

DRESSING THE LUMAD BODY: Indigenous Peoples and the Development Discourse in Mindanao¹

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ABSTRACT

Since the passage of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) in 1997, the term indigenous peoples or IPs has become codified in Philippine Law. However, legal usage of the term indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples (ICCs/IPs) contrasts starkly with the ways that members of these communities refer to themselves. In Southern Mindanao, members of government (GO) and non-government organizations (NGO) employ *lumad* to refer to the people that they are committed to assist; so do artists and cultural workers who draw on highland Mindanao cultural traditions. But Bagobo, T'boli, Mandaya or B'laan peoples in Southern Mindanao rarely refer to themselves as *lumad* in everyday speech. Those who do refer to themselves as *lumad* regularly engage with NGOs or the government and may be observed dressed in denotative clothing, with traditional chiefly emblems playing a central part. The profound significance of names and visual symbols in native claims to power is relevant to the Mindanao case. This paper analyzes how textile practices of the Bagobo, along with comparative data

from neighboring groups, pose special challenges to the conceptual category of a pan-Mindanao native. Elderly women, most knowledgeable in cloth lore and manufacture, rarely refer to themselves as *lumad*; yet women traditionally made ceremonial clothes for men, and continue to do so today. These clothes signal the men's stature as *dátu*, and the means by which these textiles are acquired remain within the purview of women. How does the *lumad*/IP discourse depend on the erasure of group- and gender-specific knowledge systems? Using local delineations of a pan-Mindanao or pan-Philippine "indigenous person," this paper will re-examine *lumad* as a political category and problematize its meaning as a cultural referent.

Keywords: Indigenous peoples, lumad, material culture, Mindanao, textiles, ethnicity, Bagobo

Since the passage of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) in 1997, the term indigenous peoples or IPs has become codified in Philippine Law. However, legal usage of the acronym IP as a noun, alongside other acronyms such as indigenous cultural communities or ICCs, contrasts starkly with the ways that members of such communities refer to themselves.

In Mindanao, members of government (GO) organizations persist in using IPs or ICCs while those in non-government (NGO) organizations employ *lumad* to refer to something unique to Mindanao and the non-Muslim, non-Christian communities that they are committed to assist. Included in the latter category are artists and cultural workers who draw on highland Mindanao cultural traditions and similarly use the term *lumad*. In the 1990s, these two field-going populations had a well-established avoidance relationship. Although they shared a commitment to the people that they sought to help and provide services for, there was distrust and sometimes contempt for each other. By the late 1990s, these divisions between GOs and NGOs were expressed in contrasting uses of terms that are intended to refer to the same groups of people that they are committed to assist.

Government and non-government personnel who customarily move between institutional spaces in city/town centers and the village/inland spaces of their target communities speak in patterned ways. Their speech outlines delineate social spaces that, on one hand, are specific to their corresponding routinized institutions whether private or public, yet on the other, are immersed in the fluidity of social interactions in both city and

village settings. What is shared by them is a way of speaking about betterment, the improvement of the conditions of indigenous peoples that is historically informed by post-Enlightenment social theorists as well as more immediate initiatives of the Philippine state, civil society groups, private volunteerism and the like. In this paper, development discourse is defined as a patterned way of talking about social change in historically marginalized communities by actors who intend to bring about systematic progress or betterment while causing the least harm. I will argue that the term *lumad* as used by participants in the development discourse does not correspond with the intended referent of Mindanao's non-Christian, non-Muslim autochthonous inhabitants who are believed to be less affected by colonial enculturation and postcolonial national integration. The argument will be developed in two ways: by delineating the late 20th century origins of the term when religious conversion to either Muslim or Christian denominations for these populations is nearly universal; and by challenging the assumption of a static, coherent and unconflicted "indigenous culture" through an analysis of how an archetypal "*lumad*" person, the *dátu* (or male leader) is dressed. I will explore the term *lumad*, its specific meanings and visual expression, and the underlying assumptions that limit its usefulness in everyday usage among the people it is meant to describe.

I went to Mindanao in the early 1990s to pursue a longstanding interest in the relationship between material culture and ethnic identity examined from the point of view of their makers. I investigated whether or not the people who identify themselves as Bagobo continued to make their famed textiles made of abaca fiber a hundred odd years after the likes of American anthropologists Laura Watson Benedict and Fay Cooper Cole documented their existence.

My questions in the field were relatively simple: were abaca textiles patterned with beautiful *ikat*² designs still being made, and if so, for what purpose? The scholarly consensus of the time was bleak, so in anticipation of negative results, I also had a subsidiary question: if cloth production is as dead as most people believed, how did it die?

