

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' MOVEMENT-BUILDING AND
NEOLIBERALISM:**

A Focus on the Higaonon People in Misamis Oriental, Philippines

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Abstract

Three key assertions for Indigenous Peoples' Rights are for ancestral territory, self-determination, and right to culture and identity. And in the discourse, there has always been an assumption of collective demands. However, this assumption does not take into consideration the changing reality in indigenous territories.

Legitimate as the collective rights assertions may be, there are already evidences that these demands do not benefit community members homogenously, and have in fact aggravated their economic conditions. In some communities, the exercise of these rights has led to further deterioration of the environment.

The introduction of labor, money, and the commodification of land, fictitious commodities as referred to by Polanyi, inadvertently changed the structures and class relations in the indigenous communities. The continued uncritical understanding of indigenous peoples' rights as a collective assertion does not reflect what Fraser refers to as 'encoded relations of domination'.

Using the case of the indigenous peoples' movement in Mindanao, this study tests the hypothesis that emancipatory movements within the indigenous peoples movement are driven by the deteriorating relationship between the indigenous people and their environment, as affected by the entry of a market economy in their territories.

The findings show that in communities where there is already a predominant view of land as commodity, movements are fractured, with the dominated class creating an emancipatory movement separate from the efforts of traditional leaders who are only reclaiming their position of power in a market economy.

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Introduction

Indigenous peoples, in the definition of the United Nations, have “retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies where they live.” But with the entry of resource-extractive industries into ancestral territories, increasingly with the implementation of neoliberal economic policies, indigenous communities have been unavoidably exposed to the market economy.

Assuming that the new world systems are altering the dynamics in the communities, the study hopes to understand the indigenous peoples’ movement building in the peripheral reaches of this neoliberalism. Using the framework of Polanyi’s (1944) double movement and Fraser’s (2014) contribution of an emancipatory or triple movement, it looks at why some movements remain in the protectionist double movement while others turn into emancipatory movements.

This study forwards the hypothesis that emancipatory tendencies within the indigenous peoples’ movements have emerged with the entry of a market economy in their territories, deteriorating the relationship between the indigenous peoples and their environment, turning both into fictitious commodities as how Polanyi describes them. This, in turn, makes perceptible the different social layers in the community, what Fraser terms as ‘encoded relations of domination,’ showing in the differences in the ability of community members to access and utilize the resources in their territory.

Chapter 1 presents the study’s theoretical framework and related literature. Chapter 2 briefly skims through Philippine history to show how the commodification of land and labor started in the country as a result of the colonial empires. Chapter 3, with a focus on Mindanao, presents key policies that gradually liberalized the economy and how this liberalization

translates on the ground in a country that is import-dependent and export-oriented. The chapter also presents, although not extensively, selected protectionist movements of some indigenous communities in Mindanao. Chapter 4 presents one case of the Higaonon people and their experience with the entry of an oil palm plantation in their territory. Chapter 5 is the conclusion of the study with a few recommendations for further in-depth researches.

While the overview necessarily looks at the development of the macroeconomy of the country, the case presented focuses only on one experience of the Higaonon people in Northern Mindanao with an oil palm plantation. Oil palm plantations had been a relatively recent phenomenon in the Philippines, having extensively developed first in Malaysia and parts of Indonesia. It is therefore a viable case to look at considering that as a 'late comer' in industrial plantations, there isn't much land left to occupy except for what remains inside indigenous territories.

The study also focuses only on the Higaonon People because of the acknowledged difference in the experiences of indigenous peoples. It would be best not to compare the movements of different communities from different countries unless a more extensive study is done. There would be differences in policies and their processes of integration or maintaining their cultural and traditional practices.

Basing on Tarrow's (2011) mechanisms in studying social movements, the study looks at the movements' framing of contentious politics, and the definition, crystallization, and construction of collective identities. The narrative of the movement building will be constructed through a review of historical accounts, press releases, and any publicly available published material on the communities.

CHAPTER 1: Theory and Related Literature

Three key areas of indigenous peoples' rights are ancestral territory, self-determination, and culture and identity. What makes these rights distinct from the rest is that they are necessarily collectively asserted. These articulations came about after a long history of dispossession as a people, brought on by colonialism and the new world systems that came after it. Indigenous peoples had been displaced from their territories and deprived of their ability to decide and govern themselves to accommodate the economic needs of the colonialists and the new superpowers after the world wars.

Thus, in the discourse of indigenous peoples' rights, there has always been an assumption of collective demands, as writings focus on issues "concerning the position of indigenous peoples in relation to national states" (Oliveira, 2011). This assumption, however, is not nuanced enough to understand the changing reality in indigenous territories. These rights necessarily come with the assumption that the peoples, as a collective entity, would want to be separate, or at least to some degrees, from the majority states that encompass their territories. But this does not reflect the reality that had resulted in their forced assimilation, still to varying degrees, to the majority states.

1.1 Indigenous communities and colonialism

The lifestyle of indigenous peoples is deeply intertwined with their territories. The communities are attuned to their environment, their means of thriving depending on how well they know, interpret and react to what is happening around them. Thus, whatever institutions they built depended on this relationship with their surroundings, human beings part of nature with their own place in how the world works (Coates, 2004). This relationship is different

from the caretaker role that is now commonly adopted especially in the narrative of the Catholic Church (Pope Francis, 2015). They are not ‘stewards’ because they are not necessarily authorized to interfere with the natural order.

It is for this reason that rituals are common in most, if not all, indigenous communities for everything they do that could affect their surroundings. In sedentary agricultural communities, rituals are performed when they open a field to farm. Another major ritual is performed at the time of harvest. Instead of being the steward of the land, they are asking to borrow the land from a greater entity (Gaspar, 2000). This may or may not be similar to the idea of a ‘mother earth’, but this concept of non-ownership plays a key role in their governance and how they accessed their resources. Since no one owns the land, everyone has the right to partake in its resources. There are communities whose leaders are not necessarily the individuals who could ask for ‘permission’ in borrowing the land from its true owner. Spiritual leaders, on the other hand, are not involved in the governing of the communities and only take an indirect part when the spirits have to be consulted for community decisions or the populace had to interface with their ancestors (Camacho, 2014).

Although varying in the structures and expressions of governance all of these show that before the arrival of the colonialists, these indigenous societies had already flourished. They had even established trade relations (Coates, 2004) with neighbors and even further communities reached by more nomadic groups. They had levels of organization in communities, and even hierarchies in roles and responsibilities. They were settled in their territories, and had institutions governing their daily lives. There were communities that reached the level of organization as ‘nations,’ but even at clan levels (nomadic groups), they had some level of governance that may have simply been to ensure that decisions are made

when necessary. But still, at this point, ownership of the land was not a concept held even as a community.

1.2 The formation of states after colonization

As the empires disintegrated, new states were formed in the old colonies. Many states took on a governance system similar to how they were run during the colonial times, maintaining economic systems that were inevitably tied to their previous colonizers. Indigenous territories, whether they had been part of the colonial structure or not, were incorporated as part of these new states. They were not recognized as separate nation-states and were consequently incorporated into the bigger market systems, forced to conform to the dominant culture, and be part of a wider ‘national identity.’

