



The Manobo Community of Han-ayan: Enduring Continuities and Changes in Militarization

AUGUSTO B. GATMAYTAN

ABSTRACT. The study attempts to weave together a partial social history of the indigenous Manobo community of Han-ayan, which has suffered spectacular violence at the hands of paramilitaries backed by government troops in 2015, months before Rodrigo Duterte captured the presidency in 2016. Employing the concept of “containment zones” and “filter points,” it seeks to create an initial phenomenology of contemporary militarization in a hinterland setting under the Duterte administration, and explores the meaning of the violence of the state’s counterinsurgency efforts that the targeted community holds. Through key informant interviews conducted during the latter half of 2018, and supplemented by participant-observation that the security conditions of the research site allowed, the case of the Manobo of Han-ayan reveals both continuities and novel measures in the state’s performance of violence whose cumulative effect on the community leaves them in a state of profound precarity and insecurity, constantly anticipating the state’s next act of violence.

KEYWORDS. Manobo · Han-ayan · militarization · counterinsurgency · containment zones · filter points

INTRODUCTION

This article presents a case study that explores the impact of the policies of the current administration of President Rodrigo Duterte on the human rights situation in a section of Surigao del Sur province. To that end, I intentionally sought a research site that had experienced human rights violations during the incumbency of Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III, the immediate predecessor of Duterte. This would enable me to compare the human rights situation in the study site under the two administrations and, thus, better assess the broader patterns or trends affecting the local human rights situation. In my search for a possible field site, my attention was almost immediately drawn to the

indigenous Manobo community of Han-ayan, which suffered spectacular violence at the hands of paramilitaries backed by government troops in 2015 (Espina-Varona 2015), months before Duterte captured the presidency in 2016.

Data for this article was gathered principally through key informant interviews conducted during two separate visits to Han-ayan and neighboring villages during the latter half of 2018. I had originally intended to rely more on participant observation in my data gathering, but security conditions at the research site and other operational constraints compelled me to shift to the methodologically more “efficient” key informant interviews. I did, however, apply participant observation techniques to the extent that circumstances allowed. I am reasonably confident that I have sufficient data to meet the objectives of my case study—i.e., to outline the human rights situation in the research area before and during the Duterte administration—and of the larger “Violence, Human Rights, and Democracy” (VHRD) in the Philippines project.

I am aware that unlike most of the other case studies conducted for the VHRD project, my paper focuses on counterinsurgent violence in a rural hinterland in eastern Mindanao. Indeed, *tokhang*—a term that has come to stand for the Philippine state’s anti-illegal drugs campaign—never once came up in any of my conversations with my Manobo interlocutors. The closest I came to a reference to it was an offhand comment by a Manobo villager to the effect that if their communities were more accessible to the police, their local leaders would also have been tagged and killed as drug dealers. This article may thus be read as a counterweight to the general tendency to regard contemporary state violence in the Philippines as largely urban-centered, focused on the ongoing anti-illegal drug campaign of the Duterte administration, and led by the police rather than military forces of the state. The study is also significant to the extent that it documents and presents community-level experiences and understandings of militarization, and points to related areas for further research, particularly in the subfield of the anthropology of war and violence, with its current focus on peoples’ experience of conflict (Sluka 2013, 171).

HISTORY AND THEORY, STORIES AND ETHICS

This article is an attempt to weave together a partial social history of the community of Han-ayan, an initial phenomenology of militarization

under the current administration, and an exploration of the meaning that the violence of the state's counterinsurgency efforts holds for them. I will address each of these three aims in turn.

I speak here of a partial social history in three senses: it is partial in the sense, first, of being incomplete. The shared and cumulative experiences of militarization suffered by the Manobo of Han-ayan are quite considerable, and to take note of each and every incident of abuse, loss, or displacement since the 1970s would make the introductory section of this case study far too long and unwieldy as well as emotionally draining. Readers who are particularly interested in a detailed history of militarization in this area are directed to the master's thesis of Fr. Raymond Ambray (Ambray 2019), who makes a fair attempt to present this history in greater detail. Here, I will only discuss selected and particular sets of incidents that, on one hand, are suggestive of the general character of experiences of militarization in this area; and on the other hand, have particular significance for my Manobo respondents, and, thus, for this paper's argument. The historical material I present is also partial in the second sense of being shaped by the particular experiences and understandings of the Manobo. Otherwise stated, I offer here an abbreviated version of the Manobos' own account and understanding of their experiences. This means that while I recognize that the military, as well as those Manobo who have joined government paramilitary units and sided against their fellow Manobo, will have their own perspectives on the history of this area, I am privileging the all-too-often marginalized voice of indigenous communities that have had to endure militarization. This privileging of the Manobos' perspective leads to the third sense of the partial, i.e., that this paper sides openly with the Manobo (following Farmer 2003, 26), even as it strives to maintain a critical appreciation of their narratives and stances.

This article also seeks to present a phenomenology of contemporary militarization in a hinterland setting in Mindanao. I maintain that despite the long history of militarization and counterinsurgency violence in the Philippines, this material has, with a few exceptions (e.g., Woon 2011; Margold 1999), yet to be fully explored by academics, especially in such fields as the anthropology of war or of violence. This paper thus hopes to help address this gap in Philippine literature. To this end, I initially chose Whitehead's poetics of violence (Whitehead 2004a, 4-5; see also Whitehead 2004b) as the theoretical framework for interpreting my research data, an approach I had found

useful in understanding how the Banwaon, another indigenous group in northern Mindanao, experienced and understood militarization (Gatmaytan 2013; 2018). In brief, Whitehead's framework posits that violence does not occur in a semiotic vacuum, but is performed within a shared cultural context that lends discursive significance, meaning, and content to those acts of violence. I soon discovered, however, that in the case of Han-ayan and its neighboring Manobo villages, there is no shared cultural context between these communities, on one hand, and the Philippine military, on the other, for evaluating the performance of counterinsurgent violence. Where the former invoke a set of rules under which civilians ought not to be targeted by the security state, the latter seems to be operating by another set of rules under which the Manobo are deemed legitimate targets of counterinsurgency operations, their civilian character or identity notwithstanding. This clash of political values is an aspect of the local experience of counterinsurgent violence that perhaps requires further investigation elsewhere.

For this article's theoretical framework, I have turned instead to Tahir's notions of containment zones and filter points (2017, 231 and 233). These allowed me to pay due attention to the spatial dimensions of counterinsurgency as experienced by the Manobo, which I had found quite striking in the field. I have thus shifted my analytical focus from the question of how the Manobo understand state violence, using Whitehead's framework, to analyzing the larger patterns in the threats and violence of counterinsurgency as experienced and articulated by the Manobo. This shift is justified in part because the Manobo themselves have their own ways of understanding the state's violence, which we as scholars ought to acknowledge and critically re-present to our readers. In seeking now to understand the experience of militarization, I deploy the notion of "containment zones," which are "areas of temporal and spatial closure" (Tahir 2017, 231) demarcated by state forces as a region whose allegiance to the state is suspect, and, thus, generally subject to militarization. Within this zone, the biopolitics of the state is such that "the regulation of bodies is not aimed at disciplining citizens but containing the multitude of categories—tribesmen, insurgents, women, and children—and, at the extreme, 'inscribing them . . . within the order of the maximal economy now represented by the massacre'" (Tahir 2017, 233, citing Mbembe). It is thus "an apparatus that organizes spatial experience into one of anxiety, risk, and precarity" (Tahir 2017, 229). These containment zones are delineated by "filter points" that regulate movement in and

out of the area, and where the unequal power relations between the security state and the local populace is reproduced through such techniques as petty annoyances, humiliations, or prolonged wait times (Tahir 2017, 233). Following Tahir, filter points are exemplified in the research area by the roadside checkpoints (locally referred to as “detachments”) operated by members of the state’s military and/or paramilitary forces. My own interpretation of Tahir’s notion of the filter point, however, goes beyond the merely physical or geo-spatial. I argue that filter points cannot be limited to checkpoints, but can also take the form of political and economic isolation, and other measures that similarly demarcate the containment zone, and thus help construct a distinction between a suspect group residing within it and the rest of the population. I do acknowledge that the notion of containment zones and filter points is only one way of examining the spatial dimension of the counterinsurgency measures experienced by the Manobo. There are, of course, other ways of doing so, some of which may be compatible with Tahir’s analytical framework, but I have, in any case, privileged her approach here because it clearly resonates with the Manobo experience. Using Tahir’s approach, I hope to offer a sense of how the Manobo experience and understand militarization.