Up until that time, the only books with new field-based information consisted of Gabriel Casal's work, *T'boli Art* and Marian Pastor Roces' book *Sinaunang Habi* that mostly made use of archival data in Europe and the US on one hand and, on the other, a highly specific rapid portraiture project in the field that made use of information as well as actual textiles from private

collections. All other publications were based on the early 20th century writings and collections accumulated by the two Americans, Cole and Benedict, which were housed, respectively, in the American Museum of Natural History in New York and in the Field Museum in Chicago. In the absence of field-based assessments of current weaving, my principal question could not be answered without conducting a broad survey across groups in order to document how technologies such as loom parts, textile terminology, dye plants, *ikat*-patterning protocols, and the like overlapped or diverged. Only then can the uses and meanings of cloth be better understood.

Initial snowball sampling resulted in two clear trajectories: on the one hand was a narrative of loss from NGO-affiliated artists, researchers, activists or community organizers, many of whom were my friends. It was in these instances that the term *lumad* would come up. For the Tagalog speakers, *katutubo* meaning native or homegrown would sometimes be used as well. I observed that individuals who were strongly committed to helping indigenous peoples were also convinced that such communities were under threat, or dying. Some deemed textiles and weaving as metaphenomena, like symptoms of a sick patient but not worth investigating on its own merit. Others, though accepting, listened patiently to my doomed endeavor. I plodded along in what appeared to be an increasingly null sample set, engaging with anyone who would agree to talk to me. Interestingly, these same individuals were more likely than others to wear or use artifacts of what was understood as "*lumad*" culture purchased from local tourist markets: T'boli jewelry, briefcases made of Mandaya or T'boli abaca cloth, and, of course, the ubiquitous kerchief or *tubaw* made by Maguindanao but worn by every activist worth their street cred. I, too, had a collection of *tubaw* purchased from Davao and Cotabato, a habit carried over from my youth in community theater. The wearing of "ethnic" attire was already popularized by singer Joey Ayala in his band *Bagong Lumad* (New Lumad) but I did not actively seek to study the term's usage or its meanings.

Tubaw is extremely practical in the field. It is useful as head covering in the heat or as protection from dust during motorcycle rides. It is also lightweight enough to dry quickly when washed overnight. As I will learn years later, my wearing a *tubaw* created a dilemma for one of my informants, an episode that I will briefly recount below.

On the other branch of my sampling tree was a narrative of possibilities from a population that I had been socialized to mistrust: government

employees. Instead of a narrative of loss, typical responses would be “I know someone who has an aunt,” “I own something that my mother gave me,” “I have a cousin who knows about them.” I did not hear the word *lumad* at all. Instead, I heard a variety of utterances, some of which were acronyms, such as ICC (Indigenous Cultural Communities). The use of this acronym most likely arose from the name of the agency which many were familiar with, the Office of Southern Cultural Communities or OSCC. “Cultural communities” also arose in the formal speech of government officials, defined as the opposite of a “cultural mainstream” (Alegre 1). But the term ICC or “cultural communities” did not seem as robust as *lumad* on this end of my sampling tree. Almost as soon as we stepped out of regional or district offices or left a government-sponsored conference venue, these terms also very quickly faded. It was replaced by the English word “tribal,” local pronunciations of “native” as well as by a plethora of ethnonyms that were commonly heard in the cultural landscape of Davao’s interior: Bagobo, Manobo, Tagakaolo, Mansaka, Dibabawon, among others.

Adam Kuper, in his essay “Return of the Native,” outlined the many ironies that emerge when terms for conquered or marginalized peoples seek to erase a perceived colonialist/imperialist burden, which arguably mirrors the rationale for the emergence of the term *lumad*. He pointed out, for instance, to the historical avoidance of the term “native” in Europe, where the preferred term is “indigenous,” yet is embraced in the United States as part of Federal legal language if spelled as “Native” (Kuper 389-390). The meanings of “Native” and similar terms in Philippine identity narratives have their own semantic trajectory and have been examined elsewhere (Bourdreau 233-236; Ramos 174-175). As a term, “Native” was not incorporated into the formal language of government or the nonprofit sector but can be heard uttered regularly in the informal setting by officials, project personnel, and, as discussed by Albert Alejo below as *netibo*, the limited contexts where it is used self-referentially by Mindanao’s indigenous peoples. By contrast, the term *lumad* is used in very specific organizational contexts. Kuper’s critique of the underlying assumptions of the indigenous peoples’ movement and how it informs the framework of the United Nations’ many indigenous rights initiatives is somewhat applicable to how the term *lumad* is used (or not) in Southern Mindanao (see for instance Arquiza; Gatmaytan; Leonen; Vidal). Whether in the US, Europe or Mindanao, it has been consistently observed that when terms of supra-local groupings are codified (by government, local NGOs, international bodies, etc.), terms of self-reference consistently defy or spill over neat boundaries

(Casiño; Loyre de Hauteclouque 92-94; Paredes; Ramos; Saugestad). We do not have to go very far from Mindanao to find a cogent example. The term “Igorot” and its uneven history and acceptance in Northern Luzon is a case in point (Scott 28-41; Wallace 11). When contemporary Kalinga point out that the term “Igorot” refers to the people whose heads their ancestors have taken, how sensible would it be to continue using the term for *all* highland peoples of the region (personal communication with Afable)?³ Similarly, the dynamics of *lumad* presents its own challenges when examining the usage of the people that the term is supposed to describe, an elusiveness that may be more concretely examined by how a *lumad* person is supposed to appear.

