

The Ancestral Domain Claim of the Higaunon in Cauyanan, Opol, Misamis Oriental


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Abstract

In the tradition of the Higaunons of Cauyanan, their ancestors came from Lanao and Bukidnon. They were told that Kamayungan Malarugao, Bukidnon and Apo Limbubungan, her husband, was a Muslim. Because of differences in faith, their descendants were separated. The followers of Islam, the Maranaos, settled to Lanao while the Higaunons stayed in Bukidnon.

The early Higaunon migrants from Bukidnon went to Dulangan, the old name of Cauyanan, in search for gold. The word Dulangan is from the Higaunon word "dulang" which means gold. Later political developments led to the split of Dulangan into Tumpagon and Cauyanan. The latter derived its name from the word "uyon" which is a Visayan term for "agree." The Council of Datus in this place agreed (gikauyanan) to transfer their settlement to the present site, now called Cauyanan. Previously, the Higaunons in Cauyanan were living in Malungon, an adjacent place.

The genealogy of key informants reveal that the Higaunons have lived here for at least six generations, or the equivalent of 240 years, more than enough as a basis for pursuing their ancestral domain claim. Seven ancestors are often mentioned: Apo Sanditan and Inay Pagote, Apo Monugsal and Inay Ugsal; Apo Gilong and Inay Sugoy-ot; Apo Mansalid and Inay Ansalid; Apo Amay Paronata and Inay Paronata; Apo Man-ibog and Inay Ibog, and Apo Manmahunyag and Inay Mahunyag.

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Introduction

Background of the Study. Cultural communities generally portray basic features that distinguish them from the rest of the national population. Despite their diverse cultures and intrusion of modernity, they show special relationship with their ancestral lands and conservation of their language, traditional social political and economic institutions, and religious practices to some extent.

The history of indigenous peoples (IP) in a cultural pluralistic area like Mindanao has been characterized with unending struggles to advance their interests and concerns. Land occupies the centrality of the idea of struggle- the struggle of IPs "to assert their identities, their boundaries, and their self-respect, their space..." (UGAT Proceedings, 1996). Their concept of ancestral domain is wholistic deriving in large part from their distinct beliefs on land and the environment. The passage of RA 8371 otherwise known as "The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997" has raised the expectation of the IPs to see the realization of their age-old dream and aspiration concerning their ancestral domain claim.

Research Objectives and Significance. Undertaken in cooperation with the Center for the Development of Indigenous Peoples Foundation-Northern Mindanao, Inc., Cagayan de Oro City in May 1999, this study on the ancestral domain claim of the Higaunon in Cauyanon, Misamis Oriental, has the following specific objectives:

- To trace the beginnings and genealogy of the Higaunons in Cauyanon;
- To document the physical boundaries of their ancestral lands;
- To know the various dimensions and changes of their culture (economy, political structure, socio-cultural); and
- To identify specific land problems and related concerns.

The significance of the study cannot be minimized. With the irreversible onrush of modernity and the continuing acculturation process the IPs undergo in various levels, it is important to contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the Higaunon tradition. Written records dealing with the Higaunons are very scanty since the group heavily relies on their oral tradition. There is a need to capture and write their history and development as a group of people before the vital information vanishes. It has been said that the ethnic name Higaunon was used for the first time in 1967 in a general survey of the socioeconomic status of Philippine cultural minorities. Another published study was done in 1979 on the demographic-ecological situation in the highlands of the Agusan-Misamis Oriental border (Francisco and Bernardo, 1979).

More urgent is the felt need by the local group to document the cultural heritage of this group of people to provide concrete basis to the ancestral domain claim particularly of the Higaunons in Cauyanon. Likewise, the data generated from this initial study can serve as good reference for organizations such as non-government organizations (NGOs) to help address pressing problems and concerns of cultural communities. Insights of this study may also provide impetus to more intensive studies.

Setting of the Study. Barangay Cauyanon,¹ located 60 kilometers from the Poblacion, is the farthest barangay of the municipality of Opol in the province of Misamis Oriental.

It was created in 1950 when Opol became a municipality by virtue of Republic Act 524. Cauyanan has been named as such because people living in the area before were united considering themselves true brothers and sisters. It was reported that they tilled the fertile soil together for them to plant crops. Sharing of food and other goods with one another prevailed (Unpublished material, n.d.).

The barangay encompasses a total land area of 1,948 hectares that is used mainly for agriculture. Serving as boundary between Iligan City and Bukidnon Province (see Appendix A), it comprises four sitios, namely: Tawili, Legeron, Buyatac, and Kapisahan. Each sitio is constituted by one purok while the Cauyanan Poblacion is composed of two puroks. It has about 2,000 population (or 220 households) out of which 420 are registered voters as of the recent elections.

Bereft of electricity, the place is accessible by land through one or two public utility jeepneys that leave every 3:00 a.m. from Cauyanan and returns from Cagayan de Oro City as early as 2:00 p.m. and as late as 10:00 p.m. Since Cauyanan is 105 kilometers from Cagayan de Oro, the one-way fare is P80 per person. Travel time runs no less than three hours for a one-way trip. Motorcycles locally called *habal-habal* also ferry passengers for a fee of P100-150 per head. Cauyanan has an elementary school, day care center, barangay hall, basketball/volleyball courts, open space market, six sari-sari stores, and a Catholic Chapel. It has also a barangay health center that serves the community two or three times a month through a midwife who comes from Opol. The availability of the midwife on regular basis is impeded not because of the distance but due to her obligation to serve other areas. Four barangay health workers (BHWs) also serve the community.

In the heart of the poblacion, the New Tribe Mission has built a church, office, rice/corn mill, pharmacy and mini-hospital for its members (the existence of this group will be explained in detail in the succeeding pages). Like the neighboring barangay of Tumpagon, the area is noted for its gold deposits (reportedly of high grade, that is, 24 karat) such that it is common to find residents gold panning daily in the river. Soil in the area is classified as loam and its geography is characterized by plain, hilly, and mountainous terrain.

The natives are primarily farmers, dependent on staple crops such as corn, banana, rambute and cassava as sources of food. Some also engage in livestock raising of chickens, hogs, goats and other domestic animals. A few others are in cottage industry like mat weaving and basket making.

Methodology. Field work was undertaken in Cauyanan on 15-20 May 1998 by a research team composed of five members: one staff from the Center for the Development of Indigenous Peoples Foundation- Northern Mindanao, Inc., one community guide who is a Higauanon, and three researchers/sociologists from Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology. Having stayed in the house of the community guide based in Tumpagon, the team had to take a daily hike by crossing a river and passing through trails and roads to conduct interviews in Cauyanan. The main instrument employed in data gathering was in-depth interview of key informants. Focus group discussions were employed whenever several key informants were gathered in the home of a prominent *kagawad* who was also the incumbent president of the Council of Tribal Cauyanan Communities. In all cases, the informants were always provided with free snacks and meals and the researchers ate together with them.

The researchers facilitated and steered the discussion so as not to lose track of the

main focus. Although the guide questions were structured, probing with follow-up informal questions whenever appropriate was utilized to gather additional information. Informal/casual conversations with the residents augmented the data gathered. Tools like camera and tape recorders were also used to facilitate documentation. In some instances, personal observations and ocular inspections of the site were helpful in validating some of the information gathered from interviews.

Due to limited time allocated to data gathering, the researchers maximized their stay by conducting interviews during nighttime with the aid of small flashlights. One interview even lasted until late evening at the time when the researchers spent the night in Cauyanon.

It is important to note that the research findings were given back to the Higaunon informants. Two *datu* personally came to Iligan together with the staff to validate the draft report. In the process, the gathered data were not only cross-checked and verified but strengthened with additional information.

Origins and the Ancestral Domain

Beginnings and Genealogy of the Higaunons in Cauyanon

The word *Higaunon* is derived from the word *gaun* which means mountain or hinterland (*bukid*). The Higaunons (or *taga-bukid*) love to live in an environment where they can freely breath fresh air in the forests and mountains. This makes them different from the *Dumagats*, the people who are fond of living near the vicinity of the sea (*dagal*).

As a group, they usually consider *Dumagats* as Christians or the baptized ones. It is part of the Higaunon tradition to avoid a *Dumagal* neighbor by withdrawing farther to the hinterland. According to an informant, the Higaunons are sometimes referred to as *kawamot* (this means "outside") as they are different from the *Dumagats*.

As members of an ethnic community, they have names to call each other. The younger ones greet each other by using the word *gali* which means brother or *angaday* to mean sister. To the group, *ama* (father) and *inay* (mother) are the honorific greetings for the older ones. They consider it an insult if the *Dumagats/Christians* would use *gali* as a form of greeting because such gesture is a manifestation of the absence of respect of their culture. They have this notion that when other groups call them *gali*, it has a connotation of being *ignorante*.

According to a *datu* informant, Higaunon is close to the tribe of *Manobo* who dwells mainly in the mountains of Mindanao. Note that the legend of the *Manobo* has been explained by an informant in relation to fire after the great floods that occurred during Noah's time: "*nakahaom sa kalayo*" or "*nakubuan ang kalayo*" These Higaunons who migrated to various provinces of Mindanao archipelago are now found in various places such as Naawan and Mantigao of Misamis Oriental as well as Iligan City particularly in the *barangays* of Bonhonon, Tubaran, Hinaplanon, Kiwalan and Rogongon. The Higaunons are believed to compose *wala ha talugan*, eight territories, spread out in Misamis Oriental, Agusan, Lanao and Bukidnon.

The Higaunons are considered a distinct subtribe in relation with other tribal groups in

Mindanao like the Teduray, Talaandig, Mansaka and Bla-an. Each of these tribes has its set of rituals and beliefs particularly in venerating their god. To the Higaunons, *Magbabaya*, a powerful, white, and saintly being, is their god.

As regards their linguistic relatives, a data informant said that the Maranaos of Lanao del Norte, Talaandig and Manobo of Bukidnon have a very close language affinity with the Higaunons.

According to the folklore of the Higaunons in Canyonan, their ancestors came from Lanao and Bukidnon during the pre-colonial era. They were told that *Kamayungan* was a Higaunon from Malarugao, Bukidnon and *Apo Limbubungan* (her husband) was a Muslim. Because of differences in faith, their descendants were separated such that the followers of Islam (Maranaos) settled in Lanao while the Higaunon stayed in Bukidnon.

The early settlement of Higaunons in Canyonan can be traced during the Spanish period. The Higaunon migrants from Bukidnon went to *Dulangan* (an old name of the place) in search for gold in the area. The word *Dulangan* is taken from the Higaunon word "*dulang*" which means gold, thus the name of the area.

Later, political developments made way for the split of *Dulangan* into two barangays, namely: *Tumpagon* and *Canyonan*. The latter obtained its name from the word "uyon" which is a Visayan term for "agree." The Council of Datus in this place had an agreement or consensus (*gikanyonan*) to transfer their settlement at the present site (which is now called *Canyonan*). Previously, the Higaunons in Canyonan were living in *Mahagon*, an adjacent place. Hence, the place derived its name from the agreement of the Council of Datus.

With respect to the genealogy of the Higaunons in Canyonan, the data reveal that there are six generations (This is limited to the information revealed by ten key informants in Canyonan). Seven great grandparents have been identified and they are as follows: *Apo Sanduan and Inay Pagote*; *Apo Managsal and Inay Ugsal*; *Apo Gilong and Inay Sugay-ot*; *Apo Mansalid and Inay Ansalid*; *Apo Amay Paramata and Inay Paramata*; *Apo Man-ibog and Inay Ibog*, and *Apo Manmahunyag and Inay Mahunyag* (Please see attached diagrams in Appendix for this purpose.) The diagrams show the existence of polygamous unions which are usually done by men (polygynous type of marriage). However, a few women also have a plurality of husbands as partners but not at the same time (meaning remarriage occurred only after the death of one's spouse) considering that polyandrous unions are not allowed in their culture. It can be gleaned that there are some cases when names of the offspring could not be identified by the informants. Nonetheless, these were still included and represented without a label.

