

The Discourse and Politics of Resistance in the Philippine Uplands

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WHAT CURRENTLY PREVAIL IN THE RURAL PHILIPPINE countryside are pockets of traditional societies -- mostly in the upland areas -- amidst an agricultural sector that is increasingly incorporated in the dominant capitalist political economy.¹ The reproduction of the traditional modes of production -- mostly swidden agriculture -- is threatened by forces which support and maintain the transnationalist and capitalist development discourse borne by the state and its bureaucratic apparatuses.

1. Atam Yengoyan, "The Effects of Cash Cropping on Mandaya Land Tenure," in Ron Crocombe, ed., *Land Tenure in the Pacific* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1971); Katherine Warner, "Walking on Two Feet: Tagbanwa Adaptation to Philippine Society" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1979); and Violeta Lopez-Gonzaga, *Peasants in the Hills: A Study of the Dynamics of Social Change Among the Buhid Swidden Cultivators in the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1983).

There is strong evidence that locally based and self-organized people's movements are gradually emerging in the Philippine uplands as challengers to the state-sponsored development discourse. Indigenous structures and ideological systems are being summoned by them in an attempt to protect their local social structures from the onslaught of modernization. This is seen in the movements of the Igorots of the Cordilleras of northern Luzon and of the Lumads (collective name for the non-Muslim indigenous peoples of Mindanao) in the mountains of Mindanao in the southern Philippines.

It is the intention of this article to show that resistance in the Philippine uplands is a complex articulation of both the recovery and/or protection of traditional structures, and of outside-generated dynamics which induce a reconstruction of the social formation.

One of the concerns which will be considered in the analysis is the number of tensions which emerges in the role of organization and its implications on the transformation of individually based everyday forms of resistance into collective, structured, and planned forms of action. Attendant to this problematic is the role of an outsider -- either as an individual or institution or as manifested in an ideology -- in the organization of struggle and its translation into a national project. Equally important is the question of recruiting elements of the dominant discourse and appropriating these into the language of resistance.

Dynamics of Resistance in Pre-Capitalist Societies

Change is not automatic with the participation of indigenous communities in a market system, even when cash incomes increase. Dalton argues that there is a context for development based on the organizational history of the community which opens the possibility for resistance.² The incorporation of the peasant economy into a market-based commercial type of agriculture could also affect revolutionary change. On the basic premise that the peasantry is no longer reproduced independently of the external economy, the interactions between the forces of capitalism could spawn contradictions which could breed revolutionary forces.³ Moreover, the confrontations between the forces of capitalism and the forces of tradition, far from the involutive pattern characterized by Geertz, could open up opportunities for the politicization of the peasantry through the awakening of mass

2. George Dalton, "The Development of Subsistence and Peasant Economies in Africa," in G. Dalton, ed., *Tribal and Peasant Economies: Readings in Economic Anthropology* (New York: Natural History Press, 1967).

3. Eric Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

consciousness and the realization of the desire to break out from the oppressive structural relations imposed by the system.

The celebrated debate between James Scott and Samuel Popkin addresses the pivotal question of whether peasants struggle in order to retrieve what was or to reach something new.⁴ Scott argues that the subsistence ethic prevailing in the "moral economy" of the peasant provides a logic for resistance in which the peasants do not resist to pursue vertical mobility but to defend and protect the sources of subsistence which are threatened, or to restore those which were lost. On the other hand, Popkin argues that the resistance waged by peasants is a progressive process of looking outward and forward, not inward and backward. Moreover, he points out that peasants, far from being the moral communitarians Scott would like to portray, are actually individualistic, competitive, and rational.

In a later book, Scott argues that resistance is influenced by the existing forms of labor control and by the peasants' perception of the probability and severity of retaliation.⁵ He argues that there are obstacles to collective open resistance in peasant social formations. These include the following: a) the absence of direct exploitation stemming from the fact that agricultural transformation had the effect of removing the poor from the productive process rather than of directly exploiting them; b) the presence of complex local class structures and close kinship ties leading to consensual patron-client relationships; c) the presence and viability of evasion as an alternative to confrontation; d) the existence of a repressive state apparatus; and e) the absence of a realistic possibility for success matched with a pragmatic desire to survive.

