Learning to be Indigenous: Education and Social Change among the Manobo People of the Philippines

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of PhD Social Anthropology in the Faculty of Humanities.

2012

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LIST OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................. 4
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS ...................................................................... 5
GLOSSARY ............................................................................................................................... 6
ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................. 6
DECLARATION AND COPYRIGHT STATEMENT ................................................................. 10
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ............................................................................................................. 11

CHAPTERS

INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................................... 12
Tagpalico, Agusan del Sur ................................................................................................. 13
The Philippines ................................................................................................................... 14
Indigenous Peoples ........................................................................................................... 18
The Manobo ....................................................................................................................... 19

CHAPTER 1 – Person, Place, and Productivity ........................................................................ 26
House Groupings and Domestic Routines .......................................................................... 26
Demographic Changes and Movement in Settlement ....................................................... 30
Farming ................................................................................................................................. 32
Sharing and Local Forms of Exchange .............................................................................. 35

CHAPTER 2 – Making Households and Maintaining Tagpalico as a Community of Relatives ....................................................................................................................... 40
Recognising Relatives and Name-giving ........................................................................... 42
Establishing Identities ......................................................................................................... 44
Marriage Practices, Land Ownership, and Settlement Patterns ........................................ 45
Getting Married and Failed Marriages .............................................................................. 46
The Case of Mona ................................................................................................................ 49
Giving Birth and Having Children ..................................................................................... 52
Outsiders as Kauban (Ally) ................................................................................................. 53

CHAPTER 3 – Indigenous Politics and Practice: Manobo Leaders ........................................ 55
The Leader as Learner ........................................................................................................... 55
Indigeneity ............................................................................................................................ 56
The Manigaon of Tagpalico ................................................................................................. 58
Conflict Resolution and Mediation .................................................................................... 62
Ritual Leaders and Speakers ............................................................................................... 66
Representing the Community .............................................................................................. 70
Links to Other Organisations .............................................................................................. 71
Dealing with various ‘Authorities’ ....................................................................................... 73
Inconsistencies ..................................................................................................................... 75

CHAPTER 4 – The School as Military Free Zone and Mission in the Mountains .................... 77
‘Peke nga Eskwelaahan’: Issues in the Institution of the School ........................................ 78
The School Re-makes the Community ................................................................................ 85
Learning to Teach in Tagpalico .......................................................................................... 87
The Social Organisation of Teaching .................................................................................. 90

CHAPTER 5 – The School as a Place for Becoming Educated .................................................. 95
Schooling as Sacrifice of Time and Money .......................................................................... 95
Schooling Changes Children’s Lives .................................................................................. 97
Getting Acquainted with School ....................................................................................... 98
Parents’ Participation and Children’s Aspirations ............................................................. 106
Literacy and Numeracy ...................................................................................................... 108
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Map of Southeast Asia</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Map of the Province of Agusan del Sur</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Map of Agusan River Basin</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Some staple foods that are locally grown in Tagpalico</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Logs on their way to the buying station</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Spot Map of Tagpalico</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Marriage ritual</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>Manigaon</em> performing a ritual</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Manobo leaders attending the <em>Datu</em> Assembly</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The School in the Tagpalico Community</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>A Classroom in the Tagpalico School</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Teachers on their way to Tagpalico</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Grazing the <em>keybow</em> – a role that children perform outside school</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Learning to participate in school</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Parents in the weekly <em>pahina</em></td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Schoolchildren performing a Manobo presentation during a school event</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Young children showing the <em>Binaylan</em> dance</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>A Manobo leader speaking to schoolchildren</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Parents discuss their concerns with a nun during a school activity</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Graduates of the Tagpalico School</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALCADEV</td>
<td>Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBCP</td>
<td>Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>Communist Party of the Philippines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DepEd</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECIP</td>
<td>Episcopal Commission for Indigenous Peoples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSUU</td>
<td>Father Saturnino Urios University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKSP</td>
<td>Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Indigenous Peoples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>Indigenous Peoples Apostolate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPM</td>
<td>Indigenous Peoples’ Ministry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPRA</td>
<td>Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSM</td>
<td>Missionary Sisters of Mary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCIP</td>
<td>National Commission for Indigenous Peoples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTCA</td>
<td>Parents-Teachers-Community Association</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>Securities and Exchange Commission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SILDAP – Sidlakan</td>
<td>Silingang Dapit sa Sidlakang Amihanง Mindanao</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLLCHS</td>
<td>San Luis Lumad Community High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SusAg</td>
<td>Sustainable Agriculture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>Tribal Filipino Apostolate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GLOSSARY

abyan – spirit guide of a baylan or healer
anak – child
apog – lime
apugan – altar
araw – day of commemoration of a place; anniversary
baboy-ihalas – wild boar
bagani – local Manobo warriors; village defender
balanghoy – cassava
bangko – altar
banwa – house groupings or clusters
baon – tuck money
barangay – smallest government unit
barrios – the Spaniards introduced Christianity to the country and organised communities into a central political system.
bata – young
baylan – healer; shaman
baylo – form of borrowing and exchange
binaylan dance – a dance imitating the movements of a baylan (healer) during festivities.inunyagan – individuals baptised into Catholicism
bolo – machete
bugas mais – corn rice
buhat-buhat – prayers
bulok – slow learner; dull
bunae – payment made by a person for maligning another person’s name with an unfounded negative remark.
bunyag – to baptise
Buwan ng Wika – Language Month, usually in August, is the nationally declared time when languages of the Philippines (Tagalog and local languages) are given importance in subject areas taught in school.
carabao – water buffalo
chismis – rumours or gossip
dagnay – nickname
daru – plough; plow
datu – headman; leader
diwata – supernatural beings; spirits
duma – tubers
duway – the practice of having two or more wives or polygyny
edukado – educated; schooled
edukasyon – education; also means formal schooling
eskewelahan – school
fiesta – commemoration of a patron saint of a community
gaba – negative karma
galiko-liko – meandering
ganas – the practice of bringing the wife to the husband’s family or home after the wedding
gi-buya – betrothed
gihikyad – to unroll (as in a mat)
ginamos – fish paste
ginikanan (ikaduhang) – (second) parent
gituboy – appointed; selected
gulay – vegetables
hayo – spoiled meat
hungos – cooperative organised work similar to pahina
ikaduhang ginikanan – ‘second parents’ of children, which teachers are also regarded as
indang – a local itchy grass
itain – to be tagged along in company of someone
kababayen-an – women (group of)
kabatan-unan – youth; group of young people
kabayo – horse
kado – forest
kahimunan – ritual; festivities
kalibre – cassava
kamote – sweet potato
kamyot – small bag
karenderya – eatery; place where cooked food is sold
karlang or gabi – taro
kasulatan – written agreement
katilingban – community
kauban – ally, company, friend, or being in unity with other people
kendi – candy
keybow – another term for buffalo
kulafu – a commercially-produced wine used in rituals
kultura – ‘culture’; beliefs and practices of a group of people that makes them distinct
kumbiti – wedding feast
lasang – densely-forested areas
liko-liko nga dalan – meandering road, path, or trail
linaw – a peaceful time
linung-ag nga bugas mais - cooked corn rice
Logdeck – a deserted logging station
lumad – indigenous; indigenous peoples
lumadong edukasyon – indigenous education
maayong kinaiyahan – positive values and character of a person
madudown nug dumaya – the ability to play and manoeuvre well
madudown nug pamaba – the ability to speak well
Magbabaya, the supreme god
mais – corn
makabayan – patriotic; nationalist
mam-ori – betel nut
mananabang – local midwife
manglampas – to clear a portion of land
manigaon - male leader; elder
moro - islamised groups
nabag-o na – refers to a person who has become ‘different’ and ‘changed’ especially in attitude and actuations.
nailad – cheated; fooled
Nanay – term of reference for ‘mother’
nilampos – successful
organisado – organised group or community
pabuto – fireworks; firecrackers
pahinatagay – sharing
pahina – cooperative work in clearing lands and planting crops
palay – rice
pamayas – ritual of thanksgiving
panglawas – pertaining to the body and health
pangudab – a ritual to introduce newcomers to the spirits or to inform them about an event
paryente – relatives; kindred
peke - fake
‘pilot’ - ‘pilot roads’; main roads
pulgada – length of measurement known by the distance between the outstretched tip of the middle finger and thumb.
purok – zone; group of households; neighbourhood
rebelde - guerrilla; rebel
saka-sikreto – the time when a man goes to a girl’s house for the first time to declare his intention to marry the girl.
saka-tando – refers to the moment when the man returns to the girl’s house to ascertain the decision of the girl and her family.
sa-up – land caretakers or tenants
saging – banana
sikaw – shyness; shame; embarrassment
sili – cayenne; chilli pepper
tag-bukid – people living in the mountains
tagbanwa – spirits that live in the environment and land that are being shared with people
takdol ang bulan – full moon
taligsik – raindrops; drizzle
 tampuda – a truce or peace pact
 Tatay – term of reference for ‘father’
 tig-birada – person who drags and hauls timber
 tingpugas – planting season
 tinuod – real
 tribu or tribo – the term used to refer to one’s ethnic group, similar to a ‘tribe’
 tud-um – song; poetry, story, or narrative that is sung or chanted
 uma – farm
 utan – vegetables
 utaw – a person
 utukan – intelligent; smart
 Yumbagan – means ‘a place where people gather or meet’; the name of the people’s or community’s organisation where the Tagpalico school is located
ABSTRACT