During my stay in Han-ayan, I felt that many of my informants had a need or desire to recount their experiences, whether in the course of scheduled interviews or even in casual conversations. This, despite the obvious pain that their tales can sometimes cause them. I recall, in particular, my interview with the daughter of a community leader murdered by paramilitaries, and how her speech—which had been very straightforward up to that point—slowed to an almost incantatory cadence when she began talking about her father’s death, as if she was carefully navigating between jagged memories that could so easily reopen still raw wounds. I felt so guilty for asking her to relive her memories that I apologized to her afterward. From my own experience in other similarly militarized communities (see Gatmaytan 2013), I understand such story telling or “sharing-sharing” as an implicit request to record or document their experiences; to “log-book”—as a Higaonon leader I once knew used to say—their history. I believe this drive to share their stories is an agentic response to their situation, one that draws upon their still largely oral traditions and knowledges. More, I also see their stories as gifts in Mauss’s sense ([1950] 2002, 6-7). By this, I mean that the sharing of a story here is not a discrete transaction where a thing is transferred from one party to another. Rather, the presentation

of the gift is a gesture that initiates a relationship of continuing, mutual exchange between the giver and the recipient. I sense, however, that my obligation in this relationship is not to reciprocate with a tale of my own, but to pass the stories I have received onward to other audiences or publics. In a political context that involves contests over the framing and significance of events, decisions, and outcomes, stories have a key importance. Like seeds that contain a record of their genetic heritage, stories preserve memories, and perhaps, more crucially, the perspective that framed these memories of people, things, and events. Like seeds, they embody the hope of harvest, in this case, of support for and solidarity with the storyteller. The Manobo are thus broadcasting their tales like sowers in the field, and it seems I have been entrusted with their stories so that I too can broadcast them, in other, further fields. All of which is to say that the telling of stories can have political significance, as an indigenous mode of resistance; one in which we, as scholars who traffic in knowledges and understandings, can participate.

But precisely because stories can have political weight and significance in ongoing struggles or negotiations over rights or claims, the tellers of these tales may be targeted or suppressed by those who have a stake in maintaining and/or dissimulating the current situation. How then are we to reconcile the obligation to share individual Manobos' stories with the ethical duty to ensure their safety by concealing their identities or maintaining a pragmatic silence? How do we address the tension between the informant's secrecy and anonymity and the scholar's agency through witnessing? My response here is to construct a synthetic, communal story into which I have woven my individual interlocutors' words and tales. The resulting narrative is a fiction in the very specific sense that I myself crafted or authored this narrative (following Clifford 1986, 5-6), even as it contains the truths lived and learned by individual Manobo witnesses.

This brings us to another, more fundamental ethical issue. Leaving aside the question of how to talk about the experiences of the Manobo, there is the matter of whether or not we should even speak of the situation of the Manobo at all. The problem is concisely captured in an adage attributed to the anthropologist Laura Nader, who is reputed to have warned: "Don't study the poor and powerless, because everything you say about them will be used against them" (Farmer 2003, 26). But as I have noted, the Manobo were very vocal about their experiences. Here, there is none of the conditioned "surface silence" that Farmer (2003, 25-26) says characterizes many of the poor, a

silence the anthropologist must break only after carefully assessing the possible consequences. With the Manobo coming forward with their stories, all that is left to me as an anthropologist is to record their “painful eloquence” and report their situation as they see it, to “bear witness” as it were (Farmer 2003, 26, 27) to their experience of and insight into decades of state violence.

CONTEXT: HAN-AYAN AND ITS NEIGHBORS

As noted above, this case study focuses on the Manobo residents of Han-ayan, a *sitio* or *purok* of around thirty households in the hinterlands of Barangay (village) Diatagon in the municipality of Lianga, Surigao del Sur province. Han-ayan lies between two other sitios: the village of Mike is a much smaller, less compact community, about a three-minute walk up the road from Han-ayan; and the village of Km. 16 (pronounced “KM 16,” “16,” or “Dieciseis”), which is slightly smaller than Han-ayan, and about a ten-minute walk down the road. The names of these indigenous villages may seem unusual to some readers; they are a legacy of the logging industry, whose jargon has thus been inscribed into the local geography. These three villages are so physically close to each other that visitors often mistakenly assume that they all form a single community. Han-ayan and its two nearest neighbors are only about an hour’s drive up a mostly rough mud-and-gravel road that winds into the hills from the market place of Barangay Diatagon. The road itself is another legacy of the logging industry, constructed to facilitate timber extraction during the postwar period.

In this article, my remarks on Han-ayan and its residents can be applied as well to the people of Km. 16 and Mike. In fact, in this study, I would go so far as to denote the community of Han-ayan as representative of the larger Manobo population of this hinterland area. Having said that, I should add that the Manobo people of Surigao del Sur are certainly not a politically undifferentiated mass who all share the same political perspective. In fact, there are Manobo who are members of the Magahat-Bagani group, a paramilitary organization organized, armed, and salaried by the Philippine military, and has conducted counterinsurgency actions against Manobo villages (see Cupin 2016). Still, it is safe to say that the greater majority of the Manobo in this hinterland area find themselves at the receiving end of the counterinsurgency efforts of the government’s military and paramilitary forces, as will be discussed below.

Han-ayan is one of the twenty-odd Manobo communities in what is called the Andap Valley Complex, a large, hilly area covered in heavy brush and forest stands that runs roughly parallel to the central section of Surigao del Sur's narrow coastline. According to the Manobo themselves, their ancestors migrated into this area from neighboring Agusan del Sur province many years before the Second World War, in the process displacing the Mamanwa settlements originally occupying these hills. Local respondents say that the name *Han-ayan* comes from *han-ay*, meaning "line" or "in a line." According to one account, a series of serious disputes were once settled here, one after another, as if in a line. Another version holds that these disputes were resolved at or along a nearby creek, which featured a line of stone steps down which its waters flowed. Both accounts revolve around the resolution of conflict and the resulting achievement of peace, which is quite ironic, given this area's contemporary history.

Originally, the Manobo were subsistence *kaingin* (swidden) farmers (Garvan 1931, 73). Today, most of the Manobo of Han-ayan and the surrounding area rely on the planting and harvesting of abaca (*Musa textilis*) for fiber and of falcatta (*Albizia falcattaria*) trees for softwood. These products are sold to buyers in Diatagon for money with which to pay for needed or wanted goods and services. At the same time, most families continue to cultivate corn, root crops, bananas, and other farm products in swidden clearings for consumption and occasional sale. Rice cultivation is still practiced, but it no longer has the economic centrality it must once have enjoyed. The Manobo villages in these hills thus function as the economic hinterland to the metropolis represented by Diatagon—and by extension, the township of Lianga—supplying the lowland with agricultural commodities for consumption or resale. To note, the five Manobo villages I managed to visit in this area appear prosperous compared to so many other indigenous communities I have visited. Most of the houses are substantial in size and are of sturdy materials, a number of them even sporting satellite dishes. Many families own motorcycles, and there is relatively lively traffic along the road to Diatagon, with logs or bundles of fiber carried on motorcycles down to the market on the coast, and groceries or merchandise brought up into the hills. While Han-ayan is not connected to Mindanao's energy grid, neighbors work together to form small, generator-based electrical networks to provide local power. A few families have already begun investing in solar panels.

After the Second World War, this area became part of the logging concession area awarded by the Philippine government to Lianga Bay Logging Co., which built the network of roads still used in the hills to this day. At the height of its operations, this logging firm made Diatagon's center, where the company had its offices, markedly more prosperous than Lianga, the municipality to which it belonged. Even today, Diatagon looks like a full-fledged municipality rather than a mere barangay of Lianga. The Manobo profited little from these logging operations, however. The company was averse to hiring Manobo as workers, preferring to hire instead Bisaya or Surigaonon laborers from the coast, or migrants from elsewhere in the country. Indeed, there was a time when the company engaged police or constabulary units to search for and arrest Manobos practicing *kaingin* or *swidden* farming in the area, which the firm reportedly saw as destructive or wasteful of commercially valuable timber.

Under such conditions, it is not surprising that the outlawed New People's Army (NPA) was able to establish a presence in this area during the increasingly turbulent 1970s and 1980s as it waged its protracted guerrilla war against the Marcos dictatorship and the succeeding administrations (Sales 1992, 215-18). Catholic priest-turned-Communist rebel Frank Navarro is well-remembered by many of the older community leaders, particularly for convening a week-long meeting with all the Manobo *datus* in 1985, during which he spoke to them of "human rights." That was, according to one of the surviving *datu* (headman) who attended that meeting, the first time they ever heard of their individual and collective rights. Father Navarro and the NPA are also credited by a number of respondents with successfully blocking the entry of Benguet Corp., which was then interested in exploring the mineral potential of the area, thus raising fears of displacement among the Manobo. The NPA continues to maintain a presence in the more remote parts of the Andap Valley area even today. The latest available *Provincial Development and Physical Framework Plan* of Surigao del Sur province acknowledges that the NPA "remains to be a major threat," leading to "the unstable peace and order situation in some parts of the province" (Province of Surigao del Sur n.d., 163). It cannot be denied that the Manobo in this area have had encounters with the NPA over the past decades, and that the latter have contributed to the development of the Manobo, particularly by making them aware of their internationally recognized rights to self-determination and territory, and encouraging them to organize and realize these rights

collectively. It would be simplistic, even lazy, however, to simply equate the Manobo with the NPA. A distinction can and should be drawn between the armed and insurgent NPA opposed to the state, on one hand, and the unarmed, civilian Manobo communities who actively participate in the regional economy and in local and national politics, on the other.

