ones surfaced only later. I guess the people talked about a few other reasons only among themselves.

*One major reason was livelihood.* The people needed land for the type of agriculture that they were just learning to engage in. Datu Aba and DENR ruled out farming within ancestral domain because Mt. Apo was a protected area. Ancestral domain within a protected area was incompatible with farming (*galas*). Even if he meant, 'no new cultivation', the recurring questions would still be left unanswered. How would the people live? Where? If the forest was important, what about the people in the forest?

Yet how could the people use the livelihood argument when the whole focus was forest protection? A key issue here was the appropriation, or even manipulative reduction, of the discourse of ancestral domain into the discourse of environmental protection. 'When you claim the land,' Curotan lectured, 'don't think that you can cut the trees. Your role is to protect the forest.' Here, right became simply a role. The material resource 'land' was equated with 'forest'. The accusation of 'cutting trees' reduced all 'forest dwelling' into a crime. It seemed that the only knowledge the people had was hacking down trees.

Nabamas, on the other hand, attached the ancestral domain discourse to environmental protection that was favoured by the DENR. Nabamas presented itself---and was packaged by Curotan and company---as basically an environmental protection group. It wanted to claim the ancestral domain totally for the sake of fulfilling its mission as indigenous environmentalist.

If we were to believe Nabamas' official document, however, we would notice that its program went beyond purely ecological concerns. Its SEC Registration dated 29 November 1995, presented a more holistic 'PEACE' program:

- P**    Peace
- E**    Education
- A**    Agriculture
- C**    Culture
- E**    Ecology/environment'

Ecology and environmental protection forms only one concern among others, agriculture included. Yet during the campaign, this categorical '*walay galas*' (no farming) policy was exactly what turned the people off. Nabamas was playing games with DENR's environmental discourse to win the ancestral domain claim. It was unfortunate because it meant the loss of confidence of the people who were understandably thinking of livelihood and survival, as well as forest protection. The Pandanon people simply could not believe that anyone could be passionately determined to claim ancestral domain with a pristinely altruistic cause of environmental protection.

*There were political reasons as well.* First of all, Datu Aba did not inform the Pandanon folks before filing his claim. DENR was saying that internal negotiation could follow later. What guarantee could be given that Datu Aba would be more consultative when he had already taken the land? More fundamentally, Datu Aba was not from Pandanon or Bongolanon, and he had not been recognised as leader there. So where did he get the right to claim this part of land which had never been part of his history? Why would DENR tolerate such a claim?

*Some reasons touched on ingrained fears.* The people of Pandanon seemed to have a long historical hurt in their encounter with Muslim raiders (something we cannot deal with here). The very name 'Aba' and 'Nabamas' sounded 'Muslim' to them. Nabamas, in particular, reminded them of BAMA or the Bangsa Moro Army. They feared that Datu Aba might eventually use the land as training ground for similar militant Muslim groups. This might sound petty. Many elders, however, still remember with pain their experiences during the fighting between the Ilaga (Christian armed fanatics) and the Barakuda (Moro anti-Christian groups) in the adjacent Kinay in early 1970s. The bloody battles caused many of them to evacuate to other places (Batawan & Bugcal 1996). This 'political charade' was in all likelihood an exaggerated reaction. It was true, however, that Datu Aba had close Muslim friends. (I had the opportunity to confront him about this issue against him, and he said, 'Muslims are very good people.') What bloated this prejudice, I think, was the ongoing tension resulting from the controversial peace negotiation between the Philippine government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). A militant armed faction of the MNLF wanted to disrupt the peace process. Some of

the members of tribal groups---including the Manobos of Pandanon---were being recruited by both camps. (The younger brother of Mahinay was an example. A number of those who worked as sugarcane cutters in Muslim territories were said to be offered military jobs in Islamic groups.) This mental association of Muslims with 'conflict' and 'trouble' could have added the emotional fear against Datu Aba and the Nabamas. Datu Aba had to confront the same fear among the people Sayaban.

Personal and collective insult also played a role. One statement Datu Aba made really offended the Pandanon folks, especially the informal leaders. '*Ondoy vos lider ka-ay?*' Who is your leader here? This would not be possible, some said, during the time of the great leader Pedro Mantawil. Since his death, there had been no charismatic leader in the area. The challenge of Datu Aba proved difficult. For indeed, there was no strong man to face Aba. At one point, Aba questioned even domestic arrangements in Pandanon. He questioned why a certain family was hosting a Japanese researcher in Pandanon. Yusuke Kobo was then surveying land use among the Manobos of Pandanon. Aba suspected Yusuke of covert treasure-hunting. Because of these frictions with the strong man that for a while, eruption of violence was up in the air.

### 3. ALTERNATIVE GEOGRAPHIES

Identity formation surely involves to a great extent a construction of oppositional identity (cf. Thomas 1992). Oppositional identity, however, is not enough. A group has to constitute itself more positively from among its resources within the space opened up by rejecting its inclusion in another's project. The people of Pandanon, Tahamaling and Tausuvan have definitely decided not to join Nabamas. Who are they to declare this opposition? Are they constituting themselves as another claimant? Datu Aba has thrown the challenge: 'Who is your leader here?' That was not simply a question of leadership but of organisation. After all, Datu Aba's claim touches only the area of Pandanon. Tahamaling, Tausuvan and Pandanon have never constituted a whole geopolitical unit.

### **The Making of a Local Environmentalist**

In response to the challenge of Datu Aba, the interim leaders of Pandanon and Tausuvan held a meeting on 4 May 1996. The result was the formation of a new organisation called **Tahapantau**. A detailed account of the formation of this organisational identity might reveal an important practice of agency.

Present in the meeting were Datu Bugcal, Boy Mahinay, Aris Apan, Ambadua Manib and Apo Donna Icdang, among others. They wanted a name that would represent the three sitios to which they belonged. Their instinct was to take the first syllables of the three sitios of Tahamaling, Pandanon and Tausuvan. Somebody said that they should not imitate Nabamas because it contains English terms. It had to be 'native' term in contrast to Datu Aba's. So they juggled the syllables to form a word in search of a local, apt and saleable meaning. PANTATA was possible but it did not sound good. They were still very much thinking of Pandanon as the first sitio to be represented. Then they discussed that the first inhabited sitio was Tahamaling, and so the attention moved towards a word that started with Tahamaling. TAPANTAU became a good candidate because it literally meant 'can be seen by looking upward'.

The final name came like a big insight: TAHAPANTAU. Instantly, the whole group resounded in approval. Tahapantau captured the first syllables of the three sitios. Moreover, as a number of them volunteered some exegesis, it was a powerful homonym of the possible local construction 'tohopantow' which literally meant 'overseer'. '*Pantow*' meant 'to see', 'to watch over', and therefore 'to care', 'to protect'. '*Toho*' was a prefix for 'the one who'. Tohopantow, or Tahapantau (for outsider's pronunciation), therefore meant 'the overseer', 'the caretaker', 'the one who watches over'. Datu Bugcal added that 'pantow' includes both 'looking down' if you were coming from above the hill, as well as 'looking up' if you are guarding the hill from below. Thus, the Tahapantau shall be the overseer and caretaker, protector of both the forest and the plains. From this exegesis emerged a hermeneutic of assertion. 'Datu Aba cannot say he is the only one who can protect the forests. We are also capable of minding the mountains.'

This practice of working with syllables was not new. Nabamas, after all, was an acronym. That is not all. A number of the nearby placenames were so



constructed. MANOVISA came from the names of the ethnic groups Manobo and Visayan who inhabit the place. The same pattern was true of ILOMAVIS, which was derived from the mixture of Ilocano, Manobo and Visayan. The more serious thing that they had done in naming Tahapantau was to constitute the three sitios as one geographical and political unit. The result was the newly-formed confidence and assertion that they were a separate people with a tangible identity, a stature, and a responsibility. Earlier programs in the area had tended to treat the sitios separately. The DENR, Tourism and MAFI focused their projects in Sitio Waterfall/Tausuvan. Datu Aba, yielding the Tausuvan to the government programs, included only Pandanon in his ancestral domain claim. Tahamaling, for all practical purposes, simply did not exist in the minds of the most people as its legendary marker--a tree with two kinds of branches--had been cut by the loggers. Tahapantau, as it were, would be a redrawing of the local map. It remained to be seen, of course, whether this naming exercise would be politically efficacious.

The formality had to follow. The complete name of the organisation became *Sovokaddan to Monuvu to Tahamaling, Pandanon Woy Tausuvan* which means Association of the Manobos in Tahamaling, Pandanon and Tausuvan. Although this was approved, the word 'Monuvu' was replaced later by the word 'Minuvu'. Monuvu was criticised because it referred only to ethnic members of the Manobo tribe, whereas the reality was that a third of the population was Visayan and Ilocano. Minuvu, the generic term like 'people', was chosen, having a sound that was 'similar' to Manobo, anyway. This complete name and its contracted form Tahapantau would then on appear quite regularly in their succeeding documents. During our series of land surveys, the word was often mentioned whenever people felt like asserting their claim to their land, and whenever they expressed their original plans for the restoration of the forests.

This identity formation released new ideas. The silent Datu Ambadua Manib suggested that they should have their own feastday. They should celebrate the beginning of Tahapantau. They should gather together so that they would generate 'konokka' or 'kalig-on' (strength). Datu Manib detailed his proposal, "First, it will be held in Tahamaling because Tahamaling was the original settlement. The next

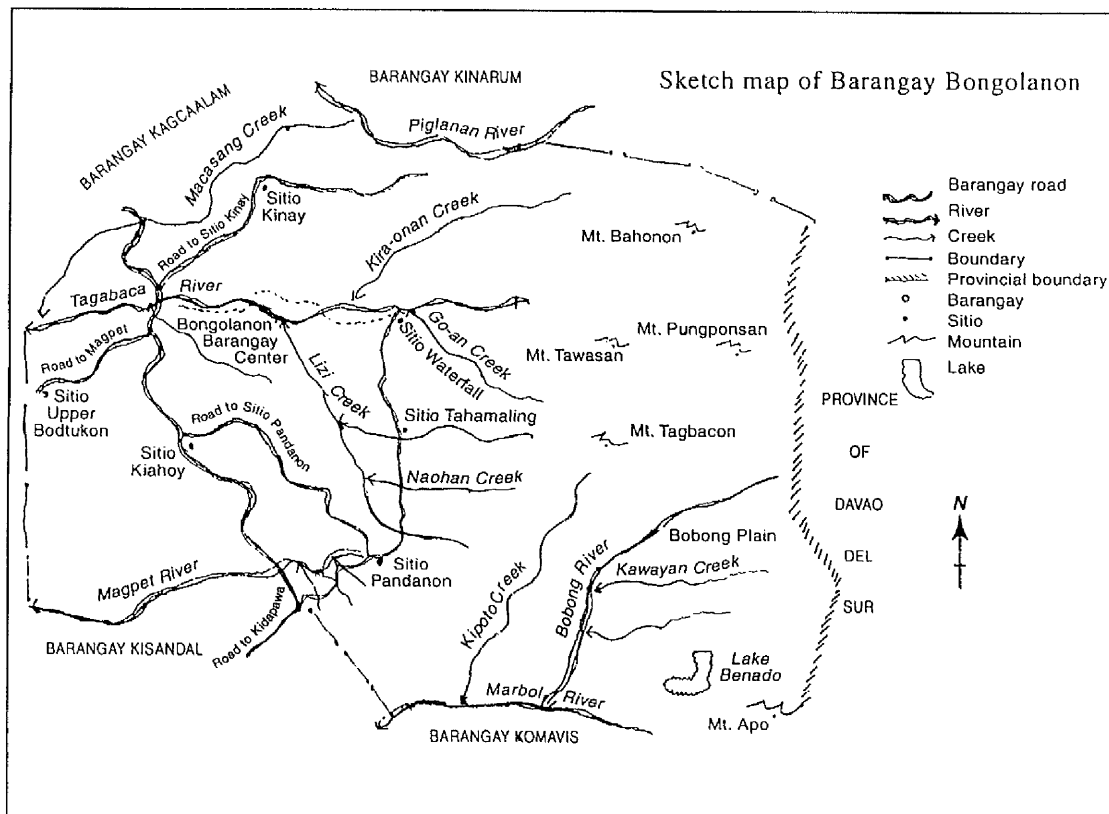
will be in Pandanon, and then in Tausuvan. There should be *ahong, uwahing, and saoroy*. The old men should have *panuvadhuwad* (invocation to the spirits)."

Datu Manib also demanded that the original name Tausuvan should be retrieved. The name 'Sitio Waterfall' was imposed by the PANAMIN in 1979. Then the Tourism program became the object of criticism. 'Tourism [promotion] only made the Manobos porters to tourists and climbers. To be a porter is very difficult. You get very tired. They think that just because we live in the mountain we do not get tired hiking and carrying their bags. Porters are not fed well. Many children are hurt in the stairway, which Tourism constructed on the way to the waterfall. Tourism does not help the people who live here.' More importantly, they reiterated their opposition to the plan of tourism to relocate the people of Sitio Waterfall. Then the forest restoration project of MAFI became the next target. A certain Dr. Acosta lent them a horse but the MAFI personnel would use it almost exclusively for his own interest. Aris Apan complained that he sometimes had to carry five dozens of brooms on his shoulder because he could not avail of the loaned horse. Boy Mahinay volunteered to draw the map of the whole area they would claim.

The following week, on 13 May 1996, Tahapantau elected its officers. Datu Enagaro Bugcal became its first president. Now, they have not only constituted themselves as a new social formation, they also have a presentable leadership. Datu Bugcal for a while considered affiliating with OMA (Obo-Manobo Association). OMA itself was in trouble. Exactly on the same day of the Consultation, the subject of investigation was the president of OMA, Pastor Joshua Gubal, who was accused by another fellow pastor and fellow translator for the SIL, of sexual harassment. Datu Bugcal, still feeling inadequate and needing to be attached to a 'bigger' identity, considered Sinebadan ta Katigatunan ta Sandawa (Association of the Descendants of Mount Apo Sandawa), or the government-formed Tribal Communities Association of the Philippines (TRICAP). With laughter and seriousness, the group asserted its independence from SKS. Apparently, SKS leader Engr. Socrates Semilla told them not to register Tahapantau as a separate organisation, and that they should work instead under SKS. 'Why should be we under SKS?' asked Datu Apan, 'We will just become part of the problems of SKS. The same is true of TRICAP. Why do they all of a sudden want to take over our

ancestral domain claim? Suddenly, we have become interesting to these people!' (Laughter).

What happened during the Third Consultation that was held on 25 May need not be detailed here. It was a simple, straightforward declaration of the people's position. There was a big difference. People now spoke of themselves as Tahapantau. The next important step now would be to continue what they had originally planned: to file their own claim---in their own way.



**Map 3.** Sketch map of the ancestral domain claim of Tahapantau, showing various vernacular names for local landmarks. (Adopted from the sketch map drawn by Datu Enagaro Bugcal during the Tahapantau 'surbe'.)

### **From 'Bunnuis' To 'Surbe'**

The tense encounter between Nabamas and Tahapantau might be called a 'relationship of productive conflict' (cf. Ricoeur 1998:80). It was productive, as I would like to show, at least on the part of Tahapantau. This section explores how Tahapantau traversed, and built upon, the space laid out by DAO2 and by their rejection of the Nabamas-DENR campaign. They did this in a number of ways. In between the series of public consultations, Tahapantau people were challenged to make their own local knowledge visible, by talking about them, by writing them down, by recording them in tape. This was to win a more stable access to their land that was under threat. They achieved it with modest celebration.<sup>2</sup>

To my mind the most graphic performance of their local knowledge was in their launching of a series of ancestral domain surveys. I had never seen them more alive than during the ocular documentation of their 3,000-hectare territory. Their 'going-to-the-woods' was, as it were, a performative expression of their 'being-in-the-world'.<sup>3</sup>

From the 'outside' the whole event might be seen as just another land claim which can be represented by circumscribing and then shading a certain portion of the Mt. Apo map---part of which originally allocated to Nabamas---and labelling it 'Tahapantau'; that could fulfil the legal requirements.<sup>4</sup> Or it could be enhanced 'scientifically' by superimposing the 'community-based map' onto a standard cartographic representation as others have done (cf. Walpole, et al 1994). A creative approach was demonstrated by the Kaliwat Theatre Collective among the Manobos of Arakan Valley, producing a booklength account of traditional Arakan culture as well as the process of their ancestral domain claim (Kaliwat 1996). An ethnographic or ethnosemiotic exploration might enrich even further our appreciation of what internally Tahapantau gained or achieved in the process. I shall do this by accompanying Tahapantau actors in their 'subjective mapping' of their ancestral domain experience (cf. Behar 1990:225). This is to reveal, to some extent, how the people were 'engaged in the self-reproduction of their reality in multifaceted and complex ways' (Escobar 1992:77; cf. Peet & Watts 1996).

*'Bunnuis': Manobo practice of mapping.* Launching a land survey had a short history. It started from a small informal discussion after the Second Consultation in Pandanon. The group then was mostly women: Ude, Tiya Igaw, Beting and Melania. It was getting clearer that their final decision was to reject Nabamas. The task then was to document Tahapantau's own claim. As with Nabamas, Tahapantau had to draw a map.

It was, in a way, the moment I was waiting for. The example of community-based mapping exercise done among the farmers in Mindoro (Walpole, et al. 1994) could be applied here. I ventured: 'What if we make a map, not on paper, but on the ground, using twigs and leaves?' (PRA). Tiya Ude jumped into the conversation saying, 'That's what we call "*bunnuis*"'. Instantly, she cut green leaves of spring onions and lined them up to form a kind of boundary perimeter. She continued.

'We use this process in arranging weddings. The parents agree on an exchange. The parents of the woman necessarily ask for something. Let us say one carabao (then she cut a piece of spring onion), one gong (another piece of the long green leaf), until the list grows long. Sometimes, they talk about land. So the sticks are used to sketch the boundaries.'

This surprise lecture was approvingly seconded by Tiya Igaw, Eping, and Melania who suddenly found a topic they seemed to be very familiar with. I had been wishing the situation would allow the performance of community-based mapping or any of those participatory research techniques (cf. Nelson 1995). It was a great joy to discover that they had a corresponding tradition, which could be expanded for the sake of their present concerns.

The project then became the object of imagination. Somebody volunteered to cook food while the men were discussing the boundaries. Another woman identified other leaves that they had seen used in traditional marriage arrangement. One of them even ran to pick up some *tabbak* leaves that apparently were associated with bunnuis. It became clear that 'bunnuis' had two meanings. First, bunnuis was the traditional way of balancing the demands of the bride's family and the counterproposal of the groom's kin. Leaves and twigs then would represent pieces of object offerings. Sometimes the offering could be land, and hence the second practice. Bunnuis could also mean the traditional way of outlining and defining

boundaries and making maps. For the present purpose of Tahapantau, this second meaning was highlighted.

The discussion on *bunnuis* continued the following morning. The men, while reaffirming the explanation of the women, expanded '*bunnuis*' into a '*surbe*'. The plan was to launch the '*surbe*' after the Third Consultation. The second seasonal crisis period, however, called off the activity. It had to wait for the return of the migrant sugarcane workers in August. Their contribution in terms of food and money was important for the expedition.

'*Surbe*' comes from the English word 'survey', specifically 'land survey'. I prefer to use '*surbe*' because it was the term they used and because it had come to mean a mixture of the traditional '*bunnuis*' and other skills and knowledges, including what some people had learned from working with logging companies and government projects. We had two '*surbe*'. What follows is a quick account of these two activities and then a more reflective analysis of '*surbe*' as knowledge and performance.

The first *surbe* was set on 7-11 August 1996. In preparation, Datu Manib measured thirty meters of abaca rope enhanced by a long rattan string. The twigs of the table '*bunnuis*' had now transformed into a long measuring tape. Datu Bugcal asked me to produce survey sheets with columns for compass readings and land use. I had to borrow a crude Boy Scout compass in Kidapawan. It was no delight for Datu Bugcal who had worked with a more sophisticated compass when he served as forest guide and photographer in J.J.Bosquit Logging Company way back in 1969. We bought ammunition for the two Springfield guns. Beting Colmo's concern was protection against the leeches and so she equipped herself with raincoats and long boots. Our provision was simple. We had a sack of rice, some bread, a few kilos of dried fish, noodles, coffee, sugar, and candies. The group expected some good catch in the jungle for supplement. We also brought some bottles of gin and lemon, despite the fact that pastors normally prohibited them. Alcohol was needed to combat the cold as well as to supply bottles for improvised gas lamps. Synthetic sacks, used in transporting rice or chemical fertilizers, would prove invaluable as mat and blanket. The provisions were distributed to all, except Beting, the heavier packs being given

to the stronger persons. The weather was not perfect, with a light shower that sprinkled the grass. One could not expect a sunny August in Mt. Apo.

The composition of the team they assembled was interesting. There were thirteen of us, including Agaring, the wife of Datu Bugcal, and two boys Robin Linog and Roger Manib, and Beting Colmo in her first mountain climb. Datu Bugcal was head surveyor and Aris Apan was his assistant. Chieftain Ambaduwa Manib would blaze the trail, assisted by Visayan Rudy Cordero, Mario Egaan, and forest expert Limpao Apan. Pastor Boy Mahinay and Botoy Ampoy were assigned as hunters. My task was to photograph and film the trip. Our departure was a joyous occasion, with a number of people from Pandanon bidding us good luck.

For three days and two nights, we hiked following the sketch drawn by Datu Bugcal. Survey recording started in Tahamaling. Tahamaling was named after a pair of trees standing back to back, one Almaciga and the other Balite. According to stories, the spirit who dwelt there was unpredictable. One is never sure whether it would extend help or cause illness. Even the stump of the trees that were cut by logging had been used for firewood.

Towards the border of the settlement, traces of wild boars stealing cassava roots were visible. Further into the jungle, Datu Manib hit a huge bat that, together with the Simollon bird Botoy shot, supplemented our supper that evening in Kianus. Kianus, incidentally, used to be the resting place of the hunters of old. It was said that when the hunters were away, even wild boars chose this place for the renewal of their energy. The late evening was filled with '*ponguman*' or oral folktales. We also had some visitors! Apparently, some people from Kinarum would also roam around the area even in the middle of the night.

I had a dream the following morning (I had not dreamed for ages). I saw a furless monkey, sitting inside a cooking pan. The team interpreted it as a sign that we will not catch a huge animal during the trip. It proved to be true. Hunting along the Gatuungan jungles, Bohonnon ridge, and Naowan plateau had no success. But the *itulan* and more *ponguman* of Datu Bugcal and even of Datu Manib were enough consolation. Under the flickering light of bonfire, they would tape record their own stories and the lively audience response and then replay them to multiply fun.

Before we tore down our makeshift tent on the final day, I saw some offerings at the foot of a tree. On the *tambaa* (an elevated square-shaped trelice made of bamboo splits used as altar) were coins, food, and leaves. Somebody must have tried last night to still request the mountain spirits to grant them game. I could sense that they were feeling embarrassed toward me because, despite their *pamuvadtuva*d (invocation to the spirits), they could not show a good catch. When even that religious intercession proved futile, hunter---and pastor---Mahinay offered an explanation. *Mamunggud*, the Manobo god of the hunt, he said, did not grant his deer or monkey or wild boar, because the trip was for a different reason; it was for the claiming of the land itself, not simply the wildlife in it. The group agreed. This explanation reinforced, instead of superseded, the earlier interpretation of my dream.

### **Visual Echoes and Bodily Energies.**

Midway between Sitio Naawan and Tawasan, Datu Bugcal signalled for a pause. The carpet of wet velveteen moss was several inches deep. I thought he just wanted to test. As I approached him, I noticed that people were already silently listening. Datu Bugcal was solemnly singing. The weak rain kept falling. My concern was to capture the event in film. The camera registered 'Dew'. It would not record. I just listened with the people. With tears, the old man sang the memory of his father. 'No matter how I tried,' Datu Bugcal later reflected during an informal discussion, 'I could not stop crying because I remembered my father carrying me on his shoulder during our long trips in the woods. He used to pass that place when he went hunting.' He did not mind that his singing was not recorded. There would always be things better kept in memory.

Datu Bugcal's recollection of his father mediated by the landscape could be said to be purely personal. Yet the members of the survey team also appropriated it. The pause during the hike to listen to Datu Bugcal's song must have provided space for sharing---at least witnessing---such a show of emotion and affection. Others later offered some interpretation. Somebody suggested the mountain spirits did not permit such a solemn thing to be recorded. Another explained that that was really how Manobos would remember their fathers. Memorable as it was, however, it did not register into the long list of important landmarks. It remained, nevertheless, a



powerful visual echo from the past that could be heard through actual visit and in storytelling. While the experience was in a sense personal, the story-telling and story-sharing made it communal.<sup>5</sup>

The more important focus of the conversations during the *surbe* was their plans. I was surprised that they already had plans of planting *abaca* hemp and rattan poles in selected areas. These people were very often chastised by government personnel for having no sense of the future, not even for gathering firewood for the next cooking. Yet they were now talking casually of an apparently well-laid plan of reserving ten years for rattan production in this wooded area, and root crops in another hilly region, and so on. They even had ideas on how to prevent illegal logging by putting a known tree-cutter, for example, in charge of a fragile forest growth. With laughter, they referred to themselves as the '*tohopontow*', the overseers and caretakers, of their territory.

The second and shorter '*surbe*' was launched on 20-21 August 1996. The target this time was the area of Kipoto, a hidden waterfall. Because of the success of the first trip, more people wanted to join. The modest budget, however, would not allow a bigger crew. We had some new faces in the group of fourteen. To the two women before were added Juvelyn Calago, the lone teacher in the mixed Grade I-II primary school in Pandanon, and the young Jenny, daughter of Datu Bugcal. Apo Danna Icdang, despite his age, was invited because of his familiarity with the strange regions, which even Datu Bugcal had never visited. The runners this time were Jimmy Mantawil, son of the deceased great Datu of Pandanon, and Jeter Roman. Eight-year old Jabby, youngest child of Pastor Mahinay, was the youngest of the forest surveyors.

Compared to the first trip, the steep slopes, rough rapids, and thick underbrush this time were definitely more demanding, but the wild fauna was more rewarding. One sign of this was the abundance of rattan poles which they could only dream about in earlier Bohonnon area (Bohonnon meant 'rattan region'). We even found a red, round nameless fruit, the size of an orange, which nobody knew whether it was edible or not. Although we did not catch any animals---that was practically ruled out as a result of the first expedition---we gathered some interesting forest foods. We feasted on the juicy white pith of an old *bahibbi* palm (which I

would occasionally see in some posh city gardens). Our hot instant noodle soup, graced with fresh water frogs, was enhanced by *lohallom* leaves and *koumanga* fern sprouts. Along the way, the children gathered the sweet-sour bulbs of *tawakay*, *pusung-pusung*, and *tuhis-tuhis*. Tawakay was especially significant because according to the elders, it grew abundantly during the difficult *hulaw* or extended droughts, which the tribe experienced most terribly in 1973, and even worse in 1977 when Mt. Apo was set on fire. Marble-sized wild berries occasionally popped out of the shrubs. The crystal clear water, drawn from fresh springs and served through the *sikoddu* full-length bamboo vessels, simply had no equal. I understood better what I had heard often: 'We go to the forest to make our minds cool.'

It was cooler when we reached the enchanting waterfalls. We almost could not hear each other because of the powerful noise of the waters between the two high walls that seemed to guard the narrow Kipoto River. Kipoto River, observed the Manobos, was a funny short river. It was so named because it just jumps up and down with no clear sense of direction. It would maintain its width from its source down to where it reaches the great Moovoo (Marbol) River. The falls, to my surprise, had not been named until we came. The waterfall is found within the general area of Tagbacon, and so it could be named Tagbacon Falls. But since it was part of Kipoto River, they decided to name it *Tausuva't Kipoto* or Kipoto Falls. (While discussing this, even children had fun because the word Kipoto contained 'poto' which meant 'a boy's balls').

More seriously, they boasted of succeeding in concealing Kipoto Falls from the eyes of the Tourism Office. 'This is our waterfall. Later, we will develop this as our tourist spot, but we will manage it, not the Tourism [Office].' It was more than an oblique critique of the present Tourism program in Sitio Waterfalls. The statement was a subtle assertion of their own knowledge of the land and their capacity to manage it.

Our evening in a dense Tagbacon jungle was a mixture of political discussion, map-reading apprenticeship, folklore feasting, and even Manobo dancing. The name of Datu Aba came up again, but in a lighter mood now, perhaps because they felt more confidence in themselves. Instead, we concentrated on our route. With the help of the sketch map drawn by Datu Bugcal, Beting and I located

where we have been, where we were and where else we were going (See Map 3). According to the original plan, we should spend another day to go to *Sooan Banug*. The name literally meant 'eagle's nest'. Very few hunters have reached this tall, white cliff with holes serving as nests for the big birds. There was a prevailing belief that where eagles lay their eggs, there would be mines of precious mineral. Beting burst into a sort of prophecy: that *Sooan Banug* would become an object of competing desires. Tiya Agaring, among others, opposed the plan to go to *Sooan Banug*. '*Dilikadu!*' she shripped, 'there are so many huuuh!' Beting could simply not let it pass unexplained, 'What do you mean by many *huuuh*?' Tiya Agaring made gestures suggesting members of the NPA or the New People's Army of the Communist Party of the Philippines. 'A 16-year old boy was killed, just below this hill. A severed head was even paraded around by we don't know who.' It was decided to forgo *Sooan Banug*. (It would later mean the literal yielding of *Sooan Banug* to the Apao claim in Sayaban.)

During the rest of the evening, they exchanged *pongumanon* and *itulan*. As in the days of their grandparents, people were squatting or lying down, all ears to the stories, and bursting in yells (they're not fond of clapping) at funny or sexy punchlines. I remember a fable told by Datu Bugcal about a lizard's circular search for a scapegoat for the death of her young, ending in admittance that she was to blame. People saw it as an allegory for their political rivals.<sup>6</sup> Then came the dancing. Datu Bugcal and Tiya Agaring donned their traditional Manobo shirt and skirt. They had brought them all along the journey. Since there was no gong, the empty plastic container served as substitute. Apo Donna held it tightly between his knees and struck it with a stick, approximating the bouncy beat, if not the metallic ring, of the gong music. Even Beting danced despite the day's fatigue and the tiny floorspace covered by grass and abaca leaves inside the tent. This dancing, however, turned out to be just a prelude to the next day performance.

I was trailing behind when the group reached the great Moovoo or Marbol River. To my surprise, I saw Datu Bugcal and Tiya Agaring, and Apo Donna up there on a huge rock-stage, dancing in their endangered costume, and again hopping to the beat of the improvised plastic percussion. I handed my camera to Boy Mahinay because I felt I simply had to join the dancing. I did not ask how they chose

the place for the merriment, whether it had a name or a story behind it. At certain points, one simply had to be where one was, and just blend with the place.

Yet somehow, the urge to express in words, in music and in narrative also managed to emerge. Tiya Agaring and Datu Bugcal sat by a low rock at the side of the river and begun singing. The audio of my camera could not capture the shrill of their song because of the roar of the rapids, but their emotions were, as it were, visible. Even as they sung to celebrate, their faces expressed pain just as their bodies betrayed their fatigue. Once in while, they would look up to the hills or down to the waters. Not far, the children took advantage of the stopover by dipping into the fresh waters, but they would come out periodically and curl up on top of rocks to watch and listen to their elders' performance. I wondered whether this was an instance when the convergence---no matter how partial--of sensations on land and waters, of singing and dancing, and of elders and playmates produced collective memories.

Perhaps it is this kind of experience that made Datu Bugcal reject a simpler way of filing a claim. 'I did not listen to the suggestion of Engr. Semilla (leader of the non-governmental organisation called SKS). According to him,' Datu Bugcal continued, 'there's no need for an ocular survey; we should simply shade our portion on the map, and it would be enough. If we did that, we would miss a lot.' Datu Bugcal probably meant a certain delight in the practice of knowledge. As Aris Apan a few times said, with erect posture and a confident smile, during the surbe: 'I really like this thing that we're doing. We can move around. We know where we are. This, after all, is our land.'

It is not out of naivete that, throughout the survey account, my language has become more celebratory than clinical. This is because the object of description has also slipped---if only temporarily---away from the more defensive survival discourse of public contestation, and closer to a self-affirmation praxis of everyday life. Datu Bugcal and his companions were, as it were, *enacting* themselves *for* themselves. They were not evading an armed group or entertaining an audience. They were not even pointing to a landmark of some significant past event or proving a genealogical link to a dead ancestor. They were not performing a ritual to appease the gods, nor, I believe, were they play-acting to please this researcher. They were simply, collectively *being there* at that cultural *space* that they generated out of the political

opportunity opened to them by the ancestral domain discourse and their own practice of agency which went beyond the legal exigency. Through their action, they were activating what we may call their *vernacular forms of energy*. Whether this energy could be converted into political power remains to be seen--or, is this the right way of making an assessment?

### **Reflective Assessment**

The process of ancestral domain claim was, of course, more complex than forming a group or launching a survey. As early as 12 July 1996, Tahapantau had already prepared a letter addressed to the PENRO, to file a formal petition for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC). Due to the difficulty of finding people to sign the letter, and because of the value attached to the land survey, the letter was submitted towards the end of the year. The claim included nine areas covering an estimated three thousand hectares, and signed by one hundred and eighty-three (183) household heads or lot owners. Among the signatories were tenurial settlers and land-buyers including 31 Cebuano, 15 Ilongo, 6 Ilocano, and one Muslim. A good number of these people lived outside the area, which should partly explain the difficulty in asking them to sign.<sup>7</sup> The rest were native Manobos including three close kin of Datu Aba.<sup>8</sup> After more than a year, though, the DENR had not yet decided on Tahapantau's claim because of the other conflict Nabamas met in Sayaban, which shall be the subject of another chapter.

In the meantime, people of Pandanon and Tausuvan (Sitio Waterfall) continued to migrate for survival. Drought still visited the area periodically. Datu Bugcal himself would roam Kidapawan and knock on the doors of different government offices and friendly church contacts seeking financial assistance for his artist son Noel. Noel eventually died even after trying all kinds of treatment from Manobo medicine men, to Visayan faith healers and hospital doctors. Rudy Cordero, member of the survey team and officer of Tahapantau, desperately walked in tears around the Kidapawan market, looking for some money to buy biscuits for the wake of his father who died recently. And just before I left Pandanon, I heard a debate on whether to continue the primary school or not. The dedicated teacher had not been receiving her salary for months. With all this poverty, I was not surprised to see a

number of men, in the dark hours of dawn, pulling some sliced timber to sell to customers waiting downtown. I could not take photographs of them.

In this type of situation, one tendency is to dismiss the efforts of small interest groups or even social movements as at best a 'nice try'. The 'weapons of the weak' remain simply weak weapons. The protection of the forests, for example, would really depend not on the local people but 'primarily on the actions of outside or 'non-local' groups' (Bryant, Rigg & Stott 1993:107). To balance this tendency, some observers warn against any form of economic or political reductionism. They call us to 'resist the teleological temptation whereby movements are valued only if they progress ineluctably from daily resistance to protest actions to political projects, finally transforming themselves into veritable power alternatives' (Alvarez & Escobar 1992:324). We obviously have to nuance our observations in light of these two positions.

The first tendency might seem cruel, as I am personally inclined to believe. The actuation of some DENR, Tourism and MAFI personnel reveal this superiority complex.

The second tendency, to measure social movements primarily in terms of political success, seems to be shared even by some Tahapantau officials. In May 1997, for example, Datu Bugcal, confident of tribal support from the three sitios of Tahapantau of which he was president, ran for the post of Barangay Captain of the whole Bongolanon. He lost. In a bitter letter that he sent to me in London, he said he felt 'betrayed' by his fellow natives, and said that the re-elected Visayan captain won because he had 'more money while I being a poor man had nothing to show.' With due respect to Datu Bugcal, I think he had misinterpreted the merits of the Tahapantau movement. He thought, quite mistakenly, that the Tahapantau gains in cultural empowerment in its own territory should automatically translate into political, or more specifically electoral, power.

The real, palpable gain of Tahapantau could be the invention of its own self. It is not so much the production of a name or a group. Not even the reorganisation of population from three separate sitios to one politico-geographical unit. It was, more fundamentally, the invention of their capacity to invent themselves by way of the knowledge of their land and the corresponding delight in their knowledge. For so

many times in the past, they have been subjected to dis-placement or re-placement. This range from the intrusion of logging companies in the 1960s, to the militarization in early 1970s, hamletting of the tribal communities by the PANAMIN also in 1970s, to the recent Tourism and MAFI projects that threatened them of relocation in the early 1990s, and down to the most recent concerted efforts of the DENR and NABAMAS to integrate them into an environmental project. So many things in their past conveyed the idea that they could not do anything. This was the refrain during the beginnings of the Nabamas-DENR intrusion: the papers have been forwarded, you cannot do anything. With their firm stance during the consultation, their creativity in naming Tahapantau, and their knowledge and energy during the '*surbe*', including their stories, their survival techniques, as well as their plans for forest management, they do deserve neither insult nor neglect.

#### Notes on Study 4: Landmarks and Land Claims

<sup>1</sup>Masauji Hachisuka, the Japanese ornithologist who was the first on the record to have traversed Mt. Apo from Davao in the south-east up to the peak and then down to Cotabato in the north-west, wrote about a certain 'Datu Apang'. Datu Apang guided Col. Fletcher of Zamboanga in going to the peak of Mt. Apo in 1928, as well as Hachisuka himself, this time from the peak down to Cotabato in 1929. Col Fletcher named the lake in Mt. Apo peak 'FAGGAMB' using the initials of the members of the team. The first 'A' in FAGGAMB represented Datu Apang who was probably the grandfather of Aris Apan (Hachisuka 1931:75).