Hence, what I also observed that primary, secondary and tertiary informants in this branch of the sample rarely wore or carried anything that signaled their “tribal” or “native” identity is equally significant. The individuals who presented a narrative of possibilities regarding Mindanao textiles were instead dressed like any other Visayan. They signaled “office worker,” “farmer,” “student,” or “housewife” with clothes purchased from secondhand markets called *ukay-ukay*, or for some office workers, the required *oneporme* or uniform (Milgram 189-191; Quizon *Philippines*). Choice of clothing for everyday wear will seem unproblematic for most readers of this volume beyond the semantic category of “fashion,” suggesting a relatively unlimited set of possible “choices” of what to wear at any given time. When clothing is tightly associated with one’s cultural identity, however, as it was with Mindanao’s indigenous peoples especially during the crucial American colonial expansion in Southern Mindanao in the 1900s (see for instance Abinales; Hayase; Tiu), relinquishing one type of clothing becomes part of the process of acquiring a non-“tribal” social category. Informants in multiple communities shared accounts of how family members who converted to Christianity as late as the 1960s were expected to express this spiritual shift by wearing Western clothing items obtained from abroad in the form of missionary relief goods. Children sent to school were expected to wear uniforms that were, once again, obtained outside of the community and materially conformed to a distinct visual and social category of “student.” If their children did not comply, they would not be allowed to attend school. The visualization of the colonial civilizing mission has certainly been documented extensively elsewhere in the Philippines and Southeast Asia (see for instance Roces *Gender*; Niessen) especially when framed as a form of body discipline through “Christianized” or “Islamized” dress.⁴

The phenomena being addressed here are everyday interactions: individuals who self-identify as members of Mindanao's many indigenous populations who today are often fluent in Visayan, Tagalog, and sometimes English. In Southern Mindanao, language is often used interchangeably with ethnicity, a fact that is reflected in assumptions used in collecting and analyzing Philippine census data as recently as 2000 (NSO). These polyglot individuals were sometimes denigrated by my friends in cause-oriented groups as not really *lumad* anymore but "assimilated." Indeed, the dark sunglasses and showy watches that were part of what can be termed late 20th century "datu fashion" can easily lead any observer to the same conclusion. For women, it is more subtle. I had one Mandaya guide, whom I call Del, a weaver's daughter married to a fellow Mandaya. In 1993, her husband made bags and wallets out of Mandaya cloth (*dagmáy*) for the ethnic tourist market in Davao City, but she did not use any of the products that her husband made. Del would only wear her Mandaya dress when demonstrating weaving in handicraft fairs or performing in tourism-oriented festivals while her sister, who appeared on the cover of Marian Roces' aforementioned groundbreaking book, travels everywhere in full regalia. Del's daily tasks related to earning a living and caring for her family – looking after school-aged children; dealing with middlemen, handicraft buyers, and the bank; completing administrative errands related to the city or provincial government on behalf of siblings or her mother in her home village, among others – would be encumbered if she wore Mandaya clothing. Her everyday tasks were made easier if she looked and sounded like any other Visayan-speaking inhabitant of Davao City. It is worth noting, however, that Mindanao's highland populations, like their coastal neighbors such as Maguindanao, as well as inland counterparts in other parts of Insular Southeast Asia, have a centuries-long history of diverse textile consumption. The evidence presented by textile collections accumulated from Mindanao around the turn of the 20th century (see for instance Bronson; Quizon *Between*; Reyes) are consistent with observations made by historians of Southern Philippine trading kingdoms examining even earlier time periods (see for instance Junker; Laarhoven). It can be argued that Del's array of material choices in everyday dress in the late 20th century somewhat reflect the diversity of cloth produced and consumed by her ancestors a century before, although differing in range and scale.



Fig. 1. The author (wearing a *tubaw*) examining market-bound abaca fibers drying in the sun. Near Lamiawan, Caraga, Davao Oriental in 1994.

I learned years later that during our trip to her mother's village, Del had to repeatedly explain to neighbors and people we met on the way that, despite the *tubaw* on my head, a practical accessory as much as an affectation, I was not a member of the "NPA" (New People's Army), but was someone from America writing a book about cloth. I thought I looked like a cool fieldworker; she apparently thought I called too much attention to myself by my headgear, but never said anything to me at the time. She constantly chatted up people on the way, waving about a bright umbrella to shade her from the sun while we took shelter in a household near the main road to cool off as we ate our midday meal, and, later tried, unsuccessfully, to hitch a ride on logging trucks as we hiked up the rutted dirt road to get to her girlhood home. Once there, her mother and another weaver greeted us wearing embroidered Mandaya blouses (*bádo*) while the rest of the men, women, and children wore everyday work attire of market-purchased t-shirts, paired printed skirts for women, and polyester shorts or trousers for the men of the kind that can be purchased in the many secondhand clothing stalls (*ukay-ukay*) in village and town markets (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Three Mandaya girls from Del's home village standing underneath a clothesline with common everyday garments. Near Lamiawan, Caraga, Davao Oriental in 1994.