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Learning to be Indigenous: Education and Social Change among the Manobo People of the Philippines

November 2012

This ethnographic study describes the intersection between politics and education, and between discourses and practice pertaining to indigeneity among the Manobo of Tagpalico in a highland area of the Philippines. The analysis reveals the interrogation of my own personal values as I came to understand what are held to be important values by the Manobo. For example, my idealistic perceptions of indigenous leaders were challenged by what I came to appreciate about their leadership skills relative to strategic and situated participation in the context of complex relations with various outsiders. This study further explains how adults and children actively engage in social processes through which they negotiate what counts among them as significant, appropriate knowledge and learning. It discusses how global discourses of education, literacy, and indigenous peoples are spoken about in ideal terms, but enacted differently in local practice.

Salient in understanding this study is an appreciation of how the role of learning in practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) plays an important part in situated participation of actors in the educational enterprise. Against a background of local understanding about what it is important to know about – principally farming and other economic activities - and international discourses of indigeneity, schooling, literacy and development, children, parents, leaders, teachers, and nuns have appropriated and negotiated their notions of being ‘educated’ and ‘indigenous’ within a social space that is the school setting. As the Manobo explore what it means to be ‘educated’ in a politically volatile environment, they also learn to use their understanding of what it means to be ‘indigenous’ in order to negotiate their positionalities relative to external groups like the nuns, teachers, anthropologists, the military, guerrillas, and other non-Manobo groups.

This study argues that learning to become educated transforms understanding of what it is to be a more valued person in the community, which altogether translates into significant differences in the children’s sense of self or personhood. Children are allowed to negotiate their social position within the family and the community through education but at the same time it also creates new forms of ‘inequality’ and ‘social separation’ (Froerer, 2011:695). For example, emerging forms of social differentiation in Tagpalico are evident in the processes through which more female members are becoming educated, bringing in a greater contribution to the family’s economic resources and thereby, developing a sense of choice about their lives as ‘individuals’ in charge, to a certain extent, over their own destinies.
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In my journey of doing this research work, I wish to thank the Manobo of Tagpalico, the teachers, and the Missionary Sisters of Mary for allowing me to conduct this study in their school and community. This work is dedicated to you.

I am grateful to the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program, especially the people behind the IFP Philippines, for giving me the opportunity to pursue this PhD work.

I cannot thank enough my Supervisor, Dr. Gillian Evans, for the guidance, support, and inspiration during the whole process.

I also wish to thank Prof. Penny Harvey for her insights, as well as my thesis examiners for their valuable comments.

To all my Professors, classmates, and friends in the Social Anthropology Department of the University of Manchester, thank you for your comments and questions regarding my work. Special thanks also to Marie Waite and Ann Cronley for patiently giving me advice on submission matters.

To the Intal Family, Nolan and Tata Caliao, Joan Gervacio, Shang Fuentes, Lie Longboan-Kretchmer, Sirgus Gatmaytan, Resty Abella, Ayen and Manny Ranas, Oliver Ibanez, Areli Sanchez, Anne Pama, Susie Miles, and my Manchester Evening News Arena colleagues, who all make my life in Manchester more memorable, I greatly appreciate the moments I share with all of you.

To Geddy Bear, thank you very much for the love, friendship, and kindness. I never felt alone in Manchester because of you.

I am grateful to my family, who share the same dream with me and pray endlessly for my safety and success, salamat kaayo.

To the cosmos, I am humbled because everything is allowed to flow and happen.
Learning to be Indigenous: Education and Social Change among the Manobo People of the Philippines

INTRODUCTION

My motivation for this research study comes from my work with lumad or 'indigenous' people’s advocacy groups in the Philippines from 1998 to 2005. I encountered and worked with these organisations in relation to my teaching job handling introductory anthropology courses for undergraduate students at the Social Sciences department of the University of the Philippines in Davao City in Mindanao. Part of my role was to give training in basic research techniques to teachers working in lumad schools. The experiences of working with these groups somehow shaped my conceptions of how lumad people should be, and how they should behave as persons and as politically and culturally mobilised groups. This thesis describes, in part, a critical examination, of my own taken for granted perceptions about what it is to be ‘indigenous’ in the Philippines and I examine, through ethnographic case study, what is at stake when a particular group of people strategically learn how to reconfigure their understanding of themselves by adopting an ‘indigenous’ identity.

Most of the lumad teachers I have encountered then and now say that they are dedicated to serving their communities, even if the pay is small, because they pity the children in their communities if they are left uneducated. They relay stories of how their elders were, because of a lack of education, exploited in the past and gave up their lands to lowlanders because they were unknowledgeable, too trusting and friendly. It is common to hear that elders exchanged their lands for tobacco, liquor, and sardines, believing that they still had vast forests to move to and live in. By the time the elders realised that the lands they once lived on had already become the property of and titled to the lowlanders’ names, it was too late for their understanding of how lowlanders operated to make any difference. This tragedy of land loss is perceived to be about not questioning what was written on the documents, which in itself is about the inability to read and write. I have met leaders who speak earnestly about how their forefathers were cheated by migrant settlers and they promise not to allow that to happen to their people again. The step to prevent future exploitation is perceived to be education. These teachers and leaders have a heightened sense of their collective history and are filled with courage and determination to counter ignorance and discrimination through schooling. As a student of anthropology, interacting with these leaders, it was not hard for me to admire the way they value their ‘culture’, respect how bravely they articulate their commitment to the community group, and how keenly they want the younger generations to be educated. I observed how the leaders have faith in Magbabaya, the supreme god, who is trusted to give them guidance and blessings in their political and cultural endeavours. Whether in everyday life or in the context of outside-community gatherings, like the teacher training we facilitated, rituals played an important part of the practice. As they made decisions, leaders stressed consensual procedure and cooperation.
From these encounters, I gained an idealistic, perhaps romantic idea that lumad people, especially those who have a deep sense of spirituality and commitment to improving the welfare of members of their community, will always set a good example and continually work for the betterment of their lives, especially through support for education. The observed commitment of leaders to serve their fellow members of the group and their profound spirituality, created in me a strong sense of steadfast leaders who would always be supportive of the religiously inspired, economic and educational programs that are initiated to help turn their aspirations into reality.

With these somewhat lofty ideals in mind, I approached the Missionary Sisters of Mary (MSM) of Butuan City, Philippines with the aim of studying the relationship between indigenous education and community activism in the highland areas. MSM is a Catholic congregation that has been assisting a Manobo community in maintaining a lumad school in the community of Tagpalico, Agusan del Sur. Permission was granted for me to join the school staff so that I could pursue research into how best to think about and to provide ongoing support for indigenous education initiatives in the Philippines.

**Tagpalico, Agusan del Sur**

My fieldwork took place from December 2008 to December 2009 in Tagpalico, Agusan del Sur. Tagpalico is located in the province of Agusan del Sur, a landlocked province that can be found towards the northern part of the island of Mindanao in the Southern Philippines.

Mountainous terrain characterises the province’s western and eastern geographical landscape, with a valley running through the middle. Flowing through this valley is the Philippines’ second longest river, the 350-kilometre long Agusan River, which supports riverine communities and adjacent plain fields. The Agusan River traverses from Compostela Valley in the south to Butuan Bay in the north. Agusan, which means ‘where water flows’, is a geophysical landmark that brings distinctiveness to the provinces of Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur and has aided major economic and political activities in the region from past to present. These two provinces were only divided into distinct provincial bodies in 1967.