<sup>2</sup>Among other things, these local knowledges would include significant fragments of indigenous astronomy and its relation to agriculture, description of endemic varieties of sugarcane, banana, and corn, and a listing of edible as well as poisonous plants in the jungle. None of this had received attention in any of PNOC-sponsored researches on environment (EIA 1991; EIA 1995; Celebrating Mt. Apo 1997; Vega 1997). Unfortunately, the limitation of space does not allow us to discuss it here, either.

<sup>3</sup>This use of Heideggerian insight in understanding the relationship of Philippine indigenous peoples with their land is not entirely new (cf. Barrameda 1996). For a more extended application of this phenomenological approach on dancing, drumming and singing as cultural modes of being-in-the-world in an African context, see Friedson (1996).

<sup>4</sup>According to Datu Bugcal, the SKS leader suggested that they should just draw the map of their claim and they did not need to make an ocular survey of the land. Datu Bugcal and companions dismissed the suggestion and preferred to launch an expedition.

<sup>5</sup>A similar thing happened during the preliminary land survey made by Tano Bayawan, Atawan and his son in Batuun *Garung* (18-21 July 1996). Atawan admitted, although with a mixture of joy and embarrassment, that he 'could not help' shedding tears when he made it to the resting rock named precisely after his father Garung. According to Pastor Tano Bayawan, Atawan even had a headache. It happened a second time when Atawan visited another area associated with the memory of his father. For more than twenty-five years, he had wondered whether he could still reclaim the land of his father. His father worked hard---but failed---to oppose the inclusion of his land in the national park. Now, Atawan, in the presence of his own son, vowed to continue the struggle because there was a new opportunity for a land claim. Again, the actual, ocular and personal visitation of the landmarks was important for the 'subjective mapping' (to borrow from Behar 1992) of the ancestral domain claim. I would venture to say that the resourcing of the 'visual echoes' served as a kind of 'ancestral energy' that animated Atawan for the next round of struggle.

<sup>6</sup> This story must be old. A slightly different version is found among the Ilianen Manobos (Wigglesworth 1981:24-29).

<sup>7</sup>There were times when Datu Bugcal felt bitterly inclined to deny Tahapantau membership to those who have sold their land, and those who despite repeated attempts to reach them never showed any concern or help in the struggle for the land claim.

<sup>8</sup>It appears that Datu Aba himself had a piece of land in the Tahapantau area, but he preferred to have only his family members appeared in the document.



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Study 5 **Beyond Collating Histories**  
*Apao's Construction of Collective Narrative*

*'The past is more than a construction... [W]hose claims on the past obtain recognition and acceptance, by what means, and why? Rival factions compete for historical truth. We have official history versus unofficial history, history versus memory, memory versus counter-memory.'*

---Anton Blok, 'Making History' (1992:121)

BETING COLMO DID MORE than apologise to the Apao elders when, on 21 April 1996, she arrived late for their meeting. She brought documents from the heated public consultation on the other side of the hill. Quite discreetly, Beting succeeded in making the elders realise that the contested land claim of Datu Aba in Pandanon also threatened the Apao territory in Sayaban. That meeting started a complex of local initiatives and conflicting claims regarding the history and territory of the Manobo of Mt. Apo.

I was not there during the meeting (the Apao organisation never invited me to their sessions). Beting later gave me her typewritten journal entry. The unsolicited testimony, written curiously in Tagalog, had her signature on every page. It narrated the early reactions of Apao elders to Datu Aba's account:

They were very quiet as they listened. When I showed them the map of the claim as well as the *papeles*, they reacted very strongly. According to them, the documents contained many lies. Like the protection of Mt. Apo from the spread of the fire when it burned in 1983. They said they were the ones who put out the fire, why would Datu Lago claim it? The stories about the landmarks, which Lago wrote in his document, were allegedly wrong. Like *Bobbong*, for example. It was not because it had plenty of bamboo's that it was called Bobbong. There was a river there where Apo Apao saw a darter with side fins that looked like bamboo. That was why it was called Bobbong. Before the end of the meeting, Kapitan Iyong [barangay head] and Simeon Serrano [head of the Apao organisation] decided to go to Datu Lago to settle this problem. If Lago would not face a public consultation then they would file a counter-claim since Sayaban people could also claim a good portion of Lago's purported territory.

While the people of Pandanon could only challenge Datu Aba's leadership aspirations (cf. Study 4), the Sayaban elders seemed ready to overturn his whole historical evidence altogether. Claims to resources, however, do not depend on 'correct' history alone. As I hope to show in this Study, the Apao meeting triggered a complex series of actions and formations that revealed latent arenas of conflict and unexpected co-operation. It also opened up spaces for the emergence of new actors in the development of discourses of identity, boundary and history.

In this Study, I wish first of all to trace what may be called 'tributaries' of action, especially of the emergent actors in the field. These tributaries of action as it were fed the original 'stream' of the cultural movement that Tuddok to Kalubbaran ni Ayon Umpan started. Here we will encounter a number of new actors in the field. Among them are Atawan Bayawan, 'returnee' tribal organiser and head of the Bayawan clan, and Apo Salumay Iyong, an 'imported' local historian, plus a couple of other movement entrepreneurs and even non-entrepreneurs who found themselves involved or implicated in the struggle for cultural and material resources. The second part discusses the substantial issues in local history and Apao genealogy as well as the strategies employed by a number of movement actors in their struggle to avoid violence while asserting access to capital resources. The third section ventures into some themes within their cultural struggle which go beyond the practices of collating histories and contesting land claims.

## 1. FROM MOMENTS TO MOVEMENT

For the Tuddok initiators, the period between April and October 1996 was beset by many questions. How could Datu Aba's claim be contested? Who would contest him? To what extent was his story true? Who knew the more correct story? Many people heard and believed that Aba's papers had been accepted by the DENR; then wouldn't opposing him be a futile effort since 'the government' had already taken over? A new State body was being formed--the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD); perhaps its Muslim head, leader of the formerly secessionist Moro National Liberation Front, could solve the problem better? Now if they chose to oppose Aba's claim, would Sayaban be ready to present a counter-claim? In whose

name: the barangay? the Apao clan? the Tribal Council? Or a new federation? How could they form a unified collective action? If that were not possible, then perhaps some groups, like the Umpan clan, should just opt for family-sized ancestral lands, rather than aspire the communal ancestral domain? Would it not defeat the whole purpose of maintaining their tribe as a people? How much land would the tribe claim? Where were the boundaries? Can they manage the environment? Was it legally possible, by the way, to claim a portion of an established National Park? Very importantly, would the claimants include the area already occupied by the PNOC? How would this huge power project react? Can they sustain the struggle without external assistance? Did they trust themselves enough to believe they were worth it? A number of these questions obstinately lingered during the next two years.

As many of the answers to these questions are still being worked out up to the time of this writing, I can only attempt to give a partial account of the beginnings, the 'episodes' that, like those a keen novelist says, contain within their apparent uneventfulness a power that would later lead to further events (Kundera 1991:338-39; cf. Bauman 1993:157). To do this, I shall heed the suggestion of some observers of social movements. They ask us to recognise the fact that the 'groups' or 'movements' that we normally refer to as 'actors' or 'agents' in the field are in continuous process. These movements bring together a host of compatible and incompatible elements to create workable and contextual identities and strategies.

Arturo Escobar, for instance, following Alberto Melucci, offers a useful research trajectory: 'Rather than assuming the existence of a relatively unified collective actor,' he says, 'the researcher must precisely explain how collective action is formed and maintained. This demands that the researcher provides a view of how actors construct common actions, explain how different elements are brought together, and describe the concrete processes through which individuals become involved in action' (1992:72). For lack of space, I shall even narrow down the category 'individuals' to what Faye Ginsberg calls 'cultural activists'. I shall try to understand not only how they got involved but also how their created media of action---such as documents, maps, or photographs in this case---get circulated and recognised as part of collective strategies (cf. Ginsburg 1997:124). Following Ananta Kumar Giri (1998:84), I shall 'start with key actors in the contemporary discursive

terrain and move with them in their own constructed biography and reconstructed history'. But I shall heed the reminder from Hilhorst (1998) that even the apparently non-key actors, the so-called movement non-entrepreneurs, also play crucial roles in the process of forming collective action.

### **Datu Santiago 'Lago' Aba: The Moment of Mission**

An obvious starting point is Datu Santiago 'Lago' Aba, founder and leader of the *Native Barangay Association of Mt. Apo Sandawa* (NABAMAS).<sup>1</sup> Datu Aba was a major actor not just in its north-western side of Mt. Apo but in the whole natural park as well. In particular, much of the action in Pandanon and Sayaban was triggered by his strong, if controversial, moves. Datu Aba's impact on Pandanon is discussed in Study 4. Now, to understand the rest of the political and cultural movements in Sayaban, we need additional insights on Datu Aba's position and trajectory of action that made him an enigmatic figure in the recent history of Mt. Apo. How did he start?

The Nabamas' territorial claim rests upon the solemn commissioning of Datu Aba to protect Mt. Apo. Datu Aba is allegedly given the mission by successor of Apao to unite the people and protect the forest. This commissioning is narrated in an official document entitled *The Story of Sandawa* (Aba 1995?). We shall quote here the relevant section at length to capture its dramatic tone. Everything seemed to have happened on a single day.

It was in the early morning of November 8, 1969 when Datu Omog Serrano (1885-1986) sent for me for a very important meeting. Immediately I prepared myself and hurried off to Sitio Sudsuhayan...He showed happiness in his face upon seeing me and thanked me for responding to his call. After a short exchange of news from our respective sitios, the Apo started to talk with seriousness in his voice. I detected a sense of deep concern within him...

He started by informing me of the influx of migrants from far away places, the destruction on the Sandawa (Mt. Apo ranges) wrought by the logging activities and the Kaingeros, and the sad plight of our tribes. What was once peaceful and serene place that is Sandawa is now full of strife that also influenced the once peace-loving and united tribal community. He instructed me to unite again our divided people and [to] exert our best efforts in the protection, preservation, conservation and rehabilitation of Sandawa for the sake of our children's children and the future generation.

He emphasised to me that by the time Sandawa is destroyed, we who are of the Bagobo-Manobo descent will cease to exist as a people, for our tribal survival depends largely on Sandawa ---the source of our food, medicine, mores, and roots. In essence, he was telling me that Sandawa to our people is life itself.

Then he related and pointed out to me the places, hills, rivers, and mountains covered by our ancestral domain. He also said that these areas must be protected with our very lives,

and the responsibilities must be equally shared by apportioning to our kin the areas for easy implementation and supervision.

According to Apo Omog, all my brethren, family and relatives, and also followers in Owas and Kisandal are all entitled to our ancestral lands and domain in Sandawa covering the following areas: *Linao Endang* (now Lake Venado); *Muron* (Red Hen); *Bobbong* (ornamental plant); *Tawasan* (ritual or offering place); *Desok Na Sandawa* (small Sandawa); and *Uwayan* (resting place)...

We ended our conference late in the afternoon and after receiving his blessings, I headed home and arrived after twilight time.

That night, I cannot sleep thinking of the great responsibilities that Apo Omog placed on my shoulder that would spell the destiny of my people.

According to the document, the following month was spent on meetings and gathering of resources in preparation for the land survey. Under the guidance of the old men Manomba and Dasanan, the survey pushed through on 7 January 1970. The rest of the narrative enumerates the special landmarks that the survey team had visited, with their corresponding etiological stories and photographs.

The appendix is also instructive. It is like an album of snap shots highlighting NABAMAS' activities in 1993. It shows Datu Aba and his NABAMAS actively participating in tribal-initiated peace process, co-operating with foresters of the DENR, and in touch with grassroots communities in Mt. Apo. A separate series of photographs celebrate Datu Aba's 'meeting with DENR Secretary Angel C. Alcala' to whom Datu Aba is 'introduced as the protector of Mt. Apo'.

The document must have formed part of the formal application for the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC). When it was submitted to the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) sometime in 1995, the Board had only one apprehension. One area mentioned, *Muron*, was beyond the Cotabato border, and transgressed the existing political boundaries. Datu Aba's appeal to the 'original pre-State boundaries' settled the question. Datu Aba had given a touching story of his commissioning, and DENR had worked with his group for a number of years. (I had seen their jointly sponsored billboards in strategic places in Mt. Apo, campaigning against illegal logging, littering and treasure-hunting.) In Datu Aba, the DENR saw an indigenous environmentalist who was willing to work with the government.

I had a number of chances of talking to him personally and quite frankly.<sup>2</sup> What emerged from our initial meetings was a man of deep conviction, strong passionate love for the forests of Mt. Apo. When I met him near Lake Agco, for

instance, I asked him one question. 'What is it that you feel has not been understood by your critics?' He said, 'It seems that until now, they have not understood that mine is simply the desire to protect the forests.'

Among other things, Datu Aba realised the sacredness of the mountain and for him the task of protecting it was itself a sacred duty. 'I have a dream' he said. 'I was given a task. Take care of Lake Venado even without aid from the lowlands. I myself feel tempted to open up farmlots. It is not possible. It is sacred.' In what sense was the mountain sacred?

Why would it not be sacred? The Lord is fond of this mountain... There are Tinikaran and Almaciga there. There are huge trees which you could not see anywhere else. In other words, the Lord really blessed this mountain. There are 'caretakers' of the forest. There are owners. In the Bible, in Genesis, there are two kinds of spirits of God. There are 'lost souls'. Malevolent spirits. If you cut trees, they will get angry.

When asked about the source of his strength, Datu Aba expressed his trust in God and in the voluntary contribution of his members who guard the forest without pay. He said he did not want any funding from outsiders just as their ancestors survived without priests or pastors, without the government or NGOs. Regarding the opposition to his claim, Datu simply said, 'I have spent a lot already. We will not back-out. They will see. Whether we have ancestral domain (certificates) or not, we will really protect the forest.'

It was not surprising that by early January of 1996, PAMB was ready to approve the claim, until they realised that local culture and politics went beyond the identification of landmarks and fielding volunteer forest guards. In Pandanon, the people asserted their right to livelihood and form their own organisation. In Sayaban, elders and leaders detected other issues.

### **Kapitan Iyong: 'Who fought the fire in Mt. Apo?'**

It was Pablo Iyong, the barangay captain, who dismissed Datu Aba's claim of putting out the fire in Mt. Apo forests in 1983. For some reason, he tended to be emotional about it. In one Apao meeting, Kapitan Iyong burst, in his native Obo-Manobo language: *'To 1983, id oseng din sikandin kid-abbuk to apuy. Waaah! Waa labut doy kid abbuk to apuy.'* (He [Aba] said that in 1983, he put out the fire. Nooo! He had nothing to do with putting out the fire.) Perhaps it was because braving the fire was

for him a symbol of the Manobo's way of protecting Mt. Apo. This could be gleaned when, during an earlier multi-sectoral forum, he attacked those who kept on insinuating that the 'natives were to blame' for the irresponsible resource extraction in Mt. Apo. The NABAMAS issue had not yet erupted when Kapitan Iyong passionately argued:

I would like to react about the issue on illegal logging in Ilomavis. We know that this has long been happening [*'dugay na na'ng nahitabo*] in our barangay. Let me clarify that this is not so anymore. As a matter of fact, we have started planting trees. I hope we would no longer bicker [*'magdak-dakanay*], blaming us natives [*'netibo*] because we are also thinking what should be done. Like that forest fire [*'dakong sunog sa Mt. Apo*] in 1986. We, the natives, helped in putting out that fire. No DENR personnel went there. (MAFI 1995:12)<sup>3</sup>

Kapitan Iyong's feeling must have been shared by many. Pastor Tano Bayawan, for instance, framed and laminated his '*Certificate of Appreciation*.' The Bureau of Forest Development (BFD), Mt. Apo Jaycees, Presidential Assistant on National Minorities (PANAMIN) gave the award 'in grateful recognition of his dedicated efforts and participation in the extinguishing of fires within the vicinity of the Mt. Apo National Park and Watershed'. It was signed on '6<sup>th</sup> of May 1983 at Sayaban, Ilomavis, Kidapawan'. Kapitan Iyong dared Datu Aba to show his own plaque of heroism.

In fairness to Datu Aba, but without attempting to solve the debate through archival research, I would like to offer a small note. At least in 1992, when some hundreds of hectares of Mt. Apo area burned, we have a record of Datu Santiago Aba joining forty-four other volunteer fire fighters from Kisandal and Ilomavis. They 'proceeded to Mt. Apo peak to suppress the burning mountain' [sic] using 'branches of shrubs as their fire swatter'.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps only 'members of NABAMAS helped put out the fire' in 1983, as the document of Datu Aba modestly puts it (Aba 1995).

Kapitan Iyong promised to lead the Manobo of Sayaban in the rightful claim of their land. The succeeding months saw him quite unsure of his position. For while he considered launching a separate land claim, then to just wait for the decision of Nur Misuari as head of the SPCPD. He would also make some irregular moves when the local managers of the PNOC intervened in the political processes.

Kapitan Iyong's friend, Datu Simeon Serrano, was in the best position to lead the Sayaban land claim. As head of the Apao organisation, he was recognised as the

custodian of clan's interests. In early May, he helped summon Salumay Iyong for an initial caucus on the background story of Aba's land claim. For some reason, Datu Simeon's allegiance would shift, now taking in Beting as secretary of the Apao organisation, then dismissing her from the group, now fighting Datu Aba only to be heard trying to convince others 'not to disturb Aba's claim'. Both Datu Simeon Serrano and Kapitan Pablo Iyong found it hard to position themselves in regard to Aba's claim, especially when a new actor, Atawan Bayawan, suddenly emerged from far away Bangkal, after more than twenty-five years of semi-self-exile.

**Atawan Bayawan: 'I thought I'd never see my father's land again.'**

Tuddok leaders, Beting Umpan Colmo and Pastor Tano Bayawan, grew uneasy with the Apao leaders. Apao's promised opposition to NABAMAS waned. The initial reaction of the elders opened up one very important avenue for the development of a new way of talking about the land---the knowledge of history, and a clearer target group for organising---the elders. That also spelled the difficulty of Beting and Tano who were both young and quite lacking in the traditional knowledge. Beting had additional encumbrance being a woman and a sister of an outspoken activist. Tano's job as Bible translator tied him down in front of the computer. His meagre salary and poor health prevented him from moving around. They needed somebody who would share their vision of a radical cultural regeneration and at the same time be credible to the elders and be adept in organising in an indigenous way.

Tano seized the opportunity when his Uncle Atawan Bayawan visited Sayaban to talk to the Bayawan clan. They discussed self-help projects like maintaining a communal farm and collective sponsorship of a Bayawan youth to pursue secondary education. Tano drove home the point that the most urgent problem was the ancestral domain claim conflict. To Tano's relief, Atawan did not need too much convincing. Atawan was just waiting for this moment to resume his unfinished task that began many years back, but was again triggered by recent events.

Atawan was the son of the hunter Garong Bayawan. Garong had no interest at all in the education of his boy. Atawan finished grade VI without his father's encouragement. Then as a young man, Atawan helped his uncles in the preparation of papers for the reclamation of their portion of Mt. Apo National Park.





**Figure 5.1** Atawan Bayawan, in reflective mood. After a series of frustrations, he left the Sayaban area (and the adjacent Balabag) with a heavy heart, 'thinking that I would never see my father's land again.'



**Figure 5.2** Datu Santiago 'Lago' Aba, leader of NABAMAS, shows the extent of the Mt. Apo territory that, according to testimony, Apo Omog entrusted to his care. For him, claiming ancestral domain means protecting the environment. The photograph was taken during a private interview in his Kisandal residence.

Atawan stayed away in Bangkal for about twenty-six years, until on 2 May 1996, he encountered Datu Aba at the crossroads in Ginatilan.

According to Atawan, Datu Aba asked him, 'Where will you go if there is trouble?' Atawan did not expect the direction that conversation went. Aba allegedly told him, 'You could not go Sayaban because the people there have already sold their land to PNOC. You cannot go to the other side of the mountain either, because I have already counted all the monkeys and the frogs there. I have put my claim on that land.'

Atawan replied, 'Don't forget Datu that we are still here. That we were here long before you came.' Atawan would tell the story of this meeting as a kind of refrain during many of the group discussions he attended or initiated.

Atawan said he got hurt. He carried this feeling as he attended a seminar on ancestral domain claims given by the DENR towards the end of the same month of May. The seminar 'enlightened' him. He realised that the government, through the Departmental Order No. 2 (DAO 2), had opened up the legal possibility of reclaiming his father's hunting grounds and providing land for the rest of the landless natives. Atawan remembered that during the seminar, Datu Enagaro Bugcal from Pandanon posed some questions on the claim of Datu Aba. Rizal Curotan, veteran DENR forester, whispered to Atawan's ears, saying 'Datu Bugcal does not understand Datu Aba. Datu Aba has very good intentions.' Atawan did not respond to Curotan. He studied carefully this new lesson in life. He then remembered his father in the *kamingaw* (solitude, silence) of the forest. He recalled what Datu Aba told him when they met in Ginatilan. By some logic, Atawan felt it was time to move. That move became more urgent---and more feasible---when he presided over the meeting of the Bayawan clan.

The meeting was called by Tano Bayawan perhaps to explore the resources of his kin on his father's side. All the while, Tano worked with the Umpans according to the plan he and Beting agreed upon. The Umpans, however, lacked strong leadership. Not one among the Umpan elders was an organiser. Tano must have sought reinforcement from the Bayawans who consisted probably the biggest lineage within the Apao clan. The gathering was not at all strange. I only realised later that the Linubaran ni Bayawan had started having modest 'family reunions' since 1992. This

was a case of a latent or submerged movement network capable of being mobilised in face of a political opportunity and triggered by a sense of emergency. With the Tuddok of the Umpans, the Linubaran Bayawan promised to change the landscape of struggle.

The Bayawans, together with the Andots and the Umpans, were more particularly hit by Datu Aba's claim. Datu Aba included the area of Kawayan and Desok no Sandawa, which according to Apao history were assigned to the Bayawan descendants by no less than Omog himself who allocated some portions of the land to Datu Aba. That made the conflict more acute for these families than the rest of Apao descendants. The Bayawans' move would be stronger if the whole Apao moves as one. Here was the problem. The head of Apao, Simeon Serrano, was beginning to side with Datu Aba. The challenge then was how to win over the support of Simeon and the rest of Apao. If that was not possible, perhaps a new organisation could be created precisely for ancestral domain claim, and Atawan could become the leader of that new group. Would it not reinforce the already brewing conflict within the tribe? Atawan struggled, instead, to convince the existing leaders to at least understand and not object to his move. The strategy was in two steps. First, register an objection to the claim of Datu Aba. That would slow down the process of Aba's application. Second, file a petition for the recognition of their ancestral domain claim. The first move would involve fewer people, just enough to show that there were enough people who are hit by the earlier claim. The second move should involve the whole Apao. In between, it was important to show the Apao leadership that the first move, initiated by the Bayawans, was not for the Bayawan alone.

On 16 July 1996, Atawan Bayawan and his younger colleagues drafted a formal letter of petition addressed to the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO). The letter did not oppose Datu Aba's claim in its entirety, but expressed worry that Aba 'included the land that we inherited from our forefathers'. Signed by Atawan and some sixty residents, mostly coming from Bayawan families, called for a public 'consultation' to reach a peaceful settlement. It took almost a month to get those signatures. On 13 August 1996, the DENR office pressed a 'RECEIVED' stamp on the document. That purple ink on the paper signed by the people dismissed once and for all the prevailing myth that Aba's claim had

already been approved. It was interpreted, quite correctly, that something still could be done.

The purple stamp was also important for Atawan, but for a different reason. For months, he had left his wife worrying. His wife was so bothered that she sent his son to check what happened. His son in turn became one more active member to the Bayawan clan who showed support behind Atawan's crusade. Later, the wife herself came down and witnessed her husband's activities. She understood him and left him to pursue his mission. 'Of course' she said in one conversation, 'he had to do it because it was his father's land'. Atawan's intended few days of visitation extended to years of commitment. Atawan said, with his own brand of humour, that the evidence of the purple stamp somehow helped.

During one of our more exclusive sessions in Kidapawan (a reflexive exercise the Tuddok group had accustomed to doing before and after any major activity), Atawan shared how important this movement was to him. I noticed that his eyes were wet. His speech faltered as he traced his own mission to his father. 'I never thought' he said, 'that I could still come back to this land of my father. I thought everything was lost.' Atawan continued, 'Sometimes I reflect. I stop there. I must confess that it hurts... I recall my father. He did not just die in the jungle. He got sick there. His sickness lingered for quite a while. Until he died. He was buried there. That is why it is really difficult for me to lose our land.'

### **Tano and Beting: 'Is it really worth it?'**

It is tempting to assume that the participation of Beting and Tano constituted the most solid foundation of the movement. But even they experienced having second thoughts.

During a rare walk with Tano in going to Pandanon, I heard him expressing deep sighs for his tribe. As we passed by rubber and coffee plantations owned by Visayan and Ilocano settlers, he murmured, 'I don't know why our tribe is like this. Look at those big farms. All of them belong to the *kristiyanos*. Why can't we do the same? My fellow Manobo are still very poor. I don't know if we could succeed.' I was worried that behind us, the teen-ager Ettoy was also absorbing this feeling.

Tano had other frustrations. Reluctantly, he joined the Apao organisation, hoping that the elders would lead the tribe wisely towards a reasonable ancestral

domain claim. He ended up resigning as treasurer because, as in all other tribal organisations he had seen, leaders tended to preserve only personal interests. According to him, that was also true, to some extent, of his fellow Manobo Christian ministers.

Tano must have found it difficult to answer a constant and insistent reminder of Fely, his Visayan wife. 'Remember, Tano, that you have four children who need to eat as well. Because of this organising, you are not able to do your translation work. Where shall we get all the coffee to provide for your endless meetings?' It was no secret that Fely felt really squeezed because a number of Tano's kin would come to his house and share whatever is there at table. There was question whether this strong Manobo family tie was counter-productive. Fely was thinking of moving to General Santos where her father had given her a substantial tract of coconut farm. If they transferred there, they could send their children to school, and be free from the dependence of other kin. Tano, however, decided to stay and start a movement.

It started from a dream, Tano explained to the group when we had time to reflect on their movement. 'It was there inside, deep inside, just waiting for the right time. When other companions arrived, then I thought it was the right time.' In another conversation, he said, 'This is to protect the land of my mother. My mother is old now. Most likely, she will not be moving away. She lived here. She will die here. That is why I want to secure this land.' Tano, in different times, allowed Fely and some of the children to move to General Santos. For a while, he himself tried to settle there, only to find himself coming back to continue the work. Instead of giving up, he managed to recruit other members of the family. Pastor Sheryl Umpan, for instance, even risked his fragile job in the PNOC by spending time transcribing tapes and translating documents for their land claim. Even Amao, the fifty-year-old mentally handicapped, contributed to the more manual tasks like fetching water for the visiting elders and gathering firewood for the kitchen. The children were always on-call to run and buy or borrow a quarter of a kilo of sugar, sachets of *Nescafe* instant coffee and *Milo* for those, like Datu Bugcal, whose 'stomachs are already black with coffee'. Tano also was responsible for organising the weekly *pintakasi* or voluntary communal farming of *loofah* and *tahiti* in Muaan and Balabag.<sup>5</sup> Quite importantly, in Tano, people like Pastor Modesto Bayawan---who always feel 'There's nothing we

can do anymore, we are a failure'---could find some solace. Perhaps his own self-questioning helped him empathise with those who were tempted to despair. If Tano continued, it was because he could find strength in the company of fellow movement activists like Atawan and more especially from his cousin Beting.

Little did Tano know that Beting herself, right in the heat of their campaign, almost abandoned their struggle. On 3 July, the day that Tano won Atawan's support for their movement in Sayaban, Tuddok almost lost Beting while she was in Davao attending to two sick Manobo. Since I was also in Davao at that time, I could recount it in more detail. There is much more here than a personal affair.

As discussed in Study 3, Beting had to periodically go to Davao to visit Ettok in the hospital. So did I, especially when we had our second patient. Let me just introduce him.

Jun Embac was a young Manobo from Kisandal, married, and with one child. He was suffering from an acute appendicitis when his aunt Diding Tenorio in the Kidapawan parish convent brought him to me. He needed an immediate operation. I accompanied them to Amas provincial hospital, but there was no anaesthesiologist available. It was possible though to hire one from any of the private hospitals around, but we had to pay P2,500. That would take care only of the doctor. What about the medicine? We decided to just bring him to the Davao Medical Centre the following day. He would be with our earlier patient---Ettok.

Diding remembered me because she was there in the house of Datu Aba during my interview. Aside from the simple act of charity, I thought helping them had an added virtue, that of sending good signal to Datu Aba. But I was worried about the expenses.

In the evening, at around 9:00pm, Ettok called long distance from the Davao hospital. He could already go up to the third floor of the building. Then Beting also called up reporting that there was fire at the hospital and Tiyo Lomiyok panicked. It was interesting that Ettok did not even mention that he was ready to jump out of the window minutes before he called me.

The following day, Jun Embac's parents arrived. The father could hardly speak a Visayan word. He was, so to speak, 'pure' Manobo. We picked up Jun Embac who was in terrible pain. The father stayed behind, while the mother came with us in

Davao. We had to rush to the emergency section of the hospital. After queuing for an hour, the doctor shouted at me: 'Where are the needles? The blood? How come you're not ready?' I wanted to explain that those items were not included in the list given by the woman at the reception. The young doctor was extremely busy. It was also obvious that he was operating on some prejudices based on the colour of the patient and my own haggard look. 'Shut up!' he literally shouted at me, 'Just buy these things and come back very quickly. Don't you know that your patient is an emergency case?' He was right. I had to run for needles and the right type of blood. A charming female doctor helped us to convince another patient to 'lend' blood reserved for his operation the next day. It also meant we had to look for a replacement before we could even think of going to sleep.

Beting arrived from Kidapawan and took some of the errands. I stayed in our Jesuit residence in the University, while Beting remained in the hospital during the operation. (Normally, she would prefer to rent a cot at the city bus station and spend the night there.) Tiyo Lomiyok, the father of Ettok, who initially did not know his way around the city, served as hospital and city guide to Embac's mother.

Beting had almost no sleep. When she went to the chemist very early in the morning, she met a Japanese tourist whose companion fainted. The man had no cash in pesos. Beting advanced P79 to the chemist and the man left \$10, leaving enough change to hand an additional sum to her new patient. Beting said that this could be another sign that what they were doing was graced.

In the evening, I invited Beting and another friend to a dinner by the seaside. During the conversation, Beting revealed that while she was walking in the mall near the hospital, she met her 'former' boyfriend. She talked about their good days but also their conflicting views about the tribal groups. For instance, her boyfriend used to give food to the Badjao seafarers who were known in Davao as beggars. 'That was as far as he would go,' Beting explained. 'For me, that was not enough. I wanted to go back to my tribe and serve them. For him, it was foolishness. That was the sort of thing that we usually quarrelled about.' Drinking another bottle of beer, Beting talked aloud.

I don't know why I have this strong feeling inside me to go back to my tribe. I will build a foundation for the education of the young. No matter what happens. Even if I have to offer my life in the process. I really don't know if this is right. But it *is* right! It's really a sacrifice.



It really, really hurts! Is it really worth it? I know I want to be with him. I also think of Tiyo Lomiyok, of Ettok, of Tano, of Tahapantau, of Tuddok, and of the women, Tiya Igaw, Tiya Ude. Then I also think of the DENR people, how they mistreat my fellow Manobo. They need me. I cannot leave them.

The following day, that conviction was immediately tested. Phoning from the Davao airport one night, Beting told me how she was tempted to take the other option of living a simple family life. At that state, the whole movement---and my research, too---was at stake. Like Tano, she both loved her tribe and was disillusioned with some of its leaders. Unlike Tano, however, she had no family of her own. Besides, she had seen many movements before that eventually fizzled out and corrupted by less altruistic leaders. Would their movement be any different?

In the end, however, she decided to stay. Again, according to her, the memory of Tiyo Lomiyok and Ettok and now Embac, in particular, stood in contrast to the generalising statements that her friend made about her tribe. She vowed to commit herself to the continuation of the struggle.

When she went back to Kidapawan, Tano introduced to her his uncle Atawan, who would later play a crucial role in the movement. Beting's meeting with Atawan during the *pintakasi* on 5 July must have confirmed her renewed commitment.

One particular thing that Beting contributed to the movement was her capacity to move other women into action. Her half-Ilocano cousin Pinky played the role of a companion, dialogue partner, errand girl, secretary, and sounding board. Pinky's house in Ginatilan also served as our stopping station when we had to hike up the Pandanon hills. Bibet, the wife of Beting's brother Sander, usually helped cook for us when we had serious meetings in Kidapawan. Local healers like Ibet of Sayaban and Ulinan of Pandanon accompanied their healing massage with intimate lessons on the 'mysterious' sources of power from the herbs of Mt. Apo forests to the guiding spirits in their dreams. Beting claimed she drew much energy from meeting and hugging the many women who all claimed to be one way or another her aunts. From them Beting learned other knowledges such as the name *kovuhaa* for that intense feeling of attachment among kin. By learning from them, she could also recruit them into action simply by not leaving them uninformed about what the male elders were discussing. To her delight, Beting would very often discover other women like Tiya

Igaw, Tiya Ude and Tiya Clarita were not very far behind. While preparing coffee or cooking vegetables, they would listen and sometimes even butt in during the men's discussion. Even Fely, Tano's reluctant wife, soon found herself accompanying Beting to the Office of DENR to check on the updates on Datu Aba's claims.

The most important information Beting received from the women were those pertaining to her Manobo mother Dangayan who died when Beting was six years old. The women remembered Dangayan with fondness. She was charitable to the needy, and was often the life of the group. Among the many pieces of information she culled from those conversations, one was most painful. It was the subtle and even cunning ways, employed by some of her closest kin by which the many hectares of Dangayan's inherited lands slipped into other people's hands. Whenever Beting reconstructed those moments in her imagination, she would usually choke in bitter tears because her Visayan father himself had much to do with it. The details of the ingenious strategies are not for me to write here. I shall leave them to Beting and family to reveal later in their own writing.

The combined leadership of Tano, Beting and Atawan among the families of Umpan and Bayawan formed a lively triumvirate. The emergence of the well-respected and long-missed local historian even reinforced the partnership and established a firmer link with other elders in the community.

**Apo Salumay and other elders: '*Mopian kohi diid potoy.*'**

On 31 July 1996, a 'distraction' from the intense signature campaign in Sayaban turned out to be a turning point in the movement for ancestral domain. One of the Apao elders, Landawe Umpan, aged seventy, wanted to marry a young fellow Manobo church minister in Dulis, Magpet. The Umpan family thought it awkward if not totally funny, but Apo Landawe begged to be given chance to enjoy what he called '*last lab*' (from the English 'last love'). Perhaps as an enticement, he promised to hold a Manobo traditional wedding so it would form part of the movement for cultural regeneration. He admitted, though that he would need all the support of the Apao clan. It was therefore a test case for the promised co-operation of the Apao group, which was being mobilised in the course of the land claim. Atawan Bayawan

agreed to serve as the *melow* or intermediary to face the family of the prospective bride.

So, loaded with several kilos of fish, vegetables, live chickens, rice, condiments and cooking utensils, the big delegation from Sayaban braved the rough jeepney ride and long hike to the Dulis hills. Part of the adventure was the crossing of the wide Magpet River by means of manually operated cableway. When we reached the huge bamboo house in the middle of those tropical woodlands, Manobo friends welcomed us. Immediately, the guests prepared the food to entertain the host. The greatest surprise for the Sayaban group was to see the man whom they had always respected as the bearer of integrity and wisdom, Apo Salumay Iyong.

Eighty-six year old Apo Salumay, older brother of Kapitan Pablo Iyong, spent the last twenty-eight years away from his Sayaban birthplace. He came all the way from Katindu, which was further up north of Cotabato. The people needed his skill in negotiation especially with the kin of the hesitant *pastora* who was then in her early thirties. Atawan yielded his role as *melow* to Salumay, the latter being more senior. The details of the negotiation were interesting in themselves,<sup>6</sup> but the bonus for Atawan was when Salumay began discussing the traditional practices and history of the Manobo in Mt. Apo. He also explained how the host Apo Bonggayan was related to the visiting Umpans and Bayawans. It was amazing how he could enumerate the many children and grandchildren of his elders and contemporaries and who got married to whom and where most of them had moved. With his own combination of history and humour, Salumay entertained and educated his willing audience of young and old. One short song had a lasting impact on the visiting group. It was the one-liner '*Mopian kohi diid potoy*' which had to be sung twice and then repeated as many times as one wants.

Serving as mantra, it simply meant, in his own translation, 'Kind words never die.' *Mopia*, when applied to people could mean 'kind', but its more generic meaning included being good, beautiful, healthy, as well as moral, true and wise. I won his attention by singing the chant that was not difficult to learn anyway. I also managed to interview him on *D'yandi* and other Manobo rituals. Atawan gained more. Unlike Landawe Umpan who went home with uncertain marriage prospect, Atawan brought

Salumay himself to Kidapawan the following day. That started their co-operation on the land and culture struggle.