The use of the term Neoliberalism is not just here the mere introduction of new economic systems. Rather, this study adopts Harvey’s (2007) understanding of it as a ‘conceptual apparatus’ (p.5) that would allow accumulation of wealth for domestic and foreign capitalists. Economically, this is done through deregulation of the market and privatization of industries so that there is virtually no government interference possible. This allows the capitalists free reign in devising strategies to gain as much profit, this being part of their ‘individual rights.’ But as perfectly summarized in the famous quote from Margaret Thatcher, “Economics are the method; but the object is to change the soul’ (Harvey, p.23).

1.3 Articulation of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The definition of indigenous peoples includes the clause of the communities’ maintained and continued pre-colonial traditions and practices. But right from the start when the issue of indigenous peoples started to gain traction in the international community, that is, discussed at

the level of the General Assembly of the United Nations, they had acknowledged the impact of colonization on the communities. They tackled the difficult issue of defining what ‘indigenous peoples’ would refer to given that countries around the world have different definitions and consequently have different policies related to the communities (Cobo, 1982).

Regardless of these differences, what was established was the recognition of their collective lifestyles prior to colonization and that they had sovereign systems, separate from colonial systems, that were subsumed when modern states were formed post colonialism. The articulation thus of Indigenous Peoples’ Rights evolve around these differences from non-indigenous rights holders. For non-indigenous communities, especially those basking in the material progress of a liberal economy, human rights essentially link with individual property rights.

In the codification of the recognition of the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights, the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) was further articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). The concept of FPIC is that the Indigenous Peoples, ‘through their own representative institutions’ (OHCHR, n.d.), should always be consulted when decisions will be made that would affect them. Free means they are not forced, prior means that they are consulted before anything is decided on, much less implemented.

However, this FPIC would later on be met with problems once it is applied in communities that no longer maintain a strong collective identity, influenced by the new global socio-economic and political systems. Although asserted by all indigenous peoples across the world, the translation of this FPIC on the ground vary as much as the communities asserting them vary.

Postcolonial theorists give value to the sovereignty that indigenous communities, had prior to colonization (Song, 2016). There are also even proponents of multiculturalism who propose they should be allowed to determine which practices should be continued or not, without interference from external sources or external value judgments (Kymlicka, 2002). But to reiterate, this pre-colonial sovereignty was exercised in a context when it was beyond the communities to even consider that it is possible to own land, to own nature.

1.4 Movement, Countermovement, and Emancipation

Polanyi (1944) argues that social movements are naturally formed to protect society from destructions brought about by a liberal economy. The indigenous peoples' movement is a good illustration of this, with its ideals of protecting said peoples' territories from further encroachment by resource-extractive industries.

However legitimate as collective assertions of indigenous peoples' rights may be, there are already evidences that these demands do not benefit community members homogenously, and have in fact led to aggravated economic conditions of community members. In some communities, the exercise of these rights has led to the further deterioration of the environment (Gaspar, 2019).

The deterioration of the environment necessarily affects indigenous communities whose identities are traditionally linked to their territories. Malik (2018) has developed a typology of indigenous communities in Indonesia according to their cultural integration and resource management. The types ranges from communities who continue to have full control over their resources to communities who have been uprooted from their territories. Those who are able

to maintain their full control of their territories maintain their pure traditions, often isolated from other communities. At the extreme end are the communities that are no longer in their territories, forcibly assimilated into the mainstream society. In between these two extremes are the communities that still have control over their lands, but have been influenced to varying degrees by external factors. The second type continues their traditional ways of life depending on nature, but are in touch with outside communities while the third type, although still having control over their territory, do not necessarily follow traditional methods in the use of their resources.

Eder (2013), on the other hand, presents an account of the overlapping and creation of new identities formed among indigenous groups in the Philippines, forwarding class formations due to several socio-economic influences. He doesn't present a typology, but rather, shows mixed lifestyles of community members who both to some degrees maintain ties to their territories, maybe even owning a house in their village, but live mostly integrated in non-indigenous communities. There is a mixture between their roles in territorial resource management, even if hypothetically they would have full control over it, and some external source of income.

The introduction of labor and money, and the commodification of land, fictitious commodities as referred to by Polanyi (1944), changed structures and class relations in indigenous communities. The continued uncritical understanding of indigenous peoples' rights as a collective assertion would be thus blind to what Fraser (2014) refers to as "encoded relations of domination." These relations of domination could explain why within the indigenous community and movement, contention framing around class liberation is now superseding the framing of territorial protection, although the latter continues to be common among the

movements. It is not just a matter of one state dominating another state, but also a matter of reviving – or encouraging - relations of domination within this dominated state.

The introduction of market allowed individuals who previously could not earn money to be economically empowered. Individuals who were previously dominated or who were powerless pre-market economy could gain leverage and perhaps aspire to be equals with their previous superiors. For indigenous communities, the introduction of the market economy would have allowed lower classes – or at least the families not part of the ruling clans or lineages - to earn separately from community production. It means they no longer needed to rely on the community distribution rules that may have been set by their rulers. All of these changes would have contributed to a new lifestyle and a new worldview that could be inconsistent with their pre-colonial circumstances.

1.5 Statement of Hypothesis

This study tests the hypothesis that emancipatory tendencies within the indigenous peoples' movements have emerged with the entry of a market economy in their territories, and the consequent deterioration in the relationship between the indigenous peoples and their environment.

Here a qualifier is necessarily added to Fraser's concept of encoded relations of domination. This relation, that the study assumes to have existed in pre-colonial times, only becomes salient when the relationship between human and nature is destroyed, and humans start to see nature as a commodity, and an individual (or a family) him/herself is given a monetized value (wage or capacity to profit).

It comes from the assumption that with the change in the indigenous peoples' relationship with the environment (i.e. management of their resources), relations of power have also changed. Access to what used to be communal areas for production, for example, have become restricted depending on who the decision-makers in the community are – the traditional ruling class. Communal territories became private properties. Differences between social strata have become more pronounced. From this new production arrangement, contention is not only between the indigenous community and the state or capitalist intruders, but also between dispossessed community members and a section of their own community who adheres or who benefits from the new capitalist structure.

Contentious politics thus takes on an emancipatory frame and becomes viable only when the indigenous collective identity, as a consequence of the lost link between human and nature, is already unredeemable.

Chapter 2: The Commodification of Land and Labor, Classes, and Class-Consciousness

The belief system of the early inhabitants of the Philippine archipelago originates from a common creation story despite the main god or deity's different names. They all believed that *Magbabaya* or *Kabunian* or *Bathala* created the world. This world was inhabited not only by men but also by unknown entities with the various parts of the environment having guardians. The indigenous communities therefore respected their environment, using the resources as if they were simply borrowing it from the gods, be it as individuals or as a community (Gaspar, 2000).

Despite the absence of a unified form of governance and with many of the scattered communities still practicing animism at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, there was already a level of development in what was to become Mindanao, the southern supra-region of the country. Philippine historian, Renato Constantino (1975), refers to the area as the 'Muslim South' (p. 37) and points out the development trend then, which was already apparent in the sultanates and their trade relations with China and some Western seafarers.