Important methods used in the early search for answers about Mindanao's abaca *ikat* textiles through the selection of reliable informants combined snowball sampling with semi-structured interviews using an album of photographs. These methods were developed and refined in the field. Although photographs of key collections of Bagobo cloth in museums in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, DC as well as Leiden were obtained by the time I started fieldwork in 1993, it did not initially occur to me to make use of them in selecting informants.⁵ I initially relied on talk, on speech, on people claiming knowledge of what in Mindanao was then loosely termed as "tribal matters." Not only did I end up with the same circle of individuals who knew someone supposedly knowledgeable about cloth because they themselves were "*tribal*" or "*netibo*," but once I was face-to-face with such individuals, it was not easy to evaluate what they did or did not know. During one such interview, I exasperatedly pulled out photos that I had just taken of a small exhibit in a university museum in Cagayan de Oro a week before. This was in the olden days when photographs were shot on film and prints carried around in little albums with plastic sleeves. Despite the dark and rather blurry photographs of the museum interiors, it became evident how quickly cultural knowledge as well as attitudes towards textiles could be assessed. Since the photographs were of a collection of textile pieces

extant in Mindanao, they also seemed a more reasonable starting point than those locked away in an overseas museum since the 1900s. This was 1993, at the very beginning of fieldwork when substantial funding was not yet obtained; I relied on my own limited resources as well as the kindness of others who freely gave their time and labor and opened up their homes.

With external funding, additional periods of fieldwork were completed in 1994. I visited Mandaya areas in Caraga as well as Guiangan Bagobo in Calinan and Talomo, Tagabawa and Obo Bagobo in Bansalan and Sibulan, Tagakao in Malita, B'laan in Malalag and Matan-ao, covering areas that are today in the provinces of Davao Oriental, Davao del Sur, Sarangani, and Davao City proper. By 1997, a principal field site was developed in a Tagabawa and Obo Bagobo settlement near Bansalan with comparative Guiangan and Tagabawa sites in Calinan and Toril. In the course of many conversations, with the help of generous guides and hosts who welcomed me and my research assistants in their homes, who cajoled reluctant relatives and translated questions and answers when my beginner's Tagabawa came up short, I rarely heard the term *lumad* in everyday speech. And once again in 2009 and 2010, in a return visit to the Bansalan area as well as the T'boli homeland of Lake Sebu, I observed a similar pattern. Why is this so?

John Wolff's Cebuano-English dictionary published in 1972 states that *lumad* is a Cebuano word that means "native, natural-born citizen" (640). As a verb, it can also mean to "stay [or] stick long on" something, as in "*mulumad ku...*"

Albert Alejo in his book *Generating Energies in Mount Apo* situates the first explicit use of the term within the context of late modern Philippine "cultural politics." According to Alejo, and drawing on the writings of Karl Gaspar, the Lumad-Mindanao multisectoral alliance (or LM for short) was set up in Davao del Sur in 1983 arising out of a desire voiced in the 1980s for a "pure Lumad" organization that can respond to "ideological conflict within the Church in Mindanao" (290). He states further that in that same year, "Lumad is now the accepted term *among organized groups* for IPs in Mindanao" (290, emphasis mine). The heart of Alejo's ethnography focused on the alliances that emerged, faded, regrouped and faded yet again among the organized sectors who self-identified as *lumad* and their multi-sectoral partners who collectively protested the building of the power plant in Mount Apo by the Philippine National Oil Company (hereafter PNOC) from 1989 to 1993. His compelling account of indigenous tradition, expressed in the

ritualized supra-local treaty called *dyandi*, clashing with state and anti-state forces, is just as valuable in documenting the strengths and weaknesses of Church-based multi-sectoral work, especially during the end of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986 and the shifts in policy and military strategy in Mindanao during Corazon Aquino's administration. Alejo writes that the multisectoral alliance LM, known widely by its

regional cluster group, the Alumahad...[consisting] of eleven tribes from the five provinces of Southern Mindanao...was already set up when the geothermal plant project erupted. Combining both traditional and nontraditional means of organizing, Alumahad soon became the protest action arm of Lumad-Mindanao in the Mount Apo struggle. 'Lumad' then became identified with the critics of the government (67).