Scott argues that resistance is not always and not necessarily organized and manifested in collective efforts aimed at the source of appropriation, but could take the form of what he called everyday forms of resistance, which he characterizes as

the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them. Most of the forms this struggle takes stop well short of collective outright defiance. Here I have in mind the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pillage, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth... They require little help or no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual self-help and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms.⁶

4. James Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Resistance in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); and Samuel Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

5. James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

6. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Scott recognizes that these commonplace forms of resistance are what the peasantry is engaged with to defend their interests in the absence of organized revolts. It could also very well form the foundation for collective action. In this respect, he effectively argues against the claim that the peasantry, as a subordinate class having no experience or knowledge of social systems other than their own, looks at their subordination as inevitable. He also agrees with Hobsbawn in the latter's claim that revolution and resistance do not necessarily imply the rejection by the resisters of the legitimacy of the existing power structure, but could be seen more as a struggle for daily existence despite such a power structure⁷ – struggles which Scott calls "close to the ground, rooted firmly in the homely but meaningful realities of daily experience." Scott believes that the objects of resistance are not impersonal historical forces but real people; that the values held by the resisters are familiar and not abstract ideologies; that the goals are modest and not grand; and that the means are both prudent and realistic. George Lukacs, perfectly captures this nature of peasant resistance which Scott envisions:

The outlook of other classes (petty bourgeois or peasants) is ambiguous or sterile because their existence is not based exclusively on their role in the capitalist system of production but is indissolubly linked with the vestiges of feudal society. Their aim therefore is not to advance capitalism or to transcend it, but to reverse its action or at least prevent it from developing fully. Their class interest concentrates on symptoms of development and not on development itself.⁸

However, it must be pointed out that indigenous ethnic communities and migrant settlers in the Philippine uplands could not be classified as "peasants" in the traditional sense. Moreover, their mode of production could not be considered as showing the "vestiges of a feudal society." Thus, even if resistance in the uplands reflects what Scott envisions, it could also go beyond and outside the context of Lukacs's statement pertaining to resistance of non-proletarian classes.

The Emergence of Resistor-Subject in the Uplands

The indigenous traditions of resistance have emerged as a continuation of the struggles which started even during the first contact with the colonizers. However, the current constitution of upland societies -- as composed of both migrant and tribal peoples -- has made the terrain of struggle complex. The dichotomy that exists is reflected in the manner by which resistor-subjects emerged between the two upland groups. These differences also manifest

7. Eric Hobsbawn, "Peasant and Politics," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (1973).

8. George Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), p. 59.

the variation by which the migrant groups and the indigenous peoples have constituted themselves vis-a-vis the discourse of development.

The indigenous upland peoples are historically and culturally anchored to the land. They possess a strong, almost religious bond to their habitat and their relationships with the land goes beyond economic logic. Even as there exists a variation among the different tribal groups on the manner by which they appropriate land, there seems to be a convergence on a usufruct-based interpretation of land occupancy juxtaposed with a spiritual language that positions the land and its resources as sacred -- things which should be revered, not exploited.⁹

This indigenous concept of land articulates with a communal existence the structure of which reflects a form of social organization that streamlines the human-habitat relationships.¹⁰ In the case of the migrant upland population, the whole dynamics become different. As bearers of a lowland discourse, they became agents for the extension of the language of economic exploitation -- as either propagators of nascent commercial forces or as victims of lowland political economic inequities seeking better lives in the uplands. In either way, migrant peoples end up engaging the land in a manner different from the tribal peoples -- they use it for economic value. As a result, the migrant political economy that has been constituted is one that reflected the hegemony of economism and the absence of an indigenous power/knowledge which valorizes the sacred value of the land. Instead, the land became the object for the generation of the poor upland migrant's subsistence value and the rich migrant's surplus value. The modes of constitution of subsistence migrants resulting from this type of political economy is characterized mostly by weak community structures -- in some cases even by the absence of a sense of community -- and strong isolated family-based organization.