This would be crucial in the slow progress of the Spanish colonization in this group of islands as they had to fight the more organized Islamized communities. Unlike in the northern (Luzon) and central (Visayas) parts of the country, the Spanish authority in Mindanao was virtually limited to the coastal area in the northern part of the region, with a few scattered missionary bases. For this reason, indigenous communities in this part of the country were able to evade the colonized hamlets and generally maintained their way of life apart from Spanish control (Gaspar, 2000).

2.1 Pre-colonial Communities

Prior to the conquest, the communities had been small and reliant on subsistence agriculture and the inhabitants were self-sufficient (Constantino, 1975). The chieftains, in fact, although coming from particular lineages did not rule as an economic class, and thus also produced food for their own consumption. Their only difference from the other community members is that they head a 'social unit' - not a 'political state' (Constantino, 1975) – and this is in accordance to the needs of the community, example in finding sources of food, resolving conflicts, relating with neighbors and traders. They therefore rule because the community members recognize their abilities and could at any time, when they could not carry out their responsibilities, be replaced (Constantino, 1975). Their role in production is important as this basically what prevents them from becoming an economically different class. Their use of the land had been similar with the rest of the community.

Spanish colonizers had also observed that even with the abundance of gold in the islands, the people did not collect them unless necessary. Even chieftains only possess some as ornaments. The Spaniards therefore saw the natives as lazy because they did not seek to amass wealth (Constantino, 1975). But this only shows that the concept of wealth was not present in these pre-colonial societies, or at least it was not the same as how the Spaniards understood wealth.

The society at that point already had a 'slave' class. They could be war spoils, but another common reason for servitude was that they could not pay a debt or penalty. Conflicts were usually resolved through the penalization of the offender, which could be in the form of service. 'Slaves' of the latter type could eventually earn their freedom after they have repaid their debt or served their time for restitution. However, this class, if it could be termed such, is

not as what it was in Western societies as the status of a member of society could change more easily. Moreover, the difference in material wealth was not really pronounced in the subsistence communities even between the slaves and their ‘masters’ (Constantino, 1975). The access to resources was also not determined by this social position as all of them still had the same access and relation to the land, and produce for their own consumption. This ranking, therefore, was not equivalent to class stratification which has an implication on resource access and wealth distribution (Constantino, 1975). These social assignments, however, took on an economic dimension with the introduction of colonial resource exploitation.

Despite the lack of classes at this point, the direction of the indigenous communities had been towards the formation of such, with the Islamized communities already exhibiting more stratified and hierarchical social structures under sultanates (Constantino, 1975). The level of organization in the indigenous communities was, in fact, how the colonizers were able to easily implement their colonial rule using the local governing families or individuals.

2.2 The Encomiendas and the Haciendas: The Commodification of Labor and Land Under Spanish Colonization

The story of land ownership for the indigenous peoples of the Philippines starts with the Spanish colonization of the archipelago that would later on come to be known as Las Islas Filipinas.

At the start of the colonial rule, the encomienda system, similar to the Spanish-colonized Americas, was put up in the islands. Each encomienda, intended to be units for maintaining peace and order as well as for missionary work was self-sufficient. The system of exploitation

was in the *tributo* and in the *polo y servicios*. The *tributo* in Crown encomiendas - those considered to be directly under the king and facilitated by an *alcalde mayor*, in present-day a mayor, instead of an encomendero - were taxes that went back to Spain. But in the encomiendas assigned to encomenderos, usually as rewards for the colonization, became a source of income for whoever had authority over it (Constantino, 1975).

The *polo y servicios personales* on the other hand, was forced labor. On paper, it was presumably only employed when no Chinese labor was available and the workers were paid. However, in practice, *polo* was unpaid service from inhabitants for different functions that may be beyond the scope of an encomienda, ranging from conscription to the war – Spain was at war all the time with the Dutch and the Portuguese who were in the nearby islands of Indonesia and Macau, and there were also local uprisings to suppress – to shipbuilding, or working in the mines (Constantino, 1975). *Servicios personales* were unpaid private labor for the Spanish conquistadors. This could be likened to, if not the same as, the *repartamiento* arrangement in the Spanish Americas where the encomienda entitled the holders to the labor of the natives in their landholdings (Lockhart, 1969).

Through the encomienda system, indigenous leaders – *datus* as what the chieftains are called - either by force or of their own accord, became the intermediaries between the colonizers and the communities. They were instrumental in the *reduccion* or the gathering of the families into hamlets from their previously scattered domiciles (Constantino, 1975). At the pretext of making it easier for the Spaniards to protect them, the concentration of the population made it easier to make an inventory of the population, who were old enough to be enlisted for work or who had to pay tributos. The chieftains made sure that the correct amount of tribute is

collected. Otherwise, in many cases, they are punished by the encomenderos or are forced to pay for the lacking amount (Constantino, 1975).

Although technically not owned by the encomendero, the encomienda could be inherited up to two generations of the encomendero's descendants. During this time, to avoid the possibility of encomenderos expanding their administrative territories in the conquered lands, 'uninhabited lands' were declared to be properties of the Spanish Crown (Constantino, 1975). And for some time during the American colonialism and post-colonial Philippines, this was interpreted to include the territories of the indigenous communities that had never been part of the Spanish systems.

In these Hispanized areas, the chieftains who connived with the colonizers eventually obtained favor from the colonizers and became *principales* (Gaspar, 2000), basically the appointed local overseers of the Spaniards, and secured their position as part of the ruling class. This is to be distinguished from the chieftains who did not willingly work with the colonizers but who were nonetheless forced to become part of the colonial system. But also, as history progressed, the lineage of these chieftains might have eventually been acknowledged as part of the ruling class.

Later on, this new role of the chieftains would have an implication in land titling procedures, as the descendants of these *datus* are entitled to claim indigeneity due to their place-genealogy (Paredes, 2022), and thus could also claim to be head claimants of an indigenous territory. Whether or not they had been willing parties to the Hispanization of their communities, they would become part of the majority Hispanized population, their descendants with the privilege now in modern times to claim indigenous territories.

Encomiendas, as systems of colonial administration, would eventually revert to the Crown and were not private holdings of the encomenderos. But still, the first commodification of the land happened within this system. Historians did not see the direct link of land acquisition through the encomienda but have presented proofs that encomenderos in some cases have amassed vast tracks of private lands within their administered encomiendas by buying them from the locals (Lockhart, 1969). The indigenous chieftains who thought to gain profit from the new setup under the colonial rule moved to have the lands previously communally tilled by their village recognized as their private properties. And despite the protests of the villagers, the colonizers saw the potential of accessing the land themselves or gain from it through these profiteering chieftains and recognized these claims of ownership. The rest of the villagers then became tenants, and the socio-economic stratification in the communities started (Constantino, 1975).

The massive acquisition of land, however, was not at the level of these chieftains, but still among the Spaniards – the encomenderos, as stated above, and the religious orders. The friars and their orders were allowed to acquire land through bequests from the Crown, or from the locals they have converted and have convinced that they could secure eternal redemption if they donate generously to the church (Constantino, 1975).

