

The Ancestral Domain Claim of the Impahanong - Amusig Tribal Council Organization


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Abstract

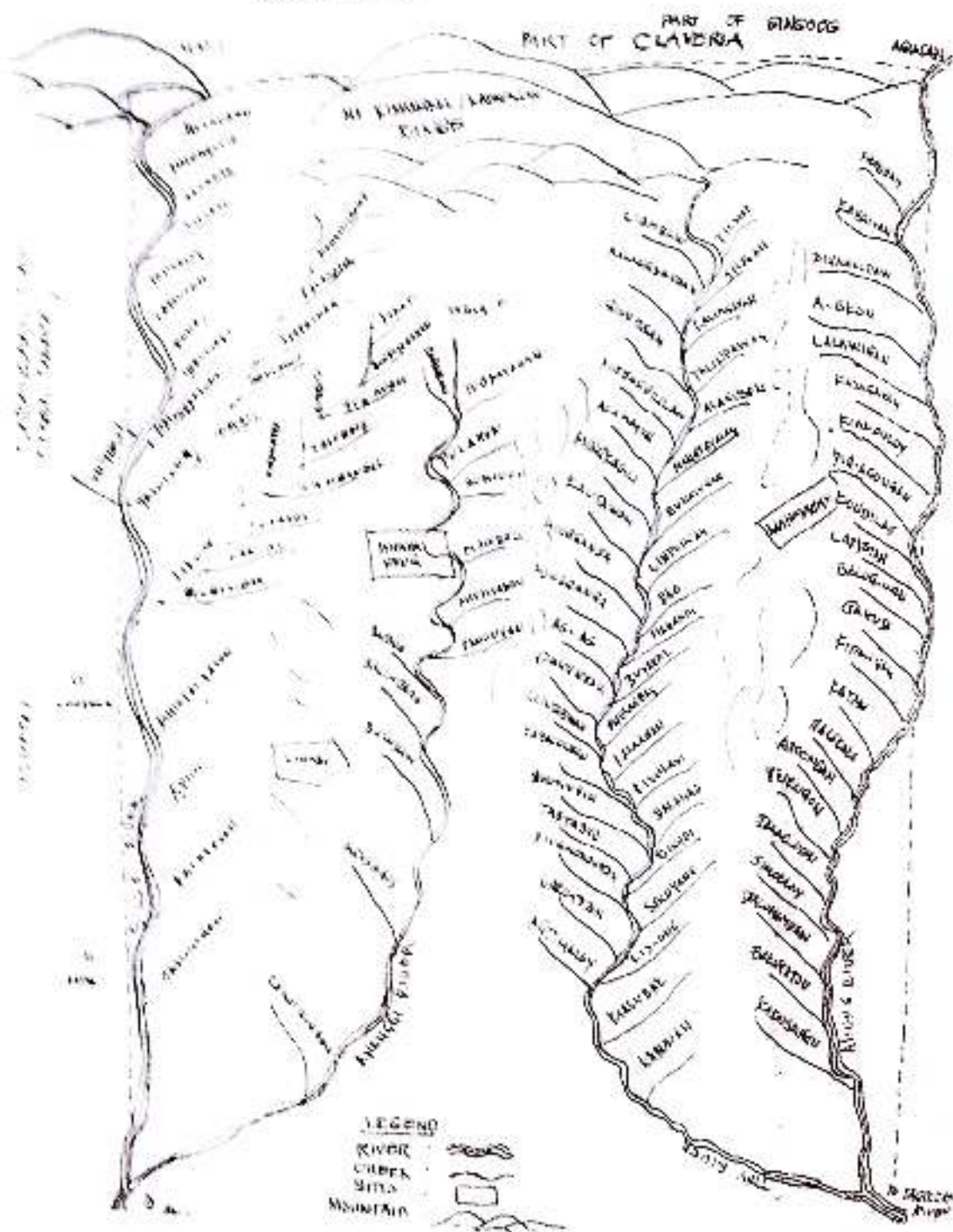
This is a documentation of the ancestral domain claim of the Higaunons of Impohanong and Amusig in Malabog, Bukidnon. They are part of the larger group of Higaunons who belong to the wala ha talugan or the eight territories of the tribe that stretches from Agusan del Norte, westward across Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental up to Rogongon, Iligan City in Lanao del Norte — all associated with big rivers that spill into the sea. The eight are Odiangan (Gingoog), Agusan, Kabulig (Claveria), Tagoloan, Lanao, Cagayan, Pulangi (Bukidnon) and Balatukan (Balingasag).

As far back as this indigenous community can recall, their occupancy of their ancestral domain goes back to at least eight generations, or, using the universally accepted 30 years per generation as a gauge, the equivalent of 240 years. This is far in excess of what the government requires to justify the issuance of a certificate of ancestral domain claim.

Re-enforcing their claim are community lore on the names of places and sites, as well as their tradition and custom on land acquisition and land use.

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MAP 1
 SKETCH MAP OF
 INDENTURED HANIG NAGNON TRIBAL COMMUNITY
 IDENTIFICATION ANCESTRAL DOMAIN CLAIM



Part I Introduction

This study is a documentation of the ancestral domain claim of the members of the Impahanong Amusig Higaunon Tribal Community Organization in accordance with the guidelines set by the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act.¹

Unless otherwise specified, direct lengthy quotations from our respondents are in Cebuano Bisaya, the sole medium of communication during the interview.

The research-interview was done at Kiligbet, more popularly known as Log Deck, a sitio of Barangay Impahanong in the municipality of Malitbog, Bukidnon. From the evening of May 16 to lunchtime of May 18, 1998, we logged a total of 19 hours of interview with seven *datu* and two *bae*, all respected leaders of the Impahanong Amusig Higaunon Tribal Community Organization. These respondents were:

1. Datu Mantimongmong (Ricardo Yanohon), Co-Chieftain of said organization and is also head of the committee on rituals and traditions;
2. Datu Manlumunda (Jesus Yanohon), 59, elder brother of Ricardo, the baylan and ritualist of the group;
3. Datu Bahala (Rizalino Lumameng) who heads the committee on Pamulalakaw (roughly translated as "fishing");
4. Datu Mangumbuyan (Felix Lid-awon) who is the associate of the baylan;
5. Bae Nanulan (Roquisa Bulalakaw) who is in charge of community health;
6. Datu Manlumakted (Sipling Lamumay), responsible for farming;
7. Datu Ronaldo Man-awuden, also responsible for farming;
8. Datu Manballawan (Eusebio Sumunda), and
9. Bai Teresita Yanohon Sinagonya, Bai Mangaugapog, prepares the betel nut and the buyo for the *paruhat*.

The documentation project was spearheaded by Mr. Lino "Ino" Gelsano, Executive Director of the Indigenous Peoples Apostolate (IPA),² who graciously provided full support for the research in the form of transportation, accommodation, research supplies and funding for transcription for those who needed it. As arranged, IPA took care of informing the informants about the project and the schedule of interview. Odelio "Odoy" Sawanga, a member of the staff of the acted as our efficient and patient guide, interpreter, facilitator and respondent at certain points.

As in the actual field interview, the production of the research output was shared by the research team. Rudy B. Rodil, an ethno-historian, leader of the research team, wrote Parts 1 and 2. Luz C. Sevidal Castro, an expert on Philippine Studies, team member, put together Parts 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. Maria Cecilia Tangian, an instructress of history took care of Parts 3 and 4, and drew the genealogy diagrams as well. Odelio Sawanga produced the sketch map of the ancestral domain claim.

Research Methodology

Before the interview proper, the respondents conducted a ritual right in the middle of

the interview room "paying our respects to our ancestors," the respondents would explain later, "and seeking their permission because we shall be discussing matters related to the past from their time to the present." Three chickens were offered. One chicken was "for those who made our customary laws;" another was "for the spirits of our ancestors;" and the third was "for the spirit of knowledge that we may discuss our knowledge outside with enthusiasm."²

The process may be described as a case of group interview wherein interviewers and respondents were all seated around in one room, the entire tiny second floor of a home actually. After the ritual and during the introductions, it was explained that the research team could only be available from the evening of May 16 to mid-day of May 18, after which they would proceed to Kalabugao for another two days of interview with the leaders there. The purpose of the research was to help the indigenous people document their ancestral domain claim. The *datus* and *baes* in attendance were very appreciative and expressed their willingness to cooperate. Given the limited time, everybody was made to understand that the interview may last deep into the night. Indeed, there was one session, on May 18, which started at 4:00 o'clock in the morning which meant waking up at 3:00 in the morning or earlier, and went on until noontime, interrupted only by coffee break and breakfast. Nobody complained.

The topics were lined up and agreed upon at the start, after the ritual and the introductions, and these were: (a) origin story of the Higaunon; (b) evidences of ancestral domain claim like the concept and institution of the *walu ha talugan* or the eight territories of the Higaunon in the five provinces of Agusan del Sur, Agusan del Norte, Misamis Oriental, Bukidnon and Lanao del Norte, the genealogy of the principal leaders, the names of places, mountains, rivers and creeks, and others and the stories behind them, land use practices and other cultural institutions of the community. Given the time constraint, there could only be limited photography of important sites and people; a return trip would be required for a more thorough photo-documentation.

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to express their profound gratitude to Simplicio Manon-og, the team's efficient driver; Freddie Lamumay and wife Evelyn Sagayna who provided accommodation at Kiligbot in their tiny two-storey house, and moved heaven and earth to keep their little baby Marissa from drowning our taping sessions with her angelic voice, and the ladies and gentlemen who were in charge of preparing our simple but sumptuous meals. Loreto Sagayna and wife Lucy Lamumay also helped out in the housework.

Part 2 Higaunon, the People

The indigenous people who constitute the membership of the Impahanong Amusig Higaunon Tribal Community Organization in the municipality of Malitbog, Bukidnon, call themselves Higaunon, meaning "dwellers of the hinterland." They are an integral part of the bigger community of the same name that has traditionally lived in their traditional domain called *walu ha talugan* or eight territories that encompass five provinces of Agusan

del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Misamis Oriental, Bukidnon and Lanao del Norte in northern Mindanao.

Biuukid is their language. They also tend to be identified with Bukidnon in popular usage among outsiders. The latter is a generic name given all indigenous groups in the province of Bukidnon by Bisayans and other outsiders. Indigenous groups found at the north-central Bukidnon area are the Higaunon and their subgroups: the Talaandig and the Banaon, the latter inhabiting the border area between Bukidnon and Agusan, more specifically within San Luis, Agusan del Sur; the Tigwahanon who occupy the southern part of the province, and the Umayamnon who inhabit the border area of Bukidnon and Agusan, more specifically in the municipality of Cabanglasan, Bukidnon. In Higaunon cultural tradition, they also acknowledge common ancestry with the neighboring Maranaos of Lanao.

Higaunon ancestral domain is made up of the *Walu ha Talugan* or the eight territories of the Higaunon in northern Mindanao. All associated with big rivers that spill into the sea, the eight are Odiungan (Gingoog), Agusan, Kabulig (Claveria), Tagoloan, Lanao, Cagayan, Palangi (Bukidnon) and Balatukan (Balingasag).