The Physical Boundaries of the Ancestral Domain

Information on their ancestral domain can be traced as far back as the Spanish time in their early settlement in *Dulangan*. The area was bounded by natural landmarks like mountains and rivers as follows:

- Southeast - Mt. Impadagpu and Mt. Gabunan separating the area from Rogongton, Iligan City
- Northeast - Mt. Pahina, boundary of Maimit, Iligan City

- South - Mt. Bisigan, boundary of Talakag, Bukidnon
- Northwest - Barangay Lumbia up to Cagayan River
- North - Iponan River of Misamis Oriental

Employing the barangays as boundaries, to the North is Barangay Nangcaon and Barangay Limunda to the West. Further, in the South is found Barangay Tugas of Maticao, Misamis Oriental.

The informant, Datu Tumundag, claimed that in the past they had no problem enforcing their territory with their neighboring tribal groups especially with their Higaonon brothers in Rogongan. Both groups respected the traditional markers which were laid to establish their distinct territories. No case of land dispute was experienced with neighbors.

At the family level, the Higaonon traditional idea of land rights includes the notion that a family who has been tilling a piece of land for sometime shall be entitled to that land. No one should trespass on one's property especially if the land owner has already planted permanent crops on his/her stead. In case of land disputes, the settlement was done by the council of datos who would request the offending party to discontinue tilling the land or leave the area. However, if the offending party had already planted permanent crops on that land, the complainant was required to pay the farmer to end the dispute.

It was learned from the informant that land problems usually occurred in their relations with the Christian settlers or Dumagats. Land problem emerged when a Christian entering the area bought a parcel of the natives' land and had it subsequently surveyed and titled. Later, the native landowner would find out that the Christian land buyer expanded his territory—a case of illegal encroachment of boundaries.

There are also cases when Christian settlers come to the area asking the native to till a part of the latter's land. Once accepted, the Christian offers to the native landowner some goods such as tobacco, bolo, winnowing basket, and other stuffs. Unknown to the native, all the goods he received were priced and totaled by the Christian settler until the amount would be approximately equal to the price of the land. This leaves the natives no chance to complain.

Land alienation among the natives may also take place as a result of intermarriages. For instance, if the groom cannot produce the prescribed *bugay* (bride's price) during the wedding, a piece of land can be used to substitute the amount needed and serves as a collateral for the wedding to take place. There was preference for lands planted with abaca or fruit-bearing trees (this is *mekoras* to them or the presence of improvements). However, the rights of this mortgaged land are now with the newly married couple. Redemption of this land requires the payment of the prescribed amount of the goods/items asked by the bride's parents from the groom during the wedding.

The conditions earlier mentioned have far-reaching effect on the ancestral domain claim of the Higaonons in Cauyanon. As expressed by one informant, they can only claim ancestral domain in the area they are presently occupying. However, Datu Masingilan, has expressed hope on the possibility of the reversion of the lands bought by some foreigners in favor of the natives.

Worldviews on Land and Land/Property Ownership

The data gathered show that land ownership is not private but communal. This conforms to the notion of usufruct associated with the natives' worldview on land. The ancestral land can be tilled by community members as long as they wish. The notion of tenancy does not exist. If the family concerned wanted to have one's land occupancy permanent, the same should erect land markers or plant durable/permanent crops like coconuts, hard wood, trees and the like. If a piece of land has been occupied by a certain family for several generations, grave markers as betel nut tree or stone markers serve as natural evidence of ownership. Moreover, natural boundaries like rivers or cliffs may also serve as bases for establishing claim to a piece of land.

The Council of Datus possesses the authority to determine land rights of community members. The Higaunons do not define the size of land that should be apportioned to each member. It is the individual family who decides the extent of land it desires to till and manage. However, it is a recognized practice that one refrains from entering an area already occupied by someone especially if the occupant has already planted durable crops in one's land. All these are established norms concerning land relations to avoid conflict.

The Higaunons also believe in the idea of private property ownership. Material possessions like bolos or kitchen utensils are mainly for personal or family consumption. It is, therefore, a community view that items acquired or purchased by an individual/family should be considered a property of the concerned individual/family.

However, the above principle does not apply to the ancestral land which is, to reiterate, communally owned and not a personal material acquisition of community members. It is in this context that if a Higaunon sells her/his land to a non-Higaunon buyer, the same is violating the above mentioned tradition.

Economic, Political and Sociocultural Practices

In addition to the above, this section presents the other various dimensions of the culture of Higaunons in Cauyanan. Culture in general refers to the beliefs and behavior that people acquire by growing up in a particular society where the group is exposed to a specific cultural tradition. This represents the Higaunon's enduring shared patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting transmitted over the generations.

Economic Means of Survival

It was learned from the interviews that in the early years in Cauyanan, the harvests of farmers were very abundant. The Lumads planted all sorts of crops like corn, rice, cassava, camote, banana, ube and varieties of legumes. They did not experience famine. They attributed this bounty with their effective agricultural ritual (*igbabasok*) which they observed every year.

Although gold was bountiful in their area, the Lumads were less interested in this. Gold then was not an expensive commodity warranting their attention.

However, despite food abundance, they cannot sell their crops to the markets because

of the absence of farm-to-market roads. Their only recourse was to transport their products by way of Iponan river going to Cagayan de Oro by riding on rafts made of bamboo poles. The travel was long, consuming about 12 hours, and was dangerous as there were cases when their goods submerged on water when rafts overturned.

In the late 70s, Higaonons ventured into selling logs through Iponan River but in 1982, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) implemented the log ban in the area. Gold rush took place in 1979 affecting all the vicinity of Cauyanan thereby changing the people's lives. Farmers became gold panners and business climate was active so as inflation. Gold was bought at P100 to P130 per gram and money was easy. People became consumers of food than than producers of food. Unfortunately, DENR restricted gold mining activities in the area in 1994 and confiscated some gold-processing machines. What are left right now are small-time gold panners doing sporadic mining activities in Cauyanan. This time people are going back to farming.

Just recently, Cauyanan was linked to Tumpagon and adjacent barangays through a barangay road. However, although public utility jeepneys (PUJs) are now available, the fare is also prohibitive. For instance, a sack of legumes or copra is charged P100.00 which is equivalent to the fare of a passenger. The residents are discouraged to sell valuable crops because the return will not compensate for the fare.

Marketing of their goods is not a problem. Some middlemen contacts are ready to buy their goods. For instance, the natives usually deliver their mongones and peanuts to a Chinese merchant in Lapasan, Cagayan de Oro City who was recommended to them by Paul Huells, an Australian missionary based in Cauyanan.

At present, the natives are into other sources of income like selling bananas at P40 — P80/hundred, domesticating varieties of animals, raising several kinds of crops like ube, camote, cassava and many others. However, despite all those efforts, they are still trapped in the quagmire of poverty.

Economic support of the government to Cauyanan is entirely unfelt. The Australian missionaries tried to help their adherents by disseminating varieties of fruit crops (which are recently planted) and dispersing animals like carabaos and rabbits. Almost each family affiliated to Tulioi was given a pair of rabbits which they have to pay in cash (P300) once they have sold bunnies. A pair of a month old bunny is priced at P300 while a mother rabbit can have as many as 7-8 offspring. It is already a good investment for the natives but this is not enough for their needs.

The Traditional Leadership/Political Structure

The Higaonons in Cauyanan select their traditional leaders (datu) based on hereditary and personal qualities. A datu can be either male or female who descends from a datu family (a hereditary position). Personally, he/she must possess such personnel qualities as trustworthiness, generosity, and approachability. Financial resources of the candidate are also considered in order for him/her to discharge his/her functions effectively. There are cases when the datu has to foot the payment in cash or in kind to help the offender who does not have any money or property. For instance, according to a datu, he once gave a carabao to a kin who was fined in Rogongon, Iligan. This assistance also extends even to an offending Duragat.

The appointment of a datu is decided upon by the Council of Datus. Each aspirant is given a title signifying a meaning related to his function. For instance, a title of *Bae Yawe* means a female datu who holds the key, *Datu Pinto* is a datu who settles cases.

In Cayunan, the following datu positions and titles are existing:

- *Datu Sumagayan* - serves as a chief datu and a peacekeeper. He also acts as a detective to know the real situation of impending cases.
- *Datu Koloba* - this office is equally important as the *Sumagayan* for he/she is in-charge of closing a dispute and arrangement of payment for the aggrieved party. In Cayunan, it is Bae Yawe (Lilia Tamong) who is the *Koloba*.
- *Datu Husay* - takes charge of the administration of justice
- *Datu Pinto* - receives complaints and serves as secretary to the Datu Council. If there are cases which remain unsettled in the lower level, they are brought to him as it is inherent in his position to resolve these.
- *Datu Cayunan* - the datu in-charge of Cayunan
- *Datu Intonda* - usually cases that reach his level are settled. Therefore, these particular cases under his jurisdiction do not move up anymore.
- *Datu Balagwan* - the gatekeeper who aids *Datu Pinto* in attending to community needs. Acts like a messenger, sort of police
- *Datu Lambongan* - usually settles case in his own domicile. Does not do it outside as he stays in his place permanently.
- *Datu Gonsi* - serves as a key to the settlement of disputes

There are also female Datus who have the following titles:

- *Bae Kaomulan* - in-charge of convening the datus and attending to the guests during celebrations just like a social manager.
- *Bae Dalangan* - takes care/manages *Dalangan*. Serves like a watcher.
- *Bae Panoroganan* - in-charge of *torogan* (ceremonial house). Unfortunately, there is no ceremonial house in the place yet.

Cultural Beliefs and Practices

Marital Practices. The Higaonons in Cayunan practice parentally-arranged marriages in which the parents betroth (*biya*) their children. As recalled by the informant, very young couples, as young as ten years old, are allowed to marry despite their tender age. There are cases where infants, even newly born ones are already betrothed by parents. At times, pregnant mothers are asked by a man to allow him to marry her unborn child in case she delivers a female infant. This signifies a big gap in age between the man and woman if consummated.

The betrothals of children are agreed upon by the parents who, in turn, call upon the Council of Datus, to determine the date of marriage and other necessary preparations. During the gathering, the datu documents all the items/things to be expected by the bride's family from the groom, like the *bagay* (bride's price) which is at least P500.00, the sacks of rice to be prepared, the heads of pigs to be butchered, the drinks and others. Because their

ancestors are not numerically literate, corn grains are used to determine the exact number of the items earlier mentioned. For instance, if the bride's family would like to ask P1,000.00 as "bugay," each corn grain is priced at P100.00 each. This calls for a total of ten corn grains. The same is true for the other items like ten grains for five pigs or five grains for five sacks of rice. It is known by the concerned parties that all the prescribed preparations should be intact before the wedding takes place; otherwise, the marriage ceremony cannot proceed. However, if there are deficiencies in the items prescribed by the bride's family say, the *bugay* amount is lacking, the groom's family can present some properties, including land, and "mortgage" them to the bride's parents to save them from the situation. If the property "mortgaged" is a piece of land, it becomes a property of the newly married couple.