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1 Source of Map of Southeast Asia showing Mindanao, Southern Philippines: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/southeastasia.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/southeastasia.jpg) [accessed 1 August 2008].
Home to more than 609,000 people, Agusan del Sur\(^2\) is endowed with fertile soils that support the agricultural activities of its inhabitants which include crop farming and gardening as well as poultry and livestock raising. Corn and palay (rice) are the main crops cultivated, along with tubers and vegetables. Forestry and logging activities are common too as the area is basically composed of forest lands. In the 1960s, the Agusan area was the top producer of lumber in the country. Until now, most of the residents living in the mountainous regions have relied heavily on forest products for cash, harvesting timber from what have now become second growth forests. The Agusan River serves as a main transfer route for the gathered timber and logs from the hinterlands, which are transported toward the City of Butuan. Due to the numerous rivers and streams that serve as tributaries to the Agusan River, fishing has also provided an additional source of subsistence for families living along these areas. With no predominantly dry months, Agusan del Sur experiences maximum rainfall during the months of December and January. Heavy rains contribute mainly to the swelling of rivers and to some extent devastation of agricultural products and interruption of economic activities of the people. Mining for gold and other mineral resources grew in importance too, after forest products from forestlands declined in the 1990s. Mining in the province does not only involve local companies but also international mining firms from around the world. Aside from that, plantations of palm oil, corn, and banana also took over a lot of the province’s agricultural and forestlands.

Although not cited as a major problem, the disruption of peace and order in the province and its nearby regions has been a common feature of the news, both in print and on the radio. Military patrols and insurgency guerrilla ambush operations grab the headlines from time to time as both parties conduct offensive operations against each other. This has happened since the 1980s and continues until the present time in the region and is expressive of centuries of political and economic history in the Philippines.

**The Philippines**

Spaniards ruled the Philippines for more than 300 years, from 1521 to 1898; the Americans colonised the region for more than 40 years, from 1898 to 1941; and the Japanese occupation during World War II lasted for five years, ending in 1946. Colonisation had political repercussions in the Agusan area, but also brought economic, religious, and social changes to the lives of the people there. For instance, the Spaniards introduced Christianity to the country and organised communities into a central political system called *barrios*. *Barrios* grouped together households and land areas under one administrative authority and remain the initial

political configuration of the country until today. As the population grew, larger political units like the barangays, municipalities, provinces, and regions were formed. Local government units, as these political bodies are called, receive an annual budget that is allocated from the national government. When the American colonisers took over from the Spanish regime, they retained the established centralised system of government. Protestantism as a religion also gained ground as people recognised in it an alternative to the dominant Spanish Catholicism. The Americans also institutionalised the public formal educational system, which required children to take up the free primary education. Unlike the Spanish times when education was mainly for religious instruction and formal schooling was limited to those belonging to the wealthy and elite families, the public educational system under the Americans provided compulsory free elementary education to children of all economic backgrounds. English became the medium of instruction, especially once American teachers were invited to fill in the shortage of teachers in the instituted centralised public school system. Following American colonisation, mass public education consequently became the general framework for the future educational system in the Philippines. This means that the State provides basic elementary and secondary education under a centralised implementing body mandated by the Philippine constitution. The goal of basic education at present is to ‘provide the school age population and young adults with skills, knowledge, and values to become caring, self-reliant, productive, and patriotic citizens’ (Philippines, Department of Education). Children aged from five to 16 are expected to attend school.

The aim of the Americans in establishing a centralised educational system was generally to prepare people from the colonised country to take control of the civil service and bureaucracy formed to support the colonial government. Despite the mandate of the Department of Education to provide free basic education to children, there have always been remote areas where children have been unable to attend school because public schools do not exist. These are usually in far-flung areas that are difficult to reach and where the population is small. Non-governmental organisations, like the SILDAP -Sidlakan (Silingang Dapat sa Sidlakang Amihang Mindanao) that first helped the Manobo leaders in Tagpalico to set up schools, often include literacy programs in their activities to respond to the absence of schools in isolated communities. In the urban areas, private schools administered by religious congregations and private organisations also exist alongside the public schools to cater to the educational needs of children. Families who can afford to pay tuition fees send their children to these schools rather than to the public ones where children are cramped in classrooms and there are not enough facilities, like textbooks, to support the children’s education.

The Japanese invasion of the Philippines in 1941 and their occupation of the country until the end of World War II brought economic devastation to the country and destroyed its major political establishments. At the end of the war, reconstruction activities were mainly geared towards rebuilding the nation and achieving economic growth by taking advantage of the country’s natural resources such as minerals, agriculture, and timber. The island of Mindanao, of which Agusan del Sur is a part, has densely forested areas where logging became a major
economic activity in the 1960s that lured people from the northern islands of Luzon and the Visayas to migrate and settle in Mindanao. One of the impacts of this influx of migrant settlers included increasing displacement of the lumad or ‘indigenous’ groups into more isolated areas. As the lumber industry developed, migrant settlers began to establish their livelihood in the lowland areas where the lumad communities originally lived. As the lumad lands were exchanged for goods such as sardines, tobacco, and commercially produced wines, the original settlers moved farther into the mountains.

Despite the increasing economic growth of the Philippines in the years after World War II, the benefits were not felt by the majority of the people and only a few sectors and individuals benefited from such 'development' in the country. The political scenario of the country was continually characterised by patronage politics, allowing the elites to stay in power at local and national levels of government (Hutchcroft and Rocamora, 2003). This led to their amassing of wealth, which was particularly manifest during the time of the late President Ferdinand Marcos, who ruled the country for more than 20 years, from 1965 to 1986. The Marcos era was known for cronny abuses as Marcos extended his regime by declaring Martial Law in 1972. As the elites stayed in power and enjoyed economic favours from the President, the majority of the people at the grassroots level did not experience any improvements in their standard of living. The economic gap between the rich and the poor widened as corruption became widespread.

As a response to the growing lawlessness and political unrest among disgruntled citizens as the corruption of his decades-old government and cronies became clearly apparent, Martial Law or military rule was declared in the country by the late President Ferdinand Marcos in 1972. Blatant amassing of wealth by his family and friends and of control of major industries such as sugar, coconut, and tobacco led to civil activism and unrest in the 1970s. Having its origins in the resistance movements of earlier colonisers, the Communist Party of the Philippines was founded in the 1930s but weakened during the next decades, only to strengthen again in the mid-1960s, during the time of President Marcos (Guerrero, 1970). National democratic ideals gained ground among young students that campaigned against the ongoing domination of the United States and the control of landlords and local elites in the countryside. The revolutionary movement, inspired by the victory of the Chinese revolution and the teachings of Marx and Lenin, aimed to achieve genuine land reform for peasants who constitute 70 per cent of the country’s population. Political activism flourished and was manifested through militant demonstrations at the embassy of the United States of America, the presidential palace and public venues. Amidst this heated political scene, the Marcos government was quick to campaign for the eradication of militants. As a result, military rule was declared. In order to contain further social chaos, freedom of expression was curtailed, a move which was responsible for the propagation and establishment of a nationwide network of underground guerrilla movements.

During the Martial Law years, politicised students started to organise anti-government protests against the regime and soon after, civil liberties such as the freedom of speech and freedom of
media were curtailed. People who spoke against the government and who worked for social justice to reveal human rights violations were viewed negatively and branded subversives. My own family felt the effects of this repressive regime when my parents, who were educators and church workers, were arrested for subversion and rebellion charges as they were working with farmers under a Social Action program with the Catholic Church. By helping farmers to improve their agricultural technology and by providing assistance in the difficulties and atrocities experienced in the countryside, my parents were branded as anti-government and rebels. They were arrested, tortured and detained for more than two years, from 1981 to 1983. They were among the thousands of political prisoners detained during the Marcos years and they were among those who were lucky enough to survive the ordeal. Even if they were considered political prisoners, the stigma of being in jail for a length of time created opposing feelings of fear and courage among us. On the one hand, we were afraid that the government authorities would still come after us despite the acquittal of the case and on the other, the experience taught us to become stronger in standing up for principles of what we believed to be just and right. Personally, that experience impacted on my political views: I became critical of the government and always wary about my family's security. It also made me realise that trying to help the underprivileged and marginalised can arouse diverse, sometimes negative impressions and can even put your safety and freedom at stake. Being raised by Catholic parents who were also church workers, I realise that my sympathy for the poor and marginalised is an expression of the Christian beliefs that I have learned as a product of my upbringing.