One thing that attracted Salumay to the group, he told me later, was Atawan's serious note-taking. Atawan was always quick to jot down any new information, which come out from Salumay's narratives, or questions that he wanted to reflect on some other time. Salumay took that as a sign that this group was more serious than those who simply listened but never wrote. He expressed his desire that his stories and histories would be inscribed on paper. Beting, of course, also needed Salumay's *itulan* or historical accounts for the documentation needed in the more legal form of their struggle. She also relied on Salumay to complete the Apao genealogy. For these efforts, Salumay could only offer his whole support. At the very outset, he denied Datu Aba's version of his territorial claims. He agreed to sit down with other elders to determine exactly the terms of Aba's commissioning and delineate Sayaban's boundaries. When he left for Katindu, he promised to alert himself and his neighbours to their radio announcement. (The quickest way to reach him in Katindu mountains was through the public service of DXND radio station in Kidapawan.) Beting, Tano and Atawan took this offer seriously.

On 22-23 August, they gathered the *kovuyyahan* (Manobo village elders) to a caucus or *ukum* or, as would later become popular its popular name, *kodpotongkooy*. The meeting was attended by most of the elders. During their meeting, the elders recalled and traced the genealogy of their descendants. Using the rough sketch of Atawan and Tano's map drawn from their two-day ocular survey, the elders compared notes on the *patow to livuta* (historical landmarks) and events that happened to the tribe.

Salumay Iyong, of course, was the main attraction. He could recount the most number of stories, explain the background of the most number of landmarks, and link the most number of Apao descendants to one another. The local historian Apo Montera Sia competed with Salumay in narrating stories behind the Mt. Apo landmarks and clarifying some details in their genealogical chart. Landawe Umpan had a special contribution because, together with Apo Erong, he could recount the true story of Omog's land grant to Datu Aba. Other participants were Kansing Mantawil, Ambolugan Dolom and his wife Ambaning, Akwas Bayawan, Dalmacio

Umpan, Addong Umpan, Domling Andot, Atawan Bayawan, Apo Liawan Igianon, and Moring Ahon. Datu Enagaro Bugcal of Pandanon offered a surprise participation. Datu Bugcal had just finished the Tahapantau land survey and had practically won their public contest against Datu Aba, and so he felt confident in giving advice to the Apao elders on matters pertaining to the legal aspects of the land conflict. He even pointed out the area of *Soan Bamug* (Eagle's Nest) which neither NABAMAS nor Tahapantau was interested in claiming. He suggested that Apao would be in better position to make use of that extremely steep but potentially lucrative hillside. The two-day conference ended with the detailed plan on how to produce the draft of the 'true history' of Mt. Apo and the Apao genealogy. It was obviously not to be a definitive document as they wished. On 24 August, Salumay called the elders back because he said he needed to correct some of the collated versions they agreed upon earlier. The process became intense as the public consultation grew near. As a matter of fact, it continued even after they had submitted the synthesised document during the historic public hearing attended by the provincial officer of the DENR and Datu Aba himself. By that time, even the vacillating Kapitan Iyong came out in with strong public position.

In the beginning of this section, it was difficult to say simply that Apao opposed Aba. The reason should now be clear. In a span of a little more than four months, from late April to August, several actors emerged almost from nowhere. No amount of survey before this period could accurately detect the episodic moments, which occasioned the beginnings of the actors' movements or the renewed commitment of those who were already involved. From these 'tributaries' of individual action came the 'stream' of what now could be called a 'collective action'.

## 2. TEXTWORK, LEGWORK AND NETWORK

What we have seen so far are the broad strokes of multi-faceted processes of the production of collective action from individual and sometimes very personal micro-decisions. In this section, I shall review these sequences with particular attention to the minute issues and strategies employed by the contextual actors, but with more focus on the formation of a historical discourse and innovative practice.

## Righting History

Right after the caucus of elders, I went home to Manila primarily for my father's death anniversary, but also partly to help Tuddok in deflecting further accusations of being dependent on the '*pari*'. Flying back early morning on 6 September, the eve of the Public Consultation, I met Engineer Loy Lacerna, head of the Mt. Apo Foundation Inc. (MAFI), at the Davao Airport. In a spirit of fraternal care, he advised me against attending the Consultation. It was to avoid adding complication to the already tense situation. For the same reason, PENRO Marcial Amaro insisted earlier that I should go as an observer. Having been away for two weeks, I was not sure if I would be allowed even to be at the sideline, or whether my presence was indeed a nuisance. As soon as I reached the Kidapawan Convent, Pastor Joel Buntal arrived with the SIL service motorbike. I gathered later that elders arranged to pick me up and make sure that I witnessed the Sayaban event. By that time, the political alignment had shifted. The Tribal Council, the Barangay Council, and the Linubaran ni Apao were all on the same side as the Tuddok and Bayawan.

When we arrived, Pastor Sheryl had already set up the sound system in the same elementary school hall where I faced the tribal assembly ten months ago. Atawan had posted the home-made map of the contested areas and the outline of the Apao genealogy. They put the microphone near the middle of the hall perhaps to facilitate more audience contact and to avoid simulating a classroom atmosphere; it was a lesson they learned from the Tahapantau experience in Pandanon. Surprisingly, the government officials were not late. PENRO Amaro himself was there because being new to the office, he would be more 'objective' in considering the different positions between Aba and Apao. The regional officer of the OSCC also appeared. Datu Aba came with Sultan Marinius Kiram who was son of a Muslim prince. About a hundred people filled up the hall with some, like myself, remaining at the margins. A little away from the scene, Tano's wife Fely and some twenty women and some children were busy with food preparation for the whole assembly. Those who could be spared, she sent to the Consultation. 'Go there and listen so you would understand!'

The program started with an opening prayer led by Datu/Pastor Enagaro Bugcal. It was followed by a strongly worded welcome remark by Kapitan Pablo

Iyong and Tribal Chieftain Don-Don Lim, OSCC regional officer Sammy Asicam gave an unscheduled call for peaceful negotiation. And PENRO Amaro gave an overview of the DAO2 provisions. Tano was supposed to read the collated history, but he was sick. He requested his cousin Pastor Damaso Bayawan to take his role of reading the *itulan*, which was probably the most solemn part of the session. The rest of the meeting was less restrained as Atawan and Datu Aba, Kapitan Iyong, Simeon Serrano exchanged comments, now resurrecting the issue of who were the real fire-fighters of Mt. Apo, now challenging who knew what landmarks. Datu Aba's witnesses, old Dasanan could only affirm that Apao was the first ruling Manobo in Sayaban but did not say anything in support of Nabamas' claim. Sultan Marinius appealed for more protection of the forest but his being a Muslim probably prevented his audience from giving him points. Sammy Asicam tried to find a role for the OSCC. Sensing that the conflict could develop into a violent confrontation, he volunteered his office to mediate. He shall call a mediation meeting before the next consultation. PENRO Amaro said he was enlightened by the outcome of the consultation. He asked for a copy of the history and encouraged the group to complete their documents not just in protest against Datu Aba, but into the ancestral domain claim proper. Perhaps it would be good to look at the text itself.

The short history opens by identifying the inhabitants of this part of Mt. Apo Sandawa as 'Manobo'. The next paragraphs specify the particular group of Manobo, namely those of Sayaban, and historicises their own account by revealing that this history is a product of a collective remembering and a series of discussions, specially during the caucus of elders on 22-23 August 1996. They are therefore aware that this account which was deliberately drafted for the occasion of the Public Consultation was 'not definitive'. It has, therefore, a very visible slant.

From the very beginning, there is an immediate assertion that 'all the lands and the forests around this mountain have a great relationship with our life...because since the time of our elders these places have been divided into different territories of their descendants to be used as hunting grounds and source of their livelihood'. This forms the main thesis, as it were, of the documentary account. The mountain is not an inert mass of land, devoid of link with its inhabitants. It is not only the source of their way of life, but they have somehow determined its boundaries in accordance with their

kinship relations. It is within this general framework that the claim of Datu Aba would be located towards the very end of the document. This is obvious in the way the history is presented as genealogy and the genealogy practically as a will of inheritance. Let me translate the bulk of the text, paraphrasing and commenting along the way to clarify some points while keeping its general tone:

The elders traced the beginning of their '*itulan*' (history) from the time of Apo Apao, the first Datu (tribal leader) who lived and reigned over the inhabitants of this part of Mt. Apo. He had nine children. They were Datu Onggii, Datu Ponggilan, Datu Ogwon, Datu Andot, Bai Eda, Bai Laduman, Bai Eppos, Bai Anung and Bai Aglay. [*Bai* is the female equivalent of *datu*]. From these children of Datu Apao come almost all the tribal people living around this portion of Mt. Apo. It is estimated that Datu Apao lived here from around 1830 or 1840 based on the age of Datu Salomay Iyong, the eldest child of Laduman who was the fifth child of Datu Apao.

Before he died, Datu Apao apportioned the mountain and the forestal areas among his children to be used as their hunting grounds and source of livelihood. He gave Onggii, the father of Umpan, the plains of *Ko-uwon* beside the Matingao River that is now known as Balabag. Datu Ponggilan got married to a native of Tubon, Makilala. He stayed there that is why we cannot trace his descendants.

Ilomavis was given to Ogwon, the third child of Apao. During the time of Datu Apan, Ilomavis was called *Matimundo*. Later, during the time of Lizada Pandoy, the first Manobo teacher in the area, Matimundo came to be known as Upper Ginatilan. Andot, Eda, Laduman, Eppos, Anung ug Aglay were also given [land] together with Ogwon [It is not clear which parts, though].

Since Ogwon was a blacksmith, he brought his *sayavan* (anvil) in this place now called *Sayaban*. Ogwon was also an *anitowon* (spirited or possessed with a spirit). He was asked by his spirit to transfer to the top. He then established this area now called *Sudsuhayan*. There he began healing the sick according to the voice of his spirit.

Datu Apao handed over to Datu Andot, his fourth child, the *Desok no Sondawa* (Small Mt. Apo) as hunting ground and source of livelihood for his descendants. He was also recognised as the successor of Datu Apao.

The *itulan* continues with glimpses of the tribal experiences especially during the term of Datu Andot. The American authorities then imposed education at the primary level. Many Manobo parents feared that their children might be fed to *Agassi*, the legendary giant who fed on humans. They tried to hide their children in the forest. Some 'got caught and they were sent to school' like Abon Umpan and Bakidnon Adang in Balabag, Agud in Bongolanon, Lizada Pandoy in Indangan, Bakidnon Lumulungan in Perez, Benito Linog in Mua-an, and Alejandro Anggab in Palusok. The teachers could not pronounce some of the Manobo names so they gave the children new ones. One favourite example from the Umpan family was Tiyo



Lomiyok. *Lomiyok* became *Romeo* on paper; none, however, had managed to call him Tiyo Romeo.

It was also the period of '*Tapid*' or the formation of the tribal settlement. Tribal descendants were growing in number and land had to be apportioned. It was customary for the newly-wed couples to stay close to their families. So they were assigned to a lot found within the territory of the community to which they belong. In the village, crimes were stopped because the Datu of Kidapawan, who was the trustee of the American regime, handed down laws against killing and fighting. Soldiers roamed the areas periodically to enforce the law.

The document also records that a number of the Manobo helped build the road from *Kidapawan* (formerly called *Nuangan*) going to Perez, Meohao, and Ginatilan. Ingkoo also ordered the opening of a trail up to Mt. Apo because some tourists were coming. Datu Apan became the first to chart the route going to Mt. Apo and served as guide to the Americans (cf. Hachisuka 1931:78-79).

Things were not that harmonious, however. In a short paragraph, the document also alludes to an earlier reaction of the residents against the effects of State intervention. When in 1936 Mt. Apo was declared a National Park, sections of Balabag were sliced off from the territory of the Manobo residents. Abon Umpan filed a petition to segregate the area called 42T, which spanned some 1,500 hectares from the National Park. Garong Bayawan, the father of Atawan, and other tribal leaders followed up the petition. President Ramon Magsaysay apparently listened to the petition, but upon his death, his successor changed the decision<sup>7</sup>.

Further down the document, the transition between Datu Andot and his successor is described. Mentioned here are the placenames that are more directly implicated in the ancestral domain conflict:

When Datu Andot got sick and was nearing death, he entrusted the care of the tribe to the son of Edâ, Omog Serrano. Omog Serrano distributed his land to his assistants in overseeing the tribe... Indayodan, Inturon and Bodoy Andot hunted in *Desok no Sondawa* (Small Mt. Apo) and Garong Bayawan continued hunting and trapping games in *Small and Big Kawayan*. Garong Bayawan gave this mountain to his brother Possana Bayawan and upon Garong's death, Kawayan remained the hunting ground of the Bayawan descendants...

Indayodan Andot, before he died, also divided unto his children, relatives and children-in-law, the *Small Mt. Apo*. Among the recipients were Domling Andot, Joseph Andot, Pandia Montera Sia, Ambaning Sia Dolom, Moring Ahon and others.

Datu Induanan, the son of Ogwon, owned one portion of the plain of *Bobbong* near the head of *Natian no Bobbong* where there is today what is called *Rock of Induanan*. When Induanan died, he left this land to his children and to Benito Tadeo, his partner in hunting.

It is now clear how the succession to tribal leadership went from Apao to Andot and to Omog. It is not clear, however, who took over from Omog since by the end of 1960's, the State had already succeeded in diffusing local power by introducing the barrio and then barangay system. Perhaps this is why there has been some confusion as well as to the boundaries of the land distribution. The political boundaries overlapped and in many cases ignored this orally defined land delineation. Ilomavis, for example, is now occupied by the mixture of Ilocano, Visayan and Manobo, and has been precisely renamed. The Balabag of the Ogwon's descendants share the same fate, too. It has therefore become unthinkable how the Apao descendants could retrieve these lands. The document mentions these places, but its actual thrust is on the remaining area that can still be recovered, if only without the intrusion of Datu Aba. With this they have established the link between the earliest ruling datos and *bais* with the living elders, many of whom participated in the caucus. The stage is now set for clarifying in how and to what extent Datu Aba, who is not a member of the Apao lineage, got a share of the land. According to the very last section of the document, it was during the time of increasing population and the formation of '*tapid*' or settlements that Datu Aba approached Apo Omog:

Datu Santiago 'Lago' Aba, a man from Owas, was one of those who approached Datu Omog to ask for a section in *Subpangon*. That was the year 1964. Datu Omog initially refused Datu Aba's request because *Subpangon* was already occupied. *Subpangon* is now the 701 of PNOC. Datu Omog, however, told Datu Aba to go to Bobbong. He was given the area from *Natian no Bobbong* up to *Pongpongong* and Kabacan River. They asked Induanan to accompany Datu Aba to point to him the boundaries. Benito Tadeo assisted Induanan. Apo Landawe Umpan, Apo Erong and Pepping Addong witnessed the agreement between Datu Lago Aba and Datu Omog.

The elders recognise that Datu Aba has a right to some portions of the land by virtue of the will of Apao's successor, Datu Omog Serrano. Both implicitly recognise the capacity of Omog to legitimately hand over the land according to their particular Manobo tradition (cf. Manuel 1976). The elders, however, want to make two important points. First, it was Datu Aba who approached Omog to beg for land. It was not the case that Omog suddenly thought of granting thousands of hectares of land, bypassing the actual Apao descendants in the area itself. Second, the original

boundaries must be respected. Datu Aba should start from the *Natian no Bobbong* up to Kabacan River if he wanted to, but he is not allowed to encroach on the land of the Andots, the Umpans, the Bayawans in *Desok no Sondawa* and *Kawayan*. And, if we are sensitive enough, we can also detect another strategic move. In mentioning that Sobpangon has been given to the Apao descendants, Sayaban elders were laying the foundation for an imminent claim over the area currently occupied by the PNOC.

To local residents, the reading of the history and the conduct of the consultation meant more than a fulfilment of a legal requirement. It was the first time, they said, that they have heard the ‘whole’ *itulan*. The women who were sent by Fely to the Consultation came back saying, ‘Fely, they talked about the story of the mountain. We have not heard it before.’ I took it to mean that this was the first time their local knowledge was given public recognition. It was also possible that with the loss of epic recital, knowledge of the past was neglected. Pastor Modesto Bayawan exclaimed in Visayan, ‘*Kahilakon man ta ani*’ (It makes us feel like crying.).

To PENRO Amaro, the historical account sounded reasonable. While it opposed Datu Aba’s claim, it did not do so by means of alluding to some mythical founder of the tribe or by tracing the tribal origins to the creation of the first man and woman. In fact anyone who expected an epic poem or a long narrative to be presented as ‘indigenous proof’ of the land’s divine ownership would be frustrated. Those who are waiting for a quotable rhetoric on the sacredness of the land or on its spiritual link with the diverse species of life in the forest could get no caption for their environmentalist posters. The legal requirement of residence ‘since time immemorial’ does not hold water in face of a claim which confesses to only about four generations of descendants. One just have to decide on the basis of which party has weightier argument within a commonly assumed cultural frame or ‘customary law’: in this case the legitimacy of the handing over the land from the right tribal leadership.<sup>8</sup> During a separate conversation with PENRO staff in Kidapawan, I gathered that this presentation of history made them more careful in processing claims.

The question then lingered, even among the Tuddok initiators themselves, as to how they managed to produce the collective claim.



**Figure 5.3** Apo Salumay, the well-respected Sayaban local historian, appeases the spirits of Lake Agco. He leads the Bayawan and Umpan families in rekindling friendship with the mountain spirits, and asks them to blame not the local Manobo but the power plant project for disturbing the mountain and changing the colour of the sacred lake. With the crowd is a member of the crew of Channel Red film outfit, documenting the events for ancestral domain claim and for this ethnographic research.

### Indigenous and Ingenious Strategies

How does one account for the relative success of the Sayaban consultation and the succeeding work of organising? Tuddok's strategies and improvisations deserve to be assessed and appreciated. This section aims to illustrate with some detail how Tuddok leaders mobilised local and extra-local resources in exploring a new way of doing local politics. They themselves felt that such an assessment was necessary. For two days immediately after the Consultation, and also on several occasions afterwards, Tuddok initiators and I sat down to reflect on the recent progress of their movement. The following discussion has benefited from these many sessions. Behind the presentation of the public document lies a combination of 'traditional' practices and 'adopted' sources of action.

*a. Legwork.* The group attributed much of the success in organising to Atawan's '*minamuvu*' (traditionally Manobo) style of groundworking. Beting and Tano delighted in his quickness of action and mastery of Manobo ways of doing things. From 3 July, Atawan started talking to people. He said he wanted to check his opinion against the thinking of other elders. He talked to Domling Andot, Boy Lim and Simeon Serrano. The following day he went up to Novunturan to consult Sauro Bayawan and Joram Bayawan, both his kin. The next two days, he widened his circle to include Mering Ahon, Fidel Umpan, and others. Atawan would usually start at four in the morning. He learned this *odsollom* or starting to visit early in the morning from his old folks. 'You should catch the people before they go to their fields. Here in Sayaban', he said, 'you have to talk to the people before the PNOC dump trucks pick them up at six.' (He reported later that during these house-to-house visits, he noticed that even those who had jobs in PNOC had nothing in their kitchen. Sometimes, they did not even have coffee to warm their stomachs before they leave their house.) Then he recruited Don-Don Lim, the Chieftain, invoking their relationship as brothers-in-law. He also reached out to Liawan Igianon who was said to be a witness when Datu Aba approached Apo Omog asking for land. With Liawan were Federico 'Landawe' Umpan, Agdong Umpan, Dalmacio Umpan and Dasanan (who allegedly was on the side of Aba). Not satisfied with Sayaban people, he visited Tiya Dora from Balabag as well as attended some meetings of Tahapantau in Pandanon. Then back again to make almost the same round. He said that he needed to go back to the people many

times. This is called *liwod-liwod*. 'I need to check whether they have changed their minds. Because sometimes they say yes, and then they hear another opinion and then change their yes to no.' In some cases he had to stay longer, like wooing a woman which in Manobo is called *odmoholiyug*.

Atawan claimed that these styles went beyond mere strategies of winning friendship. 'You have to show *oddatan*, a deep respect especially for the leaders. These leaders are happy when you approach them. They would think they are big. This is 'weighty' among the Manobo.' Otherwise, just for a simple thing, they easily get hurt, '*Desok-Desok od dorogga*'. Then they will need to perform a *Pamaas* ritual so that talk could continue. Atawan also appealed to that strong Manobo feeling called *kovuhaan*, which is the feeling of missing your loved ones. In addition, Atawan uses *pohilomok* or endearing nickname to soften the heart of the person. He would call Simeon '*Meon*' and Kapitan Iyong '*Kap*'. This should not be done only for a show. He insisted, 'We don't have *anting-anting* (amulets or potions), except a truthful respect toward people.'

When he landed on a group that is already in session, Atawan's approach was one of '*odpominog*'. Literally, it meant listening. But it involved strategic eavesdropping and gradual participation in a discussion. Atawan related how he used to eavesdrop on the conversations of the elders when he was young. 'I did not immediately enter into their discussions. Often, when a number of elders talk, I try to position myself from a distance to listen to what they were talking about. Then I would go nearer and nearer until I began to make sense of what they were talking about. Only then would I join the circle.' This is the same strategy he would use in their movement. From May, he had been listening to the people and consulting them.<sup>9</sup>

*b. Land Survey.* There was another thing Atawan wanted to do and eventually did. It was to visit his father's hunting ground. He said, 'I have had this movement inside me. I look at Mt. Apo (*pantaw-pantaw*) and I would feel like crying. In reality, I am well settled in Bangkal, but I hurt inside.' The view of the mountain reminded him of his father. Thus on 17-21, July Tano and Atawan organised a photo-documentation trip of Desok no Sandawa. The very idea excited Landawe Umpan, Joseph Andot, Modesto, and Dondon Lim who decided to join them. Atawan's son served as porter. Beting and I contributed 20 kilos of rice, 2 kilos of dried fish, and a

pack of coffee. They took care of the batteries for the flashlight and some bullets for hunting. I loaned them my loaded camera and tape recorder.

When they came back, Atawan reported that they could have gone to more areas had Tano been better equipped for the physical strain of forest hiking. For Tano, even the shortened journey was highly educational. Atawan and the other elders lectured on the origins of the names of the rivers and the huge Saumayag trees, hunting grounds. He reminisced:

My father was a real hunter. Whenever he caught a deer, he would distribute the meat to our neighbours. He himself would personally bring the shares to their houses. I told him, we should change this custom. We don't get anything from this kind of tradition. I proposed that we sell them by kilos, and not just give them away like that. My father said no. According to him, if you are not generous, you will not find favour from the owners (*komonoy*) of the animals and birds in the forest...

'My father, he would not listen to the radio. He said everything said there was a lie. I told him, what kind of thinking do you have, *Pang*? Why don't you catch up on what is modern? He never liked it in the towncentre. He would rather stay in the jungle. But I was a rebel.'

Later, however, Atawan realised, 'Had not my father went about hunting in the forest, then we would have nothing to photograph and tell stories about. Then we would not be able claim back this land.'

There was something Atawan did not report. Tano revealed during our reflection that Atawan shed tears and suffered from extreme headache when they reached the cave of Garong, his father's resting place. When confronted, Atawan blushed but readily smiled at Tano's banter. 'Sorry,' I said, 'I forgot to remind you to bring some *Paracetamol* for simple fever and headache.' Beting took note that when she joins the team for future land survey, she should bring some medicine. With a cunning smile, Tano gave a cutting remark: 'Don't worry,' he told Beting, 'you will not have the same headache as Atawan's for his father!'

From this short ocular survey, Atawan and Tano generated a sketch map which they later presented during the Public Consultation in Sayaban. The photographs, sad to say, were almost useless because of the fog.

As in Tahapantau, the land survey was an occasion for talking about other Manobo knowledges. Atawan shared with us his knowledge of the proper ways of training dogs for the deer hunt and building houses. For a hunt, for instance, you need at least five dogs. They are the ones to pursue the deer. The deer would run. The

hunters would then lie in wait near the waterfall, because the deer would certainly run to the falls, thinking that he would be safe there. Upon reaching the waters, he would hide, with only the nose sticking out of the water. There you can easily catch the deer. When Beting once asked if the dogs were trained, Atawan said yes. The dogs were very well trained. When they were still puppies, the hunters would accompany them to the forest. You go around so they get familiar with the forest and they don't get lost. If somebody catches a deer, you bring them close to the trophy so they would remember the smell of their future target. Then they have a bite. They now cease to be afraid. Later, you take them as apprentices to veteran '*tuyyang*'. Soon they become hunters themselves.

Fragments of local knowledge like this added spice and colour of life to the long discussions on the land claim. People felt they had something to contribute to the forums. It was amazing how knowledge could be passed to another Manobo in a very oblique way. It was also interesting how the submerged local knowledge could stir other elders into hours of discussions. Along the way, the renewed interest in their cultural resources translated into political action. I wonder, now, if these discussions had any relation with the action of some people who recently took over parts of the contested areas. A number of people from Sayaban went up to *Desok no Sondawa* to go back to their formerly tilled land (*galas*). It was to dare the NABAMAS camp if Aba would drive them away, since he said the land was his already. Nobody dared to drive them away. Among those who reclaimed their piece of land were: Domling and Joseph Andot, Angatan Ambis, Osema Diansig, Moring, Crispin and Bong Ahon, Thelmo Ahon, Benito and Roy Tadeo, and others.

c. *Spatial Adjustment/Housework*. I noticed some spatial adjustment in the house of Tano. 'I knew', Tano explained, 'that the people (who would come for meetings) would increase.' Tano's one-floor wooden house consisted of a small few-square-meters of chatting area that was adjacent to an equally small room that used to be a cornerstore. The middle part was a little elevated and divided into a closed bedroom and an open space leading to the kitchen. The kitchen area has enough room for a medium-sized table and a sink. It also had two doors, one leading to the makeshift toilet, scantily wrapped by synthetic rice sack; the other door faces the road that leads to the PNOC area. I often sleep on the open floor space in the middle of



the house, together with Atawan and other 'family members'. The meetings initially occupied only the front foyer. I did not notice it immediately, but as more and more elders frequented Tano's house to see Salumay and talk to Atawan, Tano felt they needed more space. So first, Tano and Fely decided to divide the dining room to give way to additional sleeping quarters especially for Beting and her women assistants like Pinky or Janice. To compensate for the loss of space in the kitchen, Fely extended the sink and the cooking platform by one meter outwards using hollow blocks that she herself cemented. Tano then tore down the divider between the chatting area and the former multi-purpose store thus creating a longer session hall. The open floor space also provided additional space for listeners during midday sessions. Occasionally, the amplifier, which Ettok assembled for his vocational course on electronics, appeared on one corner. The map of landmarks or the genealogical chart frequently decorated the walls during some of the *kodpotongkooy*. During this period, Tano hesitatingly agreed to install a one-bulb electrical connection from the PNOC powerline.

### **Paper Power**

Paper has been mentioned a few times in this Study, but only in sporadic ways. It has been alluded to in the theme of documentation, writing history, submitting petition letters, and drawing maps. I believe paper deserves a special reflection of which the following should be taken only as a pointer to a fuller investigation. I am led to suggest that Tuddok's engagement with paper went beyond being a part of the repertoire of strategies in Manobo society.

The Manobo in Sayaban seemed to have an ambivalent attitude towards paper and its related forms. In the first place, many of them could not read nor write. The Summer Institute of Linguistics started its literacy program only very recently. Its 'Reading Club' attracted some forty participants from the young and old. PNOC later supported this program. The graduation ceremony, which I attended in 1996, was a lively community event. With the presence of the elementary school and even the beginnings of a high school in the village, people have begun associating paperwork with useful education, very much unlike their parents' fear of missionary teachers in the 1960s. In the public sphere, paperwork was identified with government service.

Only State officials were normally seen to be carrying documents. Atawan, having been himself a barangay official in Bangkal, was familiar with this. He joked that 'Kapitan Iyong's dogs seemed more civil when they see visitors clipping folders of documents under their arms.'

Many Manobo, however, remained suspicious with those who wielded paper and pen. They knew that their grandparents lost their land precisely because of the imposition of land titling and notarised documents that they did not understand.<sup>10</sup> The litany of this type of practices need not be recited here. Some particularly local experience had to be considered. For instance, paper in the form of Identification Cards, introduced by the PNOC, limited the Manobo access to their former hunting and recreation grounds in Mt. Apo. One requirement even for application for employment would be an ID; I did not realise how difficult it was for some to go to the towncentre and get ID-sized photographs. Some persons had to change their surnames because of the Company practice of not accepting too many individuals from the same families. The experience of altering public documents and changing one's name certainly did not give the impression of credibility to public documents. I also heard a number of members of the Porters Association complaining that the head porter had failed to produce their IDs even after collecting their payment and their signatures. When Atawan started signature campaign against Datu Aba's claim, he knew he had to be careful. He was dealing with people who had unpleasant experiences with people with pen and papers.

Tuddok leaders shared this apprehension. Beting, in particular, had other reasons for not working on paper. In her written reflection, she wondered why her hands were so 'lazy to write'. She realised that it was because of the early training she received as a child from Manobo elders. 'Yes, we are Manobo, a tribe that is used to oral tradition. That is why I prefer story sharing. I realise that this has not been erased by the twenty-six years of moving around with the lowlanders; my appreciation for the oral tradition is not lost despite the fact that I have once been a lawyer's secretary'. That to her was a source of identity. Beting, however, had other thoughts:

On the other hand, I also think that perhaps it is better if I can teach my hands to write. It does not mean that I am cutting myself off from oral tradition. It just came to mind that there are so many stories that could not be heard because those who knew them are now dead. Our

weakness in reading and writing is also one reason we lost our tribal lands. In the march of time, we were left behind because we paid more importance to the contents of the heart than to the power of the pen... Although ink is the instrument to describe the contemporary events in our tribe; it is still the heart that pushes my lazy hands. During the past days my heart and mind have been full of apprehensions for the future of my innocent tribe which is governed or affected by the work of some leaders who are adept in the use of ballpen and paper. (Personal notes, 25 April 1996)

Beting's written inner talk represents Tuddok's feelings. They had accepted that contemporary transactions had to be done in black and white. More concretely, because Datu Aba's claim was 'on paper', they had to meet him on the same ground. And they felt they were in a position to do so in the service of their tribe. Tano, for instance, had been engaged in Bible translation for a number of years. He had good command of oral and written Manobo and Visayan and a fair understanding of English and Tagalog. Beting's years of work with a human rights legal office made her familiar with legal parlance and practice. Atawan was also equipped with local government discourses having been a barangay official for many years in Bangkal. He insisted that even before encountering research he had already developed the habit of carrying notebooks for new learning. In addition, teenager Ettoy could already handle the still and video camera as well as the tape recorder. Pastor Sheryl, too, shared his skill in transcribing dialogues from tapes. These were all useful throughout the course of the movement.

The first and probably the most sensitive test of Tuddok paperwork was the drafting of the petition letter, which had been mentioned above, against Datu Aba's claim. As early as the first half of July, Atawan was confident that he had the support of the Bayawan families. Who should sign the petition? It would be better if the whole Apao clan would sign, but the Apo leadership and they feared that they could lose to Datu Aba by sheer default. If Atawan signed it in behalf of the Bayawans, should he put the tribal 'Datu' before his name? Would it not trigger jealousy among the local officials, since Atawan had just come back from many years of exile and had not official position in the area? However, if he did not claim to be a datu, would the PENRO give weight to his cause? If this first attempt failed, how could they proceed to the next step? These questions were resolved by the arrival of Salumay who affixed his signature together with the Tribal Chieftain Datu Alfredo Pandia Lim and Datu Montira Sia, a local historian. With that as backup, Atawan did not feel he had

to embellish his name with a 'royal' title. Salumay also saved Tuddok from a possible embarrassment: the first draft contained some factual errors about Datu Aba's origins. Maintaining the pages signed by some sixty-six household heads, they changed the cover letter altogether and submitted it not on its recorded date (16 July 1996) but almost a month later. The purple ink stamp on the cover dated 13 August 1996 became for them a plaque of triumph. Atawan carried it around and showed the actual petitionary letter back to the signatories and to others who initially harboured doubts on the Manobo making a showing in the DENR office. The circulation of this document, I believe, helped the submerged network of Apao descendants to come out with a new sense of identification to a common cause. It certainly boosted the morale of the reinforced Tuddok team which, from the duo of Beting and Tano in October 1995, could now count at least a hundred participating adults, including most (not all) of the tribal elders, local leaders and several pastors.

Sensitivity to paper and documentation grew stronger because of other incidents. On 3 August, Beting's residence (actually her brother Sander's) in Kidapawan towncentre was ransacked by an unknown person. It was obvious that the intruder was after some documents, not of Beting, but of her sister Era. Boxes of folders and rolled Manila papers were left scattered on the floor when we discovered what happened. Motivations could range from political threat to search for treasure-hunting guides.<sup>11</sup> Worse, in late October, Era's house in Muaan completely turned to ashes by a fire which consumed literally everything, including Era's essays on Manobo culture and spirituality, as well as my untranscribed interview with their father on the arrival of the Visayan in the area.<sup>12</sup>

The most serious lesson came when some of Tuddok's maps were stolen from Tano's house. On 3 October, two days before the Second Public Consultation in Sayaban, the barangay captain took the documents while nobody was in the house. According to a very close associate of him, the map was to be shown to some local managers of the PNOC who called a secret meeting on the ancestral domain claim. Some Apao elders, including the head himself, went to listen to the financial and technical offer from the Company provided the leadership of the claiming party should come from their ranks and not from Tuddok. The stolen documents were

discreetly returned later. The act signalled a warning against taking texts and documents lightly.

On the more positive note, Atawan discovered a set of old land registration and letters regarding the petition of earlier Bayawans and Umpans to return the portions of their land swallowed up by the Mt. Apo National Park proclamation. Again, these papers served to demonstrate that theirs was a struggle that went back to earlier decades. Overall, Tuddok leaders had recognised the important but sensitive role of paperwork in their cultural struggle.

### 3. CULTURAL CONTEXT OF HISTORICAL TEXT

Assessing the movement might be premature, but even Tuddok leaders felt a need to process their experience from April to October. Not that they lacked meetings to plan their strategies or evaluate their gains. They wanted, however, to articulate their gut feelings on their activities, to ask not just 'What is the next step to take?' but 'What ultimately is at stake here?' Unfortunately, that session never pushed through. My attempt here is to tease out answers to the latter question by placing Tuddok's scattered reflections in dialogue with real and potential interrogation. Focusing on the making of history, I hope to approximate the operative insights of Tuddok actors in their cultural project.

#### **Thin history?**

One question thrown indirectly at Tuddok was: 'Where is their myth?' It came from Mac Tiu, a university lecturer and director of Development Education Media Service in Davao. When he heard about the Tuddok struggle, he protested. 'They should have more myth than that' he said. Based on his own theory of ethnicity and self-determination, he prescribed what Tuddok should do or have, namely: That they should trace their origin to a glorious past (cf. Tiu 1997), and root their race to a legendary hero with deeds larger than life. They should tell their history in a long epic that distinguishes them as a separate and unique people. The Manobo should not just have an Apao for an ancestor. If they have none, then somebody should tell them they better invent one. Otherwise they lose. They are not worth it.<sup>13</sup>

The Sayaban folks could only hark back to Apao, the poor Manobo<sup>14</sup> who needed to go to the other side of the mountain to borrow some farm tools and whose name itself meant 'chicken flea', something the elders rarely mentioned but did not hide nevertheless. While the Apao history was enough to refute Datu Aba's claim, it did not do so by alluding to some mythical founder of the tribe or by tracing its origins to some primordial genesis of the first man and woman. In fact anyone would be frustrated who expected an epic poem handed down the centuries through a long line of singers or shamans and now preserved in the memory of a seasoned bard. There are no solid monuments or exotic rituals which when deciphered could be used as 'indigenous proof' of the land's divine ownership. Those on vigil for a quotable phrase on Mt. Apo's sacredness or its spiritual link with the diverse species of life in the forest could get no caption for their environmentalist campaign posters. They are simply not there.

A more legal and historical critique could come from the research advocacy of Rudy Rodil, whose MRG monograph (Rodil 1993) inspired my Mt. Apo study. In a private communication, he suggested that I 'document and establish once and for all the ancestral claim of a particular group of people over a certain territory.' He immediately said he was 'not too keen on advising you to go into Mt. Apo' because the Lumad protest movement neglected the necessary research on the tribal history, genealogy, and culture. This weakness might prevent me from producing a 'winning case' in such a 'short time' of fieldwork. He would be glad to know that Tuddok had drafted the Mt. Apo history and genealogy. I wonder, though if Tuddok's claim would pass Rodil's test.

Rodil claimed he 'discovered' that it is possible to document and concretise the meaning of occupancy 'since time immemorial' that is required by DAO2.<sup>15</sup> From his Matigsalug case, a formula could be used to prove the legitimacy of a tribal people's land claim. His argument ran like this:

What is the significant connection between ancestral land claim and genealogy in our research? In the absence of a documented history, we can establish an estimated historical time depth, by which we can estimate how long the Matigsalug have lived in their claimed territory. How far back must we go to prove that they have lived there since time immemorial? Or that the territory has been handed down to them by their great ancestors? We have in this study a genealogy whose continuity is traced through 51 generations. Given the universally accepted average of 30 years per generation our 51 generations easily give us a

time depth of 1,580 years. This is more than sufficient proof with which to establish the Matigsalug ancestral land claim. (Rodil 1994:65)

This process of 'proofing', if taken as a legal litmus test, could be devastating for tribal groups who, like some Manobo groups, are known for their 'short memory' (cf. Paredes 1997). How would the Manobo in Mt. Apo then fare with the record 51-generation genealogy of the Matigsalug of Bukidnon? Besides, even that claim would not be immune to quite disturbing questions. It presupposes, for example, that memory of ancestry exactly matched territorial occupancy. More importantly, it naively presumes a lot on the Matigsalug cultural practice of historical narrative and definition of terms like generation. The fact that the story of Adam and Eve and Noah had entered into the Matigsalug genealogy, for example, should alert us in detecting a different way of constructing history. The Manobo of Mt. Apo could only reach to mid-1800s; nothing beyond that. The Bayawan clan, in particular, admit that their ancestor Bayawan came from the north-eastern flank of Mt. Apo but their intermarriage with the descendants of Apao made them local inhabitants. They do not seem to worry about going beyond what they have because apparently that should be 'proof' enough to claim the land.