Queried further on the specific significance of the association between *talugan* and big rivers, this was the answer of the respondents:

The *talugan* refers to those big rivers which flow directly into the sea. The rivers of Malitbog, Silu-n and Amusig, cannot be referred to as *talugan* because their waters flow into Tagoloan river. They are better referred to as branches of the *talugan*. It is Tagoloan river that goes directly into the sea. There are many rivers in Agusan, but only Agusan river merits the name *talugan*. The rivers in Agusan that originate from the Higaunon territory and flow into Agusan River are Maasan, Uhilyog, Pusilaw, Agsabu, and Uhot. Other rivers come from the Manobo territory. The *talugan* of Gingoog is actually a combination of two rivers, Gingoog and Odiungan, but were referred to as one because they are near each other and belong to the same region. Medina is part of this. The *talugan* of Balatukan is derived from Balamukan river. Langtañ is included here. The *talugan* of Kabulig is also one big river that originates from the mountains of Claveria and flows to the sea. Kabulig is encompassed in the present towns of Claveria and Jasaan. Then, each *talugan* is supervised by a *datu*.⁴

Using the framework of present day political units, it is possible to locate these traditional domains within specific towns within the aforementioned five provinces. What we enumerate here are merely the areas of heavier population concentration. In Agusan del Norte they are found in the towns of Las Nieves, Buenavista, Buman City and Nasipit. In Agusan del Sur they are in the town Esperanza. In Misamis Oriental, they inhabit the towns of Magsaysay, Gingoog, Salay, Balingasag, Medina, Claveria, Talisayan, Cagayan de Oro City, Manticao, Na-awan, Initao and Opol. In Bukidnon they live in the towns of Mauolo, Fortich, Impasug-ong, Baungon, Talakag, Libona, Malitbog, Malaybalay, Cabanglasan, Lantapan and Valencia. In Lanao del Norte, they are traditional inhabitants of Barangay Rogongon of Iligan City.

The ancestral domain of the Impasugong Amusig Higaunon Tribal Community Organization is one of two districts claimed by the Higaunon dwellers of Malitbog, Bukidnon.

The other is that claimed by the Sabangaan tribal Council.

Where did they come from?

They all trace their origin to Apo Agbibilin. As far as they could recall, Apo Agbibilin was followed by Apo Entampil, then several generations which they could not remember, then picked up again from Apo Pabulusun, Apo Manlighud and Apo Mandinhay. Apo Entampil was allegedly the sole survivor of the great flood which submerged the earth in the time of Noe.⁵

Then there was Apo Nangamihan. He was followed by Apo Mangkubuhan, who was really from Tagoloan, then Apo Pinalig-en.⁶

After Apo Pinalig-en came Apo Kasagayan, then Apo Kasagayan, then Apo Suminulang.⁷

After Apo Suminulang, there was Apo Unga, followed by Apo Namakwe Dungdungan who were the direct ascendants of Datu Manlumunda and Datu Bahala, the last two being among our respondents. This is a total of nine generations from Apo Suminulang down to Manlumunda and Bahala; ten if we include the latter's children. Datu Mangumbuyan, another respondent, confirmed this. From their place in Amusig and Claveria, their families converged at Impahanong to become the leaders here.⁸

Noe and the great flood

The story of the great flood is also the story of Noe. To outsiders, this may sound like a story lifted from the Bible. But to the Higaunon, it is an integral part of their native lore; Noe in their tradition was a baylan

Noe came to know that there was going to be a flood. He informed his people about it and persuaded them to help him build an ark. There were those who laughed him to scorn and thought him crazy because there was a drought at the time.⁹

Noe built his ark; he also repeatedly told people about the impending deluge. Those who believed in him came to help. But those who thought he was drunk from too much intake of tuba, a local brew from the *pugahan* tree continued to laugh at him. About a month before the flood, Noe sent out his people get a pair each of the different animals and take them aboard the ark. Those who believed in him were also taken into the vessel.¹⁰

When the water rose, those who did not believe sought to obtain space but Noe replied that he was sorry but there was only enough space for those who helped him. "I told you but you did not believe me," he said to them. So, those who were with Noe survived.¹¹

The sole survivor, Apo Entampil, the ancestor of the Higaunon, was so named because she was swept by the water to the tip of Mt. Kimangkil, now a sacred mountain among them. Located at the border of Misamis Oriental, Bukidnon and Agusan, Mt. Kimangkil is also known to the Higaunon as Kapayagan. It is called Kimangkil because the land that was left dry at the time of the flood was no bigger than the *bangkil*¹², Binukid for the back of a chicken. It is also called Kapayagan because one gets a clear view of the surroundings when he stands at the tip of the mountain. From the same tip of the mountain, Noe sent the crow to reconnoiter outside the ark. The bird flew on and on and found nothing alive, not a single person. In its hunger it started to peck on the carcass of a person. Worried, that the

crow had not returned, Noe sent out the dove to check. The dove found the crow pecking on the carcass and said that Noe wanted it to return. At that moment the crow pulled out the intestine of the dead person, the tip swung and wound around the neck of the dove thus leaving a white stripe on the latter's neck.¹²

Apo Entampil said that she would be grateful if the child she had in her womb would be a male because she had an assurance that the human population would multiply. If the child was a female, she would throw it into the sea. She had a male child and she took good care of him. They parted ways when he grew up. But when they met after a few years, they lived as husband and wife and had eight children, four male and four female. They parted again as soon as the children grew up, the four male children going with him and the four female children with her. When they met again after ten years, the children married each other. And that was how the population increased in Mindanao. Some went to Tagoloan, others to Naawan, others still to Balamkan, then to Agusan and so on.¹³

Common Ancestry with Maranaos

In their origin stories, the Higaunon share a common ancestry with the Maranaos. It is told that at the time of the founding of Cagayan, Apo Kagayhaan was born to Apo Pabulusen. Her beauty was beyond compare. Batu Lakungan, a Muslim, married Apo Kagayhaan. Cagayan derived its name from her. The remains of Apo Pabulusen and Batu Lakungan are buried near the river Tagoloan. The Maranaos and the Higaunon share common blood twice, from Batu Lakungan, a Muslim sultan, and Apo Gawahanen.¹⁴

"To us Higaunon," said Datu Mantimongmong, "Lanao is one of the *wala ha tabugan*." There is a *tampuda*, peace agreement between the Higaunon and the Maranaos. They have had many fights before and it was always the Higaunon who turned victorious. Our most famous fighter was Apo Nanginmalambago, whose remains are buried not far from Impahanong. He could fly, he was never injured, he died from old age. Before he died he entered into a *tampuda* with the Maranaos. This is evidenced by a live stone found at the headwaters of Tagoloan river. The Maranao counterpart's stone is said to be kept in a room by their elders. Another evidence is the durian tree found at Tigkalan. It was here that the *tampuda* or peace pact was held.¹⁵

There is also the story that the Higaunon and the Maranaos came from two siblings. The Higaunon ancestor was the elder male; the Maranao the younger. Both are possessed with abilities. It is said that one day the younger one wanted to test his elder brother. He took a squash, cut it in two and buried his ring in it, then he sat in the middle of his house and told his son to go and fetch his uncle. When his brother arrived, he asked him why the squash is alive when it has been separated from its plant. The elder brother replied: because you put your ring inside.¹⁶

They do not know the names of the two siblings. The Maranaos trace their ancestry to Apo Gawahanen. When Apo Gawahanen was young she was tasked to watch the cotton that was put under the sun to dry. Then a big whirlwind came and caused the cotton to wrap around the child; both cotton and child were carried all the way to Lanao. She was found there, alive and unhurt because she was cushioned by the cotton, and taken care of. When

she grew up, Apo Baboybagonsalibo, a Maranao sultan, married her. This was how Higaunon and Maranao blood converged.¹⁷

Part 3 Ancestral Domain Claim

There are a number of ways to determine the authenticity of the ancestral domain claim of the indigenous peoples. The most direct way is to request them to define their ancestral territory and name the places therein, like mountains, rivers, sacred places, burial sites and so on. Usually they have stories behind every name.

As agreed upon by the datus of Misamis, according to our respondents, Abakahan river was the boundary between Bukidnon and Misamis, the same boundary is used by the government today. The Bukidnon part was given to Datu Makahiwa as *purong*, a territorial grant by a bride's parents as part of the marriage arrangement. Their ancestor, Apo Mandinhay, was from Amusig. He got married in Mat-i, part of the mountains of Claveria, Misamis Oriental. As *purong* he was given Abakahan, or more specifically, the river of Silo-o. The practice was called *pasug-uta*, to give away land. From thereon, the territory passed on to Apo Mangkubuhan, then to Apo Pinalig-on, then to Apo Kasagayan, then to Amay Dungdunga-an, then to Apo Mansagsagan, popularly known also as Gibang, father of Datu Bahala.¹⁸ Datu Bahala was one of our respondents.

It is said that before Cagayan de Oro was made a barrio, their ancestors have been living here: Apo Pabulusen, Apo Bukbuken, Apo Kumbalan and Apo Malig-on. It was Apo Pabulusen, Apo Bukbuken and Apo Tawaga who swam to Malacañang and were given the written laws. They were told to memorize the laws because they could not read. They were also given extensive instructions on how to implement these laws. Back in Cagayan de Oro Apo Pabulusen immediately instructed his people that a datu should be assigned to a talugan and the laws he brought with him should be implemented there. The datu based in Balatukan was assigned Balatukan; the one in Kabulig was given Kabulig (the present Claveria); the one in Amusig was given Tagoloan; then in Agusan, and in Gingoog, until there were *walu ha talugan*. The respondents mentioned a vague reference to the laws emanating from Malacañang which brought about this event.¹⁹

A researcher, William E. Biernatzki, who did field work in Kalabugao in April and October 1969 heard a similar story from his respondents:

Kumbalan and Tawaga, two brothers, were Bukidnon datus ruling what is now Cagayan de Oro City. At that time, the place was but a small Bukidnon settlement called "Bagyangen" or "Bagyan-en," because the houses were poorly roofed with the leaves of bagyan trees – the only thatching material available there at the time. The settlement was previously called "Dumageki," or "Dumageiti," a name whose derivation was not given.

Kumbalan, who apparently was the higher of the two, had a dream in which he saw many gifts awaiting him and his brother in Manila, including a hat (*kalu*), shirt (*sikita*), baton or cane (*bastun*), and "law" (*kampuna*). The nature of the "law" was not specified by my informants. When Kumbalan awoke, he greatly desired to

go to Manila and get these gifts and symbols of authority, but he became depressed when he realized he had no boat. When he told the dream to Tawaga, the latter offered to go to Manila to get the gifts, using his shield as a boat.

After a dangerous journey, Tawaga arrived in Manila and was given the gifts, which included guns and gold, as well as the symbols of authority. When he returned, Tawaga set up the first organized government in Cagayan de Oro — presumably under Spanish rule. Having defeated and made peace with the Maranaos, who had attacked his fort (*lian*) situated on Mount Kulagu near Cagayan River, Tawaga is said to have turned his attention to organizing the government among the scattered Bukidnon bands inland. Other sources imply that he moved inland to escape religious and cultural absorption by the Bisayan, to two of whom, named Kamsadyu Diugnu and Hiplayun, Tawaga peacefully gave the hat, baton, and so on. This abdication of civil authority is said to be revocable, if the Bukidnon ever get tired of the forest and wish to settle in town or along the coast.