The Philippine state responded to the NPA presence with the violence of militarization. This violence has been near continuous since the 1970s or 1980s, and often resulted in the Manobos' displacement from their homes and farms. In the beginning, the Manobo would flee individually or in families into the surrounding forests during such times of danger. Later, however, they began to evacuate in larger groups down to the lowlands, where they encountered the Catholic Diocese of Tandag. Bishop Ireneo Amantillo of that diocese is widely recognized as inspiring the Manobo to organize themselves (see Ambray 2019, 94), eventually leading to their establishment of the Malahutayong Pakigbisog Alang sa Sumusunod (Persevering Struggle for the Coming Generations or MAPASU) in May 1996. Where in the past, the datu functioned as village-level leaders, today the Manobo also recognize elected officials of MAPASU as well as local government officials as community leaders. Initially, there were tensions between the more traditionalist elders and the more progressive MAPASU officials (for example, over the question of *boya* or arranged marriages, especially those involving adolescent girls), but these issues were eventually worked out. For most Manobo in the Andap Valley Complex, the MAPASU continues to be the umbrella intervillage association that oversees their rights and welfare. It articulates its own interpretation of the indigenous right to self-determination, which is closely bound with the idea of protecting the Manobos' territorial claim over the land and resources of the Andap Valley area. On that basis, MAPASU opposes all mining operations in this area. This decision—asccribed by many respondents to their elders (*mga tigulang*)—was based on the organization's stated objective of ensuring that the descendants of today's Manobo will also be able to benefit from their ancestral lands and resources, as reflected in the organization's very name. A common metaphor used to explain this decision draws upon bodily imagery: swidden farming may necessitate the felling and firing of trees, but like one's hair, these will regrow in time. Mining, on the other hand, was like pulling out one's organs, which do not regrow themselves and thus leads to death. Thus, while indigenous swidden agriculture is perfectly acceptable to the

Manobo, mining ought to be opposed, as it would lead to the destruction of the very environment their people rely on for their survival, and thus denying succeeding generations their opportunity for development. A few informants even added that their opposition to mining also benefits the lowland communities, who would otherwise be adversely affected by pollution and the loss or degradation of water resources.

The Diocese of Tandag, recognizing other needs and aspirations of the Manobo, also organized the Tribal Filipino Program for Surigao del Sur (TRIFPSS). This led to the establishment of a network of elementary-level schools among the Manobo villages in this area. Years later, the problem of ensuring the continuing education of the TRIFPSS's elementary school graduates came up, so Manobo leaders worked with Catholic Church workers toward the establishment of a local secondary school for aspiring students. Their efforts bore fruit in 2004 with the founding of the Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development (ALCADEV) in Han-ayan village. It should be noted, however, that for all the impact that the Catholic Diocese of Tandag has had on the lives of the Manobo, most of them remain unconverted to Christianity, and continue to rely on their *baylan* and other traditional ritualists for their spiritual needs. One Manobo leader even earned the ire of some Diocesan priests when he vehemently and successfully opposed the establishment of a Catholic chapel in one Manobo village.

VIOLENCE IN HAN-AYAN: A PARTIAL HISTORY

The various versions of Han-ayan's history—and of particular episodes within that history—that I encountered during my fieldwork naturally varied from person to person. In general, however, they all recounted a long, emotionally demanding series of human rights violations or abuses at the hands of the Philippine state's military and/or paramilitary forces, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s through to the present (cf. Sales 1992; Alamon 2017). This body of shared experiences and memories of suffering and loss is so vast that some informants confessed that, having endured so many abuses over the years and having undertaken so many evacuations in response, the details of the various incidents sometimes become mixed up in their minds. Fortunately, I am not interested in documenting the entirety of the Manobos' various experiences here. As I explained above, I will focus

on particular sets of incidents that have great significance for my respondents. I found two such sets of incidents from among the mass of stories I collected during my fieldwork.

The first set I recount here has greater resonance for the older members of the community who witnessed the events. These respondents saw the following incidents as marking a perceived shift in the government's attitude toward the Manobo, as will be discussed later in this case study.

The first set of incidents all occurred in May 2005, when there were already ongoing clashes between units of the Philippine military and the NPA in the forests further up in the hills from Han-ayan. The residents of the villages of Mike and Han-ayan became particularly alarmed when they heard the sound of near-continuous gunfire drawing closer and closer to their villages. They soon learned that a column of soldiers from the 58th Infantry Battalion was walking down the road toward them, all the while shooting into the surrounding trees and vegetation. On reaching Mike and Han-ayan, they began shooting at peoples' houses and water boxes, abaca-stripping machines and abaca fibers hung up to dry, and even shot dead some of the residents' dogs they encountered. Some villagers fled into the surrounding brush, but most were forced down the road, ending up huddled in front of the TRIFPSS grade school in Han-ayan. When the soldiers reached the village, they set up a perimeter around it, surrounding the assembled residents. The soldiers then accused three local men of being NPA supporters, and in full view of the villagers, proceeded to torture them. One man had a plastic bag pulled over his head and tied around his neck before finally being released. The two other men—who were brothers—were beaten by the soldiers, who clubbed them repeatedly with their rifles. Seeing how the wall of the community cooperative directly behind the brothers was repainted with their spattered blood, one witness recalls thinking that the two men could not possibly survive their ordeal. Yet they did, and the soldiers concluded the torture by binding their wrists and detaining them. The troops stayed until a military helicopter landed at Han-ayan the next day to pick up the bodies of soldiers killed in their encounter with the NPA, after which they left the village, bringing the battered brothers with them. The two were later “redeemed” (*nabawi*) by community leaders.

The second set of incidents was the most often and most clearly recalled by both old and young informants. This may be due to its relative proximity in time to the present, as to the very striking, indeed

harrowing nature of the events themselves. I refer here to the September 2015 murder of three men—two community leaders and the executive director of the ALCADEV school—by paramilitaries backed by soldiers of the Philippine Army.

In the early morning of September 1, 2015, the residents of Han-ayan were roused from sleep by armed soldiers from the 75th Infantry Battalion, who ordered them to assemble at the *basketbolan* (basketball court) of Km. 16. On the short trek to that village, the people saw soldiers stationed at intervals along the road. Upon arrival, they found that the people of Km. 16 were also gathering at the basketbolan. This was a section of the gravel road from the lowlands that widened out before branching in two directions: left into the hills and right to Han-ayan. A house-cum-*sari-sari* (sundry) store stands between these two branches, and there are high earthen banks on both sides of this junction area. Soldiers positioned themselves along the top of these banks. Dionel Campos, then the chair of MAPASU, and Belen Itallo, a senior teacher of ALCADEV, were made to sit on a bench fronting the sari-sari store, facing the residents assembled on the road. At around 5:00 a.m., two masked men stood beside Campos in front of the villagers, removed their masks, and introduced themselves as members of the Magahat-Bagani paramilitary group. They rebuked the villagers for their opposition to mining. At some prearranged signal, the soldiers on the earthen banks abutting the basketbolan fired extended bursts from their assault rifles over the heads of the villagers. Meanwhile, one of the paramilitaries beside Campos forced him down onto the ground and shot him in the head with an assault rifle. Datu Juvello Sinzo, a community leader who was among the assembled villagers, fled down the road but was shot by another paramilitary. He was still alive when the shooter approached his prone body and broke his limbs against the concrete sides of a water box Sinzo had fallen against. The paramilitaries warned people not to move for two hours, then left with the soldiers. Shocked villagers laid the dying Sinzo on a bench beside Campos's body, where he shortly expired. Later that morning, students found the bound body of ALCADEV Executive Director Emerito Samarca, dead from stab wounds and a slashed throat in his room at the school, where he had last been seen in the custody of other paramilitaries. Fearing further violence, Han-ayan and other Manobo communities evacuated, ending up in a refugee camp within the sports stadium of Tandag, the capital of Surigao del Sur

province. It would be one year and two days before they felt it was safe to return to their homes.

Some readers may recall this second event, which drew considerable media coverage and public outrage (see, for example, Carvajal 2015; La Viña 2015; *MindaNews* 2015), giving impetus to the launching of the wide-reaching Stop Lumad Killings campaign later in 2015. To note, President Duterte is on record as supporting the Stop Lumad Killings campaign during this time (Manlupig 2015). While reviewing my data, I was struck by how different witnesses fixed on different details in their respective accounts: how still-hot spent cartridges fell from the soldiers' guns and got tangled in some girls' hair; how one masked paramilitary turned away, perhaps unable to stomach the violence; how Dionel Campos's killer repeatedly pressed one foot down on his prone body, "like a butcher standing over a [slaughtered] goat"; or how someone shouted, "*Tama na, sir! Tama na!*" (Enough, sir! Enough!) throughout the shooting. Such details mark the witnesses' individual experience, and point to the lingering trauma of the event. One respondent said of her fellow villagers, "they have not yet moved on" (*di pa sila naka-move on*). Unfortunately for the affected Manobo, the paramilitary perpetrators—who were easily identified because they introduced themselves, or were relatives of some of the many Manobo witnesses—remain at large to this day, even though there are numerous reported sightings of these men in or near military camps in Diatagon.