It is also part of the agreement that the groom should provide one dozen of plates which are used by the couples during the banquet as *libi* (to start off an abundant beginning). In order for the groom to get complete independence from the control of his in-laws, he should give 12 sacks of rice to his parents-in-law. Otherwise, the latter can always demand compliance/favor from him all the time.

In case the marital agreement among parties is broken (due to a fault from either one or both of the parties), family conflict does not emerge. However, in case the parties to be married eloped or in matters of incest relations among cousins and related individuals (*sumbong*), the ritual called *pamalasan* will be done to shy away bad fortunes coming to the couples. What it takes is to butcher a pig (colored *bulaw*) and white chicken. The ceremony is going to be officiated by a highly skilled *dani* called *balang kawitan*.

After the wedding, the bride is supposed to join the family of the groom. Three days after the marriage rites, the *datu* or *baylan* is going to bathe the couple. In the afternoon of that day, the newly wed is to go back to the abode of the bride. The ritual called *atumohan*, will be done by the *baylan* or a *datu*. The preparations include seven chicken cooked without salt and spices and served uncut in seven plates. Together with the offerings, the *datu* will bless the clothes worn by the couple after their wedding (*hinuhoan*) to signify their oneness and fruitful life ahead.

Aside from the above mentioned goods and properties, the man is also required to put up a house for the bride.

The Marriage Rites. During the wedding, the bride and groom are presented to the community. The ceremony takes place at the house built by the husband for his wife. The *baylan* solemnizes the marriage by chanting prayers and invoking the presence of their *Magbabaya* to bless the new couple. After the chanting, the couple would exchange cooked rice and viand. This marital rite is termed *inamol* which is akin to the Mamama marriage practice where rice or cassava is made into a ball-like in shape and eaten together. This gesture marks their union and acceptance of one another as husband and wife. A community banquet follows the ceremony.

Other Marital Beliefs and Practices. The Higaunons believe in polygamy for as long as the husband can afford to shoulder the financial obligations inherent in it. In fact, a *datu* can have at most seven wives. However, this polygynous practice is not allowed among the women. The natives also believe that no one should marry in December because this is not a good month for the couple as it is the last month of the year and couples who marry in

less season will not last long for togetherness.

However, nowadays, there are changing patterns of marriages in Cayonari as a result of religious and political influences in their culture. For instance, with the coming in of Catholic missionaries before WW II in their area, some natives were converted to Catholicism and subjected themselves to Catholic marriage rites. This rite coexists with the traditional ones.

The legalistic Christian culture also invades the native culture. For instance, among the Higamonos, marriage does not need a paper to make it binding. For the Christians, a marriage contract serves a lot of purpose for it is a proof of legality of the marriage. Today, the local civil registrar allows baylans to officiate wedding and to have the marriage contract of the wedded parties registered and reported to their office. The Higamonos also discourage marriages of underage persons. Having acquired familiarity with the law that the couples should be of legal age if they decide to settle down, that is, 18 years old for females and 21 years old for males.

During the validation meeting, it was known that weddings typified by a combination of traditional and modern practices do take place in the area. For instance, sometime in October 1998, the adopted daughter of the American missionaries was married. There was a festive atmosphere with foreigner-visitors gracing the affair. Six pigs were butchered for the celebration and the Higamon *bagong* dance was portrayed which was accompanied by traditional musical instruments. But the ceremonies were according to the tenets of the New Tribe Mission, more Christian in orientation. The couple also procured a marriage license from the Civil Registry. One carabao was given by the missionaries to the newly-married couple as gift.

Burial Practices. If someone dies in the community, the Council of Datus would gather to determine the expenses, place, and time of burial. The dead body is going to be bathed and vigil is done for one day only. If the departed one is a baylan, his/her body is going to be wrapped in white cloth and his/her *kumbá* (worship house) and house are going to be decorated with white cloth. In the past practices, they built a hut for the dead one in the forest in which the corpse was to be laid down on a mat as if she/he were sleeping. After three days, the relatives will visit the tomb site which is deliberately elevated with soil. Upon the visit, if the soil has receded it is their belief that a nearest relative is going to die soon. The datus also set the duration of worship. For kids, prayers would last up to three days, while for adults 8-9 days. It is their belief that these prayers symbolize that the dead ones are totally orphaned, that is, they have no more parents nor relatives with them.

Three days after death, to determine the cause of the death of the departed one, the bereaved family places ash after the visit from the cemetery at the foot of the doorstep of the *lucan*, together with the offering of a chicken. The imprints that would show in the ashes are believed to be the element causing the death. It is their belief that *bag-ag* of animals, human or supernatural beings could be responsible for someone's demise as reckoned from the ash imprints.

Further, stones, betel nut tree, bamboo, wild flowers and plants and other grave markers are used to identify a tomb site. It is important to note that these markers were personally seen by the researchers during the field work.

Beliefs in Life After Death. The Higaunons believe that the souls of the dead would go to the *baya* (a place for souls). It is described as a vast plain and flower gardens with numerous people particularly children in an atmosphere of serenity and solemnity. Only good ones would go there after death. For the wicked ones, their souls would go to *dildilusan* which they believe to be a deep lake full of boiling or very hot water.

For the Higaunons, heaven is composed of seven levels. The first level is situated where the moon is found; the second is the place of stars; the third level is where other beings/creatures are found; and the fourth level is the abode of the first people on earth like *Agta*, who forego death and went there riding on a handkerchief, and *Isagadan*, the invincible, brave criminal. Moreover, the fifth level is the place of the *diwata* who is believed to be powerful and obedient to God. The sixth level is composed of black people or *Agta* while the seventh level is the dwelling place of *Magbabaya*, their god who is white/fair in skin and saintly in character.

Religious Rituals. The Higaunons gather at a specific venue for a particular purpose. As a community, they usually gather at the *torogan* (a ceremonial house), where the *baylan* (ceremonial priest) offers prayer to the *Magbabaya*. It is also here where they offer a thanksgiving ritual for a bountiful harvest called *lagit*. If a number of families join the ceremony, each family should offer three or five chickens, cooked without salt. If there is only one family celebrates it, seven chickens shall likewise be offered by this family. On top of these offerings, wine, betel nut, water, rice and chicken soup are also prepared. If the family has a *ganta* (*gantangan*) for the scooping of corn/rice grains/grits, five chickens are sacrificed of which one is going to be placed inside the *gantangan*. The blood of the chicken is to be poured into the said object.

Agricultural Rituals. The Higaunons are very close to nature. It was gathered that whenever they hold an activity vital to their existence, they would always invoke the guidance and approval of the supernatural beings. For instance, when they start their agricultural activities (be it field clearing or crop planting) they observe the ritual called *igbabasok* (agricultural ritual). They called upon the *baylan* to offer their sacrifices to *magbabaya* and *diwata* (earthly spirits in-charge of agricultural fields) so they can be permitted yearly to till and plant crops. The traditional Higaunons usually plant once a year and *igbabasok* is a common observance from March to May (summer). In case they plant twice a year, they no longer repeat the ritual.

The offerings included in this ritual are five chickens, pieces of *titad* (betel nut), cooked rice, wine and water. There are three kinds of ceremonial plants that are part of the ritual. These are camote leaves, stalks of *kilala* plant and sugar cane. These plants symbolize abundance and nourishment of plants to be planted. The blood of the sacrificed chicken is to be poured into these plants before they are ceremonially buried/planted to the agricultural field. The rice or corn grains to be sowed are also sprinkled with the blood of the chicken. These grains are to be planted soon after the burying of camote, *kilala* and sugar cane plants.

One of the five chickens offered is going to be singled out as *safangsang*. This refers to the chicken offered specially to the *diwata* and is carefully identified so it will not be swapped by another. Once offered, only the *baylan* is allowed to eat it after the ritual.

After the food has been offered by the baylan, *magbalabag* takes place. It is an act of inviting all the domesticated animals of the diwata like dogs, cats and *sigbin* (a kind of animal) to partake the food. Soon after that, *manampulot* takes place wherein all the persons around and those who volunteered in planting the crops join in the eating session.

The informants observed that only a few Higaunons are practicing *igbabasok* at present. Correlatively, they observed that harvests are becoming too meager also.

When the Higaunons hunt, it is their practice to hold *panalikot* (hunting ritual) to ask permission from the diwata who lives in the forest that they will be allowed to kill/hunt animals. It is usually done in January and participated in by hunting families. For a pair of hunters (usually male and female) two chickens are offered. Being part of the group, the hunting dog should also be present in the ritual. The food offered should be consumed right there at the ritual site (a balete tree) and no one is allowed to bring home any food.

Incidentally, the *balete* trees are no longer as abundant as before. In fact, the most prominent balete tree which was the usual site of *panalikot* found near Mt. Birasan was partly burned due to the El Niño forest fire.

Another significant ritual that takes place once the rice or corn is about to be harvested is called *lagti* or *tilao*. This is a ritual marking the first taste *tilao* of their planted crops. For the *lagti* of corn, the offerings include chicken, *binaki* (shredded young corn cooked in corn brsks), *tilad*, wine and water. For the *tilao* of rice, all the above offerings are present except *binaki* because, this time, it is *pinipig* (pounded young rice) that is prepared.

They have also a ritual called *pamahandi*. It is their tradition that someone should take charge of the financial resources and the safety of their animals like pigs, carabaos, cows or goats. In this regard, it is a belief that a baylan-in-charge of *pamahandi* should be available as a specialist.

In Centro Cauyanon, the Higaunons usually gather every December to celebrate *kaliga* or *panuo*. This is a most-awaited gathering of datos in the surrounding areas of Cauyanon. This is a venue where the datos publicly display their wisdom by chanting their history and tradition (*tanod*). The public discourses of datu are done nightly lasting for 9 consecutive days. They usually wear their traditional costume during the affair. This event is also called *dumalundong*.

The Higaunons have difficulty in reviving their *panuo* because the participating datos are already too old to continue the tradition. They seem not inclined into producing their tradition in a written form instead they heavily rely on the oral/verbal transmission of it. Yet, the datos appeared to fail in transmitting the invaluable knowledge to the younger generations.

It is part of their custom to celebrate the *kaliga/panuo* every year because of the notion that failure to do it makes the *diwata* angry and somebody would be seriously ill. However, the *Tidtol* founders (as earlier noted, this is explained in detail in the appropriate section) were able to persuade their members to discontinue this practice.

Whenever a Higaunon has a seriously ailing family member, the parents induce the patient to vow to go to their sacred mountain called Mt. Binasan. If the person becomes healed as a result of this promise, the patient is required to do a *panabalo* or *panungdan* (prayer by ascending to the sacred mountain) to offer a thanksgiving prayer. This mountain is considered sacred because it is where the baylan offers and chants prayers. Once the healed patient gets there, he has to offer a 25-centavo coin and betel nut.

The general term given to the Higaunon place of prayers is *kumba* which means house or church of the Lumad.

Relations with Outsiders

Contacts with outsiders such as the early colonizers, businesspersons, missionaries, educators, and the like influence the way of life of the Higaunons in Cauyanan in various dimensions. In general, the rich gold deposits and forest resources of the area have attracted outsiders to the place.

The Businesspersons/Capitalists

Early Mining Operations. Since the Spanish period, there had been massive mining activities in the area. A Spanish military named Enrique Perril took in a second wife who was a Higaunon. He reportedly acted as the first barangay captain of the place in Tumpagon. It can be surmised that political leadership facilitated more control of the economic activities in the area through intermarriage with the native inhabitants.

In 1939, an American Company named Santa Cecilia Mining did its business operation in Pigsag-an, Tumpagon, Cagayan de Oro City. The workers in the said firm were constituted by Black, White Americans, and Tagalogs from Luzon. Later, in 1941 another American firm set foot in Cauyanan, specifically in Sitio Kapisahan. This was known as the Rio Verde Mining Company.