In a way, the entry of both the corporate and the subsistence migrant has served as the battering ram for the entry of forces which could later colonize and transform local power/knowledge of the "savage," "backward," and "troublesome" native. Even as in later periods the subsistence migrant has formally joined the native in their position as objects of punitive and management discourses, it does not change the fact that migrant forces have effectively contributed to the displacement of the tribal peoples from their ancestral lands. It is also equally valid to argue that the entry of migrant forces in the uplands led to the transformation of some indigenous practices

9. "Land and Solidarity: From the Village to the Cathedral," *Tribal Forum*, Vol.V No.5 (Sept.-Oct. 1984).

10. June Prill-Brett, "Bontoc Concepts of Property as Product of Their Socio-Economic Systems," in *Dakami Ya nan Dagami*, papers and proceedings of the First Cordillera Multi-Sectoral Land Congress (Baguio City: Cordillera Consultative Committee, 1984); and Mariflor Parpan-Pagusara, "The Kalinga Ili: Cultural-Ecological Reflection on Indigenous Theory and Praxis of Man-Nature Relationships," in *Dakami Ya nan Dagami*.

and belief systems, which to some degree transformed the constitution of local power/knowledge.

The emergence of a resistor-subject in the context of these differences spells out an important distinction between migrant or migrant-influenced (tribal peoples who have been significantly transformed by their contact with lowland and migrant social formations) and indigenous upland peoples. Migrant or migrant-influenced resistor-subjects are produced in the context of a discourse of material entitlement. In this type of resistance, they fight the state and its agents in order to lay a claim on the system, to belong in it, and to possess the kinds of things which people of the mainstream have – education, material comfort, and material wealth. In cases of resistance in the form of non-participation in development projects, the documented evidence in some social forestry studies imply that this refusal is based on two things: a) the migrant's perception of the project's failure to deliver a better economic arrangement; and b) the apparent threat of losing control over the subsistence economy.¹¹

When analyzed critically, these reasons are basically defending the material basis for existence from the risk of losing some sense of economic well-being which they already possess, no matter how subsistent and marginal it may be. However, even if resistance is waged in order to protect the subsistence economy, the Geertzian vision of an involuted society does not materialize. In this context, the traditional foundation for involution to occur does not exist. There are no strong community structures and interrelationships to back it up, and no sense of tradition except a shared history of lowland displacement and induced migration to the uplands.

At this point, it is not my intention to declare these types of resistance insignificant, for indeed they have also contributed to the weakening of the onslaught of alienating forms of development in their own unique ways. However, what I would like to point out is the failure of these forms of resistance to challenge the discourse of development itself, not only its manifestation.

The emergence of subsistence migrant resistor-subjects occurs in a manner by which there is already a settled acceptance and non-problematization of economic growth. What are being questioned are not the forms of alienation which a discourse of development founded on economism could unleash, but instead the manner by which such discourse

11. Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr., *Social Forestry for Upland Development: Lessons from Four Case Studies* (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1983); Rosemary M. Aquino, *Some Observations on the Management of Social Forestry Projects* (Manila: De La Salle University, 1983); and Benjamin C. Bernales and Angelito de la Vega, *The Forest Occupancy Management Program: A Case Study* (Manila: De La Salle University, 1982).

could effectively exclude them from, or deny them of, its benefits. This type of behavior is consistent with Lukacs's proposition of a typical pre-capitalist response: that the interest of non-proletarian classes, of which migrant uplanders are perhaps somewhat a part, although in qualified terms, is based on the symptoms of development, not on its logic.

In a way, this could be expected since these peoples have been induced to migrate to the uplands by the failure of the lowland-based development discourse to provide them a share in the development pie. They covet its substance -- one whose benefits were or are being denied from them -- even if their current modes of production are not directly implicated in capitalist relations of production. In this context, the potential for coopting these peoples into participating in upland development is much higher.

The case of the indigenous peoples in the uplands is totally different. The emergence of resistor-subjects was attended by a continuing discourse of alienation brought about by historical forces which effectively deployed colonizing instruments. The basic underlying logic of this process was the creation of a "minority" as a development category in the cultural terrain. The "minority" became the "other" of the language of colonization, a space which was described as inhabited by non-Christianized savages living at the fringes of civilization.

Religion and education have facilitated both the "normalization" and the "marginalization" of this type of otherness. There were also legal and bureaucratic instrumentalities which were deployed. Land laws effectively legitimized the usurpation of ancestral lands. Bureaucratic institutions, ostensibly established to uphold the policy of cultural integration, were also established to facilitate the normalization and control of "minority" groups.