THE BROKEN PROMISE OF CHANGE

The Manobo of Han-ayan and the rest of Andap Valley were still living as refugees in Tandag when the 2016 national elections drew near. The then-dominant Liberal Party, to which outgoing President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III belonged, fielded Manuel A. Roxas as its candidate for the presidency. Given the fact that the grim events of 2015 occurred during the term of a president from the Liberal Party who subsequently and signally failed to bring the identified perpetrators to justice, Roxas's bid found little support among the Manobo. The final nail on the coffin of his ambitions, at least as far as the Manobo were concerned, was when he perhaps unthinkingly visited the evacuation site in Tandag with an armed escort of soldiers, the sight of which sent the Manobo children hiding in terror and sent at least one elder trembling with fear.

In contrast, the candidacy of then Davao City Mayor Duterte enjoyed popular support among the displaced Manobo. Respondents cited the fact that Duterte was from Mindanao and would thus presumably understand the Manobos' plight; that he promised to pursue peace talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the NPA; and that he offered a political platform that some interpreted as pro-environment and antimining, among other things, to explain his popularity among the Manobo. In particular, however, Duterte's campaign promise that "change is coming" clearly resonated with a people who had endured decades of government neglect and violence, and who rather justifiably felt that they had been denied justice in the matter of the terrible events of 2015, among other adverse experiences. Thus, when asked for whom they had voted for in the 2016 elections, almost all my informants prefaced their answer with "Siyempre" (Of course)—i.e., "Siyempre, si Duterte"—reflecting the sense that for them, no other candidate was even worth considering at that time. A relative of the slain Dionel Campos was even certain that the latter would have voted for Duterte as well had he lived to vote. Respondents estimate that Duterte won 70 percent of the Manobo vote, with Senator Grace Poe coming in a distant second. Many informants recalled being overjoyed by the news of Duterte's electoral victory and his subsequent inauguration as the country's 16th president in June 2016. One man stated that when Duterte won, he felt that the Philippines finally had "a president of the poor" (*presidente sa kabus*), and that "all our problems have been answered" (*tubag na tanan sa atong mga problema*).

On February 24, 2017, however, President Duterte threatened to bomb Lumad or tribal schools such as those run by ALCADDEV and TRIFPSS, claiming that these schools were operating illegally, without government permits, and were merely training grounds for the NPA (Lingao 2017; see also Province of Surigao del Sur n.d., 166). Given the high value the Manobo accord to education (Trinidad 2012), this news troubled many villagers. The outbreak of the so-called Marawi Siege on May 23 of that same year resulted in the declaration of martial law across all of Mindanao (Proclamation no. 216, s. 2017). When asked, many of my respondents said they initially accepted the idea of martial law. They believed that a state of martial law would help the state's military forces address serious law-and-order problems across Mindanao, particularly terrorist organizations like the Maute Group then fighting government forces in the streets of Marawi City, the

trafficking of illegal drugs, and cases of violent criminality. On October 15, 2017, the people of Han-ayan were terrified by their first experience of a drone overflight. Many residents thought that the audible but invisible unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that hovered over the community was there to deliver on Duterte's promise to bomb the ALCADDEV school. This triggered another evacuation, though only down to the village of Km. 9. While it was later learned that the drones used by the Philippine military were designed only for surveillance and had no offensive capabilities (see Parameswaran 2017), they still cause anxiety whenever they fly over Manobo communities, as will be discussed below. On February 1, 2018, President Duterte announced his intention of "choosing investors" who will develop areas belonging to indigenous groups in Mindanao, which specifically included the Manobo communities of the Andap Valley Complex (Arguillas 2018). Again, this troubled the Manobo, many of whom feared that Duterte might hand over control of the area to a mining company, in spite of the MAPASU's stated opposition to mining operations within their territory. These developments steadily eroded the Manobos' initial faith and trust in Duterte.

On July 16, 2018, the Manobo of Han-ayan joined their neighbors in evacuating to the lowlands once more. This was in response to the presence of government soldiers establishing a series of military checkpoints in the area, beginning at the Manobo village of Simuwao. Witnesses from Simuwao complained that the soldiers behaved so abusively (e.g., raucous and inconsiderate behavior, asking Manobo women where they can find the prostitutes in the village, sighting their assault rifles on villagers, interrogating people walking to or from their farms) that they could no longer endure (*di' na namo kaya*) the troops' disruptive presence. While soldiers did not similarly beset Han-ayan and other Manobo communities then, the Manobo of Han-ayan joined Simuwao in evacuating from the area. This time, however, the military and police, local government officials, and even the municipal social welfare personnel all seemed to be working together against them, though all they wanted was to avoid possible violence by fleeing the area. First, they were barred from entering the Diatagon public gymnasium where they had planned to set up camp (see also Saludes 2018). When they finally persuaded barangay officials to allow them entry, they found that water and electricity to the gymnasium had been cut off (Saludes 2018). The military set a perimeter around the gymnasium, and the municipal social welfare office monitored and

restricted the entry of relief supplies to the Manobo sheltering within. The military also staged a “rally” at the gymnasium entrance, where MAPASU was denounced over the public address system as an NPA front by such speakers as Marcos Bocales, leader of the Magahat-Bagani paramilitary group responsible for the murders of 2015. On July 30, 2018 the Manobo decided to escape the hostile conditions in Diatagon and walk north along the highway to Tandag, the provincial capital. However, soldiers mounted on military vehicles repeatedly blocked their way. The exhausted evacuees eventually found shelter at the public gymnasium of Barangay Buhisan in neighboring San Agustin town. Negotiations between the MAPASU and its supporters and the military later resulted in the latter pulling out of Simuwao. Through all this, the military and the municipal social welfare office questioned the reason for the evacuation, repeatedly saying that there were no military operations then to warrant an evacuation (Mordeno 2018a).

For many Manobo, the July 2018 evacuation crystallized the realization that the MAPASU—and by extension, the Manobo people of the Andap Valley themselves—were among the terrorists and criminals that the “president of the poor” planned to seek out and destroy through his declaration of martial law. It is safe to say that almost all the Manobo in this area who had voted for Duterte now regret doing so. As one informant put it, “He has taken off his mask; he introduced himself as a dove, but it turns out he is an eagle” (*Gikuha na man niya ang iyang maskara; nagpaila siya nga siwit, unya agila diy*).

LIFE UNDER DUTERTE’S MARTIAL LAW

My initial impression of Han-ayan was of a vibrant community, with cheerful and hardworking residents socializing and tending their homes and farms. I discovered, however, that this sense of normalcy was very fragile. In the early morning of October 18, 2018, the sound of a drone was heard once more, circling over the village for more than two hours. The next day, I found that the villagers had turned wary and anxious overnight; they ventured out less and kept their children close; and the entire community was markedly quieter. One of the ALCADDEV staff commented, “Now there is fear, now there is anger [among the people]” (*Naa na’y kahadlok, naa na’y kasuko*). Those I approached readily confessed that they were worried because the community has observed that military operations on the ground soon followed the appearance of a drone in the sky.

This underscores the profound uncertainty of community life under Duterte's martial law, where the possibility of violence at the hands of government forces and the painful necessity of again abandoning their homes and farms haunt every moment. One Manobo stated, "We cannot say we won't have to evacuate again, we cannot say we won't be attacked by the military again" (*Di' ta kaingon nga dili na ta makabakwit, di' ta kaingon nga dili na ta atakehon sa military*). Indeed, many villagers now live "in anticipation of violence" (following Jeganathan 2000, 112-13): Some families were reportedly searching for a second-hand motorcycle for use in the next evacuation. One mother has an evacuation kit—a plastic pail with a lid that can be used as a basin, containing a small metal pot, blankets, soap, and other necessities—that she can easily snatch up and away when necessary. In much the same spirit, another woman said that since the events of 2015, she now makes it a point to store her family's clothes in a bag rather on the shelves in her house. Finally, some villages have developed their own procedures for evacuation, and their residents have internalized their individual roles within those procedures.

One leader said that continuing militarization, including the anxiety and insecurity it engenders, was their "biggest, heaviest problem [because] it dislocates our livelihood" (*pinakadagko, pinakabugat nga prublema, [kay] madislokar ang among panginabuhì*). Many Manobo complained that militarization and the frequent need to evacuate makes farming difficult or problematic. As one young farmer said, "*Igo lang ka makatanom, bakwit na sad; kapuy!*" (You have only just planted [crops], [but you have to] evacuate once again; [it's] exhausting!) During evacuations, farms are left untended, which all too often leads to poor harvests and low incomes. One man said that after every evacuation forced upon them by militarization, their livelihoods were "*back to zero, dili sa uno*" (back to zero, not back to [square] one).

This sense of precariousness is heightened by the way the military seems to be isolating the communities within the Andap Valley Complex. In Tahir's terms, the military is demarcating this area as a containment zone. I find this development rather chilling, as this spatial "othering" process has historically been a preparatory step for the application of violence (Hinton 2004, 159-60). This process of demarcation has several aspects, which we will briefly address in turn. I should also add that while most of the measures described below have been used, off and on, by the military in counterinsurgency operations since at least the 1980s, the intensity and coordination of their

implementation is reportedly more marked under Duterte's martial law.

