

The Teduray Women of Rifao in South Upi, Maguindanao: Their Ancestral Domain Claim and Struggle for Peace

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Introduction

Following the anti-terror campaign of the Estrada administration in 2000, peace once more emerged as a fundamental demand for the peoples of Mindanao. Civil society groups, particularly nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and churches, with the help of international NGOs, were never before as earnestly involved promoting peace education, calling for ceasefire and monitoring peace agreements, and setting peace and development zones.

Issues crucial to the attainment of permanent peace however remained unaddressed, foremost of which is the land question which among the Lumad peoples of Mindanao has found expression in the demand for the return of their ancestral domain (AD). Lately, the AD issue has grown to be an extremely important agenda among groups supporting indigenous people's rights and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) itself had included it as a negotiating point in its talks with government.¹ Of utmost concern to the indigenous people (IP) organizations is the overlapping of Moro and Lumad AD claims, already stoking inter-ethnic violence in some areas of Maguindanao.

This study is an attempt to look at the situation of Teduray women in rural Mindanao in the context of ongoing land struggles and peacebuilding in various parts of the region. Centro Saka, Incorporated (CSI), being itself long involved in agrarian reform issues and the AD struggle through its forerunner organization, Philippine Peasant Institute and the recently formed Mindanao Rural Congress-Rural Women (now organized into *Panaghiusa sa Tulo ka Katawhang Kababayan-an*

sa Kabanikanhang Mindanao or PTKKKM), commissioned this research in support of its organizing work among Mindanao women.

Part of a three-series gender research which includes the Moro women in a coastal municipality in Zamboanga del Sur and the Christian women in a banana plantation area in Tboli, South Cotabato, this paper is focused on the situation of the Teduray women in a mountain barangay in South Upi, Maguindanao where a logging operation made possible through an Integrated Forestry Management Agreement (IFMA)² permit had dislocated families and brought in armed conflict.

Research objectives

Informed by recent gender interest and popular discourse on women's role in land development and peacebuilding, the research is conducted to contribute to the furthering of women's participation in land struggles and peacebuilding within the context of Mindanao's multi-ethnic, tripeopled³ development. It proceeds from a need to draw the real situation and particularities of the various groups of rural women in the region, so that future interventions may better respond to local culture and conditions. In particular, this research on indigenous women hopes to contribute to the consolidation of community-based women organizations, the observation being that grassroots organizations are languishing and only federations seem to have thrived (First Rural Women Assembly, Davao City, December 2005). This research further seeks to identify strategies by which Teduray women, both within and without their culture and society, respond to their issues of poverty and disempowerment, as well as determine hindering and facilitating factors in the effort at self-organization, political participation, and economic empowerment.

Research methodology

This research heavily relied on qualitative methods of data gathering, including focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews, and participant-observation approach. Documents produced by NGOs, particularly service institutions like Lumad Development Center, Inc. (LDCI), for their advocacy work and the scantier documents they

made on women have been valuable for this research, along with the infrequent publications on women in agriculture and research papers made by feminist researchers and organizations. Project proposals, development plans, and socioeconomic profiles have also been surveyed, along with vulnerability studies commissioned by international NGOs engaged in rehab and reconstruction in conflict-affected areas. News and information from the net were also helpful sources of information, especially in providing background data on ongoing armed conflicts, land-related legislation, and peace advocacy.

The weightier part of the research still came from field visits and interviews conducted with community members. Group discussions were further validated by individual interviews conducted in respondents' houses. This included farmers, local leaders, and village dwellers, mostly women. Visits to government offices in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and barangay officials' houses were also conducted to get official views of current local issues.

Theoretical framework

If any meaningful development had to take place in a community, the onus had to be taken up by the most oppressed in the area (Ingty 2000). In the case of the rural poor women, this means their direct involvement in defining their goals and issues and engaging in action towards the attainment of these goals. One important question raised by this research is, *Who defines rural women's issues?*, either echoing the anti-feminist argument that in certain cultures "gender is not an issue," or the reaction to international development agencies' imposed criteria and policies on poor women. The former is generally part of the old suspicions towards feminism being divisive and is characteristic of most nationalist and ethno-nationalist struggles, the latter a criticism of First World beneficence which has made of Third World women an object of many a welfarist project.⁴

In drawing women's voices to bear on this research, feminist theories challenging Eurocentric masculinist epistemology⁵ have been used, particularly those postulated by Black American theorists who argued for alternative ways of producing and validating knowledge. In her article on the construction of a Black feminist thought, Collins (1989) explains that "[an oppressed group's] political and economic

status provides them with a distinctive set of experiences that offers a different view of material reality than that available to other groups” (747). However, “their lack of control over the apparatuses of society that sustain ideological hegemony makes the articulation of their self-defined standpoint difficult. Groups unequal in power are correspondingly unequal in their access to the resources necessary to implement their perspectives outside their particular group” and more powerful groups are more likely “to suppress and discredit the standpoints of oppressed groups as self-defined standpoints can stimulate oppressed groups to resist their domination” (749).

Writing in the same vein, Hall (1989) argues against academe-made theory as “often prescriptive, elitist, and exclusionary” and calls for the construction of a theory for everyday use, one that “draws on and resonates with the idiom of regional, ethnic, racial, and working-class culture” (910). Standing in line with the above arguments, this research seeks to divulge the viewpoints of rural peasant women, i.e., the Tedurays of Upi, in Maguindanao, highlighting attitudes and perceptions that do not necessarily support stereotypes and prevailing views about indigenous women.

Limitations of the study

A short visit and interaction with community members could not at once bring out silenced voices, and for all its worth, this report could but reveal only a part of their hidden transcripts.⁶ Moreover, there are cultural and political barriers to visibilizing women’s issues that a one-time foray cannot just as easily break through. While the language barrier was remedied by informants’ basic knowledge of Filipino and Visayan, the researcher’s inability to speak the Teduray language enabled local respondents to edit information before relaying it to the researcher. The research’s emphasis on women’s viewpoint, which the researcher made clear early on during the data gathering work, did make the women more assertive and aggressive in expressing their ideas and grievances, but made the men (male respondents who were husbands of the women interviewed) cautious: There was a tendency among them to say what they felt were ideas and attitudes sought by the researcher (e.g., ideas which are supportive of gender equality, rather than their real sentiments) that they may help their women get support for their

organizing project.⁷ The research therefore was not able to fully take account of male local opinion as it may affect organizing efforts for women empowerment *vis-à-vis* the male-led AD struggle in the area.

While there are Bisayan women (married to Teduray men) and Lambangians (natives with mixed parentage, usually Teduray-Lambangian), researcher was not able to differentiate between Tedurays and Lambangians' or Bisayan women's circumstances and perceptions. There was a strongly-held perception and feeling (especially among these particular AD claimants) of "homogeneity"—i.e., that they are one Teduray community – which the researcher did not seek to challenge.⁸

The area, economic life, and social institutions

The area. A mountain community located in the southwestern portion of Maguindanao, Rifao sits on a land area of 7,200 hectares and is inhabited by Tedurays. It is composed of seven sitios: Tenegu, Sigmao, Serangsang, Belangas, Kibungay, Beniringan, and Poblacion. As of 2000, the National Statistics Office (NSO) recorded a total of 119 households and a total population of 526 (The Three Faces of Mindanao, 2005, 83).⁹ Traditionally, Rifao was a much wider area composed of eight sitios, which included Sitio Bantek, Sitio Renti, Sitio Uga, Sitio Timanan, Sitio Ranao Felayan, Sitio Grijan, Sitio Marikulo, and Sitio Bliyugan¹⁰ (Interview with Tamday Moafot, 26 January 2006). Political gerrymandering however kept modifying boundaries in Upi that Rifao shrank to its present size with none of these sitios still remaining with Rifao.¹¹ Moreover, Rifao has been recently relocated from being the southernmost barangay of North Upi to becoming the northernmost barangay of the reconstituted South Upi.¹²

The Tedurays' dwelling units are usually small, sixteen square meters on the average and made of bamboo, rattan, and other forest products. Average household size is six persons, generally composed of a nuclear family. A small household usually consists of an elderly couple and one or two grandchildren. The extended family, as is characteristic of traditional societies, is a common feature. A house may hold a family and a set of grandparents, or two sets of nuclear families, or fragments of two or more families. There would be seasonal occupants like cousins or a distant relative who came to help with farm work, or a disabled child deposited to the care of grandparents. There would be family members

who are seasonally away, like schooling children at a relative's place in another barangay where there is intermediate school, or young adults who found work as househelp or farmhelp in another town. The current conflict in Sitio Bliyugan,¹³ which had dislocated families laying claim to the place, had likewise bloated the household size of some families.

Production and land ownership patterns. Traditionally, the inhabitants of Rifao depended on shifting cultivation. This means living in houses made of light materials that may be abandoned every other season, when the family had to move to another area to cultivate. With the degradation of the forest and land resources, coupled with agricultural technology learned from the Visayan farmers downhill, many Tedurays have adapted not only to sedentary farming but to farm credit practices as well. Almost half of the farming village cultivates yellow corn, on loan from a Visayan trader¹⁴ in Timanan, a town ten kilometers away predominantly populated by Tedurays (Interview with First Kagawad Oray Molunggao, 25 January 2006).

While every Teduray family has owned land, most of these are untitled and may be composed of several strips scattered between sitios in the barangay or between barangays in Upi. The recurring armed tension in Upi brought on by dissident Moro groups¹⁵ and recently by the logging interests of prominent Moro families has forced some families to give up their farmlots and settle in Poblacion Rifao where an Army detachment had been placed to protect the village. The average farmlot for a Teduray household in Rifao is usually a little over a hectare.¹⁶ Half or a third of the land may be devoted to corn production to meet the family's cash needs, a fourth may be planted with upland rice for household consumption, and the rest would be utilized for the production of cassava, banana, vegetables, and other food crops (Interviews, 24-26 January 2006).

For those who do not have carabaos, corn farming (using the traditional native variety) is done through the use of a *bok* (dibble) for planting, and upland rice is still sometimes harvested an armful each time, as immediately needed for food. A one-fourth to one-third hectare farm would usually yield fifteen sacks of *palay* on bad days or thirty sacks if pests like rats or birds did not get there first. Many farming families have however long stopped cultivating rice, especially after the 1997 drought

and the repeated rat infestation. Moreover, the price of palay seeds, at PhP500.00 a can (equivalent to one-fourth of a sack) is increasingly unaffordable for most families (Interviews, 23-25 January 2006).

Only five percent of land in Rifao is alienable and disposable, all of which are located in the poblacion. About two lots belong to Teduray families, an 8-hectare parcel to the Udas Family, and another 8-hectare parcel to the Amando Family. The largest is a 72-hectare tract owned by an Ilonggo named Vicente Grajido who came to Rifao in 1958 as a teacher and had slowly acquired the lands from the Teduray natives in the 1960s through barter. From this 72-hectare land in Poblacion Rifao, an 8-hectare was said to have been parceled out to a mestizo Teduray-Cebuano identified only as a Garcia and a resident of Bliyugan. Grajido's family now lives in Nuro, Upi where many migrants have settled. Other landowners in Rifao include Cebuano Dadoy Teleron and Ilocano Rodolfo Pimentel who have more than ten hectares each. Both are non-residents of Rifao and both their lands are unoccupied (Interviews with Ex-Barangay Captains Pepito Tana and Ricardo Garcia, 25 January 2006).