In the 1980s, political turmoil continued, even after the end of the Marcos years and the lifting of Martial Law. Nothing had substantially changed in the quality of life of the Filipino people and plenty were still living under dire conditions; poverty was still widespread and basic services remained inadequate. Anti-government movements spread and became more prevalent, especially in the far-flung provinces and communities. To contain such movements, succeeding governments, through the military, continuously launched anti-guerrilla campaigns by fielding military operations in the countryside and the hinterlands. The guerrilla resistance, which started during the time of the Japanese occupation, gained influence when issues of land reform, corruption, and unequal opportunities continued to prevail despite the changes in government. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was established during the 1970s and 1980s, at the height of the military rule. Radicalised students and intellectuals were at the forefront of the movement and gained supporters from the different provinces. This situation remains prevalent in certain parts of the island of Mindanao and the effects of this on the case of Tagpalico are, in part, the focus of this thesis.

As a reflection of the wider political turmoil experienced in the country during those times, the peace and order of the Agusan area was equally strained and disrupted. Anti-rebellion campaigns were launched by the government wherein the area of Agusan del Sur in general, and Tagpalico in particular, was one of the sites for clashes between government and revolutionary forces. Military operations became prevalent and disrupted local ways of life. Tagpalico residents tell of how they kept on moving and running away from unsafe areas, and
evading armed men passing through their community. They became fearful and faced the fact that they were living in uncertainty. They say they were not able to take care of their farms and their children were unable to attend school as they were always on guard and on the go; a situation which the Manobo leaders and members wanted to end. This uncertain and frightening reality led them to air their concerns and seek assistance from cause-oriented groups like the non-governmental organisations in the region and the religious sector of the Diocese of Butuan to help them gain reprieve from their uncertain plight.

More recently, disgruntled groups have started taking hostages from Manobo families and government personnel as a way to air demands and grievances towards the government. When political strife happens, villagers and those living in the hinterland communities evacuate to safer areas like the town centre or the lowland church, and leave their homes and farmlands while the clashes are happening and until it is safe to go back to their homes.

**Indigenous Peoples**

During these decades of political strife, the terms used to refer to the ‘native’ peoples in the Philippines underwent a series of changes. At one point, they were called ‘cultural minority groups’ because they had distinct languages and ways of life compared to the lowland populace. There were also fewer speakers of native languages compared to among the lowland dwellers. When the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997 was enacted, the term ‘indigenous peoples’ gained popularity and usage. The formulation of the Act is also a reflection of the growing international ‘indigenous peoples’ rights movement, which was evident in the presence of non-government organisations that worked with ‘indigenous’ groups and communities in the Philippines. The reference ‘Indigenous’ is capitalised to refer to and recognise such a group through use of a proper noun, as particular persons that symbolise ‘cultural heterogeneity and political sovereignty’ (Yellow Bird, 1999:2). I use the term ‘indigenous’ here to represent a general descriptive expression with an analytical academic purpose in mind and not with a purposeful political intention.

In the Philippines today, the government has identified 110 different ‘indigenous’ groups and their population estimates vary among different government agencies. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts has estimated the population of ‘indigenous’ peoples to be 6.5 million, while more than 12 million have been registered by the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples. Mindanao has the largest number of indigenous peoples, with almost 60 per cent of the ‘indigenous’ population being found there. ‘Indigenous’ groups in Mindanao are categorically divided into two: the Muslims or Moro and the lumad, which is the generally accepted term used to refer to the ‘indigenous’ non-Islamized groups. At present, there are a number of issues that confront these groups of people. With the enactment of the law on indigenous rights, the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997, issues to do with land claims and land security have come to the fore and have become the central focus of discourse about ‘indigenous peoples’ in the country (Gatmaytan, 2007). Land rights claims are not my focus here; rather, I am preoccupied with the intersection between politics and education and between
politics, education and discourses and practice pertaining to indigeneity among the Manobo of Tagpalico.

The Manobo
Agusan del Sur is known as the home of several ‘indigenous’ or lumad groups, including the Manobo, Higaonon, Banwaon, Mamanwa, and Talaandig. A few of the Manobo are said to be found in the municipalities along the national road and on the eastern side of the Agusan River while the majority are scattered mostly on the western side and the mountainous parts of the province (See Figure 3). The Manobo language, spoken by more than a hundred thousand speakers, is the most popularly spoken language among the lumad groups of Agusan del Sur. As of 2005 there were 152,884 ‘indigenous peoples’ in Agusan del Sur and 121,191 of that number or 79% belong to the Manobo group.

When immigrants from other provinces of the Philippines came to live in the region because of the increase in economic activities deriving from the logging industry, they settled in the area, and the low-lying lands occupied by the Manobo were exchanged with lowlanders for goods such as tobacco, sardines, and commercially produced wines. Deserting the lowlands and riverine communities to accommodate the new settlers, most of the Manobo were pushed into the hinterlands of the mountainous areas of Agusan. A few of them stayed in the lowlands and integrated into the new settlers’ communities and became the minority. Due to these developments, the life of the Manobo also changed, as is documented in the studies of Garvan (1931), Yumo (1971) and Bauzon (1999). These studies of the region provide a description of the Manobo’s pre-World War II way of life and the process of Christianisation; their political system; and the changes of social life in the region.

Figure 3. Map of Agusan River Basin showing my field site.³

Garvan was an American teacher who arrived in the Philippines to establish formal schools in different parts of the country. He travelled around Mindanao and the Agusan area from 1905-1909, after which he submitted his report about the *Manobo of Mindanao*. Garvan's account focused on describing Manoboland during the pre-war period when most of the island was still densely forested. Giving considerable account of the material culture, Garvan documented the Manobo’s wooden dwellings, their bodily adornments and clothing, farm implements, musical instruments, and ritual objects. He noted that the Manobo mostly lived in thatched houses built high above the ground to protect the families from night raids. He also noted the religious beliefs of the Manobo that involved consulting supernatural beings called *diwata* in almost all domestic and economic affairs. Natural signs like the sounds of the birds served as omens to everyday activities and animal and blood sacrifices were offered to alleviate illnesses and appease angered spirits that brought misfortune or diseases.

Garvan noted that domestic and intertribal relations and conflicts were guided and resolved by acknowledged male leaders as well as defended by local warriors known as *baganis*. Family feuds and intertribal disputes also characterised Manobo life, which were often caused by non-payment of debts or acts of treachery. The feuds could take several years and even generations to end and revenge became a factor in ensuing conflicts. Unless a party agreed to a peace negotiation mediated by a chief or group of leaders, and accepted a reconciliation offering from each party, the fights continued. When a peace pact was achieved, the fights would end and the groups involved bound themselves to the oath.

Garvan's account portrays the life of the Manobo in their previously heavily-forested environment in the first years of the 1900s and at this time he noted too that they had already established trading relations with the Christianised lowland inhabitants. He was quick to identify that the Manobo had been often exploited by lowland traders who used fraudulent weights and measures and bound them in usurious transactions, tying the Manobo deeper into debt. During barter transactions the Manobo would usually be at the losing end as their products were valued cheaply and the goods they received in return were priced highly thus leaving them with more debts. Since the Manobo had an inadequate understanding of how the trading in the larger centres was conducted and the existing buying-and-selling prices, they did not know they were already being cheated. At times, their land became the payment of their debts, forcing them to move farther into the mountains.

Garvan also reported how Christianisation of the Manobo proceeded successfully in the area. One Spanish Jesuit priest, Father Saturnino Urios, after whom the biggest university in the province has been named, combined tact and patience to get to know about the life and language of the Manobo in order to succeed in persuading them to be baptised in the Catholic faith. In other instances, conversions were the outcome of coercion, threats, and armed expeditions. Designating local chiefs and leaders as partners in the propagation of the Christian doctrines and utilising them alongside identified lowland Christian traders as mediators between
the colonial officials and the Manobo, religious leaders strategized to gain the trust of the local people.