Politically, there is a widespread perception that the Manobo communities are being cut off from the government and from public services. One leader noted that since around 2014, no local government officials or politicians have visited the area. The one exception he cited was a vocal *konsehal* (municipal councillor) who genuinely appreciates the Manobos' contributions to Diatagon's local economy. Similarly, the barangay captain of Diatagon had initially refused to allow the evacuees to use the public gymnasium during the July 2018 evacuation, explaining that under martial law, the military made the decisions and he was merely following their lead (Mordeno 2018a). One respondent complained that in the face of the many abuses continually endured by the Manobo, local government officials were "*hilom lang, hadlok kay martial law*" (just [keeping] silent, afraid because of martial law). Staff members of ALCADDEV remarked that where once their relations with the local Department of Education offices were cordial, now the latter seem wary of meeting with them. Similarly, other line agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Social Welfare and Development, have, according to my respondents, become markedly less accommodating toward the Manobo of the Andap Valley area. For my part, I did come across a group of officials from the government's Commission on Human Rights (CHR) while on my way up to Han-ayan, but given the CHR's virtual pariah status within the Duterte administration, they would be the exception that proves the rule. When questioned, the now-unapproachable civil servants explained that they had been instructed by the military to refuse assistance to the Manobo. They said, "*We cannot do anything [about this], because it is martial law now*" (*Wala mi mahimo, kay martial law karon*), as if the declaration of martial law granted the military extraordinary control over the provision of public services. At the same time, military officers and soldiers were quoted by respondents as saying that under martial law, "*Kami ang mahukmanon*" (We [have the power to] decide [things]) and "*Amo ang balaod*" (The law is ours), which seems to suggest that the military is claiming a greater voice in the political or administrative control of the area. Some of my more elderly interlocutors noted that this was one difference between martial law in the 1970s and today: in the past, the Manobo only had to contend with the military. Now, they confront not only the military, but also the unapproachability, if not hostility, of local governments and line agencies, as if the entire

bureaucracy of public service itself has been “weaponized” against them. This explains the sense of surprise or bafflement that some respondents felt over the government’s response to their evacuation in July 2018. It represents a twist on the current “whole of nation approach” to counterinsurgency, under which all government agencies were supposed to provide programs and services to local communities (Sec. 1, Exec. Order no. 70, s. 2018) and thus win them from their suspected support of insurgent forces. Instead, what the Manobo experienced was a policy where all government agencies were denying them services, and even respect.

There have been similar attempts by the military to sever the Manobo communities’ links to the wider economy. The most common form this effort takes is what the Manobo call “food blockades” where soldiers at checkpoints block, delay, or generally harass people transporting sacks of rice and other foodstuffs up into the hinterlands. Some of my informants spoke of snide insinuations by soldiers at the checkpoints that the rice is intended for the NPA; of attempts to confiscate all or part of their cargo (“*Apil diay sa martial law ang bugas?*” or “Does martial law apply to rice as well?” complained one frustrated Manobo); and of sometimes being made to wait for hours before being allowed to proceed onward. As Tahir noted (2017, 233), checkpoints are sites where the power differential between the military—and by extension, the state—and the Manobo is reproduced. This is apparent not only in how soldiers at checkpoints seek to control the flow of foodstuffs into the area, but also document and thus harass residents passing through. Thus, there are accounts of soldiers using mobile phone cameras to photograph Manobo residents as they negotiated their passage through local checkpoints. On one hand, this practice suggests to the Manobo that they are suspect for some reason and that the state is building a dossier on them. On the other hand, the Manobo have to live with the fact that their photographic images, taken with, at best, vitiated consent, may be used, framed, or manipulated as the military desires or chooses. Such measures are generally implemented intermittently, even capriciously, except when there are military operations, when they are more strictly enforced and, thus, more closely resemble Tahir’s notion of a filter point. In much the same vein, there was also at least one attempt by the military to prohibit the use of the *katig* (lit., outriggers), the long wooden platforms mounted along both sides of a motorcycle to enable its driver to transport a larger load of cargo. Again, the apparent aim here was to restrict the amount of rice

or other foodstuffs going up into the Andap Valley area. A newer method of effecting economic isolation takes the form of pressure applied on shop owners in Diatagon to avoid further transactions with the Manobo. This practice was particularly apparent during the July 2018 evacuation, when the local police would inspect the purchases made by the Manobo evacuees, seeking the sales receipts to determine the store from which an evacuee made her/his purchases, and then pressuring the thus-identified store owners to stop selling merchandise to the Manobo. A Manobo teacher thus said that she is now afraid to make market purchases in Diatagon, because if she happens to mention that she works with ALCADEV, she might be arrested immediately (*Mahadlok ko'g palit, kay kon maka-ingon ko'g taga-ALCADEV ako, basin posasan ako dayon*).

Finally, there also seems to be an attempt to isolate the Manobo socially, i.e., to cut them off from their wider network of support beyond the communities. On the one hand, this takes the form of near-constant propaganda efforts that paint the MAPASU and its officials as fronts of the outlawed CPP and NPA, apparently in order to erode outside support for the Manobo and their organization. One medium for this propaganda is the radio program broadcast on Sure FM-Tandag by the military in this region, which frequently attacks the MAPASU and ALCADEV. Another is the setting up of placards or posters along the coastal highway that, among other things, purport to bewail how the innocent Manobo are being duped by the NPA, or which virtually equate the MAPASU with the NPA. The military has also weaponized judicial processes by filing false criminal charges for murder or kidnapping, for example, against MAPASU leaders. Many informants noted how anyone who speaks out against the abuses suffered by the Manobo almost always ended up having such charges filed against them. I had occasion to examine the documents of one such case, where a witness who identified himself as a community member described how he and his fellow villagers were allegedly threatened by MAPASU officials into joining an evacuation. The accused officials commented that they personally know each and every member of their communities, and that the supposed witness is not one of them, underscoring how the latter was fictitious and the charges false. Legally speaking, such cases are not particularly complicated, but it is still difficult for the accused Manobo to deal with them given the work and expenses entailed, the possibility that the military will simply refile the same or additional false charges, and the risk of harassment or detention that anyone who

wishes to contest the charges in court faces. One effect of this measure has been to drive some of the accused leaders into hiding, to the point that they no longer come down from the hinterlands to visit Diatagon or other places. Indeed, during the more recent evacuations, these leaders chose to stay behind and hide in the surrounding forests rather than risk being recognized while in the lowlands and then be arrested or worse. Where no criminal charges have been filed, government troops have been reported to resort to harassment of community leaders, repeatedly interrogating them or pressuring them to “surrender” even though they are unarmed civilians residing in settled villages. In one case, soldiers even prohibited a leader from owning or possessing a mobile phone. The result of such measures is that local leaders can no longer access or cultivate his/her personal network of contacts beyond his/her family and village.

I interpret such measures as variant forms of Tahir’s filter points, realized not at the geophysical margins marked by the presence of a checkpoint, but (following Das and Poole 2004, 8–10) at the political, economic, and social margins of the Philippine security state, instantiated in or through government services, grocery transactions, and criminal charges, among other possibilities. I argue that the cumulative impact of these measures is the gradual but contested “social disarticulation” (see Palatino 2019, this issue) of Han-ayan and other Manobo communities from the rest of Philippine society. Thus, one elder remarked, “We have no place within the state” (*Wa’ mi luna diha sa estado*). This policy of isolation is underlined somewhat by a more recent declaration by President Duterte to the effect that he will move various indigenous communities in Mindanao into “hamlets,” to keep them beyond the reach of the NPA and thus ensure these communities’ loyalty to himself (Ranada 2018). Following Tahir, the areas thus defined and isolated form a containment zone whose residents are treated as suspect, and thus subject to threatened or actual violence (Tahir 2017, 229, 231) by the military. Which is to say, the Manobo are treated by the military—and by extension, by the state itself—differently from the rest of the local or indeed national population. This is underscored by the widespread observation that the Philippine military’s soldiers behave differently “*sa highway*” (on the highway, i.e., in the coastal lowlands through which the provincial highway runs) as opposed to “*sa bukid*” (in the hills, i.e., among the hinterland Manobo communities). Their conduct is described as “OK” or even “*maayo*” (well-mannered) when they are in the lowlands, but “*mabangis*” (ferocious)

when they are in or around the hill-villages. “*Bangis*” and “*brutal*” are the most common descriptions of soldiers’ behavior I encountered among the Manobo.

This is not to say that the Manobo are passive victims of the military’s machinations. They continue to engage local government officials and line agency bureaucrats, asserting their rights as citizens to access public services. They have also continued to maintain their relations with other indigenous communities, institutions within the Catholic Church, and other civil society groups. They try to use the media available to them to report any human rights violations they experience, dispute the military’s framing of local events, and inform the general public of their situation (see ALCADDEV Lumad School 2019). Their participation in some of the Manilakbayan activities can be interpreted as attempts to “break out” of the containment zone, to reach out for support and solidarity beyond their territory. They have even rallied around the MAPASU, instead of abandoning it as seems to be the intention behind the 2015 killings (cf. Bob and Nepstad 2007). Indeed, the MAPASU’s critical role in managing the Manobos’ 2015 evacuation and stay in Tandag seems to have strengthened local support for the organization. As one respondent put it, “If [militarization had occurred] earlier, [when we] had no organization, [I am] one hundred percent [sure] we would be scattered by now” (*Kon sa una pa, na wa’ pay organisasyon, one-hundred percent nabungkag gyod [kami]*). Finally, the Manobo exhibit what to me is a resolute, near-heroic perseverance in continuing with their lives and cultivating their farms despite the difficulties of working under such insecure or volatile conditions. The fact remains, however, that they are working against great odds, confronted by a military now backed by “weaponized” institutions of government, and a president who appears hostile toward them.