I remember Atawan asserting that 'the long and short of it is that this is really our land'. 'It is not the length of the history that counts but its truth.' Atawan used the word *itulan* to mean history. The Manobo had several words for different types of narrative. *Itulan*, the kinship-focused history (SIL 1992) purports to be a narrative based on real events, especially pertaining to people and their relatives. When Salumay talks about the wives and children of Apao, he is narrating an *itulan*. *Itulan* tends to be told in relation to known persons. When Beting came into the scene, many women who knew her mother volunteered *itulan* stories about the goodness of Dangayan. *Pongumanon*, on the other hand, includes folktales, legends, myths which do not necessarily have the same claim to truth, and which Mac Tiu was desperately looking for. *Uwahing*, which Beting faintly recalls, but is unheard of nowadays, is the equivalent of epic narrative. It is long enough to be recited for a couple days by an epic specialist. (Sadly, the only living epic singer in Sayaban, Oto Pontas, could not even begin to sing because the memory of his dead brother would cause his breast to burst.) There are other narrative forms available, but in both the oral history and

written transcription, the Manobo consistently used the word *itulan*, presumably to mean that their claimed history, genealogy and land boundaries were based on solid ground.

The solid ground, to be sure, was framed within their customary law. If we go back to the provision of DAO2, the State prescribes that 'in case of conflict, the parties have to be called to settle their conflict in accordance with their own customary law.' If we take this seriously, then we have to respect the implicit, now operational, customary law. In this case, it is the assumption of legitimacy on the part of Omog in granting land both to the Bayawans and to Datu Aba. Both parties seemed to have accepted that Omog, being the successor of Apao, had the legitimate right to bestow care and ownership to the initial recipients and to their descendants (cf. Manuel 1976). I suggest that this cultural framework, until otherwise challenged on 'more solid ground', should be at least the starting point for any legal hermeneutics of such vague State requirements as occupancy since 'time immemorial'. The people's cultural context must be considered in understanding the shape of their historical text. For making history, a people, like the Manobo in Mt. Apo, may prefer to 'gain in focus what they lose in scope' (cf. Rosaldo 1989:136).

### **Divisive? Empowering?**

Another question came from some quarters of the protest groups. Edtami Mansayagan, leader of Lumad Mindanaw who spearheaded the opposition against the PNOC in Mt. Apo, questioned Beting, to this effect: Why should she waste her energy and resources in a process that is divisive both of people and the land? If I understood him correctly, Edtami pushes for the recognition of ancestral domains of 'whole tribes', that is, of Manobo, Bagobo, Tedurays. According to Mansayagan, DAO2 requirements, such as histories and genealogies according to different elders or groups introduce non-traditional way of delineating boundaries. This fragments the tribes into subtribes, clans and families.

Atawan's response to this was simple: 'Even the dogs recognise their master's boundaries'. Although there were no clear demarcation lines, tribal peoples of old recognised that beyond a certain area, anyone who hunted became himself the prey. The Omog story of subdividing the land was simply a sequel to an earlier land



distribution by Apao. There should be no conflict if only the people respected the boundaries. There were boundaries as there were genealogies.

Beting's response added another angle. She saw the process of the applying for ancestral domain claim as an alternative to being passive or playing progressive. According to her, 'this was the only issue that could involve or challenge the scattered thoughts of the community into unity.' I reckon that she considered empowering not just the claiming itself, but the whole series of meetings, consultations, collation of histories and checking of memories in order to come up with a viable collective self-representation. Wasn't the caucus of elders, their *kodpotongkooy*, to some extent empowering?

From the emergency meeting to oppose Datu Aba, it had since then become customary to call *kodpotongkooy* whenever the group wanted to discuss a problem or make any decision. This to my mind was one of the most important consequence of the movement (perhaps of the research as well). Not that *kodpotongkooy* was not there before. As a matter of fact, like the *inarang* (gathering around the fire to warm the hands), this informal way of discussion constituted the most common way of exchanging views and making collective decisions. Its new application in what could be called a 'discourse formation' was, according to elder Atawan, became a source of *konokkaan* or strength. From the casual conversations with people on the street, to visiting relatives and feeling deeply for them, to very formal caucus of elders, people could get strength. They could speak, discuss, and debate. Somehow the planning for family reunion and the listing down of the genealogy pave the way for the formation of a local discourse, an alternative to the government rhetoric and especially to the silent transcripts of the tribal people themselves.

In *kodpotongkooy*, as in other oral history exercises (e.g. Mace 1998), speaking out and talking together, in opening spaces for a new discourse to develop, the tribe comes to life again and again. This is where the old men are given importance. This is where dreams are accepted as a source of knowledge. This is where plans are made real. This is also an occasion for bodily performances as well as a school for audienceship. This is where the tribe is very much itself. In contrast, so much in the process of development conspire to silence them. Authentic assistance, it appears to me now, will have to touch on the multiplication of space for the

blossoming of their local discourse 'facilitating in finding their voices, rather than speaking on behalf of them' (Gardner & Lewis 1996:47-48). To some extent, this ethnography shares in the search for *konokkaan* (strength, energy) by entering into intimate kodpotongkooy with the actors in the field as well as in this text.

### Notes on Study 5: Beyond Collating Histories

<sup>1</sup> It is not clear when NABAMAS was formed or how many members it actually had. Its registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), dated 29 November 1995, only formalised what already existed a few years before that. Its five incorporators and the rest of a dozen listed members all came from Kisandal in Magpet. Membership to the organisation was by payment of dues, and not by residence within a geographically contiguous area or by belonging to a kinship group.

<sup>2</sup> In one conversation, for instance, he confronted me by saying that some people believed the Sayaban organisations survived only because of the '*soopi to pari*' (money of the priest). In a longer conversation in Kidapawan, Datu Aba confessed that one important influence on his environmental mission was a certain Candido Manuel from Pangasinan, and a friend of Fr. Primo Hagad and Fr. Gordon, who 'enlightened my mind' and 'taught me how to claim and preserve the forest'.

<sup>3</sup> '1986' must have been a misprint or just a confusion of dates. The great fire that most people remember is the one that occurred in 1983. Except for a brief field report on the fire of 11 May 1992, the local DENR has no record of the great forest fires that hit Mt. Apo. From sporadic mentions in different sources, mostly oral, we know that Mt. Apo had suffered from serious heat and burning in 1973, 1977, 1983, 1986 (?), 1990, 1992 and 1997.

<sup>4</sup> The report says, '[On] March 12, 1992, Kagawad Eddie Uy...chairman of Tourism in Kidapawan...organised a firefighting crew at Barangay Ilomavis, Kidapawan and Datu Santiago Ba-o's men in Barangay Kisandal, Magpet, Cotabato with total of 44 volunteers.' 'Letter to CENR Officer from the EPAS Personnel, 20 March 1992. 'Santiago Ba-o' is certainly a misspelling, one of many typographical errors found in the document.

<sup>5</sup> This refers to the *loofah* production project of the Umpans, and *tahiti* (tiger grass) cultivation among the Bayawan in Balabag. Loofah is made from dried *patola* fibres (*Luffa cylindrica*), usually sold as environment-friendly bath sponge. *Tahiti* grass (*Thysanolaena latifolia*) makes good house brooms which, though generally sold cheap in Kidapawan market, remains the main source of income for many Manobo families (cf. Kubo 1997).

<sup>6</sup> One big issue was whether they would apply the Manobo traditional transaction or, being all baptised Christians, they would go the way of the '*kristiyanos*'. The former meant more rhetorical ordeals and bigger expense on the part of the groom's relatives. The latter was more straightforward discussion of logistics and tended to give less benefit to the woman's family. The Kristiyanos' way prevailed, but only after a long Manobo-style rhetorical exchange. The woman, however, obstinately withheld her decision until the first of January. For Landawe, the delay was fatal because he would then lose the financial support of the Apao organisation, which was already committed to another wedding in 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Aside from some land tax payment and letter of appeal, original documents are not available. The point, however, is that the present fight for ancestral domain echoes the earlier attempts of the Sayaban Manobo for their portion of Mt. Apo.

<sup>8</sup> According to DAO2, Sec. 3, Article IX, 'Conflicts arising from Ancestral Domain Claims shall likewise be resolved in accordance with customary laws of contending parties. In default of such customary laws, the Special Provincial Task Force shall likewise endeavour to bring the contending parties into an amicable settlement. If this is not possible, the Task Forces shall receive evidence, prepare a report thereof including its recommendations and likewise refer to the appropriate DENR units.' See. also Sec. 7, Art. III, Identification and Delineation of Ancestral Domains (DENR 1993).

<sup>9</sup> I witnessed this practice many times in Pandanon. While we talked inside the house of Boy Mahinay, somebody might pass by, perhaps from the farm or from the town, and then pause by the window. She would slow down her steps. Then she would try to 'feel' the ongoing discussion. She could do this by making a detour to the kitchen. If she thought she could contribute to or benefit anything from the forum, she would then position herself to be visible to the people talking, close enough to be invited, but not to be intrusive. The distance should be such that the person could continue her journey if she was either not interested or not invited to join in. Atawan used this style to make a survey of other people's feelings.

<sup>10</sup> Even as recently as my fieldwork days, I had accompanied Beting in assisting Manobo residents who were still trying to recover their piece of inheritance from fraudulent deals.

<sup>11</sup> The house of Sander Umpan, brother of Beting and Era, in Kidapawan used to be the headquarters of the protest movement during its height of activities in early 1990s. Hence, the possibility of political threat. Era also was hosting a Japanese researcher in Pandanon. Some treasure-hunters believed that the Japanese researcher had secret knowledge of where the treasures of Yamasita were buried. Many Manobo and Visayan alike lost their land, house and animals in these excavations.

<sup>12</sup> Luckily, I had photocopied most of her drafts before the fire. Unrecoverable were her treasured Manobo skirt *detdet* and long knife *polihuma*, and the seeds, fertiliser, and farm tools which Tuddok had allocated for their communal farm, as well as my tapes of interview with their father Sandalio on the coming of the Visayan in the Manobo area. People who had land conflict with the Umpan family could have deliberately caused the fire.

<sup>13</sup> Mac Tiu gave a similar suggestion during a conference on ancestral domain in Davao City: 'You have to stress that you are really a different people. You are Manobo. Your descendants should really be different...In principle, the Christians, the Muslims and the Manobo are equal. In reality, they are not. The Muslims fight, and so they get more attention. The Lumad, however, are just run over.' See *Forum on Land, Law and Environment: Survival of Ethnoculture and National Identity* 1994 (Audio-Visual).

<sup>14</sup> In one discussion of the elders, Apao allegedly was a Tagabawa who came from the other side of Mt. Apo. Datu Pinantao of Sudapin, Kidapawan did not know Apao existed in Sayaban.

<sup>15</sup> Letter dated 13 November and 6 December, received on 14 December 1994.

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## Study 6 **The Embarrassment of Rituals** *D'yandi* in Protest and Project Practices

*'There is need for a higher level of theoretical development among the leaders of the Lumad people's movement... We just can't go on 'organising'. Real organising always includes study, reflection, and education work... This is not intellectual sophistication but clarity of vision..'*

---Rene Agbayani, 'Fall of Socialist Regime' (1991)

'WE WILL DEFEND Mt. Apo to the last drop of our blood.' A decade after the Lumad protesters<sup>1</sup> ritually pronounced this solemn oath, some questions loom large: What lessons can be learned from the alliance between supra-village Lumad organisations and multi-sectoral non-Lumad support networks in their protest against a State-sponsored geothermal project? How did it grow from a small group's complaint into a national and even international concern? How did the advocates and activists derive their mandates from the actions of local movement actors? To what extent did they share common cultural presuppositions and political agendas? How was their collective action and symbolic protest to be seen in light of the full operation of the power company and of the emergence of a kin-based cultural regeneration movement? What was the impact of the annually revived D'yandi vow of Lumad leaders on the remaining protesters? What has a practice approach to ritual and rhetoric got to offer in understanding of indigenous movements?

These are some of the questions that underlie the present Study. Many of them will be directly addressed, but some would probably remain open even after the close of this analysis, an analysis that covers the discursive aspect of the protest action on Mt. Apo from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s.

During these years, protest groups consistently accused the PNOC of not understanding the culture of the Lumad of Mt. Apo. This ignorance has supposedly led the company to desecrate the tribal temple and bulldoze the fragile environment. A

closer look at the protest groups' rhetoric, however, might suggest that their cultural presuppositions, as manifested in their statements and practices, are probably not very far from that of the power company's. Both parties seem to share a tendency to hold an essentialist, if not instrumentalist, view of Lumad ways of thinking and ritualising. Even among those who form a coalition against the Company, there might be incongruence between the cultural frames of the local residents and that of their supporters. Certainly, this suspicion needs to be nuanced and its various terms unpacked within the focus of this Study.<sup>2</sup>

I focus here on the discourse and practice that developed around the political watershed of the protest campaign---the *D'yandi* ritual of 1989. *D'yandi* provided the idiom and rallying point for the nascent Lumad groups and their supporters in their fight against State-sponsored development aggression. Without dismissing the value of these efforts, I argue that like development projects that they question, protest campaigns, being social interventions themselves, also need a corresponding social impact analysis to which this Study aims to contribute. A careful analysis of the rituals, the texts, and the practices employed in the protest campaign might clarify how such actions could be more meaningfully gauged.

The first part of this Study may be seen as a response to the timely call of the young Filipino anthropologist Rene Agbayani (1991) who met an untimely death in a plane accident recently. With audacity to speak in the midst of ideological tensions during the early 1990s, he asked both advocates and Lumad themselves, especially the latter, to rethink their own practices and presuppositions not just for the sake of 'intellectual sophistication' but of 'clarity of vision'. Other observers, of varying degrees of sympathy for the Lumad struggle, have since then developed their own approaches to the task of analysing the Lumad collective actions. With them I wish to enter into conversation.

I also trace the following reflection to my own fieldwork itself which coincided with the period of self-questioning among some actors in the anti-PNOC campaign. The second part describes *D'yandi* Assessment which I attended in 1996. Taking the cue from the questions of these remaining protesters, I try to reconstruct the events of the 1989 *D'yandi* ritual and outline how it was used as idiom of protest until the mid-1990s.

The third part extends the discussion by documenting PNOC's strategies of diffusing the D'yandi threat, as well as the succeeding protest's response. I end by introducing the perspective coming from the Tuddok movement as it presents itself as an 'alternative to the alternative movements'. I hope to show that the formation of the Tuddok cultural regeneration movement is a creative contribution to a lively conversation with, as well as a continuation of, the wider Lumad struggle for self-determination.

It has been remarked, quite wisely, that 'people know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does.'<sup>3</sup> The Lumad protesters are no exception to this maxim. But I also hope to show in this section that at least some actors struggle to know what their actions have done and not done and what else needs doing.

## 1. (POST)PROTEST REFLECTIONS

Agbayani was not alone in his call for more reflexivity. Columnist Carol Arguillas had from the beginning appealed to the protesters to engage in 'more serious research' on Mt. Apo to substantiate or nuance their complaints. But 'nobody seemed to have listened to her'.<sup>4</sup> In 1995, after witnessing the very poor turn out of an anti-PNOC rally in Kidapawan, she wrote in her newspaper column how depressed she was. After eight long years, they still have not learned because they have not reflected enough. 'Never fight technicalities with mere slogans', she said. 'Slogans must be substantiated and backed up by technicalities, too... That's how the opposition to the Mt. Apo geothermal power project miserably failed. Slogans never win a war.' (*PDI* 9 Oct 1995).

To be fair, not all protest literature was 'mere sloganeering'. As has been surveyed in Study 1, sympathetic academics and activists produced serious articles on the legal, environmental and cultural basis of saving Mt. Apo from the PNOC drills. The better-argued papers mostly came from the LRC lawyers through their *Philippine Natural Resources Journal* (especially in the 1990s) and KFI (cf. Mincher 1993). Others offered updates or general primers (KFI 1990; Tribal Forum 1991) or placed the issue in international forums (Broad & Cavanagh 1993; Mincher 1993; Durning 1992; Philippine Solidarity Bulletin 1992). These earlier publications served more to

present the stance of the campaign rather than evaluate its strategies. Up to this date, however, no critical self-assessment has been published from these advocates.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the sad thing is that in the frantic need to move from one urgent issue to the next---and there are always many simmering issues---they seem to have no time to celebrate even their legitimate successes.

In this literature, though, the 1989 D'yandi always occupied a most prominent place in the discourse of Lumad solidarity and sacred mission to protect Mt. Apo. Perhaps the elaboration of the meaning of D'yandi was also a way of reflecting on the mandate of their action. Datu Tomas 'Birang' Ito served as the Bagobo guru. He published his reflection on D'yandi in a series of articles in Lumad Mindanaw's *Sinwara* (Birang 1990, 1991a; 1991b) as well as in a couple of video-documentary films (Anderson 1992; TABAK 1994). According to him, D'yandi is 'made only when a people or a community face an imminent destruction or death'. D'yandi 'will resolve the misunderstanding, the mistrust, hate, exploitation and the violation of human rights'. It 'settles all disputes'. D'yandi serves as 'the highest and the most sacred assembly among the Lumad' (Birang 1991a:18). But teaching the 'essence' of this ritual was one thing; translating it into the work of organising and advocacy was another. Reflecting on the ways that Lumad groups and their supporters had made use of D'yandi remains to be done and shall constitute the central part of the later sections. Before proceeding, we need to learn first what other observers have contributed to the Mt. Apo debate, hoping thereafter to enter into a dialogue.

### **From Protest Rhetoric to Policy Research.**

The first focused analysis of the Mt. Apo protest was done by Esperanza Castro in her essay on 'Understanding Public Opposition to Development Projects: The Mt. Apo Case' (1994, 1996). In her first paper, Castro offers insights on the motivations, organisation, attitudes and strategies' of the opposition groups. In her later work, she applies the same categories to both parties, PNOC and protesters alike, and this time adding 'control' and 'limitations' (Castro 1996:11). One thing she writes in the first, but removes in the second, is her explicit affirmation of the work of the protest groups. 'It is to the credit of the opposition groups', she says, 'that public

participation in the decision-making process was massively utilised to maximise dissemination of information and the formation of opinions.' She continues:

The opposition's network of organisations also widened the audience---from local, to regional, to national, even international---that must be addressed by both the PNOC-EDC and the government's environmental agency. Their persistence in raising various environmental, economic, social, cultural and legal concerns about the project also tested the patience and credibility of the PNOC scientists in proving the company's sincere intention. To wit, the environmental permit issued to the Mt. Apo project carried two requirements that are considered 'firsts' in geothermal development in the Philippines: the zero-waste disposal scheme, and the provision of an environmental and tribal welfare guaranty fund for the Mt. Apo project. (Castro 1994:286)<sup>6</sup>

She omits this passage in her thesis, but offers a different apologia for the opposition. She explains, for example, that the tendency of oppositionists to take an 'extremist, obstinate position' usually results when the developer, as in the case of PNOC, adopts a 'Decide-Announce-Defend Model' which often make some people feel 'bypassed and ignored' (Castro 1996:34-36). The present opposition, she admits, has not yet been totally resolved, and therefore could 'still be revived or be replicated in other PNOC-EDC projects (1996:75). Castro recommends the cultivation of trust between the two parties. The developer, in particular, needs to understand the culture of the local people or the 'social environment' and offer adequate compensation for the host community in order to get out of the present impasse (1996:70ff). In effect, she also shows how development companies size up their critics and determine their options.

Adding significance to this study is that Castro herself holds a strategic position in PNOC. She has been 'involved', since 1992, both in the creation and the functioning of the Public Relations Department which has been 'envisioned to specially deal with public opposition' (Castro 1996: Preface) as well as 'to manage the promotion of the corporate image' of the PNOC (1996:68).

One might complain, though, that Castro delimited her sources too narrowly on news reports from national dailies (no fieldwork, interview or protest statements) and uncritically adopted the generic categories taken from conflict management (e.g. Bacow, et al 1983) and community mediation (e.g. Carpenter 1991). Consequently, the 'opposition' is neatly reduced into one loose coalition, the Task Force Sandawa (TFS), which is then said to fit in quite nicely with handbook typification of project oppositors 'as shown in literatures' (Castro 1996:72). The protesters' conduct is



shown as predictably 'consistent with the behaviour of other opposition groups'. This means, namely, that their constituents mostly come from the 'outside', that they rely on available networks of interest groups, that they harbour incurable mistrust towards the developers and so perpetually demand infinite amount of information despite adequate clarification from the development agency (1996:57-59 *passim*).

Such an 'executive summary approach', as we might call it, provides busy policy makers an easy handle on a complex phenomenon, but only by bracketing so much of the local, historical, political, cultural and even personal undercurrents at work in the inter-tribal, multi-sectoral and cross-regional configuration of the 'opposition'. Since these concerns are beyond Castro's paper, we turn to sympathetic but critical studies that approach the protest campaign not as problem of project management but as part of a wider social movement.

### **From Identity to Strategy**

B. R. Rodil's essay (1993; cf. 1994) situates the Mt. Apo protest within the long history Lumad movement for self-determination---starting from the time of Spanish colonisation, down to the American imposition of land titles and the Marcos regime's plunder of indigenous peoples' natural and cultural resources. Also under attack is the whole concept of development itself which PNOC represents. Whether this concept of development is compatible with Lumad self-determination or just a continuation of colonialism remains a crucial question.

From this we realise that the main actor is not the *Task Force Sandawa* (TFS) *per se*, which is simply the Manila coalition of support groups, but the whole Lumad social movement. It was embodied then by the umbrella organisation *Lumad Mindanaw* (LM) and its southern Mindanao regional assembly called *ALUHAMAD* (Alliance of Lumad in Southern Mindanao for Democracy). It was ALUHAMAD, for example, that initiated the D'yandi ritual in 1989. But the D'yandi's multi-tribal composition was made possible because of the prior Mindanao-wide Lumad formation that had been going on since the late 1970s with substantial help from Church institutions as well as from the Left. This partnership with non-Lumad supporters later created tensions and made the Lumad struggle for self-determination more complicated (cf. Appendix 2).

Karl Gaspar (1997) spells out this complex dynamics of the LM's self-assertion. LM was faced with strong ideological pressures from 'those up there'---referring to the political officers (POs) of the revolutionary forces who wanted (because they needed) to control not only the strategies but even the areas of deployment of Lumad groups. Until the late 1980s, Lumad leaders assumed that interlinking with the 'National Democratic-oriented movement' would help their genuine cause. No decisions were made on their own. But all the while, the Lumad wanted to form an independent group distinct from the support network.<sup>7</sup>

This tension was put to test when the revolutionary movement lost much of its controlled territories in Mindanao due to the Aquino government's 'total war policy' against the insurgency. To consolidate whatever areas were left of the revolutionary movement, the political officers allegedly 'assigned' the Mindanao-wide umbrella organisation to a small Malabog district in Davao and to Mt. Apo; it was not allowed to enter other areas. When the LM Council of Elders rejected this non-consultative style of partnership, 'the progressive forces ostracised them' and allegedly called on others to 'let LUMAD Mindanaw die a natural death' (Gaspar 1997:31-36). Gaspar does not hide the POs' counter-charge of 'financial opportunism' within the LM leadership. Gaspar's sources, however, believed that the withdrawal of support was unjustifiably drastic. 'The bottom line', Gaspar sums up, 'was that the LM leaders asserted their independence, which was anathema to the POs' (1997a:36).

In an earlier version of this study, Gaspar admits his failure to validate the position of the 'underground movement based in Mindanao' (1997a:5-6). But other sources hint at the same problematic relationship between the Lumad and the Left. For example, in his critical essay on the upland resistance in the Philippines, Contreras (1992:42,50) states 'the articulation between the desire of the people for land, sovereignty, and self-determination, with the agenda of a party ideology that is capable of translating resistance into armed struggle is a problematic terrain'. For some historical and cultural reasons, this is even more difficult for the Lumad in Mindanao. More directly, the Communist Party itself, in its official statement published in the internet, speaks of the 'rectification movement which the revolutionary movement has been carrying out since 1992' (Jalandoni 1996: 6-7). This 'rectification movement' we now know involved a painful process of healing

from the trauma of the internal purge during the second half of 1980s. The purge of the Party cost several hundreds of lives of its own cadres, guerrillas and activists suspected of being military spies. It has left many communities disillusioned (cf. Abinales 1996). The Jalandoni statement admits that in 'one area of the indigenous peoples in Mindanao' the 'revolutionary movement lost its mass base in eleven municipalities because of the errors of military adventurism and urban insurrectionism in the early 1990s' (Jalandoni 1996: 6-7). One can reasonably believe that this 'one area' must be the region of Lumad Mindanaw.<sup>8</sup>

So far, assertion of Lumad dignity and rights has occupied the above studies. The discussion on the history of this struggle against old and new forms of domination is also instructive and even indispensable. But for an intimate analysis of the protest practices themselves, much still remains to be done.

Most recently, attention has shifted from the politics of self-determination to the pragmatics of strategy and organisation. Steven Rood's (1998) contribution lies in his insights on the continuities and contrasts between the struggle of ALUHAMAD against the PNOC in southern Mindanao and that of the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA) against the Chico Dam project in northern Luzon. There is nothing new in the association between the two. Even Castro's essay that we mentioned above, mentions D'yandi as 'similar to the pact of warlike Kalingas (head-hunters) of northern Philippines who successfully fought the construction of the Chico Dam under the Marcos regime' (Castro 1996:51). Rood, however, offers finer insights. For example, Rood notices that the Mt. Apo campaign phase was much faster and its NGO support more technically sophisticated. That was because it profited a lot from the earlier experiences of the same national Church and NGO network (e.g. ECTF, TABAK, and KAMP) who assisted the collective movements in the Cordillera (1998:146-47). The combination of traditional leadership and community organising in the creation of ALUHAMAD and, extendedly, the rhetorical innovation involved in the performance and packaging of D'yandi had also been employed in the decade-long transformation of the *Bodong* Peace Pact. It now looks funny, at least for Rood, that even as the support groups participate in this process of 're-inventing tradition', they remain 'anthropologically naïve' in thinking everything was being done in a 'traditional way' (1998:145, 152).

Also important is Lela Garner Noble's (1998) essay on Philippine environmentalism. She uses, among others, the Mt Apo case to demonstrate the limits of success when environmentalists perpetuate the totalizing 'legacy of distrust' of all government projects, a distrust that cannot tolerate 'negotiated gains' but tend to be, in themselves, 'endless and costly' (1998:193-94; 215-16). She notices, in particular, that most of the environmentalist supporters of Mt. Apo come from Davao who, like their Manila counterparts, tend to take up the concerns 'not in their own backyard' (Noble 1998:201, 213).

Jointly, Rood and Noble bring in the sensitivity to the sources of the strategies involved in the Lumad struggle in Mt. Apo. But for my purposes here, Rood deserves more importance because he specifically links the rhetorical innovation involved in the performance of Mt. Apo *D'yandi* blood compact and the Cordillera's *Bodong* peace pact. We shall touch his work again later in this Study, adding ethnographic details which Rood's essay simply glossed over.

## 2. D'YANDI AND THE RITUALIZATION OF PROTEST

According to standard accounts, the D'yandi 'intertribal blood compact' in 1989 meant life and death not only for a small group of tribal families, but for a whole confederation of tribes and their collective existence. One account sums up the meaning of the event:

At that point, the resistance of the Bagobo and other Lumad---and the confrontation---escalated. Two thousand Lumad from nine tribes met and signed a D'YANDI, an intertribal blood compact to defend their area from the project. It was an historic occasion: only the third Lumad D'YANDI since the thirteenth century, and the first time in history for all nine tribes here to gather as one. Their solemn words made the event all the more momentous: 'For us...the land is our life; a loving gift of [The Creator] to our race. We will die to defend it, even to the last drop of blood. (Broad & Cavanagh 1993:34)

Government agencies feared that it might lead to a 'tribal war'. PNOC operation was suspended for two years. In 1991, PNOC presented a more extensive impact study that won the DENR's ECC, and won the legal case in 1992. Extra-legal protest action, however, continued. The hard-line stance of the Catholic Church activists was never withdrawn. Even as late as 1996, protest literature still harked back to the 1989 D'yandi. Despite the drawbacks of the movement, D'yandi remained for them 'an

important landmark in the Lumad's living traditional culture' (e.g. Broeckman, et al 1996:87).

### **The Passage of a Rite**

What is not usually talked about is that, with the passing of years, the D'yandi ritual of 1989, or the way it was packaged, became a practical and even an existential embarrassment—in both senses of the word as encumbrance and shame---to the protest campaign. Deviating from convention, for example, D'yandi was renewed every year. Each renewal was supposed to remind the D'yandi pact holders of their commitment to propagate this commitment to their constituents. The first three or four renewals were occasions for the release of new statements. But by 1995, the dwindling participation of even the original pact holders cast doubt in the whole exercise itself. They were supposed to defend the sacred mountain to the last drop of their blood. 'But', a frustrated protester asked, 'where is the first drop of blood to be spilt?'

I was allowed to observe the '*Paghandum sa D'yandi*' or the commemoration of the D'yandi which was held in the Catholic Pastoral Training Centre in Kidapawan. in April of 1996. With a huge colourful mural at the background, representatives of remaining protest groups gathered to assess the status of the D'yandi solidarity pact. The leading luminary then was a certain datu who was a Protestant pastor and university lecturer in Davao City. Mentioning that he was one of those who drafted the D'yandi statement, Pastor Rogelio (not his real name) explained the place of D'yandi in Mindanao culture and history. Then with passion he appealed to the constituents, to this effect:

We don't need to repeat (*usbon*) the D'yandi. Where is the picture of D'yandi? The real aim of the D'yandi is to help one another. D'yandi will be pursued, not by the D'yandi holders, but by us...The Lumad are just being tossed around [by the government]. Solidarity! Let us go back to D'yandi! This D'yandi is a 'spiritual power'. We must give it meaning in our own lives. To give it flesh (*pagpaunod*) in history, campaign for D'yandi should go to those who have not heard about it. We call for a more serious implementation of the D'yandi.

For Pastor Rogelio, the solution to the crisis of movement was a more intensive information campaign on the real meaning of this 'most sacred commitment'. It was evident, however, that the task did not belong to the original D'yandi holders many of whom were not present during the renewal.

Era España (sister of Beting) proposed to translate the D'yandi ritual solidarity into an organisational structure. 'We should not limit this D'yandi to a yearly commemoration' she said. 'The structure for the D'yandi should be different from other organisation. It should be the highest, higher than any other structure.' Era wanted the 'spiritual power' that Pastor Rogelio found in the D'yandi to be operationalised in a kind of federal structure of tribal elders which would lead the indigenous peoples around Mt. Apo towards the objective of the D'yandi and beyond. Somehow, her proposal was not picked up, perhaps because she put more responsibility---and therefore blame as well---to the D'yandi holders who were practically not in a position to fulfil her vision. From what I gathered, Era was pushing for a more indigenous, but newly invented, form of organisation that was structurally different from what the NGOs have been used to.

Datu Silimbag, wanted something altogether different. 'Don't mention D'yandi anymore', he pleaded, 'because it is finished.' He cried, 'What can give us strength? What can you still do with your D'yandi? I want to suggest what can give us strength. Even if we fill this house with papers and documents, it is of no use. If we are united, let us petition this with our own blood like what the Talaingod did.'<sup>9</sup> The facilitator was quick to write on the board '*petisyunan sa dugo ang pag-angkon sa yutang kabilin*' (petition with blood the ancestral domain claim). Datu Silimbag continued, 'Let us strengthen ourselves to drive away our rheumatism, because we will now be using guns.'

Another person in the group warned that a continued violation of the D'yandi commitment might result in a '*sapa*' which meant punishment. A woman participant, picking up on Datu Silimbag's cry, strongly pushed for the revival of the *bagani* warrior class or even the *Tadtad* group of spirited fighters and consider the holding of a *pangayaw*, a tribal war. Nothing of this sort was agreed upon.

Before they dispersed, the D'yandi was once again renewed. Participants' palms were marked with the blood of the sacrificed chicken. Its concrete application, however, still had to wait for further reflection, because 'it was not clear to most people what D'yandi was about' and that 'some members of the D'yandi in 1989 had grown cold (*nabugnaw*) or won over by enticement (*'nahaylo*').

Further reflections continued. Era España published in her edited newsletter *Pusaka* (January-March 1996) her 'theological interpretation' on D'yandi in relation to the Christian Lenten sacrifice. Then she prepared a longer essay on D'yandi's visible effects, based on what she heard from other members of the protest movement. In her analysis, the death of major tribal leaders who welcomed PNOC manifested the power of D'yandi. She was referring to Datu Joseph Sibug and Artia Guabong, the two most prominent Manobo leaders in Kidapawan who died at relatively young age a few years after they convinced their fellow Manobo to host the government project. Several fatal accidents around the project site were also linked to the power of D'yandi. This approach, however, took a difficult turn. Era's house burned and completely turned into ashes, possibly because of arson related to a land issue. But Era then feared the possibility that anyone, including herself, could be hit by D'yandi's blind cosmic force. A fellow Manobo activist, who was a veteran in the Arakan uprising, reprimanded her precisely for trying to put these things into writing.

Within this unfinished task of reflection, sensitive questions linger. What exactly is D'yandi: a sacred ritual, a political organisation, or a cosmic force that can hit anybody? Or is it the right question to ask? Who can legitimately enter into its solemn pact? Were the 1989 D'yandi pact holders legitimate representatives of their tribes? Did they have constituents? Should D'yandi be renewed every year? Where did this practice of 'renewal' or 're-enactment' come from? How can people realise the D'yandi pledge in the concrete? Should they take up arms? Can people be released from the D'yandi commitment, and should they? Where are the original D'yandi holders? Who were they, by the way?

These clusters of questions seem to me, at least, to call for a re-understanding of D'yandi not merely as a ritual performance to annotate, a text to interpret or social drama whose structure we need to reveal. It calls for an affirmation of ritual as a 'busy intersection', to use a recent phrase (Rosaldo 1989:20), where different interests, interpretations and interventions meet, cross and contest one another. One does not understand it simply by doing an exegesis of the terms and symbols involved in it. One needs to track the trajectory of its discourse, the many ways that people get involved in it or shy away from it, the ways people interpret its function or construct its history or project its future, the strategies of linking it with notions of sacredness and political

efficacy. In short, it calls for an appreciation of the ritualization practices themselves rather than towards a definition of the ritual so-called (cf. Bell 1992, 1997). The best way to proceed is perhaps to recount what transpired during the origin of this series of practices.

### **Reconstructing the D'yandi of 1989**

Despite the enormous publicity that the D'yandi has received, there exists no clear description of how it was conducted or of the initial process of its formation as discourse. We could only make a composite picture from the fragments of information scattered in the earliest published texts and testimonies.

On 9 April 1989, a national daily announced that 'six Lumad tribes supported by Church workers, mediamen, concerned citizens and non-government organisations will hold a rally in Kidapawan on Thursday and Friday. It was to protest against the plan of the Philippine National Oil Company to put up a geothermal plant on Mt. Apo.' The six affected tribes referred to were the Manobo, Ata, Bagobo, K'lagan, Kaolo, and Ubo. Their representatives had earlier submitted a letter of petition asking President Corazon Aquino to stop the power project in Mt. Apo and instead declare the whole National Park as their ancestral domain.<sup>10</sup>

What the newsreport missed was the major gathering of the members of the budding indigenous peoples' organisation called the *Alyansa sa mga Lumad sa Habagatang Mindanaw alang sa Demokrasya* (Alliance of Lumad in Southern Mindanao for Democracy) or ALUHAMAD. On 10-12 April 1989, ALUHAMAD, the sub-regional division of the Mindanao-wide indigenous peoples federation called Lumad-Mindanao (LM), held its General Assembly in the multi-purpose hall of the Spottswood Methodist Centre in Kidapawan, Cotabato (Walpole 1990). During this three-day meeting, the Lumad leaders and their supporters discussed the major issues confronting the indigenous peoples in Mindanao, foremost among them were the threats to their ancestral domain and environmental degradation caused by the government's fast-track approach to development. Although they faced many issues, none was more acute, more urgent and more symbolic than the Mt. Apo Geothermal Project (cf. Walpole 1989). After the private debates, they came out in public protest.



As announced, representatives from six Lumad tribes and their supporters from the Catholic and Protestant Churches, non-government organisations, environmentalist groups and the media gathered around in Kidapawan for a spectacular show of force. Among the crowd was the Bishop of Kidapawan (Open Letter, 27 January 1992) and staff of the KFI (Kinaiyahan Bulletin 1989). According to Fr. Peter Geremia, a veteran Italian missionary and long-time Catholic Church advocate, 'hundreds of Lumads dressed in their colourful native costumes' participated in the public protest action. Starting with a parade through the busy Kidapawan towncentre, 'the caravan slowly lined up, vehicles loaded with the participants and decorated with streamers and a loud sound system that carried the voice of the usually shy and silent tribal groups' (Geremia 1990: 56-57; also Walpole 1989). As the caravan reached the Manobo villages, however, they felt the ironic cold reception of the local villagers, the very one they were protecting from the effects of the power company. 'Actually,' Geremia seems to lament, 'their caravan was disrupted by nails carefully placed [by local residents who favoured the project] along the road which caused many flat tires and many of the participants were blocked. Signs of hostility and threats, compliments of clever PNOC advertising met those who reached Lake Agco. Then a heavy downpour of torrential rain turned the dirt road into an open wound, as if it were streaming with the blood of Apo Sandawa.' (Geremia 1990:58; cf. Winiger 1990). One of those cars that got stranded belonged to Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos himself. Some Sayaban residents later confirmed this to me. They admitted to being part of the scheme of unwelcoming the 'outsiders'.