While Garvan relied for most of his accounts on the letters of missionaries, his interviews with informants, and his observations of material creations of the Manobo, Yumo’s (1971) findings were based instead on his field interactions in four Manobo communities near river tributaries of the Agusan Valley, namely Kala-isan, Sagisi, Tibalho, and Buhangin. His study, though unpublished, was kept at the Father Saturnino Urios University Library. It looked into the challenges that confronted the political system of the Manobo as the logging industry encroached into the forested Agusan environs. He particularly mentioned that most of the Manobo were pushed to live farther into more isolated areas of the mountain ranges as the immigrants began to settle in the lands where the flourishing logging activities, spearheaded by the migrants, were happening during the 1960s and onwards. Yumo added that even if the majority of the Manobo had moved farther away into the hinterlands, they had adapted to some of the lowlanders’ way of life. Some were able to acquire ploughs and started to plant commercial crops like cacao, coconut, coffee, and hemp. They also engaged in carabao (buffalo) logging, dragging timber to the village centres using buffaloes. Rattan gathering became a common cash earner together with the sale of forest products. Yumo observed that because of the influx of the logging industry the Manobo undoubtedly participated in the growing cash economy. Income from wage labour had also become an alternative way of increasing earnings, specifically for the leaders who were hired as security guards of logging concessionaires. Having the respect of their fellow Manobo, these leaders also served as mediators when conflicts arose between the company and the Manobo communities or kattilingban as they were commonly called by the local residents.

Very important to Yumo’s observations were the changes that these developments had on the leadership, power, and politics of the Manobo social system. The Manobo acknowledged three influential figures, namely the datu (headman), bagani (warrior/village defender), and the baylan (healer/shaman). One person might take several roles at a time, for example a datu could also be a baylan or a bagani, or one could just be a baylan but not a bagani or a datu. These roles were usually hereditary and possessed spiritual as well as mystical aspects. They were acquired through processes of blood lineage and community approval and held always by senior males. Most datus were also sons of identified datus as the case may be, or a close blood relative. A son of the chief would probably become a leader since he would have the opportunity to observe more closely the roles of a chief that his father performed while he was growing up, aside from the notion that the role was hereditary from father to son. In contrast, Yumo wrote that the form of leadership of the lowlands could be acquired through political connections with more powerful State officials and personal accumulated wealth. The implementation of a national structure of bureaucratic leadership caused confusion among the Manobo members. By appointing one person as the head based on connections and ability to cooperate with the existing lowland officials, the Manobo’s decision-making system, as well as their conflict resolution practices, was challenged. The bureaucratic system composed of zone
leaders and representatives identified by immigrant officials did not fit well with the traditional roles Manobo leaders performed.

In light of this disparity, Yumo called for the recognition of the traditional forms of leadership in areas where the Manobo lived, to prevent social disintegration of the group. He also recommended more educational opportunities for both the Manobo and the lowland populace, to promote understanding among them and to lessen discrimination against the Manobo. Educating both sectors about their different ways would, Yumo argued, promote respect between them and prepare the Manobo to accept new changes. Utilising the traditional forms of leadership to channel changes could, he suggested, somehow buffer disorientation and dislocation among the larger Manobo populace.

Bauzon's (1999) report on the Manobo built on Garvan's (1931) and Yumo's (1971) observations. Her study focused more on the areas of Loreto and San Francisco in the province of Agusan del Sur and a community in Cantilan, Surigao del Sur, the province that is to the far eastern side of Agusan del Sur. To complement her observations in her field study in 1993 to 1994, she made references to the unpublished works and manuscripts written by a Manobo chieftain, who became a barangay captain, named Datu Manggosawon. She also referred to the works of a local elementary school teacher and historian named Eulogio Eleazar who personally wrote descriptive accounts about his group and place. These people helped her complete her study on the ‘reconstruction of Manobo social reality’, which her publication aimed to explain.

Bauzon (1999) recounted social practices and several changes, which she had seen in the communities she had studied. Since her study came much later than Garvan’s 1931 publication and Yumo’s 1971 work, Bauzon’s study revealed her observations on certain practices that had changed through the years. For example, she noticed that the thatched roofs of houses were now gradually being replaced with galvanised iron sheet material. In cutting trees for producing timber for sale, chainsaws were already being used instead of the adzes and bolos or machetes. The locally-produced wines that were used during rituals and which were drunk during merry-making were already being replaced with commercially sold wines in the lowlands. She also observed that aside from the logging activities that the Manobo participated in, some people had started to engage in gold panning as an alternative income earning activity. These two activities again provided more income for the Manobo working as labourers. Those who were employed as security forces for the companies were now issued with more advanced weapons like pistols and Armalite rifles, a practice that had some implications for the existing rivalries that formed part of the Manobo social organisation.

Bauzon realised that family vendettas and feuding among clans still persevered and somehow the introduction of modern weapons into the Manobo society brought more danger to clashing families and communities. Aside from elevating warfare through technological change, the changes in roles of leaders also raised tensions to another level. Conflicts had not been confined just to families and communities, but also took place between leaders and their
constituents. Some leaders who worked for the companies had been viewed as cohorts who connived with the lowland officials. There had been a case of a Manobo leader who was believed to have been murdered because he simply disappeared after agreeing to the government’s move to relocate his group to another place. Despite this event, local leaders who were able to deal with the lowland politicians were continuously utilised to bridge local communities and the bureaucratic government, giving rise to the emergence of what Bauzon called ‘tribal leader-politicians’. Furthermore, Bauzon also observed that some of these tribal leader-politicians became leaders of religious Protestant denominations. These Protestant leaders then managed to organise agricultural and livelihood cooperatives in their areas in order to pool the resources they had harvested from the forests. The leaders had already become instrumental in the economic, political, and religious endeavours in certain communities. They were able to combine some of their traditional roles as well as the roles that were once foreign to them.

Bauzon further realised that it was not only in the economic and political realms where changes had occurred in the Manobo society. How the Manobo regarded sickness and the ways they responded to illness were also modified. Previously, they relied solely on the village baylan to perform a ritual and consult the spirits for the well-being of the members. Offering a blood sacrifice of a pig or chicken and a concoction of medicinal herbs from the forest would normally suffice. However, with the presence of a medical alternative, the Manobo would choose to bring their ill relatives to the lowland health centres to acquire medications offered by medical practitioners. On top of the accepted traditional ways of healing, and when the rituals for the spirits or diwata conducted by the baylan or shaman could not alleviate the illness, modern medicine would be resorted to by the Manobo.

The national school system had already been instituted in the area that Bauzon visited. As mentioned earlier, one of her informants was a public school teacher who had also gained his elementary education in the existing school in that area. They both recognised that by writing about the particular history and situation of the Manobo they would contribute to the better understanding of different groups of people in the country as well as dispel stereotypes and negative perceptions about the group that were propagated at this time about the Manobo being technologically backward, failing to recognise existing national laws by continuing to engage in traditional conflict resolution processes, and still holding animist beliefs. They upheld that the Philippine government must support a policy of ‘multiculturalism’, which would recognise all the ethno-linguistic groups of people in the country in order to show equal concern for the welfare of all its citizens. By having such a policy, ‘peace, harmony, prosperity, and national unity’ would, Bauzon argued, be achieved and the richness of ‘Filipino culture’ would be preserved.

The accounts by Garvan (1931), Yumo (1971), and Bauzon (1999) exemplify how the Manobo lived in this region in earlier times; a past that is shared by the Manobo of Tagpalico. Garvan aimed to describe and document what he saw as practices peculiar to the Manobo. Yumo was concerned about the challenges facing the Manobo political system and he offered appropriate steps to be taken to cushion its social disintegration. Finally, Bauzon tried to reconstruct and
recognise the Manobo social reality as part of a ‘multicultural’ nation. Even though these scholars did not focus in detail on the educational situation of the Manoboland, they provided an account of the important transformations that the inhabitants of this region were undergoing. It is in the light of these continuities and changes in Manobo life that my study was conducted.

As well as utilising participant – observation as the main research method, I have also collected a household survey; conducted formal and informal interviews; volunteered in teaching an adult class in school; attended lumad festivals, teachers’ meetings, and conventions; paid home visits; and used photography and other research techniques to gather data for my study. In my year-long engagement with the school and the Manobo’s community life, I experienced all kinds of highs and lows and certain disappointments that helped me to recognise what is culturally distinctive about my own personal values in comparison with those held to be important values by the Manobo. For example, my Catholic notions of honesty and truthfulness are challenged by the events of stealing and theft in the community, which eventually led me to understand that theft is a reinforcement of sharing practices and a defiance of the hoarding of surplus in the community. I also came to realise how my idealistic perceptions of indigenous leaders were tested by the pragmatics of the strategic and situated participation which defines what it is to be a good leader in the context of complex relations with outsiders of all kinds. More importantly, by studying, in practice, how adults and children actively engage in social processes through which they negotiate what counts among them as significant, appropriate knowledge and learning, I came to examine how global discourses of education, literacy, and indigenous peoples are spoken about in ideal terms, but enacted messily in local practice.