Debt practices. In corn production for cash, a hectare is usually allotted and a carabao is necessary. Almost all plow farmers are trapped in debt for lack of own capital to finance corn production. In lieu of land titles, draft animals serve as collateral to loan bags of fertilizer, a sack of rice, and money for household expenditures. Not a few Teduray families have lost draft animals this way. Carabaos and horses may also be lost to *tamuk* (dowry) or to cattle rustlers. Less than half of Rifao's farming households still have carabaos which farmers use to work their own fields or a *kemaram* (a hired farm labor) (Interview with First Kagawad Oray Molunggao, 25 January 2006).

A crop failure would mean inability to pay debts resulting to confiscation of one's farm animal. A debt of PhP8,000.00 to PhP10,000.00 is equivalent to one carabao.¹⁷ For less than a hectare, a cropping cycle costs around PhP8,500.00 on loan from the trader inclusive of seeds, fertilizer, and a sack of rice for household consumption (Interview with First Kagawad Molunggao, 25 January 2006). Dependence on the trader's beneficence for loaning them production and consumption needs is taken for granted that many do not even bother to ask how interest rates on loans are computed. Oray, for instance, is not bothered that she and her husband already lost a carabao to Toriales. She understands

that the trader loaned them and they were not able to pay, so he got their carabao instead. She knows, though, that a bag of fertilizer, which costs PhP800.00 when purchased cash is deducted against her crop at PhP1,000.00, and a sack of rice which may be bought at Timanan for PhP850.00 becomes PhP1,000.00 against her corn crop at harvest time (Interview with First Kagawad Molunggao, 25 January 2006).

Poor access to market. Post-harvest facilities are just as nil. There is one dryer and a daycare center converted into a warehouse. There is no rice mill, corn mill, or even hand mill in all of Rifao. Pestles and mortars are used for rice, which usually means long hours of pounding. Transport costs remain a primary constraint to corn producers. On rainy days, which are quite frequent as dry and wet seasons are not so pronounced there, the road would be impassable. But even on dry days, no jeep plies the rough route as there aren't enough passengers to ferry.¹⁸

During harvest seasons a hauler truck would come to load the crops and bring these straight to Toriales' warehouse in Timanan where the nearest corn mill is also located. For those who harvest either earlier or later than most, they have to pay for their own transport costs at a per piece basis. A 90-kg sack of corn grits is charged PhP100.00 by *habal-habal*. Those who have animals transport their sacks of corn across the 10-km distance by cart drawn by a carabao or relay these by horseback.

To buy supplies such as rice, coffee, sugar, gas, and cigarette, some would hike part of the distance from Rifao to Mangga, a sitio eight km away, and get a jeep or a habal-habal that would take them to Timanan. For those who can afford, a habal-habal is taken, which costs PhP50.00 per head, usually with three or four other passengers. To be going to and from Timanan on a weekly or monthly basis has become a sign of good fortune that the marketgoer would not be let alone by neighbors for days on end until her supplies run out. Children hiking to school are a common roadside sight.

Poverty and coping strategies. Money income from corn production is scant and some families supplement this by engaging in farm labor, either in a neighbor's or in the farms in nearby sitios. A day's work is paid PhP50.00, way below the legislated minimum wage of PhP190.00 a day for agricultural workers and lower than what is paid the Visayan farmworkers in the lowlands (PhP80.00-PhP100.00 a day). Those with

carabaos are paid PhP100.00 a day for plowing. For corn harvesting, a farm worker gets one sack for every ten sacks he gathers. The most badly paid are those who sell their labor for a *ganta* of rice. While rice may be bought for PhP45.00 a *ganta* in Rifao, storeowners up this at PhP70.00 a *ganta* if obtained in advance (Interview with Tamday Moafot, 26 January 2006). This means two days of weeding before a *ganta* could be paid.

A vulnerability study comparing income levels in five communities in Lanao Sur and Maguindanao showed that the Tedurays of Rifao have the highest number of farmers and, at the same time, the lowest level of incomes coming from farming. The level of poverty is such that thirty-seven percent of the households have only one meal a day, and only thirty-four percent are able to have two meals a day (MVO 2005).

Traditionally, main staple is rice, but this had been replaced by corn since the 1997 drought. When corn is not available, root crops like cassava and *gabi*, along with banana, are substituted. For those who plant native corn variety, the grits are milled or pounded into fine bits and served as staple food. To economize on their rice supply, they usually mix it with corn or else make rice or corn porridge. Coffee is consumed for breakfast which they themselves sometimes make from rice or corn.

Some families plant vegetables in their farms or backyard lots and raise a goat or two and poultry. But for those whose houses are located in eroded uphill areas surrounded by cogonal grass, vegetable gardening is next to impossible, especially if the wife is tied to housekeeping chores and the care of little children.

Families that raise goats and hogs are less likely to grow backyard vegetables as fencing materials are now hard to come by and growing plants only serve as fodder to grazing animals. Back when rivers and marshes were clearer, the men would catch fish while the women would gather mussels. None of this has remained, however, and all that can be obtained from riversides and marshes are *taro*, *palawan* and *keayos*.¹⁹ Male household heads who alone work the family farm are not inclined to start a vegetable garden with anything other than the usual fare of carbohydrate-rich crops.

For the poorest households, foraging is resorted to, usually by gathering root crops from riverbanks or wild yam, bamboo shoots, and berries from the forest. This low supply of vegetables, exacerbated by lack of safe drinking water and poor sanitation, partly explains the

prevalence of malnutrition and diseases, especially among children.²⁰

Health care and women's reproductive health. Primary health care is almost non-existent in Rifao. There is one barangay health worker (BHW) who does not work for lack of medical supplies, and probably for lack of any incentives.²¹ During the previous administration, the BHW was paid a monthly honorarium of PhP500.00 (Interview with Ex-Barangay Captain and Kagawad Ricardo Garcia, 24 January 2006), but these days there is no sign that there is any budget either for prenatal care or for the BHW's honorarium.

Arbolaryos or traditional healers are also now hard to find and *fandays* are usually called on only for birth assistance. While *beliyans* are still sought, they are usually regarded as spirit healers who specialize in certain types of diseases, as those having to do with offenses made to the *divatas*. Infant mortality and morbidity rates are high with almost every other household having suffered a case or two of death of child at infancy. Diarrhea remains the leading cause of high morbidity, especially among children, followed by malaria, dysentery, skin diseases, and respiratory ailments.

Of the twenty-three married and widowed women interviewed, four had a child each dying at infancy; another four had two; one had four; while another had five. Thirteen had no zero infant death. These women, ages nineteen to sixty-four, have an average of four children (FGDs and Interviews, 24-26 January 2006).

Water and sanitation. There is a crying need for safe potable water and a more dependable water system. At present, one spring serves the entire poblacion. For bathing and washing laundry, women go to the river where children and adults also defecate. Fetching water from the spring is anybody's work, but mostly by children and women who also do the cooking and cleaning of pots and kitchen utensils. Between 5:30 and 6:00 in the morning and between 3:00 and 6:00 in the afternoon, empty gallons would be lined up at the spring and one has to wait twenty to forty-five minutes to fill her containers. To avoid having to take long just fetching water, some get up as early as 5:30 in the morning or do it during siesta hours, between 1:00 and 3:00 in the afternoon. Often, young children would be sent to the spring to wait in line and fill the containers for the parents to carry home later. The prevalence of diarrhea, dysentery, and skin diseases all clearly indicates the deplorable

need for a better water system in the barangay.

Education and literacy. Illiteracy is prevalent, with most unable to read or write. There is a primary school with two classrooms. Grades I and II students are lumped together in one class, Grades III and IV students in another. One teacher-in-charge (TIC) and a teacher aide who did not finish college handle the classes. The latter is paid an allowance of Php400.00 a month – Php200.00 from the barangay and Php200.00 from the municipal office of South Upi (Interview with Ex-Barangay Captain and Kagawad Garcia, 24 January 2006). If one of the teachers got a bout of malaria, the other subbed.

Tensions occasioned by Moro groups passing by or by an armed group encountering another would mean an indefinite suspension of classes. During harvest time or when family farms demanded additional labor, or on lean months when food is so scarce, children would disappear from classrooms (Interview with Froilan Mendoza, 27 January 2006). Those intent in pursuing intermediate level (Grade V and VI) had to set camp among their relatives in Timanan – *magkampo sa kamag-anak sa Timanan* – staying back home in Rifao only from Friday to Sunday. They walk the 10-km distance between home and school.

Illiteracy is pronounced among adults and the elder population, as their parents kept them away from what was perceived as evil foreign influences or they were betrothed at an early age. *Hindi kami nakapag-aral kasi kung magdating ang mga maestro, taguin kami ng magulang namin, matakot sila sa Hapon.* “We were not able to go to school, because our parents hid us from the Japanese teachers. They were afraid of the Japanese.” *Maliit pa ako pinaasawa na kaya hindi nakapag-aral.* “I was very young when my parents married me off so I was not able to go to school” (FGD, 24 January 2005). Of the twenty-three women interviewed, only two were able to reach high school, three got to intermediate level, twelve at primary level, and six had no schooling. Their husbands fared only a little better: Three reached high school, nine intermediate level, seven primary level, and four had no schooling at all (FGD and Interviews, 24-26 January 2006).

Government service and traditional leadership. Government service is a vague presence, represented by a barangay captain who spends more time in Nuro than in Rifao and who borrows the Gender

and Development (GAD) budget without a by-your-leave. No barangay health program exists, and even the twenty-three recruits to the Civilian Volunteers Organization (CVO) are not receiving any honorarium. There is no health clinic, and the nearest hospital is a thirty-bed facility 10-km away in Timanan, South Upi.

Rural electrification is non-existent, so are farm-to-market roads. Once a month when the road to the village is dry, one to three jeepneys ply the route; otherwise, people take the skylab or habal-habal. Except for the head teacher who owns a motorcycle that always runs out of gasoline, none of the residents owns a habal-habal. In the entire poblacion less than ten families are known to own a horse so that the most common mode of transport is by foot.

Traditional leadership, symbolized by the *timuay labi* and the *ke'fedewan*²² is cherished and respected, but this governance system had long been disrupted and superseded by the Philippine government system. Recognized traditional leaders were also the first to get themselves elected as barangay captains and barangay council members. Only very recently, the Timuay Justice and Governance (TJG) system is being revived with the help of NGOs promoting Lumad rights to AD and self-governance. Far from having been permanently uprooted, the traditional system of community governance still survives and stands side by side with the barangay system, sometimes overlapping and conflicting with, and sometimes supporting, the other's functions.