An even earlier but unnoticed account adds some poignant quotes. Published in same month as the D'yandi, the front page report of a newsletter called *Gimbao* opens with the heavy feeling of resentment matching only the heavy downpour of rain on the mountain. Some of the elders who joined the protest caravan noticed the change of colour of the sacred Lake Agco from the original steamy blue to the present murky brown. '*Midpenderawit si Apu su midbusiyan ka lawa rin* (Apu is crying in grief for a hole was dug through his body) lamented a Manobo datu as the rain heavily fell on their caravan to the PNOC Geothermal Plant site last April 13, 1989' (Luzon 1989). The account continues. '*Ka kelukesen pa rengan ne kayi ran ebpengetey te ketey ne ibawi te daru.*' (At the time of our ancestors, it was here where they got

herbs to cure ailments), the Manobo datu pointed out as the caravan reached Lake Agco, once a boiling blue lake now turned into a mud puddle. He added that 'nothing must be taken from the sacred grounds unless one asks permission from Apu' (Luzon 1989:3).

From there the group proceeded to Apo 1-D which was one of the two wells already dug by PNOC engineers. At dusk, the delegation came back to the towncentre, gathered in Spottswood Methodist Centre, leaving perhaps a group of elders and close supporters to solemnise their solidarity in defending Mt. Apo Sandawa through the ritual D'yandi.

During the D'yandi, the datu formed an inner circle surrounded by a thicker layer of friends and supporters. Datu Tomas Ito, an articulate Bagobo leader from the eastern flank of Mt. Apo, must have presided over the ceremony because he was often referred to as the officiator of the D'yandi (Birang 1990, 1991, 1991b). A trinity of *tambara*, the traditional Bagobo and Manobo bamboo altar, stood at the low platform (cf. photograph printed in MMNS 1993). Around the *tambara* squatted the twenty-one datu supposedly representing the nine Lumad tribes of southern Mindanao. 'The special herbs were mixed with liquids and offered up to the spirits' (Geremia 1990:58). After some exhortation and invocation to the spirits, they bled a chicken and poured its blood on a bowl. Then with the use of a feather taken from the sacrificial chicken itself, the presider spattered the chicken blood on the hands of each participant.

I witnessed a similar rite during the 1996 D'yandi renewal. I offered my palms to be stained with blood together with all other people who stood in solidarity with the cause. But the original D'yandi had something even more solemn. The pact holders pierced and 'jagged their fingertips and mixed the blood with wine' and 'all drank from the same mixture' (Agbayani 1991:47-48; cf. Geremia 1990).

A week after the event, Datu Sauro Pontongan, spokesperson of the D'yandi participants, and also a Protestant pastor, was quoted as saying, 'This mountain (Mt. Apo) is sacred to us and we look at the PNOC as a desecration to our holy place.' He warned that 'if worse comes to worst, we are prepared to lay our lives to defend Mt. Apo' (*Manila Chronicle* 21 April 1989). Datu Pontongan was then the Chairman of *Katigatunan ka Sandawa* (KSK), Kidapawan-based people's organisation and

member of ALUHAMAD. (The year before, on 27 October 1988, he led the signing of a petition letter to President Aquino asking her to declare Mt. Apo as ancestral domain of the Bagobo, Ubo, Manobo, Ata, K'lagan, and Kaulo.) Soon, the D'yandi became associated with the threat of a tribal violence (e.g. 'Bagobos oppose PNOC drilling in Mount Apo' Manila Chronicle, 21 April 1989; 'Nine tribes declare "war" on PNOC plant', *Daily Globe*, 27 June 1989). More serious articles followed, particularly in legal and environmental circles (Fay, et al, 1989; KFI 1989; Walpole 1989a, 1989b).

Wanting to reach the national decision-makers and to expand the network of support, the Lumad representatives went to Manila. Carrying the mandate from the April event and assisted by NGO sympathisers, they went fully equipped even to show a documentary film at the University of the Philippines Film Centre and to dialogue with members of congress and the senate (cf. Walpole 1989b). During their trip, they performed a version of D'yandi adapted for their urban audience. A journalist captured their dramatic way of calling a press conference:

A group of Bagobo and Manuvu tribesmen, striking in their tribal finery of beaded vests and trousers, sat together in a ritual of prayer and sacrifice. They were going to call on the "Creator"---Magbavaya---to help them because a "demon" was coming to disrupt their lives and whip them away from their land. In front of them lay a rooster and a buyo nut. Presently, the rooster's neck was cut and its blood drained into a bowl. The buyo nut was sliced into several pieces. A young Manuvu tribesman let out a chant, asking Magbavaya to accept their sacrifice and offering.

The ritual's setting was Manila, far from the homeland of these tribesmen who compose the Lumad, some six million tribal Filipinos who live in Southern Mindanao. It was held in July when the tribesmen felt it was time to tell their lowland brothers about the coming demon...The demon is a geothermal plant that the Philippine National Oil Company. (Manlongon 1989:3)

Accompanying the Manlongon article was the full text of the *D'yandi Declaration of Principles*. This was the first time a 'Declaration' was mentioned in public in conjunction with the D'yandi, and was perhaps the most important aspect of the Manila trip for the formation of the protest discourse (Lopez 1989; PDI 13 April 1989). Because of its poetic and moving language, rich in local colour and memorable images, the Declaration circulated to a wider audience what otherwise would have stayed within the limited circle of original D'yandi witnesses. What various people have done with this D'yandi ritual-cum-declaration shall be the concern of the later sections. But before we go further, let us first take a closer look at the influential text.

### Sealed in Blood and Wine

Allow, for a moment, some background ethnographic notes. *D'yandi*, the solidarity ritual that the Lumad performed in defence of Mt. Apo, seems to be rooted in ancient Mindanao and even Malay practice.

Among the Bagobo on the eastern flank of Mt. Apo, *D'yandi* is an institution for peace-keeping and mutual protection. According to the first and only Bagobo dictionary written by a Spanish Jesuit missionary (Gisbert 1892:23),<sup>11</sup> *D'yandi* is an alliance, a pact, a covenant or an expression of friendship between two Bagobo parties. It involves an exchange of weapons and jewellery. When done with an oath, it is ritualised by the cutting of a rattan pole, an act that implies, most probably, that whoever violates the agreement will be punished with death. As long as the parties faithfully keep their pledge, they profit from their mutual friendship and protection.<sup>12</sup> *D'yandi* practice goes beyond the Mt. Apo region. Manuel records a case of a *D'yandi* pact among the Manuvu between Davao and Cotabato (1973:187). In this case, two feuding Manobo families settled their conflicts by picking a Matigsalug girl and cutting her in two. This was said to have paved the way for the two warring parties to intermarry and pursue peaceful trading relations---at least for some time.

The B'laan have what they call '*sadyandi*', which literally means 'covenant-making'. *Sadyandi* is a 'socio-religious ceremony...a ritual to seal a peace compact between reconciled enemies or to bind two families or class in long-lasting friendship'. The solemnity of the ritual is such that whoever violates the pact is put to death. A third-party witness is invited to make sure the sanction is imposed effectively (Genotiva 1966:64).

*D'yandi* is also found in the vocabularies of vows and oaths even among the tribes of coastal Mindanao such as the Tausug (Hassan, et al 1975) and Badjao (Sather 1997). Among the latter, '*janji*', which I presume to be same as *D'yandi*, is a 'vow or pledge' that is of 'fundamental importance' to their social relations. It also has 'a religious component and so additionally forms the most frequent basis on which village ritual observances take place' (Sather 1997:287-289). *D'yandi* pact, among the B'laan is used to prevent a bloody conflict or mend it; it is so solemn that the *D'yandi* holders 'become blood brothers' (Rodil 1996). As a strategy for making conflict

negotiation, D'yandi is probably identical to the Malay *janji*, which even has a set of cognates referring to the formality of the agreement and its violation (Wilkinson 1932).<sup>13</sup> D'yandi, or its counterpart, seems to occupy a special position above the ordinary forms of intra- and inter-tribal conflict settlement among many Lumad groups in Mindanao and Malay neighbour.

Now, the 1989 D'yandi captured the general sense of this ritual and even went further. It transformed this bilateral conflict negotiation strategy into a multi-tribal 'blood compact' which involved nine tribes that faced a common enemy. While it carried the traditional sanction against violators of the pact, it goes further in threatening a huge State-sponsored development project. Unlike most orally negotiated pacts, this one is accompanied by a strong public statement, the D'yandi Declaration of Principles.

The Declaration opens with its main thesis: the Lumad of southern Mindanao take their sacred duty to defend the land that the Creator has lovingly given to their people. It does not mince words when it further states:

Therefore, we Datus (tribal chieftains) of the different tribes of southern Mindanao, aware of the distorted system of laws, bind ourselves and declare our unity. Through this D'YANDI, we swear to fight and die for our sacred ancestral lands which we inherited from our forebears, because the land and our life are gifts from Magbavaya; to defend it to the last drop of our blood in the coming years and even until the next generations...Whoever attempts to violate, subvert and betray this D'yandi (pact) will be cursed and punished with death. The life of the traitor will be like a broken plate. (*Midweek*, 6 September 1989, p. 5)<sup>14</sup>

The Datus or tribal chieftains locate their historic gathering in multi-purpose hall of a Protestant Institute in Kidapawan, Cotabato on 13 April 1989. They met to 'discuss and analyse the [dreams and] aspirations of our people, to focus attention to problems threatening our ancestral domain---Sandawa (Mt. Apo) and to pool efforts in improving the condition and ensuring the future of our race' (Appendix 1).

Having stated their objective, they proceed to the basic premises of their action. The first principle is the affirmation of their devotion to their land that they believe is a 'loving gift' of the Magbavaya, the revered creator and God. Magbavaya created this land for the Lumad race to live on and to nourish. Aside from their relationship with Magbavaya, the Lumad feels a special intimacy with the land because its rivers, mountains, forests and fields keep treasured memories of the spirits of their ancestors and heroes. These spirits are either buried there or continue to

guard the land for them. This sacred presence is proof enough for the Lumad that the land belongs to them just as they belong to the race. Their counterpart for the continued care and ownership of the land is their present labour in 'nourishing and living on it'.

History, that is, the stories of old handed down to them by their elders, has always taught them that this original dispensation was one of 'peace and bliss'. But contemporary analysis---which for them includes feelings and a lot of images---makes them wake up to their sad reality:

We have analysed and felt that our race is suffering because of poverty for a very long time. The Lumad tribes find no more reason for celebrations, to be happy. Our race is now facing a big problem, a famine and crying in anguish for the days for come.

Our race was utilised like gamecocks teased to fight each other for the amusement of the rich and for those enriching themselves. They have forcibly milked our ancestral lands resources using new methods like machineries and fertilizers [sic]. This they did by showing us papers we could not understand. (cf. Appendix 1)

Who were the culprits? According to this view, the 'strangers from the north' drove them away from the fertile plains and forced them to move up to the less productive mountain slopes. These strangers were out to destroy the Lumad laws and livelihood by taking advantage of their innocence about the ways of the State.

Moved by their spiritual attachment to the land and forced by the historical pressures brought about by the intrusion of the State, the modern market economy and perhaps the exhausting migration of the people from 'the north', the Lumad conclude that they should lose no time to act. Since the modern threats are much bigger than what village-level organising could handle, they banded together to match a formidable enemy, the 'Demon' of development aggression, most concretely embodied by the PNOC in sacred Sandawa. This banding together of different tribes in Mindanao is something new and historic. Earlier peace negotiations would usually involve only two or three villages or tribes. So to solemnise this bond, the ritualization should be no less sacred. Hence, the adoption of the 'most sacred of rituals', the D'yandi.

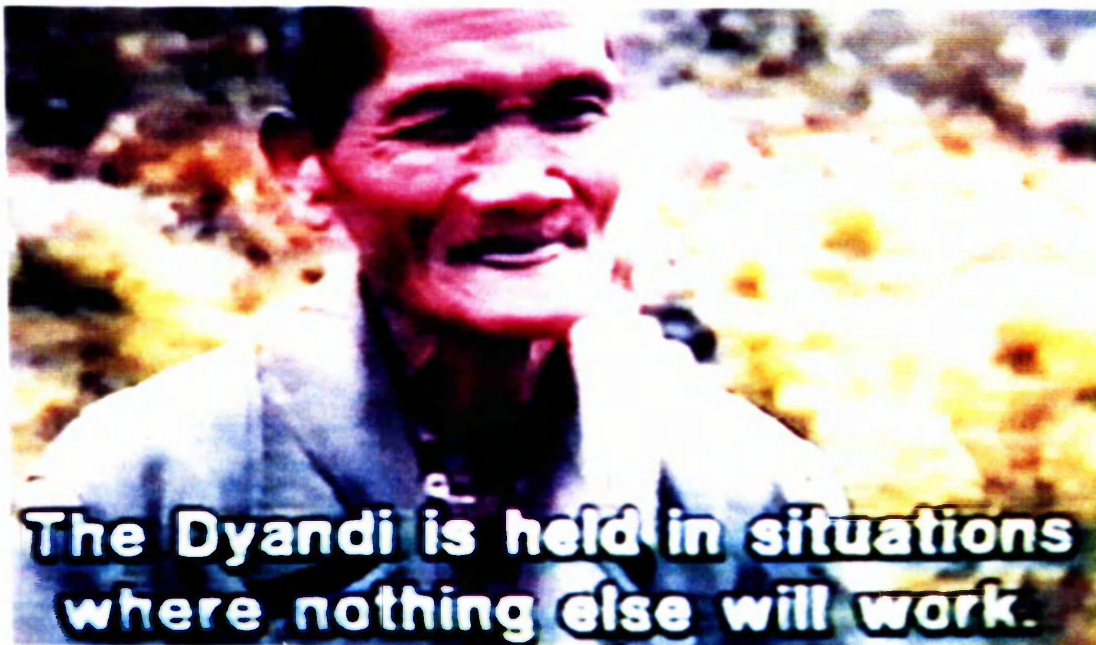


Figure 6.1 D'yandi in the media. Datu Tomas Ito explains the significance of the D'yandi pact. These two sequences are taken from the video documentary, Apo Sandawa: Sacred Mountain.





**Figure 6.2** Leaders of ALUHAMAD and Sinabadan ka Bagobo Mekatanud (SBM) mobilised huge crowds in Kidapawan during the height of protest against the PNOC project in early 1990s. (Photograph courtesy of K. Gaspar.)



According to the Declaration itself, this expanded D'yandi ritual performs several functions. The first is to 'attest(s) to the unity' in struggle. D'yandi both symbolises and effects the newly-formed 'supra-village collective identity' (cf. SENTRO 1993). More concretely, this D'yandi is a collective vow to fight the PNOC in Mt. Apo and other corporations that effectively 'grab our lands which we have nourished and inherited from our ancestors'.

The second role of D'yandi is more proactive. D'yandi urges the Lumad to go beyond opposing intrusive development schemes. It 'remind(s) us to enrich our lands for the good, enjoyment, betterment and future of our race, to attain equality and harmony between and among us in solidarity with the Muslim and Visayan tribes.'

This unity means that the pact holders must abide by the discipline and practice implied in entering into this solemn pact. They should equip themselves with all the necessary spiritual armoury by invoking the spirits of their ancestral heroes and even of particular trees supplying the resources for an impending encounter with evil. They should be ready to take up arms if necessary. In the meantime, the D'yandi vow commits them to explore the legal and extra-legal means like signing petitions and holding public demonstrations to express their sentiment. The Declaration is also wise enough to know that some of the holders might get tempted to back out. As mentioned earlier, the traitor among them are duly forewarned that they should expect no less than capital punishment, their 'life will be like a broken plate'. The statement ends with an ethno-legal declaration that the D'yandi pact is 'sealed in blood and wine by 21 Datus representing nine southern Mindanao Lumad tribes' (Appendix 1).

This powerfully composed document provided a rallying point for the media and many indigenous peoples' rights advocates and environmental activists. Among other things, the phrase 'to the last drop of our blood' immediately caught fire. Within a few months, the Lumad cause against PNOC has intensified both within the national and international forums. (Fay, et al 1990:19). 'Opposition mounts against geothermal plants' bannered *The Manila Times* (29 July 1989). Datu Oton Ambe, one of the D'yandi elders, allegedly warned that 'If the PNOC persists, blood will flow' (*Philippines Journal*, 7 August 1989). Before 1989 ended *Survival International* had already distributed urgent campaign leaflets mentioning the 'blood compact, by which leaders agreed to defend their land at all costs'. Soon, another London-based NGO

produced a video documentary using exactly the phrase 'To the last drop of our blood' as film title (Old Street Films, 1992; cf. Apo Sandawa: Sacred Mountain, 1994). The advocacy spread like wild fire.

### **Sacredness and Secrecy**

A closer scrutiny of the Declaration, however, reveals some disconcerting details---or the lack of them. We have encountered the question: Where are the original D'yandi holders? A more basic question is, 'Who were they?' The Declaration says the sacred pact is 'sealed in blood and wine by 21 datus representing nine tribes of southern Mindanao.' Blood and wine here symbolise the 'might and sacredness of the D'yandi' (*Philnajar* 2(2):28). Unfortunately, it does not indicate who those datus are and which tribal communities exactly they are representing.

Now, because the published version was in English, I thought that the original document might shed light on the important actors. The closest document that I got was a mimeographed copy of the Visayan text in the files of the Tribal Filipino Apostolate (TFA) in Kidapawan. Although it was most likely a typewritten copy of the original---if there was such a text---it did not have a list of the D'yandi signatories. Curiously, a hand-written date is added below the title; has it been added later? It is not clear from the document whether the twenty-one datus had either seen or signed it. There is reason to believe that the Datus indeed performed the ritual but somebody else (or a group) wrote the document later. This does not necessarily diminish the value of the ritual or of its Declaration.

During the 1996 assessment, though, Pastor Rogelio mentioned that the holders signed a cloth-document that had remained under the custody of the Tribal Foundation for Community Development (TFCD). I have not been able to countercheck this, and for a good reason.

In a separate telephone interview with Pastor Rogelio, he said that the full list of the names of the original D'yandi holders had been deliberately kept secret for security reasons. 'It is difficult for me to tell you their names' he cautioned. 'This is secret. Perhaps the names will be revealed on the tenth year of the D'yandi ritual.' Revealing them would take a collective and ritualised decision on the part of the elders. But, Pastor Rogelio then sounded prophetic:

The D'yandi holders know who they are. They know that if they betray their promise, they will get hit ('*maigo*'). As a matter of fact, some of the original D'yandi holders have died because of this. It has not been agreed upon to release the names of the holders. The revelation will have to go through 'ceremonies' or 'rituals'. Every year, there is an assessment. But on the tenth year, there will be a 'rectification'. The elders know to whom they would pass on the symbols. The problem is some of the elders have died already. (Telephone interview 28 April 1998)

In addition, the number and names of the tribes differ in various reports. The Declaration of Principles enumerates nine, but adds 'and other Lumad peoples' (The 'original' Visayan version gives only seven, omitting Arumanen and Kaulo). Despite this information, a number of campaign publications mention only six (e.g. ECIP 1991; KFI 1990) The maiden issue of *Kinaiyahan Foundation Incorporated Bulletin* mentions Tagabawa which the Declaration missed. This becomes problematic when attempt is made to check who is representing which tribal group.

A minimalist assertion is that the D'yandi was multi-tribal and that the devotion to Mt. Apo as sacred mountain and ecological sanctuary goes beyond the area declared as national park. This implies that major decisions affecting Mt. Apo are not the sole prerogative of the small 'government-brainwashed' Manobo village near the project site. Pact holders from tribes residing in remoter regions have as much right to be consulted as those most directly affected. An unexpected consequence of this assertion will be discussed later in the PNOC response. But even now, a number of issues could be raised.

The first is *social responsibility*. The D'yandi Datus publicly committed their tribes to a life and death struggle, using words that signalled a tribal war (ECIP 1990). This strategy of secrecy is understandable in essentially covert or underground movements. But by naming the tribes without naming their representatives, they could be putting their peoples at risk while the alleged leaders remain relatively safe. To what extent, then, could the 'succeeding generations' be held responsible for the enforcement of the D'yandi mandate when the initiators themselves would not come out in the open? To think that the D'yandi Declaration itself says that the Datus are 'ready to sign petitions' (Appendix 1).

The second issue is *legitimacy of representation*. To what extent were the original D'yandi holders legitimate leaders of their supposed constituents? This has organisational implications. Pastor Rogelio evades this question by appealing to the

mission of the present activists. Edtami Mansayagan, in a separate interview with a London researcher, offers a circuitous explanation boiling down to an admission that some of the twenty-one *datus* might not be the recognised leaders in their communities (Taped interview with J. Putzel, April 1993). An unpublished study by a member organisation of the anti-PNOC campaign is more realistic. PRRM's report (1992:160ff) recognises that there are at least two camps of genuinely indigenous peoples who are claiming 'legitimacy' in representing Mt. Apo welfare, both 'throwing diatribes against each other'. It concludes that 'there is no single official Lumad position' and that 'neither camp can lay claim to a position representative of the true sentiments of the majority of the Lumad peoples'. This puts in question the legitimacy of the 'official declarations of various tribal groups' including, presumably, the anti-PNOC.

A third concern is *local connectivity*. How much effort have the protest campaigners exerted to integrate the sentiments and positionality of the local Manobo communities and their legally recognised leaders? If we are not certain of who are part of the original D'yandi, we are at least certain of who are not. One crucial figure missing is Datu Joseph Sibug.<sup>15</sup> Datu Sibug initially had mixed feelings with the PNOC, but very soon welcomed the project into Sayaban where he is remembered, among other things, as the builder of the village school. Being a son of a Manobo woman from Kidapawan, he gave prestige to the tribe when he founded Tribal Communities Association of the Philippines (TRICAP). He won the Ten Outstanding Young Men award in 1993, represented the Philippines in United Nations General Assembly in the same year, and served as Sectoral Representative for the indigenous peoples in the Philippine Congress until his untimely death in 1994 (Sibug 1994). Around the time of the 1989 D'yandi, Sibug's concern was to check other PNOC projects in Luzon and Visayas to get a good estimate of what could befall Mt. Apo if they hosted the project. His ready approval of the project, I gather from my fieldwork, greatly influenced the local Manobo reception of the power project in its early phase. One wonders whether the other *Datus* of the D'yandi had similar clout in their respective communities.

This lack of effective connection with the most directly affected villages manifested in the prejudice that developed among the protest groups against the

Sayaban people. The inclusion of the remoter tribes like the T'boli, Teduray, B'laan and, in some other accounts, Matigsalug in the north, clearly aimed to expand the network of the campaign. But it also conditioned the dismissal of the local Sayaban villagers as villains, for having 'sold their culture and their environment' to 'development propaganda and politicians' promises (Linao 1992). These 'diatribes' could be heard many times over the radio, naming the Sayaban people as the culprit in the Mt. Apo 'disaster'. It is no surprise, then, that as late as 1994, the organising alternative groups in Kidapawan, was still at its 'initial stage'.<sup>16</sup> The tendency to expand the network of protest action and use the media had succeeded but only at the expense of local organising. The political context of this tendency will be explored at some length later in this Study.

At this point, it can be objected that this search for the core-facts of an historic event distracts our attention from the more substantial issues; a kind of 'postmodern suspicion' on the 'strategies of sacredness' (cf. Caron 1995). I disagree. I am aware that sometimes a researcher 'gets deeply caught up in the practice of probing or digging ever more information or pursuing hidden secret or restricted knowledge' under the unquestioned assumption that 'unearthing secrets' or 'unlocking important mysteries' about a group makes one a better anthropologist (Malkki 1997:96). But I am convinced that this present interrogation is not what Malkki calls 'extraction of truth for its own sake'. Some things cry out for clarification because people, like some of those who attended the D'yandi Assessment in 1996, get confused (cf. PRRM 1992). Malkki herself does not rule out the role of an investigator being combined with that of a sincere witness. 'To pursue a caring vigilance, to be a witness,' she says, 'is not to lose concern for questions of evidence or explanation' (1997:96).

What I have done so far is to look at the influential moment of the ritualization of protest campaign in Mt. Apo, and its accompanying textualization in the form of a Declaration of Principles. I have tried to show that while D'yandi has its deep and widespread roots in Mindanao indigenous tradition, the practices that developed around it, including its elaboration in the Declaration, contains some perplexing signals. These could explain why even some of those who consider themselves bound to the D'yandi demands also get confused as to its legitimacy and its mandate.<sup>17</sup> The whole problem, of course, has to be placed within a wider political context of

ideological, cultural and even personal tensions besetting the indigenous people's movement especially in Mindanao during the late 1980s and early 1990s as we have earlier described in the review of literature. It would be interesting now to see how PNOC responded to D'yandi and how the battle of rituals that ensued revealed some operative presuppositions of both the power project and its protesters.

### 3. CONFLICT OF RITUALS AND PNOC CULTURAL RESEARCH

Protest took many forms, and so did the response of PNOC and its sympathisers. We concentrate here on the combination of counter-ritual and cultural research. Discourses of developers and protesters are too often presented either as parallel lines that never meet, or opposing forces that bump head-on. Actual practices are more complex. They collide, intertwine, untangle again, and perhaps imitate each other, or steal each other's strategies. Again, D'yandi seem to provide the occasion for analysing these practices.

#### Counter-Ritual and Counter-Counter-Rituals

D'yandi did hit PNOC hard. Barely two months after the release of the D'yandi Declaration of Principles, the World Bank withdrew its financial support for the project (*Our Common Ground* 1994:1). In its official report sent to international NGOs fighting for Mt. Apo, the Bank offered instead to help PNOC find alternative sites for energy resource (Rodil 1993). By February 1990, the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Ecology recommended the 'immediate termination of PNOC's activities' (PRRM 1994). PNOC buckled down, but only to prepare a 10-volume Environmental Impact Assessment or EIA (PNOC 1991).

Improving on past experience,<sup>18</sup> the 1991 EIA devoted a whole volume on socio-economics and cultural aspects of the energy project, plus a substantial portion of the Final Report. With some detailed narratives, the study affirmed that behind the 'veneer of modernity', the native culture was very much alive, the traditional central position of Mt. Apo was intact, and that 'this is a very important and probably the

most significant finding of the study' (PNOC 1991:171). If this was to true, then the Lumad elders' threat was also real:

PNOC appears to have completely ignored their existence. The fact that '21 Datus forged a D'yandi' and the compact was 'sealed in blood and wine', regardless of whether such was consummated through their initiative or 'manage[d]' by others, is at this point in time, a concord that may not easily be ignored. For it would take a lot of face-saving for the Datus to reverse the pledge they have sworn to: 'to fight and die for the sacred ancestral lands...

The issue on the 'violence of the religious and cultural right of the Tribal Filipinos' appears to be the 'hardest nut to crack'. The rest of the issues, namely, the illegality of the project, the destruction of remaining rainforest, the threat to the most important watershed in Mindanao, the costs of the project; and the unavailability of alternative solutions are not [as] insurmountable. (PNOC 1991:199)

The EIA warned that since the Mt. Apo Geothermal Project sits right at the 'centre of a social volcano', substantial measures have to be undertaken. 'If not properly appeased, the costs of socio-cultural remedial measures may be beyond government's reach' (PNOC 1991:235). Recommendations ranged from employment priorities, community development, a share in the company revenues, and others.

One of the so-called 'most cost-effective project modality' was the holding of 'culturally-valid propitiatory rites, provided these are not illegal and violent' (PNOC 1991:245). The DENR took this recommendation seriously and translated it into one of the requirements when in January 1992 it granted the long-coveted Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC). Compared to zero-waste disposal, Environmental and Tribal Welfare Trust Fund (ETWTF), reforestation, and other requirements, the propitiatory ritual was a minor one. It was, however, politically sensitive and culturally explosive, as the succeeding events proved.

On 27 February protest groups held a huge rally in reaction to the granting of ECC. Congressman Andolana and Bishop Pueblos were among the crowd. In their re-enactment of the D'yandi, tribal elders led by Datu Tulalang Maway and Datu Birang Ito reiterated their 1989 vow. Choreographed presentations dramatised the message that climaxed in the burning of two huge effigies of the geothermal exhaust pipes (OCEAN/KFI. 1992).



Figure 6. 3 Pamaas ritual sponsored by the PNOC. Company officials witness as a Manobo priest presents offerings to appease the mountain spirits and cast away the spell of the protesters' D'yandi. This photograph is taken from the *PNOC Annual Report* (1992) where the original caption runs: 'Officials of PNOC and Napocor participate in the 'Pamaas', a Manobo healing ritual to counter negative external forces. This paved the way for the start of exploration activities for Mindanao.' (PNOC 1992:23).



But on 10 March, impatient to end its two-year delay, PNOC answered back by holding its prescribed propitiatory ritual. PNOC top officials from Manila joined sympathetic tribal elders in a ritual called *Pamaas*. *Pamaas* is actually a very common Manobo ritual for appeasing the spirits, sealing contracts, or resolving conflicts. With PNOC sponsorship, however, *Pamaas* took a very definite political meaning. It was held in a newly constructed shed, with concrete floor and GI roofing, located near Lake Agco. It was to dispel the curse of the D'yandi and clear the way for the return of PNOC (Rodil 1993:21-22).

Just five days later, members of the New People's Army (NPA) operating in Mt. Apo, exploded landmines leading to the death of three policemen and injuries to 24 others in Makilala, close to the project area (OCEAN/KFI 1992). Although the attack might not have been directed at the project, it added tension to the situation.

Project sympathisers then strengthened their stance by performing another ritual called *Pangayaw* on 17 April to warn those who were against the completion of the development project. *Pangayaw* was a dangerous term to invoke since it meant a readiness for war. Bloodshed was averted when Datu Tulalang Maway, aged 85, dialogued with the people. Protest camp on 15 April was dismantled on 19 April upon the advice of Kidapawan police. Protesters transferred to the municipal plaza and then to the front of the Catholic De Mazenod Centre (OCEAN/KFI 1992).

D'yandi holders maintained, however, that no matter how the PNOC manipulated the tribal customs, the effects of the D'yandi would prevail because it was the most sacred of all Lumad pacts. So again, on 17 May 1992, oppositionists led by Datu Tulalang Maway, who was a participant of the original D'yandi, performed yet another ritual called *kanduli* or *panippas* this time at the peak of Mount Apo. This practice was traditionally done when a group was preparing for a defensive battle.<sup>19</sup> Violence was not inevitable (Rodil 1993:21), but remained possible if the government did not clarify its stand on the real issue of ancestral land (Apo Sandawa Sacred Mountain Film 1994). According to one observer, this time, it was a rather 'melancholy Panippas, desperately seeking the guidance of Apo Mandaragan' (Molintas 1992:16).

### Counter-Interpretation and Counter-Counter-Interpretation

Unlike the *D'yandi*, *Pamaas* was performed without a Declaration. Nevertheless, accounts and interpretations were not lacking. During the ceremony, some PNOC officials were conferred the rank of a datu, an act practically granting infinite access to the ancestral lands in exchange for jobs and funds (Rodil 1993:21). According to an observer (Alibutud 1992:42-43), the gifts offered by Datu Amado Pinantao, the 83-year old Manobo who officiated the rites, consisted of money---seven pesos and 77 centavos, liquor---bottles of *kwatro kantos* (*Ginebra San Miguel*), and food---pork and beef cooked without salt. They were meant to appease the mountain spirits. More importantly, perhaps, Datu Pinantao explained that the ritual also sought to remove the *D'yandi* curse which earlier shielded Mt. Apo from outsiders. 'It's like the Tagalog '*sumpa*', explained the datu. 'If they [the PNOC and the Napocor] continued their activities on the mountain, something bad would have happened to them. But now that I have dismantled the *D'yandi*, they can go on with the project' (Alibutud 1992:42).

Other interpreters expressed their support. Datu Joseph Sibug, who initially showed signs of hesitation towards the project, elaborated the message of the rite: 'We want to tell Apo Sandawa that these government officials are here to give development to cultural communities, not destruction' (*PDI* 22 March 1992, p. 14). Historian Heidi Gloria, serving as anthropologist for the Company, put it in more 'anthropological' term. *Pamaas*, according to her, was a 'healing ritual or a reversal rite', apparently making *Pamaas* a *D'yandi* antidote (cf. OCEAN/KFI. 1992). 'It is heartening to note,' Gloria sentimentally wrote later, 'that PNOC-MIGP has taken the initiative to retrieve the *Pamaas* and adopted a policy for the protection of native rights' (1997:62; also Lasaka 1997:77). But whether the PNOC staff took it seriously was a different matter.

Era España, a staunch protester, did not think so. 'They are making a joke out of our rituals,' she said to her audience. According to her, the holding of *Pamaas* to combat the sacred *D'yandi* was politically divisive and culturally insensitive. 'This would only mean that DENR and PNOC have little respect in the belief of the tribes...They want to let the *anitos* or spirits fight each other' (España 1993:4). Era

had a point. Indeed, Pamaas literally became a joke in the glossy in-house magazine of the PNOC.

PNOC's *Energy Forum* (1996) fondly recalled the event of 1992. One of the two anecdotes on the Pamaas in the Company's 'slice of life' corner, seemed to reflect the staff's sense of humour, at least during that time when the Company was already stable. I quote it here in full:

*A cow dressed for the ritual.* After two years of protracted consultation, PNOC was finally given the environmental compliance certificate for the Mt. Apo project. However, one of the conditions was that the company should hold the 'Pamaas' ritual to drive away the bad spirits from the projects. PNOC was supposed to bring seven white animals. On the eve of the ritual, PNOC was still one white cow short. Desperate, Agnes de Jesus and Lino Tongco dressed up one cow in white T-shirt and persuaded the Imam to accept the sacrifice. Luckily, the Imam was flexible enough to iron out this kink which could have prevented the ritual. (Diokno 1996:23)

Note the inappropriate use of the Islamic title *Imam* for Manobo *Datu*. To complete the fun, the jest was accompanied by an illustration of a brown cow wearing a tight white shirt. No solid conclusion can be drawn solely from these fragments as the Company's policy could also be gauged elsewhere. But if the Company was serious in its attempt to be a good guest to its hesitant host (Ramos 1995; cf. Factoran & Metin 1996:198-99), then there is a lot more to be done than drilling additional wells into the subterranean stream of Mt. Apo. PNOC personnel needed more serious cultural reorientation.

Unfortunately, many of the support groups had their own version of 'anthropological naïveté', to borrow from Steven Rood's terminology (1998). As late as 1996, Kinaiyahan Foundation, an environmentalist support NGO, could still confidently assert that the 'PNOC-backed ritual' was 'inconsistent to the true meaning of Pamaas'; it branded the PNOC Pamaas as 'blasphemy to the genuine cultural belief of the Lumad. While this could be true, their explanation betrays their selective appropriation of the Lumad cultural discourse. Allegedly informed by their native sources, the authors declare:

Pamaas is a ritual of sacrifice or offering performed to win forgiveness or make up for an offence. As such it can only be properly performed if the geothermal project is removed from Apo Sandawa, and only at the peak of the mountain never at the project site because the rite's aim is to please Apo Sandawa who resides at the peak.

On rituals, the PNOC's stand was: "PNOC agrees to assist in the conduct of such local or tribal rituals within reasonable terms and expenses. For example, PNOC will not be party

to any form of violence or illegal act. In addition, as agreed with the Ilomavis/Sayaban groups, PNOC will protect sacred spots, assure ingress and egress rights, and will be open to suggestion[s] on such activities and practices to promote tribal culture and traditions."

The PNOC promise to be "open to suggestions" remains unfulfilled. Their assurance to "protect sacred spots", while it sounds reassuring, reflects PNOC's rejection of the indigenous belief that the whole mountain itself is sacred. (Broeckman, et al 1996: 95-96)

After struggling with the politics of the D'yandi ritual and doing an exegesis of its Declaration, we could draw some insights on the working assumptions, among protest groups, about culture, politics and indigenous knowledge.<sup>20</sup> First of all, the question of having back-up is important because it reveals the support groups' concept of agency and self-determination, namely, that any Lumad action has to be unblemished by non-Lumad intervention to be considered authentically theirs. Having been members of the earliest protest allies, do they need others to explain how, like the 'PNOC-backed Pamaas', the D'yandi ritual and rhetoric owed probably as much to external support as to Lumad indigenous resource?

Secondly, protesters' rhetoric on Lumad culture shows unreflected assertions. The above quotation accuses the Pamaas celebration of being inauthentic because it was not done on the peak of Mt. Apo. But neither was D'yandi. The D'yandi Declaration itself, for example, clearly indicates that the original ritual was done not at the peak of Mt. Apo, not even near the sacred Lake Agco, but in a multi-purpose hall of a Protestant church in Kidapawan towncentre.

Protest literature abounds in similar confusion as to whether Apo Sandawa is the dwelling place of the Supreme God, or whether it is the Supreme God himself like Magbavaya;<sup>21</sup> whether the god Apo Sandawa lives in Mt. Apo or whether Mt. Apo is his burial site; whether the mountain is sacred because it houses the ancient altars of the Lumad or whether the whole sacred mountain is itself the object of their worship. There is also the big question of how these 'traditional' beliefs and practices co-exist or are integrated into the Protestant evangelical faith that most of the Manobo in Kidapawan have adopted since the coming of the American missionaries in the 1930s (Rambo 1975:108-115). Not that we are expecting total coherence in separate 'religious' statements. (My own Catholic tradition is full of mixed and mixed-up metaphors, too.)<sup>22</sup> The point is to understand why some other stakeholders could pronounce these assertions as 'an unmitigated HOAX and nonsense'. This quoted

phrase comes from the lawyer Johny Sibug, brother of Datu Joseph Sibug. In his written declaration, he argues:

The obviously concocted proposition that Mt. Apo is the ancestral land and altar of worship of the highlanders is an unmitigated HOAX and a lot of nonsense!