Salient in understanding this study is an appreciation of how the role of learning in practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) plays an important part in situated participation of actors in the educational enterprise. Children, parents, leaders, teachers, and nuns have appropriated and negotiated their notions of being ‘educated’ and ‘indigenous’ within a social space that is the school setting against a background of local understanding about what it is important to know about – principally farming and other economic activities – and international discourses of indigeneity (Cadena and Starn, 2007; Merlan, 2009), schooling (Anderson-Levitt, 2003), literacy (Street, 1993), and development (Paulson, 2011). At a time when indigenous peoples are given increasing attention by international forums like the United Nations and national governments with the aim of upholding indigenous rights to self-determination and education, this study brings understanding to a specific experience on how global discourses of literacy, education, and indigenous peoples’ concerns are played out in a specific community of the Manobo where resolution of political tension turns out to be the primary reason for the existence of an educational institution in the community. As the Manobo explore what it means to be ‘educated’ in this environment, they also learn to use their understanding of what it means to be ‘indigenous’ in order to negotiate their positionality relative to external groups like the nuns, military, guerrillas, and other non-Manobo groups.
The intent of the three chapters that follow is to describe the lived environment of the Manobo of Tagpalico with reference to their social organisation and politico-economic activities. Not only will this provide a further contribution to the studies about the Manobo that highlight their socio-political system, economic activities, and cultural beliefs, it will also bring to the fore the social relationships that provide the background of my study about the learning processes of the Manobo in relation to inside and outside school situations. In viewing how they relate to the land, how they structure interpersonal relationships among themselves and what cultural values arise from these relations, the chapters explain how the Tagpalico Manobo are expected to behave and act in different situations. This leads to an appreciation of what follows in later chapters of the thesis, which is an exploration of what difference education makes to Manobo life and transforming value systems.
Barangay Santo Niño, of which Tagpalico is part, has a total population of 4,039 (Community-based Monitoring System - Bayugan, 2005) and has ten zones (purok) belonging to it. Zones are grouped according to the location of the houses. Zones in Barangay Santo Niño are widely scattered but within the zones some houses are clustered together. If the grouping considered is membership of the school’s association, this will include families who live in other zones (purok) but who also send their children to the Tagpalico School. The membership of the school’s organisation numbers around 250 individuals. As for the membership of Yumbagan, the organisation of the community in which the school is located, some say that those who are living in Tagpalico now are the members. Others claim that Yumbagan as an organisation is already defunct because many of its members have migrated to other places and that there have been no regular meetings conducted in recent years. Despite these differing opinions, the name Yumbagan is still used to refer to both the place and the organisation of the Manobo.

House Groupings and Domestic Routines
Thirteen dwellings (Houses 1 to 13 in Figure 6. Spot Map of Tagpalico) are visible from the school building and they line the road that traverses the Tagpalico community. These 13 houses are the only structures found near the school; the rest of the houses are located in the different house clusters (banwa) farther away from the school area. All 29 households associate their involvement with Tagpalico through their participation in the school and through their relations with other relatives living in Tagpalico. The house structures are all made of wood and most have galvanised iron sheets as roofing; those families who are not able to afford to buy iron sheets use wooden slabs as roofing material instead. Houses are normally suspended several inches above the ground, just high enough for animals to roam freely below the bamboo or wooden floors. It is common to see a porch before the front door that serves as the receiving area for visitors or a place to chat and rest for people who have come home from work on the farms or arrived to visit relatives.

Typically rectangular in shape, with half of the floor area elevated higher on one side, homes sometimes have a wall which divides the rest of the house from the elevated side. The raised

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1 The majority of the families living in Tagpalico built their houses along the foot trail that formed as the main road of the community. This was previously the pilot road or the main road created during the height of the logging operations in the 1960s/70s when logging trucks passed by to haul timber from the inner mountain slopes. Agusan del Sur was the top producer of timber in the Philippines during these decades and so, most of the forested areas throughout the mountain ranges in the province were opened to log harvesting, including the area in Tagpalico. After the logging operations stopped in the 1970s and most of the trees had been harvested, the residents still referred to these roads as ‘pilot’, from the ‘pilot roads’ that traversed along the slopes of the mountains. Not all of the Manobo became employees of the logging companies that operated in these areas. In fact, most of these families retreated farther into untouched forest areas and only later came back to deserted areas after the operations were stopped.
portion usually serves as the sleeping quarters of the family. The lower side of the house functions as an eating space, working area, or also serves as an added sleeping space. In the rear portion of the house is the cooking area, which is usually made of compacted soil contained in a rectangular wooden box. The typical cooking hearth is made either from welded metal rods formed into a stove that is bought from the lowlands or just big sturdy stones that are sunken into the compacted soil. Just above this area are wooden poles lined up parallel to each other which serve as the firewood compartment. Collected branches of trees cut into pieces of firewood are left here to dry from the smoke and heat that emanate from the hearth below.

The floor on this cooking area also serves as a washing area if an elevated sink is absent. Beside the hearth is a section where cooking pots are stored and eating utensils like spoons, plastic plates, and a few glasses are kept to dry. Drinking water is stored in plastic containers and also used to wash pots and dishes. Some people use separate vessels for preparing hog food or storing farm products like sweet potato (kamote) and cassava (kalibre). Morsels of food gathered from washing the dishes are thrown directly into the backyard or are swept to fall below the floor, later to become the food for chickens that roam freely around the surroundings of the house.

All thirteen houses are visible from the hill where the school is located and which is high enough to receive a signal from the transmission towers of cellular telecommunication networks. Some Manobo youth who have acquired mobile phones send messages from here to their friends or relatives living in other places. There is, however, no electricity and it would take more than two hours of walking to reach the nearest village with electricity where mobile batteries can be recharged to full power. Without this connection to families and friends elsewhere or to the news programmes heard over the transistor radio, outsiders staying in Tagpalico quickly feel isolated from the life in the lowlands.

All around, the landscape is a continuous flow of rolling slopes and steep mountain terrain covered with green vegetation, newly-grown shrubs, and trees. On a clear night, a distant village where electricity lines have been connected can be viewed as glowing, distant lights. Early morning and late afternoon fog makes the houses along the road invisible, bringing so much moisture that clothes hanging on clotheslines outside become damp and cold. As the skies get dark in the evenings, the village becomes quiet. Not all families have enough kerosene in their lamps so most people go to sleep as soon as supper has been eaten and darkness has set in. Dawn breaks with the crowing of roosters, chopping of firewood and children shouting at each other while taking a bath or fetching water.

The entire surroundings of Tagpalico area used to be densely forested. Because of intensive logging activities in the 1960s and up to the 1980s, most of the forests have been cleared of all the hardwood. What are left today are second growth forests and clearings cultivated by the Manobo. There are also a number of grasslands that have grown since the soil was eroded and
its fertile topsoil was depleted, thus preventing certain vegetation from thriving. The remaining patches of densely-forested areas (*lasang*) are located in very isolated areas and only reached when hunting for wild boar (*baboy-ihalas*).

Some families opt to maintain two houses, one in the Tagpalico centre near the school and the other one on their farms, which are usually situated two to three kilometres away from the main house in Tagpalico. Farm huts are one-roomed structures used for resting and keeping tools while working on the farm. These are smaller than the main house in the village and usually made of wood, with a thatched roof and without a porch or separate cooking section. Parents working on the farms usually go home to the main house in the afternoons to be with their children who have been at school during the day. If adults wish to stay for several days in the farm hut, they take the children together with their woven mats, cooking pots, and blankets with them. This happens normally at weekends or on days when the teachers go to the city and there are no classes for a few days.

The staple food in Tagpalico is the rice derived from milled corn kernels (*bugas mais*) and the steamed sweet potato (*kamote*) if there is no rice available. The viands that go with this food are usually stewed vegetables harvested from the farms. If a family can earn some cash from selling farm products in the lowlands, they will buy canned sardines, instant noodles, sugar, salt, cooking oil, kerosene, dried fish, coffee, laundry soap, and fish paste (*ginamos*) from the markets. Other sought after goods are soy sauce, vetsin (monosodium glutamate), bath soap, shampoo, and tobacco. However, income from selling farm products is not always regular or reliable. Based on my household survey, I calculated that the average monthly household cash income in Tagpalico is Php 1553.00 (£22.50 a month). This mostly comes from selling bananas, chillis, corn, falcata timber, and various root crops. The products grown on the farms are still viewed as more important than the shop-bought goods from the lowland because staple products are reliable and only if there is a surplus can these products be sold to the markets. Every family therefore strives to be self-sufficient in terms of food and tries to raise animals so they have other sources of income when the need arises. Pork and other meat are not part of the regular diet as these are rarely available. Only when there is a celebration, a big ritual (*kahimunan*), or a wedding feast (*kumbiti*) is a pig butchered and prepared as food. If someone has been lucky enough to trap a wild boar in the forest then people are able to buy portions of meat. Chickens are raised, but they are not eaten during ordinary meals because chickens are an immediate source of cash and are also used during rituals. Even if farm harvested products are staples, shop-bought goods are considered valuable or prestigious.
The families now living in Tagpalico ‘own’ parcels of land in the surrounding areas. These lands are not titled as Tagpalico is classified under the category of forest and timber lands, and as such its lands are inalienable. These lands cannot be sold and bought, unlike residential and agricultural lands that are legally titled. However, the area in Tagpalico has always been inhabited by the Manobo and so they consider themselves, and are considered by others, as the original settlers of the area. The parcels of farmlands are owned by families who till the land based on agreements of the original settlers and natural features of the land such as rivers, valleys, springs, and natural vegetation are the landmarks that signify boundaries.