Egalitarianism characterizes traditional social relations. While the timuay is accorded the highest respect on account of his status as village leader, there is no economic disparity between him and his constituents. The traditional system of sharing resources requires everyone, especially the community leader, to look after those who have less. To hurt or deny help to a neighbor in need violates the Teduray's sense of propriety, *kefewo fedew*,²³ and is seen as injurious to community life. Along with this belief, getting ahead is seen as a mark of selfishness, individualism, and arrogance: Loss of faith in this belongingness, in this connectedness to the common lot.

Traditional values and cultural influences. At present, differing levels of interaction with the outside cultures and the uneven entry of market forces brought in new influences and economic conditions that created little changes in ways community people interact with one

another. Little disparities – in terms of income, access to education, and other social privileges – exist here or there, and receptivity to new values and attitudes varies between individuals. Even traditional practices like are getting more than one wife, a privilege accorded a tribal chief and those next in rank, is now slowly being questioned although, in almost every circumstance, the voice of the elders is still to be obeyed above all.

The village being in the lowest rung of the Philippine government system, barangay officials learn from the ways of Moro politicians upstream who have strong devotion to social hierarchies. While wealth accumulation is still a long way off, symbols of change that may set an individual from the rest are already visible. This includes having a son or daughter study in high school or in college in Nuro, being in the confidence of corn traders and the privilege of getting loans others have no access to, owning more than one draft animal, and so on.

One feature of present-day political leadership is the intense rivalry between clans over political position. As barangay officials seek to align themselves with one incumbent Moro politician or another, so do the voting population of Rifao ally themselves with this local candidate or another, usually with one who is kin. This divides community loyalty along family and clan lines. This system works not only for barangay captains and council members. An individual who, by organizational or political affiliation has had access to resources and benefits for dealing with outsider groups (NGOs, government agencies, relief organizations), is expected to distribute the spoils to his immediate relatives and friends.

Another inauspicious product of the contact between indigenous culture and the outside world, particularly between kefeyo fedew and contemporary (Christian) morality is the much lamented about dole-out mentality which many indigenous groups in Mindanao are distinguished for, thanks to self-assessments by donor-fatigue afflicted government organizations (GOs) and NGOs. Relief and rehabilitation primarily characterized Lumad groups' relationship with the outside world, which heretofore has perceived them as victims of neglect, indigents, and laggards in an increasingly developing world. Churches and, later, relief organizations, took turns making mercy missions in Lumad territories in Mindanao which, to some extent, only contributed further to the retardation of their productive capacities, as it made of them perennial dependents of (more powerful) beneficent groups.

Male control of the marriage system. Men control the marriage system and if the elders decide a man may take another wife, the first wife will have little say in the matter. Among younger couples, marriage by choice is becoming common although the practice of paying the bride price is not about to be eradicated as yet. The women themselves are not prepared to do away with the tamok, as that to them is the equivalent of a marriage contract. Only loose women are without bride prices (Interviews, 24-25 January 2006). The man's parents pay the girl's parents her dowry according to what had been agreed upon during the negotiations – usually PhP10,000.00 and two draft animals or, if the man's family cannot produce a carabao or a horse, the cash is doubled, say PhP20,000.00.

Of the twenty-three women interviewed, seventeen married by parental arrangement, six by own choice. Of those whose marriages had been contracted by their elders, only two women were of legal age at the time of marriage; the rest were seventeen and below, with some in their pubescent or pre-pubescent stage.²⁴ Those who married out of their own choice married young, between fourteen and twenty, to boys close to their age. The girls married off by the elders got men who are either as young as they were or five to fourteen years older than them. Two young marriages were arranged between two fifteen-year olds and one between two sixteen-year olds. In cases of girls who were married off during their pre-pubescent years, the marriage was not consummated until they had their first menstrual cycle. At the earliest, they had their first baby at fourteen (one case) or fifteen (four cases) and at the latest at twenty-one. Two of the women interviewed share conjugal bed with another woman, one in obedience to the wishes of the elders and the other one out of a need to find a man who could support her economically (FGD and Interviews, 24-25 January 2006).

Divorce is harder on women than on men as dowry will have to be returned to the man's family, especially if the divorce had been occasioned by her misbehavior. If it is the man who committed a misdemeanor leading to a divorce, no compensation is required of him.

Hardly could an unmarried woman be found in Rifao, as the elders are always quick to marry off their daughters, including the widows. Exceptional is the case of Adelina Lalison who chose not to marry again after her husband died. At forty-nine, Adelina thinks of remarriage with

distaste, having lived for ten years with a man who drank. She now tends the farm by herself. From her income in handicraft making she was able to send all of her children to school, one of whom is now a teacher and lives with her family in Nuro. Her sons help her, but most days, farm labor is all in her hands. She takes pride in the fact that she has not incurred debts, having stuck to the native corn variety and not ever having applied fertilizer into her field of diverse root crops and vegetables (Interview, 25 January 2006).

Parental authority and female mobility. Children are duty-bound to obey their parents, stay in the village, and marry from among the tribe. Extreme economic difficulties have however forced young sons and daughters to seek board and lodge elsewhere. Unlike the better-off income groups in the lowlands or coastal areas who can tap their kin network to gather enough capital to see to the departure of a daughter to work as domestic help abroad, the Tedurays are too poor to even send their children to a high school. The farthest the children could go to find work is the nearest town (Nuro) or city (Cotabato) or the next (General Santos, Tacurong, or Davao) in a neighboring province. Exceptional is the case of sixteen-year-old Irene, granddaughter of sixty-year-old Champion Mopuyang, who, after venturing into the city with high school friends, found a Maranao family to serve and is now in Marawi City and has not communicated for more than a year since.²⁵ But more than the lack of capital to finance their daughters' departure, a greater restraint to female mobility is lack of education.

Women interviewed expressed regret over their ignorance and lack of knowledge over what matters most now in a world they increasingly find harder to deal with. *Ni hindi kami marunong mag-Tagalog, hindi marunong magbasa.* "We can't even speak Tagalog,²⁶ we can't read" (FGD, 24 January 2006). Even those who go out on their own or are sent out to the towns or cities to work as househelps do not always succeed: *Paano, mangmang, walang pinag-aralan, kaya magkonsumisyon lang ang amo, siyempre hindi makatiis, e di mag-uwi lang dito.* "They're ignorant, unschooled. So they get scolded all the time. If they could not stand it anymore, then of course, they go back home here" (Interview with Ex-Barangay Captain and Kagawad Garcia, 24 January 2006).

Access to government resources and defense. Slow economic

development and general backwardness are generally attributed to the area's physical isolation. Roads are impassable on rainy days and the peace situation a little fragile to be attractive for public and private service institutions to visit. In the early 1990s, a health and adult literacy program among Tedurays and Lambangians was implemented by the LDCI, but it did get as far as Rifao (Interview with Froilan Mendoza, 27 January 2006). But more than the inaccessibility and the security problem of visiting service personnel, greater blame is placed on the autonomous government upstream which, being in the hands of Moro politicians, is not expected to look after the welfare of non-Muslims.

In the north, most especially in the uplands of Nuro where the Tedurays live in proximity with the Moro populace,²⁷ tension over land claims threaten everyday life. In Rifao southwest of Upi, where homogeneity is equated with harmony, the Moro threat hangs in the air like a coming pestilence. The Philippine Army's 57th Infantry Battalion up in the hill overlooking the village does provide temporary relief, but the unstopped logging operations in the forest area now claimed by a former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)-commander all too clearly tell Teduray villagers that their livelihood and their lives are far from secure. The MILF command in the Maguindanao area may be talking AD and peace with their leaders,²⁸ but all that is immediately comprehensible to them is what their collective experience with Moro bandits and armed rebels tell them: That safety is getting as far away as they can from the approaching Moros.

Teduray women and mountain survival. Women's role in the survival of the mountain community cannot be overestimated, and while the Tedurays of Rifao are generally of the belief that it is the men who feed the family, everyday life shows otherwise. Thanks to the incursion of capitalist production, men are increasingly involved in corn farming for cash which brings in income only twice a year after four months of working the field. The bulk of this income usually goes straight to the trader and the farmer would usually go back home with a sack of rice, bags of fertilizer, and some grocery. For four to six months between harvesting seasons when the men would be in the field clearing, plowing, and weeding, so much depends on their wives making both ends meet and saving the household from starvation. On top of childrearing and housekeeping chores, Teduray women work beside their husbands and

children, tending the corn or rice farm and growing root crops for their daily consumption. This they supplement with income they earn from engaging in farm labor, which usually fetches them PHP50.00 a day.

During lean months when no rain would fall for days on end, riversides and forest areas would be foraged for kayos and wild berries. Foraging by riversides is usually done by women and children; food gathering and hunting in the forest by men, which they sometimes do in groups. Elderly couples, more attuned to the subsistence economy and home-based production activities of olden times, are not hung on male-female roles and share household chores and farm work without a bother. Younger men, on the other hand, being not as tied to child rearing as their wives, are more inclined to go to community meetings or join armed groups.

The degradation of forest resources and the erosion of the soil due to the introduction of chemical fertilizer have over the years made food production and food preparation more difficult. Women have to walk further afield to graze their goats (and their draft animals if their husbands are not around)²⁹ or to look for water, fuel, and fodder. If men got in trouble for running in an election or for engaging in a political action, it is also the women who go to the authorities and concerned parties to negotiate on their behalf.³⁰

The AD claim and armed conflict

The Claimants. In early 1990s,³¹ tribal leaders, with the help of NGOs based in Cotabato, organized the Mamalo Descendants Organization (MDO), a multi-sectoral organization composed of Teduray and Lambangian tribes, for the reclaiming of the natives' AD. The move was in response to Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Administrative Order (DAO) # 2, which recognizes the IP's right to their AD. By the year 1996, MDO filed an application for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) with the Office of the DENR under ARMM, at the Office of Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC-ARMM), and at the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). The area covered by the said claim includes: North Upi, South Upi, Datu Odin Sinsuat in Maguindanao, and Lebak in Sultan Kudarat. To date, the application remains pending as the claim is being contested by powerful business and political interests in the region.

The IFMA 005 anomaly. Granted to Alonto Kader of the Maguindanao Coastal Logging Concession (MCLC), the IFMA 005 was issued in January 1998, less than two years after MDO's filing of their AD claim. Covered in the IFMA are barangays which are predominantly populated by the indigenous tribes and are in their AD claim. This includes Rifao, Ranao Renti, Ranao Midafa in North Upi, and Kuya in South Upi. Not until November 2002, when heavy equipment moved into Sitio Bliyugan to do road clearing did the community people know about it. This constitutes a violation of the Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) provision of RA 8371 (the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act or IPRA) requiring business entities to conduct consultations with community people prior to entry into the area. But more than the FPIC violation, MDO and NGOs supporting the Tedurays and Lambangians' AD claim are bothered by an entry in the MCLC Comprehensive Development Plan denying the presence of Lumad tribes and the existence of an AD claim in the said barangays.