Born under the majestic shadows of this famous mountain of one-half pure Manobo blood, unlike the self-appointed 'protectors' of my people, from childhood in the early till the late 1930's when this land was still in its primeval state, not even for one moment have I ever come across an ageing or ancient Manobo relative who talked of Mt. Apo and its immediate environs as 'ancestral land or an object of worship.' Yet I lived and co-mingled with such illustrious datos and leaders with names such as Datu Pinantao (who is still alive), Datu Mansaloc Guabong...and many others...

Let us accept the fact that the PNOC grounds and plant is concentrated in about 10 hectares of land on the first ridge just before descending down to the Marbel River, way down from the summit which is still a long way up. How then can there be desecration of the altar at the summit, assuming the proposition has a semblance of truth. For some groups claim that we Manobo still persist in beliefs involving spiritism, animism and anito worship with such *fabricated rituals as a djandi* is not only a BIG JOKE but a gross INSULT to our intelligence and literacy standards knowing that literacy is high and in religion statistics show that 90% of the cultural communities in these parts are of Protestant sects (Alliance, Baptists, UCCP and Iglesia ni Kristo members).

An adherence to this proposition by some Church leaders is a patent admission that in these days when man has already walked on the moon, there are still those who seek to perpetuate godless creeds and foster superstition, and an admission also that they have miserably failed in their biblical mission to evangelise the alleged pagans. (Notarised statement, 11 July 1989. Italics supplied, but capitalisation original)

The issue of conversion to Christianity is a tricky one, and we do not have space to tackle its nuances here.<sup>23</sup> But this is something that the rhetoric of protest had always tried to evade (except Gatmaytan 1990:10-11), perhaps because it dilutes the purity of indigenous image that they assume they had to maintain. To promote the claims of the indigenous people on their ancestral territories, protest discourse tends to project them as anything but baptised Christians. Lawyer Sibug castigates the Catholic priests and nuns for their ironic role as patrons of 'godless creeds' (i.e. communist ideology) and 'pagan superstitions' (e.g. animism).

Attorney Sibug, however, does not have the last word either. His notarised statement reveals an equal amount of inconsistency. If D'yandi were a pure fabricated ritual, insulting to Christianised Manobo, what does he make of the Pamaas, a ritual of appeasement to the mountain spirits, that his respected Datu Pinantao officiated and his brother Joseph Sibug defended?

Another passage from his testimony betrays his own cultural presuppositions with regard to the notion of sacredness of a place:

During those early years, unless there was an itinerant Manobo hunter, you cannot meet or espy a single soul in that Mt. Apo region for five days, which was the period to and fro [sic] the summit. I declare under oath that I had never seen a solitary clearing or hut in those mountainous regions except for one hut of Landawe near the Agco which was a small store catering to mountain climbers. Kaingins only began to appear in the Sayaban area after the illegal logging in the middle of '60's. Sitio Sayaban only began during the centennial climb in April 1980, which was my 12<sup>th</sup> and last climb so far as of that year. The evidence is therefore very clear that no hill-tribe resided there, much more at the summit --- the alleged ancestral altar even up to this very moment. What then would be the basis for this ancestral fallacy? (Notarised statement, 11 July 1989).

Many things could be said about this statement, but let me point out only one. While Sayaban was indeed forested up until the late 1950s, it was, however, already named Sayaban even long before (hence its recognised name! Cf. Bernad 1959). It was the Sayaban (anvil area) of the Apao lineage. As we have discussed in Study 4, Apao and his descendants had already been hunting around the area since the early part of this century. To say that Sayaban began only in the 1980s is to associate the sitio with the remarkable, but nonetheless late, contribution of his brother Datu Joseph Sibug. Johny Sibug was not lying when he said that only the hut of Landawe could be seen in the forests around Lake Agco. But Landawe belonged to the big lineage of Apao whom Datu Pinantao himself did not know. I was surprised to hear this information from Datu Pinantao himself when I interviewed him, accompanied no less than by Johny Sibug himself. Either the Apao descendants of Sayaban are just nostalgic for an illusory past, or the Manobo of Kidapawan simply had no significant contact with them in the early days. I believe that the truth lies closer to the latter.

What emerges from this discussion is the significant, but never discussed, gap between the descendants of Apao in Sayaban that was part of the bigger Ginatilan, and the datus of the plains of Kidapawan.<sup>24</sup> The Sibugs and the Guabongs, for instance, do not appear in the long genealogy of Apao and his descendants. In effect, the Pamaas rituals that PNOC sponsored through the Kidapawan datus could be as much alien to the Manobo of Sayaban as the D'yandi of the protesters in 1989. It should not be surprising if the Sayaban folks decide to hold their own rituals---which in fact they did, this time, through the Tuddok cultural regeneration movement. We shall proceed to their alternative ritualization after discussing still another unforeseen repercussion of D'yandi Declaration.

### Framing (Up) Mt. Apo

Political analysts would probably call 'cultural framing' this use of ritualised actions and rhetorical devices for protest and counter-protest. D'yandi, in particular, despite its limitations, was indeed a meaning-constructing indigenous instrument that the Mt. Apo protesters utilised for the intensification and the spread of their campaign. This movement technique is best described by Tarrow, and clearly applies to D'yandi:

Out of a cultural toolkit of possible symbols, movement entrepreneurs choose those that they hope will mediate among the cultural underpinnings of the groups they appeal to, the sources of official culture and the militants of their movements—and still reflect their own beliefs and aspirations. (Tarrow 1994:122)

These 'cultural frames' help put the other arguments---like protection of biodiversity or State violation of ancestral heritage---into a form that not only makes sense to the mind but also moves people to action. When successful, it does not only strengthen the convinced, but also defines the arena of meaning and power even for the antagonists and observers. Cultural frames, then, may give shape to collective actions and even to political opportunities as well (cf. Gamson & Meyer 1996: 276).

Despite the usefulness of this insight, Hilhorst, working on the discourse formation of the Cordillera people's struggle, finds Tarrow's position 'highly problematic' and she has a point:

[Tarrow] presents collective action frames as carefully plotted and produced by entrepreneurs. By separating the entrepreneurs from the constituency of movements, he seems to deny agency to the non-entrepreneurs and forecloses them from an active role in the process of framing. Although this picture might be reflective of certain moments, for example, when an established movement launches a campaign to expand its constituency, it doesn't capture those moments of movement when framing is 'everybody's' business and concern. (Hilhorst 1997:128)

By capturing such pivotal moments, Hilhorst is able to describe how a simple theme like 'land is life' in the Cordillera was differently framed and became a cause worth dying for. It was later recruited into the Communist discourse of class-based nationalist struggle which, in turn, branched into the fight for regional autonomy in its present divergent interpretation. Hilhorst, however, could have developed the role of the *Bodong* peace pact rituals beyond the scanty treatment that she gave in few paragraphs (cf. 1996:133, 145).

At any rate, the Mt. Apo case lends itself to a similar approach. As has been shown above, the meanings of D'yandi and other rituals shifted from one power

struggle to the next in the hands of different campaign entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. I would extend this project and explore another 'twist' in the transformation of the D'yandi discourse. Again, it is in the hands of the PNOC, but this time as a frame for a cultural study.

In 1994, feeling that the legal problem and the environmental issue being resolved, PNOC decided to take the social and cultural question more seriously. Enjoying the new image of being called 'nature-friendly company', it also had ambitions to outdo its opponents in cultural sensitivity. Probably noting that even the Lumad sympathisers had neglected this part of the struggle, PNOC launched a multi-million peso cultural research of ten indigenous cultural communities around Mt. Apo.<sup>25</sup> The study profiles nine indigenous communities around and even outside Mt. Apo National Park, plus the relocatees within the Mt. Apo Geothermal Project area.

The bulk of the eight-volume report is beyond this Study. But one of its conclusions is disturbing, and it shall be the object of this section. The Final Report says: **'In regard to Mt. Apo, the majorities of the respondents in the nine communities surveyed professed no cultural attachment to Mt. Apo while admitting that they had heard about it mostly from the radio and from friends and relatives'** (Gloria 1997:vii. Bold highlighting in the original). The Report adds an equally grand declaration about the relocatees. Gloria writes: **'A striking finding from among the twenty-one primary relocatees was the conscious rejection of the indigenous culture. But for the President of the Village Association, a Manobo, none of the residents expressed a desire to preserve their native culture.'** (Gloria 1997:x. Bold highlighting in the original (cf. Lasaka 1997:84)

How did they get this kind of statements? What question did the researchers ask? How did people answer? What exactly is meant by 'cultural attachment'? How would the company and the other policy-makers use such statements? How would this kind of conclusion affect the struggle for the claiming of Mt. Apo as ancestral domain? A detailed critique of the whole 'cultural study' needs more space. I shall, however, discuss two points. The first is about the conclusion, and the second is about a curious step in the method of research.

First, this conclusion is surprising since just a few years back, the celebrated EIA report of 1991 warned the policy makers against being deceived by the 'veneer of



modernity' in the lives of the Mt. Apo tribal people. 'Their basic culture and worldview' the report said, 'are still intact' and this 'is a very significant and probably the most significant finding of the study'.

The vividness and alacrity with which cultural beliefs and traits were described belie the claim from certain quarters that Mt. Apo is not 'sacred' to the natives or that their culture has already changed to the degree that their worldview has lost all reference to Apo Sandawa. The fact is that Mt. Apo has not ceased to be the wellspring of Bagobo and Manobo cultures even though some of them no longer live within the National Park. (PNOC 1991:169-74)

But why the change in observations in less than five years? One answer can be drawn from the same Report: 'Rapid acculturation or Bisayanization may have occurred over the last few years as a consequence of very high hopes and expectations in regard to the benefits they believed were forthcoming from M1GP.' (Gloria 1997:x; Lasaka 1997:v, 85). That means, PNOC gave the impression that modernisation would be coming so soon and so strongly that the local Manobo somehow got carried away and so abandoned their native culture even before the total impact of this 'rapid change' had hit them. It reveals a fundamental flaw in the whole conceptual framework of the Gloria study: it is in seeing culture merely as a functional habit, and the local residents as totally vulnerable people who are easily victimised by the change in their environment.

The 'Conceptual Framework' gives away its basic premise. Taking off from George P. Murdock (1965:84), it says: 'Culture consists of habits, whose persistence depends on whether or not they gratify human needs, biological and otherwise. Gratification reinforces habits, strengthens and perpetuates them, while lack of gratification inevitably results in their extinction or disappearance' (Gloria 1997:8). 'Culture,' Gloria continues, still using Murdock's essay, 'is largely a product of adaptation. It tends to adjust to the dynamics of the physical and social order, or environment. Changes in the environment and social order alter the group's life conditions. They create new needs and render old forms unsatisfactory, stimulating trial and error behaviour and cultural innovations. As products of this adaptive process, cultural elements tend to form a consistent and integrated whole and are subject to a strain of consistency with each other [Summer 1986:5-6]' (Gloria 1997:8).<sup>26</sup>

Does this not sound like an apologia for the cultural change the Manobo are forced to experience as they 'adapt' to the PNOC intrusion? Apparently, there is nothing to worry about since by and by, the people will, through 'trial and error',

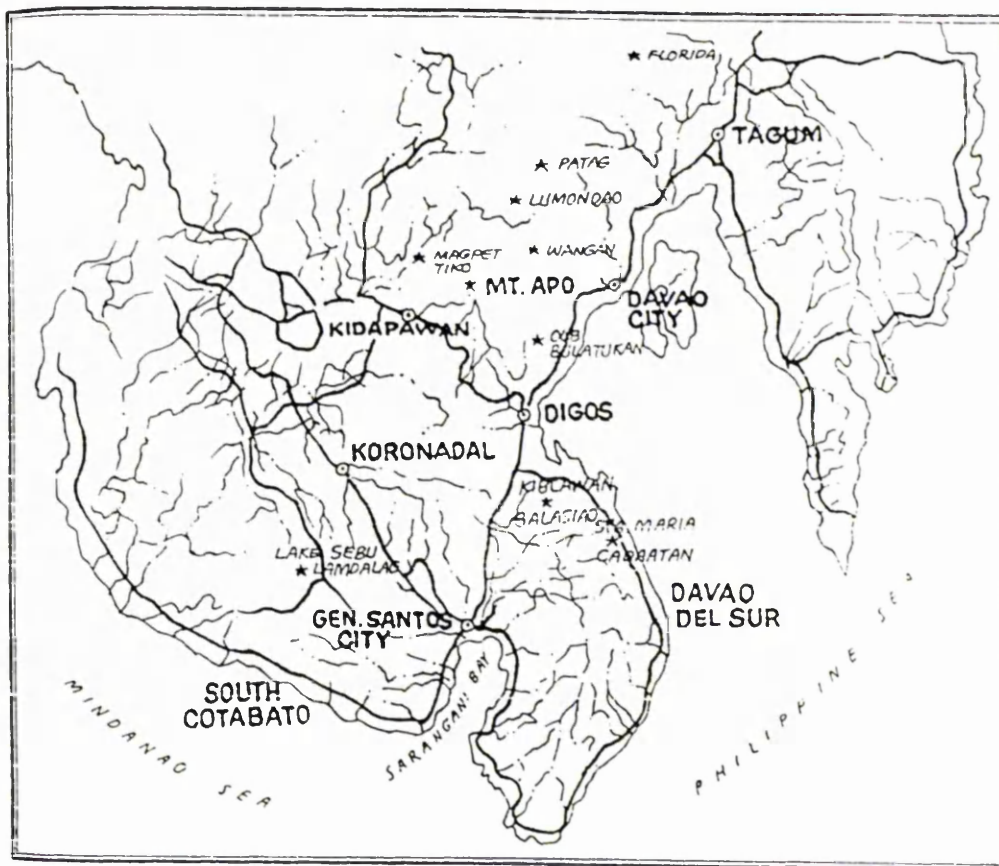
eventually form a 'cultural whole' that would re-establish a new equilibrium. But since this is not the place and the time to discuss the more theoretical arguments against this anthropological view, I appeal to the discussions on the bankruptcy of such a notion of culture. To take just one quote:

The notion of culture has recently been undergoing some of the most radical rethinking since the early 1960s...[O]ne of the core dimensions of the concept of culture has been the notion that culture is 'shared' by all members of a given society. But as anthropologists have begun to study more complex societies, in which divisions of class, race, and ethnicity are fundamentally constitutive, it has become clear that if we speak of culture as shared, we must now always ask 'By whom?' and 'In what ways?' and 'Under what conditions?' (Dirks, Eley & Ortner 1994:3-4)

Guided by such reconceptualization of culture, we can ask: Who said they have no more 'cultural attachment' to Mt. Apo? How did you ask the question? Whose understanding of 'cultural attachment' are you using? And so forth. Then it becomes problematic to pronounce such blanket and loaded statements that the indigenous peoples---nine of them, plus a relocation community---have all of a sudden ceased to maintain their tradition.

Is this the only explanation? Perhaps there is another. There is. And it has something to do with the scope of the study.

The researchers of EIA 1991 covered the municipalities near the project site and the Mt. Apo National Park, but focused their interviews on the most directly affected tribes 'domiciled in the upper elevations of the National Park' (PNOC 1991: 172). Whereas the 'consultants' of the 1997 Cultural Study reached out even to people outside the park boundaries, covering nine tribes as far as the Tiboli in the south and the Ata of Kapalong in the north. What was the criterion for choosing these communities? When this question arose during the presentation of results in Davao City, the presenters were at a loss in answering.<sup>27</sup> But the answer was in the text of the research contract, namely, that the groups or tribes to be studied 'should be found within and around the Mt. Apo National Park' and that they should have a 'valid and verifiable cultural attachment to Mt. Apo'.<sup>28</sup> How was this to be interpreted in terms of actual ethnic groups? Amihan-Vega, the consultant for Environment and Natural Resources Management Module, later explains the link between the Cultural Study and the D'yandi:



### MATCHING D'YANDI AREAS WITH SCOPE OF CULTURAL STUDY

#### **D'YANDI AREAS**

1. Bagobo
2. Manobo
3. T'boli
4. B'laan
5. Matigsalug
6. Kaulo
7. Teduray
8. Ubo
9. K'lagan

#### **PNOC RESEARCH AREAS**

- |               |                                |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Bagobo     | Lumondao, Marilog,             |
| 2. Manobo     | (Tico) Manobo, Magpet          |
| 3. T'boli     | Lamdag, Lake Sebu              |
| 4. B'laan     | Balasiao, Kiblawan             |
| 5. Matigsalug | Patag, Marilog                 |
| 6. Tagakaulo  | Patag, Marilog                 |
| 7. Jangan     | Wangan, Calinan                |
| 8. Ata        | Florida, Kapalong              |
| 9. Tagabawa   | Old Bulatukan, Makilala        |
| 10. Relocates | Lake Agco, Ilomavis, Kidapawan |

**Map 4.** The map (Amihan-Vega (1997) shows the location of the research sites covered by the PNOC Cultural Study. The sites are chosen to match the tribes said to be represented by the D'yandi pact of 1989. The composite list of the D'yandi areas comes from many sources. They cannot be pinpointed, however, because of insufficient information.

In choosing the project sites for the study, one of the criteria used was the indigenous groups' cultural attachment to Mt. Apo as mentioned in the *D'yandi*, an intertribal blood compact forged and signed by the Bagobo and other Lumad chiefs in 1989 to 'defend' their area from the Mt. Apo Geothermal Project. The presence of a good number of particular ethnolinguistic groups in the locality was also taken into consideration regardless of its proximity to Mt. Apo. (Amihan-Vega 1997:12)<sup>29</sup>

D'yandi has come full circle. The protest groups framed their campaign by means of the D'yandi that was sealed by 21 datos from nine (not two or five) tribes who stood witness to the sacredness of Mt. Apo. By so doing, they expanded the network of campaign to include not only those literally and directly hit by the project, but also those who find emotional or aesthetic and spiritual attachment to the mountain, whether directly or indirectly affected by the power project. That has magnified the issue and won for the campaign the enthusiastic participation of many sectors. It also promised the formation of a regional or sectoral identity of the Lumad, comparable to the regional formation being worked out in the Cordillera.

Yet, when PNOC took this scale as its frame for its cultural study, the result was precisely a diluted and weakened link due to geographical distance and other factors. There seems no substantial reason to suspect that the whole Cultural Study was meant to subvert the D'yandi through research. That much can be said of the *Pamaas*. I suggest that even if there were no problem with the cultural presuppositions in the PNOC research, it was still likely that those who live farther from Mt. Apo would not be as 'attached' to Mt. Apo as the D'yandi discourse had it. This is because the dominant idiom for ancestral domain claim was attachment to the land of one's *own* ancestral heritage. To put it crudely, it is possible that other tribes were more attached to their village-level sacred spaces than to Mt. Apo itself.<sup>30</sup>

In a sense, those who conducted a review of the indigenous people's organising efforts in the Philippines have anticipated this consequence. (One of them was Agbayani himself). 'The crucial point,' the Review says, 'is the notion of the collective self in self-determination' (SENTRO 1993). When we talk of self-determination, we must ask how that 'self' is collectivised and defined. Most often, we presume that the land, 'the gift from the gods and source of all life' serve the purpose, and that rituals cement that collective identity. 'Rituals play an integrating role'. This also works when the scale of solidarity being attempted goes beyond the

ordinary village level. Grander inter-village pacts or treaties, like the *Bodong* in the Cordillera and *D'yandi* in Mindanao, could help regulate trade and peace negotiations.

But 'beyond these specific or ad hoc arrangements,' the Review admits, 'the supra-village collective identity becomes almost non-existent'. Such public identification markers like generic 'ethno-linguistic collective names are produced and imposed by the outside institutions such as the colonial and the neo-colonial state, religious and educational institutions'. There is no guarantee that the multi-tribal collective identity achieved through ritual would be effectively translated into actual political structure. The Review now calls for a more down-to-earth approach to organising indigenous people:

What are the implications of these for IP organising work, particularly at a time when numerous outside non-IP forces are all upon the indigenous communities, some with renewed interest in their culture and especially their natural resources? Many of these, whether from GOs, NGOs, religious organisations, academic institutions, local and foreign big business, or even lowland migrants, bring in ideas and practices often at cross-purposes with each other but similar on their divisive and erosive impacts on indigenous communities. Not to be ignored is the reality that there are other IP organisations with different development frameworks...There are no clear indications of emerging region-wide and country-wide institutions and symbols, in spite of the occasional successes at projecting IP issues nationally and internationally. (SENTRO 1993:188).<sup>31</sup>

Where does this all leave us, or better still, where does it lead the Lumad? After the hyper-media projection of the D'yandi through the dedicated participation of different sectors, some Lumad leaders have called for a return to grassroots organising, a 'moratorium to big campaigns' and giving priority to 'strengthening local organisations' (cf. Gaspar 1997:37). The same message was put forward during the PANAGTAGBO assembly which I attended in Kidapawan in 1996. Perhaps this shift of orientation and frame of action could be read as reflective of the shift from the fast-track, quick-response 'protest campaigns' to a more sustained and sustainable 'social movement'. This, I believe, is not far from what the Tuddok cultural regeneration movement in Sayaban is aiming at by strategically scaling down organising so that they could own up whatever they are doing. To what extent this would suffice to face issues bigger than their tribal resources remains to be seen.

## Notes on Study 6: The Embarrassment of Rituals

<sup>1</sup> I use 'protest campaign', 'protest groups' and 'protesters' interchangeably to refer to the organised public resistance to the PNOC power project in Mt. Apo. This anti-PNOC campaign is a work of many groups and individuals, both Lumad natives (e.g. SBM, ALUHAMAD), their non-Lumad supporters (e.g. TABAK, LRC, and KFI) as well as the co-operation of both (e.g. TFAS, ASLPC). I am reserving the term 'movement' to the collective action which carries forward a qualitative change in society and culture that is broader than, say, stopping a development project (e.g. Lumad Social Movement). I resonate then with a similar distinction between 'social movement' and 'protest movement' introduced by Surendra (1987:208), and between 'protest movement', 'protest campaign' and 'social movement' made lately by Byrne (1997:116ff).

<sup>2</sup> This suspicion arises not only from my fieldwork observations, but also from some comparative material from Australian Aboriginal experience (Whittaker 1994; Head 1990), Hawaii geothermal project (Carroll (1989), northern Philippines (Tauli-Corpuz 1992) and others (Benda-Beckmann 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault (Quoted in Rabinow 1982:187; cf. Goodman 1997:783)

<sup>4</sup> Personal communication with Nonoy Rodriguez in Davao City, 19 November 1996. Also from various conversations with Carol Arguillas during my fieldwork.

<sup>5</sup> Not that there were no critical assessment being done. First, Jimid Mansayagan's few pages of the 'History of Lumad Mindanaw' supposedly serves this purpose but remains unpublished except for some precious references found in Gaspar (1997:36). The 'history' is part of LM's self-reflection since mid-1990s. During the First Forum of PANAGTAGBO on 6-10 December 1995, which I attended, representatives of LM offered to discuss these lessons that they have learned from Mt. Apo campaign and from working with ideological support groups. The body refused, however, because 'the other side' was not well-represented. Secondly, a document exists based on a review of indigenous people's organising in the Philippines assisted by OXFAM-UK and Ireland (SENTRO 1993). The section on KAMP is most relevant to this Study. Despite its participatory intent, however, it lacks the contribution of the Mt. Apo Lumad for reasons that will be made clear below.

<sup>6</sup> Some policy studies are less polite. One report on the issue of health, environment and sustainable development credits the Mt. Apo protesters for 'compel[ing] the national Government to review its policies, environmental laws and regulations, and specific project implementation guidelines'; but it also castigates them for delaying the process of government approval and raising the cost of energy projects. 'Clearly, although ECC conditions covering technological provisions are necessary, to keep costs down those that pertain to social acceptability (e.g. medical outreach programmes, educational packages etc.) should be deleted.' (Torres, *et al* 1994:31-34). Other policy-oriented studies include concerns on health (Guerrero 1993) and public participation and environmental impact assessment (Sales 1994; Rivera 1994; Factoran & Metin 1996).

<sup>7</sup> In 1984, during the First General Assembly of Lumad-Mindanao multi-sectoral alliance, the Lumad immediately called for a 'pure-Lumad' organisation. This led to the creation of a separate KADUMA-Lumad support group as distinct from Lumad-Mindanao which was an indigenous people's organisation (See Appendix 2)

<sup>8</sup> We gather from an assessment of indigenous peoples organising in the Philippines that very early in 1990s, 'one regional member-organisation (LM) has been "dissolved" although most of its local affiliates have remained intact and links up directly with KAMP. This is currently being handled as a special case' (SENTRO 1993:157, 183). KAMP, the 'national federation of genuine and progressive organisations of indigenous peoples', served as 'the main channel in providing a national framework to the indigenous peoples' issues and struggles' (SENTRO 1993:166-7). With KAMP's withdrawal of support from LM, the latter's 'whole structure weakened' and its 'momentum was lost' (Gaspar 1997:36). During this difficult period, LRC remained Lumad Mindanaw's faithful support.

<sup>9</sup> Datu Silimbag is referring to the Ata-Manobo of Talaingod, Davao del Norte. In 1991, the Government granted Industrial Forest Management Agreement (IFMA) to Alcantara and Sons, Inc. (Alsons) when the latter's Timber License Agreement (TLA) expired in 1989. This 'reforestation program' resulted in the evacuation of many Ata-Manobo from their land. The Talaingod then launched a *pangayaw* (tribal vendetta) which led to the death of seven Alsons workers in October 1994 (SAGIP 1995; cf. MMNS 1993:96-100).

<sup>10</sup> Bernardo V. Lopez 'Tribesmen assail PNOC on Apo power projects' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Sunday, 9 April 1989, p. 2. Also 'PNOC urged to stop Apo power projects, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 13 April 1989.

<sup>11</sup> For a limited but comparative list of Bagobo terms, see Hayase 1989.

<sup>12</sup> The original dictionary entry reads: '**Diandi**. ---Alianza, pacto, convención, amistad. Para hecer [sic] *diandi* dos bagobos suelen regalarse mutuamente armas y otras alhajas de su uso, y si lo hacen con juramento, usan la fórmula de cortar el bejuco. Mientras se guarda fielmente el pacto se tratan como hermanos, y protejen mutuamente' (Gisbert 1892:23). Note, however, that D'yandi does not appear in Laura Benedict's famous study of Bagobo ceremonial, myth and magic (Benedict 1916).

<sup>13</sup> E.g. *Janji* agreement; contract; arrangement; formal bargain and not merely an amicable understanding (*muafakat*). Ex. *Berjanji* to make such an agreement; *bertepat janji* fulfil an agreement; *mungkir janji* violate an agreement; *adat di-isi janji di laboh* when the law has been observed the contract is binding (Wilkinson, R. J. 1932).

<sup>14</sup> This Declaration was also published in *Philnajor* in its Special Issue on Mt. Apo, May 1990, 2(2):26-27. The *Midweek* version uses 'D'yandi'. I have adopted here the *Philnajor* version for the sake of consistency in spelling. It is not clear when the 'original' statement was drafted. Neither of the versions states whether the declaration was originally in English or some other language.

<sup>15</sup> Sibug has always been associated with the Government even during the Marcos regime. In 1982, Datu Sibug mediated between the Government and Datu Mambiling Ansabu, leader of the tribal rebellion against a cattle ranch in Arakan Valley. This led to surrender of Datu Mambiling. Mambiling, however, returned to the jungle to take up arms again because of failed promises of the Government (MMNS 1993:94-96).

<sup>16</sup> The update states: 'Our report deals with the organised communities in eight areas or parishes: Antipas, Magpet, Arakan, Bakong, Carmen, Columbio, MAKALO (Kabacan/Matalam), Makilala. Other areas (Roxas, Kidapawan Parish) are not included in this assessment because the organising there is still at the initial stage and they participate

through the overall Tribal Association ASLPC.' (Tribal Filipino Apostolate Report 1994, p. 2). In 1996, the Kidapawan parish church appointed a community organiser to start organising Manobo in the area.

<sup>17</sup> This confusion could also be due to the coercive capacity of the whole Declaration itself. The D'yandi Declaration, unlike the *Pagta ti Bodong* of the Cordillera in 1975, had no clear set of sanctions. Without fuss, the document, which was signed (not just sealed) by 150 identifiable Bontoc and Kalinga Elders, promulgated six concrete sanctions against 'working on the dam project' or 'selling their goods/products or giving food' to the employers of the Company. The peace pact holders are declared not responsible for any acts of violence done to people working on the dam project. (*Anti-Slavery Society* 1993:105-106). The Mt. Apo D'yandi had no such concrete provisions.

<sup>18</sup> In December 1988, PNOC submitted an environmental impact assessment to the DENR. This EIA was severely criticised for being 'substandard' (cf. Mincher 1993), and for 'neglecting the social impact' on the local residents and the environment (Fay, et al 1990:21). Delfin Ganapin, Jr., prominent environmental consultant from the University of the Philippines in Los Banos, judged the social impact module as 'very weak'. 'It did not even take into account the impact of the project on tribal land rights...that the affected area is a national park' (cited in Fay, et al 1990:21).

<sup>19</sup> This historical account relies primarily on Rodil 1993, and Philippine Resource Centre 1994:12-13. It is understandable that other accounts exclude the pro-project rituals (Broad & Cavanagh 1993), but it is amazing how Sales (1994) study of people's participation in the Mount Apo project could have missed the D'yandi in his chronology of events.

<sup>20</sup> Despite public claims to knowledge of indigenous culture, there is evidence that protesters felt they had to do much research themselves. For example, in February 1993, TFAS (Manila, Kidapawan and Davao Chapters) sent two teams for a two-day Environmental Investigation Mission to Mt. Apo. The Mission's finding sounds insecure: 'The study of the socio-economic/cultural impact of the PNOC's Mt. Apo geothermal power plant has been hampered by the general lack of socio-economic/cultural data against which we can compare local conditions before and after the construction of the project' (TFAS 1993:6).

<sup>21</sup> E.g. 'Most of the Mindanao tribes consider the area of *Apo Sandawa* as their place of origin, as their most sacred sanctuary where their ancestral spirits find their home. *Apo Sandawa* himself is venerated as a great spirit protecting both the tribes and the island. If he is desecrated, they believe that both the tribes and the island will be doomed to sudden destruction' (Geremia 1990:56).

<sup>22</sup> 'Consistent with a perception of social movements as constructed processes, instead of a unitary phenomenon, I propose to view discourse formation as negotiated. Non-linear, multi-polar and *not necessarily consistent*, they are emergent properties that evolve out of the practice of collective action' (Hilhorst 1997:129. Highlighting supplied).

<sup>23</sup> For early, local and generally sympathetic first hand accounts of missionary influence on Kidapawan Manobo and neighbours, see Spottswood (1960), Eleosida (1961), Kurais II (1964), Olson (1967), Cocjin (1969), Yuag (1969), especially Handoc (1973) and Rambo 1973.



<sup>24</sup> This is clearly felt in the celebration of the *Allaw ta Apo Sandawa* (Mt. Apo Day Festival), which started as birthday party of Datu Joseph Sibug in 1980s and has been held annually on 7 April in Sayaban. Visiting tribal leaders from other provinces and government officials from as far as Manila convene and dine among themselves, with the barest minimum participation of the Sayaban folks. The rituals of conferring datuship to outsiders and the lack of food for the local people was felt so 'insulting' that during my fieldwork in 1996, the elders of Apao wanted to do away with the feast and hold their own Apao festival instead.

<sup>25</sup> PNOC entered into a research contract with the Ateneo de Davao University, with consultants coming from other universities and colleges. Starting in 1994, it went into several drafts with titles changing from 'Cultural Adaptations and the Mt. Apo Geothermal Project: A Research and Action Study of 10 Indigenous Communities in Mindanao' to 'A Baseline Study of 10 Indigenous Communities around Mt. Apo'. Note the shift of focus away from the effects of the geothermal project on the communities involved. The initial result was presented to some twenty-five academics and policy makers, one year late in 1996, but was only released early in 1997.

<sup>26</sup> Although Murdock's book is not identified in the Report, it is very likely that the reference is to his 1945 essay reprinted in his *Culture and Society* (1965). Gloria seems to have picked up only one strand of Murdock's idea. Murdock qualifies his notion of adaptation: 'Culture is gratifying, of course, not in an absolute sense but in a relative sense. To a slave for, example, the submission and drudgery demanded by his status are not pleasant; relative, however, to the painful alternative of punishment or death for rebellious behaviour, observance of the cultural requirements of his status is gratifying or 'reinforcing' (Murdock 1965:84n3). The other reference, which Murdock mentions, is Sumner's *Folkways*, published in 1906.

<sup>27</sup> 'Dissemination of PNOC Research: A Baseline Study of 10 Indigenous Cultural Communities around Mt. Apo.' September 20-22, 1996, Pearl Farm Beach Resort, Davao City. While I thanked the research team for inviting me, I registered my objection that she has not invited reactors from the tribal communities themselves.

<sup>28</sup> Mt. Apo Cultural Study, Contract Number EDC 94-110, between PNOC-Energy Development Corporation and Ateneo de Davao University, for the duration between 10 May 1994 to 9 May 1995.

<sup>29</sup> 'The nine (9) other indigenous communities were signatories of the D'yandi Pact of 1989. They were the oppositors to the M1GP' (Gloria 1997:2); 'Each of these indigenous communities was chosen because of its relevance to M1GP. All of them were represented in the D'yandi of 1987 [sic] and signatories of the Blood Compact in opposition to PNOC-M1GP seven years after the Blood Compact was made' (Lasaka 1997:68).

<sup>30</sup> During the 1996 D'yandi Assessment, for instance, some participants clarified that the commitment of D'yandi was to defend one's own tribal territories.

<sup>31</sup> In a sense, too, this problem is universal. During the 'Indigenous Human Rights Conference' sponsored by RAI and Survival International that I attended on 12 November 1997, this tension between effective campaign and nuanced analysis came out. 'There is no fixed end point in human rights, and the real gains made may yet be undone.' (*Anthropology Today* 14(1):18)

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Study 7

## **Ethnography and Ethnogenesis**

### **Fieldwork Learning and Learning**

*'I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism  
that would not try to judge, but to bring an oeuvre,  
a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires,  
watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch  
the sea-foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would  
multiply not judgements, but signs of existence. Perhaps  
it would invent them sometimes---all the better. All the better.'*  
---'The Masked Philosopher'<sup>1</sup>

AS IN ALL INQUIRY, ethnographic research could only proceed with a certain investment of belief, a belief that there is something there to be known or discovered. It could be a different manner of narrating truth in history or putting social structure in motion, a peculiar way of nurturing nature, or a challenging view of collective existence. Now what if that 'something' is still being brought to life by the people being studied? The ethnographer then could patiently witness its unfolding and document the process of its invention or renegotiation. But, what if in this practice of witnessing, the cultural researcher herself is recruited in the people's self-regeneration? She, then, by choice and/or by chance, becomes a partial partner in the invention of the object of her study. The result could be not so much a blurring of disciplinary boundaries but an overlapping of projects between academic ethnography and grassroots ethnogenesis. I am led to think that my research in Mt. Apo embodies this learning.

This research opened with a search for a way of doing ethnography that would do justice to the minute actions of people in their struggle for meaning and resources in the context of a contested development project. I hope to have shown how 'tributaries' of action of energised individuals have led to the formation of 'streams' of cultural movement (Studies 3, 4, 5). I also hope to have presented the complexity of the context of this struggle in the encounters among local actors and

support groups, project officers and paramilitary personnel, as well as pastors, priests and protesters (Studies 2-6). Study 1 has prefaced all this by showing the cross-continental links between local movement and international mandates for advocacy.

The limitations of the present work are many and obvious. One would wish, for instance, to see separate Studies on Manobo indigenous ecological knowledge in Mt. Apo, on gender issues especially as they are linked with PNOC employment and with tribal leadership, on the religious motivations and local theologising of movement leaders, as well as on the nascent arts of Manobo poetry, painting and pottery. These, however, will have to wait for another presentation.

As I draw to a close, two questions linger and invite reflection. One is on the local or on-site cultural movement in Mt. Apo, and the other on the peripatetic, multi-stranded practice of fieldwork involved with such a movement. They could serve as frame for this last and concluding Study.

## 1. POETICS AND POLITICS OF ETHNOGENESIS

The first question echoes from the early days of my fieldwork in Mt. Apo. Apo Ambolugan asked me, 'Why do you still want to study us? We have no more culture.' I take the question to express another instance of what has been observed many times by researchers in many parts of the Philippines---the avowal of a certain cultural depression, a collective low self-esteem which is not reducible to simple modesty or nostalgia for a glorious past. It uses an idiom of comparison at the expense of the self. I have to confess that I got personally hit by this depression on a very profound psychic level especially that I witnessed this sense of '*pagkaubos*' (feeling inferior) in various ways. It ranged from overt statements like 'We are the least of the tribes', to the covert embarrassment of hunters for not being able to catch a prey in their disturbed forest; from the awkwardness of borrowing old gongs so that they could dance again, to the pain of being fired from the power company because they lacked the outsiders' technical skills; from being scolded by nurses in the municipal clinic, to feeling accused by environmental activists of selling their souls to the 'development aggressor'. When I left Mt. Apo, I could not deny the

psychological fatigue that I carried within me. I have touched on this point partly in the beginning of Study 3. Despite the dominant discourse of culturelessness, I have answered that question of Ambolugan with an affirmation of what I was beginning to see but could only hope to celebrate later.