At that time, Pabulusen was high datu of all the inland Bukidnon on the central plain of Bukidnon province (apparently including Mount Kiranglad) in the upper Pulangi River valley, and in the western tributaries of the lower and middle Agusan River; so, Tawaga contacted him and gave him authority to control the people and keep the peace in that area. Pabulusen, who is said to have been given this authority "because he was good," confirmed the authority of subordinate datos in specific places. Among these, Datu Lumetang had charge of the entire upper Pulangi River valley, from the river's sources in the Kalabugao area down to the waterfall (*salagapun*) of the Pulangi, in the vicinity of what is now the municipality of Valencia, Bukidnon. Under Lumetang were three *alimaung* ("guards" or "generals") — Balahen (or "Manbalahen"), Manuali, and Ubatling. These guards assisted him in governing his region, the first two "in Limayam" — Agusan Province, now regarded as Manobo territory — and the third at the falls of the Pulangi.²⁰

The nearest recorded historical reference to this Manila trip was in 1754, elucidated in a letter of Father Jose Maria Clotel to the Father Rector of Ateneo Municipal in Manila from his mission in Talisayan, Misamis, dated May 11 1889. The letter contains the most extensive account on the Bukidnon published during the Spanish regime. The original of this letter is located in *Cartas de los PP. De la Compañia de Jesus de la Mision de Filipinas*, Cuaderno IX (Manila: Imprenta y Litografia de M. Perez, Hijo, 1891), pp. 170-84. A translation is published in Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898* (Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark, Co., 1906) Vol. 43, pp. 288-309. In a footnote to the word *Masalicampo*, Father Clotel said:

Masalicampo or *Maestre de Campo*, is a title which the higher authorities used formerly to confer on Bukidnon who had distinguished themselves by some service for Spain or its government; for example, by fighting against the Moros for the Spanish flag. In an appendix to this letter one can read how such a title was conferred at the request of Father Ducos, S.J.²¹

Father Frank Lynch, S.J. who did a translation of the letter and saw the appendix referred

to by Father Clotet noted:

In an appendix referred to by Clotet are three documents which witness to the fact that Sr. D. Joseph Romo, Governor of the Province of Cebu, had (under date of September 12, 1754) granted to Lingaon Binoni, Bukidnon dato, the title of *Maestre de Campo* of the pagan Bukidnon. The symbolic staff of office (an ebony, silver-topped cane) was also conferred. This was given in recognition of his assistance to Father Ducos, who led a force of Bukidnon in battle against the Moros who had been raiding villages in the vicinity of Dapitan, Iligan, Initao, Iponan, and Balan.²²

Do they recall certain datos who were in charge of some territories of the *wala in talugan*? They are Datu Mangumhayan for Malitbog; Datu Mambuhoy for Tagoloan-Pulangi; Datu Manugtal for Balatukan. But today there is no specific datu who is assigned to a *talugan*.²³

Realistic Ancestral Domain Claim

In recognition of present day realities in which it is no longer possible, nor feasible, to lay claim to the entirety of their traditional territory, the Lumad claimants usually settle for a more realistic claim. During the paralegal seminar in Balingasag, February 15-18, 1998, the datos of Kabulig and the datos of Tagoloan decided that it is too complicated to go back to the original past, which would also involve Claveria. What they agreed on was that within the *talugan* of Tagoloan, their claim shall be by district, those from Malitbog will file their claim, and those from Manno Fortich, too.²⁴

Do these districts have any boundaries? Yes, they said. Earlier, before the days of the CADC, the DENR conducted a survey and planted concrete boundary markers. "My brother in law," said Datu Mantimongmong, "was part of the survey team. They placed a marker at the headwaters of Malitbog, another marker at Kimangkil, then another at the headwaters of Odiongan and Gingoog, in the place called Kalanawan, then straight on to Mamatu, then to Maraan. From here the line goes on to Agusan. They prepared a map. The land area of the entire territory was estimated to be 30,000 hectares, divided into two claims, Sabangan and Impahanong. Silo-o river is the boundary between the two. The claimant for the latter are the members of the Impahanong Amusig Higaunon Tribal Community."²⁵

The districts of Malitbog includes the following political units:²⁶

- 1) Barangay Mindagat
- 2) Barangay Kiabo
- 3) Barangay Makopa
- 4) Barangay Sau Lous which has the following sitios:
 - a) Salindawan
 - b) Larapan
 - c) Libertad
 - d) Sabangaan
 - e) Tagmaray

- f) Victory
- g) Impahanong
- h) Badiangan

Mt. Kinangkil may also be claimed: those from Agusau agreed.²⁷

Genealogy: Determining Length of Occupancy in Impahanong and Amusig

Higaunon ancestry in Amusig started with Apo Nangamihan, followed by Apo Mangkabuhan, then by Apo Pinaglig-en, then by Apo Kasagayan, then by Apo Summulang, then by Apo Unga, and then by Apo Namakwe Dungdunangaan from Amusig.

Two of our respondents, Datu Manlumunda and Datu Bahala, agree that their parents' ancestry is traceable to this line for a total of eight and nine generations, respectively. The genealogies of the other respondents range from four to eight generations. Those from Misamis Oriental as well as those from Amusig converged at Impahanong. Their occupancy since has been continuous and without interruption. Computed at the universally accepted 30 years per generation, this is a total occupancy period ranging from 120 to 270 years.²⁸ [See Genealogies in Figures 1- 8]

Reason for Moving into the Interior in the Face of Spanish Intrusion

When the Spaniards arrived, our people moved away into the interior because they did not like the strangers' organization and their religion. They also did not want their indigenous culture to be influenced. So, they moved up from Tagoloan to Claveria; others went to Maulo Fortich; others still went to Malitbog, until they reached the highest point. They moved because they wanted to preserve their culture.²⁹

Part 4

Names of Places and Sites

Names of places and sites such as mountains, rivers and other natural monuments and the stories attached to each of them are living proofs of long habitation by indigenous communities. That the names are in Binukid and the stories are associated with the ethno-history of the people identify them without doubt as Higaunon ancestral territory.

The Sacred Mountains of Kimangkil and Manambulid

Because Apo Entampil, the lone survivor of the great flood, was swept by the waters to that only dry spot of land at the peak of Mt. Kimangkil, this mountain has been held sacred among the Higaunon of the *walu ha tabugan*. To them it is the place where the spirits, the *manununda*, alight when they descend from heaven to participate in the meeting of the elements of the mountain. Can they hunt within the forest? Higaunon, yes, but for others it is dangerous. Even the *manununda* and the *tumanod* only hunt towards the lower portion called Manambulid.³⁰

These nature spirits, "we call them *kumpadi* or friends of our ancestors," they said. It is dangerous because there are monkeys there the size of fingers, known to them as *humaoy* which cannot die. If one is wounded with a bolo, whoever is hit with a squirt of blood, even just a drop, is automatically transformed into another finger-sized monkey. Whoever enters the place without the proper permission from the spirits, will be eaten including the bones and the hair. There was the story of 300 Maranaos during the Second World War who shot these animals. They all disappeared. The only signs that they had been there were the *kampilan* blades with handles and scabbards missing, and gun barrels minus their stocks. They were all devoured by these animals. Yes, they emphasized, it is really dangerous to just enter the place. But the Lumad here, they always make it a point to undertake the ritual appropriate prior to entry. It is said that Apo Nangamihan, a respected ancestor, was able to control them in the past. This is the reason why the name of Nangamihan is invoked during the ritual. Also, during the ritual, "we ask the spirits to leave us alone because we belong to the same ancestry, we are friends. Normally we use chicken for offerings. But the best is the pig. It is like going to church for prayer. The mountain is the church of our ancestors. After this we may enter the place and hunt; if we have dogs with us, it is alright."¹¹

Mountains and Rivers

Following are the names of mountains, rivers big and small and the stories attached to them.

Mountains:¹²

1. Kimangkil – named after the *bangkil* or the back of a chicken the size of which was the only dry piece of land that was left during the big flood.
2. Kapayagan – another name of Kimangkil.
3. Amusig – Not its original name; used to be called Ilimbusan. As their ancestors moved into the area, it acquired two names, Salikot and Usig, the latter evolved into Amusig. Tribal workshop called *panaliped* was done here.
4. Ki-ambaw – neighbor to Amusig, derived from "ambaw," Binukid for rat. During the flood, there was only enough dry land left for a rat to stand on.
5. Manambulid – neighbor to Ki-ambaw, its peak was totally flooded over.

Rivers:¹³

1. Itoy – For those who grow dogs, these eventually grow fat and healthy.
2. Mimpangi – abundant with pangi tree; its fruit tastes like coconut.
3. Malambago – abundant with bago tree.
4. Ulayanon – abundant with ulayan tree.
5. A-oken – from the sound made by a rooster.
6. Lalawigan – Higaonon hunters put up their temporary huts there where they could rest and dry their deer meat; about one to three days distance from their homes.
7. Kasagayan – burial place of Apo Kasagayan.
8. Man-alum – from the depth of the lagoon. Kahulugan is Binukid for waterfalls.
9. Ig-agongan – clear water, like the clear sound of an agong.
10. Kundilas – shape of the hut is like that part of a pig's organ near the liver.

11. Halugwan – where people take a bath (*magbalago*), wetting only their head, to wash away bad luck in hunting; faces a towering mountain.
12. Halugan – a cliff through which one climbs up or down with the use of a vine; or to lower something with a vine or string like a tuba from a tall coconut tree.
13. Tokugon – a river in Amusig; not clear how the name was derived. There is another river of the same name in Malitbog.
14. Simuklay – Not clear how the name was derived.
15. Tinampakan – Apo Bataay ascended to heaven from there riding on a *sermban*. The ax mark indicates that he only had time to hit the tree with his ax but never got to finish his task before he ascended to heaven. Among the Higaunon, one must be holy in order for him to ascend to heaven. It is the Magbahaya who decides who would be deserving; one never knows when he will be taken up.
16. Hanupulan – sturdy hanupul vine abounds here; used as antidote for poison.
17. Salumayagon – has plenty of salumayag tree.
18. Panukabon – has plenty of panukabon edible fruits, usually eaten by big rats.
19. Hasaan – hunters of old hone their tools here but the whetstones were taken from Kinapuntan river in Impasug-ong.
20. Lagas – sandy, plenty of gravel and rocks.
21. Pigdiwatahan – prayer area for the diwata.
22. Salawsaw – salawsaw trees grow here in abundance.
23. Sabangan – where two rivers converge.
24. Balangbangan – has plenty of Balangbangan trees.
25. Ginatesan – where people take shortcuts (*gates*) instead of following the route of the river.
26. Montipuga – small creek, has trees called lipuga.
27. Alagutsen – shallow river, easy to apply the tubli in to poison the fishes.
28. Alamayon – has plenty of alamay, a wild abaka.
29. Minganda – both mountain and river, tip of mountain is not flooded, a good place to plant ganda, a wild onion. River flowing beside it is also called minganda.
30. Pigbaugkilan – where they make their baugkil, the basket for carrying live game.
31. Mintabwan – the river where grows the plant, like buli, that is used for weaving mats.
32. Nilutu-an – When Apo Bataay was still a practicing baylan, he and his companions caught a deer one day, they were also being pursued by the Spaniards. Several times they tried to cook their deer meat but failed due to the intensity of Spanish pursuit. They walked in the direction of San Luis, made sufficient distance and were able to cook and eat their meat. The soldiers failed to find them because they already ascended into heaven. Nilutuan was where they cooked their meat.
33. Balambangan – plenty of balambangan tree. Kautawan – elementals make their appearance here, the baylans said.
34. As-as – hardwood tree named as-as.
35. Panongan or panong – temporary pond where live fish caught earlier were temporarily placed to be retrieved later.
36. Pitwak – lower stream located at a place lower than Ki-ambaw, flows into Ki-ambaw, looks like a mountain with a waistline.
37. Kalwayan – lway grass grows here in abundance.