The royal bequests were detrimental to the indigenous populations. Definitely, the lands that were granted to the Friars were parts of ancestral territories. Moreover, the Friars would draw maps beyond what had originally been bequeathed to them and would usurp land from the natives who could not provide land titles proving their ownership (Constantino, 1975). The

natives became the *kasamas* or tenants in their own lands, designated the lowest social rank and the poorest in the colonial hierarchy.

These large tracks of private lands became known as *haciendas* although they are not as expansive as the one in the colonized Americas. Despite their interrelatedness, it should be noted that these two colonial institutions, the *encomiendas* and the *haciendas*, developed separately. In the narratives of Spanish America, historians have referred to the *encomenderos* and the *hacendados* as proprietors with high-ranking titles, the *encomenderos* mostly urban dwellers and the *hacendados* mostly living lavish lifestyles in the countryside (Lockhart, 1969). The main difference in the two systems was that *encomienda* allowed the conquistador to access local labor while the *hacienda* to privately own vast tracks of land. And as will be explained later, the former had more relevance to the Spaniards in the early years of colonization than the latter, with most of their aspirations still based in their motherland. Landholdings in the far colony had not been as important as exacting free labor.

For some decades, the Philippines did not have a major role in the Spanish galleon trade, serving only as a convenient dock and repair stop for the ships that go to and from Mexico and China. The galleon trade, however, encouraged a large migration of Chinese to the archipelago where they introduced new consumption patterns to the locals (Constantino, 1975). Meanwhile, the industrialization in Britain and its need for more raw materials directed the country's interest to the Philippines, something that they had before not pursued because of the presence of the Dutch who were in the nearby islands of Indonesia. Since for the Spaniards, the Philippines was just a distant outpost under the supervision of Mexico, Britain was able to trade freely with mainly the Chinese settlers in the Philippines despite Spain's rule for its colonies to only trade with her (Constantino, 1975).

The industrial revolution in Britain likewise affected how Spain changed its treatment of the Philippines. The empire was being left out in the globalizing capitalism so, finally, it looked at the archipelago as a potential source of raw materials and opened it eventually to international trade (Constantino, 1975). The self-sufficiency of the *encomiendas* eventually became obsolete and the *haciendas* that allowed for large single crop cultivation became more important. Diversified staple crops were replaced with cash crops, among which tobacco, hemp, and sugar became the most important goods (Constantino, 1975).

The feudal system in the Philippines was thus started by the capitalist development and excursions of the Western empires in the still-developing archipelagic communities. This system would form the base of the country's economic development, a large part of the population tied to land for a long time even after the colonizers have left. The land distribution schemes post-colonial governments tried to institute were not successful, with the landed elite among those who also held government positions. In fact, the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, which was passed in 1988 under the presidency of Corazon Cojuangco-Aquino, failed to dismantle Hacienda Luisita, a sugarcane plantation that is owned by the Cojuangco family, and is operational to date.

Starting as a peripheral player or maybe even just having a supporting role in the global market, the country's manufacturing industries remained underdeveloped and for a long time its economy relied on the production of cheap raw materials for export, dependent on the dictates of the global economic powers.

2.3 Further Demographic Marginalisation of the Lumad: Resettlement Programs under the Americans and Post-colonial Philippine Governments

Although the reorganization of villages started with the Spanish forced concentration of the indigenous populations under the encomienda system, massive resettlement programs from the north to the south of the country started during the American colonial period.

The Spanish – American war ended with the Treaty of Paris signed in 1898. For \$10,0000.00, the Philippines was turned over to its new colonizers. The Americans considered Mindanao, which according to Spanish land titling laws are largely unoccupied, a frontier territory and the new government designed strategies in how best to use the land for production and at the same time subjugate the large populations of Islamized indigenous communities and the non-Hispanized natives.

The first such strategy was the homesteading. Although at first conceptualized to respond to the food shortage in the few communities the Americans were able to sustain in Mindanao, particularly in Sulu and Zamboang, the program also allowed the new colonizers to quell unrest in the south (Alamon, 2017). Additionally, it was also meant to culturally assimilate the communities to the mainstream under the ‘Filipinization’ policy of Governor General Francis Burton Harrison (Abaya-Ulindang, 2015).

According to the Philippine Organic Act of 1902, the homestead areas should not be lands ‘not inhabited by Moros (the Islamized natives) or other Non-Christian tribes.’ But here, there is a problem because the non-Christian tribes had not taken part in the mortgage system or the Torrens titling processes under the Spanish colony. It would be difficult for them to prove that

they had been tilling and occupying the land prior to the arrival of the homestead owners. In fact, in the creation of the Commonwealth Republic in 1935, the Americans acknowledged that these areas had not been part of the Spanish colony (Alamon, 2017).

Resettlement programs were likewise implemented post the Americans, from the Commonwealth Republic under Manuel L. Quezon through the National Land Settlement Administration established in 1938 up to the government under Ramon Magsaysay in 1953. Mindanao, also dubbed as ‘The Land of Promise’ became the resettlement area for landless farmers from the northern and central parts of the country, as well as the surrenderees from the rebel group, Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon (HUKBALAHAP) that was formed during the Japanese colonization period. The Philippine Army had separately established the Economic Development Corps, with most of the homesteads under the program set up in the Islamized areas and the beneficiaries were mostly surrenderees from the HUKBALAHAP (Abaya-Ulindang, 2015).

The programs, by virtue of them serving the purpose of also pacifying unrest both among the population to be resettled and the territories where they were opened, and with a goal to integrate all the communities into the majority socio-economic and political system, have been considered as ‘internal colonialism’ (Abaya-Ulindang, 2015). What the direct colonizers did not accomplish in incorporating indigenous-held territories the resettled Filipinos did.

2.4 The Communist Party of the Philippines and the spread of class-consciousness

An ulterior motive of the government for the resettlement programs, especially under Ramon Magsaysay, was to dissuade people from being sympathetic to communist ideologies (Abaya-

Ulindang), which at that time had also been taking root as more Filipinos were exposed to American intellectual circles. It was also the time of the Cold War, and governments allied with the US were attacking Communists and those suspected of being Communists. In fact, the first communist party in the Philippines, the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) was established in 1930 when the country was still under American occupation. The introduction of this ideology brought in class-consciousness to the Philippine hitherto national liberation movements.

In its early years, the communist party had been legal and joined Philippine politics. During the Japanese occupation, it led the HUKBALAHAP in an armed resistance against the yet-again new colonizers. The PKP was not only at war with the Japanese, however, but also against the Philippine elites including the remnants of the American colonialists. In 1957, the party was banned from Philippine politics and the PKP wanted to abandon its aspirations for an armed revolution (Abinales, 1985). A breakaway group composed largely of young educated activists founded the new Communist Party, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in 1968 and had been an underground organization from the start. The following year, Jose Ma. Sison, the founding chairperson of the new party, met up with a remaining HUK unit and formed the New People's Army (Stanford University, 2018).

Both parties had been instrumental in the spread of class-based movements, albeit farmers and farm workers comprised the majority of uprisings and revolts, as they have envisioned.

Because the working class did not expand as much as that in the industrialized West, the class struggles promoted by the new communist party drew heavily from the Chinese experience under Mao Zedong (Mediansky, 1986), which in turn drew from the USSR experience founded on Vladimir Lenin's idea of the worker-peasant alliance. The thoughts spread to the

countryside as the party, and the formation of the New People's Army, depended much in organizing the land-dependent peasants and farmers against big landowners.