The term *lumad* had evolved into what Alejo terms as an "ideological password" by the late 1980s and his use of the term during his fieldwork, along with his occupation as a Jesuit priest, inadvertently marked him as an "activist," or a suspected member of the Alumahad, even as the LM at the time was itself, according to Alejo, "practically dead" (67). The complexities of the internal rifts within progressive forces and their relationship with the LM as recounted in the book need not concern us here. What is certain is that by the time the bulk of my field research on the Tagabawa Bagobo commenced in Davao del Sur in 1993 and 1997, near the epicenter of the historic *dyandi* documented in his book, as well as in a subsequent visit in 2009, I did not encounter the term. ⁶

Clearly older women who were my principal informants do not refer to themselves as *lumad* because, using Alejo's terminology, they are not "organized" (67). My visits only initially attracted the attention of local leaders who tactfully investigated whether or not I was bringing to the community any "development projects." Many of them soon withdrew when discussion focused on weaving, since self-identified leaders were often men, with only a few choosing to stay on based on their own interests or temperament. After many months, I finally asked one of them what *lumad* means. The late Jhuna Roman was an accomplished gong player and singer of *sambila*. I learned that among his many hats, he had also worked with various ancestral domain initiatives including the Kinaiyahan Foundation. I came to appreciate his qualities as a thoughtful and reflective person. He

explained that Tagabawa Bagobo people like himself can sometimes be considered a *Manobo* (Quizon *Men, Women* 103) and can also be *lumad* “*pwede rin*” (it can be used, too). Our discussion moved on to other things. The term was intelligible to him but unless brought up by someone from outside the community like me, it was not a compelling part of everyday discourse.

The term *lumad* then becomes meaningful when Mindanao people regularly engage with NGOs and, to a lesser extent, the government, but is not used in everyday speech. There is unevenness in levels of acceptance among people that the term is supposed to describe. Alejo, for instance, was surprised to learn from his Manobo informants in Sayaban that *lumad* had a derogatory meaning since it suggests the English words “low” and “mad” (67). When speaking with individuals introduced to me by NGO colleagues as being *lumad* themselves and who accepted the term, I found among them very limited textile knowledge. Is it because these young men and women had no such knowledge? Is it because I did not mirror the use of the term *lumad* when it was brought up by them, failing to provide what Alejo calls the “ideological password”? Or were the photographs of abaca *ikat* cloth and garments simply not intelligible from within *lumad* discourse because the artifacts were too specific to a place or a people?

In 2009, I observed a member of a T’boli women’s cooperative conduct a meeting with Obo visitors, all men, who came to Lake Sebu to study the cooperative’s history, structure, and processes. Against expectations, none of them referred to a shared *lumad* cause but instead used terms such as *netibo* or native, *tribu* or tribal, among others. These terms make most cultural workers and scholars wince, since they are believed by us to be pejorative terms dripping with colonial denigration. Why are some terms used but not others? In what ways are loaded terms such as “native” or “tribal” acceptable but not *lumad*? Could part of this avoidance of *lumad* be attributed to its strong cultural connotations as a Visayan word? In the field, I was identified as a Tagalog (*Tagala*) learning to speak Tagabawa. I would repeatedly hear the use of the term *Bisaya* to point to something that was outside or not theirs. For first or second-generation Protestants (such as among Manobo and Bagobo who self identify as “Alliance” or members of the Christian Alliance church), they would point to a Roman Catholic chapel and instead of framing it as *Katóliko* (Catholic), they would say “Ay, *Bisaya*.” First- or second-generation Roman Catholics (such as among T’boli and

Mandaya) would refer to a Cebuano or Ilonggo-speaking shopkeeper, fishpen owner, or, sometimes, an in-marrying daughter- or son-in-law in a similar way.

How then can we more closely analyze the profound significance of names in indigenous claims to power in Southern Mindanao? If we posit that *lumad* is not an empty term but is an explicitly political one, what are its cultural meanings, and what is its visual expression? What does a *lumad* look like? Despite attempts to the contrary, phenotypical “racial” categories are difficult to sustain in Mindanao since everyone shares shades of brown skin. I will argue that in order to parse the grammar of the *lumad* body, we need to look at the meaning of clothes. I will focus on the presentation of the male leader or *dátu* through an examination of men’s chiefly clothing, past and present.

Take the famous image of Inong Awe, taken in 1989 and republished in Alejo’s book (Fig. 3).



Fig 3. Inong Awe from a photograph republished in Alejo (207), provided by the Legal Resource Center

Apo (or grandfather) Inong Awe wears a three-part ceremonial attire: a headcloth, a jacket, and short trousers. He is shown reciting an invocation in front of a three-part altar (*tambaa, tambara*) made up of ceramic vessels nested in split bamboo uprights. His clothes do express one aspect of the *tam* *dátu*, which means 'rich' or 'wealthy' in Cebuano because the extensive use of beadwork and the quality of the classic workmanship signal the high cost of his clothing. The headcloth (Obo, Tagabawa, and Guiangan terms are listed: *tutub, tutuf, tangkulu, klubow*) is made of cotton that has been dyed using the tie-dye *pelangi* technique that produces an all-over pattern of fine white circles on a claret background. It is embellished with horsehair as well as beads, spangles, and tassels which are very expensive since they are purchased from lowland shops by the women who make them. His jacket (*ompak ka mama*) is made from plain-dyed abaca cloth (*ogget*) in black (*metum, fitam, kinarum*) that has close-fitting three-quarter sleeves, a loose bodice, and an open front. It is elaborately embellished with beadwork along the garment openings, seams, as well as a distinct branching plant motif coming down the upper arm. The trousers (*saroar, salwal, sawal*) are made from narrow-striped abaca cloth tailored carefully to conserve fabric, with elaborate beadwork in the upper portions and an equally elaborate bead-and-appliqué technique on the cuffs (*totok, toktok, tuktuk*). Although we cannot see it in this photo, he is most likely wearing leather shoes as indicated by the knee-length men's socks, a common style adopted by senior Bagobo men who travel to ceremonial events in Bagobo dress (*ompak ka Bagobo*).