38. Dahinogan – gust of winds passes this way.
39. Saludawag – Our ancestors were generous, *dawag* in Bimkid. Our diwata were also generous, like those that watch over the wild pigs.
40. Bunayogan – good place to pass.
41. Da-o – used to have plenty of da-o tree with its edible fruits; they have disappeared now.
42. Buyatak – prayer area for the diwata.
43. Manlagbas – water flowed over the banks to here.
44. Dalamaw – have steep banks.
45. Bangkudan – rest area for travelers from the other side.
46. Sahyong – creek that looks like a water pipe (*sandayong*).
47. Kaanulawan – name of a tree that grows there.
48. Lis-ong – shaped like mortar (*lusong*).
49. Kineban – shaped like a chest, inside of which lives the spirit that commands the transmission of good deeds, watches over your health from birth.
50. Mimbanat-i – banat-ig trees grow here.
51. Pamakason – rest area for hunters from Mat-i. After a steep climb, they have to unload when they reach the top because of the strain on their back and shoulders.
52. Digkawaswas – perpetually dark or shaded by the mountain.
53. Kahantaran – hit by sunrays; from Digkawaswas where there is no sunlight, one goes to Kahantaran to get a taste of sunlight.
54. Kinok – same as Digkawaswas, also dark or shaded.
55. Malaypalay – has plenty of palalay, the smaller variety of rattan.
56. Palangka – When Apo Palangka was disabled and could not stand, he also ascended to heaven. Apo Palangka used to lived here. It is a sacred name, should be its name, not the present Victory.
57. Malansawaga – easily gets flooded whenever it rains.
58. Mayateng – Apo Mayateng ascended to heaven from here.
59. Ki-away – place of fighting. Once there was a hunter who rested here. Then a stranger came and took the entrails of his catch (pig). They fought.
60. Pagbahan – where they make their lime. Open to the sky and had excellent sunlight. When they make fire for the lime, even the trees would burn.
61. Tubalon – Abundant with food. Tubalon literally means “our meal is there, no need to pack our food (balon), because hunters can always find something to eat.
62. Malambago – malambago trees grow in abundance here.
63. Manlawiaw – often gets burned.
64. Binitayan – Hung there is a basket for live chickens.
65. Sayaw – plenty of birds called sayaw.
66. Bagyangon – plenty of badyang plant.
67. Min-atel – plenty of white crabs called atel.
68. Talulong – so abundant with fish, people come here in big numbers.
69. Dagingan – Amplifies one's voice. Even if it is soft here, it is audible and clear on the other side.
70. Aalawon- wild pigs pursued by dogs tend to congregate here.
71. Lunaw – its banks are prone to landslide.

72. Salekted - Salekted trees grow here.
73. Ligarau - because of the steep banks one has to make a detour (*moligad*).
74. Kandasay - Wild games like deer and pigs usually make their last stand here.
75. Tamusan - There was a man named Tamusan who used to live here. He liked to climb trees to collect the honey of the kyut. He climbed one day, fell and died.
76. Penas - its banks are prone to landslides (Junaw).
77. Tangkop - There is a crevice here that serves as habitat for spirits not like us. When our spirit finds its way there and gets entrapped, we get sick and may even die if not properly assisted (*matangkop*).
78. Tikog - a plant grows here that is like tikog, the material used for weaving mats.
79. Minkakalon - a tree the fruits of which rats like very much.
80. Apog - The clay here is white like lime. There was once a couple that lived here. From their elevated hut, the wife accidentally dropped her comb. She ordered the dog to pick it up. When the dog brought up the comb, they laughed at it, then a lightning hit them. The dog supposedly understood them. That is why since then talking to a dog was taboo because it could not talk back.
81. Nasuagan - origin not clear.
82. Tabangou - Where wild pigs fall and captured (*tabangan*).
83. Ananggi - the water way is like the entrails of a chicken.

Part 5

Land Ownership, Disposition and Land Use

The vast expanse of what they know as their territory includes forests, valleys, rolling hills, huge mountains, big and small rivers, streams, springs, falls, a lake, even cliffs. Certain parts of these lands, water and rock formations had served as abode of nature spirits who exercise guardianship over specific parts of the territory. The customs governing the use of the land are closely related to their beliefs in spirits.

Territory is commonly held by the members of the community. Commonality of ownership is limited to the members of the community, who are related by blood or through ceremony. Because the clan lives within the community, all members may make use of the land held in common. The people observe certain norms in the use of the land, the basis for categorizing or dividing being the use for which the territories were devoted: *kangin* (swidden) farming area; hunting area or the forests where wild pigs, deer, birds, bees live, and sacred places for rituals, burial and worship. But there are also areas where people who wear hats and shoes and do not know how to speak their Binukid language are not allowed to enter.¹¹

Farm lands and farming

Farming had largely been undertaken for subsistence: "We plant only for our own consumption."¹² Similar to many other highland inhabitants of Mindanao, they are *kangin* cultivators. The Impahanong inhabitants had subsisted on tubers like *lutya*, *gabi*, *kamote*, *kamoteng-kahoy*, on seasonal grain crops like rice, corn and also on bananas. Food had

been supplemented by wild game and fish obtained from the rivers and streams.⁵⁶ Planting had been done according to the signs of the stars consulted by the farmers for the timeliness of planting.⁵⁷ Family members are taught how to commune with the spirits who watch over their crops.

One tends a farm within the year and would move on to another plot to allow the previous site to lay fallow for between seven to fifteen years to recover its fertility. This new plot must have already regenerated, if previously farmed, or it may be newly opened.⁵⁸

One may also cultivate an old farm plot and open a new plot concurrently. Should a member of the community, especially one in dire need, wish to make use of the land currently cultivated by another, the former has to seek permission from the latter. The latter, recognizing the dire need of the farmer, may also give to the former whatever crops could still be availed of on such land, especially when the giver had crops already grown in another newly opened land enough to provide for his own family. The family normally built their huts near their *kaingin* so that they can easily watch over their crops.⁵⁹

People had planted abaca for its fibers as material in the local weaving of clothes, bags, hammocks. Since clothing was sparse — one set for work, another set for changing into when setting out to buy salt, soap, or matches — the need for the material was not high, thus, to date, except for families that had learned the commercial value of abaca, only a few had planted a number of abaca plants more than necessary for local use.⁶⁰

In the forests, valleys or lower areas, there had been farms into which tenders prohibited the entry of non-farmers and outsiders and those with questionable character, otherwise, the efficacy of prayers will be lost and this makes the area vulnerable to pests and the crops will bear no fruit. Markers had indicated such prohibition. The road to the area would be blocked with a log, then a knot contraption which is set up to point to the direction away from the farm. This indicated that the unwelcome visitor must go the opposite way,⁶¹ unless it was extremely necessary and the visitor has secured prior permission from the concerned. Misfortune befalls the area violated by entry of nonbelievers. To cleanse the area of such misfortune requires ceremonial action of the *baylan* or the farm tender. A penalty may be exacted for those who disrespect the tradition. The owner-tender of the farm, in fact, has the right to protect the area by striking the violator of the traditional prohibition.

Other markers indicated places where a ritual had just been performed or in effect which were taboo to non-believers and newcomers: (1) where appropriate rituals were recently made, entry is prohibited to those who are not participants in the ritual; (2) areas newly cleared; (3) areas newly planted to which entry is prohibited also of women observing their monthly menstrual cycle;⁶² [to prevent rotting of the crops]⁶³ (4) areas where the crop are bearing fruit; (5) areas where a harvest is going on or from which crops had just been harvested, while the ritual is in effect for days or weeks,⁶⁴ say, during a *kaligã* when night of chanting to the spirits take place in *kaamulan*, the celebration of a bountiful harvest. Only family members and others participating in the farming rituals may enter such areas.

Hanglos and Traditional Values of Cooperation

Hanglos is a form of communal labor exchange on the land at certain phases of farm-

ing among the Impahanong Higa-mnon. It is characterized by cooperative work done on a farm lot by a group consisting of about 14 to more than 30 people,⁴⁵ of farmers or their household members, including women and children or whoever is available. It requires a farm lot user to render the equivalent work (in terms of number of days or hours and type of work) on the farm lot of each farming member of the group until the last cooperators' farm lot had been worked on. The type of work ranges from clearing the field for planting, actual planting to weeding to harvesting. The communal labor exchange is also resorted in house-building.

The hunglos group for clearing is smaller because each family may send only one person. The group becomes bigger at the time of planting and harvesting when all members may help in the activity.⁴⁶

Several hunglos groups in a community may work on a number of fields simultaneously. The tiller or cultivator may provide food and drink for the participants in the pertinent hunglos group. But during needy times, the participants place their food in a common pool.

To serve the pragmatic purpose of speedy completion of the agricultural tasks on time with the seasons, the hunglos had eased the impact of climatic adversities or the onslaught of pests on the farms or of rotting. Providing multiple occasions for renewing social and economic ties with relatives and neighbors, hunglos had been an epitome of the values of fairness, cooperation and commitment in the management of land.

Hunting and Fishing Grounds (*Pangayanan*)

In the forests, gatherers forage for firewood, construction material, honey as well as hunt animals like pig, deer, birds and bees. Within the hunting grounds are also sacred places.⁴⁷ Hunters were quite familiar with the places roamed by their prey which they caught in traps. These are contraptions of a sharpened bamboo stake set on a trigger that goes off once stepped on, thrusting itself on the animal. Hunters go about their tasks accompanied by dogs.

Appropriate markers are made to forewarn passers-by, especially hunters who bring dogs with them; if allowed to run loose, such dogs can easily fall prey to such traps.⁴⁸

Rivers and streams had, in the past, provided a rich source of protein: *anga*, *bakarai*, *lasili*, *pa-it*, among others.⁴⁹ One could go to the river as late as 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon and after only one hour, succeed in catching, at the minimum, forty pieces of fish. A fisher who went at night could return home before bedtime with more than 200 pieces, more than enough for the family's viand.

But in recent years, with the arrival of numerous logging personnel who bulldozed truckloads of soil into the river, covering large areas near the river, dirtying the water, even spilling some of their oil into the water, these fishes had been depleted. Thus, even if one went to the river at dawn, s/he would not succeed in getting any fish; all that one could now see there are stones. Food from hunting wild game had been abundant, providing adequate supply of nutrients in the years prior to the coming of the loggers. Traps would be set up early at dawn and by about 8:00 in the morning, the hunter would successfully retrieve a deer or pig staked at the trap or *batik*.⁵⁰ With the encroachment of big-time logging, their food sources from wild game had been depleted. This posed serious problems on their

nutritional requirements.