The emergence of resistance by tribal groups in the uplands is a reaction to this discourse. Although there have been cases of passive acceptance of the discourse, the punitive and the incorporative language which was deployed warranted a reaction which was both violent and self-assertive. Earlier in history, when the hegemony of local power/knowledge was still pervasive in these social formations, the emergence of resistor-subjects was attended by a language of resistance couched in a terrain of the indigenous peoples protecting themselves, not to lay claim on the development pie like the migrants, but to assert their identity and to refuse the externally-articulated images and symbols being held out to them.

However, by the slow process of cultural diffusion and change, and despite earlier acts of resistance by the natives, the modes of constitution of these indigenous groups -- what used to be uncolonized local power/knowledge -- were touched, corrupted, and tainted in various degrees and ways by the outside forces. Indigenous structures were assaulted and the political economy of subsistence was integrated with a cash-driven and

market-based economy.¹² Local knowledge was corrupted with the entry of Western modes of education and forms of belief. The tragedy is that there have been instances wherein fractions of the indigenous population, mostly their elites, have participated in the smashing of their own traditions.¹³ Others, mostly the Lumads of Mindanao and some of the non-Igorot groups in Luzon and Visayas, have opted to recede further into the depths of the forest, turning to evasion as their form of denying development and modernity their participation in the alienating discourse. This latter strategy has only allowed the agents of development to freely install their projects in ancestral lands, even as the withdrawal of their former occupants led to the disruption of the latter's community and tradition and the distortion of the prevailing subsistence ethic.

The Igorots of northern Luzon, for their part, have maintained their territorial claims despite severe pressures from the colonial and post-colonial forces of displacement. However, there is growing evidence that their traditional practices and structures have already articulated with elements of modernity.¹⁴ As in the case of the Lumads, there emerged a new system of class stratification in the Igorot society which is based on Western concepts. Consequent to this is the birth of the categories of the "assimilated" and the "traditional" sectors in indigenous societies, with the former actively engaged in the practices of modernity -- living its lifestyle, practicing its religion, coveting its forms of knowing and methods of exchange.

In sum, the whole logic of indigenous social formations was disarticulated and its peoples were alienated from their past. This separation is symbolically captured by the alienation of ancestral lands -- what the natives had held sacred and constitutive of their culture -- and their integration in an exploitative discourse of land use. In this context, the constitution of indigenous resistor-subjects is no longer driven by a defensive discourse of protecting the foundations of tradition. It is no longer a recovery project, in which attempts are made to go back to their pristine, untouched, and pre-colonized modes of existence. The totalizing power of modernity has made this project extremely difficult and, even to the indigenous peoples, no longer relevant to their current needs.

The emergence of indigenous resistor-subjects in the uplands is currently attended by a complex articulation of elements of tradition being summoned to provide anchor to acts of resistance which are relevant to the changes in

12. Benedict Solang, "The Marginalized Economy of the Cordillera Interior," in *Dakami Ya nan Dagami*.

13. "The Carnage Continues," *Tribal Forum*, Vol. VI No. 5 (September-October 1985); and Anne M.A. Tauli, "A Historical Background to the Land Problem in the Cordillera," in *Dakami Ya nan Dagami*.

14. "The Marginalized Economy..."

their lives. There is no more a "pure" language that provides anchor to a politics of recovery of these traditions. For example, a study conducted by Lopez-Gonzaga among the Buhid Mangyans of Mindoro has indicated an interesting articulation between acceptance of and participation in capitalist modes of production on the one hand, with acts of resistance founded on the protection of tribal traditions on the other.¹⁵ She points out that the Buhid response to the process of incorporation is characterized as a form of "dependency resistance."

In general, what is evident is the appropriation by indigenous groups of remnants of their traditions -- of their old "self" -- and of elements of the modern discourse -- their "other" -- in order to construct a new "self," one that places itself as the active and autonomous subject for a discourse of liberation and self-determination. Here, local power/knowledge is reconstituted as a manifestation of the confrontation between the remnants of tradition and the active forces of development, and the recruitment and appropriation of outside-generated concepts and practices as instruments of empowerment, and not as weapons of colonization.