Inong Awe is identified by Alejo as an Obo Bagobo, which is one of three sub-groups of Bagobo that are differentiated along linguistic and territorial lines. The two other Bagobo sub-groups are the Tagabawa and the Guiangan. Obo and Tagabawa are distinct languages belonging to the larger Manobo family of languages while Guiangan belongs to a completely different language branch that is more closely related to B'laan and T'boli. Alejo's ethnography dealt mostly with Obo Bagobo, as did Arsenio Manuel's work on the Manuvu, because the geographical area of their research is understood to correspond with Obo Bagobo territory. But what does Obo Bagobo mean? There also exists a category Obo Manobo who shares with Obo Bagobo many aspects of language but has less overlap with Bagobo material culture, and whose territory is understood to range towards the Northeast. Inong Awe here wears what is categorically identifiable as Bagobo dress. But there

also exists a category of people who self-identify simply as Obo/Ubo/Ubu who are well known to their T'boli neighbors who obtain from them forest products, including dye plants needed in the preparation of *ikat* cloth. Obo/Ubo/Ubu once again share a similar language with that spoken by their counterparts who self-identify with the Manobo or Bagobo descriptor, but those that I have observed are dressed very much like T'boli.



Fig. 4. Photograph of unnamed Manobo priests; reprinted in Alejo (219) from a 1992 report of the Philippine National Oil Company

Take another historic photograph from the Mount Apo protest, published by the PNOC in 1992 and reprinted by Alejo in his book (Fig. 4). We see two unnamed Manobo officiants, this time referred to as “priests.” Of interest to us here are three men, one facing away from the camera, wearing a headcloth and an upper garment, engaged in the process of reciting an invocation over plated offerings to counteract the negative spirits of the protest *dyandi* of which Inong Awe presided over in 1989; the second man faces the camera and is seen assisting in the ritual by holding onto a palm rib or reed, wearing a cotton headcloth, an upper garment similarly made of cotton and embellished with more elaborate appliqué designs, a necklace, sunglasses and Western-style trousers; and the third man, partially obscured by the second figure, wearing regular street clothes but like the second man before him, also wears sunglasses and a headcloth. We see that the

upper garments of the first and second men are more dependent on the elaborate use of polychrome cotton cloth that is consistent with styles associated with Cotabato Manobo, Bukidnon, and Higaunon. Similar to Inong Awe's ceremonial dress, however, we see that the type and style of *pelangi*-patterned headcloths are shared, including the manner by which they are knotted above the forehead. In these two instances, Bagobo and Manobo "priestly" attire closely models "chiefly" attire, with the headcloth possessing the most resilient denotative meaning.

Apo Inong Awe comes from a respected family and most likely owns his complete attire; others are less fortunate and must borrow from various people. Men do not make their traditional attire and cannot buy them. Elderly women, most knowledgeable in cloth lore and manufacture, rarely refer to themselves as *lumad*; yet women traditionally made ceremonial clothes for men and continue to do so today. The ways by which one acquires heirloom clothing is through social relations that are enmeshed in moral ideas of merit. It is true that well-off families are less likely to sell or pawn their ceremonial clothing pieces to the Muslim shopkeeper or antique dealer's runner, but it is also true that a rich man cannot simply purchase such clothes from a shop or from a dressmaker.⁷ Women who are knowledgeable (*katig*) in the making of clothes are often senior kinswomen – mothers, aunts, grandmothers. Men who seek to wear chiefly clothing but are not on good terms with their relatives and neighbors, or who disappoint the larger community with greedy or unjust behavior, will have a difficult time acquiring them. Those who persist in wearing chiefly clothing by borrowing or, according to some informants, stealing them, and appear in public events such as parades, tourist festivals and the like are widely met with scorn. Elected officials with tribal parentage who wear such clothes but who are not viewed as good leaders are also met with skepticism. If they are also feared due to political connections with armed sectors on the left or the right, they are tolerated but are believed to later suffer consequences such as illness or misfortune. For the worthy, acquiring complete ceremonial dress is seen as a lifelong project that may begin with gifts from a mother, sister or wife, an inheritance from a deceased family member, or the result of a long process of negotiation with weavers and their households (Fig. 5).