Fruit Trees and Other Durables

Until recently, no fruit trees, nor durables had been planted. Only season crops that were easy to harvest were planted. This may be attributed to their world view that life is temporary. To be able to subsist — on crops planted in farm plots, on food hunted from the forest, on fish caught in the rivers — was enough. The primordial concern was to ascend to heaven bodily.⁵¹ The time to be invited by the spirits to ascend bodily was undeterminable — it came at the discretion of the spirits.⁵² Thus, should the time arrive and there were fruits awaiting harvest from the trees, the feeling of regret for abandoning the trees and the sense of loss would minimize the chance of the planter to accompany the spirits in ascending to heaven to join Magbahaya.⁵³ This may also be a factor in their preference for short term crops.⁵⁴

It was the *baylans* who identified which plants get the assent of the guardian spirits in heaven. Plants which spirits do not wish to see nor make use of as their abodes include fruit trees as they originate from the lowlands, thus Baylans and their followers before had believed that durables were inappropriate for the needs of the people. Not even bamboo was planted.⁵⁵

Thus, it had been held that planting fruit trees would only insult the spirits because these had not been originally grown by their ancestors. Also, the smell of these plants was offensive to the spirits. Even the color of some plants [like the purplish stems of the *asorods* banana] is disliked.⁵⁶ Planting those which were insulting to the spirits incurred the curse of the spirits and prompted the early occurrence of death of the planter as the durables outlived the human beings.⁵⁷ The place inhabited by the people would be despised by the spirits because the people had not stood for their beliefs, had ceased to follow their ancestors' ways.

Selling produce of the soil or food derived from the product of the soil was not encouraged by the people;⁵⁸ such had been taboo to the ancestors who did not want to sell or make money off the land. And because planting fruit trees seemed to imply the notion of planting for sale, this further dissuaded the people from planting fruit trees. Not even coconut had been planted. This was due probably to ignorance about the technology that would make food out of it or to the unfitness of the soil type, preventing the growth of coconut. As to planting coconut for sale, the road distance from the farms discouraged the thought.⁵⁹

Recently, certain plants had been introduced, what with the seeming erosion of the customary authority that only the local old folk could determine what to do with the land, the thinning out of the force of the tradition that compelled the planting only of food crops; nothing else, and the prevailing leniency on the taboo on durables. The practice became acceptable especially with the encouragement of government to plant certain trees. Thus, the commercial planting of coffee is seen in certain portions of the land.⁶⁰ However, rituals still have to be performed before coffee planting or selling, rituals that seek permission of the spirits for the planting for commercial purposes.

Also, soon, some inhabitants had become aware of the palatability of fruit from trees grown out of the seeds of fruit that were brought up their territory by the loggers who had

come to cut trees for business. They had since learned how to plant a few fruit trees — mango, jackfruit, guava — for family consumption.

Sacred Sites

Land is God's gift.⁶¹ From it, the inhabitants derive their sustenance. The Higa-moon believe that spirits control the many facets of their lives. They believe that these spirits inhabit their territory and watch over the trees, stones, various land and water formations, the very sources of the people's life. The people, thus, accord these natural formations a high degree of respect, reverence, and atonement for any offense committed against them and through rituals [*panuhay*], relate to them for almost every activity they undertake.

The people recognize certain sites as sacred. Such sites may be places of assembly of the gods, as is Mt. Kimangkai, the area where spirits, *manumunda* or *tamanod*, would land from heaven to attend the meeting of the guardian spirits of the mountain. It is the point from which a selected few among the faithful would ascend, joining the spirits in heaven. These spirits would move gradually down from the top to attend the rituals performed at the lower levels of the mountain. This area is also a place for hunting. Entry of community members to this sacred site is preceded by the performance of a ritual to entreat the spirits not to harm the invoker. The ritual involves the sacrifice of animals — pig or chicken. To earn the favor of the spirits so as to be allowed entry unharmed, the ritualist invokes the kindred ties that these spirits have held with their ancestors who, long ago, had established relations with these spirits.⁶² The ritualist, as such, acts as facilitator or mediator between the spirits and the community members.

Entry to this sacred site is prohibited for outsiders. They only had access to the lower part of the mountain near Manambulid. Manambulid itself was also a sacred site which was guarded by spirits who, like the human guards, the *alimo-ong*, would exterminate invaders and those unfit to enter the area, like those who wear shoes, who speak Bisaya.⁶³ These spirit guardians [*kuona-ay*] of the sacred site took the form of finger-sized animals which were ferocious, but immortal, and invulnerable to bladed and other weapons. Forceful entry would anger these animals. Legend has it that the spurts of blood from wounds inflicted by resisting invaders on these animals would transform them to monkey-like creatures, multiplying in progression. They would consume the invaders, including their weapons and their scabbards, except for the blades.

The sacred sites may also be areas previously settled by a baylan who since, had ascended to heaven bodily, or areas where baylans may perform curative rituals. One such place is a site located farther down below Manambulid. This site is called Gimatesan, from where Apo Masagala [also called Bata-ay] ascended to heaven. This ancestor had a hut on this hill, which had since petrified, now called Bakusan. Worshippers there entreat the spirits to cure the illness of children in the *panangdan* ceremony. Stories are told and retold about how families had been afflicted with multiple child deaths and how after *pagpanangdan* are blessed with healthy children. Baylan Datu Manlumunda cites the case of Datu Bahala whose family the baylan had prayed for in this hill after it had suffered several deaths of children and which, since then, bore well children.

Land Disposition

As described in the section on farm lands and farming, land would be assigned to a member of the family to cultivate. This may be land already previously cultivated by the father or land opened earlier by the father-in-law. The rights to use is awarded to the member of the family.

Some-farm land may be awarded to a male outsider who marries into the community. The award takes the form of an initial gift, a *purong* (turban), which is a small piece of land that becomes part of the provisions given by the bride's father to the newly married couple in the practice called *purong uta*. [See Part on marital customs.] The plot assigned may be an area still uncleared in the forest or a plot that has lain fallow for some time. A bigger plot may be awarded much later, called *sininá*. The *purong*, as well as, the *sininá*, symbolize the acceptance of the groom who is an outsider, to the woman's community.⁴⁴

The award of rights to use land so disposed brings with it the authority to exercise power over the land, as well as, the compulsion to practice therein the customs and traditions of the wife's clan⁴⁵ and the recognition and honor that come with such power.⁴⁶

Part 6

Land And Culture

Belief in Nature Spirits

The spirits of nature, *abiyán*, are omnipresent. This is the belief of the Higaonons of Inapahanang. They believe that each child is born with a guardian spirit that protects the child's welfare and safeguards the child against harm to person and territory. There are spirits who perform miraculous cures. There are those who protect the soil and its crops, promoting their healthy growth and ensuring a bountiful harvest. There are malevolent spirits who play havoc on the people, their crops, their property and those who cause illness. There are spirits who are also aggressive and give the people courage to face intruders or threaten their life, limb and property. And then, there are those who accompany human beings to join the Magbabaya.

They believe in the impermanence of the world — that the world is not theirs. Their central concern, thus, is to seek eternal life upon ascension with spirits to heaven, to Magbabaya, the Creator. In prescribed rituals and ceremonies, they pray to these spirits to continue giving them grace, to continue providing for food from plants and animals.⁴⁷ entreat them for protection against harm and implore them for cure in times of illness, seek their permission for almost everything they do, all aspects of their lives actually, from clearing fields, harvesting, to entering marriage, to revealing information to academicians doing field research. These ceremonies are called *panganipo* which are compulsory in nature, omission of which incurs the ire of the spirits who may place a curse on the offender.

All their life, they have sought to preserve their faith, rejecting conversion to Christian religions, shunning Christian and Bisayan practices, wishing their culture to remain untainted by untired traditions and unfamiliar practices. With the entry of strange religions

and formal government, they retreated inland farther and farther away from their original settlements near the present Cagayan de Oro City. Even as they nestled in the ridges of the hinterlands of Malubog, the proselytizers of Christian religions had followed these indigenous people — labeling the Higa-anon practices as *colorman* or fake, attacking the core of their faith — that of attaining everlasting life without death through ascension with spirits to join Magbabaya, the Creator.⁶¹ Recent threats to their territory and culture had been the activities of a logging concession and a forest protection scheme of government.

Most customs and practices then in the social and economic life of the Higa-anon have basis, thus, in their belief in the impermanence of the world, the need to harmonize with the spirits and the concern for ascension bodily to join Magbabaya.

Performance of Ceremonies - *Pangampo*

The people perform rituals, or, *pangampo*, officiated by the *baylan*, to relate with spirits. These rituals are interlaced with activities related to their means of livelihood and to most other aspects of their life. Many of these rituals are performed at certain phases in the farming cycle. Some of these rituals are cursorily described below.

1. Clearing in parts of the forest. The ritual performed before clearing part of the forest for farming is for the purpose of offering or *siagampo* to the spirits of the soil, trees, the stones, the cliffs (*tagibugta*, or owner of the soil, *tagakayo*, *tagatulang*, or owner of the trees, *tagabagpa* or owner of the grasses) and spirits of the clouds. Offerings consist of chicken, coins, beads. When affordable, a pig is offered. The *siagampo* is made to seek the protection and avoid the curse of the spirits residing therein, as well as, to safeguard against harm to the health and growth of person and crops.
2. Burning [*pagsawog*]. The ritual, involving only the offering of beetle nut, is performed, still, to seek the protection of the spirits prior to burning the cut grass or saplings.
3. Broadcasting the seeds [*paggagas*]. A ritual is performed prior to planting, which involves the offering of a chicken and bloodletting on the soil [*paggadagò*, *pagdugà sa baki*] before broadcasting the seeds.
4. Sprouting. As soon as the rice or corn had sprouted, the ritual called *layag-layag* is performed to ensure good growth and elicit the protection of the spirit *Igbabawòk*, strengthening, thus, the efficacy of the preceding ritual.
5. Harvest and "tasting" the crops [*paghutàsa*]. The period of festivity marking a good harvest is called *kaamulan*. Thanksgiving in honor of the spirits of the farm land takes the form of sacrifice of chickens and, when affordable, pig. The act of offering must be done otherwise the spirits who wish to be honored [*nagpa-abina*] may enter the bodies of the farmers and cause them illness. Aside from the offering, a ritual that comes with "tasting" must be performed.⁶²

The ritual for "tasting" the harvested produce, called *lag'en*, involves singing, chanting and praying. Another simpler form involves only a ceremony called *mandalawit*, which excludes chanting.

A feast is held, after which chanting commences which goes on through two sleepless nights. The two-night chant is called *kaligâ*, during which the *baylans* are officiants. The spirit who is honored seems to have come from another place but is part of the host of spirits, *palatambo*, who watch over the farms and ensure bountiful harvest so much so that the grain harvested is long-lasting, no matter how little the harvest. The Higa-unon call their *palatambo* by the name of *Igbabasók*. The two-night chanting describes the travel of the *palatambo* who wishes to be honored [*nagpa-abiyan*] to the place of the celebration. This spirit is fetched from afar, in its abode called *Tampuyong a Dapitan na Bungtod a Kininlawan*, and brought to the place of the Higa-unons by watercraft that cruises through rivers and streams, stopping at each one to invite the spirit there to join the trip to the place holding the *kaamulan* celebration. With the spirits so invited, the craft then passes by the mountains to invite the spirits there, too. Upon arrival at the celebrators' place, the honored *palatambo* perches in the *daguing* which consists of two pieces of wood which make a sound as if that of drums when beaten, which are set up in the farm in an area designated for praying. The *daguing* symbolizes the people's respect for the *palatambo*. The *palatambo* so honored stays in the *daguing* all throughout the ceremony, witnesses the acts of offering made of chickens and pigs. At the end of the two-night *kaligâ*, the *palatambo* is conducted with chants to the starting point of its return journey.⁷⁰

Characteristics of the *Abiyan*

These supernatural beings are believed to assume certain qualities of goodness and aggressiveness which transfer to the human beings. A person is born with *abiyan*, spirits. These spirits guard the person anywhere s/he goes and are the source of the character of the person. S/he is born not only with spirits of positive qualities but even with the spirit of aggression [*talabusaw*] which are part of life and which must be appeased as they imbue the person with the qualities of fearlessness and courage. The latter are part of life, cannot be removed, can only and must be appeased. But these qualities must be so bridled as not to cause harm or death to another person. They must be positivized to provide a source of strength of the people to struggle for the protection of the welfare of life and territory. To be fearful deters the person from striving, from exerting effort to survive, to live.