By way of a postscript to this partial history of the Andap Valley Manobo, I would add that beginning December 31, 2018, and for days thereafter, the military conducted intermittent aerial bombing of the areas around the Manobo villages of Decoy and Panukmoan, prompting another evacuation (ALCADDEV Lumad School 2019). Even as people were still reeling from this event, soldiers from the 401st Brigade of the Philippine Army patrolling the uplands of Barangay Buhisan, San Agustin, last January 24, 2019, inexplicably fired upon four Manobo farmers carrying harvested fiber from their abaca farms. The farmers fled but two of them, Emel Tejero and Randel Gallego, both of Han-

ayan village, were shot and killed. The military brought their bodies to the village of Neptune, where they had a detachment. The slain men were described by the military as NPA rebels killed in an armed encounter, a claim disputed by the Manobo (ALCADEV Lumad School 2019). These are the first deaths due to militarization suffered by the Manobo during Duterte's tenure as president, underscoring the continuity of patterns of violence across decades and across political administrations. As of this writing, no one has been held to account for these two killings. Finally, there are reliable reports of continuing or intermittent counterinsurgency operations in the area (ALCADEV Lumad School 2019), which unfortunately have not been more widely reported in the media.

STATE VIOLENCE: THEME AND VARIATIONS

One Manobo woman declared that “the symbol of martial law here is [the military's] deployment of drones” (*ang hulagway sa martial law diri kining pagpalupad nila og drone*). This statement captures what, for the Manobo, is the most salient characteristic of life under Duterte's martial law: it is not just the continuing, virtually constant threat or reality of militarization, which, after all, is not peculiar to the Duterte administration. As we have seen from the history of Han-ayan outlined above, two of the most resonant events in the local history of militarization occurred in 2005 (during the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration) and 2015 (during the Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III administration).

Rather, it is the community's perception that they—Manobo residents of civilian communities—are actively being targeted by the state's counterinsurgency forces and programs. My informants do say that their becoming targets of the military is not particular to the Duterte administration. Elders saw the incidents of 2005 as significant because, for them, it served to mark a shift in the way the military operated. Until then, Manobo casualties or victims were mostly collateral damage resulting from the conflict between the Philippine military and the insurgent NPA. Thereafter, the military began to directly target Manobo communities and their residents, even as it continued its operations against the NPA. The even grimmer events of 2015 underlined how the MAPASU, the Manobos' organization, is now also a target of the military and its paramilitary minions. This sense

of being targeted by the military—and by extension, the Philippine security state—is captured by the image of the drone.

At one level, the drone very clearly symbolizes the hostile, surveilling eye of the military, directed at the Manobo and their villages. There is more, however. Because each appearance of the UAV is, from bitter experience, linked to subsequent military ground operations, the drone is not merely an eye or lens employed in surveillance, but is also a virtual gun sight used to aim or direct the violence of militarization at Manobo villages (compare Tahir 2017, 221). This is why, even though the people of Han-ayan have absolutely nothing to hide from the drone, its association with military operations still causes widespread anxiety. There is the sense that they are not only being observed or looked at, but that they are being aimed at. For the Manobo then, to live under Duterte's martial law is to live under the metaphorical gun sight that is the drone. It does not matter then that the drone is "merely" a surveillance UAV. The fact that it presages and directs the violence of the state means it can still cause the anxiety, if not terror, associated with the use of armed drones elsewhere (International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic [Stanford Law School] and Global Justice Clinic [NYU School of Law] 2012, 55 et seq.; Rohde 2012; Sluka 2013, 186; Hayes 2019, 107). Here, I would flag the military use of UAVs for further research and analysis, perhaps as part of the emergent "anthropology of drones" (cf. Gusterson 2014).

As this discussion suggests, the Manobo of the Andap Valley area understand the violence of counterinsurgency as a direct attack against them. Despite their clear civilian identity, they see themselves as treated the same way as the armed and insurgent NPA. As one Manobo commented, "*Apil naman mi nga gi-atake sa militar*" (We are now included [as targets] attacked by the military). These, then, are unarmed civilians—noninsurgents—who are targeted for counterinsurgent violence. This is a point that some of the older respondents, who experienced martial law under Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s and 1980s, and under President Duterte today, addressed in their reflections. They concluded that life under Duterte's martial law is worse, claiming that Marcos never directly attacked civilians and their communities. There were certainly abuses against civilians back then, but they said that at that time, there always was a sense that the military was more clearly focused on defeating the NPA, and would distinguish between the latter and the civilian population. To illustrate this point, informants pointed to the military's counterinsurgency doctrine in the 1970s of

separating the “fish,” referring to the NPA, from the “waters” they swam in, referring to the people. Recalling how during the evacuation of July 2018 the military was actually trying to prevent them from evacuating—pressuring the local government to deny access to the gymnasium and then repeatedly blocking their way when they tried to trek to Tandag—one informant saw this as reflective of how the military now simplistically lumped the Manobo and the NPA together. To restate that in Maoist terms, it now seems that the water would no longer be allowed to separate or distinguish themselves from the fish, because they were now all fish in the eyes of the military.

Unsurprisingly, the presence of the military is often associated by my informants with a sense of alarm or fear (“*Basta na’y milit[ary], ma-alarma god ang mga tawo*”) (see also Genotiva 2018). Indeed, the mere sight of the footprints of military-issue combat boots in the surrounding forests has been known to spread panic through some villages. This sense of danger or precariousness is the result of their cumulative and continuing negative experience of militarization. As one respondent said, their anxiety “springs from their lived experience . . . [borne out] not just once, or twice, or five [times in their lifetime]” (*nagsumikad sa buhi nga kasinatian . . . dili lang sa isa, o duha, o lima [ka beses]*). The result is that though there may be no actual military operations, even the perceived hostile conduct of government troops can trigger an evacuation, as was the case in Simuwao village, recounted above. There, the military repeatedly insisted there were no military operations to justify an evacuation, missing or eliding the point that their mere presence in a village can heighten the anxieties of life in a militarized zone. This negative view of the military is so widespread in the area that I was initially suspicious of the homogeneity of my informants’ responses to the question of what the state’s violence means to them. Only later did I realize how the continuous experience of militarization shared by the targeted Manobo villages could produce this homogeneity (following Afflitto 2000, 115).

I found only two variations on this theme of being targeted by the military: the first came from a *baylan* or ritualist, with whom I conversed after he had presided over a ritual performed as part of the celebrations for a child’s birthday. Drawing upon indigenous Manobo cosmology, he spoke of life-giving *tagbanwa* or environmental spirits in the forested hills occupied by his people, and the predatory *engkanto* or demons of the seas and coasts associated with the Bisaya or non-Manobo lowlanders. He even recounted a folktale about a stolen wife

and a wedding feast in a spectral dance hall to illustrate the wicked character of the engkanto. He went on to say that living with such spirits on the coasts, it is no wonder that there are so many disasters and so much violence among the non-Manobo, many of whom have taken on some of these spirits' malevolent character. On the other hand, he claimed that the Manobo experience no disasters or violence, save those visited upon them by soldiers from the lowlands, who thus act out the predatory nature of the engkanto. This view suggests a profound, somewhat pessimistic sense of conflict or tension between the uplands and the lowlands, between the Manobo and the Philippine state that dominates the lives of the people of the coasts. The baylan's reaction to the overflight of the drone during my fieldwork was to address his neighbors, saying, "*Pagbantay mo, kay na-a nay dautan sa palibot ninyoha*" (Be vigilant, all of you, for there are now evil [beings] around you). This statement is striking in that it can be understood both as a ritualist's warning against unseen, evil spirits, and as a fatherly warning against the soldiers expected to follow in the wake of the drone. For the baylan perhaps, drawing a distinction between the two was unnecessary.

The second variation drew not on indigenous notions, but on international discourse, specifically on human rights. The elder who spoke of this was one of the leaders who attended the week-long discussion of human rights organized by the rebel priest, Fr. Frank Navarro, in 1985. He described the experience as if it was an epiphany, saying that only then did he realize "*ta-o di-ay mi*" (we were human [after all]), i.e., that the Manobo had equal standing with the Bisaya lowlanders, with the same claim to rights as the latter. For this elderly informant, the history of the Manobo of Andap Valley can be read as a continuing journey to realize their full humanity. Thus, before 1985, they had no clear sense of what their rights were as a people. After 1985, they organized themselves as the MAPASU, to realize their rights and protect their interests as a people. Later, they provided for their children's education through the TRIFPSS and ALCADDEV schools, to help sustain their struggle for their rights across the generations. At the same time, they reached out to other indigenous organizations and nongovernment organizations, seeking support and solidarity, and speaking out against abuses they suffered. Unfortunately, the military—especially after it began to directly target the Manobos' civilian communities and the MAPASU—seems to be opposed to this movement. The elder concluded, "*Nagpasabot nga dili mi tawo; wala gi-*

ila ang among pagka-tawo" ([This] means we are not human [in their eyes]; they do not recognize our humanity). In response, the Manobo have no choice but to "continue to assert [their rights], to develop, in order to realize their rights" as human beings (*padayon ang pagbarog, paglambo, aron matinuod ang mga katungod*). Similar to the baylan's viewpoint outlined above, there is here a perceived fundamental opposition between the Manobo, an underprivileged indigenous group seeking to achieve and express their full humanity, and a state seemingly set on denying them such an aspiration.