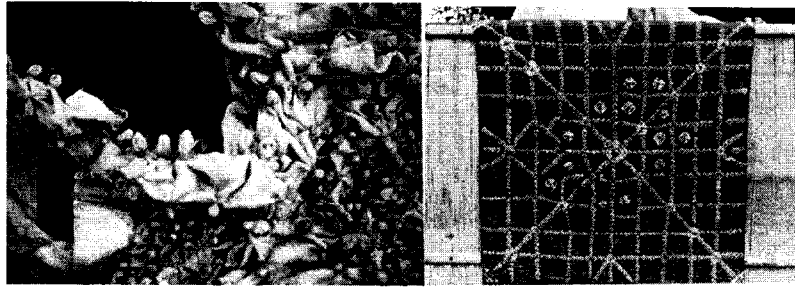


Fig. 5 Detail of cotton fabric (left) tied with abaca thread (*pelangi* technique) in preparation for dyeing to produce the characteristic circular patterns of white on a maroon field in a yet unembellished Bagobo headcloth (right). Photos taken in private residences in Sibulan, Toril, Davao City and near Malasila, Davao del Sur, 1994.

In other accounts of the Mount Apo protests, such as Rudy Rodil's publication in 1990, Inong Awe is referred to as *Dátu*, "acknowledged as the chieftain of the Bagobo tribe in Davao" (61), an attribution that most likely did not come from Inong Awe himself. The title *dátu* among Bagobo indeed has a profound honorific dimension, and it is also true that there is a kin-based dimension in that sons, nephews or sons-in-laws of acknowledged *dátu* may one day be honored by such a title. But the leadership structure of Bagobo is primarily charismatic, and one that does not have the kind of stability, scope or rigor found among the Maguindanao. It somewhat mirrors aspects of this leadership structure through its indirect participation but was not explicitly ritually linked by treaty to the sultanate the way the Teduray were (Schlegel 25-27). Rodil links Inong Awe by lineage to Tongkaling of Sibulan, a famed Tagabawa leader who presided over a datu-ship that blossomed under American rule during his lifetime.

Contrary to popular belief, there is not one "chieftain" among the Bagobo, but many. Tongkaling's datu-ship was a testament to his ability to negotiate and work with the Americans, as he did with the Spaniards, to promote Sibulan's prominence as the principal highland rest stop on the Southern access to the summit of Mount Apo. Hence, his nephew Inong Awe was himself but one datu out of many. His influence during the Mount Apo protests was demonstrated in his ability to recruit followers but it did not necessarily translate into a territorial domain.



Fig. 6. Group photograph of unnamed Tagabawa Bagobo men and women with Sarah Metcalf in Malate, Manila, originally published in the *Worcester Sunday Telegraph* in 1932

So what does a *lumad* leader look like? Often male, expected to be able to speak in ritual language that is not Visayan, Tagalog or English, in ways that will not invite illness or misfortune upon himself or his family and have, at the very minimum, a headcloth reflecting his role and stature, textiles which remain within the purview of women. Most leaders are multi-lingual and, in their invocation, must select one of the many indigenous languages that they speak. The clothes that they choose to wear at any given occasion are meaningful to communities as well as to specific individuals; if borrowed and unreturned, or stolen, their makers and owners are acutely aware of the transgression. If someone deemed unworthy wears an old and storied headcloth, this, too, is viewed with anxiety and disapproval.

Ironically, the persistence of the non-specific term *lumad* also depends on performing a non-specific role. It relies on the erasure or blurring of group identities, deriving its resilience and power from the inability or the unwillingness of a dominant culture, including its nationalist, environmentalist and social justice sectors, to come to terms with the segmentation of institutions that come face-to-face with indigenous communities. The indigenous peoples of Mindanao are not outside the body politic but very much within it. But unless they wear their colorful clothing and demonstrate for us their pre-Christian or pre-Islamic rituals, individuals who are just as likely to be Christian Alliance pastors or Catholic lay workers,

unless they perform for us their *lumad*-ness, we do not acknowledge the full complexity of their existence: their Visayanized selves, their Islamized selves, their late-life converted selves that allow them to obtain a baptismal certificate in order to register their children in public school, their educated selves who have pursued university degrees and are then denigrated as “assimilated,” and no longer a true *lumad*. In our search for a pan-Mindanao or pan-Philippine “indigenous person,” let us carefully re-examine what that desire prevents us from seeing. Being a *lumad* is a political category, not a cultural one; it is not meaningless, far from it. But if we wish to persist in using it, we must also educate ourselves on the other names that Mindanao peoples have long used to refer to themselves, even those that we do not agree with or do not yet fully comprehend.