The Tedurays and Lambangians' opposition to IFMA 005 is primarily anchored on their threatened existence as rightful claimants to the area covered by the company operations. MCLC's non-recognition of their presence in the area virtually wipes out whatever historical right they have to the place. And for the MCLC permit to be issued just after their AD claim had been filed smacks of despotic reaction characteristic of Moro feudal lords.

IPRA being a national law, MDO and member organizations argue, must take precedence over regional and local laws such as those passed in the ARMM. MCLC must therefore abide by the provision which requires all business entities to consult with and get the consent of the AD claimants prior to undertaking any development activities in the area. IPRA also requires that any development plan must coincide with the Ancestral Domain Development Plan (ADMP) of the claimant organization (TLWOI Petition Letter to ARMM Governor Farouk Hussin dated 22 December 2002).

Doubts are also afloat as to who really owns IFMA 005. The LDCI is of the belief that there are more personalities involved other than Alonto (Mindanao Cross, 07 December 2002) and there is strong opinion that the IFMA permit was actually a logging concession to former MNLF Datu Randy Karon, MCLC's Operation Manager. Beside fundamental

issues related to historical land rights, equally important issues such as environmental catastrophes brought on by the logging activities of MCLCI are also being publicized.

The covered areas are residual forests left over by past logging operations which did not bother to undertake significant reforestation. If government is really concerned with preserving the remaining forests of Maguindano, Lumad advocates argue it should have declared the IFMA 005 covered areas watershed because these support two major rivers – Tebuan and Tran – and many tributaries sustaining upland, lowland, and coastal communities. It seems that with IFMA, the government only transferred the management of forest areas to the IFMA holders like Karon, instead of to the community themselves (Mindanao Cross, 07 December 2002).

Displaced families. Before the entry of armed security accompanying MCLC operations, Sitio Bliyugan was home to some thirty families who cleared plots of land in the area to cultivate coffee, food crops, and fruit trees. People from neighboring sitios also sourced their forest materials for their house needs from Bliyugan. Since the field operations of MCLC in 2002, people have kept away from the place as security forces guarded the perimeter.

Among the most affected are the Moafot and Molunggao families.³² Seventy-six year old Tamday Moafot claims that his parents had cleared a total of forty hectares in Sitio Bliyugan which were distributed to eight families, including his own. He planted his own 8-hectare land with rice, corn, root crops, fruit trees, coconut, and coffee, but all these now went to MCLC. To put food on the table, he offers his labor to his neighbor Nalaf Tana, who owns a very tiny sari-sari store in Rifao, in exchange of a ganta of rice each time. If farm work is not available, he resorts to digging root crops like taro, gabi and kayos.

Angry over the fate that had befallen his family, Tamday seeks help from barangay officials to get back to Bliyugan. A barangay captain advised him to go ahead and till unoccupied idle land in Poblacion Rifao, which he refused to do. *Bakit ko trabahuin ang lupa ng tao?* “Why would I till lands I did not clear?” The barangay captain, also a Teduray, told him it is alright to be squatting on another man’s field, because *ganyan ang mga Teduray*, Tedurays are like that, *mag-iskwat-iskwat; basta walang tao, trabahoan. Basta bumag lang kunin, hiram lang*. Taking pride in

the fact that his family had had wide tracts of land in the old days when Rifao was undivided such that his father even donated lands for schools, he could not bring himself to borrow any parcel. For him, a farmer can only cultivate his own land; and whoever cleared the land has the right to own it. *Kung ako ang naglinis, siyempre babawiin ko. Bakit ko ibigay ang linis ko?* “If I cleared the land, of course I will take it, why should I give it to another man?” (Interview, 26 January 2006). The shack he and his wife are occupying, though, is crowded with the families of their two married daughters, with children visibly malnourished, and one five-year old still unable to walk.

If only barangay officials would tell them to go home, Tamday says, they would all troop back to Bliyugan. *Kung magsabi lang ang barangay officials na mag-uwi kami, uuwi kami.* But nobody would give Tamday his word. Instead, what his family is getting are threats from left and right. The Army colonel who promised security from attacks by Moro rebels and armed bandits warned them against going back to their farms. *Kung doon kayo sa Baliogan, babala kayo.* “If you insist on going back there, you go at your own risk.” The Operation Manager of MCLC, Karon,³³ himself challenged all those who have a stake in Bliyugan: *Kung sino ang may lupa dito, magtira dito. Kung sino ang may claim mag-uwi dito para hindi namin makeba ang lupa.* “Whoever has land claims here should stay by their lands, then we cannot have your lands.”

Ancestral land rights and armed conflict. Groups supporting the Tedurays’ AD claim in Upi are not far from linking the Bliyugan case with some bigger stakes which political lords in the ARMM might not so easily give up. For one, the AD claim of the Tedurays and Lambangian tribes is under the territorial and political jurisdiction of the ARMM which is lorded by landed interests. It also lies within the Bangsamoro homeland, the hypothetical territorial claim first put forward by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the 1970s when it waged a secessionist war against the Philippine government. Karon, a former MNLF commander, became DENR Secretary in the ARMM Region and was himself responsible for approving IFMA 005 in 1998. It is believed that he owns IFMA 005 as part of the concessions he was granted for returning to the fold of law and joining government service. Karon is among the crop of former MNLF commanders who found a niche for serving the ARMM bureaucracy. His own wife is mayor of Kalamansig in Sultan Kudarat

(Interview with Tamday Moafot, 26 January 2006).

Stretching from North and South Upi to Datu Odin Sinsuat in Maguindanao and down to Lebak in Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat, the Teduray and Lambangian tribes' AD claim presents a threat to business interests. Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat are hosts to timber license agreements and forestry management contracts which, to many observers, substitute for logging permits. In Maguindanao alone, timber companies like the Cotabato Timberland Co., Inc., the Raiz Logging Co., Ltd., and the MCLC divide the forest areas among themselves, with permits extending to 2021.³⁴ Under IFMA 005, MCLC is permitted to "reforest" 5,500 hectares in Upi until 31 August 2023.

For the Tedurays and Lambangians laying claim to the forest area, the problem they face over IFMA 005 goes beyond expelling logging interests. At the heart of their claim is their right to their ancestral territory which decades of Philippine statehood, and recently of Moro warlordism, have eroded. With rulers in the town centers and rebels at the sitio level, community people in Upi cannot help but feel cornered.

The Rifao evacuees. With or without the AD claim, the Tedurays' and Lambangians' history is a long account of defenselessness against Moro armed groups and, in recent time, rebel groups who take turns staging wars in their vicinity. A strong prejudice against the Maguindanao Moros is therefore palpable, which recent actions by MCLC men further buttressed. To most Rifao residents, Muslim or Moro has become synonymous with the Tedurays' oppression and is almost always equated with harassment, attacks, maltreatment, and abuse (FGD, 25 January 2006).

The Tedurays' homogeneity in Rifao is an attribute of this herd complex which finds safety only in the presence of fellow Tedurays. While the elders may relate of the times when their ancestors would trade forest goods with their Muslim neighbors down the coast for fish and salt, inhabitants of present-day Rifao do not seem to share the memory. Their collective experience with Muslim presence is more recent: Associated with cattle rustling and battles which keep on spilling over into their sitios and which always meant abandonment of their houses and crops and destruction of their property and livelihood.

In 2002, more than seventy Moro armed men identified as MILF ("because they spoke Muslim") entered Rifao and set up camp in the school building where they cooked rice and roasted chicken they shot

on sight. The armed men might have just been retreating and resting en route to another camp or encounter, but the frightened residents fled at sight. *Unang lusob nila iyon.* That was their first attack. The armed men likewise took kitchen utensils and other valuables, fired at their houses, and shot at the men they saw running. Those close enough got to hear the armed men's warning: *Kung magbalik kayo sa barangay ninyo papatayin namin kayo. Pati aso, kung mayroong makita, babarilin.* "If you go back here, we will kill you. No one will be spared, including your dogs, if we see one" (FGD and Interviews, 24-25 January 2006). The second attack, *ang pangalawang lusob*, happened when Karon's men engaged Teduray tribesmen in an encounter right in the middle of the road in 2002. That was when a tanker owned by MCLC was burned by Teduray men opposed to the IFMA 005 operations.

But these were not new encounters for Rifao residents. In 1992, the whole barangay also evacuated when a Maguindanao family was massacred by Tedurays in Barangay Lagitan, a coastal village in North Upi. Bandits made residents a target of reprisal as the perpetrators withdrew and hid in Rifao. Stolen from the murdered family was a .38 revolver, an M-16, and a homemade M-79 (Interviews with Kagawad and Ex-Barangay Captain Garcia, 24-25 January 2006). Then way back in the 1980s, when MNLF rebels stalked the mountain area of Upi, Teduray residents would seasonally abandon rice farms and houses as Moro rebels set up camp in Bliyugan.

Lumad resistance against IFMA. The Teduray-Lambangians' repeated history of flight from Moro hostility is however sporadically peppered with brave acts of resistance. During the 11 May 1998 election, the Tedurays and Lambangians of South Upi fielded their candidate, Teduray Jovito Martin, to run against seasoned Moro politicians. For the two tribes, Martin represented their voice and to have him at the mayoralty would be like being governed by their own and therefore a step nearer to their desired self-governance. The vote turnout declared Martin the winner, but a Datu Israel Sinsuat, son to Datu Michael Puti Sinsuat,³⁵ contested the election results and was later proclaimed winner after a long-drawn if farcical court proceedings. This prompted the Teduray and Lambangian tribes to call for a *soonomon bangkesen* (tribal unity) that culminated in the burning of the South Upi town hall on 15 March 2000. Almost three years later, this act of resistance was again

repeated, with the burning of a tanker owned by MCLC early in 2003. The latter resulted to the evacuation of some 150 families into the forest when MCLC security engaged Teduray tribesmen in skirmishes.

This protest action, directed at the logging operation which blatantly disregarded the standing AD claim of the MDO and the community people, was backed by support groups in the city. NGOs like the LDCI, and sectoral organizations like the Teduray-Lambangian Women's Organization, Inc. (TLWOI) and the Teduray and Lambangian Youth and Students Association (TLYSA) lobbied congressmen, senators, and local executives to step in and put a stop to the MCLC logging operations. A network of twelve NGOs and peoples' organizations (POs) in the province of Maguindanao, the Task Force *Sagip Fusaka Inged*, likewise conducted a fact-finding mission and relief and medical mission in the evacuation site in March 2003. Foremost in the demands of this network of support is the recognition of the Teduray-Lambangian right to their AD which powerful business interests in the ARMM seek to suppress if not altogether abolish.

Casting its appeal in the light of women's worsening conditions, TWLOI itself asked for senators and congressmen to intervene. In its letter to ARMM Governor Hussin, it asked the latter to "give tooth to the IPRA law" and grant the Teduray-Lambangian tribes their CADC. It argued that IPRA itself and the Expanded Autonomy 9054 state that in case of conflict between the Muslim Code and the Tribal Code, the national law applies (TWLOI Petition, 22 December 2002). Based on Regional Legislative Assembly (RLA) Resolution 269³⁶ adopted on 15 August 2003, this appeal seems to have been heeded.