Contrary to Mediansky's (1986) claim that the CPP-NPA was merely a 'nuisance' before the 1980s, the influence of the CPP was actually strong during Martial Law, with a lot of discontented youth activists aligning with the ideals of the CPP and going underground (Abinales, 1985). The first guerrilla bases were set up in the old hacienda communities in Central Luzon, but it quickly spread up to the north of Luzon and down to Mindanao. Membership further increased with the fraudulent Philippine elections of 1978 that reinstalled Marcos Sr. as the president for his third successive term (Stanford University, 2018).

In northern Luzon and in Mindanao, the indigenous territories, still with forest cover and whose terrains are difficult for the Philippine military, were the best areas for the setting up of the guerrilla camps. The CPP quickly learned how to incorporate the contentions of indigenous communities, grouped together with the 'Moros' as 'national minorities,' framing them in the larger context of the fight for land (Guerrero, 1971). In the early analyses of the party, however, these minorities did not include the non-Islamized indigenous populations in Mindanao and only mentioned the indigenous communities in Northern Luzon. Additionally, they did not consider them a separate class but 'special groups' (Guerrero, 1971) and acknowledged that they have their own governing systems.

What is important in this context is that the mixing of the communist party-led people's war and the indigenous peoples' movements, which will be presented later, had introduced a form of class-consciousness among indigenous communities. Not only that, the struggle against capitalism was also introduced. What had been a simple defense of territory against

denudation or against ranches became a fight against capitalist intrusion. The identification of capitalism as the enemy carries with it the whole gamut of investors, government policies, and local enablers who were sometimes fellow indigenous peoples who are responsible for, or take the side of, the intruders.

Chapter 3: Liberalization of the Philippine Economy and the Early Lumad Movements

Right before the country was 'liberated' from the US, free trade between the US and the Philippines was imposed, introducing custom duties gradually over a period of twenty years through the Commonwealth Act No. 733. This allowed for a last stretch for the American colonizers to import raw materials to the US without duties and for them to dump goods into Philippines without taxes. And although for a time this would be replaced by trade protectionist policies, the Philippine export orientation would remain a major characteristic of its economy.

3.1 Post-colonial Philippine Economic Policies

The immediate economic policies in the country after its colonial experience had been in support of a nationalist 'Filipinization' strategy, which meant strict control of its imports and exports. Direct foreign investment therefore went to import-substitution industries (Dohner & Intal, 1989). With pressure from the sugar industry, a highly influential interest group considering they come from the old moneyed hacendados, finally in the 1960s and 1970s, the country tried to liberalize trade and opened up to exports. It led to an increase in exports of traditional industries, but this did not help much in the country's overall economy with the peso pegged to the US dollar and exchange rate still going down (Dohner & Intal, 1989).

The programs implemented the first few years of the Marcos administration, which started in 1965, seemed to be effective, promising for the first time land distribution and the construction of important infrastructures such as irrigation and highways that made farm to market easier for farmers (Overholt, 1986). This was, however, coupled with the centralization of power to Marcos and his allies. Despite the expansion of government

spending, a lot of it went into patronage politics (Dohner & Intal, 1989). The declaration of Martial Law in 1972 further consolidated the hold of Marcos and his cronies on the state-owned corporations and state-funded projects (Overholt, 1986).

While it looked like some measures – such as the expanded exports that made the Philippines one of the top exporters of copper, log, sugar, and coconut (Dohner & Intal, 1989) – benefited the country's economy, it did not trickle down to the people in the lowest rungs of the economic ladder. On the ground, lands that were supposedly distributed to farmers were bought and consolidated by the cronies (Overholt, 1986), who have started to replace the old landed class. Although Marcos controlled foreign companies in the pretext of protecting the country from exploitation, his allies had freedom to these resources (Overholt, 1986).

The pretentious protectionist economic policies of the Marcos dictatorship, however, were not congruent to its international allegiances. The power struggle between communist China and US impacted Southeast Asia, most prominently in the Vietnam War that started in the 1950s and only ended in 1975. Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia were recognized as US allies, the Philippines especially with several US military bases continuing operations in the country. Despite the deterioration of democracy in the Philippines, it did not lose much favor from the West and in fact the government was able to borrow heavily for its supposed development plans (Pollard, 1970).

By 1979, the traditional products for exports were largely replaced by semi-manufactured products. However, since the raw materials for most of these – for example, semiconductors and garments – were imported, there was no visible positive effect on the economy, and in fact resulted to a deficit in the Gross National Product (Dohner & Intal 1989). Philippines

became a net importer and there was no real manufacturing industry in the country, its manufacturing only a part of an international assembly line.

The biggest contribution to the country's economy continued to be from the agricultural sector and from the extraction of raw materials, but a big share of the economy profited only a small part of the population. This echoes a picture of colonial exploitation although now the income goes to the Philippine elites.

With the fall of Marcos in 1986 and the rebuilding of Philippine democracy, the new government under Corazon Aquino loosened several economic restrictions, among them the removal of export taxes on several agricultural products and discontinuing the price control on rice and corn (Rosenberg, 1987). Trade monopolies were broken down and many of the state-owned establishments – from banks to trading companies – were also privatized (Rosenberg, 1987). Under Aquino's regime, the complete liberalization of the Philippine economy unfolded; their plan was exactly to deregulate the market, privatize government-owned establishments, and liberalize the economy.

In the south of the country, these changes throughout these political changes didn't translate into improved lives. It only worsened the encroachment of capital into indigenous peoples' territories.

3.2 The encroachment of remaining Lumad territories and the resulting counter-movements

Accounts from during the American colonial period showed that there were already trading activities - the cash crop being abaca - between the Hispanized communities, largely settled

along the coastal areas, and the non-Christian population they called the *Bukidnon* (which literally translates to ‘mountain people’ and may refer to the different ethnic groups in the area such as the Higaonon, Manobo, and Talaandig, not be confused with the Panay-Bukidnon people in the Visayas) in the mountainous parts of Northern Mindanao (Alamon, 2017). The Americans established settlements in these mountain areas - a province that would also be named Bukidnon - and trained the hitherto uncolonized natives how to plant rice and corn as cash crops (Alamon, 2017). In essence, the introduction of commercial production to these indigenous communities not achieved through the *encomienda* and *hacienda* systems of the Spaniards was carried out by the Americans.

One of the most important companies left by the Americans is Del Monte, then called Philippine Packing Corporation, established in 1928 in the territory of the Higaonon people in Bukidnon. Under the American colonial government, the company the following year was granted land declared to be the ‘Bukidnon Pineapple Reservation’ through a Proclamation issued by American Governor General Eugene Allen Gilmore (Alamon, 2017). The American colonial government followed after the Spanish declaration of the untitled lands to be owned by the king and thus when the territory became their colony, it became public land despite the presence of the indigenous inhabitants.

Dole, an Irish-American company that produces fresh fruits, also established plantations in the southern part of Mindanao (in present-day SOCCSKSARGEN) later on, setting up its plantation in the ancestral territory of the B’laan people. This resulted to a long-drawn fight of the B’laan to reclaim their lands or at least, for some leaders, seek equitable remuneration from the company (Alamon, 2017 & Gaspar, 2000).