The Manobo, of course, question why they are apparently being treated as targets of the state's counterinsurgency violence alongside the NPA. One student angrily asked, "Why are the soldiers so intent [on us], when it is obvious [we are] civilians?" (*Nganong initan mi sa sundalo, klaro naman nga sibilyan [mi]?*) In fact, a surprising number of informants said they did not oppose military operations as long as these were directed at the NPA and not at themselves, who are unarmed civilians in settled communities, actively contributing to the regional economy, and interested in elections and in availing of government services. In the words of one leader, "If their intention is [to fight] the NPA, [the soldiers] should go to the forests; they should only pass through the communities [on the way there]. [Instead] they gather in the homes of civilians" (*Kon NPA ang ilang tuyo, didto unta sila sa lasang; molabay lang sila sa komunidad. Na, mopondo naman sila sa balay sa sibilyan.*). In other words, these people are not challenging the state's right to conduct counterinsurgent violence; they question rather the legitimacy of such violence when directed toward them by the military.

STATE VIOLENCE: NOTES TOWARD AN EXPLANATION

When I asked why the state, in their view, is hostile toward them, a few of my respondents expressed bewilderment. One elderly woman even speculated that soldiers were drug addicts (*adis-adis*), hence, beyond reason or understanding. Most of my informants, however, asserted that the Manobo are being targeted by the military because there are corporations interested in the mineral wealth beneath the hills of the Andap Valley area (see also Mordeno 2018b). The military, in this view, is acting at the behest of these corporate interests by destroying or intimidating indigenous communities whose opposition to all mining operations in the area is articulated by their organization, MAPASU. As another woman said, the military is hoping to "dismantle

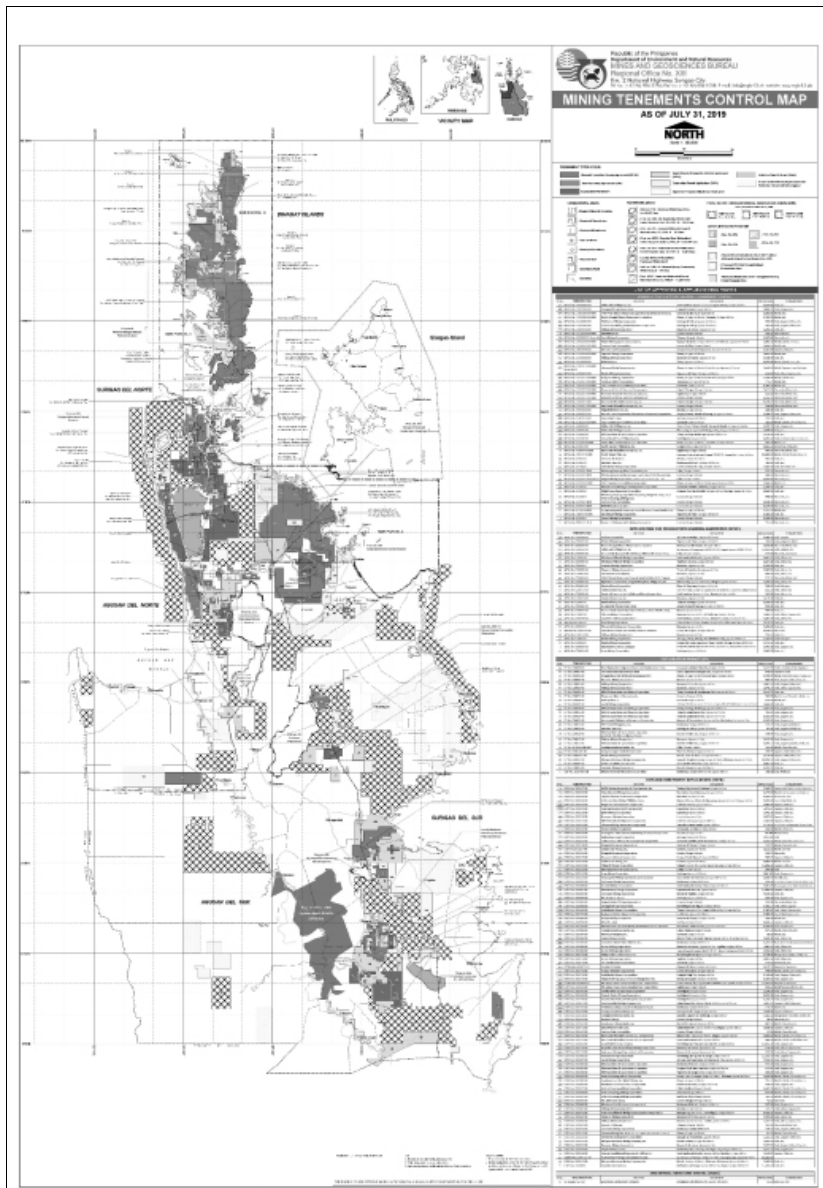


FIGURE 1. Mining Tenements Control Map as of July 31, 2019 showing mining applications (shaded in crosshatched pattern) covering most of the Andap Valley area, the inland area to the north of the northern coast of Lianga Bay, where the words “Surigao del Sur” appear on the map (DENR-MGB, n.d.).

the organization, so mining can enter [the area]" (*bungkagon ang organisasyon, aron makasulod ang mina*). In this connection, we have seen how some of my respondents recalled that just before Dionel Campos and Juvello Sinzo were murdered, the assembled villagers were berated by the paramilitaries for their antimining stance.

Data from the Philippine Government's Mines and Geosciences Bureau seems to confirm that there are corporate mining interests in the area (figure 1), particularly in the coal deposits in the Andap Valley area. The latest available development plan of Surigao del Sur province confirms that it has abundant deposits of manganese, chromite, gold, copper, nickel, iron, and coal, and that there are twelve mining corporations operating in the province, one of which—Philex Gold Philippines Inc.—is conducting exploration work in a 6,207.63-hectare tenement spanning the municipalities of Lianga and Barobo (Province of Surigao del Sur n.d., 68). It seems clear that the province is intent on exploiting these resources, especially since its stated development goal is "(t)o transform Surigao del Sur into a progressive province within the framework of an Eco-Tourism, *Mineral*, and Agri-Industrial-based economy" (Province of Surigao del Sur n.d., 8, emphasis supplied). Clearly, this attitude sets the government at odds with MAPASU's stated opposition to mining in the Andap Valley region.

At this point, I draw on the observation that the drive for development is so strong among Southeast Asian states and so pervasive that "individuals who do not embrace it are suspect in terms of their intelligence or their loyalty to the current regime" (Dentan, cited in Duncan 2004, 4). I would go further and argue that neoliberal "development" operates as the economic ideology of the Philippine state, in particular. The mining industry figures in the state's notion of development (Holden and Jacobson 2007, 479), such that opposition to mining can and has been seen as opposition to the state itself. Potential or actual mining areas can, thus, easily become sites of struggle between local populations seeking to protect their livelihoods and mining investors whose claim over the area is backed by the Philippine government's legal and military machinery (Holden et al. 2011, 143-44). In the militarization of the area that may very well follow, the local people can find themselves labeled as communists, especially since they are seen to oppose a global industry representative of capitalism (Holden and Jacobson 2007, 490; Holden et al. 2011, 154-55). In the case of Han-ayan, we have seen how the Manobo

organization MAPASU has been accused of being a front for the communist NPA. By so labeling a population reluctant to submit to the state's economic vision as communists, the government can justify its violence to itself and to others, even as the threat of violence implicit in being tagged as communists weakens the local communities' capacity to resist the entry of both soldiers and miners (Holden and Jacobson 2007, 478).

I need to emphasize that the presence of mining interests is how most of my respondents explained the military's decades-old hostility toward them, and that I have to record and report this fact. Having said that, I also have to say that my interlocutors seemed to be understating the importance of another reason for the military's attitude toward the Manobo of the Andap Valley. Here, I refer to the historical interactions between the Manobo and the NPA, which perhaps allows the military today to simplistically equate one with the other. It is true that there are NPA units in the Andap Valley area. Mere geographic proximity, however, does not justify equating the Manobo with the NPA any more than Christians residing with Muslims in a city can be considered Muslims as well or vice-versa. It is also true that the Manobo and the NPA have a shared attitude toward the right to self-determination. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), of which the NPA is the armed wing, has long supported indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination (see Point 8 of the National Democratic Front's "Ten Point Programme for a National Democratic Revolution," cited in *Anti-Slavery Society* 1983, 163–64). On the other hand, the Manobo—through the MAPASU—are seeking to exercise their right to self-determination (cf. Ambray 2019). While the Manobo first learned of their right to self-determination through Fr. Frank Navarro and the NPA, this does not necessarily make them members or supporters of the NPA. The Manobo, like other indigenous groups in Mindanao, have a tradition of political autonomy and self-governance (see Garvan 1931), which long predates the coming of the NPA. What the insurgents simply did was to give the Manobo the cultural and political resources to rearticulate their tradition of self-governance in the terms of the internationally recognized discourse of indigenous rights, i.e., as "the right to self-determination." In theory, their interpretation and exercise of their right to self-determination could exclude either or both the Philippine state and the NPA. Today, the Manobo are asserting their right to self-determination by, among other means, protecting their territory from the possible ravages of mining operations.