With the entry of these mining capitalists, a permit to operate was secured from the national government without the knowledge of the natives. Owing to the employment opportunities offered by this firm, they were welcomed by the residents of both Tumpagon and Cauyanan. However, the mining operations did not last long due to the outbreak of World War II. Santa Cecilia Mining operated for about 12 years and Rio Verde for 10 years.

It should be mentioned here that a sort of military base (believed to be the biggest in the area then) was also established. The place became an attraction to many outsiders to engage in mining activities notwithstanding its strategic location as a heavy depository of arms/ammunitions. But in 1941 before the occupation of the Japanese, the machinery, equipment, gold, and other valuable things were slowly taken out of Dulangan. To support the claim of early Spanish occupation of the place, it was reported that there have been a number of remnants found associated with the early occupation and mining activities (for example, anemometer, platinum, airplane muffler, antique things, and others). A case of an Higaunon going to the place and carrying a map to identify possible location of antique items was cited. Some of the natives affirmed that some old items were indeed unearthed from the area.

Contacts between Higaunons and outsiders were generally work and business-related. To the former, the advantage they got from the mining capitalist was mainly economic in nature such as employment.

The Asian Park in the 90s. Arising from the presence of rich gold deposits, small-scale mining inevitably prevailed as a major economic activity among the natives even

before and after the foreign mining firms came in. The presence of gold deposits made not all natives lured to become agriculturists/ farmers as they got more from gold panning. Damagats or Christian migrants also came in droves some of whom were equipped with machines to aid them in the small-scale mining activity. The residents even experienced disturbances in the past such as when 4 helicopters raided the place and confiscated the machines used by them. Some military officials were believed to be behind this.

As a consequence, the people were prohibited from small-scale mining. The private armies apprehended and arrested the Lumads. A son of a datu was even threatened with gun.

Moreover, some of them suffered negative repercussions when excavated tunnels collapsed and they lost their loved ones and companions. One datu was a bit emotional in narrating the sad fate of his favorite son after amassing about 50 thousand pesos worth of gold.

In 1995, a big Korean-owned company called Asian Park came into the scene. Holding office in Carmen, Cagayan de Oro, the firm employed Christian settlers and some Higaunons as guards right in the ancestral domain of the Higaunons. It was the case that a certain Mr. Sangkil Park, the manager/president, rented the concession which was previously granted to a certain Mr. Tau (a Filipino) by the DENR. The latter reportedly obtained concession through the help of some *Lumads* who pretended they were Higaunons.

Three camps were built: one in Tumpagon, one in building in Tuburan as factory for gold melting and place for the guardhouse, and another one in Taglimao. The nature of operation was open pit mining where highly efficient heavy equipment such as bulldozers, pay loaders, big hoses were brought to the area together with a coterie of about 70 security personnel. These machines easily made the destruction of mountains to facilitate gold extraction. In fact, according to the informants, mountains "melt" after being bombarded by huge hoses whose water was pumped from Iponan river. In the words of the natives (in Cebuano), "*Ang mga Koreano gusto tumpagon ang mga kabukiran sa Tumpagon.*" (As noted earlier, Tumpagon and Cauyanon were one before.) The people have witnessed how they did it with big machines to be able to get high grade gold (24 K) different from those found in Diwalwal, Davao and Bukidnon. In the words of a datu: "*Sama sa uling sa bagol nga itom ng kon ibaguos pula ang siga.*"

In Cauyanon, Park was able to buy the land of Gerardo Talampas through his son-in-law Gocio Babatedo. The Koreans erected and fenced the mining site in the said place. Heavy equipment facilities were operating and an estimate of no less than 100 workers and 20 security guards were employed. Bunk houses were built and pay loaders were brought to the area. The operations lasted only for four months and covered as many as about 50 hectares.

Because of ecological and economic threats of Asian Park, the Lumads opposed the entrance of this foreign firm. To some extent, the natives were aware of the ill effects of mining operations so that they manifested unity in petitioning for the cancellation of the license given to this foreign-owned mining company. They also questioned Park's citizenship and his right to exploit the natural resources through the leadership of Benny Malinda, a Higaunon based in Tumpagon. It was reported that about 20 truckloads of natives coming from Tagoloan, Tumpagon, and Cauyanon openly protested and held a picket rally at the DENR office in Cagayan de Oro. The natives obtained the tacit support of the mayor of

the city.

In this move to oppose the mining operations, the connivance between some DENR officials and the Korean company was unveiled. The DENR Regional Director was later transferred to Butuan City. It was also during this time that Subangan Task Force was created together with the Rural Reforestation Management Project (RRMP) under the Bureau of Agriculture and DENR. This project particularly involves tree planting of gmelina, mahogany, and the like to protect/safeguard the natural environment particularly the water sheds. Monitoring the implementation of the logging ban was also part of the responsibility of these bodies.

While the protest led to the suspension of the project of Asian Park in 1996, the Korean company was able to operate for about four months as mentioned earlier and covered a sizable portion of the natives' lands. The lands covered/bought by Koreans are as follows: Tumpagon, Tawili, Pigsag-an, Tuburan, and Taglimao. Now, the company is operating in Zamboanga and Dinagat Island in Surigao in a similar gold business. Yet, many believed that the company was able to secure land titles in the lands of the Higaonons especially from Dumagats who secured lands from the natives, left the area, and became absentee landlords. An issue being raised by the natives concerns their ancestral domain which they believe rightfully belongs to them. They are asking if they can still get back the lands sold to the Koreans.

Indeed, threats to survival and autonomy of the natives cannot be discounted. According to Datu Mansingilan, it was heard from a reliable source that a certain Lepanto Mining Company which is presently operating in Mindanao has been eyeing to get a mining license in Cayanon and Tumpagon. This signals for the continuing vigilance and perseverance on the part of the natives.

Logging Operations. From 1950s up to late 1980s, Oloy Roa, a prominent businessperson and resident of Cagayan de Oro pursued a logging business in the area. The natives have been forewarned on the ecological havoc of logging, yet they showed no open resistance. Roa, like the other outsiders, was received positively. One attributable reason could be the latter's strategy in taking in a Higaonon as one of his wives similar to the Spanish tactic mentioned earlier. This must have facilitated his easy entry to the area. Further, the landowners were offered a monthly pension of P50 to be able to gain access to their lands. In fact, some of these pensionados were economically benefited for being hired as security guards and timber persons. Most probably, they were also hired to deter possible native hostility. Unfortunately, from Magsaysay's period until Aquino's time, the P50 monthly pension was never augmented but remained the same.

Looking and reflecting back, the natives admitted they used to think that the logging operation was good for them considering the above-mentioned reasons. It was rather late when they realized the disadvantages caused by the logging activities especially when they saw the drying up of the rivers and streams and observed their soil fast eroding. During the El Nino phenomenon, the watershed system was adversely affected. The water pipe connections in the community dried up. Today, the logging operation in the area is gone so as well as their pension with the implementation of the logging ban. Pensionados were not assured of a sustaining income even if Roa's logging firm had deserted the area.

The Christian Settlers. The first Christians who entered Cauyonan were the Ilonggos and Boholanos whom the natives called Dumagats as mentioned earlier. When these outsiders came, they requested the natives to allow them to buy a portion of the latter's land. Because the Higaunons were accommodating and without scruples, the request was granted outright.

It was gathered from the informants that the Christian settlers kept on expanding the coverage of their land. They were able to do this as land transactions were devoid of a deed of sale, survey of boundaries, concrete and permanent markers, and the like.

A number from the natives was shortchanged in land transactions. For a piece of land, they received in turn items such as *urigo* (winnowing basket), tobacco, carajay, holo, rooster, sarinés, used clothes, or transistor radio as the case may be. With these goods/stuff as mediums of exchange, parcels of land were eventually lost. Some natives were deceived as the process involved listing down of these goods/items on a credit basis (*utang* or *bale*) with the natives unmindful of the negative repercussions on their land. They never realized that their land is considered a collateral. They found it difficult to get back their lands from the Christians on the ground that the latter have already paid their occupied land from the accumulated goods taken by the natives.

The first Higaunon in Cauyonan who sold his land to a Christian was Sergio Sugay-ot. The rest followed in disposing their land. In this case, one of the patterns that prevailed was for Christian buyers who have stayed in the area for quite sometime to become absentee landlords. Some of them were identified as living in Opol, Misamis Oriental and Pagatpat, Cagayan de Oro City. These people were the very ones who sold their lands to Asian Park.

To a lamenting Datu Tomondag, it was unequivocally stated that when the Christians came they were allowed to buy only one hectare of land per family yet each was able to sell 10 or more hectares to the Koreans. They strongly suspected that some of their lands have been sold without their tacit knowledge. The natives felt powerless and helpless on this case as to them there is no law that protects them.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, the Christian settlers also pursued small-scale mining activities and engaged in buy and sell of gold as well. In 1997, for a gram of gold dust, Christian agents buy it at a prevailing rate of P95-P110 and sell it in turn at P110-P130 to jewelers and other interested buyers in Cagayan de Oro City. Now, a gram of gold dust is sold at P310 as mentioned earlier.

The Military and the New People's Army (NPA). In 1984, Cauyonan was infiltrated by NPAs whose composition was drawn mainly from the Christians although a few Higaunons were also known to have joined the group. The NPA members usually pass by the area on foot in a group of about 5, 10, or 30 each time and carry heavy arms which were concealed in sacks. While they suddenly appear from the woods, they also disappear in the same process. According to an informant, intrigues from neighbors caused and sowed the reign of terror in the area. The presence of NPA and the subsequent military operations during the period led to the declaration of the area as "no-man's land" for about two years. When the military reinforcement came, the natives were amused in saying that instead of being protected by the persons in uniform they were the ones guarding them instead. As a consequence, the natives deserted and evacuated the place out of fear from being caught in the cross fire.

During the height of the underground movement in the area, two individuals were killed, one of whom was a military official (a lieutenant). He was reportedly shot near the house of the barangay captain. The other casualty was a civilian.

Despite these untoward incidents, peace and order was gradually restored in 1986 and the natives returned to their domicile.

The Public School System (Elementary). Prior to World War II, an elementary school offering Grade I level existed in Cauyanan. The building was then made of cogon roof and wooden walls. During the Japanese occupation, the classroom was abandoned. The school became operational only during the liberation period in 1946 with Grades I and II. It was only during President Corazon C. Aquino's government that a complete elementary was opened but with only three teachers for six grade levels (Grades I through VI).

In relation with the presence of the public elementary school system in the area, a scandal involving a teacher emerged. It is a case of encroachment on the land donated to the barangay as school site. A certain Tiguman family donated 1.5 hectares for this purpose. The issue involves a four-hectare land bought by the teacher near the premises of the elementary school. When the teacher had her acquired lot surveyed the latter extended the area coverage of her land near the school when this lot rightfully belongs to the barangay. To the surprise of many, she increased her lot by about 2 hectares which led to the reduction of the school site. At present, her residential house is constructed right within the lot where the elementary school stands. A case is now filed by the barangay council against this teacher at Opol, Misamis Oriental. They were puzzled as to the manner by which they can get back this particular land as a land title has been reportedly secured by this teacher.

This is a case of an agent of the government in the lands of the natives posing a land problem to the locality. However, the presence of the school does not in any manner appear to adversely affect nor vanish the Higaonon culture.