This sets the motion for a continuing AD-based peace agenda which put the Teduray-Lambangian women at the forefront of the peace struggle. In October of the same year, a Lumad Women Peace Summit called for the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the MILF to "recognize and include the Lumad Women Agenda for Peace and Development" in their peace talks (Declaration of the First Lumad Women Peace Summit in Mindanao, 5 October 2003). The MILF had recently included the AD issue as one of its talking points with the GRP, and Lumad groups in Mindanao, having "interlapping land claims" with Moro communities felt threatened with exclusion.

At the local level, however, many deny knowledge as to what caused the armed confrontation or who burned MCLC equipment.³⁷

A negotiation cum peace dialogue was held in which MCLC was asked to suspend operations, but now Karon and his men are back cutting logs and constructing structures – in violation of the IPRA law the Teduray and Lambangian tribes uphold. Among other breaches, MCLC did not get the consent of the affected families thus violating the FPIC provision in IPRA.

On top of these, Karon denies in his statements to the media the existence of Teduray AD claimants, saying that only Maguindanao communities live in the areas covered by IFMA 005. MCLC did call for a consultation with community people, but the latter did not come as an act of refusing to legitimize MCLC operations (Interview with community leaders, 27 January 2006). Confronted with a powerful adversary like Karon and his political and business cohorts, local tribesmen appear to have no choice but engage in hit-and-run tactics. Barangay officials who try to mediate business interests with community demands thus complain, *Ang ikinalulungkot lang naming mga barangay officials walang pormal na reklamo*: No formal complaint has been lodged in the barangay level (Interview with Ex-Barangay Captain and Kagawad Garcia, 24-25 January 2006). Where local organizations are weak, it seems the battle is better fought in the cities and in political offices.

Rifao women and the struggle for peace

The Sen-odoroy Tintu We Fintailan (STWF). Women organizing among the Teduray and Lambangian tribes began as early as 1994 when sectoral representations in the MDO, the organization that spearheaded the Teduray-Lambangian's reclaiming of lost AD, were needed to broaden base of support for the claim. In time, as gender gained importance in project development, Lumad women organizations grew as well, bearing family welfare and equality issues that have become urgent concerns in NGO work.

The STWF (or the Indigenous Women's Organization of Rifao) was first organized in March 1997, with an initial members of fifty-four women. It was then named *Seimuon Segedaw Sefefyfo*. It was reorganized and renamed *Sen-odoroy Tintu We Fintailan* in November 2001 with a new set of officers. At present, it has twenty-four active members (Interview with STWF President Benita Mamalunok, 24 January 2006).

In 2001, the group tried out communal corn farming, goat- and

poultry-raising. The communal farm did not prosper, however, beyond planning stage and the animals did not disperse to other hands. The standing joke among STWF members about hog-raising and animal dispersal projects is, *Bubayin o ibawin?* (Raise or roast?). Besides the intermittent armed conflict that disrupts community life and socioeconomic projects, people just seem not ready to engage in painstaking collective undertakings. Those intent on making a serious business out of the cooperative endeavor are stymied by lack of support from the more complacent members or else debilitated by illiteracy. *Paano ako maglaban, hindi ako makabasa. Pero sa salita lang maglaban ako diyan, pero pag may sinulat diyan hindi ako makabasa.* “How could I fight, I can’t even read. But I will fight with my tongue, but if there are written documents there, I cannot read.”

Still, STWF’s current concern centers around their families’ survival, thus the crying need for livelihood projects that their mother organization, the TWLOI, may grant them. A vegetable growing project is under way to address the high degree of malnutrition among children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers, but scarcity of funds does much to douse enthusiasm. To make much needed cash, they are working for the procurement of their GAD budget which their barangay captain borrowed, but it seems things are slow in coming.³⁸ The current barangay captain also happens to be the husband of their former treasurer who also stands accused of using funds raised for their previous undertaking³⁹ (FGD, 24 January 2006).

Other than the scarce resource, the community women also complain over leadership and organizational management. People tend to think that positions in an organization are a resource that should trickle down to family and relatives,⁴⁰ thus the tendency for officials to run away with organization money at the expense of community welfare. A resigned officer of STWF laments: *Ang hinahabol lang dito, sa totoo lang, pera lang. Pero sa kabutihan ng karamihan, wala.* “Here, what most people are after, is money. As for welfare of the community, zero.”

Survival needs above all. Their economic difficulties are further made worse by the current conflict attending IFMA 005 operations in Bliyugan. Sitio Bliyugan used to be their source of rattan, *nito*, and other forest products from which they could make handicrafts like baskets and food covers, but since the MCLC men cordoned off the area, they now could not even get anything there for their house materials. While TWLOI

and the NGOs in Cotabato City every now and then persuade them to go out and join protest actions and mobilizations, they are often too occupied with daily survival to take part in meetings and collective actions.

The armed confrontations between Karon's security forces and resisting tribesmen do bother them, and they are all for the return of their AD, as they fully sympathize with the families that MCLC expelled from Bliyugan, but most days they would rather just thank the military detachment up the hill for the temporary peace they now enjoy (FGD and interviews, 24-26 January 2006). Of immediate concern to them is the upkeep of their starving children and how to stave off the seemingly endless pregnancies that get so much in the way of their work and learning (Interview with Melanie Moafot, 25 January 2006).

Most of them are convinced that if only they know how to read and write, as well as speak Tagalog, they could do so much better fighting for their GAD budget and other rights (Interview with Adelina Lalison, 24 January 2006; FGD, 24-25 January 2006). One or two had been lucky to have been trained in alternative health and soap-making, but their hands are just always tied with babies and the kitchen to be able to go out and know more (Interview with Melanie Moafot, 25 January 2006).

The TJG and women participation. To strengthen opposition to competing claims launched by logging and business interests, on one hand, and by armed rebels wanting to secure a homeland, on the other hand, Teduray and Lambangian POs, with the help of civil society groups in the cities, are upscaling their lobbying work to rally support for the tribes' AD claim. In the *inged* level, a structure of self-governance known as the TJG is being erected to embody this resistance and this claim. Anchored on the idea that the indigenous tribes had always had its own government system and self-sustaining lifeways before intruders destroyed and supplanted these, the TJG is not only the tribes' cultural response to what they see as a systematic extermination of their cultural heritage; it is also their political organization and their ultimate weapon to win back their ancestral land rights and (lost) political autonomy.

Women's participation in this political movement is represented by TLWOI, of which STWF is an affiliate member. TLWOI is a party to the GRP-MILF peace negotiations. TLWOI's, and the TJG's position, for that matter, is that being the primary casualty of the insurgency and counterinsurgency wars staged in their territory, they have the right to

be represented in these talks, and the right to demand reparations. The granting of their AD rights claim, which they perceive to be the root cause of the ethnic tension in the Maguindanao Province, is the most just recompense for the historical injustice the Teduray and Lambangian tribes, and especially the women, have suffered.

For the women of Rifao, the TJG is a relatively new agenda; what they immediately see is the illegal logging that has now occupied what used to be their territory (Interviews, 25 January 2006). Having been denied entry to what was once public property from which they could source much needed forest products, they understand that someone there had made life harder for them.

In crafting its petition letters to senators, congressmen, and would-be saviors, TWLOI is careful in emphasizing this sorry predicament. The indigenous women being the backbone of family survival deserve recognition and help to enable them to play this role well and perpetuate the race, thus the need to support their struggle to have land to live on and the need to respond to their immediate economic survival needs via livelihood support programs. In organizing indigenous women for the AD claim, a good strategy is thus discussing AD in relation to livelihood and survival (Interview with Froilan Mendoza, 27 January 2006). Otherwise the concept is a little far off their daily grind.

Teduray tradition and women's perceptions. Raised in customary ways and with very little education beyond what is immediately accessible in the villages where they grew up, most women in Rifao are more inclined to abide by the laws of the elders. Market forces and the little exposure they have had to the outside world – sometimes through their children who ventured out and came back – are however slowly changing thought patterns and practices. For one, they have seen how their lack of education was an obstacle in improving their life conditions and how their lack of knowledge about how the world now works is endangering even their very survival. Twenty-four year-old Norisa says that the world in which their elders lived was totally different from now. *Iba ang panahon noon sa ngayon.* To be unschooled nowadays means to be left behind. *Ngayon marami ang nakapag-aral. Maraming Teduray ignorante pumunta sa siyudad, kawawa.*

Even their views of what makes government and effective leadership are now colored by these new desires. Benita, for instance, who together

with her husband, works for the setting up of the TJG, says that she prefers leaders who are educated, that's why she really wants her two children to get some education. *Ang gusto naming mamuno iyong nakapag-aral, pero dapat alalayan siya ng pinakamatanda sa amin, kasi hindi niya alam ang labat ng kaugalian namin.*⁴¹

In their fight for their lands and livelihood, the women recognize as well that one of the impediments to their goals is their own lack of knowledge. Marilyn, who married at fourteen and had her first baby at sixteen, says that being schooled gives one the confidence that ignorance never does. *Kung hindi ka nakapag-aral mahiya ka. Kabit alam mo ang totoo hindi ka magsabi, kasi mahiya ka.* "If you haven't been educated, you are shy. Even if you know the truth, you don't speak up because you feel shy."

Even their inability to speak Tagalog is an obstacle to arguing their way into government offices. Benita sees it as a disability, having been fielded as STWF president to speak with barangay officials and NGOs to make known the tribe's demands: *Mahiya ka magsalita kasi hindi ka marunong magsalita ng Tagalog.* "You cannot speak up because you cannot speak in Tagalog." In the final tally, this hunger for knowledge is all borne out of the need to fight those who knew better. Sixty-year old Champion articulates it best: *Kailangan iyong nakapag-aral para malaman niya ang alam ng nakaaral.* "We need leaders who are educated so that she will know what the learned men know."

The widely held view that it is the man that looks after the upkeep of the family is also slowly being questioned. Forty-year-old Nena Garcia, who spends more time in the field than her Councilor husband, says that women have more work than men. Men clear the land, chop wood, plow the corn field, and bring in money, but women do almost anything – from laundry to cooking, raising vegetables, and kemaraw. Even perceptions about land ownership and property rights are now changing. Feeling the undependability of their husbands' incomes, some women are not adverse to the idea of having their own land. *Para may sarili kaming lupa. Buti kung pakainin ka lagi at mga anak mo ng asawa mo.* "So that you have your own land. You can never be sure that there is always a man to feed you and your children" (FGD, 24 January 2006).

RH and women's rights. While the men and the elders do have control of the marriage system, this does not mean women do not or cannot renegotiate the cultural precepts laid down for them. Obedience to traditional customs is still upheld in most cases, but women are

increasingly beginning to question traditional practices which they find burdensome. Moreover, new influences such as those brought in by Christian missionaries or by children who had worked or were educated in the towns, as well as values they themselves observed in the lowland communities, are slowly making their way into the uphill society. Increasingly, more daughters can now choose their husbands, and in a few cases, may even marry outside of the tribe.