At rituals, the people implore the spirits to give the courage that allows them to relate well with other human beings, and to neutralize the boldness that impels people to kill others. Requiring blood, the *talabusaw* must be cared for, otherwise what obtains is *odidum*, that which blockades all thinking that is positive, all vision that is beneficial.⁷¹ Bloodletting of pigs and chickens, the preferred sacrificial animals, cleanses all such clogs and finalizes the process of purging the negative element from *talabusaw*.

Threats to Culture; Retreat to the Hinterland

The coming of the Spanish government and Christianity in the coastal municipalities of the province of Misamis Oriental marked the start of the retreat to the hinterland. The Spaniards showed no respect for the customary law, nor for their proofs of Lumad proprietorship over the land, much less, their places of worship. While there is no written code of laws, there has been a traditional *pina* of the territory — which determines what behaviors

are appropriate or not in terms of religion, how to use the natural resources, how to relate with others. It also defines the mores governing sexual segregation, man-woman relations, as well as identifies the obligations of the young toward elders, even spells out the manners of speech.²² This same *pina* has prohibited all that comes from the lowlands, including alien words, practices, religions.

With the arrival of the Spaniards to the area, in wanting to maintain the essence of their culture and in seeking land to cultivate, the Impahanong Iliga-unon have retreated from their lower-lying territories near Tagoloan, in Claveria and in Manolo Fortich, have gone to the depths of hinterland [*kinabangkayan*, the topmost], avoiding influence by alien religions and practices.²³ This is how they articulate this sentiment in Bisaya:

Di nana gusto nga madiktahan ang among pag-ampo, among basakan pa sa bibliya, pa-adto-on pa sa simbahan dayon panghalaran pa ug mga kuwarta. Walay kuwartabay sa anò. [Loose translation: We did not want our adoration to be dictated upon, that we be made to read from the bible, to go to church and give money offerings. We do not offer money in our traditional faith.]

The people do not wish that their faith be threatened by a strange religion. In the church, the strangers pray in their own ways, not the native people's own. Thus, the ancestors had resisted the alien ways that did not include their own customs, not wishing to come in contact with strangers who professed alien religions, practiced strange customs, spoke a strange language. Moreover, they view it this way: *Dili kita mosagal ni-anò, mga Kristiyano. Netibo man kita.*²⁴ [Loose translation: Let us not mingle with them, those Christians. We are natives.]

Nor did they wish their children to be influenced by strange teachings in school. They believe that they could contract disease if they sent their children to school to learn things not their own.²⁵ The schools established by the priests taught in the medium strange to the people — English or Tagalog or Bisaya, neglecting, thus, their own. And what they fear all the more is that what the schools are teaching are not what the people needed. Thus, the old folk prohibit the children from entering school. The *damagat* (lowlanders) could not understand why.

Furthermore, they had to look for areas — land to cultivate, forests to hunt wild game in, waters to fish from. They avoided contact with the strangers who now settled in areas which they used to occupy.

Resenting the proselytizing moves of the strangers, the old folk took measures to restore the traditional faith of the would-be converts. One such step taken was to wash away with sacrificial animal blood (*gipangalas*) the baptismal oil used by the Christian church off the would-be converts, hoping to purge any effect of the oil and everything Christian that it stood for.

As to the language of the settlers, when the areas near Cagayan became Christianized and the settlers flocked therein, the ancestors retreated inland also because they did not wish their own prayers be tainted with terms used in the religion of the Christians. Otherwise, their rituals would lose their efficacy, and the ritualists would only contract diseases.²⁶

One other reason for the retreat of the ancestors was their fear of incurring the ire of the

spirits, like the *tumanod*, guardians, who had fled from the areas settled by the Christians, because they resented the presence of such animals as were not endemic to the forests, like the carabao, cow and horse, and were offended by their smell. As well, the noise of the area now occupied by settlers who were Christianized, had become disturbing, thus forcing the flight of the spirits. Even the mere mention of the term "kalabaw" or "baka" was enough to send the rain falling hard, indicating the resentment of the spirits. These incidences served to remind them of the traditional *pina* prohibiting the encroachment all things that come from the lowland.⁷⁷

Our respondents have observe that foreigners like the Jesuit priest, Fr. Cullen may have developed an appreciation for and understanding of their practices, as he strove to learn their language, their rituals. Yet, it appeared that all these were means to convert the Lumad to Christianity.

Threats to Culture from Acculturated Higa-unons

It also seems that it is our own companions who do not now recognize our traditions. They scorn us and smirk at our practices.⁷⁸

Although numerically the population in Impahanong is mostly Lumad, yet, a number of Lumad do not admit being Lumad and are ashamed to speak their language. In the town center of Malitbog itself, a number of residents are relatives of Impahanong Lumads who had been acculturated to the *Bisaya* way of life, who have become professionals and refuse to be identified with the traditional Lumad. The member-datus of the tribal council declare that they cannot compel these professionals to sympathize with the traditional Lumad who seek claims to ancestral domain. Eventually, the traditional Lumad will only have to let them be.⁷⁹

Many among the Lumad who have remained in Impahanong are not, themselves, staunch defenders of tradition, nor promoters of the culture. Having been acculturated, they have become *Bisaya* in stand, and have accepted the teachings of the Baptist, the Pentecostal religions. Achieving unity in the task of claiming ancestral domain with those who have accepted other Christian faiths has become an uphill endeavor, especially that the latter seem to be interested only in just owning the land, acquiring titles to it, to perpetuate their respective businesses.⁸⁰ The members of the tribal council can only hope that the Lumad who are not one with those working for their claims to ancestral domain or with those who are asserting their right to self-determination will awaken from their complacency. They hope that those acculturated to the Christian faiths will realize that with the implementation of IPRA, there are certain prohibitions against what they want.

It is these very people who, even prior to the implementation of the program for advocacy for claiming ancestral land, would demonstrate their scorn⁸¹: "for those among us who, desirous of retaining the integrity of our culture, have remained traditional. They would sneer at us, even echo the declaration of contempt for our ignorance. They have become oblivious of our common origin, of our belief that land is not a piece of commodity but a gift from God⁸² to the people, for the people's living and sustenance.

If it is difficult to make some co-residents (Lumads) maintain their faith in their culture, it would be more difficult to make government authorities understand Higa-unon beliefs and customs. But, as one tribal *datu* would say, "knowing that we have the right to

exercise self-determination, we really must defend our culture to preserve it."⁸¹

The intensity of the desire of some old folk to preserve their culture does not radiate to the youth. It seems that there has been some failure of the older folks to transmit their knowledge of traditions to the youth to raise their consciousness about the importance of preserving the culture.⁸² No longer is it practiced to spend nights learning their traditions all dawn. With the coming in of schools, more youth had not been asking to perform the rituals. It had to be deliberate, not spontaneous.

While tradition has it that ownership of land is communal, yet, there had been a case of sale of land by a datu in Sabangaan who, due to enticement of a handsome payment from a capitalist, has sold about ten hectares of farm land strategically located at the roadside in a sitio near Impabanong, namely Sabangaan. There, the buyer built a structure with walling of galvanized iron sheets. Such structure serves as collection point of the produce of the land — tomatoes, pepper, cabbage, squash, which are brought to his stock yard in Agora, Cagayan de Oro City, en route to Manila. This was the only known case of land sale, so far. The traditional leaders have been alert to prevent any other similar occurrence from taking place.

Threats to the Culture from Logging Concessions and Integrated Forest Management Agreement

In 1966, a logging concession was awarded to a certain Pobleto, without consultation with the people of Malitbog. The area covered by the concession was extensive, including some farm lands and hectares of virgin forests in the area of Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental, extending up to Malitbog to a mountainous area called Manggahan.⁸³

The people of Impabanong, having no concept of private ownership of land, nor individual proprietorship of land, just stood witness as the logger proceeded to fell trees. They had sensed no problem, then, foreboding of any untoward after-effect of the activity of the loggers that would hence become widespread. The people had been unconscious about making business off the land, had not known that wood from forests could sell for big money.⁸⁴

And so, they watched curiously, let alone, helplessly, as bulldozers of the logging concession trampled over their farm land. One victim was Datu Bahala whose fields of camote, coffee, corn, luya, had been damaged by the bulldozers. Along with another victim, Datu Mangansiyan, who was also the brother-in-law of Datu Mantimongmong and Datu Manlamunda, they expressed anger over this event. To silence the protestations, some tokens were given to the affected farmers, some, in the form of recruitment to the company force. The farmers acquiesced in the face of the well-armed logger.⁸⁵

The logger continued to win over the people by allowing them to ride their trucks to and from the town center, sometimes, shared their supply of dried fish and sardines with the people. "It was as if the personnel of the logging company were our kin," they said. Seeing how the presence of the logging concession redounded to their immediate benefit, the Lumad cultivated good relations with the logging company. There had been no concerted move from the people to resist the presence of the loggers, nor were their logging activities prevented.⁸⁶

The logs had been brought to a log deck in Impabanong, called Kiligbot. With the

progress of logging activities, Kiligbot acquired the name Log Deck, which, to this day, is the popular name of the place.