The Religious Missionaries: The Catholic Missionaries. Before World War II, a Catholic missionary priest named Fr. Hogan visited Cauyanan. As an offshoot of his missionary effort, some Higaonons were converted to the Catholic faith and submitted themselves to baptism, marriage, and other rites of the church. Fiesta celebrations were always viewed with great enthusiasm as it was always associated with gatherings and merriment. The culture and tradition of the natives were not necessarily questioned that they continued to practice them. However, their being Catholics were not reinforced and strengthened by the church's doctrines because there were no church-designated layperson visible in the local community. There is no Catholic religious organization neither a lay minister's circle. Perhaps this is because of the remote location of the place with very poor roads and absence of regular transportation facilities as well. Social services are sadly lacking in the hinterland.

The diminishing number of Catholic followers can be gleaned from the information that only about three families (this includes the teacher in the place) remain Catholics. But they are Catholics only in name as there have been no religious services done in the Catholic chapel. Until the present, the place is no longer visited by a priest. The last fiesta was

celebrated on 19 March 1994 yet although there are reports of clandestine informal fiesta celebration in other sitios far from the center of Cauyunan without the presence of a chapel or a priest officiating mass. If these "Catholic survivors" would like to hear mass, they have to go to Tumpagon where Catholics are at least still active.

The New Tribe Mission. The emergence of this New Tribe Mission can be traced to 1978 when an Australian couple known as Paul and Devie Huells visited Tumpagon and Cauyunan after staying in Cebu for sometime. They had a talk with the barangay captain (a certain Mr. Alinggom) but were initially refused as their presence was associated with Communist infiltration. Later in 1984, having made the necessary arrangements and declared their identity, they finally stayed in Cauyunan. During the initial stage of community immersion, it was the wife who was observed able to speak and understand a little of Cebuano. The couple diligently learned the language of the Higaunon with Datu Tumudag and a certain Fred Bacl as their main informants who were offered compensation of P60 daily and free food for their tutorial services. The missionary couple stayed in 1989 in the house of a certain Kokong. When the latter interrogated about their main purpose, the outright response was that they were then in a mission to preach and spread the words of God. When further asked if they had any business interest, they vehemently denied it and reasoned out that if they were engaged in it they could be driven away immediately.

The Australian couple participated in the activities of the natives such as when the later went to the fields, visited the balete tree or performed the *bubai* (rituals) and weddings. They even ate the foods which the baylan dedicated to the *engkanto* or *diwata* together with the natives. Not long after, they built their house and continued to be extra close with the natives. They gradually developed a tremendous rapport with the Higaunon to the very fact that that a number of the natives became members of the New Tribe Mission specifically called Tultol meaning *sugilanon* or *kasaysayan* or life history of Jesus. Once a member of this group, one is believed to be "*naluwus na*," meaning saved. According to a reliable information, about 2/3 of the households are now members of this group in Poblacion Cauyunan. Note that a number coming from Tumpagon, the adjacent barangay, are also Tultol members. One of the strategies employed by the Australian missionaries was to invite one Lumad couple to dine with them in their house and go to the natives' residence, exchange pleasantries, and eat there together with the family members the following week. This was always accompanied by a gradual teaching of the Bible and religious songs from 9 to 11 in the morning just like a household prayer meeting. The Bible was eventually translated into Higaunon as the couple had acquired mastery of the *binukid* or the local dialect. This translated Bible was instrumental for the Higaunon Tultol to believe that God speaks to them in their own language.

Before formal settlement of the missionary couple, it is interesting that an almost one kilometer-long runway was built whose labor cost for its preparation/construction was valued at P8,000. The lot utilized for this purpose was rented out to them for P9,000 good for 10 years. Now, the lot has been bought and titled. As part of the runway, a small red flag is tied to a pole serving as guide or signal for incoming planes to land. Considering the nature of this transportation facility, there is no doubt the couple belong to a large organizational network. They were observed to be regularly receiving visitors (mostly foreigners) from Cagayan de Oro, Bukidnon, Iligan, Marawi and other places.

On top of the mountain of Cauyonan, the Australians have a comfortable house equipped with all the modern conveniences such as a solar-installed power system, computer, appliances (refrigerator, electric stove, washing machine, etc.) phones, and an intricate antenna on top of the house. The house lot was reportedly given to the missionary couple. An unusual big dog inside is visible once one enters their house. Whenever buying food and medicinal supplies and other needed materials from Cagayan de Oro, a jeep is usually hired to ferry these to Cauyonan. The couple were observed having abundant food always. In several occasions, they distributed canned goods and used clothes to the natives. To many, they were found good, kind, and benevolent to the Higaunons of Cauyonan.

Owing to the presence of the missionary couple, a number of improvements started to pour in the place to the delight of the natives who seemed neglected by appropriate government agencies. Simply speaking, the Higaunons became recipients of numerous benefits. Animal dispersal project was introduced. The natives were given carabaos as working animals to aid them in their farm work where two families share one carabao. To date, 20 carabaos had been given. There were also four natives who were sent to Davao to undertake training on plant/seedling propagation. Some women were taught dressmaking skills and one of them became a grantee of a sewing machine.

A pharmacy dubbed as "*Boteka Binhi*" and a two-bed mini-hospital were established to look after the local folks' health/medical problems. Medicines (also for animals) were sold at a low/discounted rate for members. Medical facilities include Xray machine, blood and urine analysis. In this regard, selected women natives were brought to undergo crash-training courses in Davao for the para-medical work. These trainees can now issue prescriptions for simple cases like coughs or diarrhea and treat simple wounds. Twenty women manage the pharmacy and mini-hospital four of whom take turns in reporting to duty each time from Monday to Saturday. They do not get any monetary payment for services rendered but they receive medicines and some supplies for free as part of their privilege. The presence of the Australian wife who is a nurse herself facilitated the operation of the pharmacy and mini-hospital. It was learned that these facilities were managed and operated as a cooperative whose initial capitalization of P6,000 was put up by the Australian couple.

The medical woes of the natives were indeed positively answered. In fact, whenever somebody is seriously ill, the Australian couple can easily phone their base in Impalambong-Bukidnon and within 30 minutes or so a plane (called *idro* by natives) comes to fetch the patient for free and bring one to a hospital in Cagayan de Oro (CDO) for treatment. There are reportedly foreign doctors in CDO hospitals/clinics who offer them free treatment. Note that when the plane comes from Lumbia airport of Cagayan de Oro City, it takes only takes 8-10 minutes for it to reach Cauyonan.

But these airlift services are open for free only to those who are Tultol members. An outsider (or a non-Tultol) can still avail of these services but will be charged with about P3,000-P3500 for the plane fare. It is the analysis of many that the availability of these medical services is a strong factor to lure one to join the group. In emergency cases, the natives are helpless in terms of distance and finances and the couple readily come to their rescue.

In addition, a water system was also built for the whole community. A pipe was installed to capture water from the catch basin of spring water. This flowing water is useful for domestic purposes such as bathing, washing clothes, and drinking water. It is interest-

ing to note that that the water in Cañonan tastes better than the one in Tumpagon. There are also two faucets installed in the center of the community whose source is a big tank filled with rain water. One is situated near the rice/corn mill, while the other one is found near another house, most probably a guest house, owned by the Australian missionaries. (Note that at the time the research team went to the area, the house was not occupied since the person met an accident and was in Australia for the recuperation). The faucet near this house is used in washing one's dirty feet while going up the steep trail from about 100-200 meters down where the flowing water in a pipe is found. It is not unusual for one to emerge from it with wet and dirty feet as the soil is sticky and reddish in color.

Farther, a post-harvesting facility or a rice and corn mill was built in 1997. This is reportedly managed by about 105 Tultol members as a cooperative. The building also houses the corn thresher and dryer. The lot where the mill lies has been bought for about P14,000. The mill is becoming a center of the community since the natives usually converge here as observers and onlookers if not waiting for a turn to have one's rice/corn milled. To an ordinary farmer who mainly depends on rice/corn for daily food, the mill is tantamount to a heaven-sent facility. This frees the farmers from the burden of paying about P80-P100 fare per person. (The point of origin is in Tumpagon where a public utility jeep leaves at dawn time.) There are also private motors but the charge is quite exorbitant. One can just imagine the impact of the establishment of the rice/corn mill to the natives in the area. Note that two laminated documents hanged in the rice/corn mill reveal the following information. It is no wonder the registered name heavily carries the meaning of Tultol. As stated earlier, one who becomes a member of the group is believed to gain salvation or "*naluwas na*."

CAUYONAN NALUWAS, INC. (The group in whose name the rice/corn mill was registered)

SBC Registered: June 13, 1997 per SEC Special Order No. 133 s. of 1997

BIR Registration as a Religious Organization

Business Code- Religious Organization 919

Tax No. 004-993-172 (Tax Identification)

While the natives are apparently benefited, the foreigners must also be pleased that the buildings were constructed through a *pahina* system (labor on voluntary basis). A strong influence of the Tultol on the Higaunon as a people prevails. In fact, on a Tuesday last May 1998, the research team assigned in the area saw the church bell (the chapel is another visible structure found in the barangay) ringing at about seven in the morning. After a few minutes, the members gathered and one of them took the lectern and started preaching. It was a good manifestation of the religious influence of the New Tribe Mission and the dispensability of the missionary couple. In fact, three males who are high school students are now trained as good preachers (*magnawali* or *magtultol*). The members also complied with the tithing system by sharing their produce such that in a designated receptacle such as a big basket hanged near the door, members voluntarily drop their contribution in cash or in kind like rice or corn.

It is interesting to mention that the Tultol plays a key role in settling disputes. Whenever there is trouble/problem, the members are given pieces of advice. Foremost, any con-

cerned member is advised by the organization (This is called this as *ayukan*). If not doing any better, he/she will be asked to give a testimony before their group otherwise, he/she will be subjected to a discipline. The disciplinary action includes stripping of one's privilege to purchase medicines and goods from the pharmacy, exclusion from participation in the group's activities and the like.

Further, it should be mentioned here that the Tultol group has another structure which is designated as an office purposely for their perusal as an organization. The place is equipped with facilities like typewriters and computers. The natives said that the Australian couple always assert that Tultol is not a religion or church but an organization or group.

Furthermore, good takers of the missionaries' house have been trained. Thus, the couple can freely leave their house in the care of their close and trusted housekeepers who are considered adopted children. Four caretakers stay from Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 5 pm and receive a compensation of P70 per day at the time of interview in 1998.

One key informant could not identify explicit disadvantages of the Tultol. But unlike before when the natives were free to practice their culture, at present there are several "don'ts" surfacing related to the beliefs of the New Tribe Mission while they enjoy the amenities provided by the Australian couple in the community. What they do in the past are suddenly transformed as taboos thereby affecting their social life as Higaunons. According to the informants, Tultol is adversely against some traditional practices as they are considered paganistic and a defiance of Christian beliefs. Restrictions are gradually imposed and the following are considered deadly sins—believing on their baylan, practicing their *panaha*,² *pamahandi* or *dumalindong*, celebrating fiesta, involving in politics, taking liquor/hard drinks, joining community benefit dance (this is *bayle* in Cebuano which used to be a good source of income for the barangay), and other activities. In fact, the Roman Catholic Chapel now stands empty with no masses held. To the New Tribe Mission, the religious figures and images inside the church are akin to idols or *dios-dios* and fiesta celebration is a form of venerating/worshipping these.

With respect to restricting members from joining politics as a candidate, this was neutralized when the mayor of Opol personally went to Cauyanon himself and intervened.