More important than my own answer was the response of Ambolugan's fellow tribespeople. My conduct during fieldwork was simply an attempt to witness and accompany the counter-movement of Ambolugans' fellow Manobos for cultural regeneration. Apo Ambolugan himself participated in this initiative spearheaded by Tuddok in Sayaban. He was there during the first Family Reunion of the Umpan clan. His wife Ambaning led the dancing of the women. Ambolugan was also a regular participant during the collective reconstruction of the Sayaban history for their ancestral domain claim (Study 5).

It was a pity that in October 1996, while his niece Beting Colmo was attending the anthropologists' conference in Benguet to talk about what cultural regeneration they had achieved,<sup>2</sup> Apo Ambolugan died. He did not live to attend the second and much intensified Family Reunion in early 1997. Nor was he able to participate in the later deliberation on the ancestral domain claims. But all is not lost. Ambolugan's fellow descendants of Apao answered his question by creating a movement. The following section reflects on Tuddoks' development in its understanding and practice of cultural regeneration.

### **Tuddok's Initial Notion of Culture**

Tuddok's original idea of cultural regeneration was supposedly simple. Leaders Tano and Beting desired to retrieve what they nostalgically miss---traditional values like family closeness and resource sharing. It also meant the return to the practice of old rituals, especially *Pakaa't Kallo* (feeding of farm tools), the recital of epic songs called *Uwahing* which lasted for several nights. They missed those lively responses of their fellow Manobos who would listen and react to the epic singing even from the silence of their own homes. Cultural regeneration meant giving back the central place of the datu as the village strong and wise man, with popularly recognised *gorô*, or the power of the word, wit and wisdom manifested for example in the datu's capacity to

settle disputes within a remarkable jail-less society. Part of this regeneration was to recover ancient ways of healing through the use of herbs and barks according to the instructions of spirits communicated in dreams. Cultural regeneration involved the renewed desire to learn and speak their Obo language and possibly produce literature in it, not limited to translating English evangelical songs as has been done so far in SIL projects. It also meant that people would start dancing again and therefore the traditional bright red costumes with the ornamental sequins and beads would again brighten their public spaces during their self-chosen tribal festivals. The whole net effect was supposed to be the recovery of their collective self-confidence and self-determination.

There was one serious aspect of this culturalist discourse. Tuddok leaders wanted to work for cultural regeneration 'without getting into politics'. This might sound naïve or essentialist, but not if we consider what it involved. First of all, Tuddok did not want to tackle the issue of the presence of the PNOC. A number of the members of the village, and even of the Umpan families themselves, were already working in the power company. Touching this politically sensitive issue could divide rather than unite them. The last thing they wanted was to be associated with the so-called 'alternative movements'---and for some serious reasons. In her personal manifesto entitled 'Our Simple Story', Beting sharply analysed her tribe's situation and bitterly explained how they got disillusioned even with those who claimed to be their 'saviours':

To highlight our powerlessness as tribal people, issues were raised (both old and new) by...the alternative thinkers from the alternative movements. So when they blew up these issues, sometimes we did not understand what they were talking about...but it was impolite not to say 'Thanks!'...

The alternative movements perceived us as poor and powerless beings who were in need of liberating development plans, strategies and projects. Ironically, in their quest to liberate us from our powerlessness, they initiated programs that implemented projects in which we were identified not as working partners but as 'beneficiaries'...

Some paid attention to us, especially those who were interested in drawing us to their side or in attracting us to work in their institutions that, like other NGO institutions, claimed to serve the interest of tribal people. This was just one of the many ways that caused division among ourselves. Before we knew it, we were already absorbed into this chain of divisions until we spoke in different tongues. How do you think we could ever understand each other again? (Beting Colmo, Notes, January-February 1996).

One of the burning issues that the political movements attached to indigenous peoples' agenda was the protection of the environment. Tuddok tried not to highlight this as well. There have been reports of uncommon sickness and even death since the entry of the geothermal power plant. Many trees have been cut to build a road to the project. In Sayaban, the hot spring apparently ceased to be as hot as before, while the blue Lake Agco had turned muddy and murky. But Tuddok was silent on this issue. Partly this was because the ecological debates were usually couched in terms that were foreign to the ordinary Manobo people. Biodiversity, arsenic poisoning, global warming and defence of a heritage site did not seem to be as felt as the effects of direct logging which earlier government personnel have been known to condone. Besides, the way the NGOs had presented the alleged effects of the water contamination in the media left the village people feeling insulted. Many felt bad, for example, when they saw Manobo children and their mothers with 'dirty skin' broadcast on television.

Avoiding politics also meant following an altruistic cause for the sake of the tribe and not for taking power. As much as possible, they avoided any semblance of threatening the recognised village and local government officials. So Tuddok started with kin group, the scope and the scale of organisation and representation that they could manage given their meagre resources. Going national and international was too risky. They were not even thinking of going Pan-Manobo movement. Such scale of movement could attract the intervention of big actors, whether from the Church, NGOs or State. They would then lose control of their moves. They could not imagine, for example, young NGOs holding seminars telling their elders what would be good for them based on experiences from other protected areas. Tuddok started from a small lineage, the descendants of Ayon Umpan. They would then expand to include the rest of the Umpans and then the Bayawan. Soon, through negotiation, they hoped to win the sympathy of the whole network of Apao descendants. That was the trajectory of their movement. Later development would prove them to have a respectable and probably the only available strategy.

The first attempt to operationalise these ideas were in their Family Reunion in 1996. As has been discussed in Study 3, this was on all counts a successful move.

Within the three-day gathering in Muaan, Tuddok managed to initiate the gradual renewal of kinship ties, the appreciation of the elders and their stories as well as the enthusiasm of the young. The young recited new poems, mimicked the traditional dances, and appropriated native names from the rubrics of our unfinished genealogy. They invented a new ritual for giving Manobo names to those who have been baptised and given Christian and western names. A landmark was placed on the burial site of the dead relatives and stories began to be circulated about the deeds of their ancestors in the forests. The traditional way of cooking meat in green bamboo poles resurfaced, and the use of cut banana sheaths as plates became a spectacle rather than seen as lack of chinaware. The guest priest blessed the *tambaa*, or indigenous altar, while the protestant pastors led the Christian prayer before the meals. From there they constituted themselves into an organisation with programs of self-help, including the contract to sponsor a talented young kid to school and work on a communal farm. Somebody during the reunion said, 'If we come together and eat, and meet our relatives and therefore avoid marrying our blood relations, and begin to help one another, who could invent a case against us?'

So far, the idea of cultural regeneration without going into politics worked well, but not without soon being challenged and eventually changed when Tuddok took the matter more seriously.

### **Expanding Culture in Practices**

The word '**cultural regeneration**' was not my own. The leaders of Tuddok, Beting and Tano originally coined it, in its present English form. Both had substantial college education. From the phrase, we can get an idea that they were both thinking of 'culture' or 'kultura' in their movement. When more elders joined the activities of Tuddok and Apao, and with participation from Tahapantau, the term kultura had to be translated into botasan. Botasan practically covered all the Manobo ways of doing things and the rules that governed them---from the practices of arranging marriages to the managerial principles in settling disputes, land ownership and ritual officiating, to conduct in the hunt and negotiating with enemies. Botasan, in a way, was co-extensive with the general notion of *kultura*. But the revival of the term itself within

the movement introduced greater sensitivity to the local processes. At the same time, the continued use of *kultura* opened up possibilities for adopting other forms of cultural expressions not heretofore included in the concept of *botasan*. The result was, to my mind, an expanded notion of cultural activity. A few examples would probably help.

For a start, even the '**Family Reunion**' was already a mixture of practices. The phrase itself was originally in English, and had been much in use among the Christian lowlanders. Protestant churches also used 'Reunion' when they get together for special fellowship once a year. Apparently, clan reunion was not a common practice among the Manobos. What they had were frequent visits among relatives, especially during harvest time. They would have *kolivuungan* that simply means celebration. Reunion then could be seen as the equivalent of *kolivuungan*. But what about the word 'family'? Surprisingly, when I asked a number of people about their term for 'family', as in a nuclear family composed of parents and children, they found it difficult to answer. An elder later managed to offer the word *aunggun* but the word did not seem to produce any interest at all. When they spoke of family, they meant the lineage (or clan, in Philippine usage), called *Linubbaran*. *Linubbaran* actually was a flexible term that could be a single line of descent, but could also cover a whole village whose pedigree could be traced to a single ancestor. The use of word *linubbaran* seemed to have helped the initial family reunion movement to extend its later partnership to Apao and even to the people of the neighbouring Balabag.

The Family Reunion as event also teemed with cultural improvisations. We have already mentioned the invention of a new nameless naming ritual, among other things. But on top of this was the recital of newly composed Manobo free verse by brothers Ettoy and Ettok culled from our two-day poetry workshop. I was told that later family reunions in 1998 and 1999 saw the introduction of a cultural quiz among the youth to check their knowledge of the names of ancestors and landmarks. Quiz shows, of course, were something they learned from the radio and, recently, television. To encourage more dancing, they even introduced dancing and drama contests among the different families. This development of the arts and performance extended into pottery and painting. So far, Ettok had been commissioned to paint a



mural for an NGO in Davao City where he also agreed to exhibit some of his clay sculpture and hand drawings, all depicting Manobo environment and customs. Sculptural pottery and watercolor painting were not Manobo traditional art expressions. Perhaps they would also begin to sing later. The only remaining epic singer Oto Pontas still could not sing because of a deep emotional block. But the family reunion movement seems to have found a way to announce its existence.

The most important of all the Tuddok initial steps was its turn to the claiming of their ancestral territory. From the 'unpolitical' dancing performance, they launched a legal fight for the recognition of their rightful claim to that part of Mt. Apo that they now occupy. This move signalled a major political turn. What used to be a 'simple' cultural activity transformed into an engagement with political forces. Study 5 (together with Study 4 on Tahapantau) documented the steps they made along the way. In this Study, we review some cultural innovations that went into the political and legal process. The most notable of these was the institutionalisation of *kodpotongkooy* from its informal nature of casual conversation of villagers (cf. Vander Molen & Khor Lee Kee 1994) to its semi-formalised conference of tribal elders.

As described in Study 5, however, when Tuddok succeeded in attracting the elders, Pastor Tano had to demolish one of his house dividers to create room for the bigger gathering. Wider space had to be complemented by moderate though continuous supply of coffee. (If I were allowed one generalisation, it would be safe to say that Manobos were indeed big coffee drinkers. That included the very young toddlers.) Because of this, *kodpotongkooy* came to be known as '*kapi-tongkooy*' or 'coffee-conference'. Tano had to make sure there was enough Nescafe in the bottle and plenty of sugar in the plastic jar. Never mind milk. Sometimes biscuits were added, and in especially extended sessions like the caucus of elders, cooked rice and fried fish with boiled instant noodles were served on tin or plastic plates or even on inverted casserole covers. The young children of Tano and their cousins stood on call---while watching basketball on the black and white television---to run to the store for any errands or to the artesian well to fetch water for the kitchen. Neighbours also gradually started lending a hand. Wooden benches, for example, from the next hut

would be taken across the street to add to Tano's limited furniture. But the more people get involved, the bigger the risk of losing your rubber slippers which normally had to be left at the door. People would come and go without being too worried about taking home a different pair of footwear from that which they brought when they arrived. The welcoming host, however, could not be bothered by these seemingly petty things.

I mention these details because they illustrate how some cultural images and indigenous practices get converted into political strategies. I suggest that these spatial and hospitality practices served as a strategic simulation of the *datu* image. The traditional datu house was always full of people. The datu could feed the guests because he could command contributions from his domain. It was difficult to imagine a good tribal leader who had no space for many people or could not afford to offer some refreshment during meetings. Indeed, these minute strategies helped. Slowly, most meetings of the Apao elders moved to Tano's house. It was certainly a gain in the research process as well. But it also put Tuddok leaders in serious financial crunch. To some extent, they have managed to stretch their cultural practices to enter into local politics. The economics of the movement, however, challenged their capacity to snapping point.

Tuddok had to explore networking with possible friends or *owkuy*. As more people got involved in the movement, more financing became necessary. Tano's house had to keep a constant supply of hot water, coffee, sugar and biscuits, even lunch or supper when stories ran high. And traditionally, a leader had to provide this food and drink. Neither Atawan nor Tano nor Beting, however, had enough money to sustain extended meetings. They were struggling for cultural regeneration through self-determination, but they could not do it by isolating themselves. The crisis became acute when they were preparing for the Second Consultation on ancestral domain claim because more people were coming. Here they had a clash of cultural models. While Beting wanted to maintain the traditional datu way of feeding people, Atawan and Tano preferred to reform its feudal function. After heated debates, they agreed to cut down on food preparation, but they would still solicit outside help. The question then was from whom? And under what conditions?

So far my research budget contributed to procuring some coffee and biscuits for some of those meetings. After all, it benefited the research if people kept talking. My dwindling research budget, however, was nothing compared to the growing demands of organising and documentation. When I broached the idea of exploring *owkuy* (friends) relationship from the outside, they initially suspected me of being of the same stuff as the NGOs after all. Realism, however, made them decide that with some guidelines coming from them, they could still take control of external support.

They came up with a manifesto appealing for assistance but prefaced with their analysis of the situation and followed by principled conditions. I translate here a section of their analysis signed by Tano, Beting and Atawan:

Not all help really helps. This is the lesson we learned from what we see around us and from our own experience. Many groups of natives or lumads got organised supposedly for the good of the tribe. They, however, suddenly disperse due to problems related to 'funds' channelled through institutions. To be sure, we are convinced that the intention of those who help is supposedly good, but they don't really know how to adapt and position their assistance. These lessons are based on the following points and observations:

1. Usually, the institutions that help intervenes in the process of the native people's action and sometimes they even execute the actions themselves. In our view, this limits the capacity of the lumads in their self-empowerment;
2. In making decisions, the Lumad who act sometimes feel pressured by the views of those who help. This also influences a lot the action of the lumads who struggle. Part of the Lumad culture is shame and lack of assertion (*kaulaw ug kaikog*).
3. Most of the active lumads, who live in poverty, are not used to big and complicated plans. Moreover, they are not used to managing huge amounts of 'budget' and funds. It is therefore not surprising if the downfall of many Lumad organisations often have something to do with finances. In our view, it is better for small action groups like ours to grow along with our experiences. Included here is our ability to handle finances. Financial help is supposed to answer our needs, not to hinder our action.

We do not want our action to be hampered by the things mentioned above. In other words, we do not want to follow the mistakes of other people. We think of our movement as a kind of an alternative to alternative. We struggle even though we are not in [powerful] position; we are not GOs [government organisation], we are not NGOs [non-government organisations]. We have our own system of acting based on our own experiences and culture.

If there are generous people who want to help, we hope that they would understand our position and policy regarding assistance-giving. This is the following:

1. The donors should not intervene in the way we run or process our movement towards our ancestral domain claim;
2. The donors should not visit our community while we are still processing our ancestral domain claim. The presence of 'outsiders' might create some suspicion or speculation on what could be the exchange expected by the donors in return for their assistance;
3. The donors should not give their own opinion on the complex situation that affects us because this will influence and affect our own decision and direction.

Tuddok knew these were difficult conditions. Less than this, however, and their action would eventually succumb to the same destiny of NGO-led and NGO-supported tribal organisations.

In time, a couple in Kidapawan parish volunteered to help the Tuddok financially---and anonymously---without strings attached. Other small sources followed. This was music to Atawan's ears. Atawan said in Visayan, 'It's just like I'm dreaming. I had no idea how we were able to move like this.' Perhaps more than the actual amount, the assistance opened up Tuddok towards a wider pool of movement resources, something that will become increasingly complicated as they take the ancestral domain claim seriously.

The land claim would occupy Tuddok, and later Apao, for most of 1996 and even up to the present. As discussed in Study 5, Tuddok (together with the Bayawan) had to contend not only with a rival land claimant, the NABAMAS, but also with confused leadership politics among Apao elders within Sayaban itself. The important point was that towards the end of October, Tuddok succeeded in working with Apao elders and that Apao were already winning in terms of numbers. DENR was eager to receive their own application for the land claim.

Yet all of a sudden, they had second thoughts. They changed their strategy. At the height of the legal struggle, they told me it was high time to buy an agong for the movement.

'Pads,' as Beting used to call me, 'we decided to return to the original platform for cultural regeneration. We shall have to take a rest from the issue of ancestral domain, from boundary conflict with Datu Aba, and from the issue of PNOC. We have to develop our culture first. So we go back to the *agong*.'

Atawan explained. 'We need the agong very badly. Perhaps this is the only way to unite the tribe. We have to look for ways and means so that they would not think that we are at cross-purposes. If we have the agong, they will come closer. Then we will be united. With the agong, people feel something different. They seem to remember something.'

They even thought of building a house especially for the agong. They had already identified the exact spot near the river where the house would be centrally

located. They had already projected the amount of time required to finish it, where to get the wood, etc. The only problem was with the nails, for which they needed help. I could hardly believe what I was hearing. With all their difficulty, how could they think of another project?

With the help of some *owkuy*, we were able to buy an agong from a Muslim store in Cotabato City. That was 4 November. But it had to wait till 8 December before being officially inaugurated in the village. There had to be an appropriate ritual for the return of the agong to the tribe. In the mean time, it slept there at the house of Pastor Tano Bayawan, always visited by people and talked about by passers by.

When the day of celebration came, they requested the use of the elementary school stage where graduation day ceremonies and beauty contests were usually held. The lettering on the stage background read: *Kodsompot To Mgo Batasa't Monuvu*. Remembering/returning to/ retrieving the Culture of the Manobo. The agong then transfigured into the symbol of the whole 'culture' of the Manobo tribe. During the program, smaller musical instruments made a surprise show. Suddenly, the little bamboo percussion called *kubing* turned up. So with bamboo flute called *laantuy*. And of course, the dancers. They began bragging about the time that they knew hundreds of melodies and harmonies using the brass drums and how they used to compete with other tribes in cultural performances. Tiyo Atawan, speaking in Manobo, explicated the meaning of the event.

We now have our own musical instruments. We have the agong. The kulintang. Unlike the other celebrations by the government, they bring their instruments, they go back, and we are left alone, without our own. And the other instruments---we realise that they are just hiding there, timid. But now, they can come out...Here we don't perform for outsiders. We dance for ourselves.

By 'government celebrations' Atawan meant particularly the annual *Allaw ta Sandawa* or Mt. Apo Festival every 7<sup>th</sup> of April. National officers of the OSCC, headed by the widow of the late great Datu Joseph Sibug, would usually invite other national and regional OSCC officials to Sayaban. During this festival, the Sayaban people's only participation is the construction of the booths and stage. Guests bring their own musical instruments, perform for themselves, eat, and then leave. Local residents are neither invited to join the dinner nor to perform on stage. During the *Allaw ta Sandawa* in 1996, they even declared a portion of Sayaban, near the

Matingao River, the Datu Joseph Sibug National Shrine, without consulting the owner of the lot, who was the father of Pastor Tano. According to Tuddok leaders and Apao elders, the whole festival was a farce and that was why many of them did not even bother to witness it. Atawan, during the *Kodsompot to Botasan* ceremonies, was driving home a strong critique of the *Allaw ta Sandawa* and other festivals invented and corrupted by some government officials and financed by PNOC.

Perhaps more important than the critique was their celebration. Local historian Apo Salumay told stories about Mt. Apo and Datu Apao during the program. Then he sang his favourite one-liner '*Mopian kohi diid potoy, diid potoy.*' He himself translated it into English, 'Kind words never die, never die.' (Perhaps *mopian* should be rendered 'good' instead of 'kind'.) They did not say where the agong came from. It was theirs. It got lost. And it came back.

The agong ritual also led to a major turning point. The sounding of the gong won for them a new and long-term NGO support. Although they were not performing for outsiders, there were outsiders actually present. Aside from me---for I was still an outsider---there were Leah Vidal and Aida Danggoy. Leah helped keep the young artist Ettok alive. Aida was new. She worked for the Alternative Forum for Research in Mindanao (AFRIM), an alternative NGO specialising in Mindanao baseline data and socio-economic analysis. She came for counselling. But we had no time. So she went with me to the village, instead. The torch-lit celebration that she witnessed made her turn around. Moved, she said, by the spectacle of people recapturing their lost spirit, their cultural treasure, she recommended to her director--whom I have encountered twice in London---that AFRIM assist them in the continuation of their movement.

During the last week before my departure in January 1997 Tuddok leaders and AFRIM staff negotiated an agreement. The principled positions for solicitation that they drafted found a corresponding NGO commitment. AFRIM agreed to accommodate Tuddok's principles: that AFRIM would not visit them unless invited, that they would respect local experiments in the movement, and that they would not hook the movement to other solidarity groups even as AFRIM tried to find external and technical support for Tuddok and Apao. For their part, Tuddok and Apao

welcomed the gesture and even formally adopted AFRIM later into the community. Within this partnership, Tuddok would receive assistance to continue their struggle for cultural regeneration and the reclamation of their land, and, interestingly, to pursue the cultural research that had been started, this time with more vernacular strategies.

### **From Movement to Management**

Tuddok's growth in numbers as well as in documentation towards the claiming of ancestral domain became a puzzle to PNOC as well as to the recognised barangay officials. PNOC managers called secret meetings with some barangay and tribal officials apparently to make sure that the leadership in the ancestral domain claim be taken by the elected local officials and not by the unfamiliar and unconventional movement of the Tuddok clan. One barangay official, according to one of those invited, had to literally 'steal' some documents from the house of Pastor Tano Bayawan in order to show to the PNOC managers. But the attempt fizzled out. The provincial officer of the DENR was serious in proceeding according to the law. The Manila managers of PNOC, through the mediation of AFRIM, eventually requested Tuddok representatives to go to Manila for clarification of their stand and principles. Tuddok leaders clarified that they were not out to stop PNOC operations but they would include the 701 hectares occupied by the company in their ancestral domain. PNOC top officials in Manila, on their part, promised to cease all interventions in the local level and that they would not object to being included in the Apao ancestral domain claim. The only thing left then was to complete the documentation, and to find a venue for the official declaration of the said positions of the parties. The DENR took the initiative. On 17 March 1997, the PENRO convened representatives of the tribal claimants, PNOC staff, and barangay officials. The recognition of the Apao claim was approved in principle.

I was told that on 7 April 1997, during the Allow to Sondawa Festival (Mount Apo Sandawa Day), all those who were originally in conflict joined the preparation of the celebration. It was the first time that this OSCC initiated activity, which usually

alienated the local Sayaban people, became a popular venture. But this is not to say there were no conflicts anymore.

In a taped update sent to me in London, I gathered that the program prepared by the (OSCC) did not print the name of the clan-based organisation Linubbaran ni Apao. Instead, the mimeographed schedule of activities indicated a certain '*Sayaban Manobo Ancestral Domain Claimants*' or SMADC, an entirely empty acronym, signifying nothing. All of a sudden, a new title is invented for the sake of inserting into the possible ancestral domain claimants some people who would not otherwise appear in the Apao genealogy! The discovery of this act came early enough before the celebration. The group of Pastor Tano Bayawan immediately made a big streamer declaring in bold letters the Linubbaran ni Apao as the Mount Apo ancestral domain claimants. Incidentally, the one who marched down the streets carrying the streamer was a Chinese mestizo who would not figure out in the Apao genealogy, either. But for the Tuddok group, it was enough that at the level of signs and public symbols, the right name and identity of the claimants were declared.

The following year seemed to be an exasperating period of splintering of groups and renegotiation of positions among the groups and subgroups. Eventually, however, all the three major land claimants, including NABAMAS, TAHAPANTAU and APAO managed to enter into a mutual agreement regarding their boundaries.<sup>3</sup> Even the PNOC participated in the claim by financing the expensive technical land survey. All in all, the estimated land area to be claimed by the three groups would amount to some 20,000 hectares, almost a third of the whole Mt. Apo National Park. What is left to be done, after the survey, is to develop a viable ancestral domain management plan. This could be tricky. My research is not adequate to suggest any detailed plan. I could only offer one observation that I believe has to be considered before any planning should be done: That the various claimant-groups seem to have very different notions of ancestral domain, and that these differences have to be sorted out prior to any decision. Let me elaborate a bit.

The complexity of the cultural politics in Mt. Apo, especially with the ambiguous influence of PNOC, should alert planners about the possible variety of the local notions of ancestral domain operative among the present Manobo in the area.



**Chart 7.1** Aspects of Ancestral Domain Claims among the Three Main Claimants in Mt. Apo

	NABAMAS	TAHAPANTAU	APAO (TUDDOK)
<b>Environment</b>	Ancestral domain claim entails primarily a vow to protect the forests of Mt. Apo. NABAMAS has collaborated for a number of years with DENR on anti-logging and anti-treasure hunt campaigns.	Cutting timber was not our traditional practice, but was introduced only when the government allowed logging companies. <i>(Does not hide that some members have practised logging.)</i>	Apao elders say they have their own way of protecting the environment through rules on hunting, etc. They have fought forest fires. <i>(But having hosted the PNOC is a sensitive issue.)</i>
<b>Livelihood</b>	There shall be no 'galas' (farmlots) within the national park. <i>(This principle does not tally with the organisation's registered aims, and the members' practices are not beyond suspicion.)</i>	Ancestral domain is for the people as well as for the forest. Calls for honesty: People also have to farm and to live. They have some plans on where to replant rattan, abaca, and tahiti, and what spots could be developed for tourism.	PNOC is accepted as source of livelihood and welfare. <i>(Aside from some small plots, there seems no clear plan on land use. Perennial political frictions pose problems on future resource management.)</i>
<b>History</b>	Datu Omog from Sayaban allegedly entrusted to Datu Aba and his group the care of the Mt. Apo forestlands. <i>(Members of NABAMAS come from different places, with no common bloodline.)</i>	Many families have long been here. This includes the families of Apan, Bogay, and Mantawil. They know the landmarks in the area and have survived painful experiences of famines and drought here. <i>(Old families do not share common ancestor.)</i>	Ancestral domain belongs to rightful kin group. Apao has clear genealogy and history. Common narrative collectively compiled by elders. Detailed stories about Mt. Apo and Manobo ancestors. Strong movement for cultural regeneration through initiative of Tuddok.

**Note:** The shaded portions represent the aspects of ancestral domain concept that the various groups emphasise in their respective claims. Comments enclosed in parentheses and italicised are the researcher's own reading.

**Chart 7.1** attempts to map out the different emphasis given to some aspects of ancestral domain that I have identified as related to (1) environmental protection, (2) historical claims, and (3) concern for livelihood. According to official discourse, for example, NABAMAS's claim for ancestral domain is entirely for environmental altruism. TAHAPANTAU, on the other hand, is not ashamed to admit that its people also want land for livelihood. APAO people stress historical and cultural rights.

If Tuddok, through APAO, really desires cultural regeneration and ancestral domain claim, it would have to develop its own contribution in the drafting of a plan for both protecting the environment and using the forest and land resources for supplying people's needs. This is a tall order for all the groups. On this delicate task, State agencies should not relinquish its duty, under the guise of respecting indigenous people's local knowledge, to assist the groups in gradually drawing up a strategy for a sustainable use of their ancestral domain (cf. CBFMO & ESSC 1998; Van den Top & Persoon. 1997; Lynch & Talbott 1995). Political and environmental activists might want to accept this complex starting point, rather than presume a certain standardised and romanticised notion of indigenous land practice (cf. Benda-Beckmann 1997; Head 1990; Wiber 1993:141ff). The sooner the groups could identify and isolate misconceptions and clichés (cf. Redford, Brandon & Sanderson 1998), the better I think for the struggling tribal groups and for the environment.

### **Insighting Identities, Generating Energies**

I would like to end this sketchy account of the complex struggle in Mt. Apo, by thinking aloud about the formation and assertion of collective identities and, in admittedly limited form, about cultural energies which are to my mind a prerequisite as well as a product of generating identities.

In its common, etymological meaning, identity means 'sameness' or 'sharing common origin or characteristics'. This sameness is asserted as an essence, a kind of immutable constitution such that a nation, like the Philippines, is said to have been itself since the beginning, and is basically the same today, and will therefore be the same forever. But the example of the struggle of the Obo-Manobo clan in Mt. Apo makes us realise that identity is something made, created, asserted, invented, or

constructed---although I prefer generated. It can take the form of a family reunion, dancing to the tune of a borrowed agong, fighting a legal battle, unfurling a hastily made streamer, or even unpacking a sack of farm products. It can be staged, as it were, near a boiling lake, in a government office, or at the side of a hospital bed.

Identity, or more accurately identification, is a process (Hall 1996). We have to create again what we have already created before according to the changing circumstances. You would think that because they had already retrieved their agong, the tribe would then be unified; to some extent, yes, but then again you have some officials not being happy that others had it before they did. Identity slides back, slips out from our grasp, escapes our control and deviates from already set definition. Identity moves and it changes along the way.

Identity presents itself as a sum of shared characteristics. But it hides its twin strategy of shedding off unwanted or unintegrated elements (cf. Thomas 1992). This strategy appears in the selectivity involved in narrating 'common' history. In silently not mentioning the contribution of the minorities. In declaring the mixed medium as inauthentic. In dismissing the opposition as nuisance. What results is a history within time limits. A culture with clear boundaries. An identity at the expense of difference which the powerful either brushes aside or assimilates totally.

We cannot deny that assertion of identity is also linked to access to material resources (cf. Resurreccion 1998). The Tuddok genealogy was not simply for giving native names to otherwise Christian children. It was also for substantiating their claim to the land and its resources, for gaining stronger leverage in bargaining for royalty and respect with the big power company.

Here, I would like to venture an additional point. It is not only economic resources that matter in the struggle for recognition of collective identity. The struggle is for what has been called cultural energy, the capacity for collective agency through cultural mediation, or simply, the collective capacity to go on with life in particular way. I propose that the value of struggling for identity is ultimately a desire and a need for energy. If only we could have cultural energy without the necessity of clearly fixing our oppositional identity (cf. Grossberg 1996:88)! When Apo Ambolugan said 'We have no more culture' and therefore 'no identity', couldn't he

be simply saying that 'At the moment, we have no energy'? But when the agong was played, couldn't his wife, Apo Ambaning, and the rest of the women who danced, be announcing that some energy, as it were, still remains to be tapped from the stored memories of the body and mediated by the particular music and musical instruments that have been invested with the potency to 'symbolise[s] *and* offer immediate experience of collective identity' (Frith 1996:121)? And when Atawan and companions said 'We had to buy an agong', could they be hinting that, at some point, some material resources could be 'converted' into cultural energy? (cf. Hoskins 1998). Never mind, for the moment, whether it could be processed further into political power.

More than a year after I have left Mt. Apo, I received a letter from Beting. A situation similar to that period before the Return of the Gong ceremony emerged. Although they were successful in forming a coalition of the other land claimants, new conflicts emerged among the local leaders. Once again, Tuddok leaders resorted to the playing of the gongs:

I could see a pattern now after living with them for more than a couple of years. What is considered sacred by one person (e.g. the *Pamuvadtuvad*) is considered sacrilegious by another... There are a thousand islands around Sayaban. I don't know how to cross them. I don't know how they could raise a flag to say they are one people---the Manobo people of Mt. Apo. At this time, there is only one thing that all could agree with---the playing of the *gong* and the *kulintang* and the dancing of the Manobo dance. They enjoy it. There is no power play involved in it. (Beting Colmo, letter dated 6 February 1998)

This leads us back to the *Kodsompot to Botasan* in December 1996. When Tiyo Atawan said during their important second thoughts, that people seem to remember something when they hear the agong played, especially after the long wait for its return to the tribe, I wonder if it had something to do with what has been called 'historical memory'. Like amulets serving as archives or embodied essence of the event, could the agong also mediate 'a kind of historical memory, which may include memory of past hopes, aspirations and assertion, and provide a source of present and future hope... Hope, which is one antonym of fear, is also in a sense a memory of the future, or of past possible futures' (Turton 1991b:176).

I am at this point still in the initial stage of reflection on energy. I could only express it in metaphorical terms: that if the PNOC could tap geothermal energy from

the underground reserves of Mount Apo, is it too unreasonable to conceive of a cultural energy from the collective resources of the Obo-Manobo?

The initial idea of Tuddok leaders was to achieve cultural regeneration without getting into politics. But the retrieval of tribal customs would be meaningless if they were not secure in their land. The process of land claim had to be done in the context of conflicting positions of elders and rival claimants in face of legal requirements and social expectations of ordinary people. Cultural regeneration then could not escape from political action. It is interesting how they succeeded in negotiating the *pohundepdep*, which literally means 'cliff-path', to political action---that delicate balancing act between being co-opted by the power project and mimicking the more radical protest. The present challenge is how to translate their success in politico-cultural movement into a viable solidarity and ancestral domain management.

## 2. ETHNOGRAPHY, ENERGY, ETHICS, EXISTENCE

'Yes, that is a beautiful experience. But are you not guilty of creating the object of your study?' 'Would there have been a social movement at all had you done your fieldwork in a more disengaged manner?' These were questions that I encountered from some professional anthropologists during three anthropological conferences that I attended after my 'fieldwork' in Mt. Apo. One person even alluded to the possibility that I went about 'helping' the movement out of my 'priestly', if not 'proselytising,' mission. I guess, one simple answer to this question is that I was just lucky. By the time I started my fieldwork, the DENR has just begun implementing DAO2, which allowed the indigenous communities to claim their ancestral territories. My research found a place in the production of the ethnographic requirements for the Mt. Apo land claims. For all the semblance of activism on the part of my research, there was indeed the element of luck. Beyond luck, however, there are issues involved in the conduct of fieldwork that I would like to reflect on.

When I borrowed the gong and kulintang for the first Tuddok Family Reunion, I was indeed intervening in the formation of their social movement. It can and should also be seen, however, as a result of the creative act of the Tuddok leaders in recruiting me and my meagre resources into their own project. The initiative was

theirs. It was their idea to have a family reunion. Amidst the more political issues of ancestral domain, namely, the effects of development, environmental problems, biodiversity protection, they chose--- and not naively, I think--- to consolidate their clan in a seemingly harmless cultural gathering.

The idiom was also theirs. They clearly identified the gongs, the musical instruments. One could think of other artefacts or symbols representing their culture, but they chose the ones that pertain to music and the movement of the body. Whereas PNOC, in its gesture to 'help' restore indigenous culture sponsored a multi-thousand-peso loom-weaving project (*Energy Times*, August 1994; MAFI Project Proposal 1993). Native dressmakers were imported from another tribal village to teach young Mt. Apo girls to weave and sew native dresses. The project did not flourish. The women were not very excited. We might take this initiative of the PNOC, through MAFI, as well-intentioned gesture, probably in response to a request from some native consultants. But it became obvious that this project tended towards the more 'visual' imagination of the tribal culture. The proponents imagine that the tribal culture was in the visible material culture like dress and ornaments.

Tuddok and Bayawan leaders, however, chose to start from the less visual but more felt indigenous culture. They got this insight, which we could simply attempt to elaborate here, that people would be stirred by the music of the most important of all their musical instruments--- the agong. From the playing of the music, people felt a certain nostalgia for what they used to be and what they used to know. When the gong was played, it became 'natural' for them to dance. It was in the creation of the event of the dancing that wearing the 'proper costume' made sense. Why wear costume when there was no occasion?

Of course, there have been occasions for the playing of the gong and the performance of the native dance. Every 7<sup>th</sup> April, people from Manila and other parts of Mindanao come and celebrate the feast of Mt. Apo Sandawa. There is a very big difference, however. During the Allow't Sondawa Festival, the gongs played were not theirs. They are brought from somewhere for the occasion, and they are taken away as soon as the day is over. The dancers and the musicians are also aliens. They are not taken from among themselves. Or if at times, some of them were included in the cast,

they perform not for themselves but for tourists and outsiders. Worse, the local people are actually---and painfully---not welcomed in the celebration. They are not part of the feasting. They are often told, over loudspeakers, that the food is for the visitors only. And that is after the local people have built the huts and the stage for the whole performance. I have seen this happen during the Global and Indigenous Cultural Olympics Summit in Manila, and again in Sayaban---sadly, by the same people! The Tuddok reunion, possibly for the first time in many years, provided an occasion for generating, celebrating and asserting who they were---for themselves.

Now, if borrowing a Manobo gong for the use a Manobo cultural regeneration movement was intervention, then so be it. I just wonder: if taking away artefacts from communities earlier studied by anthropologists was considered normal procedure, then why would the reverse process of facilitating the reanimation of the people's source of energy be necessarily a transgression of professional practice? This invites further reflection.

### **What are we in fieldwork for?**

It may sound trite, but it still has to be said that the practice of ethnographic fieldwork is first experienced as a social intervention before it is transformed into a textual invention. Ethnography, of course, goes beyond fieldwork. But neither is its practice reducible to the production of academic monographs. This is manifested by the number of personal accounts of 'fieldwork experiences' that interestingly come later, that is, after their standard ethnographies have passed the academic initiation rites (cf. Pratt 1986:31). Recent ethnographers, schooled in reflexivity training, have as a matter of fact integrated their own interactions in the field into their own text (e.g. Bell 1998; Okely 1997; Lavie 1992, Scheper-Hughes 1992; etc.). Fieldworkers, as it were, do not only work *in* the field, however the field is understood; they also *work* it. In the process of inserting themselves into a community or accompanying a group in their movement they also encounter, delights in, collide with, adjust to, miss or misunderstand other people's actions and reactions. They impact on the lives of the people involved in their study perhaps as much as those people transform the researchers' views of things. Fieldworkers then move almost inevitably from the

already complex participant observation to an even more entangled, often multi-stranded, partisan participation (Gupta & Ferguson 1997a; Albert 1997; Marcus 1995; Caulfield 1979; Huizer & Mannheim 1979, Hymes 1969/1974). This seems especially true in studying nascent social movements in the context of contested development projects (Gardner & Lewis 1996), as the following reflection wishes to show.