The Ideological Symbols and Structures for Indigenous Resistance in the Uplands

In the current situation in the Philippines, the ideology of the left has made itself available to provide indigenous upland groups an ideological foundation for their resistance. However, the articulation between the desire of the people for land, sovereignty, and self-determination, with the agenda of a party ideology that is capable of translating resistance into armed struggle is a problematic terrain.

The New People's Army (NPA), the left-wing insurgency movement in the Philippines, is an effective recruiter of indigenous peoples, peasants, and landless workers into its movement in that it offers a vision of change, a metaphor for liberation. But despite this, one cannot safely say that the ideology that pervades the quest for self-determination of indigenous peoples in the rural countryside is just a parallel of the dream for a socialist political economy. There are indigenous symbols and structures which provide the discourse of upland resistance its unique anchor and logic.

The indigenous upland peoples possess a strong understanding of what sustains the logic of their community. Even if there are differences between and among upland indigenous peoples, there is a convergence among them towards the valorization of tradition and kinship ties founded on the centrality

15. *Peasants in the Hills*.

of the land. Land becomes the basic premise for indigenous struggles. It serves as the core of their ideology for resistance.

In more recent cases of resistance in the uplands, the confrontation between the forces of development and the forces of resistance has been characterized by the constant battle between an external force bearing Western concepts of land ownership and a group of people refusing to recognize such concepts. Manifest in the indigenous language is the constant reference by the natives to the land and the forest as a common property nurturing the life of the people, and to the existence of a divine being serving as the ultimate source of authority over the land, what the Igorots of the north refer to as Apo Kabunian and some Lumads of Mindanao invoke as Apo Sandawa.

This discursive structure of valorizing the divinity of the land and the collective birthright of the people is ever-present in the numerous occasions wherein the indigenous peoples confront the state and other agents of development. This was seen in the resistance waged by Cordillera tribes against the Social Forestry Program. In this case, the Cordillera tribes rejected the offer of the government to provide security of tenure. They refused to recognize as legitimate the government premise that their lands are public lands, and that they have to apply for long-term lease agreements of twenty-five years renewable for another twenty-five years in order to cultivate it. To them, it is inconceivable for the state to arrogate upon itself the power to apportion the land and be the one to issue permits for occupancy when their right to the land, having cultivated and nurtured it as a people, predates the existence of the state.¹⁶

Even as the land becomes the central ideological symbol which sustains resistance, there are other elements of indigenous culture which could serve as anchor for constituting resistor-subjects and strategies for resistance. Oral traditions of literature can also be appropriated as vehicles to express an ideology for resistance. Norma Lua effectively argues that traditional forms of popular culture by Cordillera highland groups possess hidden meanings which could be used as symbols to legitimize acts of resistance vis-a-vis outside forces.¹⁷

Narratives such as the Kalinga *ullalim* and several Kankanay tales deploy unflattering images of outsiders -- as peoples whose only source of power is the rifle. For the Kankanays, real power stems from the inner strength of character, and someone who just relies on force is considered less

16. "The Kalinga Ili."

17. Norma Lua, "Intimations of Power in Cordillera Oral Literature," *Cordillera Quarterly*, Vol. II No. 1 (1985).

powerful. Also constantly referred to in Kankany folk tales is the strange but politicizing motif of a destitute native thief who goes unpunished for his crimes. It is also interesting to point out that in the same narrative, only outsider-thieves are punished. What this may suggest is that in a society where wealth is enjoyed only by the few and poverty is widespread, theft -- or the resistive metaphor it stands for, considering the fact that it is an act proscribed by norms -- could be a form of retaking a share of the communal wealth, an act of individual self-help, a subversive process of redistributing power through a different means, and in the context of James Scott's argument, a weapon of the weak.

Recently, other popular forms of tribal art have been used as political instruments in calling attention to the plight of indigenous peoples. Aside from serving as a counterpoint to their appropriation by the mainstream Filipino culture, these become very effective tools in politicizing the indigenous peoples.¹⁸

In the northern Philippines, popular narrative structures such as the *hudhud* and the *ullalim* have been repeatedly re-structured to include references to the Igorot struggle against militarization and the development projects which threaten their land base.