In this, they are merely drawing on, enhancing, and asserting their tradition of political autonomy over their territory. Unfortunately, the MAPASU's position runs afoul of the state's promining development agenda and of its state-building agenda, which insists on state sovereignty even over areas where indigenous groups have a right to political autonomy, and sees any assertion of such autonomy as a mark of Communism, hence, subversive. This recalls the need to pay greater ethnographic and analytical attention to the political dynamics between indigenous groups with a tradition of autonomy and self-governance and the state (following Gibson 1990, 143).

In sum, it would appear that the Manobo of Han-ayan and their neighbors are beset by the military in part because of their association with the NPA in the Andap Valley region, and because of their opposition to mining operations, which unfortunately reinforces the military's continuing refusal to distinguish between the Manobo and the NPA, between legitimate opposition to mining and sedition, and between self-determination and insurgency. Further study of this issue, perhaps to include the perspectives of military and paramilitary officers and operatives, is indicated.

CONCLUSION

This case study is based on data drawn from interviews conducted in Han-ayan and nearby villages. I am confident that the information here is representative of the Manobo communities within the Andap Valley area, except for those individuals and families who are actively part of the state's paramilitary forces. The case study cannot and should not be made to represent all other indigenous communities or organizations elsewhere in Mindanao or the Philippines. At best, it reflects the experience of other indigenous groups who are also being targeted for militarization by the state. It has been claimed that the state is intent on a "war on extinction" (cf. Alamon 2017) against Mindanao's indigenous peoples, but I think this is a sweeping generalization. The Philippine state's treatment of indigenous groups varies considerably over space and time, ranging from the long-standing hostility displayed in the case of Han-ayan, to the paternalism of the political patronage system in Davao City (Belar 2017, 61-64), to still other structures of relations. Han-ayan's case is important as a marker of this variety, warning against any oversimplifications, positive or negative, about the state of Philippine indigenous peoples today. More importantly, Han-

ayan's case shows how the Duterte administration now treats communities it deems hostile to its centralizing state-building agenda and/or its promoting development policies.

For the Manobo of Han-ayan, the Duterte presidency does not represent a change in the conduct of counterinsurgency from the previous administration. They see it rather in terms of the continuity of previous patterns in the performance of state violence; in particular, the targeting of civilian Manobo communities and individuals, which they trace back to 2005. By 2015, they were also made aware that the MAPASU, their organization, was being targeted by the military as well, and life for organization officials has worsened with the systematic filing of false charges against those of them who speak out in the media. Thus, as they had under previous administrations, the Manobo continue to live lives of profound precariousness and insecurity, constantly anticipating the state's next act of violence, and the next evacuation. Under such unstable, anxious conditions, their pursuit of their livelihoods becomes even more difficult. The military's targeting of civilian Manobo communities and the "weaponization" of government institutions—which respondents say did not occur under Marcos in the 1970s—caused some of my older informants to say that life under martial law in the 1970s was better than it is today. The experience of the Manobo of Han-ayan points to the limits of electoral democracy as a minority people's response to their fraught situation. As a minority group, their collective voice cannot by itself prevail over the will of the majority; and even where "their" candidate wins, that candidate will have to contend with opposing interests, or even—as in this case—turn against them.

When he ran for the presidency, Duterte promised change. Looking back today, some informants reflected that if there has been any change, it has been for the worse. While checkpoints and the filing of criminal charges have been part of the government's counterinsurgency arsenal since the 1970s or 1980s, respondents assert that their use today is more continuous or systematic and more closely coordinated with other means of social disarticulation. On the other hand, some of these measures are novel: it has only been under the Duterte administration that the Manobo encountered the withdrawal of or hostility from the local government and local line agency offices. Similarly, they have only now witnessed military and police efforts to pressure local businesses to cease their dealings with the Manobo. Finally, it is only now that they confront recent developments in the

technologies of surveillance (and harassment), particularly the still-novel UAV and the more ubiquitous mobile phone camera. The implementation of these measures, as of this writing, is facilitated by the continuing state of martial law over Mindanao, which ordinary people seem to understand as vesting the military with extraordinary power and discretion, allowing the latter to more easily intimidate or overwhelm any local opposition. At the same time, it seems to embolden military officers and troops to make extraordinary—though legally tenuous—claims to political or administrative power or control in such places as Barangay Diatagon. Here, I would flag the need to study martial law as understood and performed by ordinary people and law enforcers in actual contexts shot through with relations of power, as opposed to the more abstract study of the history, letter, and spirit of a declaration of martial law.

The cumulative effect of these and other measures is to designate the Andap Valley area as a containment zone, where life is lived in a state of “not-peace-not-war” (Nordstrom, cited in Sluka 2009, 283), characterized by a continuing state of threatened or insinuated violence (following Tahir 2017, 229) that can, at any moment, erupt into actual military or paramilitary violence. Tahir (2017, 231) asserts that this strategy maps the territory as government-held areas beyond which are the containment zones, the suspect areas marked by lawlessness. It is against this imputed lawlessness that the state defines itself as a countervailing agent of culture (Tahir 2017, 234), order (Das and Poole 2004, 5-8), or development (Duncan 2004, 5 and 7), thereby justifying its existence and policies.

The state’s seeming need to perform violence against those it sees as agents of disorder (i.e., communist-influenced communities) or of backwardness (e.g., antimining communities) suggests that such violence is intrinsic to the constitution of the contemporary Philippine state. This underscores how current patterns of state violence cannot be limited to the police-led killings pursuant to the government’s urban-oriented war against illegal drugs. The relations between violence and modern Philippine politics cannot be fully understood without including the continuities and changes in counterinsurgent violence actualized in the various containment zones across the country. In Hanayan and these other militarized areas, life is precarious, while life outside them is comparatively more stable and secure. The distinction is reflected in my interlocutors’ observations of the behavior of government troops, who appear disciplined and courteous in the

lowlands outside the containment zone, but are “brutal” toward the people they encounter inside it.

As one who lives outside the Andap Valley containment zone but has witnessed the lives of those inside it, I see the vast difference in the quality of civilian life in these two areas. I find it extraordinary that so much violence and intimidation has been directed at the Manobo of Han-ayan by the military, from the 1970s through to today. More importantly perhaps, I am puzzled by how little public outrage their dire situation has generated. It is as if the abnormal—the protracted, systematic persecution of unarmed, civilian communities by the military forces of a democratic government they had voted into office—has become normal and unremarkable to people outside the area. To echo Giroux (2015), “Where is the outrage?” The situation reminds me of the anthropologist Michael Taussig’s extended meditation on the difference between seeing and witnessing (2011), in the course of which he refers to W.H. Auden’s ekphrastic poem, “Museum des Beaux Arts,” itself a reflection upon *The Fall of Icarus*, a painting attributed to Pieter Breughel. Taussig (2011, 130) remarks that Icarus’s fall from the sky is astonishing, but that even more astonishing is the lack of astonishment demonstrated by the people in the painting, echoing Auden’s view that these people were too concerned with day-to-day work and survival to care about the irruption of the extraordinary in their midst. In my own appreciation of the painting, however, the people depicted there all seem to be very studiously ignoring the fate of Icarus. They are either looking intently elsewhere—up, down, anywhere but at Icarus—or have quite simply turned their backs on him. It thus seems to me that they all know what is happening, hence, the lack of astonishment, but do not wish to acknowledge it. It is this deliberate turning away, this refusal to bear witness, which I find problematic among the people living outside the Andap Valley containment zone today, because it raises questions about violence and its place in contemporary politics, dissent and its place in Philippine democracy, indigenous autonomy and its place in national sovereignty, and witnessing and its place in a divided society.

I apologize if I somewhat unoriginally end this paper with my own reading of a social scientist’s reading of a poet’s reading of a painter’s reading of an ancient myth. I find that the way this series of readings and rereadings have happened across centuries of time underlines enduring historical continuities in what Auden calls “suffering” in the hinterlands of the Philippines, and the consequent obligation to bear

witness to its reality, despite official reassurances that we are now living in the best of times. Certainly, the formulation of an ethical and political response to the violence continuously visited by the state upon civilian indigenous communities entails a long, complex dialogue, and for that very reason, such a dialogue needs to be initiated soonest. Perhaps sharing the tales of the Manobo with which I have been entrusted can help in this process, especially as their stories are not simply astonishing, or moving, or interesting, but most importantly, true. ❀

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AUGUSTO B. GATMAYTAN holds a law degree from the University of the Philippines College of Law and a doctorate in anthropology from the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has been an advocate of indigenous peoples' rights since the 1980s; co-founding the Legal Rights Center, defending the constitutionality of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 before the Supreme Court, and working as lawyer and community organizer in the hinterlands of Agusan del Sur. He is currently the director of the Ateneo Institute of Anthropology in Ateneo de Davao University.