The incumbent Barangay Captain and Datu Tumundag, the most senior of the natives, have been recruited members of Tultol although they are slowly turning away from it arising from some disturbing observations. As a result, Datu Tumundag became sickly for several months. In fact, on the first day of interview, he was found feverish. Yet, he never missed a day to join the group as he was the main informant for four continuous days. He exuded enthusiasm in reviving their tradition most especially that the research team showed interest and concern of their situation. It is worthwhile to mention here the testimony of Dan Tumundag who revealed that at the time he was still closely working with the missionary couple, the latter persuaded him to stop performing his baylan functions. To this effect, his pictures were sent by mail to various countries and prayers were solicited from missionaries for him to cease seeing other spirits inherent in his being a baylan.

The present tribal datu chieftain who is also a prominent *kagawad*³ in the place was once a helper (in fact the first helper and one of the Higaunon "tutors") of the Australian couple but never became a full-pledged Tultol. Having felt uncomfortable with the way things were going, she raised several questions. The barangay encountered difficulties in raising funds by sponsoring a bayle as this was against the tenets of Tultol as mentioned

each. There was even a barangay session when the issue of the rice/corn mill was mentioned in passing although it was not formally included in the agenda for discussion. Expectations were raised that the barangay would earn a certain percentage from the operation of the mill since they found it difficult to raise funds from sponsorship of a benefit dance. The formal deliberation about the rice/corn mill never took place. Yet, a few days after, a *kagawad* was summoned by the Australian to his residence and was subsequently scolded together with three other *kagawad*. The missionary was described as raging with anger and bragging that they (the four *kagawad*) could not have won as *kagawad* had not been for him. It was justified that the 105 Tultol members are opposed to paying a certain percentage to the barangay. This was a tacit indication that anybody who raised questions against the activities of the Australian missionaries would be dealt with.

There are those who firmly believed that part of the proceeds of the rice/corn mill as an establishment in the barangay should accrue to barangay funds as income. In the minds of some natives, other nagging questions remain: If the pharmacy and rice/corn mill are indeed run as cooperatives, why has there been no sharing of the proceeds? How true are the reports that the proceeds of the cooperatives will be used to construct another *boteka* in another place? Why are the recipients of the animal dispersion project required to gradually pay a certain amount for the use of carabaos? All the while they were thinking these were given free to help them in their farm work. If Tultol is not a religious group, why are the local people required to share their produce in the context of offering to God? Why are the natives told that religion cannot save one unless they join the Tultol? While the Australian couple have not been linked with the gold business in the area, there are certain sectors linking their presence to something else.

It has been known that soon the couple would leave the area within the next five years as they will be transferred to a similar mission in another place. But whether this is true or not remains to be known. The latest information learned during the validation meeting was that the missionaries built another house, a third one, concrete and fenced with hog wires. To an informant, it is much bigger than the previous ones. It is circulating that these missionaries no longer have a house neither land nor properties in their own country. Thus, the expressed preference is to stay and die in the place where the Higaunons dwell. Should they be sent to another place for missionary purposes, it was further learned that they will really go back to Cayonon for good.

Delving deeper into the matter, it was learned that at the start the Australians targeted Barangay Rogongon of Iligan but failed to gain entry in the area as they were suspected to be agents of bad elements. But when they went to Cayonon, they were openly welcomed by the natives. This must have a bearing with the name of the place, *cayonon* in Cebuano means "agreement," "conformity," or "consent." Few realized that their life will be affected, be it political, economic, or sociocultural. The autonomy of the Higaunon as a people is being slowly eroded.

The words of one *datu* were very revealing when he said that the grandparents cannot be taken in oblivion as they could not have reached their age now had not been for their age-old customs and tradition. (To quote him, "*Dili puede biyasan ang ginikanan; dili moabot ang edad kung wala ang karaan*"). But, on one hand, he also said that the Tultol must be respected. This manifests ambivalence on the issue of cultural survival *vis-a-vis* material upliftment derived from the missionaries. This is the reality they are in at present.

Summary and Concluding Statements

Brief Summary

As a brief resume of the salient points, the field work data show that the Higaunons in Cauyanan, Misamis Oriental as a Lumad cultural community and a sub-tribe of the Higaunons in Mindanao have long settled and resided in Cauyanan during the Spanish period. The genealogy which is limited to the recall/memory of the old informants in the community traces their descendants to at least six generations.

The Higaunons in Cauyanan have their own sociocultural beliefs, economic practices and political structure. Like other inhabitants in the country, they have been subjected to the influences of the colonial forces; however, they were able to preserve their cultural heritage as gleaned in the usage of a Higaunon language, existence of sacred sites like burial grounds and *balete* tree, prevalence of *datus* and *baylan*, practice of *dumalundong*, *panuo*, and *bukat* and many more others. The historical experiences of the group further showed entry of various forces such as the early missionaries, the businesspersons engaged in logging and mining activities, the Dumagats/Christian settlers, and others. This led to the loss of ancestral lands of the natives through occupancy by the Dumagats and unequal business transactions with them. Some of the lands were in fact only exchanged by some goods like bolo, carajay, transistor radio, used clothes, canned goods, and the like. The more educated outsiders employed unscrupulous tactics such as releasing stuff to the natives on a loan basis as "*bale*" until the amount accumulated that land automatically became a device or mode of payment. The apparent lack of education among the natives also contributed to their being easy prey of anomalous transactions.

The deleterious situation was compounded in the middle of the 1990s with the intrusion of the Korean Company where huge tracts of land were bought by this foreign firm. Indeed, the presence of abundant gold deposits continued to lure business interests in the area. But the natives have shown that a united opposition can deter intrusion in their lands. They were aware of the ecological/environmental and economic threats on their land.

In addition, the recent entry of the New Tribe Mission has threatened the preservation of the traditional practices of the natives, be it political or sociocultural. The unmatched influences of this group arise from the enormous benefits that trickle down to the Higaunon community. Much more, the influences create a tremendous impact as social services coming from government instrumentalities are sadly absent in the hinterland.

As regards the tribal group as an organization, despite the apparent penetration and influence of the New Tribe Mission, there is presently a move to revive and strengthen the Higaunons as an organization. Established in January 1998, the Council of Tribal Cauyanan Communities has about 60 members 14 of whom are *datus*. Note that the newly organized Tribal Cauyanan Community already met thrice as of this writing. The members null to request their congressman in Misamis Oriental to help them establish a *torogan* which is available in Tubilau, Misamis Oriental where another Higaunon settlement is located. The Higaunons in Cauyanan are now in the planning stage on how to go about the titling of their ancestral domain claim as provided for by Republic Act 8731. The Center for the Development of Indigenous Peoples Foundation-Northern Mindanao, Inc. (then known as Indig-

enous Peoples' Apostolate) is directly involved in organizing the natives in the area. The barangay council is also actively supporting this effort.

The group expects to gain more members and has expressed the need for an identification (ID) card and appointment papers to certify that they are members of this cultural community. They consider this urgent since this has a bearing vis-à-vis the presence of Tultol having been asked of a document to serve as proof of their membership to their own cultural group. Being in a desperate situation where they are caught between the preservation of their cultural heritage and the material benefits brought about by the New Tribe Mission/Tultol, the group saw the importance of training and livelihood projects. These can entice people to leave the Tultol group and help alleviate their economic condition. Projects such as pig raising or carabao assistance were especially mentioned.

Foremost, there is a call to help them strengthen their organization. They have been victims in the past when a government agency collected P100 from each of them but the promised ID card and papers were never delivered. They continue to ask why the government went to their place and extracted money from them instead of bringing benefits to the community. This must have partly eroded their trust on the government.

Notwithstanding those cited above, some of the problems identified in the community are as follows:

- Health problems mentioned include fever, coughs, tuberculosis, ulcer, measles, and kidney. Infants and small children are usually hit by measles contributing to early deaths.
- Problem of Peace and Order. Civilian Volunteers Organization (CVO) or "*banda*" exists to help attain peace and order in the barangay such as preventing carabao rustling. The problem lies in the aspect of maintenance. There is apparent lack of funds for incentives/allowances of every two CVOs are assigned every night. In addition, they do not have weapons/facilities available for their use as guards of the community.
- Land Conflict among Higaonons. This has something to do with markers and boundaries in the form of a river or tree in their ancestral lands. There is difficulty in determining the boundaries. For instance if it is a river, following the route of the river is not clear. On the other hand, when the boundary is a tree, once it is cut down conflict would surely ensue. The parties involved are not only the Higaonons but also Christians or Dumagats as well. Individuals tend to claim a piece of land without any basis. A few have land declarations but without legal papers for the land title.

It was gathered that *Tampada ho Balagon* (conflict resolution) is important to them to resolve problematic cases in the community. Conflicts and problems are usually settled at the barangay level through the barangay captain. At present, the New Tribe Mission also plays a role in this regard as mentioned earlier.

Concluding Statements

The group has manifested unity for the furtherance of their interests with the Council of Cauyonan Tribal Communities presently in place. This present research has sparked more interest to strengthen their tribal group as an organization. Most specifically, the natives expected some form of assistance coming from NGOs. During the last day of stay in the area, two key informants allowed the recording of their message. The Cebuano translation of the parting message done by Bae Yawe herself is as follows: .

Sa dili pa ta magsira sa atong pagsinaysayay sa kagekan sa tanan Lumad sa Cauyonan mangayo kami ug dako kaayong pagpasalamat ug dakong pagtagad ug pag-antos pagtungas dinhi bisan pa sa kalayo sa among barangay sa Cauyonan. Bisin pa sa inyong pagpauli wala kami ikahatag kaninyo nga angay inyong mabalon gikan kanamo apan tungod lagi sa among kapobrehon maoy hinungdan nga kami na lang ang magpa-abot sa gasa gikan kaninyo kay dako ang among pag-laum nga ang kaayohan unya dinha kaninyo maga-agi kay kamo ang taytayan nga makahatag kanamo ug kaugmaon. Hilabina ang kultura ug pagpalig-on sa among pagpangabuhi sa nagtinga nga kaliwatan ug ang akong ikadugang nini nga dili kami ninyo hikalimtan hilabi na si Bae Yawe. Babay, magtukaw kami alang sa paglaum nga mobalik kamo." (underscoring supplied)

It can be gleaned from the above that the native residents expect assistance to their pressing needs and concerns. The above message further drives the main point that cultural survival and economic difficulties are interrelated. There exists a number of woes and wails of our cultural communities who for a long time despite untiring efforts end up unable to improve their lot. The dire condition of poverty raises more expectations for NGOs to act as bridge in delivering basic services to the community. Optimism prevails that an NGO returns to the community and helps alleviates perennial problems in the hinterland. Expectations really accompany research undertakings particularly when the community is impoverished.

In almost the same vein, the other *limbay* (song) that follows was proffered by *Datu Tunundag*, the Cebuano translation of which was done by our community guide:

Ang mga kamot ta mga igsoon. Maayo ang dili mamatay. Bisin ug dili ko kamo igsoon sa kamot kay dako ang inyong paghtugma kanamo. Kay magstnay saya kay kon wala mahidangat dinhi. Wala na namo humahunaa ugmang adlaw na mao nay atong pagbulagbulag. Hinaut nga sa inyong paggikan walay mga pagmahay nga inyong mabalon. Dili unta ninyo hingkalmantan ang tanan nga inyong kaigsuonan dinhi sa Cauyonan. Sa tinipon karon maoy atong panagan-an nga mawala na ang atong pagtuo sa Dios/Magbabaya kay daghan ang miabot nga gusto mawala ng pagtuo sa kultura bisan ugma mobalik kamo dinhi mopadayon ako.

The resounding message further underscores the natives' positive attitude in welcoming NGOs to their area and at the same time affirming the need to preserve the cultural

heritage.