Also significant in the current resistance of indigenous peoples in the uplands is the re-interpretation of their modes of constitution and their recruitment as material bases for an ideology of resistance. The use of tribal peace pacts -- *bodong*, *vechen*, or *pechen* for the northern Igorots; *dyandi* for the Mindanao Lumads -- as a way by which different tribal groups could form a united front against outsiders has manifested this new development. In traditional practice, peace pacts are done between warring tribes to foster harmony and peaceful co-existence.¹⁹ Its use as an indigenous multilateral instrument to foster unity among tribes in the face of forces threatening to displace them is a significant reinterpretation of a tribal concept in an environment of resistance.

Peace pacts, like the *bodong*, also provide a unique mode of social control against collaboration with the enemy. The peaceful and safe existence of villagers is protected by the *pagta* or *kalon*, or the provisions of the *bodong*. In the *pagta*, it is possible for village leaders to exclude perceived enemies within the villages covered by the pact from the protection of the *bodong*. Thus, villagers who cooperate with development agents may be

18. Joan Carina, "The Igorot Mass Movement for Self-Determination," *Cordillera Papers*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (1986).

19. *Tribal Forum* (March-April 1988).

killed or harmed without being avenged by their kin or village mates. They become social outcasts.²⁰

Also emerging in the context of recent instances of resistance is the use of indigenous structures such as the *ator*, the Bontoc village council, and the *dap-ay*, the native structure for male socialization, as avenues for political discussion of current social problems confronting the village.²¹

Thus, there is indication that indigenous upland groups are aware of and actively utilize local and traditional images, symbols, and practices to serve as anchors for their acts of confronting the system. The use of confrontation is sustained by processes which utilize elements of their tradition and their re-appropriation in the context of what is required of the times.

The struggle for the self-determination of the indigenous peoples in the uplands is a rebellion of the marginalized in their refusal to be further invested in the discourse of the dominant. Characteristic of this nature of politics is the valorization of local power/knowledge even as such is constantly problematized. Here, one must admit that the word "local" does not imply "purity" from pollution by the dominant discourse. Thus, the struggle for self-determination in those instances must not be seen as a conservative recovery of indigenous symbols and ideologies, but as a self-determined transformation of such symbols and ideologies that suits the local community in its own terms.

Modes of Constitution and Strategies for Resistance in the Uplands

The tactics adopted by indigenous peoples in resisting the discourse of development have ranged from individual acts of defiance to more organized types of collective struggle, in some cases taking the form of armed resistance. It is interesting how these struggles are structured and translated into strategies, how they become organized, and how they articulate with the on-going insurgency movement in the country. Also significant is an awareness that despite these struggles, the state and its instrumentalities are ever present to thwart these attempts by co-opting them and appropriating elements of their struggle in the revisionist discourse of developmental reform.

Everyday practices of non-organized resistance along the lines of characterization provided by Scott,²² such as non-participation, thievery,

20. CCA-URM and NCCP-PACT, *Minoritized and Dehumanized: Reports and Reflections on the Conditions of Tribal and Moro Peoples in the Philippines* (Manila: Hi-Point Advertising Co., 1983).

21. "The Igorot Mass Movement..."

22. *Weapons of the Weak*.

arson, sabotage, and slander, are evident not only in the indigenous context but also in migrant communities. There is even a possibility that these forms of resistance could be more useful in migrant upland groups, where community bonds are weak. In this environment, individual family-based modes of constitution are compatible with unorganized, spontaneous processes such as uprooting seedlings planted by a government agency, or of burning freshly-planted areas. These strategies are designed not only to serve as acts of displeasure but also as well-conceived tactics to insure that with the reforestation crop destroyed, the government will again replant the area and require manpower which they can provide, thereby allowing them to have a continuous source of extra income.

Also reported are acts wherein tribal peoples have resorted to sabotage -- by destroying mining and logging equipment,²³ driving spikes into trees - - and in one occasion, have introduced a unique mode of defiance wherein tribal women have taunted development workers with their bare breasts to express contempt.²⁴

It is interesting to point out that these examples validate an earlier claim on the distinction between migrant resistance and indigenous resistance. Spontaneous and everyday acts of resistance waged by upland migrants are driven by a claim to material and economic entitlement -- for example, that of destroying crops as a means of guaranteeing their continuous employment -- while the ones waged by tribal peoples are acts which are done to prevent the discourse from investing them in its operationalization.