Similarly, other parts of Mindanao, other corporations were being given permits and leases to extract resources or establish their operations in indigenous territories. Timber production was one of the industries the Americans brought in that the Spaniards were not able to do for lack of advanced equipment (Gaspar, 2000). And as forests were cleared, corporate plantations and a smattering of agricultural settlements of lowlanders from all over the country replaced these. The indigenous communities were thus forced to retreat further into the more remote and rougher areas.

In Talaingod, Davao del Norte, Alcantara and Sons (Alsons), a logging company that also ventured in several other industries such as energy, had encroached the territory of the Manobo, the largest indigenous group in Mindanao. They acquired land through the government's Industrial Forest Management Agreement (Ragrario, 2015). Datu Guibang Apoga, the leader of the Manobo community along the Langilan River (their people identified as Matiglangilan Manobo), together with other datos from similarly affected communities in Talaingod, waged a *pangayaw*, a formal declaration of war against Alsons (Ragrario, 2015).

In an interview of Pinoy Weekly, a Philippine online news publication, Datu Guibang and Datu Doluman Dawsay, another of the Manobo leaders, explained how it was a community action despite the actual armed uprising being conducted by their traditional warriors (Guda, 2014). Datu Guibang clarified that before they declared the *pangayaw*, they tried to have a dialogue with the Philippine government as was the process of conflict resolution among the Manobo. They first formed the Salugpungan `Ta Igkanugod (Unity for the Defense of Ancestral Land), an organization that encompassed all of the Talaingod communities affected by the logging concession. However, when the Salugpungan representatives were not granted a dialogue with the respective government officials, the Talaingod leaders decided to declare

a pangayaw and informed their communities of their decision so that they could prepare (Guda, 2014).

It should be noted that the Salugpungan is to be differentiated from their traditional political structures but a separate more encompassing organization. The leadership may be the same but the motivation for creating the structure is different. Additionally, while the traditional warriors that launched the war technically were members of Salugpungan, they were not the ‘arms’ of the Salugpungan but were moving as the traditional warriors – the *alimaong* – of the Talaingod Manobos. This is necessary to understand that Salugpungan itself is not an armed group, but a people’s organization.

Outside the communities, environmental groups who were supporting the calls of the indigenous peoples brought the campaign against the logging company to the public sphere. The entire movement – the armed uprising, the lobbying, and the public campaigns - was considered victorious as the company was forced to stop operations and withdraw (Ragrario, 2015).

Two other famous movements – both starting with a pangayaw and then getting urban support from advocacy and lobby groups – occurred earlier. One was waged against the Philippine National Oil Company led by Datu Tomas Ito of the Tagabawa Bagobo people, and one led by Datu Lorenzo Gawilan waged against the ranchers and loggers of Bukidnon.

In 1989, Datu Tomas Ito, also known to his people as Datu Birang, gathered together ten indigenous communities around Mount Apo in Davao del Sur to form a Dyandi, a peace pact. But it was not an ordinary Dyandi, but a pact among the people to consolidate and prepare

themselves, similar to what the Talaingod datos did, to a war against a geothermal project of the government threatening their sacred land, Apo Sandawa (Davao Today, 2010).

Still further back, in 1975 (Lambayon, 2009), the pangayaw declared by Datu Gawilan was brief but became a showcase of the Marcos benevolence. Datu Gawilan surrendered to Marcos himself, flown to Malacañang, and the government established the Presidential Assistance on National Minorities (PANAMIN) in their territory (Ragrario, 2015).

PANAMIN would later on be notorious for supplying arms to indigenous paramilitaries in the guise of their being traditional warriors (Thomas, 2000).

Datu Gawilan brought other Manobo chieftains into his brief war. Among them was Bai Bibiaon Ligkayan Bigkay (Ragrario, 2015), a Bagobo Manobo female leader who was a known *talaghusay* – she was not only a leader in their community, but was also requested to mediate and help in reconciling parties in conflict; *husay* means to reconcile – and the only known female who held a position equivalent to a chieftain among the Manobo. Bai Bibiaon, in the interview with Ragrario recounted how after the surrender of Gawilan she and her brothers went back to their territory instead of joining the Gawilan clan in their new position vis a vis the government. She also revealed that at this time, the Communist Party of the Philippines had already reached their remote territories as she recalls meeting people who introduced themselves as ‘Ki-im’ (Ragrario, 2015), assumed in this research as ‘KM’ or Kabataang Makabayan, a youth organization that went underground during martial law. Many of the Kabataang Makabayan members heeded the call of the communist party and joined the armed movement to organize youth in these guerrilla bases (Abinales, 1985).

But not all communities resisted, or rather, could not resist these companies that come with

armed guards on top of military protection. Eventually, some of them displaced to the peripheries of these logging companies engaged in either the rehabilitation phase of the area – where companies comply with this stipulation for all logging concessions – or engage in logging themselves, harvesting trees the company wasn't able to reach or did not meet their standards (Gaspar, 2000).

Chapter 4: A Focus on Northern Mindanao's Higaonon People's Movement

4.1 The Higaonon People

The Higaonon's traditional territories cover the northern and central part of Mindanao. They include areas of the provinces of Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, Agusan del Norte, and Agusan del Sur.

According to the Philippine National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA), a pure form of the Higaonon animistic religion no longer exists, as most of these communities are already Christianized. Their political structure is hierarchical, with a head datu at the top, and several other minor datos below him, each in charge of one function such as health, agriculture or conflict resolution.

In some Higaonon communities, however, this structure is no longer followed and a group of Tribal Elders, also from ruling family clans, in the community is more powerful than the datu. In these communities, the delineation of the areas overseen by a head datu and the elders follows the geopolitical divisions of the Philippines. The only difference is they call the administrative area *gaup* (BUHITA, n.d.) instead of *barangay*, which is the smallest administrative unit in the Philippine government system. This new structure is similar to the idealized form of governance, a simpler replication of the Philippine government structure where the president is ideally performing executive functions but is obligated to submit to the legislative and judiciary branches, as well as to the cabinet members.

The NCCA still puts slash and burn subsistence farming as the main economic activity of the Higaonon, but various land campaigns indicate that the Higaonon no longer have the privilege of moving from one track of land to another, which is important in the slash and burn style of crop cultivation. The Higaonon have in fact over the years adjusted to their varying circumstance and resorted to different ways of livelihood, among which are farming and working as daily laborers (Paredes, 2022).

To reiterate, the territories of the Higaonon in Northern Mindanao had been the site of concentrated colonial American activities. These were particularly Bukidnon, where the pineapple plantation of Del Monte is, and Cagayan de Oro, a coastal part of Misamis Oriental province where many administrative offices from Spanish to American times were located. This background is important in understanding how most Higaonon communities are to different degrees already assimilated to the practices of the Philippine majority in terms of governance, economics and culture.

4.2 Palm Oil Plantations in Mindanao

According to the Philippine Palm Oil Industry's history, the development of palm oil plantations in Mindanao started in 1950 with a 200-hectare plantation in Basilan, an island off the southwestern part of the country, now part of the Bangsamoro Region, and was followed in the 1960s by another plantation of 1,100 hectares in the now SOCCSKSARGEN region.