The issue of cultural survival exists among Higaonons in Cauyanan. Culture change seeps in due to social contact with external elements that have far-reaching effects on their political, economic and sociocultural lives. In the words of Bodley (1988), contact with "civilized" outsiders has led to economic dependency and loss of political autonomy. In acculturation, groups of individuals come into continuous firsthand contact with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups (cited in Kottak, 1991). This involves cultural change and religion may be a powerful force.

In conclusion, with the persisting problems of our Lumads, powerlessness among the Higaonons of Cauyanan prevails. In this respect, the vicious cycle of poverty goes on. It is important to note that poverty studies show that people are poor or disadvantaged because they have incapacities among themselves and there are external conditions that deny them access to resources needed for their livelihood and for the quality of a dignified life.

The Philippine indigenous peoples should be granted their ancestral lands since their existence as distinct and unique social, political, cultural and economic life significantly depends on them. Their future lies on the recognition of their right to ancestral domains. Notwithstanding other concerns, they have expressed great desire to complete entitlement and ownership of their ancestral domain which they believe rightfully belongs to them. Foremost, this is recognized as a vital step towards self-reliance and determination. It is therefore imperative for concerned agencies to act with urgency for the welfare and development of cultural communities in Mindanao such as the Higaonons of Cauyanan, Misamis Oriental.

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Unpublished Data

n.d. Material (about Canyonan) taken from the City Planning Development Office, Cagayan de Oro City.

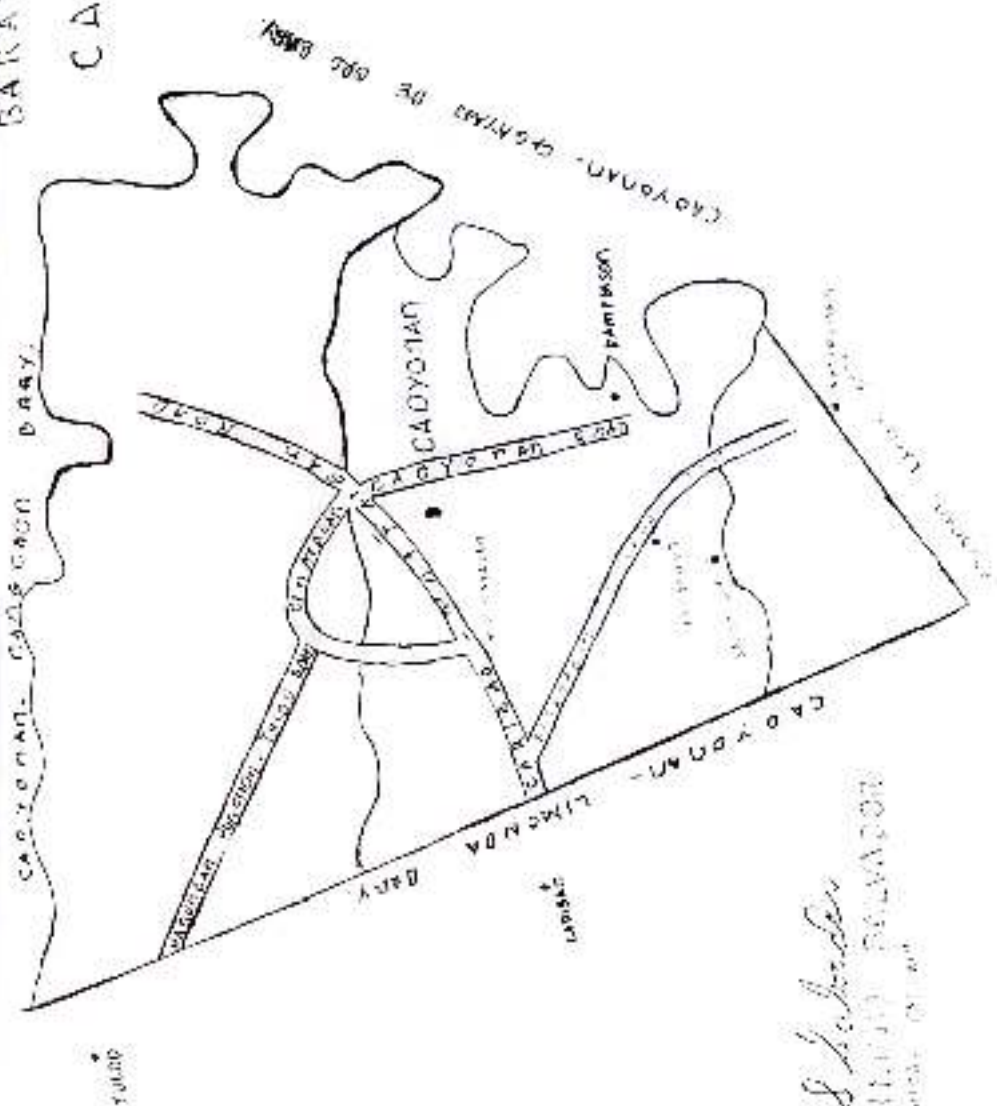
End Note:

This place was originally part of a place known as *Barrio Casagungan* whose name was changed to *Dulangan*. The latter was renamed later and subdivided into two: *Tampagan* under Cagayan de Oro City, and *Canyonan* under Opol, Misamis Oriental.

July 1999

BRACAMONTE, MAJORENOS, PONCE

BARANGAY MAP
OF
CAOYONAN



APPROX. 1:50,000

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

Research Team
Team leader: Rudy B. Redi
Members: Luz C. Sivda Castro
Marib Goda Tonglan

- Figure 1 Genealogy of Jesus Yanson (Datu Marumunda)
and Ricardo Yanson (Datu Marimangmong)
Figure 2 Genealogy of Rosalia Lumang (Datu Banaia)
Figure 3 Genealogy of Fernando Sagayna
Figure 4 Genealogy of Siping Lamuney (Datu Marimangmong)
Figure 5 Genealogy of Felix Liliawan (Datu Mangimaya)
Figure 6 Genealogy of Eusebio Sumanca (Datu Mariballawan)
Figure 7 Genealogy of Ronaldo Manawudin
Figure 8 Genealogy of Roquino Gulawon (Datu Marulan)

Legend:



GENEALOGY OF JESUS YANSON (Datu Marumunda) and Ricardo Yanson (Datu Marimangmong)

FIGURE 1A

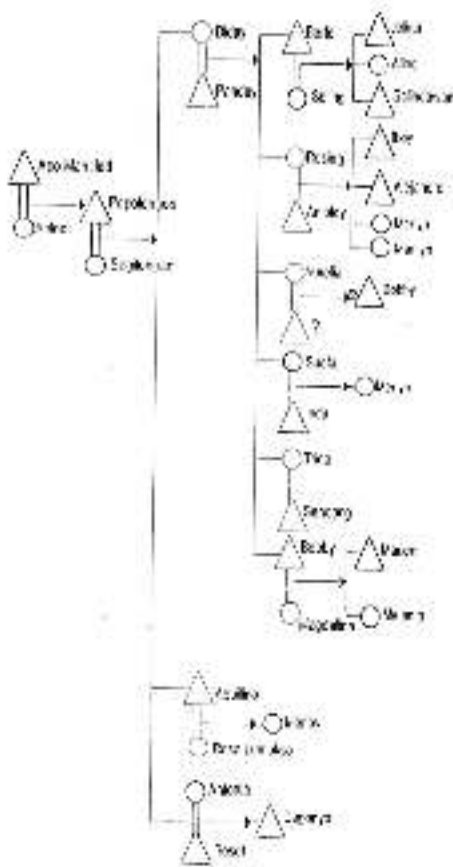


FIGURE 1B

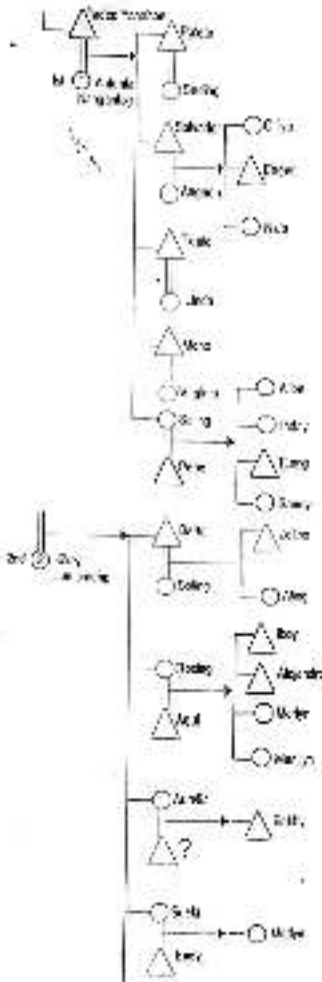


FIGURE 1C

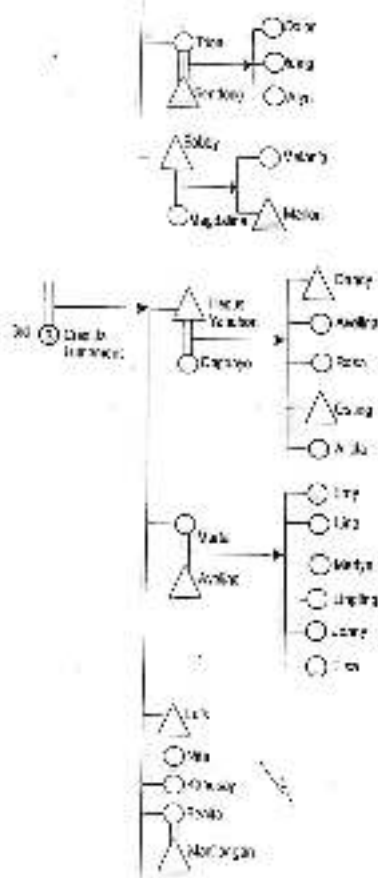


FIGURE 1D

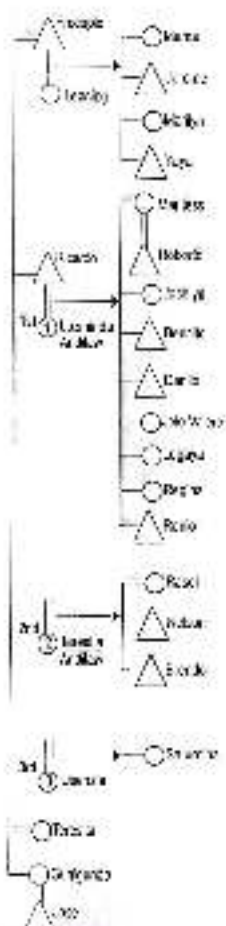


FIGURE 2
GENEALOGY OF RIZALINO LUMAMIG
(DATU BAHALA)