I suggest that we are touching here not just the politics of advocacy or the poetics of ethnography, but for want of a better term, the *pragmatics* of fieldwork. By this I mean the application of practical judgement in the crafting of fieldwork in light of some basic professional and personal principles, and performed (not always with precision) according to one's capabilities. This is all within the limits laid down by structures, as well the possibilities opened up by human actions and events.<sup>4</sup>

I grope my way in elaborating this thrust by starting from its more *professional* dimension. Here, I resonate with Dell Hymes who had earlier recognised that 'by virtue of its subject matter, anthropology is unavoidably political and ethical discipline, not merely an empirical speciality' (1974:48). Our simply being there among the people we study already has consequences, over and above the textual production that results from that experience. Nancy Scheper-Hughes puts it more emphatically: 'We cannot delude ourselves into believing that our presence leaves no trace, no impact on those whose lives we dare intrude' (1992:25; 1995). So, for better or for worse, wittingly or unwittingly, the professional practice of fieldwork places the ethnographer in position of relative power the handling of which calls for an ethical reflection within the discipline of anthropology (Gledhill 1994:217).

Anthropological reflections in the 1980s promised to provide insights into this notion of practice (Ortner 1984; Marcus & Clifford 1986, etc.). This project unfortunately narrowed down its focus on the *poetics* of representation, specifically writing (cf. Fardon 1990; Pels & Salemink 1994:5.16ff; cf. Denzin 1996). Apparently, the new ethnography diffused its energies to questions of meta-theories and textual strategies that it tended to neglect the 'social and political processes almost completely, not necessarily by denying them salience, but by backgrounding them to questions of representations, construction and deconstruction' (Gledhill 1994:225;



Scheper-Hughes 1992:24). The concept of practice as a set of activities, strategies and social intervention was 'relegated to the back burner again despite its centrality to issues such as anthropology's relationship to development and the growing interest among the sociologists and political scientists about the new social movements' (Gardner & Lewis 1996:40; cf. Bell 1998:421ff). This, I suggest, is a fair reading of the situation. Even those who were involved in the popularisation of critical ethnography in the 1980s regret that the general impact of their critique 'seemed to be limited to ethnographic writing only' and not to the 'fieldwork process itself' (Marcus 1999:10, 28n4).

Some efforts to redress this blindspot are fortunately not absent. Recent writings propose to bring the 'field' and the corresponding practices of the 'fieldworker' as a rightful anthropological subject (e.g. Giri 1998; Gupta & Ferguson 1997; Clifford 1997; Hastrup & Fog Olwig 1997). They call for flexibility in diversifying our knowledge from different field positions, unexpected contexts and unfixed agendas (Marcus 1999). They call, too, for 'reflexivity' and 'self-awareness' (Okely 1996; Reed-Danahay 1997; Pels & Salemink 1994) in the ways we as fieldworkers 'follow' our subjects and their movements (Marcus 1995), or the way we 'tame' them to become good informants (Hobart 1996). Finally, they call for 'reflection' on how our 'fieldwork relationship meant to our research subjects' (Paine 1998:134).<sup>5</sup>

I suggest that anthropology as discipline stands to gain by seeking to combine this skill of reflexivity and the will for relevance in the practice of fieldwork. It is not enough to give voice to the marginalized (granting that we can actually give any) in our resulting monographs (which come out notoriously late and remote, anyway). Without denying the weight and the complexity of doing ethnography in general, the prior task is to explore the possibility of using the 'pre-textual' fieldwork itself---given its opportunity cost---as a time and a space and an infrastructure for people's self-assessment and empowerment.<sup>6</sup> Researchers learn many things, including things about themselves, in the course of fieldwork. Why should their subjects not gain from it as well? And why should not both of them draw profit from their overlapping projects, according to their respective needs?

It is a joy to know that somebody else is trying to say the same thing. Faye Ginsburg, who has worked with Australian Aboriginal artists (among other activists) states my intention more clearly. She says,

I am more interested in how we understand our work, strategically, as a mode of social action and intervention, in relation to and collaboration with the projects of those we study... I am arguing that our reflexivity be more than textual, and that it begin by considering how our research is part of a social world shared with our subjects' (Ginsburg 1997:140).

There is also the added *personal* dimension to this professional practice. And this takes me to that period before I did my fieldwork in Mt. Apo. It started when I met Medha Patkar who was the leader of the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* in India. From London, I took a short one-month visit between July and August in 1994 to the area of the Bhils who were among those affected by the Narmada Dam Project. The visit was in preparation for my own research in the Philippines. Medha Patkar's position posed a challenge to me. She herself had done a doctorate in social science, but she preferred to go beyond producing relevant texts; she went into active organising (cf. Patkar 1992). Exploring her Hindu and Gandhian tradition, she moved among the tribal groups as speaker and chanter, sometimes as cook and counsellor, as trainer and translator. Among those supporting the movement were book writers, some of whom were themselves vending their own books on top of cars during rallies. I thought that there should be a way of doing research without always having to draw a very sharp line between academic rigour and ethical commitment, and that if pressed to make a preference, one could go further by considering a legitimate people's movement more important than one's research. As Medha Patkar argued elsewhere:

You know the general writing on paradigms of development, even alternative development model, right from Spencer and Comte's idea of progress to Andre Gunder Frank and the Third World scientists placing their vigil on the Third World reality and even Rajni Kothari and others. As a student of development and social movements at my PhD level, I had gone through all this. But that would not change the world and the exploited systems. So what was necessary we always thought was really having your roots at some place---like staking a territory as your own by planting your flag there, by capturing a symbol and shaking it for all its worth. (Patkar 1992: 278)

When I came back from India, I received news of the death of a mentor of mine in the Philippines. It really touched me. Dr. Virgilio G. Enriquez pioneered a search for an ethical, relevant and culturally appropriate approach to social science

research (1994b). One can argue, of course, that his call for a 'liberating' research practice (Enriquez 1992/1994a) ran the risk of equating the social with the national project (Pertierra 1997:11-12.20; 1992:43). But I resonated with the way he stretched the meaning of participatory fieldwork which he called 'indigenous facilitation research':

In many ways, participatory research is facilitation research but they differ in one fundamental point. Participatory research assumes equality between the researcher and the participants *while indigenous facilitation research* goes farther by recognising the superior role of the participant or the culture bearer as the one who determines the articulated and implied limits of the research enterprise... In this sense, *indigenous facilitation research* goes beyond the mere use of methods and techniques indigenous to a certain cultural or social group. It also aims to promote research activities on topics of interest to and ultimately of benefit to the community and not to groups outside of it.... [T]he "facilitation researcher" is more a morale booster, networker, or at most a consultant who confers about the research problem with the community who are, in this case, the real researchers. (Enriquez 1994b:59)<sup>7</sup>

And just before going to the Philippines to start my fieldwork in 1995, I visited a Dutch anthropologist in Chiang Mai. Leo Alting von Geusau had built up a library on the Akha whom he had studied and very much loved. With the short weeks that I went with him in the area of the Akha, I learned how, along the way, his scholarly work became inseparable from his commitment to the people he studied. In a published interview (Alting von Geusau 1985:44), he explained: 'I discovered on the one hand, a wealthy, enormous complexity of the Akha culture. On the other hand, I discovered the many problems they have. I felt committed, very involved. I love the Akha and they love me.' In the same article, which was aptly titled 'Dedicated Anthropologist', Alting von Geusau added, 'With my own background I am unable to do what so many researchers do---just study and leave' (*Living in Thailand*, December 1985, pp. 44-45, 83). I guess he was referring to his being trained as a Catholic priest and an ecumenist before he finally chose to stay with the Akha as an anthropologist.

I carried these ideas and models of solidarity during my own fieldwork in Mount Apo, site of the geothermal power plant which was constructed by the Philippine government and was opposed by environmentalist and advocates for the indigenous people's rights. Although I was in contact with the protesters as well as the government, I found myself studying and working with a small Manobo social movement, which was critical of both camps. My Manobo hosts became key figures

of this new indigenous movement. The group, called *Tuddok to Kalubbaran ni Apo Ayon Umpan*, wanted cultural regeneration and ancestral domain claim. And for this aim, they saw my research as a possible ally. As I grew more and more convinced of their cause, I also developed the desire to conduct my fieldwork in such a way that it would be of some use in itself apart from the ethnographic output that should come later. I have heard about some anthropologists wishing their work could be translated into the vernacular so they could be useful to their research subjects. But the sequence of events during my fieldwork led me to desire, instead, an ethnographic project that ran side by side with the cultural struggle of the group I worked with. Without formal contract, but with constant assessment of our roles, a partnership developed between my cultural research and their cultural movement. My research then served as a resource for the movement just as the movement provided substance for my research.

### **Between and beyond Objectivity and Militancy**

In the beginning of this section, I referred to the researchers in the field as 'fieldworkers'. My use of 'fieldworker', instead of simply 'ethnographer', has a special denotation. While researchers are often said to do 'fieldwork', they are seldom called 'fieldworkers' (but see Zamora 1986, Giri 1998b). I guess this is partly due to the more ambiguous, non-academic meanings of the word 'fieldworker' especially in development practice. The 'largely ignored', 'overstretched and under-resourced' field worker, Eric Dudley observes, 'must juggle the issues and strike *pragmatic compromises* between policies which tend to come to the field in the form of contradictory messages' (1993:11 highlighting supplied). To see the researcher in the field not just as ethnographer but also as *de facto* 'fieldworker' might help us understand fully the significance of focusing on fieldwork practice in its own right.

My own experience and that of others as well suggest that doing fieldwork today, especially in the context of contested development process and people's struggles, requires ethnographers to be 'fieldworkers' as well. As such, they are to play different roles, including some not often associated with professional practice, and to shift positions at the risk of being haunted by 'methodological anxieties' in

producing knowledge based on 'varying intensities and qualities' (Marcus 1995:100; cf. Clifford 1997:219n3). But instead of 'diluting' the conventional academic discipline, this in fact promises to enrich the practice of ethnographic research itself (cf. Appadurai 1997:59). It makes ethnography, as Gupta and Ferguson (1997a:37) well argue, 'a flexible opportunistic strategy for diversifying and making more complex our understanding of various places, people, and predicaments through an attentiveness to the different forms of knowledge available from different social and political locations.'

So it is not a matter of choosing between being objective or being militant. Come to think of it, both positions probably share the same presupposition that the researchers could be in control of their respective projects. But we know that much as we want to stick to our research itinerary, we cannot absolutely avoid being hooked to the people's own vital concerns. To say that we should as much as possible eschew conflictive situations is untenable. This leaves anthropology superficial, not able to confront the basic human predicament that includes hunger, suffering as well as struggle and hope (Hastrup 1992; Kleinman 1997; Gledhill 1994:217).

On the other hand, being too engaged in particular people's struggle could also 'reinforce one's personal power' (Ong 1995). 'In at least some cases,' Gledhill admits that 'too much engagement could be as problematic as too little (1994:221).<sup>8</sup> As already noted, it could be time-consuming and emotionally draining such that, as Hobart wisely notes, 'students who forgot their disciplinary background for a moment and actually got on with the people studied often have terrible trouble textualizing what happened' (1996:22).

I hasten to iterate some clarificatory points. First, it is important not to reduce this line of action purely to a work of *advocacy*, if advocacy is meant speaking in behalf of the people one is supporting through research. The temptation is to steal the show, as it were, and take centre-stage (cf. Gledhill 1994:219). It is unfortunate that even some of the recent books of advice for doing interactive fieldwork remain oriented to 'outsiders' when it comes to conveying the results of their research. 'What these approaches fail to explore', Burdick laments 'is the extent to which

certain kinds of claims to ethnographic knowledge may be able to help refine debates and self-critiques within social movements' (Burdick 1995:363). Prominent social analysts like Touraine (1981) and Melucci (1989) have earlier grappled with this issue. Both Touraine and Melucci assign a delicate role for the researchers working within the movement they study. Melucci, for instance, recognises the facilitative use of the researchers' resources and reflection that can enable the actors 'to take greater responsibility for their choices and actions', but he immediately qualifies that 'this possible outcome is not inspired by the missionary role of the researcher. It is rather a by-product of the contractual relationship between researcher and actor, each of whom pursues his or her particular goals' (Melucci 1989:201). Even reflexivity could be fruitfully shared between the researcher and the researched (Rudie 1993). Fieldwork should have some internal, both critical and creative, function for the host community.<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, this thrust should not be associated necessarily with political or ethical *militantism*. In many cases, Marcus' 'circumstantial activism' (1995) might be an apt phrase to describe it. But Bruce Albert (1997) supplies a more experiential clarification. Albert writes about anthropologists who work with indigenous people's movements. In the process of studying the people's struggle for *ethnogenesis* and access for resources, the researchers also get recruited to serve in various other activities like mediation, documentation, action-oriented research and didactic ethnography.

Anthropologists work on these activities while attending to their own research agenda and, very often, the latter is only accepted and understood within the context of the former. This kind of arrangement increasingly comes about as a result of formal negotiations with representatives of the host communities or of local or regional indigenous organisations... In this context, the social engagement of the ethnographer can no longer be seen as a personal political or ethical choice, optional and foreign to his scientific project. It clearly becomes an explicit and constituent element of the ethnographic relationship. The anthropologist's 'observation' is no longer merely 'participant'; his social 'participation' has become both the condition and the framework of his field research. (Albert 1997:57-58)

In a very real sense, fieldworkers do all sorts of technical jobs not out of militancy but because these things are needed and that they are in position to render them. That is how they could go on doing their research especially within a community which has grown more sensitive to the politics and ethics of being researched.

The present case offers a point of discussion. I have received some suspicion (or even accusation) of creating the object of my study by supporting a social movement which touched on the political aspects of contested land claims. It was true that my ethnographic recording and research facilitation helped Tuddok to produce the necessary documentation for their land claim. But it was also very important to admit that this documentation was rendered useful primarily (or propitiously) because of the new government policy on tribal territories that had just been recently circulated when I arrived in the area. The DAO2 of DENR allowed for the granting of Certificates of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) to tribal groups provided they could present historical and ethnographic evidence. Hence, the legal and political value of the ethnographic research.

At the same time, though, some protesters against the government programs criticised my research engagement for giving false hopes to the local tribal groups (cf. Study 4). The CADC they said fell short of an authentic recognition of the real ownership rights of the indigenous peoples. Why should I be wasting my time and the people's in such an illusory enterprise? As in this case, therefore, evaluation of so-called 'intervention' should be seen alongside the actions of the people and within the existing political opportunity structures.

Both Burdick and Albert are careful not to totally conflate the project of the researcher and that of the people they study. Burdick stresses the critical function of the fieldworker within the movement. He also includes in the practice the 'relativization of the ethnographers' voice' (Burdick 1995:374). Albert advocates a kind of 'critical solidarity' that does not limit professional practice to 'a mere reproduction' of the host's 'ethnic discourse' (Albert 1997:58-59). Overlapping of projects does not mean a total congruence of concerns and interests.

What most of these discussions miss, however, is the glaring reality that some dimensions of the personality of the researcher matter a lot during fieldwork. I do not mean to talk about gender or class or geopolitical origin, hybridity of identity, threshold for trauma, sexual orientation, technical skills, wealth, and political or religious affiliation *per se*. While they may all be potential sources of tension, creativity, and involvement, it remains to be discovered and negotiated which of these

aspects of the fieldworker's subjectivity would be *contextually relevant* within a particular research situation.

I was supposed to be going smoothly in my fieldwork because I was 'at home' in my country. But I was not allowed to reside in that Protestant tribal village partly because of my being a Catholic priest. 'Wherever there is a priest, there is conflict', many would say. The fact that I was also a Christian or that I was born on the same island did not matter in that particular milieu. My positionality as a priest, however, provided my 'host family' with external contacts which facilitated the hospitalisation of a young tribal artist who, in turn, inspired the depressed leaders of the new social movement by the way he produced painting, poetry and pottery despite his sickness.

The following sequence reveals another aspect of the researcher's positionality in the 'field' and how learning from the field could be applied to fieldwork itself.

The geothermal company, in its desire to understand the indigenous culture around the project and its future sites, commissioned a multi-disciplinary socio-cultural study of ten indigenous cultural communities around Mt. Apo (Gloria 1997). The study was conducted by a group of consultants from different universities, but the president of the Davao university run by my fellow Jesuits signed the contract. The research team leader invited me to attend the presentation of the initial result. The venue was the most luxurious island resort in Davao City. I was grateful for being asked to join the privileged group of government policy makers and academic consultants. But I also had to ask whether they invited any one from the ten communities who were the subject of the multi-million-peso study. They had not. I was told that the research result was strictly for those who would make use of it in policy and planning. The consequent plans would be echoed to the communities later.

I informed my partners in Tuddok about the PNOC research report. Beting and Tano did all they could to be given a place during the consultation. They even sent a fax message to the Manila office of the PNOC. Frustrated, they just had to rely on me to tell them about the controversial conclusions and methodology of the commissioned research. The controversy reached the formal and informal forums of the National Association of Anthropologists in the Philippines (UGAT). The ironic



twist was that Tuddok leaders also implicated me in the PNOC research because the main people responsible for it worked in 'our' Jesuit university in which I am expected to teach as soon as I finish my research.

Several months later, in October 1996, it was my turn to present a paper about my ongoing fieldwork to the annual conference of UGAT. It was to be held in Benguet, far north of Manila. Learning from the PNOC experience, I requested the conference organiser to allow Beting and Tano to attend the discussion that was focused, propitiously, on *'Indigenous Peoples: Knowledge, Power and Struggles'*. During the conference, Beting made a tremendous performance. At the very opening session, she grabbed the microphone, and after introducing herself she said, 'I come here to study how you study us.' From then on, almost no discussion was closed without Beting's views being heard. Beting stayed behind after the conference to visit other northern tribes and to establish links with some Manila offices. That experience and exposure led to future contacts and networking which proved useful to the succeeding steps undertaken by Tuddok.

This sensitivity to the groundlevel complexity of the fieldwork identity of the researcher challenges the traditional notion of professional anthropological practice. In the field, professional anthropologists cannot be and are not only professional anthropologists. Veteran anthropologist Robert Paine realises its importance to the discipline. 'It surely matters personally to most of us what 'they' think of us (and that likely influences our research and its 'objectivity' (Paine 1998:134). Once in while, too, anthropologists are called to respond to life situations according to their temper and even passion. This is not bad news to the discipline. Being 'human' in the field should not be considered as a hazard to the study of fellow human beings. In fact anthropology should include in its ragbag repertoire even the human failings of the researcher. Renato Rosaldo argues, quite passionately, that 'human feelings and human failings provide as much insight for social analysis as subjecting oneself to the "manly" ordeals of self-discipline that constitute science as a vocation... Why not use a wider spectrum of less heroic, but equally insightful, analytical positions?' (1989:173).

Earlier, I introduced a section by asking 'What are we in fieldwork for?' alluding to a common idiom 'What are we in power for?' I assume here that doing fieldwork is, to some extent, an exercise of power. The ethnographer *qua* ethnographer may *not* be a powerful political actor. But it remains true that in some cases, in the field, prior to the packaging of the research result, the fieldworker in person as well as by profession might have *some* power---if only the capacity to do harm. At the same time, we can take the opportunity of fieldwork to give due 'recognition' of each other as 'persons', that is, as Hobart says, 'as non-unitary and complex beings, who are each grappling with very different life circumstances' and 'dislocations' (Hobart 1996:32). Hobart, however, should expand the notion of recognition to include the actual practices of fieldwork that he tends to lump into the penal gerunds of 'disciplining'. But 'seeing, listening, recording,' as Scheper-Hughes asserts, 'can be, if done with care and sensitivity, acts of fraternity and sisterhood, acts of solidarity. Above all, they are the work of recognition. Not to look, not to touch, not to record, can be the hostile act of indifference and of turning away' (Scheper-Hughes 1992).

To this struggle for mutuality and solidarity, anthropology itself as a discipline is called upon to participate and to change its practice. As Dell Hymes appealed a couple of decades ago, 'anthropology must lose itself to find itself, must become as fully as possible a possession of the people' for otherwise, 'our work will drift backward into the service of domination' (Hymes 1974:54). If we take this seriously, one kind of writing that possibly emerges is 'a highly subjective, partial, fragmentary---but also deeply felt and personal---record of lives based on eyewitness and testimony. [This] act of witnessing is what lends our work its moral (at times almost theological) character' (Scheper-Hughes 1992:xii).

This witnessing is not without critical function. Nevertheless, its practice of criticism is not so much to denounce but to announce the emergence of what Foucault calls new signs of existence. Far from the narrowly conceived deconstructive criticism that he had been associated with, Foucault's dream is for the generation of life. This type of cultural analysis 'would multiply, not judgements, but signs of existence; it would summon them, drag them from their sleep' (cf. Giri

1997). And in a surprising twist, Foucault adds, 'Perhaps it would invent them sometimes---all the better. All the better' (Foucault 1988:326).

In the same vein, I can't help but wish---perhaps it is also dreamt of by Medha Patkar, Virgilio Enriquez, Alting von Geusau, and my Tuddok friends---a kind of fieldwork practice that would not try to tame people into informants just to prove, improve, or disprove a theory, or fill a gap in academic narratives. One that would not aim simply at constructing or deconstructing a discourse. One that does not reserve flexibility and reflexivity only for future textualization of experience. One that would not be trapped within the demands of mutual disciplining and self-disciplining of researcher and researched, but would co-create new spaces from which new practices of freedom could emerge. I dream of a fieldwork practice that, though not without opportunistic pretensions, recognises persons and generates energies. This would involve an 'ethics of thought'---as well as action---that is 'concerned less with a form than an energy; less with a presence than an intensity; less with a movement and an attitude than with an agitation, of a trembling that is contained only with difficulty'.<sup>10</sup>

## POSTSCRIPT

As I was closing this thesis, I stumbled upon a letter from my research partner. She wrote this after reading a section of an earlier draft of my reflection.<sup>11</sup>

12 midnight, 12 Aug. 1998

TAUWANNAN  
(TRIBAL PEOPLE'S MEETING CENTER)  
KIDAPAWAN, COTABATO

TO: FR. ALBERT ALEJO, SJ (a.k.a. Allowan)  
CAMFION HALL  
OXFORD OX1 1QS  
UNITED KINGDOM

Dear Allowan,

How is London and the life with ever busy minds? I'm sure you're paying the cost well for the privilege of living in the first world. I guess the wrestling in the university is a tough job. But I hope too that when you earn the 3 letters after your name with 2 sharp dots, when your battle (intellectual) is over, the "goro" goes with your title.

The "goro", the way I understand it now, is the gift of effect of clear thinking, the simple and clear understanding of things no matter how truth is shaken, turned upside down & challenged. So when put into words, it hits a crowd of believers. I read your paper today (what are we in fieldwork for). I understand that your fieldwork process was challenged and is under fire, questioned by experts and veterans. I had the presumption that it hit a crowd of believers. Otherwise, it was left unnoticed. In your letter, you were asking me to give my comments on this paper. Of course, I will. I can offer my layman's point of view, both an advantage and a privilege. You may find it in a separate sheet.

By the way, since when did I learn to write you in English? Oh yes, it was after I had corn meals with Rigoberto Menchu. This is my first try (at least), so you must tolerate any abuses I may commit against this beautiful language. Will you?

For yesterday, today & tomorrow  
Betty + other names

## Notes on Study 7: Ethnography and Ethnogenesis

<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault. 1988. (Originally published in 1980 under the mask of anonymity). p. 326. *The Masked Philosopher*. In *Politics Philosophy Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*. Translated by Alan Sheridan and others. Edited with an Introduction by Lawrence D. Kritzman.

<sup>2</sup> Picking up from Beting Colmo's contribution during the Conference, Mary Racelis, a prominent social anthropologist in the Philippines, said: 'Cultural Regeneration---What the groups (IPs) want is to regenerate themselves in terms of today's challenges, pressures, constraints, opportunities that are coming from the outside but in the context which can be integrated into what is meaningful for them, a new kind of synthesis. And that, of course, is what cultures do all the time.' (UGAT 1997: viii).

<sup>3</sup> One would think that after this, things would settle down. Instead, a new group emerged from the neighbouring Balabag leading to the formation of Ilomavis-Balabag Apo Sandawa Manobo Ancestral Domain Claim or IBADSMADC. It was composed of Apao from Sayaban and the other Manobo in Balabag. The details of the processes behind this are beyond the present research.

<sup>4</sup> For the moment I am borrowing the term 'pragmatics' from Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992:359ff). Perhaps a better term would be *phronetics*, based on the Aristotelian application of practical reason (cf. Hughes 1990; cf. Ricoeur 1998: 92;). An alternative could be *aesthetic politics* in the sense that Ankersmit (1996:14) uses it, which includes 'a fine instinct for the right moment for political action.' A wholly different approach to this issue would be to apply the Gandhian *prayog* or principled human experiment to fieldwork, which I hope to discuss in a separate paper (cf. Srinivasan 1993; Sharma 1993).

<sup>5</sup> A number of these issues are not new in the Philippine anthropological discussions. See for example Zamora's *Anthropological Research: Perspectives and Fieldwork* (1986), especially the contributions of Salamone's 'Subjectivity in the Field', Kloos' 'Nothing But the Truth, A Question of Power' and Lopez-Gonzaga's 'A Note on Problems and Techniques in a Field Study of a Hill People'.

<sup>6</sup> But see Dudley (1993), for example, for a more critical view of this project.

<sup>7</sup> Enriquez represents the attempt to achieve an interface between academic psychology and fieldwork. Parallel initiatives are being done in other fields, e.g. 'science for social justice' by environmental scientists working with upland development (Walpole, *et al* 1994) and 'cultural activism' by theatre artists working with indigenous peoples (KALIWAT 1996).

<sup>8</sup> For example, see D'Andrade (1995) and Scheper-Hughes (1995) and reactions, Robins (1996), Ramphela (1996).

<sup>9</sup> The question of how to manage this function within a social movement is complex. See for example Melucci (1989).

<sup>10</sup> I am borrowing this phrase from Foucault's preface to an exhibit by a French painter, a description that an early Foucauldian scholar uses as key to Foucault's 'ethics of thought'.

The fuller quote runs: 'Rebeyrole's work is "concerned less with a form than an energy; less with a presence than an intensity; less with a movement and an attitude than with an agitation, of a trembling that is contained only with difficulty' (Barnauer 1990:1)

<sup>11</sup> The body of the letter reads thus: 'Dear Allowon, / How is London and the life with ever busy minds? I'm sure you're paying the cost well for the privilege of living in the first world. I guess the wrestling in the university is a tough job. But I hope that when you earn the 3 letters after your name with 2 sharp dots, your battle (intellectual) is over, the "goro" goes with your title. / The "goro", by the way I understand it now, is the gift and effect of clear thinking, the simple and clear understanding of things no matter how truth is shaken, turned upside down & challenged. So when put into words, it hits a crowd of believers. / I read your paper today (What are we in fieldwork for?). I understand that your fieldwork process was challenged and is under fire, questioned by experts and veterans. I had the presumption that it hit a crowd of believers. Otherwise it was left unnoticed. In your letter, you were asking me to give my comments on this paper, of course, I will. I can offer my layman's point of view, both an advantage and a privilege. You may find it in a separate sheet. / By the way, since when did I learn to write you in English? Oh yes! It was after I had corn meals with Rigoberta Menchu. This is my first try/attempt, so you must tolerate any abuses I may commit against this beautiful language, will you? / For yesterday, today & tomorrow, / Betty & other names.'

## Appendix 1

### **Dayandi Declaration of Principles**

Source: *Philippine Natural Resources Law Journal* (1990)

2(2):26-27. Also in *Midweek*, 6 September 1989, p. 5.

FOR US, THE LUMADS of southern Mindanao, the land is our life; a loving gift of Magbavaya (The Creator) to our race. We will die to defend it, even to the last drop of our blood.

We, Datus (tribal chieftains) of the Bagobo, Arumanen, Manobo, Teduray (Tiruray), Ubo, K'lagan, Kaulo, T'boli, B'laan and other Lumad peoples of southern Mindanao, have assembled here at the Spottswood Methodist Center in Kidapawan, North Cotabato this 13th day of April 1989, to discuss and analyze the aspirations of our people, to focus attention to problems threatening our sacred ancestral domain -- Sandawa (Mt. Apo) and, above all, to poor efforts in improving the condition and ensuring the future of our race.

Like other peoples, we believe in a creator---MAGBAVAYA. We believe our race came from FYE'WE and FUBULAW (man and woman or Adam and Eve). The Mountains, forests, fields and rivers are the dwelling places of our ancestors' spirits. The b'nati tree, the first tree on earth, was planted in the ancestral burial grounds or our forebears; and our beliefs have taught us to forever respect, love and remember all of them.

We, Lumad, believe that land is the beginning and the end of our life and our race. Magbavaya created land for our race to live on. No one can own it except D'wata who guards our land for us. Our race owns the land as proven by our ancestors who from birth till death cultivated it. They who are now buried in this land of their birth. To us, it is a concrete proof of our ownership of the land, in much the same way as we are now nourishing and living on it.

We have analyzed and felt that our race is suffering because of poverty for a very long time. The Lumad tribes find no more reason for celebrations, to be happy. Our race is now facing a big problem, a famine and crying in anguish for the days to come.

Our race was utilized like game cocks teased to fight each other for the amusement of the rich and for those enriching themselves. They have forcibly milked our ancestral land's resources using new methods like machineries and fertilizers. This they did by showing us papers we could not understand.

History has reminded us of the peace and bliss our ancestors experienced in the olden times before they were driven up to the mountains. Long before strangers from the north came with the intention of destroying our heritage, laws and livelihood. Our current situation, as historical experience showed, was the result of these strangers who, taking advantage of our innocence, exploited, deceived, oppressed and abused us.

Therefore, we Datus (tribal chieftains) of the different tribes of southern Mindanao, aware of the distorted system of laws, bind ourselves and declare our

unity. Through this DAYANDI, we swear to fight and die for our sacred ancestral lands which we inherited from our forebears, because the land and our life are gifts from Magbavaya; to defend it to the last drop of our blood in the coming years and even until the next generations.

Be it known that:

This Dayandi attests to the unity of the Datus of southern Mindanao in defending our ancestral lands and to the hardships and sufferings of all our tribal leaders in Mindanao who worked hard to unite us all in the national struggle for freedom against foreign domination.

We swear to follow all declarations of this Dayandi and stand for the truth according to the traditional laws under it and the practice of the Lumad.

This Dayandi strongly vows to oppose and fight against the entry of the Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) geothermal plant in Mt. Apo, the Eastern Davao Resorts Corp. in Maitum, South Cotabato and other corporations. Whoever wishes to grab our lands, which we have nourished and inherited from our ancestors and from Magbavaya, ever since mankind was created, and which our race owns, will be punished with death.

This Dayandi is striving to remind us to enrich our lands for the good, enjoyment, betterment and future of our race, to attain equality and harmony between and among us and in solidarity with the Muslim and Visayan tribes.

Whoever attempts to violate, subvert and betray this Dayandi (pact) will be cursed and punished with death. The life of the traitor will be like a broken plate.

We Datus, therefore, should prepare through this Dayandi because the demon from the north is coming. The demon, whose heart is eight "dangkal" wide, is armed with a moon-shaped cane to whip us away from our land.

We are asking Apo Sandawa, called Almabet in Mt. Maitum (defender of the poor and the oppressed), Apo Tulalang and Apo Bayvagan and other BAGANI (warriors) of our ancestors to give us the strength and the permission of the bamboo for our arrows, to the "bahi" for our spears, to the "kalifod" tree for our "balatak" (shields) to fight anyone wanting to grab our domain from our race.

Our goal is for peace and harmony because that is what Magbavaya, who is always with us, wants. That is why we are ready to sign petitions, hold rallies and to shout to the (national) leadership to stop disrupting our peaceful existence.

Most of all, however, we are ready to take up arms, if necessary, to defend our human rights.

This DAYANDI seals our pact.

*Sealed in blood and wine by 21 Datus representing nine Southern Mindanao Lumad tribes. April 13, 1989. Kidapawan, North Cotabato*



## Appendix 2

### **Basic Chronology of Recent *Lumad* Formation in Mindanao**

Main Sources: Gaspar 1997a, Rodil 1993, 1994a; *Suwara* 1991, 1(4):8-9, 10-11, 15.

#### **Non-Lumad (Catholic and Protestant Churches) Initiatives**

- 1972 Declaration of Martial Law in the entire Philippines
- 1974 First Mindanao Regional Conference on Cultural Communities (MISSA-MDC) in Surallah, South Cotabato.
- 1975 Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) creates the Episcopal Commission on Cultural Communities (ECCC). Church supports struggle of the Igorots against the Chico Dam Project in Northern Luzon.
- 1976 Mainstream Protestant churches establish Mindanao-Sulu Conference on Justice and Development (MSCJD); helps bring tribal groups together.
- 1977 Second Consultation in Davao; ECCC renamed ECTF; National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) sets up Program Aimed at Christians' Education about Muslims (PACEM).  
World View Seminar organised by MSCJD in Davao ('culture of silence')
- 1978 Formation of SILDAP (Silingang Dapit); ILBUCAG (regional coalitions)
- 1979 MSPC is formed; regional formations; PACT formed from PACEM

#### **Desire for 'Pure Lumad' Organisation**

- 1980-81 Thoughts of forming pure Lumad organisation
- 1982 MSPC split--MIPC due to ideological conflict within Church in Mindanao.
- 1983 LUMAD-Mindanao (LM) multi-sectoral alliance set up in Davao del Sur; '*Lumad*' is now the accepted term among the organised groups for IPs in Mindanao. Ad Hoc consultation composed mostly of '*simbahan*' National Democrats (ND+)
- 1984 First General Assembly of Lumad-Mindanao multi-sectoral alliance: Call for 'pure lumad' organisation; Mindanao Tribal Resource Centre (MINTREC) prepares for 'pure lumad' organisation.
- 1985 Second LM Assembly in Kidapawan: KADUMA-Lumad serves as the non-Lumad 'support group'.  
International Forum for Solidarity-Mindanao (MIPCS) in Davao;

#### **Promise of self-determination**

- 1986 President Marcos calls for Snap Elections; progressive groups ask Lumad groups to boycott elections; EDSA People Power Revolution ousts the dictator. Corazon Aquino takes power. Aquino promises reforms, cut launches counter-insurgency against the extreme left.  
LUMAD-MINDANAW Founding Assembly; ALUHAMAD for southern Mindanao; Low Intensity Conflict and counter insurgency begins; problem of Tadtad fundamentalist groups used by the military.

- 1986-88 Generally harmonious relations between LM and Kaduma-Lumad
- 1987 LM forms own secretariat; Anthropological Association of the Philippines (UGAT) Land Congress 'Land is Life'; strong POs on IPs. Chico Dam Project in the Mountain Province is closed down. Supporters shift attention to Mt. Apo.
- 1988 SBM starts complaints against PNOC; Aluhamad picks up protest; CBCP releases pastoral letter on environmental protection. Catholic clergy, especially in Kidapawan, intensify campaign versus PNOC.

### **Ideological tensions and the Mt. Apo protest campaign**

- 1989 Aluhamad datus sign **D'yandi** vow to defend Mt. Apo 'to the last drop of their blood'. High profile protest campaign in national and international network begins. But political officers assign LM to a small district as part of its consolidation process. LM dissents. LM suffers from internal conflicts. Political officers withdraw support to LM. Recovery program of the progressive movement; '*imit*' (hot) relations between LM and KL
- 1990 No LM Congress. *D'yandi* renewal with *Pakang*.
- 1991 LM Congress: HR human rights; HR+ party line; HR- non-party line; confusion International trips: Germany, US, Japan. Task Force Apo Sandawa (TFAS) formed from TFS Manila (Feb 9 Davao)
- 1992 LM set up COORE; evaluates LM, calls for base building; admits being used by POs; LM struggles to survive with help of LRC/MBO; LM held office at LRC; questions on politics of external support become highlighted.
- 1993 DENR releases Departmental Administrative Order No. 2 (DAO2) offering Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim to legitimate indigenous communities; Lumad groups divided in response; further Mt. Apo campaigns abroad (London, Europe)
- 1994 LM Congress; Aluhamad is declared dead by progressive forces. LM becomes LMPF; focus on clan organisations; RA/RJ split; ECTF etc. take the legislative option, lobby for ancestral domain bill.

### **Revitalisation period?**

- 1995 PANAGTAGBO gathers several Lumad groups in Kidapawan upon the initiative of the Kaliwat Theatre Collective and Legal Resource Centre (LRC). Lumad-Mindanao goes back to base-building. Other progressive groups form PASAKA-SAGIP. Mindanao-wide umbrella organisation not ready.
- 1996 PANAGTAGBO IPO-NGO Forum on Mining Environment & Ancestral Domain (Davao); Forum on Ancestral Domain (Bukidnon); LMPF joins Panagtagbo; Beginnings of cultural regeneration movements and ancestral domain claims in north-west part of Mt. Apo (NABAMAS, TUDDOK, TAHAPANTAU, APAO)
- 1997-98 Official negotiations continue for the ancestral domain claim on Mt. Apo. Neighbouring and competing claimants form coalition. Land claim includes the 701-hectare site of the PNOC Geothermal Project.
- 1999 Technical survey of ancestral domain claims, with some financial and technical support from Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao (AFRIM).

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 The Filipino (London)  
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#### 5. Libraries and Archives Visited

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 Philippine National Oil Company Library (Makati)  
 Provincial Library (Kidapawan, Cotabato)  
 Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University (Quezon City)  
 School of Oriental and African Studies (London)  
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