However, in the face of a hegemonic discourse of development, one that is actively borne by agents of the state and of the transnational political economy, these everyday forms of resistance, by themselves, only serve in providing stumbling blocks in the otherwise smooth and easy terrain by which the development discourse invests indigenous social formations. In order to serve as an effective counter-point to this discourse, these daily practices have to be recruited into organized and structured modes of defiance.

Already evident is the emergence of grassroots movements organized by the Lumads in Mindanao. Much earlier to this development was the translation of Igorot struggle from isolated cases of communal defiance to a more structured politics driven by the *bodong* as an instrument of unity and as a rallying point to confront the system. Several national, regional, and local grassroots organizations have recently emerged, attended by numerous

23. "War and Peace in the Chico Valley," *Tribal Forum*, Vol I No. 4 (May-June 1980).

24. Geraldine Fig-oy, "The Indigenous Women in the Cordillera Region, Northern Philippines: A Situationer," *Tribal Forum*, Vol. IX No. 2 (1988).

assemblies, conferences, and tribal meetings organized to foster unity and solidarity among tribal peoples.²⁵

Manifest in indigenous resistance in the uplands is the articulation of a new discourse on social change, one that is constructed outside the terrain of the economic development discourse. New subjects, objects, and structures are summoned -- the indigenous peoples, their ideological and material resources, and their attendant institutions -- and deployed in a manner in which the language emanates from the indigenous social formations themselves and not from the outside. This language valorizes the indigenous way of life, not to recover its original state but to capture its remnants and transform it according to the dictates of an internal dynamics. In this context, a call to respect traditional land concepts, systems of governance and exchange, and modes of constitution is made.

Thus, it could be said that radical voices exist in the terrain of upland struggles that carve spaces for the articulation of a counter-discourse. The emergence of isolated, yet parallel, movements in the uplands serves to provide an interruption in the continuity of the hegemony of an elite-articulated discourse of development. However, despite all of these, resistance in the Philippine uplands remains highly at risk. This is largely because of the fact that there always exists the power of the state, which does not hesitate to use violence to enforce silence and acquiescence.

In an environment wherein the fight for land and cultural dignity of tribal peoples occur in the face of a national revolutionary front already battling the state, there is always the possibility for the latter to easily consider indigenous woes as part of its cause, and for the state to readily label indigenous forms of resistance as necessarily part of the left-wing insurgency.

There is an on-going and active recruitment by the NPA of the upland poor. In the eyes of the NPA movement, indigenous peoples' experiences vis-a-vis the appropriation of culture and land and their attempts towards self-determination are compatible with its revolutionary agenda. What strengthens the articulation between the NPA agenda and the tribal quest for self-determination is the high-level of acceptance by tribal peoples of the NPA ideology.

However, the inclusion of the local struggles for land and cultural dignity as part of armed resistance forces the state to make a blanket generalization that all desires to self-liberate and self-empower are part and parcel of the insurgency movement, and therefore should be targets for state reprisal. Since the desire of local communities to organize and mobilize in the name of self-determination for its own sake is interpreted by the state as

25. "The Carnage Continues"; "Solidarity Stressed in Lumad Assembly"; and "Lumads Come of Age."

acts of subversion and becomes the justification for state military action, the revolutionary path is forced upon native peoples and other local groups.

Aside from militarization, the state apparatus deploys other tactics which threaten to dilute the politics of refusal and self-determination which indigenous movements are traditionally recognized for. One of these is the recruitment of popular forms of mobilization in the attempt to coopt local initiative. The non-governmental organization (NGO) model in development administration is a very effective tool in this regard.²⁶

What has also emerged during the Aquino administration is the discourse of institutionalized political autonomy for the Cordillera region in the northern Philippines and the Muslims of Mindanao, an act which could be interpreted as a state ploy to coopt resistance by generating an image of magnanimity towards the indigenous peoples by securing for them a semblance of state-assured sovereignty. In the process, individuals have been used in exchange for their silence or active participation; and local structures have been appropriated to legitimize the state's policy of national integration.