The TJG, the political structure being set up for the Tedurays and Lambangians' self-governance, is moreover explicit in recognizing women's rights and, with the formation of TWLOI, issues such as polygamy, early marriage, pre-arranged marriage, even wife beating, may now be discussed among and by the women themselves. However, family planning services is one area they do not have free access to as yet.

Contraceptives are not readily available and there is no barangay health center or a midwife to go to for advice. *Alam namin iyang tungkol sa magkontrol, pero matakot kami. Tapos wala na iyong mga herbal.* "We know about contraceptives, but we're afraid. And there are no more herbal plants for that." Men, moreover, are not very receptive to the idea of condom use or self-control.

The case of Ophelia Tana. When the elders first informed Ofelia that her husband will be taking another wife, she was surprised. It was not right to disobey the elders, so she consented. She was however mad with anger and jealousy at what she understood to be a betrayal on the part of the husband and the elders. She broke plates and kitchen utensils, and for ten years, her house was in a shambles. Her mother, seeing that she was turning into a bad wife admonished her, persuading her to relent a little or they might have to repay the dowry paid them by her husband's family. She was however implacable. But when she saw that her husband's other wife (who resided in another village and with whom he spent weeks or a month because a son was also schooling there) was doing well, tending her farm, raising hogs and chickens, while her own livelihood stood on a teeter, she decided to put her life back together. The other wife, it turned out, was no shrew and treated her with utmost respect, despite all the abuse she spat at her. The three of them soon became friends and are now generously sharing bed and board under one roof. *Payag akong sa isang moskitero kami matulog, basta huwag lang akong unahan.* "I don't mind sleeping together inside one mosquito net, for as long as he comes to me first."

The case of Lolita Minted. Lolita was sixteen and her husband seventeen, both unschooled, when they chose to get married. A year later, she gave birth but the child died from malaria after two months. She soon had another baby, but this survived a month before succumbing to tetanus. The twins that followed had cleft palates and died from starvation; one after three months, and the other after five. Her fifth child was to die of malaria at six months old. Besides the extreme poverty and the hard mountain life they had to bear, Lolita and family also had to keep on moving to stay away from armed rebels that make nests out of their dwelling places. In 1986, they had to leave their rice farm in Rifao when the MNLF took camp there. They stayed in Barangay Bantek for several years before moving back to Bliyugan, and then to Barangay Rifao when trouble resumed. At twenty-eight, she has five living children all below ten years of age and hardly schooled like herself.

The case of Melanie Moafot. Life in Bliyugan might not be any much better than in Rifao, but having one's own house and rice farm made all the difference. In Rifao, Melanie had to share a 16-sqm hut with her parents and a sister's family. While her own children do not show signs of disabilities, looking after her malnourished niece and nephew who at six could still not walk and talk, on top of her own mothering chores to her five children, get on her nerves. She had been out to town joining soap-making training and health seminars given by women's groups from the city and she longs for more learning other than what she all got. Daily life is however a trying time preparing kayos, making corn porridge for the young children, fetching water, washing laundry, and breastfeeding her baby. She knows about the Church teachings against contraceptives, but she could care less if she could just lay her hands on one if that would make the babies stop coming for once.

The case of Zenaida Tana. Zenaida is second wife to Ofelia's brother-in-law. Only twelve and unschooled when she was married off to an already married man fourteen years her senior, she does not quite share Ofelia's acceptance of the other woman in her husband's bed. The bottom line of her anger and jealousy, she says, is not so much how often the husband makes love with the other wife as how much food he brings in to her table. When he offered to marry her, she already knew he had a family; all she asked him was whether he would be able to feed her and their

children, which he promised to do. Zenaida however feels that he is not being true to his promise as he does not give her equal share of his income. While Zenaida and her children share house with the other woman and her children, they do not share board and maintain a separate farmplot. The husband takes turn working on both wives' farms. Squabbles in the house usually erupt over gantas of rice not equally divided between the two families.

The case of Adelina Lalison. When Adelina chose not to marry again after her husband died from liver disease, the men did not press their luck any further. She felt husbands are just additional burden, especially if they drink. She raised her children all by herself and worked the farm with the help of her sons. In Rifao, Adelina holds the distinction of having sent her children to high school, with the eldest finishing college and now teaching in a high school in Barangay Bantek in North Upi – a feat which many men have yet to match. *Hindi namin maiwasan ang kangalian naming mga Teduray, pero gusto namin magsunod din kami sa gobyerno, magsunod din kami sa batas, kung kaya nga pinaaral ko ang panganay kong anak na babae.* “We can’t get away from our tradition, but we also want to obey government and the law, that’s why I sent my eldest daughter to school.” Another son is going to college, and although her married daughter does not help with finances, she claims to hold no grudge as her daughter already has a family of her own to look after. For a lean woman, Adelina has sinews and muscles other peasant women do not possess: She designs baskets, food covers, bags, and wallets; weaves mats; and makes simple farm and kitchen tools like dibbles, pestles and mortars, and knives. She paid for her children’s tuition from the handicrafts she made. While other women were digging bamboo shoots, gathering wild fruits, kayos, and *palawan* by riversides in those lean months following the 1997 drought, Adelina was making eight baskets a day which she sold at Php25.00 each in Upi. She feels lucky not to be in debt with traders and, unlike other farmers in the village who now cannot grow corn unless they feed it with fertilizers, she has a lush field planted with rice, corn, root crops, and vegetables. She has but one more wish: If only she had a carabao, she would do away with her dibbles and start plowing away.

The case of Maria Alejo. Being married to the head of the barangay has its advantages, but often it is a lot of work. Meetings and visitors

would mean standing by the stove at the kitchen for hours, cooking food, and serving coffee. On lean days, Maria even had to take from her own savings to be able to serve her husband's visitors. Neighbors can be tiresome, too. They always think she had more than the rest of them that they would not stop cadging until her rice bin is empty. She cannot do anything about it, she says, as it is the tribe's custom for headmen to look after the needs of the community members. *Dabil kung hindi, masama ka*. "Otherwise, you're no good." Her husband is in Nuro most days where a son also studies in college. Staying with her in Rifao is a ten-year old nephew disabled by a bullet wound in the leg. Maria feels that whatever she does is never good enough for her neighbors. In a village where the ideal couple is a young woman and a much older man, her being a year older than her husband is taken against her. She and her husband chose to be wed in a civil ceremony, so that it will be legal and binding, rather than in a customary Teduray wedding ceremony. But the women and some of the tribesmen are not happy with it. Others do not even look at her as legitimately married. *May dowry rin ako. Akala nila wala*. "They think I didn't have a dowry. I have."

The case of Benita Momalunok. Benita was eleven years old when she was married off to her first husband Benito Diwan, fourteen years her senior. He died in 1987 and in 1994 she remarried, this time, by her own as much as the elders' choice. Now forty-seven, she heads the local chapter of TLWOI. She chafes at her neighbors' lack of cooperation. *Magpatawag ka ng miting walang umaatend*. "If you call for a meeting, nobody comes." Thrice a year she calls for a meeting but when people come at all, everybody's demanding for projects for which STWF has no funds. She is all support for the Tedurays' AD claim, so that people would know that Tedurays are humans, too, not trees, she said. "They think only Christians and Muslims are humans." *Para malaman nila na tao rin ang Teduray, hindi kaboy. Akala nila Muslim lang at Kristiyano ang tao [sa Maguindanao]*. She regrets she cannot read and write because all the documents on the AD had to be read. *Kabit anong lakas ng loob mo pag hindi ka nakapag-aral wala ka rin magagawa*. "No matter how brave you are, if you cannot read, you can't do much." She had participated in a training in herbal preparation and soap-making and wishes for her organization to proceed with their vegetable growing project which they should have implemented long ago if not for the evacuation. *Hindi natuloy dabil nagbakwet ang mga tao. Tapos ngayon walang pubunan*.

Towards women's participation in peace and development work: Some issues and concerns

Layers of issues beset the Rifao community and it will be long before status of women can be properly addressed. Below are some issues and concerns based on observations made by the researcher and the *voiced* concerns of research respondents.

1. *Basic needs such as water and health services are not available to the community, making mountain survival doubly difficult for women.* The lack of water and the absence of sanitary toilets result to the spread of waterborne diseases such as diarrhea, dysentery, malaria and skin diseases – putting heavy pressure on women who carry the burden of looking after sick household members. The absence of primary health care and reproductive health care (e.g., family planning) services moreover encumbers them with nursing and child care responsibilities while neglecting their own health needs – incapacitating them from participating in community endeavors that address their poverty and powerlessness.
2. *Unavailability of government support and lack of access to appropriate farming technologies put Teduray farmers at the mercy of traders, preventing them from optimizing available land resources.* The lack of agricultural extension services and post-production facilities such as dryers, warehouses, corn and rice mills, including farm-to-market roads, exacerbate high production costs, pushing many farming households into a cycle of indebtedness and worsening food security situation. With the closure of the forest area (occupied by MCLC) to civilians, hunting and food gathering ground has been radically reduced and women no longer have access to forest products for their basket-making and handicrafts.
3. *Capacity-building particularly in health care and reproductive health rights are direly needed.* Lack of information on health and nutrition and absence of medical services and nutrition programs result to high percentage of malnourished mothers and children with disabilities, severe malnutrition, malaria and dysentery. While the women identify their problems, they lack the ropes to better their health status.

4. *There is poor access to basic social services, with the GAD budget at the disposal of the local executive who does not seem to concern himself with women's welfare.* Education work by TLWOI and network organizations along gender and equality issues enabled Rifao women to be conscious of their rights, among which is their right to an allocation from the barangay IRA. Initial inquiry and claim-making by STWF leaders however did not produce any amount as the barangay captain would not even give them the exact amount of the GAD allocation, how much more release it.
5. *Lack of educational facilities results to the prevalence of illiteracy and ignorance among both the young and older population.* With only two classrooms for the entire schooling population, most children cannot go beyond fourth grade. This leaves majority of the young population no choice but to stay in the village and work as farm help – usually marrying early without availing of higher educational opportunities – or going to the nearest town to work as househelp with not much hope of bettering their situation.
6. *Absence of educational opportunities and lack of access to information critical to their survival and struggle impede participation and active involvement in collective action towards change.* Besides closing opportunities to pursue higher education and other choices other than motherhood, lack of education also means being left behind in the climb towards economic development. With the entry of capitalist elements into the village economy, community people – and women particularly – are increasingly getting aware that powerful groups like loggers and political warlords managed to threaten village survival on account of their relative isolation from mainstream information and knowledge system.
7. *The women of Rifao are in the periphery of the struggle for territorial and land rights.* Although the direct casualty of the ongoing armed conflict over AD territory in Bliyugan, most of the Rifao women are hardly aware of the issues surrounding the armed conflict that threaten the peace and survival of the village. While a few of the local leaders were able to take part in dialogues and protest actions in the city and town centers, many remain uncomprehending and uninvolved as so little community discussion takes place as regards AD and related issues.