There had been no organization of the tribes that was strong enough to resist the incursions of the loggers, the communities of families being dispersed throughout the forested and hilly areas. Furthermore, the traditional guardians — *alima-ung* — whose role in the past was to protect the communities against invasions and raids of outsiders, were helpless against the firearms of the company security guards. In fact, the *alima-ung* had slowly ceased functioning as a force that kept order or rendered protection, until the establishment of formal government when it totally disappeared.¹⁹

Also, the people were of the belief that whatever government had decided, like in awarding the logging concession, the Lumad had no right to protest against. It had been widely propagandized that complaining or protesting against government policy or program was being anti-government; that it was not good to be always complaining because this will make you lose all your rights, your freedoms, even your life. Also, Lumads in general were much too afraid of, or much too self-effacing when facing the Dumagars — settlers.²⁰

It has only been recently explained that to complain or protest does not necessarily make them an enemy of government. It has only been lately that advocates of Lumad rights, like the Indigenous People's Apostolate, have helped to raise the consciousness that they, too, and not only those in authority, have rights to enjoy.²¹

It was only much later that the people realized the destruction to nature brought about by logging activities. In comparing their life before and after the damage wreaked by logging, they have this to say in Bisaya:

Medyo haruhay kami sa among pagpanimuyò diré. kay ang among pagpugas sa mi-aging tu-ig masakpan pa sa among abót sa sunod nga tuig; kay buháng kami sa pagkaon, abunda isab kami sa panud-an. Kay ang among pastuhan, daghan pang wá, daghan pang baboy makuhá. Ug wá pay dangan nga mo-entra sa among pagpanguna. [Loose translation: We used to live comfortably here. Our harvest would not be consumed even until the next harvest. We had vast abundance. Our hunting grounds was plentiful in deer and wild pigs. And there had been no pests that threatened our crops.]²²

They continue:

Ayhá pa kami na-apektahan nianà gumikan nga ang among mga abiyán siguro to, naabog pag-logging dinhi. Nabulabog gyud. [Loose translation: We had become much affected only after a while, due to the departure of our nature spirits who may have been driven away, disturbed by the logging activities.]²³

The people had realized the serious impact of denudation when no more game would be caught, and no bountiful harvests were forthcoming. Now, the Lumad have raised their level of awareness about land and environmental degradation. They have realized that with logging, the spirits of their ancestors had been displaced. Their abodes are no longer there: stones overturned, rivers dried up, trees felled, hills and forests denuded. These destruc-

ive practices of the loggers had made the performance of rituals extremely difficult. The spirits, offended at the destruction of their abodes, would no longer heed the entreaties or supplication of the people performing the rituals. No amount of rings, nor coins, or beads offered during rituals would make the spirits who watched over wild game answer the pleas of the ritualists. Not even honeybees. All of these animals had left since their abodes, too, were gone. The spirits had to move on deeper to the remaining forests farther away. These animals, too, have gone away, in search of new undisturbed places for home, and in search of food.⁹⁶ The rituals had lost their efficacy.

Even the fish in the rivers, they said in Cebuano Bisaya: *nangahilo siguro sila*. [Loose Translation: they may have been poisoned.] The dumping of soil into the rivers due to bulldozing destroyed the natural habitat of the fishes. Even the spirits who watched over plants would no longer serve because nature had been destroyed.⁹⁷ The residents have vowed not to allow the return of the loggers or any similar body that would bring more destruction to their environment.⁹⁸

Thus, the tribal leaders are quite wary about the integrated forest management agreement entered into by the Bukidnon Forest, Incorporated with government. A joint project with the New Zealand government, the agreement reportedly covers all of their forest resources, including even sacred sites in its area of operation. If the logging concession had left much of the forests logged over, the fear is that the BFI will consume everything vital in their ancestral domain claim — Mt. Kimangkil, up to Amosig, Manambulid.⁹⁹

Some traditional leaders sense, in fact, admit, that they are too weak to engage in battle with BFI. For one, the tribal council is divided on the matter, some members thereof believing that the presence of the BFI will bring them benefits. In fact, it is alleged that a number of them would prefer dealing with the BFI to discussing with tribal leaders. The former may compensate them in terms of wages, etc., [as illustrated in the acceptance by a member of the council, supposedly an *alima-ong*, now a CAFGU personnel, of regular salary from the BFI]. The tribal leaders, who insist on restricting the entry of BFI to the sacred sites, have no such money to distribute. Even the skills acquired by one member of the tribal council in para-legal trainings seem to be insufficient to enable the residents to respond immediately and effectively to this threat.¹⁰⁰

In the face of this threat of losing sacred sites and a large portion of ancestral domain to the IPMA of BFI, the traditional leaders can only express their hope for support of NGOs in resolving the matter. Likewise, they hope that the implementation of the IPRA and the organization of the NCIP will pave the way for the non-violent resolution of their case. Meanwhile, the tribal leaders are considering looking for more information about the BFI and its operations.¹⁰¹

Part 7 Marital Customs

Marriage practices in themselves reassert the community's desire to preserve the integrity of their culture and territory.

Marriage is largely endogamous, that is, partners marrying come from the same community, the same *tahugan*, practicing the same customs and traditions.

After the marriage ceremony, a newly married couple stays for three days in the place

of the woman before leaving for a three-day visit to the man's family. Thereafter, the couple resides with the family of the woman for an initial matrilocal (residence in the family of the woman) period of three years. During this period, they are oriented to the ways of farming. [See below.] Then, they may stay for a year with the family of the husband's (*hinanambay*), then return for a year in the woman's family before they are allowed to establish residence separate (neolocal) from the either family and to work on the farm on their own.¹⁰⁰

Several marriage practices observed by the people relate to land ownership.

Ipasabay and Pangag-ag

When a daughter gets married, the couple stay with her parents for three years. It is the customary obligation of her father to choose and initiate the opening of a clearing. The groom merely assists. This is called *ipasabay*. The same process is followed the following year. This one is called *pangag-ag*. The father-in-law teaches the son-in-law how to work the kaingin. During the harvest, they conduct a ritual called *lag-en*, then the tasting. The father-in-law constructs a table for the couple so that they may receive their own spirit with whom they may commune. In the third year, the son-in-law is now on his own. He also performs his own ritual for his farm.¹⁰¹

The integrity of the community's customs is further asserted in the marriage of women to husbands who come from outside the community. Not wanting their women to be influenced by the culture of the husband-outsiders, certain practices ensure that the outsider is enculturated to the woman's way of life.¹⁰² A few of such practices may be articulated below.

Pasug-uta

This is the practice of providing a male outsider [one who does not belong to the community or talugan] who marries into the community with some basic necessities: *sundang* [a bolo], *purong*, [a turban or shroud] and *sinina* [some clothing]. It is the woman's father who provides these basic materials to prepare the groom for living in the community of the woman and for participating in its activities. In reality, the practice involves the award of permission to work on a piece of land, the initial provision is the *purong* which is actually a small property. The *sinina*, coming later, normally represents an area bigger than the *purong*. Both also symbolize acceptance of the man into the family and community of the woman. As such, *pasug-uta* confirms his membership in the community and clan.¹⁰³

An illustration may be given of the case of the ancestor named Apo Mangkubuhan who originated from Mat-i in Claveria, Misamis Oriental. He married into Impahanong community. With the blessing of Apo Mansagsagan, the father of Datu Bahala, he was provided with a *purong* — a small lot in Abakahan. The bigger one — *insakto nga sinina* — which was an area near Silo-o river, was awarded much later.

Pasug-uta, being premised upon the compulsion for the man to observe the traditions to practice the customs, acquire the habits and follow the ways of life in the woman's clan and community,¹⁰⁴ also paves the way for the husband to exercise the bride's father's

authority and power over the land. If the purong or sinina is a community then the groom may have command over that community, may practice there the customs and traditions of the clan, may receive the recognition and honor that come with such authority and power.¹⁰³ Even then, the husband is constantly checked for his willingness to practice the wife's culture.¹⁰⁴

The man who had received purong/sinina may yet return to his homeland upon dissolution of marriage by death or separation, following certain conditions required by custom and tradition.

Polygamy

Other marital practices that underline the assertion to protect the integrity of their territory relate to polygamy, multiplicity of wives — *du-ay*. The practice is tolerated among the Higamon. Several cases occur of men marrying up to three wives concurrently or subsequently, all coming from the same territory, ensuring that the same customs and traditions related to the land are practiced by the members of the community. And in these many instances, the second or third wife is the sister of the first [technically termed sororate].¹⁰⁵

When sororate marriage occurs, the man need not come up with all the material requirements of marriage, having complied with the same in the first marriage, and having been a part of the clan of the wife for long. To maintain his pride that despite his being married, he is still in demand, the man, depending on his capacity, may offer a feast for the witnesses celebrating the ceremony.¹⁰⁶ If the man takes as his second or third bride someone who is not related to the earlier wife/wives, the man is compelled to comply with all the demands [like giving of antique] of the family of the new bride, whether she is single or widowed.¹⁰⁷

The case of Datu Mantimongmong may be cited for illustration purposes. Even before they had children, his first wife, Luzminda, had asked him to take another wife so that she would have someone to help her with the chores. When Luzminda's younger sister, Lisensiya, was widowed, Datu Mantimongmong agreed to take her as second wife, as he had also some liking for her. The women's parents did not demand as many material requirements as they did with the first wife as by then, he had long been married with Luzminda and had practically become part of the family.¹⁰⁸ It was as if he was compensating to the same family.

In terms of work assignments, the two wives and their common husband arrived at arrangements. None acted as "commander"; should one wife commit an error, this was easily corrected among the three.¹⁰⁹ In actuality, the first wife would be decisive in the arrangement.

Dissolution of Marriage

Marriage may be dissolved by death of one partner or by separation. The practices involved in these processes are again closely attached to belief in spirits.

The community ensures that life is not miserable especially for the widow, *abaybay*. The widow/widower always has the support [*tahukdo*] of either the parents of his/her partner or his/her own parents or relatives of either surviving partner. In the case of the widow

comes in the form of the assignment of someone to run errands for the widow, to sit for the baby, or to assist in other household chores. The widow may get a share in the harvest of one who has a bountiful crop. But to the inhabitants, no assistance is better than that which comes from a new husband, much more than that coming from mere relatives of the widow.¹²

The surviving partner, distraught over the death of the partner, must not live separately from own parents or parents-in-law. Care must be given to such loner. The pain that the surviving partner feels and the worries accompanying the death envelope her/his being, as such, communicate themselves to the spirits who may be disturbed over the matter and seeing how the surviving partner may be neglected, may depart, resenting the neglect. The survivor in such a state will most certainly get sick, and may eventually die, too. The spirits must be appeased through a ritual to assure them that the survivor is properly taken care of through assistance in the chores, and others, that there are those who will help in times of poverty [*kawad-on*] or meager harvest.¹³

A man/woman who loses his wife/her husband to death may remarry another. The widower is encouraged to marry within the community to ensure that the territory he had been working on stays within the clan, accessible for use by members of the clan.¹⁴ In various ways including prodding, teasing, etc., the remarriage of the widow/ widower is encouraged. The widow may choose to remarry the husband of a sister or close relative. However, there is no compulsion for the brother-in-law (*bati* or *bayaw*) to take the widow as his next wife.¹⁵

The father-in-law of the widow or widower, in his concern for the surviving partner, may decide to bring him/her into his care. He performs the ritual called *saben*, in the hope that the survivor finds another partner. When the survivor under his care is a widow and she remarries, it is his permission that the new husband seeks. It is the father-in-law of the survivor who determines the terms of the remarriage. When the ward under his care is a widower, said survivor asks the permission of the father-in-law to remarry. If the father-in-law does not perform *saben*, the surviving partner may return to her/his parents. When a widow finds another partner, the parents determine the terms of the remarriage.¹⁶

If it is the man who initiated the divorce, the *bugay* remains with the woman's family. If it was the woman who initiated the separation, the man's parents may demand for the *bugay* which had been provided by the man in fulfillment of the requirements of the woman's family for marriage to her. This may be true especially when the man's parents do not sympathize with the woman.¹⁷

Some causes for separation may be violation (*salaud*) of traditions/customs (infidelity or not taking care of the husband's food. The husband may be faulted for infidelity, neglect of family due to gambling and drinking. The parents decide whether or not the property involved in the *bugay* should or should not be returned. To formalize the separation, a ritual called *luwas hu habol* is performed.