It was not until 1980 that larger plantations were developed through joint investments of the government – then under Marcos - and private corporations. A total of 9,800 hectares of oil palm plantations were developed in Agusan del Sur, in the Caraga region, in lands that used to be the territory of the Manobo people. The Agusan Plantations, Inc. (API), which was formed

by investors from Singapore, Philippines and Malaysia, expanded their venture into SOCCSKSARGEN and introduced an ‘out-growership’ scheme where the company would simply contract local farmers to develop their own plantations, the produce automatically sold to the company.

In Northern Mindanao, A. Brown Company, started a 1,200-hectare plantation in Impasugong, Bukidnon. The company would later on expand operations in Opol, Misamis Oriental, which is just a neighboring province of Bukidnon. Both the areas are ancestral territories of the Higaonon people.

4.3 The Higaonon Movement Against an Oil Palm Plantation

On 3 October 2012, unknown gunmen shot Gilbert Paborada just as he arrived in front of his house in Cagayan de Oro city, the capital of Misamis Oriental province. He died on the spot from four bullet wounds, one of them to his head. Prior to his death, he had already received death threats prompting him to temporarily leave his home in the municipality of Opol, Misamis Oriental and relocate to nearby Cagayan de Oro City. These threats were allegedly made by individuals connected to A Brown Company (OMCT, 2012).

But who was Gilbert Paborada? He was a simple farmer, who, together with some of his neighbors, had sought help from Karapatan, a human rights organization, against the government’s decision to favor an oil palm plantation in the villages of Bagocboc and Tingalan in Opol over the residents’ application to till the land. A ranch had previously occupied these plots of what is considered public land and its lease had already expired. The farmers were hoping they could develop the land through the Community-based Forest Management (CBFM) program of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources

(DENR). However, they learned that instead of allocating the land for farmers, there was a move to lease the land to A Brown Company.

Apparently, the DENR had been facilitating community meetings – with selected individuals from Bagooboc and Tingalan – with A Brown. These individuals were allegedly formed into an organization, the *Kahugpongan sa Mag-uuma sa Barangay Tingalan*, which gave the consent to the entry of the plantation (Quijano, 2012). This organization apparently did not include Paborada’s group who were also residents of the said villages.

4.4 Confusing Land Tenurial Instruments

The decades of changing elites in the top positions in the government with different economic interests resulted to several laws that at one point favored one group over the other. The Philippines has more than 60 laws on land administration and many of them are in conflict with each other (GIZ, 2015). At the very least, there are three conflicting land tenure instruments at play in this oil palm case. One is the Forest Land Grazing Lease Agreement, which was what the ranchers held and which was about to expire and is up for renewal. This was the lease that A Brown had hoped to take over. Another instrument is the CBFM, which is open to farmer groups, and which Paborada’s group had been trying to access. And finally, there is the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT), which can only be applied for by indigenous communities through their leaders, or ‘head claimants’.

The fact that Paborada and his neighbors had tried to apply for a CBFM over the contested land shows that they identified their group as farmers. Their relationship with the land is primarily as individuals who need to till it to produce crops to sell in the market. Although CBFM is applied for by a group, farmers usually develop individual plots in the allocated area

and the viability of their application is based on their ability to make profit. They may decide to produce a single crop, do diversified farming, or even develop an integrated farm, but in the end, production is for commercial purposes, with the monetized profit distributed among the group members.

Upon learning that the farmers were actually members of the indigenous Higaonon community, Karapatan referred them to the Kalumbay Regional Lumad Organization, an umbrella organization of different indigenous groups in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. With the influence of Kalumbay, they started to build a campaign based on territorial claims – the right of Indigenous Peoples to their Ancestral Domain – instead of the individual plots the farmers had originally aspired for.

However, the application for a CADT could not be formalized since apparently there were already claimants over the area, the Dulangan Unified Ancestral Domain (Drbohlav & Hejkrlik, 2017). None from Paborada's group was part of the ruling clans who had filed for this CADT. Paborada's group was not even active in the CADT application process.

4.5 Pangalasag and its identification with the Kalumbay Regional Lumad Organization

As already mentioned, Paborada and his neighbors could not file a separate claim for a CADT. Advised by Kalumbay, the dispossessed Higaonon farmers formed Pangalasag, which means 'to shield.' Pangalasag's calls had primarily focused on the lack of indigenous consent, something that they, despite not being head claimants of a CADT, are entitled to since the plantation would impact their community. They criticized local government officials and fellow Higaonon members who were actively facilitating the entry of the plantation. And this

is where the threats to Gilbert Paborada, who became the founding chairperson of Pangalasag, started. Karapatan fact sheets show that Paborada suspected his death threats came from those they clashed with locally and not directly from the A Brown company.

Needless to say, Pangalasag also became a member of Kalumbay. Kalumbay, however, is an indigenous peoples' organization, and is not part of any Indigenous Political Structure, the government-recognized traditional governing bodies in indigenous communities. It is not qualified to apply for a CADT for any of its members. What it does is provide support to amplify the local campaigns. It is able to connect indigenous organizations to other indigenous communities in the country who shared the common plight of being dispossessed of land, and in some cases to promised wage and employment benefits from corporations.

Its founding chairperson, Datu Jomorito Goaynon, is also a Higaonon but from the municipality of Cabanglasan in the province of Bukidnon, also in Northern Mindanao. He is a traditional leader (AIPP, 2018), but in accordance with the Higaonon distribution of power, his leadership should only have the scope of their territory in Cabanglasan. He could be invited to other territories to give advise, but could not decide in the other communities' behalf. Through his election as chairperson of the Kalumbay, however, the organization's council members, many of them *datus* or traditional leaders from different Higaonon communities, have given him authority to speak in their behalf. As such, he does not function as the communities' leader, but as the chairperson of a people's organization. Whenever a decision has to be made at the community level, it would still be the *datus* who have to convene their people.

Kalumbay means ‘of one line.’ All the members agree on the principles and goals of the organization. They are critical of Indigenous Political Structures that allowed companies into indigenous territories, claiming that these leaders are fake and are taking advantage of their positions. For example, Goaynon speaks out against Dario Otaza, a traditional datu and at the same time a municipal mayor in the province of Agusan del Sur, who was killed by the New People’s Army. Goaynon alleged that Otaza led a paramilitary group that join the Armed Forces of the Philippines in conducting military operations in indigenous territories (Ayroso, 2015).

The organization also allies with other national minorities in the country, and in fact, is one of the founding members of Sandugo, a nationwide alliance of Indigenous Peoples’ organizations and Muslim organizations asserting self-determination (Business and Human Rights Centre, 2019). In the course of its campaign, several of its council members have been charged with trumped-up cases, all related to rebellion and being a member or supporter of the New People’s Army.

The assertion to territory and self-determination is constant for the organization as it has members who are also part of the Indigenous Political Structures in their communities. What is different, however, is that their campaigns include the criticism of fellow indigenous leaders who they allege to be conniving with companies and the Philippine military in victimizing fellow indigenous peoples.