8. *TLWOF's organizing work is partial to high-level lobbying and advocacy campaigns.* There is pressure politics along the belief that state institutions and political resources may be maximized to serve the interests of the oppressed which is essential in a liberal democracy, especially so that other parties in the contest are powerful entities with strong links to the bureaucracy. That the other contender in the AD claim happens to be a Moro insurgent group engaged in negotiations with a government which is itself fighting to maintain territorial integrity, indeed, makes great opportunity for lobbying work. Still, there is no substitute to painstaking work that would make community people identify and own the agenda and fight for these themselves. Partiality to city-based political action also means that much of the organization's precious – because scarce – resources and energies are spent on conferences and propaganda work not necessarily reflecting or directly serving the immediate issues and the most pressing concerns of the community women.

9. *Contrary to popular notions about Lumad people being tradition-bound and culturally circumscribed, Teduray women are receptive to new ideas and new technology, especially if these served their welfare.* Obedience to elders and deference to authority – often, male – are virtues widely accepted and taken for granted among Teduray women in Rifao. This does not mean however that these precepts are not challenged or renegotiated in everyday practice especially in the face of economic difficulties. Increasingly, more daughters and sons are now leaving the ways of the tribe in exchange for jobs in the cities. Widows, if they have proven themselves capable of feeding their family on their own, may also now choose not to marry again and wives may say no to having more children, especially if husbands have not been bringing food to the table. Even artificial contraception is not so much rejected as unavailed of because of lack of knowledge and opportunity to access and use.

10. *Micro-credit and income-generating projects are slow in coming and so scarce that they often serve to fuel jealousy rather than promote cooperation among STWF members.* People tend to squabble over the tiny trickles of help that come once every other year. There is no distributing democratically a few heads of chickens or a few packets of vegetable seedlings to a

hundred of households all hungry and wanting help; more so if there is no clear long-term socioeconomic program conveying these relief packages. While income-generating projects are often regarded by development NGOs as perks to keep the women involved while the more pressing political agenda (actively engaged in by their husbands and household members who are not as tied down as them to the house and the care of children) are being pushed,⁴² the lack of discussion and community analyses might only serve to create more divisions.

11. *Women's role in productive work remains unvaluated and unrecognized, resulting to continuing prejudice and lack of support for women's entitlement rights.* While the women themselves see that they work more than the men in both the productive and reproductive sphere, low valuation of female labor continues to deprive them of entitlement rights. While the dowry – usually draft animals – is paid on their account, they do not have ownership rights over the same farm animals.
12. *The entry of market forces has modified traditional beliefs and perceptions about land ownership.* The cash economy has crept into the village of Rifao and though there is a wide constituency behind the cultural revival movement advocating communal management of lands and natural resources, especially among civil society organizations (CSOs) in the city, actual agricultural practices and tenurial arrangements in the community level have long been altered by market forces. Titled lands in the *poblacion* are recognized as property of whoever legally acquired them, they be Visayan or native Tedurays. Among the village inhabitants, while claims are not always supported by legal documents, people have strong notions about what belongs or does not belong to someone. Titled lands are perceived as more legitimate than untitled ones.

Conclusions and recommendations

The situation of the rural women in Rifao mirrors the predicament of many indigenous women in the mountain villages of Mindanao where recurring armed conflict continues to damage community life, making mountain survival harder by the day. The situation of the Teduray in Maguindanao is even more difficult: Driven uphill to avoid having to

confront and live in close quarters with lowlanders, their last stronghold of tribal life is now threatened by Moro encroachers. As Moro rulers dominate the power centers in the ARMM, their rights to their lands are endangered further as Moro rebels and loggers harass them in the *sitio* level. This puts the tribe in a helpless situation, with women carrying most of the weight of the economic hardship and unending conflict.

While *women in conflict areas* has become of late an important focus of many developmental activities by international NGOs and local partners seeking ways to attain peace and put an end to poverty in rural Mindanao, most of the projects are concentrated in Moro-populated areas, fueling anti-Moro sentiments from among IPs. Feeling that that they are neglected by policymakers in the ARMM government and victimized by Moro armed groups in the village level, some Lumad activists perceive the funneling of development money into Moro areas as unfair (First Rural Women Assembly, December 2005).

Indeed, peace and development investments in Moro-dominated areas have been substantial to the neglect of Lumad conflict areas that have been hosting the armed rebellions. Being themselves permanent casualties of this armed conflict as insurgent and military operations are staged in their territories, the IPs of Mindanao are now demanding for inclusion in the ongoing peace negotiations, especially after the MILF included the AD issue in its talking points with government. Understandably, organizing work among the Teduray-Lambangian tribes has to be driven around this land rights question, which has also been identified as the core issue in the armed conflict in Rifao. The village women are necessarily a party to this.

However, the situation of the rural women in Rifao is in such a bad state that basic rights have to be fulfilled first before their effective political participation can be enlisted in any peacebuilding endeavor. Below are some recommendations which might prove helpful toward this end.

1. *Political education must begin with what the women know and immediately need.* Unlike their parents who rejected education as anathema to tribal life, the women of Rifao recognize their illiteracy and lack of education as an impediment to survival in a harsh world ruled by powerful “learned” men. Their children’s and their own failed forays into the cities have likewise taught them the importance of knowing the *lingua franca* in the province, ignorance of which resulted to their lack

of self-confidence in dealing with dominant groups and oppressor groups. This points out the need to set up alternative learning spaces where women may be taught basic literacy and communication skills (including speaking Tagalog) as well as basic knowledge on laws and legislation that may better help them understand issues related to the AD struggle. More importantly, group activities that engage women's involvement as well as regular group meetings where community problems and women's concerns are discussed must be encouraged, as these will help increase awareness and strengthen commitment to collective goals.

2. *Basic health needs should be immediately attended to by accessing available barangay resources.* One debilitating factor to community involvement by women is the burden of child care which eats up a lot of their time and energy. Sickness and hunger in the family are everyday stresses made worse by the absence of basic health services, toilets, and water facilities. This calls for a social welfare budget audit in the barangay council, including the GAD budget which the local executive is apparently withholding. This can only come about if the community women are made aware of their basic rights to government service.
3. *In the absence of a barangay health clinic and a tangible health program, an alternative primary health care program must be installed.* The prevalence of severe malnutrition among young children and lactating mothers, malaria, dysentery, and other communicable diseases underlines lack of access to basic health knowledge and health care skills. While increasingly questioning traditions which they find oppressive (polygyny, parentally arranged marriages, etc.) and now slowly fielding questions and demands related to their sexual and RH rights, most women are still unable to challenge marriage practices, especially those related to control of their reproductive functions. An alternative health care program should be able to not only control the spread of communicable diseases, but must also respond to the need of women to control their pregnancies.

4. *There is a need to introduce appropriate farming technology in the village and for women farmers to access basic farming technology.* A seed dispersal and vegetable growing program is seriously needed, especially in the face of high rate of malnutrition affecting young children and lactating mothers. This should be coupled with an appropriate farm management technology that factors in space, slope, and soil quality. Farmers should be gradually drawn away from production practices that degrade the soil and ensnare them into indebtedness to traders. Women must have equal access in these trainings and farm management technology in keeping with their important role in production activities.
5. *There is a need to reorient assistance programs from relief to community building.* Relief operations are appreciable given that the community is constantly hostage to armed conflict. But help groups serving IPs need not come to Rifao only to distribute relief goods. There is a pressing need to work with community people on a day-to-day basis, enabling and incapacitating them to address their economic needs and build a community defense mechanism. The tendency of church people and help groups to zero in on the tribe's and the women's victim status is moreover less than empowering, as this only promotes dependence on Christian beneficence – especially if there is no visible community organizing and community building strategy in place.
6. *Advocacy in the cities and town centers must be balanced with intensive community building work in the village level.* There is a need to field community organizers willing to do painstaking work with community people and link community work with city-based advocacy campaigns. The AD claim and the TJG have to be rooted in the historical struggle of the Teduray-Lambangian tribes for survival, and organizing and education work among the AD-TJG constituents should fall along this line. In enlisting women's participation, care should be taken to the extent that the new social structure being set up is attuned to their present needs, rather than hung with romantic notions about customary laws and traditions that may no longer have any political use. Traditional division of labor that assigns women in the kitchen while the men talk has to be reframed and greater female involvement

in leadership roles should be encouraged. Attentiveness to women and family welfare in the ADMP-TJG level would likewise assure women that they have a stake in the future being built, thus ensuring their full support.

7. *The cultural regeneration project as embodied in the AD-TJG system should be defined and spearheaded by the community people themselves based on their needs and lived experience with tradition and change.* Goals related to the construction of a just society based on indigenous knowledge and practices remain largely undefined and unarticulated – at least in the community level – and had to contend with competing influences, the most obvious of which is the modern political system (and ideologies that came with it) that had long assimilated minorities into mainstream politics and economy. Assertions related to the superiority of the indigenous ways as against modern government systems had to come to terms with market forces that continue to draw people away from the tribal way. Rebuilding of the social infrastructure that will support the TGJ had therefore to come from people's understanding of tradition and modernity, born of their collective experience and choices.

8. *Building a defense infrastructure for the AD-TJG depends, most of all, on the full support of the tribe out of the belief in the moral superiority of the alternative system being set up.* There is little hope that a CADC will be granted under the present ARMM government considering the powerful logging interests sitting in the ARMM's bureaucracy. Even the MILF that itself has an alternative vision of government seems far from granting more than a limited territorial right to other contestants to the AD claim within the Bangsamoro homeland which it is carving for itself. The movement for setting up an autonomous territory and self-governance for the indigenous peoples of Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat via the TJG might be the ideal and more viable option as yet, but it can be a long haul that might be toppled yet by more dominant social and political forces. This calls for a long-term political agenda drawn and fought for by the indigenous communities themselves.

9. *In relation to the above, research and documentation work supporting community building work should be a continuing process pursued and participated by both city-based advocates and village activists.* Research and documentation work should be able to establish the legitimacy of the Teduray-Lambangian land claims and draw mass support for the AD-TJG system being built. Research and documentation work should also monitor and identify ramifications and modern outgrowths of these ancestral claims and tradition-bound concepts so as to be politically useful to current debate and struggle. As importantly, research and documentation play a crucial role in visibilizing women and bringing to the fore the tribe's yet unwritten transcripts.

Notes

¹ This research report was completed in December 2006, long before the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) became an object of violent contention between government and the MILF. This agreement would later be challenged and rejected by various sectors of society, including some congressmen and senators, forcing some MILF commanders to declare war on Philippine government.

² IFMA is issued by the DENR to qualified companies to reforest open brushlands with wood species.

³ The "tripeople" development approach, popular among Mindanao NGOs, rests on the assumption that Mindanao is composed of three major groups, namely, the Christian settlers, the Moros, and the Lumad groups. This framework has been challenged by some researchers and intellectuals (this researcher included) who argue that Mindanao is multi-ethnic, not tripeopled, and economic and social formation within these three groups are uneven that they do not hold homogenous claims and interests. The ethnic groups within these major formations do not also share common history or common struggles.