Each banwa, which is a group of three or more related Manobo families occupying a portion of land approximately three hectares or more, is led by a male leader (manigaon) who is also responsible for the management of affairs within the banwa. If someone wants to acquire a piece of land in his banwa, the manigaon will confer with his fellow Manobo and decide according to what is discussed. If an outsider wants to acquire a piece of land, the manigaon will confer not only with his family members but also with other manigaon of another banwa in Tagpalico. Tagpalico has three banwa and five identified manigaon. Two of these manigaon do not have a banwa to lead but are considered leaders because they were elected by the Tagpalico residents to represent their community in the Barangay Council of Santo Niño and to a federation of lumad (indigenous) groups of Agusan del Sur.

When a married couple sets up home in the husband’s community, they approach the leader (manigaon) and ask for a portion of land to till. Sometimes the kin group will agree that the new couple will offer something in exchange for the land like cash or pigs. They draw up an agreement (kasulatan) signed by the couple and the identified owner who is transferring land; this is witnessed by the local leader of the group and the local barangay captain or head. However, most family members who acquire a portion of land do not need to write a kasulatan.
This is usually practised only between Manobos and non-Manobos who expect to secure a document stating that they now ‘own’ the land. This kasulatan is not a legally acknowledged land title, but a binding agreement entered into between two transacting parties exchanging land, the value of which is negotiated. This notion of formal ownership of land has only become popular and more formalised since migrants started to acquire portions of land in the areas where the Manobo are living.

**Demographic Changes and Movement in Settlement**

The katilingban or community of Manobo people in Tagpalico is comprised of a group of more than 200 individuals bound together by kinship and association to the land where they live and maintain their farms. This figure may increase or decrease depending on which grouping is considered because Tagpalico can be identified collectively by its zone (purok) number, the organisation of the parents and teachers in the school, or those members in the people’s organisation they call Yumbagan. If the political boundary is followed, Tagpalico is known as Purok 10, which is the 10th zone of the larger political unit of Barangay Santo Niño of the municipality of Bayugan in the province of Agusan del Sur.

In 2004, political disturbances in Tagpalico brought about by increased military operations and the heightened campaign to organise Lupaka, formed a para-military grouping composed of Manobo, have led many families to evacuate Tagpalico. As a result, the population of Tagpalico has greatly diminished. Today, only approximately 200 people remain of the more than 500 residents recorded by the nuns before the year 2004. The national government conducts a demographic survey every five years and the most recent result was released in 2005. The data for the municipality of Bayugan show that Barangay Santo Niño, to which Tagpalico belongs, has, out of a total population of 4,039 people, 1,820 Manobo lumads (indigenous people). Data were not available for all the zones (purok) in Santo Niño at the time of completing this study, but the household survey that I conducted in February 2009 shows that amongst the 28 households who had children studying in the Tagpalico school, there were 229 individuals living in Tagpalico at that time.

During the politically unstable years, most families have moved to lowland villages for fear of their lives and they have sought employment in the busier commercial centres of Bayugan, Sibagat, and Butuan City. These places, being the main trading centres of Agusan del Sur, do not experience frequent military operations and offer other possibilities for livelihood other than farming. Other families have left Tagpalico and live with relatives in other parts of Agusan del Sur to continue earning a living through farming. Some work as caretakers or tenants (sa-up) of farms owned by landed families in the lowlands. One family in Tagpalico has gone to assist another relative who works as a caretaker of a farm harvesting copra near the town of Sibagat.

Tagpalico people prefer to sell their harvests of banana, rattan, and corn to the town centres in Bayugan, Sibagat, and even the farther city of Butuan, especially as the buying prices for these products are higher in these market places. Normally they just sell their products to middlemen
in Barangay Villangit, the nearest trading centre to Tagpalico. However, the buying prices here are lower so, if the Manobo think that they can earn more by selling directly to the town centres they will travel to those areas.

Despite the difficulties of living in Tagpalico, which is so remote, without basic services, and where unpredictable military or guerrilla activities disturb the peace, residents who have left Tagpalico still come back either to stay or to visit. They find time to visit relatives during Christmas, New Year and Holy Week because these are the times that employers allow people to go on vacations because they are declared national holidays. It is a custom that workers go home to their home provinces at these times for reunions and family gatherings. At some other times, Manobo residents who seek work outside the community simply return after their employment is finished. There are Manobo parents who find employment in surrounding provinces where mining activities are undertaken and they cannot bring their children with them; and so they leave them in the care of the grandparents in Tagpalico, only coming home to bring provisions for their children.

Panggo, a young woman who has worked as a nanny and saleslady in Butuan City, chooses to work in nearby towns so she can visit home easily. She reasons that ‘Mingawon man gud ko kay Nanay mao diri ra ko sa duol magtrabaho aron dali ra ko kauli kung gusto nako.’ (‘I often miss my mother, that’s why I choose to work in the city nearest to Tagpalico so I can easily go home whenever I like.’) Her attachment to her mother is evident even though she is already in her 20s. Like other sons and daughters working outside the community, she brings back grocery items for the family which are additional to the cash that she hands to her parents regularly. In cases when Panggo cannot make it to Tagpalico, she sends a message to her family to come to the city so she can give the family money.

One of the Manobo leaders, Datu Korales, told me that he always emphasises to children not to forget the land and the community where they come from because it is the means of survival if they fail to find jobs in the lowlands. He related to me his experience when he travelled to Butuan City and saw lumad (indigenous) people like him living in shanties under the bridges. He pitied them because they choose to be homeless when they can go back to the mountains where they come from and live in proper houses. He says that in Tagpalico, even if it is not very comfortable, his family has a place to sleep and they will not go hungry if they all continue to tend the farm. ‘Di gyud mi magutman’, he said, ‘We will not starve.’

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2 Gold, copper, chromite, and silver minerals are major sources of mining activities in the surrounding provinces of Compostela Valley and Surigao del Sur which continuously lure workers seeking manual labour employment.

3 Proper house means that there is one house for every family; it has a lawn where children can play around the house; there are spaces for cooking, gathering around, or working together. There is ample free space where people and domestic animals can roam around.
Another reason for staying in Tagpalico is the support that people get from their relatives when they need help. They are assured that they have people they can turn to when they need assistance because they have *pariente* or relatives in the community. Although they might have disagreements among themselves as a result of drunkenness or suspicion of theft on the farms, they still emphasise the fact that they are *pariente* and they will help each other in times of need. Sometimes the Manobo are hesitant to ask for help from other relatives who are in the lowlands because, they say, these people have their own problems too. The Manobo have the notion that those living in the cities live more difficult lives because every activity, especially providing food for the family, requires money.

**Farming**

Everyone has a role on the farm. Older people, who live together with their children and grandchildren, also help on the farm and contribute to the family’s income. They might not be physically strong enough to do heavy tasks, but they help by weeding planted areas. Nanay Siling, a widow in her 70s, still finds time to plant *kamote* (sweet potatoes). She does not want to stop working because, she says, she feels weaker if she stays in the house. She even has a house of her own because she does not want to stay with her children who have their own families; she just wants to be near them.