The Role of the Outsider

In the face of an overwhelming dominance of the state, resistance could never be achieved as a uni-linear, uni-modal struggle for self-empowerment. The Philippine uplands provide a unique situation which allows for the deployment of resistance manifested in both acts of confrontation -- such as rebellion and revolution -- and acts of negotiation with the organized power of the state. In the context of a hostile state apparatus, the recruitment of elements of the development discourse and the ethic of modernity attending it -- which in this context could include using political institutions such as the courts and the legislature, and political processes such as filing cases and forming formal pressure groups -- and their reversal in order to serve the interest of the oppressed is just one part of a complex system of resistance which also includes revolutionary struggle.

However, the recruitment of institutional means must be tempered by an awareness of past experiences of how the system has worked against the cause of indigenous peoples. What is important here is an awareness of the "self" and its politics, ably supported by an organization that actively confronts the system, even as it operates occasionally in territories where the

26. Antonio Contreras, "The Political Economy of State Environmentalism: The Hidden Agenda and Its Implications on Transnational Development in the Philippines," *Capitalism, Nature, and Socialism - A Journal of Socialist Ecology*, Vol. II No. 1 (1991).

system traditionally holds power: in the courts, the bureaucracy, the legislature, the academic institutions, etc. In this context, the presence of an outsider, either in the form of ideology or of enabling structures and agents, will become important, if not necessary. One aspect which is problematic in the context of resistance is the practicability of the politics of self-isolation in systems wherein the dominant structure does not abdicate its claim of power over individuals and groups within society.

The role of the outsider in the context of resistance is always problematic. In situations wherein claims for autonomy have the effect of preserving the power differential in a community that possesses tainted or colonized local power/knowledge structures – manifested in patriarchal, hierarchical, and exclusionary modes of constitution – the presence of an outsider could be useful in serving as a catalyst for self-transformation.

But again, this should be problematized by posing the question of what should be the appropriate extent, nature, and method of intervention which still enables local autonomy and self-determination in the community. In situations like this, there is a constant tug-of-war between the arguments that invoke the respect of autonomy and local power/knowledge for what it is, and the notions of gender equality, democratic structures, and participation, which are externally determined but vital characteristics of radical alternatives to development. The important question in this regard is whether we should leave an indigenous community alone in its battles against the state, even though it means the preservation of a power structure that silences women and imposes rigid class differences; or should there be intervention by outsiders or by outside-generated concepts.

However, perhaps there is a hidden dynamic which propels indigenous social formation into a self-determined transformation of its hierarchical and gender relations in the context of resistance. What has recently happened in the struggles of indigenous peoples in the Cordilleras is the change in the role of women from passive to active participants in acts of resistance. This occurred in the context of an internal dynamics, one which emerged as a structural consequence of the disarticulation of traditional structures and ideologies. In the face of change, this is evidence that the Igorot society has metamorphosed into a political body operating in the context of constructing new identities from their past. The new use of the *bodong*, of oral literature, and of other elements of traditional culture are evidence of the internally driven changes which revise the inner logic of the culture. This is done by recruiting themes, metaphors, symbols, and other elements of the outsiders' discourse in order to cope with the changes not only in their lives but also in the strategies deployed by the state and the development discourse it bears. It should be recalled that the millenarian movements which emerged in the Philippines during the late 19th to early 20th century used a similar strategy of appropriating Catholicism in the discourse of peasant resistance.

The experience of the Lumads, whose politicization is quite recent, is markedly different from and more problematic than the case of the Igorots. After resorting to evasion as a mode of resistance, and having no history of strong political movements, these peoples are more prone to externally generated discourses of liberation. Church groups, tribal support networks, cause-oriented organizations, the NPA cadres, and other groups from the outside are now actively engaged in the mobilization of these peoples. What emerges is a complex juxtaposition of the frustration and despair expressed in the eruption of spontaneous acts of tribal defiance with the sympathetic external elements providing resources, organization, and knowledge of the outside system. The risk is that these elements, far from providing the role of a facilitator, could actually serve as agents of colonization, control, and normalization deployed by the state, hiding behind an image of compassion and legitimized by a discourse of development.