4.6 The Dulangan Ancestral Domain

Dulangan is the Higaonon term for traditional mining. This particular territory of the Higaonon is rich in gold, and gold panning had been one of the traditional sources of income

for its residence. Being located near the boundary of the Islamized communities in what is now the province of Lanao del Norte, the community had a long history of war even before the start of the Spanish colonization. Their experience with fending off invasions from their neighbors helped them protect themselves from the colonizers. However, as with the many indigenous peoples in Mindanao – and the rest of the country – they were eventually driven out of their own lands by fellow ‘Filipinos’ through the various programs of the government. Cattle ranchers eventually occupied large parts of the Dulangan territory (Miller, 2017).

In 2006, the leaders of the scattered Dulangan Higaonon communities came together to form the Dulangan Unified Higaonon Tribal Organization, the name they gave to their Indigenous Political Structure, and filed for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title at the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. However, at the time of conflict with the A Brown Company, they had not yet secured their title and in fact had not been consulted either for their consent (Sunstar, 2015). Despite the name they gave to their political structure, unity was far from the communities’ reality. The long delay in the granting of the title was largely due to the contestations in leadership within the community, and the surrounding communities of fellow Higaonon people (Drbohlav & Hejkrlik, 2017).

4.7 The Movements and the Commodification of Land and Identity

Paredes (2022) explains that different modes of Indigeneity, or being indigenous, exist on the ground regardless of how external institutions define indigenous peoples and even regardless of how the indigenous community wishes to present themselves to the external society. In her long work with the Higaonon, at least in *Baligiyan*, which is in the eastern part of Misamis Oriental and several towns away from Opol, she forwards that place-genealogy is important for the Higaonon. Place-genealogy refers to a person’s relation to the founding ancestors of

the community they are in. A person's place-genealogy would determine, in the modern times, his or her 'political authority vis-à-vis the land' (p. 39). She also emphasized that the modes of indigeneity could vary depending on the composition of the community, the percentage of settlers to the indigenous population.

Translating this to the case of Pangalasag, whose community still comes from the similar Higaonon traditions, it can be said that the places Pangalasag's members held in the place-genealogy are already far from the core founding ancestors. While the founders may not have had enjoyed economic privileges during their time, the current stratifications in a contemporary Higaonon community very near urban areas are salient and used for economic leverage.

The formation of Pangalasag doesn't follow the traditional political structure of the indigenous community. It doesn't have as its leaders the *datus* who place high in the genealogy of the Dulangan Higaonon. Pangalasag, in fact, clashed with their fellow Higaonon members who were no longer part of the traditional political structure as well but held positions in the Philippine government structure, thus having a new power to decide for their community and chose to favor the entry of a corporation over the needs of their own constituency.

On the other hand, the Dulangan Unified Higaonon Tribal Organization which had laid a legal claim over the territory was not in a better position either. Because of the delay in their title, they were not recognized as territorial rights holders even when they had already applied for it. In their case, their power is subverted by the mainstream Philippine political and economic

systems. Their move to file for the title can be considered a countermovement to their dispossession of what would have been a privileged position in contemporary systems.

It is also important to note that conflicts that were already manifesting even as they had not yet acquired the title show that within the community the traditional structures were no longer viable or at the very least were not the same as how the Higaonon governed themselves pre-colonization. Leadership had become not only a status of respect, but was a position with economic benefits. Although the rules on the delineation and titling of ancestral domains includes in its provision the responsibility of indigenous communities to ‘maintain ecological balance’ and ‘restore denuded areas’ among others (NCIP, 2020), practically the ideals of a protectionist indigenous movement, the interest for these titles could not be totally free of profit-seeking. Certainly not economically privileged as the investors that come into their domain, the leaders would nonetheless have the power to give consent or revoke investment applications to their territories.

Both movements, that of Pangalasag and that of the Dulangan Unified Higaonon Tribal Organization, to consider the CADT application process a movement as well given the immense work that needs to be done to secure a title, show that inside the Dulangan community, land is no longer communally held as a sacred resource, but as a commodity or a source of profit.

Conclusion

The inability of Paborada and his group to access their territory through the land tenure specifically for Indigenous Peoples due to their not belonging to the head clans prompted them to seek access to land as farmers. They later on formed Pangalasag, whose campaigns were directed against the oil palm plantation and its facilitators who had been a mix of indigenous and non-indigenous community members who held positions in the local government unit. They joined networks that similarly campaigned against the privileged indigenous leaders who used their traditional roles to ally with these corporations trying to gain access to indigenous territories. In this sense, instead of the protectionist countermovement of Polanyi that would encompass the shielding of their entire communities against the corporations trying to enter their territory, their movement has essentially taken on the emancipatory character proposed by Fraser. Their movement is one that not only seeks to protect their land and resources from destruction, but also one that seeks to change the power dynamics within their communities that allow access to these resources only to the few head families.

The concurrent effort of the Dulangan Unified Higaonon Tribal Association to have the territory titled similarly professed to want to protect their territory from resource exploitation although the real motivations could only be known once they regain their power to decide for their resources. However, the disagreements in leadership and territorial boundaries already show how they see the real value of the land in contemporary times, which is as a source of profit. This movement does not evolve into emancipatory because their leaders are in the privileged position. Although their position may be contested, they have a lot to gain in asserting this position.

This case in the territory of the Dulangan Higaonon in Opol could be contrasted with the protectionist movements of the other indigenous communities in Mindanao, when communities declared wars against the capitalist encroachers. War is not a light declaration of indigenous peoples as not only will it involve the warriors but the entire community itself – in preparing resources, and in preparing for the possible retaliation of their enemies. These earlier movements were clearly a unified action of the community to protect itself. The Dulangan Higaonon movements on the other hand could be said that they acted on the impetus of their class context – the dominated became an emancipatory movement, while those who had the potential to dominate moved to secure their position.

The said protectionist movements were characterized by consolidation of several communities, led by their leaders. In contrast, the separate actions of two groups in the same territory show a divided community, alienated by their access to their land.

Further research could be done to unravel the intricacies of the differentiation of indigenous movements according to their exposure to other movements, their interaction and reaction to these dependent also on the level of community consolidation, or the extent of a communal lifestyle, at the time of contact. The interaction between the indigenous movement with different external ideologies have led to varied forms of political organization among the indigenous communities no longer expounded in this research.

There are movements – the fight of Datu Ito against the geothermal power plant, for example – that even without the salience of class domination within the community, have taken on class-based interests in their articulation of contention against corporate encroachment in their territories, and while at community level they are a protectionist movement, they ally with

broader emancipatory movements. This could possibly be an influence of urban-based movements or of the communist guerrillas that the community might have come in contact with. Additionally, relations of domination have to be analyzed in a broader context. A dominant group in one community may be subservient in the bigger society, as would presumably the case of the long-marginalized indigenous communities. And as these protectionist movements connect with emancipatory movements, what becomes of their identity within their communities? Would the traditional leaders perceive themselves differently, possibly influenced by the articulations of contention of their bigger networks?

The study of indigenous movements could be as intricate as the varied experiences each community had in the process of colonization, local colonization, and even decolonization movements. But their role is significant in several of today's concerns – climate change, sustainable development, and peace and conflict. Understanding how their movements came about and are influenced would give a better grasp of the context of their contentions and could inform the actions to address their assertions.

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