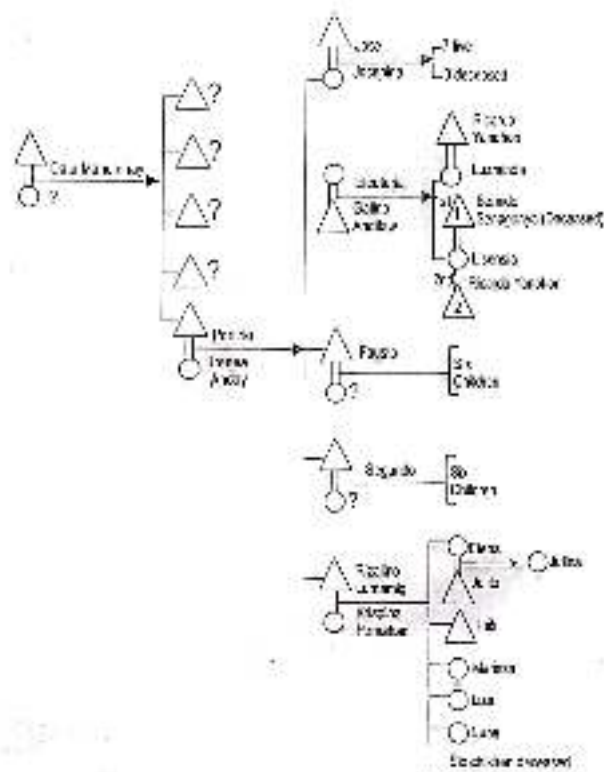


FIGURE 3
GENEALOGY OF FERNANDO SAGAYNA

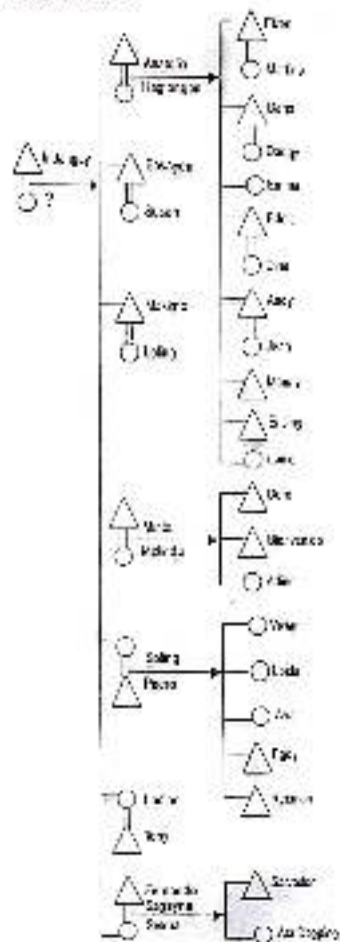


FIGURE 4
GENEALOGY OF SILINGLAMUMAY
(DATU MANLUMAKTED)

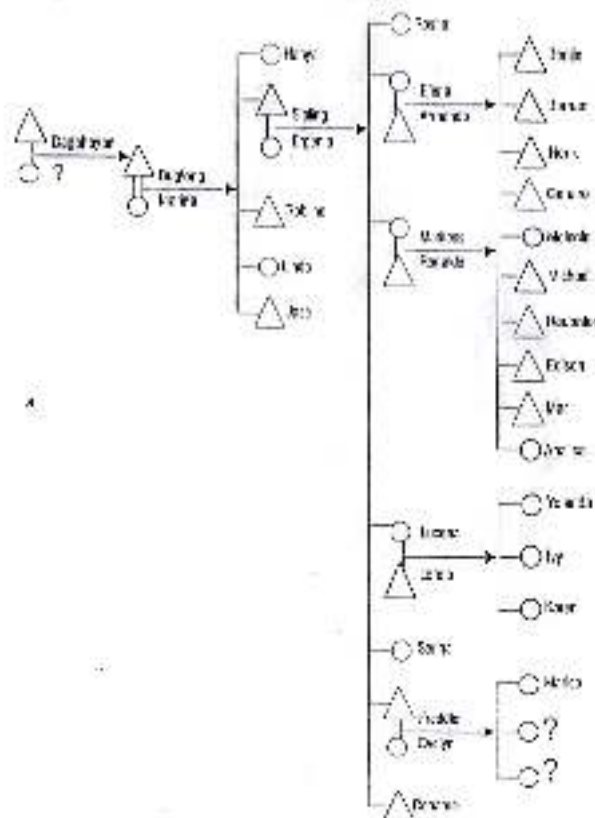


FIGURE 5
GENEALOGY OF FELIX LID-AWON
(DATU MANGUMBAYA)

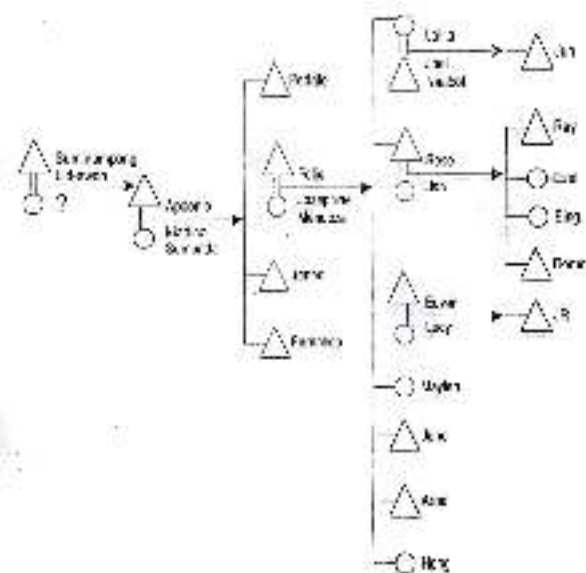
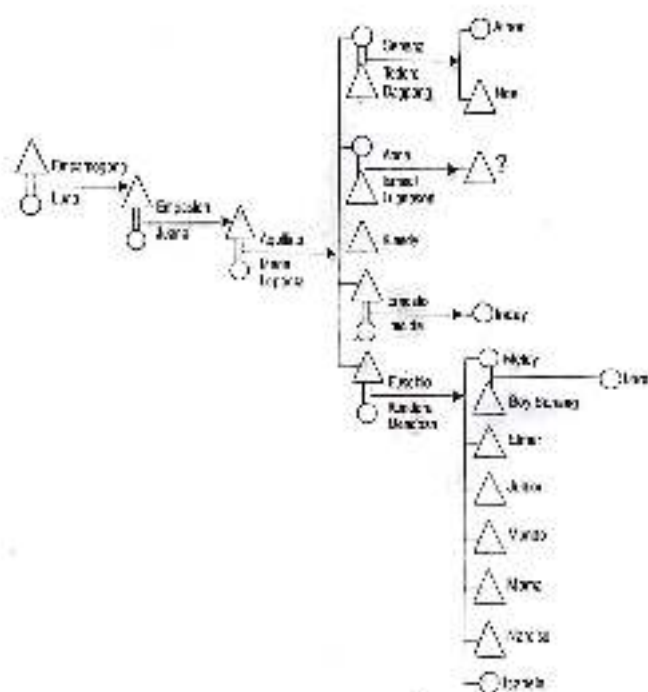
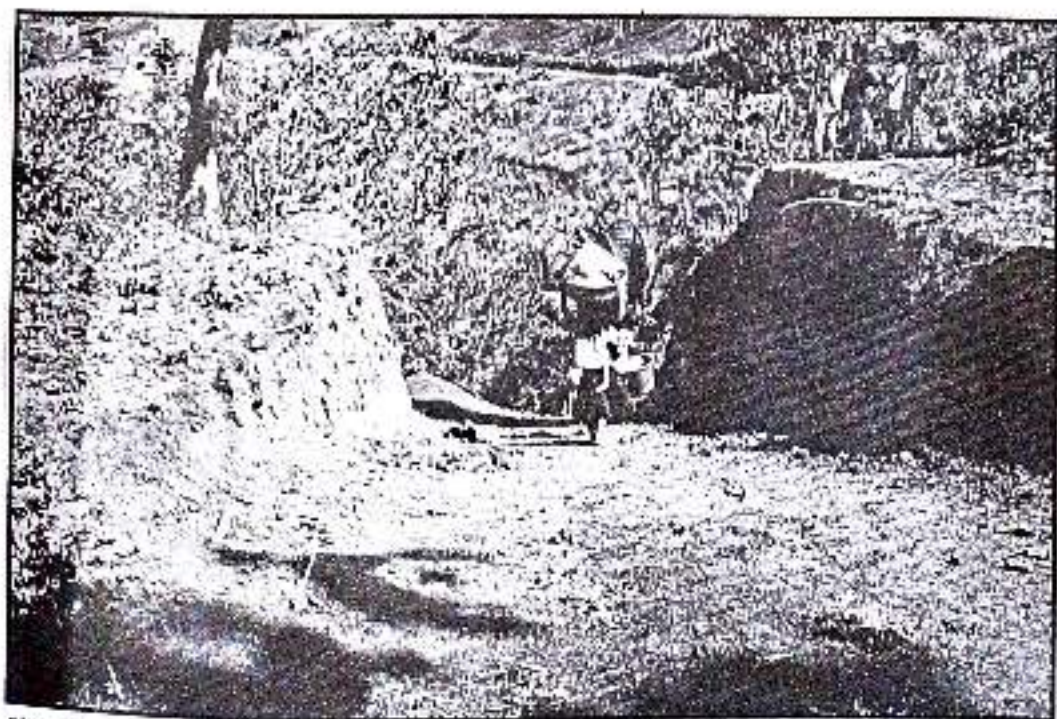


FIGURE 6
GENEALOGY OF EUSEBIO SUMUNDA
(DATU MANBALTAWAN)

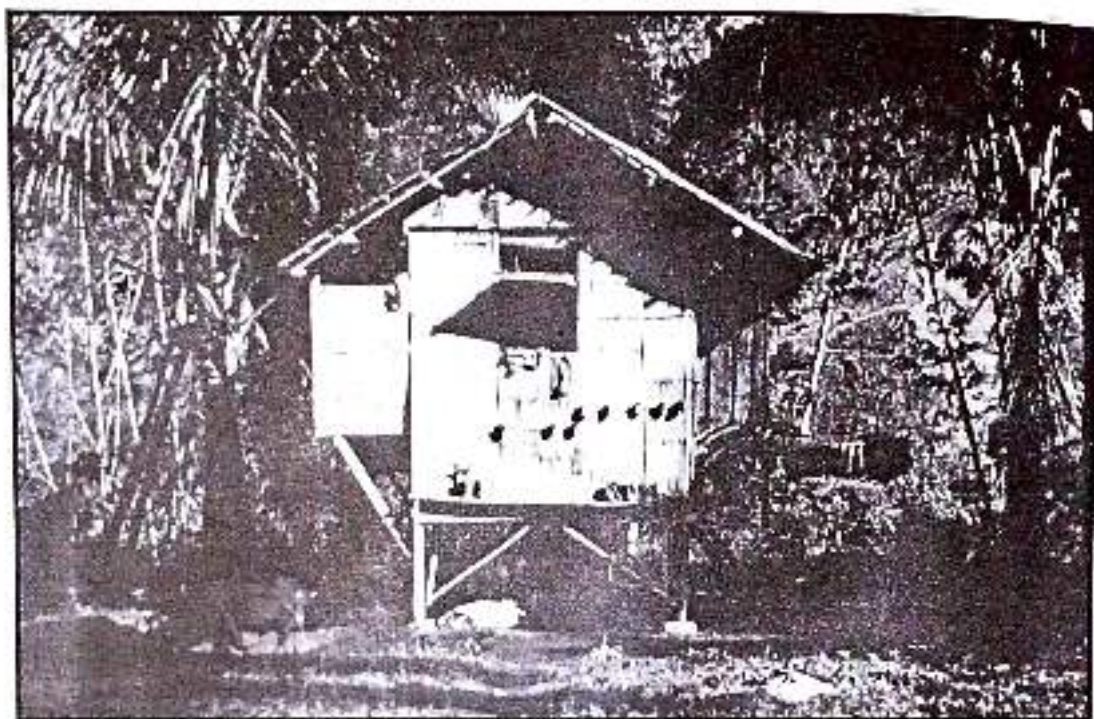




The Canyonan Elementary School



Shown is a woman tagging along her children while carrying a pail and basin of soiled clothes. The source of water is about 120 meters down.



A typical house of a higaonon in Canyon



"Departure lunch" together with the Higaonon key informants, community guides and the research team.