The indigenous peoples and cultures of Mindanao predate the existence of the word *lumad*. We must acknowledge the word's beginnings as a late 20th century political term for a pan-Mindanao cultural awareness, knowledge that should prevent us from retrofitting the past with uniformitarian assumptions of a precolonial *lumad* reality. As a Visayan word, *lumad* supplants disavowed colonialist terms such as *indio*, “native” or “tribal,” but as a modern word, it is dependent on the erasure of distinct local identities. This has implications on the writing and implementation of public sector and private institutional policies that may inadvertently encourage the weakening of distinct group-specific institutions (such as dispute settlement, land and water sharing/usufruct, oral literature, art and textile practices, etc.) when the opposite outcomes are desired. Current usage that does not take into account this term's dependence on a blurring of group-specific identity needs to be carefully revisited.

At the same time, it is equally important to acknowledge that today, young people whose heritage embraces one or more highland Mindanao ethnicities make use of the term in ways that embrace the blurring of specific cultural categories.⁸ The use of the term *lumad* limits our understanding by its reliance on a static model of indigenous culture where change, conflict and transformation can only be conceived of as intrusive and not an integral part of every social group, autochthonous or not. On the other hand, exploring how the *lumad* body is dressed points to the dynamism within indigenous institutions, underscoring in this example a necessary yet constantly negotiated cooperation between senior men and women, as well as the ethical and moral ideas that are expressed in the making, giving and withholding of meaningful articles of clothing, processes and products that

are poorly understood outside of the communities of origin. Our awareness of the limitations of the term *lumad* must change our usage of it as we rise to the challenges of the law that seeks the betterment of indigenous peoples in Mindanao and beyond.

NOTES

- ¹ This paper was presented at the 9th International Conference on the Philippines, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, USA, 28-30 October 2012. I would like to thank our discussant Ricardo Trimillos, our panel organizer Lynne Milgram, as well as the anonymous reviewers of this publication for their helpful remarks and suggestions.
- ² The term *ikat* derives from the Malay “to tie” and refers to the technique of tie-dyeing threads prior to weaving. It also refers to textiles that were patterned using this technique.
- ³ See also Katya Kaavale’s 2008 essay “Indigenusness in the Philippine highlands: Colonial construct or the real deal?” examining contemporary usage of the term Igorot (<http://infocus.asiaportal.info/2008/10/26/octoberindigenusness-philippine-highlands-colonial-construct-or-real-deal/> Accessed 15 January 2013). For an example in Northern Luzon, see Ben Wallace’s 2012 discussion of the meanings of the self-referential term “Gaddang/Ga’dang” and its implications for literate communities that rely on the distinctions in meaning of a specific spelling that would otherwise not be codified in speech.
- ⁴ These observations were based on periods of extended fieldwork in 1993 and 1997, with additional visits in 2009 to 2010 covering Davao City proper, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental and the areas now known as Sarangani/South Cotabato. In Davao City proper, fieldwork focused on the historically Guiangan and Tagabawa Bagobo districts of Calinan, Talomo, and Toril; in Davao Oriental, fieldwork was conducted in the historically Mandaya area of Caraga/upper Lamiawan; in Davao del Sur, fieldwork was conducted in the Tagabawa and Obob Bagobo areas in the upland areas accessible from Bansalan, the B’laan areas in Matan-ao as well as the historically Tagakaolo area of Malita; in Sarangani/South Cotabato, field research was conducted in the T’boli area of Lake Sebu. Funding for research was provided by the Smithsonian Institution Graduate Student Fellowship in 1992, Philippine National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) in 1993-1994, the Wenner-Gren Foundation in 1996-1997, and the Fowler Museum-University of California, Los Angeles in 2009-2010. For more detailed description of the data gathered in these areas, see Quizon 1997, 1998, and 2000.
- ⁵ The museum collections visited include the Fay-Cooper Cole collection in the Field Museum of Chicago; the Laura Watson Benedict Collection in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City; the Elizabeth and Sarah Metcalf Collections both at the University of Pennsylvania Museum in

Philadelphia and the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. Comparative data was also obtained from Bagobo collections dating to the 1880s at the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden, the Netherlands.

- ⁶ It may be argued that academic usage of the term *lumad* operates as the more nimble counterpart of the cumbersome adjective/noun “non-Muslim, non-Christian” that was used more widely in the 1980s by scholars writing on Mindanao and Sulu. The range of usage encompasses Northern Mindanao peoples in the past and their experiences while undergoing Christian conversion (Paredes); a narrative arc delineating politics of “retribalization” (Acosta); or popular urban sensibilities of poets and writers who reflect on a circumscribed otherness (Mindanawon Initiatives for Cultural Dialogue). See also Charles Frake’s discussion of the slippage of meanings in labels such as “Christian” and “Muslim” during the emergence of Abu Sayyaf in Sulu.
- ⁷ The scarcity of ceremonial dress among ritual specialists in Agusan Manobo areas was also observed by José Buenconsejo in the process of filming his documentary “The River of Exchange,” a common problem that was solved by “borrowing” portions of a complete assemblage from various sources (Jose Buenconsejo, personal communication).
- ⁸ See for instance Mindanawon Initiatives for Cultural Dialogue 6.

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