Even the distribution of the children upon dissolution of the marriage is agreed upon. The children may be distributed thus: the females all to the woman, the males all to the man. When the one from whom the other had sought divorce is hotheaded, s/he may take all the children with him/her. As soon as the children are grown, they may exercise their option to decide with which parent to stay. They are also free to visit either, at will. When a couple separates, the estranged partners need to perform a ritual to the spirit guardian of relations and ask for forgiveness. The baylan who performs the ritual seeking forgiveness

must be different from the one performing the marriage ritual.¹⁸

An example may be cited in the case of Datu Manlumunda. He was married to two sisters. The *nyuan* [uncle] of the wives had performed the marriage ceremony. The younger wife had separated from him upon advice of the one who later adopted her. This same person had performed the ritual for separation.

Marital Dissolution and the *Pasug-uta*

If the man remarries outside Impahanong, the property in *pasug-uta* remains under his authority. The man asks the permission of his first *ugangan*, father-in-law, to remarry. If the new wife is an outsider, and the man needs to leave Impahanong for the new place, the first father-in-law advises him that he should not forget the area covered in *pasug-uta*, especially that the father-in-law may not now be able to manage said area — [*diti katunasan sa ugangan*.]¹⁹ He may even expand his authority over territory when he gets married into a family in another area and acquires another source of power with the new *pasug-uta* in the community of his new wife. Or, he may go home to his place of origin before his first marriage. All these illustrate the close conjunctures between marriage practices, territory and worship of spirits.²⁰

Part 8 Conflict Management

Tampuda ho Balagon

Tampuda ho Balagon is a traditional institution employed in managing feuds (*lido*) stemming from the killing of a member of one group by a member of another group and other forms of community conflict. It is symbolized in an unwritten pact or agreement arrived at for the protection of life, legacy and land; it embodies the virtue of mutual trust in maintaining peace and unity. Literally, "*tampud*" is to sever, cut, the source of hatred and anger, symbolized in the rattan, *balagon*.

It is a traditional mechanism to restore the goodwill and smooth relations between feuding members. It is characterized by the gathering of heads of the families with the primary objective of discussing terms in the management of conflict or the resolution of feuds by consensus of all parties involved with the facilitation of a *datu* who has earned the trust of the concerned parties. The participants arrive at points of agreement to ensure that any ongoing conflict is managed or resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned. It had been resorted to due to the outbreak of hostilities spawned by thefts of animals and crops. It is an epitome of the value of maintaining mutual trust, peace, unity and prosperity among the people of varied ethno-linguistic origins and has been undertaken for the protection of life, legacy and land.

The mechanism involves the ceremonial severance of ill will existing between the feuding parties. A thin strip (*pinikas*) of *balagon* (rattan) is laid across the hard surface of a rounded piece of wood (which, because usually freshly cut, is slippery) to be cut with a single stroke of a bolo by the *datu* facilitating the ceremony. The strip of rattan symbolizes

the source of hatred and anger. One representative (usually a datu) from each of the two feuding parties hold either end of the strip of the rattan. Simultaneously, a chick is laid on the piece of wood beside the thin strip of rattan. Its neck must be severed at the instance of cutting the rattan strip. It is offered to the aggressive spirits which are responsible for the compulsion with which feuding families engage in feuds. The blood that has been let from the chicken's neck serves to purge the curse of the aggressive spirits, the curse which makes the feuding families so angry as to kill each other. The severed strip of rattan is buried with the chicken, if the latter is small. If the chicken is big enough, it is cooked.

The rituals performed with the *balaghusay* officiating are meant to invoke the ancestral spirits and to cajole and appease the aggressive spirits, not to drive them away. The same aggressive spirits, co-existing with the good ones, are also the source of the courage of the people. If these aggressive spirits are absent, people become fearful. The rituals performed are entreaties that these aggressive spirits do not use their power for evil purposes, nor enter the body of the person and, since uninvited, that they do not interfere (*nakapangawad hu lida*) in the *lida*, that they calm themselves, having been so transformed, they can be invoked to provide for the welfare of the community. The requests (*paugamayo*) are meant for the aggressive spirits to unite with the good spirits in safeguarding that the persons engaged in conflict do not commit wrong against fellow human beings.²¹

Sometimes, to mark the occasion of restoration of goodwill, a symbol is laid — a stone or a tree seedling. Also, after the ceremonial severing of conflict-riven relations, a feast, *dumalandong*, is held to pacify the hurt feelings and restore harmony and good will — *maayong kabubut-on*.²² Dumalandong addresses itself to the spirits of the datu, abiyán, and *talabusaw*, to ensure the resolution of the conflict. The *balaghusay* will call upon the spirits of the datos of old to help heal the conflict (*pagtampud sa uway*). He will also appeal to the *talabusaw* not to possess people.

When the conflict does not involve killing, there is no need for a mediator. The ritual is called *alumuhay* or *pagimgimukuda*, or *pag-uli* — restoration.

In a neighboring area, Tigkalaan near Talakag, a durian tree is said to have been planted and grown, marking the agreement to cease all conflicts among parties that had entered the Tampuda long ago. It also marks the boundary between the parties, the Talaandig and the Maranao.

Conflicts within Impahanong, so far, had not reached a level that would require the holding of a *tampuda*. In one instance, though, a conflict had stemmed from theft by those *balahibo-on ug kamot* (with itchy hands) of some property or food. Such infraction of tradition becomes the cause of the occurrence of pests. When the offender does not recognize the wrongdoing, the result is death to the wrongdoer, by spiritual causes.

Some other sources of conflict, external in nature, include kidnapping and molestation of women by outsiders. Not much can be recalled by the informants regarding the treatment of these conflicts.

Should there be any inter-datu conflict, the datu of a third territory acted as mediator in resolving the conflict, that is, if the protagonists could not talk it out among themselves. The mediator in this case was one who was a common choice of the protagonists.

If the conflicting datos cannot agree to resolve the conflict, they engage in open confrontation, sometimes resulting to killing.

Internal conflicts had been easily resolvable by the community especially those emanating from grapevine and intrigues (*tsismis, limbakay*) which involve badmouthing or speaking ill of others.

So far, no killing of a co-resident has occurred due to unresolved conflict.

¹Part VIII, Sec. 52, R.A. 8371.

²The Indigenous Peoples Apostolate has as of December 28, 1998 assumed a new identity and a new legal status. It has registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission as Center for Indigenous Peoples Development Foundation (CIP DEV) Northern Mindanao, Inc.

³Tape 3, Group interview at Log Deck, May 17, 1998. "Tape _" for succeeding references to interviews.

⁴Tape 1, May 16, 1998 & Tape 6, May 17, 1998.

⁵Tape 1.

⁶Tape 2, May 17, 1998.

⁷Tape 2.

⁸Tape 2.

⁹Tape 2.

¹⁰Tape 2.

¹¹Tape 2.

¹²Tape 2.

¹³*Bangkil* in Binukid refers also to the basket that is made to carry a live chicken.

¹⁴Tape 2.

¹⁵Tape 2.

¹⁶Tape 2.

¹⁷Tape 2.

¹⁸Tape 2.

¹⁹Tape 2.

²⁰Tape 1.

²¹Tape 2.

²²William E. Biernatzki, "Bukidnon Datuship in the Upper Pulangi River Valley" in *Bukidnon Politics and Religion* IPC Papers No. 11, Edited by Alfonso de Guzman II and Esther M. Pacheco (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila, 1973), pp. 21-22.

²³Frank Lynch, "The Bukidnon of North-Central Mindanao in 1889," *Philippine Studies*, Volume 15, No. 3 (July) 1967, pp. 464-482. This part is on p. 473

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Tape 2.

²⁶Tape 1.

²⁷Tape 1.

²⁸Tape 2.

²⁹Tape 2.

³⁰Tape 2.

³¹Tape 2.

- ³⁰Tape 2.
³¹Tape 2.
³²Tape 3.
³³Tape 3.
³⁴Tape 4.
³⁵Tape 5a.
³⁶Tape 4.
³⁷Tape 5b.
³⁸Tape 5a.
³⁹Tape 5a.
⁴⁰Tape 5b.
⁴¹Tape 5a.
⁴²Tape 4.
⁴³Tape 5a.
⁴⁴Tape 4.
⁴⁵Tape 7.
⁴⁶Tape 7.
⁴⁷Tape 4.
⁴⁸Tape 4.
⁴⁹Tape 4.
⁵⁰Tape 4.
⁵¹Tape 5a.
⁵²Tape 5b.
⁵³Tape 5a.
⁵⁴Tape 5b.
⁵⁵Tape 5b.
⁵⁶Tape 5b.
⁵⁷Tape 5a.
⁵⁸Tape 5a.
⁵⁹Tape 4.
⁶⁰Tape 5b.
⁶¹Tape 5a.
⁶² Tape 2.
⁶³ Tape 5a.
⁶⁴ Tape 1.
⁶⁵ Tape 7.
⁶⁶ Tape 1.
⁶⁷ Tape 5a.
⁶⁸ Tape 3.
⁶⁹ Tape 5b.
⁷⁰ Tape 5b.
⁷¹ Tape 7.
⁷² Tape 5b.
⁷³ Tape 2.
⁷⁴ Tape 5b.

¹⁷ Tape 5b.

¹⁸ Tape 5b.

¹⁹ Tape 5b.

²⁰ Tape 4.

²¹ Tape 6.

²² Tape 5b.

²³ Tape 6.

²⁴ Tape 5a.

²⁵ Tape 5b.

²⁶ Tape 5a.

²⁷ Tape 5a.

²⁸ Tape 5a.

²⁹ Tape 5a.

³⁰ Tape 5a.

³¹ Tape 5a. The traditional role of the *alima-ong* included protecting the community from theft, molesters, wrongdoings of intruders, kidnapping and raids of rival tribes. They conducted raids on other communities. The raids of the *alima-ong* on other places often resulted to clan feuds — *rido*. Thus, it was compulsory to stay within the *walo ka talagan*, to safeguard against backlash from *alima-ong* of other tribes. With the takeover by government of functions of keeping order, no more raiding was undertaken by the *alima-ong*, rendered inutile by the armed forces of the government, resulting to the disappearance of the former as protectors of the community. In the early '80s, at the time of salvaging of dams, the role of the *alima-ong* transformed. They acted as bodyguards of the dam. As intimated in the section on characteristics of the *abiyan*, the *alima-ong* derived their courage from the aggressive quality of the *talabusaw*.

³² Tape 5a.

³³ Tape 5a.

³⁴ Tape 4.

³⁵ Tape 4.

³⁶ Tape 4.

³⁷ Tape 4.

³⁸ Tape 6.

³⁹ Tape 6.

⁴⁰ Tape 6.

⁴¹ Tape 6.

⁴² Tape 7.

⁴³ Tape 7.

⁴⁴ Tape 7.

⁴⁵ Tape 1 & Tape 7.

⁴⁶ Tape 7.

⁴⁷ Tape 1.

⁴⁸ Tape 7.

⁴⁹ Tape 7.

⁵⁰ Tape 7.

⁵¹ Tape 7.

- 100 Tape 7.
- 101 Tape 7.
- 102 Tape 7.
- 103 Tape 7.
- 104 Tape 1.
- 105 Tape 7.
- 106 Tape 7.
- 107 Tape 7.
- 108 Tape 7.
- 109 Tape 1.
- 110 Tape 7.
- 111 Tape 7.
- 112 Tape 7.