⁴ One critique of the welfare approach is its stereotyping of women and the utilizing of the image of the poor women to sell the micro-credit projects which confine them in their roles of reproductive mothers and managers of the thin family resources, and has little to do with creating a new world (Mestrum, Francine. 2005. In <http://www.risq.org/article452.html>).

⁵ Defined here as that body of knowledge dominated and controlled by white males. The Eurocentric masculinist process of knowledge-creation and validation came to be challenged only with the development of feminist

scholarship. Black feminist theorist Collins contends that while the institutions, paradigms, and any of the elements of this process may not necessarily be managed by white males themselves, but the standpoint and the interests that are represented are those of the powerful white males (Collins 1989, 751).

⁶ The term refers to those opinions, beliefs, ideas, and values that are kept or driven underground by subordinate groups when dealing with hegemonic powers (Scott, 1990 cited in ICIMOD, n.d.).

⁷ The dole-out mentality is rather strong among the Tedurays of South Upi. "Project" is generally misconstrued as help in the form of cash or food donation for family support and sometimes in the form of seedlings or capital for hog-raising, vegetable gardening, poultry or any other income-earning activity.

⁸ All the respondents interviewed identified themselves as Teduray, thus the use of Teduray in describing Rifao. Where necessary, Teduray-Lambangian or Teduray and Lambangians is used.

⁹ There is no way to determine how this figure was arrived at, for even as MVO is quoting this statistic, a community assessment it undertook in the Maguindanao Province between November 2002 and May 2003 listed 522 households for Rifao (see *Broken lives, fragile dreams*, p 15).

¹⁰ Spelled *Baliogan* in official government statistics and news articles, Bliyugan is the local (Teduray) spelling. Prior to the political gerrymandering orchestrated by Moro politicians which effectively reduced Teduray territory and population into insignificance, Bliyugan alone was a thriving mountain village inhabited by more than fifty families. The trouble brought by lawless elements in the late 1990s, and later the tension brought on by Karon's logging operations, dispersed these families into the different barangays in South and North Upi, many of them distributed in the six (reconstituted) sitios of Rifao (Interview with Kagawad Ricardo Garcia, 24 January 2006).

¹¹ Sitio Uga became Barangay Kuya and like Rifao, had been reclassified as belonging to South Upi. Sitio Timanan became another barangay north of Rifao. Both have denser populations compared to Rifao and are hosts to a handful (some ten percent of the total population) of migrant settler families.

¹² In 1974, Teduray and Lambangian leaders made a pact with Datu Michael Puti Sinsuat, then town mayor of an undivided Upi. Under this agreement South Upi was to belong to the Teduray-Lambangian tribes and will be managed by the natives themselves. This agreement became the basis of Presidential Decree 1011 issued in 1976, which created North Upi and South Upi.

¹³ Sitio Baliogan is now part of Barangay Resa in North Upi.

¹⁴ There is one Visayan trader, an Ilonggo known only as Toriales to Tedurays in Rifao, who has monopoly of corn trading in Timanan.

¹⁵ The MNLF in the 1980s and the MILF in the 1990s up to the present. Armed conflict in Teduray territory could however be traced back to the seventies when armed confrontations between the *Ilaga* (an armed group organized to fight Moro rebels) and the *Blackshirts* (a Moro armed group) spilled to Teduray

territory. In the eighties, cattle rustling perpetrated by Moro bandits likewise became rampant in the mountain areas of Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat, victimizing Lumad villagers.

¹⁶ The household survey conducted by Mindanao Vulnerability Observatory covering three barangays (Renede, Kuya, and Rifao) also indicated an average farming size of 1.6 hectare for every Teduray household.

¹⁷ The Visayan term they use to describe the act of paying the trader with their carabao is *bira karabaw* (literally, drag or pull a carabao by the rope), the term they also use to describe cattle rustling.

¹⁸ Largely a subsistence economy and still enjoying a predominantly “communal way of life” (in terms of sharing food resources with kin and neighbors), very minimal cash circulates around Rifao.

¹⁹ *Kayos* is a tuber that grows wild in the forest. Unlike other edible root crops, it requires several days of preparation (soaking and washing in running water, peeling and slicing into thin chips, drying, etc.) before it can be cooked as it contains a toxic substance which can be fatal when not extracted.

²⁰ MVO records a disability rate (percentage of disabled household members) of two percent of the fourteen houses included in its survey. Visits to houses by this researcher revealed that most of these are children below five with speech and motor disabilities or visible cases of severe malnutrition.

²¹ The researcher was not able to reach both the barangay captain and the BHW concerned to inquire about the barangay health program, but interviews with women (25-26 January 2006) revealed that there is no prenatal and postnatal care program for mothers and babies.

²² The *timuay labi* is the tribal chief, the *ke'jedewan* his counselors. Together they make up the tribal council or what is now generally called the Council of Elders.

²³ *Kefewo fedew* is considered every Teduray's virtue. It is many things: Givingness, generosity, humility, sympathy. On this high virtue rests the cohesiveness and peace of the community, and therefore, its survival.

²⁴ Of the twenty-three, three girls were aged eleven when married off, one was aged twelve, two aged thirteen, another aged fourteen. Five were fifteen, two sixteen and one aged seventeen. The remaining two were aged eighteen and twenty, respectively.

²⁵ Champion's other ward, seventeen-year-old grandson Erwin, works in a restaurant in Cotabato City, earning a salary of PhP1,000.00 a month and sending a few hundreds every once in a while.

²⁶ The language taught in school and the *lingua franca* in Cotabato and any city in the Philippines.

²⁷ Fear for their lives is a recurring complaint of Teduray and Lambangian residents, since unlike the Moro residents who have “armed support” to their land claims, the Tedurays are unarmed, peace-loving people (Inter-Tribal Consultation, December 2005).

²⁸ There is an ongoing peace negotiation between Teduray leaders and the MILF broached by NGOs and civil society groups. In the talking points is MILF's recognition of the Teduray and Lambangian's right to their AD.

²⁹ The revival of the AD issue which engages the active participation of male leaders has repercussions on family labor. Wives of tribal leaders not only had to cope with doing work their husbands leave behind, but also the added burden of having to support their husbands, morally and financially.

³⁰ Such is the case of the two wives of a Ex-Barangay Captain Pepito Tana who was dragged, along with his carabao, by armed men before election time. The two women followed him, negotiated with his captors, and were able to reclaim him a day later after they brought with them two more carabaos which they themselves dragged by the rope from their house in Rifao to Sitio Lagitan in Barangay Mite where the men were waiting (Interview with Ophelia Tana, 24 January 2006).

³¹ Documents have conflicting accounts as to the year MDO was formally organized, some stating 1992, and others 1994.

³² The first native families who settled in Rifao are the following: Moafot, Molunggao, Moaming, Manguda, and Bandara. Most inhabitants of Rifao descend from these families (*The three faces...* 2005, 84).

³³ Also known to community people as "Commander Randy."

³⁴ This data is sourced from a photocopied document from Forest Management Bureau-ARMM, no date.

³⁵ See footnote no. 9.

³⁶ Resolution Adopting Republic Act 8371, otherwise known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, as the Legal Framework to Recognize the Rights of the Indigenous Cultural Minority in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, "recognize the rights of the indigenous cultural minority in the ARMM" and recognizes RA 8371 as the legal framework in recognizing indigenous rights in the autonomous region "until a regional law for the purpose will be enacted."

³⁷ Some barangay officials blame the incident on Tedurays who are themselves engaged in illegal logging (Interviews, 24-25 January 2006).

³⁸ A training on GAD enabled the women to go to the barangay captain and asked for this fund. They were informed their GAD budget is PhP10,000.00. An interview with ex-Barangay Captain and Kagawad Ricardo Garcia (himself a former barangay captain) informed this researcher that annual IRA of Barangay Rifao is PHP400,000.00 which means the women have a PhP20,000.00 GAD money, not PhP10,000.00. During his time (1997-2001) he appointed a Barangay GAD Chair to administer the PhP20,000.00 GAD budget which was spent on a hog dispersal project.

³⁹ An animal dispersal (goat- and poultry-raising) project was earlier tried between 1999-2003 during the first phase of the women organizing work,

wherein women were also asked to give monthly contributions for their communal production activities. None of this remained, according to former Auditor Adelina Lalison (FGD, 24 January 2006).

⁴⁰ A hog dispersal project for women was accordingly implemented under the previous barangay administration, money for which was sourced from the GAD allocation. Non-beneficiaries are however of the opinion that the dispersal stopped at the Ex-Barangay Captain's immediate relatives. (Interviews, 24 January 2006).

⁴¹ Getting an education and learning the ways of the other world is a mark of status that sets apart an individual Teduray from the rest of the tribe. While it is looked upon as an achievement, this "getting ahead" is likewise regarded as getting alienated from the ways of the tribe. Most educated Tedurays also choose to live in the towns and cities than go back among the village people, abandoning cultural precepts kept by the elders.

⁴² In other cases, livelihood and family welfare programs are used to keep the lid on the men's rebellion, as what might be said of the micro-enterprises and safe motherhood projects in peace and development zones: Help women manage the thin family resources and take most of the burden, too, that the men may take it easier and not think of making trouble against the state.

Glossary

arbolaryo – herbalist, a medicine man/woman.

beliyan – shaman, spiritual leader and healers who can communicate with nature spirits to cure patients of ailments.

bira karabaw – the Bisaya term (literally, "to drag or pull a carabao by the rope") Tedurays used to describe the act of paying the trader with their carabao.

divata – spirits believed to be dwelling in nature; also called *segoyong*.

funday – traditional midwife; also called *rhayama*.

gabi – an edible root crop.

habal-habal – also called *skylab*, a passenger- and cargo- ferrying motorcycle which is a common mode of transportation in mountain areas.

bok – dibble; a long heavy rounded stick with a pointed bottom used as a tool for opening ground for sowing.

inged - the community or tribal village.

kayos – wild yam; a root crop.

ke' fedawan – counselors to the tribal chief, the equivalent of present-day council members.

kefewo fedew – givingness, sense of generosity which admonishes one from hurting another person. A highly valued virtue among the Tedurays, violation of which is seen to be injurious to community life and is regarded with disapprobation.

Lambangian – subtribe of the Teduray which is half-Teduray and half-Manobo. The

Lambangian tribe is said to be the result of intermarriage between the two tribes.

Lumad – a Visayan term for “native;” a collective name for the IPs of Mindanao.

rhayama – native midwife; birth attendant.

Sagip Fusaka Inged – literally Rescue Ancestral Land, an alliance of twelve NGOs and POs in Maguindanao Province supporting the Tedurays and Lambangian struggle to reclaim their ancestral domain.

Sen-odoroy Tintu We Fintailan – Indigenous Women’s Organization of Rifao.

sitio – administrative and political sub-unit in a barangay.

soonomon bangkesen – a call for tribal unity preceding a collective action in response to an oppressive situation besetting the tribe.

tamuk – dowry or bride price a groom pays the girl’s parents to procure her hand in marriage.

timuay labi – the tribal chieftain, the village head.

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