In the family, a man’s main role is to do much of the heavy work on the farm. This includes clearing the land of bushes and trees (*manglampas*) and burning them when they become dry. One of the most difficult tasks a man does is to fell falcata trees when trunks have reached an acceptable measurement of more than one *pulgada*, the length between the outstretched tip of the middle finger and thumb. He can cut the trees manually using an axe or hire a chainsaw operator to cut the trees for him for a fee. He will later drag the logs with a *keybow* (buffalo) to the riverside where certain people will tie them together to float the timber on the river. If a family does not own a *keybow*, they will pay a person called a *tig-birada* who will haul the felled timber to the river. Men called *tig-float* will stand on top of the logs and guide the tied logs down the river using bamboo poles, skirting through boulders and floating along rapids until they reach the buying station downstream near the city.
Slash and burn cultivation is widely practised in this area and contour farming has recently become popular as a result of the sustainable agriculture program introduced in the area through the school. Most of the farms are located in sloping areas of up to 40-50 degree-slope so the soil must be protected from erosion either by placing sticks as ridges or by planting different vegetation across the slopes as a natural way of preventing erosion, which is the technique of contour farming. Working on the farm is a family affair. One household unit composed of a nuclear family usually work together on the farm, especially when there are no classes in the school. Older children who can firmly hold a digging tool or machete are expected to help in maintaining the farm. If younger children tag along with their parents in the field, they are not allowed to play around the area where the adults and older siblings are working, but are told to stay in the farm hut with other siblings and wait for their parents to finish their tasks. The farm hut is just within view from the farm so if the toddler cries his brother or sister can call for the attention of their mother.

The man leads his family in planting *mais* (corn), *kamote* (sweet potato), *balanghoy* or *kalibre* (cassava), and *utan* or *gulay* (vegetables) during the *tingpugas* or planting season in the months of March to May and August to November. When the rainy season begins in June and December, few farmers will plant *duma* or tubers because pests will feast on the roots, making the effort a waste of time. They also refrain from planting during the full moon (takdol ang bulan) or when it is waxing, for the same reason. *Saging* (banana) can be planted anytime and is a reliable cash crop along with *sili* (cayenne/ chilli pepper), *karlang* and *gabi* (taro), and falcata timber. Selling live chickens to interested neighbours or the school teachers is also a source of quick cash. Raising pigs and selling them is an investment for future obligations that require larger amounts like paying debts, buying school materials for children, and for pocket money and allowances of those students who study in the town centres in the lowlands.

It is the women’s role to harvest the chilli which grows randomly in the fields. There is a great demand for chilli in the cities as it is a favourite condiment for barbecue meals and goes well
with vinegar and soy sauce. As soon as the products are sold, the earnings from them are used to buy goods needed at home as well as clothes or medicines when needed. School children will always ask their parents to buy paper and pencils in exchange for lost ones, which often annoys the parents. It is not unusual to see children with pencils with their names engraved on the shaft, tied with strings, and hanging round their necks to prevent them from being stolen by classmates or misplaced in school. If there are no classes young children usually stay with their mothers to help watch over younger siblings or they weed the cornfields. If the children do not tag along at the farms, they are asked to stay behind in the house with their younger siblings. The parents cook *camote* (sweet potato), *linung-ag nga bugas mais* (cooked corn rice), and *gulay* (vegetables) before heading to the farms so the children can eat when they feel hungry.

During the start of the dry months some time in February, parents begin to clear and plant their fields in time for the harvest season in June. This is also in preparation for the opening of the school year when they need more cash to buy things to meet the requirements of the children in the school. Throughout the entire year, every family must see to it that they have planted enough to supply food for the entire family. Oftentimes they fall short and so older children, those in the fourth to the sixth grades, have to be absent from the classes because extra help is needed on the farms. During the harvest season, they have to help in hauling the products to sell in the village centre or markets.

Older children, when they reach their teens, especially the young men, serve as assistants to their fathers. If they go to school, they are still expected to help during the times when they are home. They are taught to bring the *keybow* (buffalo) or *kabayo* (horse) to graze in a safe field, to gather firewood in the *kado* (forest), or carry *mais* (corn) or *saging* (banana) to the village to sell. Children, as they grow, are always tagging along with their parents at the *uma* (farm). During these times, they learn the tasks necessary to produce food for the family and slowly master the skills needed to perform them as their bodies become able as they grow older.

When boys reach the age of eleven or twelve and their bodies are strong enough to endure the physical work, they learn to plough (*daru*). By then, they can already be relied upon to clear the fields for planting, and to weed them so grasses will not overgrow the crops that have been planted. Other farm implements that they need to master are hoes and picks for digging and boring holes in the ground, and machetes to cut branches and trunks of trees. Machetes are a must when going to the field as these are important in clearing anything that has blocked a trail or as defence from snakes or any danger on the road. They also use machetes for slicing off portions of rolled tobacco that they always carry along in their *kamuyot* (small bag), and smoking and betel nut (*mam-on*) chewing are much-loved habits. That is why old newspapers are always collected, ones that have been used to wrap shop bought goods. They flatten out the crumpled paper, fold and tear it into tiny rectangular strips, and use it to roll sliced tobacco. If paper is in short supply, sometimes the sheets of their children’s notebooks become the substitute.
Sharing (*Paghinatagay*) and Local Forms of Exchange (*Baylo*)

As well as tending the farms and producing cash crops to support other needs of the family, the Manobo have adapted forms of *baylo* (borrowing and exchange). Children play an important role in the practice of *baylo* in Tagpalico, especially when the goods needed are for domestic use. In an ordinary day, a child, together with a sibling, is sent to another house and timidly says 'Mamaylo daw si mama ug asukar, ilisan lang pag makalugsong na.' ('My mother would like to borrow sugar; she will replace it when she can go to the lowlands.') This means that the family need sugar and when the mother goes down to the markets in the lowlands, she will sell products from the farms and buy enough shop bought goods to meet her family's needs and to also pay off her debts. Kerosene, rice, salt, and cooking oil are the goods that children are most requested to *baylo* from neighbours, including the teachers.

Children are often instructed to go and ask for the goods their parents want to borrow in order to spare the adults from the shame or *sikaw*\(^4\) if ever the request is not granted. *Sikaw*, in the context of *baylo* (exchange as 'borrowing and replacing'), comes into play when the person who needs to ask is too shy to do so in person and at the same time wishes to spare themselves from the possible humiliation of being turned down. This is the reason why children are often instructed to go and ask for the goods 'na pabayluan' (to be borrowed and replaced), so that if the favour asked is declined the parents will be spared from the direct embarrassment (*sikaw*) that the refusal brings, which children are not bothered about at all. Children are told to borrow from people, kin or non-kin, who they believe will probably have the item they need. They are often told to check other houses if it is not available until they find one of the neighbours who will grant their request. Since children are by nature playful, they are talkative while on their way but as they get near the house of the person whom they will borrow from, they walk slowly with heads bowed down, throwing quick glances at the house or person. With a soft voice they slowly ask for the goods that their parents have requested. To show that they are also shy, they will hide behind the door and the person must get nearer to them to hear what they are saying. If what they are asking for is available, this will be handed to them and they scamper away immediately. If it is not available, they slowly leave the house and go to the next house or head back home.

It is different if money is involved in the *baylo* because the adults will personally approach the person whom they want to borrow from. One common example of this is when parents need cash to send to their children who are studying in the lowland high school. The teachers are often the best source for immediate cash because they have regular allowances. The teachers will offer visitors coffee first and start to talk about the activities in the school. This is the usual

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\(^4\) *Sikaw* is sometimes expressed as timidity and shyness from strangers. It is a way of distancing themselves from strangers whom they do not yet know well enough for them to feel comfortable whenever they are together or in conversation. Children are more at ease and carefree if they approach their kin and they show respect by lowering their voices when talking with old people. In instances when they inadvertently shout while playing around near some adults who are talking, they are usually reprimanded to tone down their voices.
process that they go through before the visitors really ask for what they need; it is never direct and quick. They share a lot of stories first before they will say that they need to baylo cash or ask if the teachers are interested in buying a chicken. They will then give the reason why they need money, for example, there is a request from their child and they are short of cash.

Pigs, chickens, or meat are other common means for baylo or exchange. On one occasion, Nanay Siling, an old woman whose husband died several years ago, was looking for help to clear (molampas) her piece of land so she could plant mais (corn) on it. She asked her neighbour if he could find people to do it for her with a piglet as the baylo; another family later agreed to clear Nanay Siling’s farm. In separate instances, a kabayo (horse) and a keybow (buffalo) fell seriously ill and the owners decided to butcher the animals before they die. They asked around who would like to buy a portion of the surplus meat which they would sell. As meat is a valuable food, many expressed that they wanted to get a share but they had no cash to pay for it right away. It was decided that in exchange for the meat they would work on the farm of the seller and others promised to exchange the meat for corn from their harvest in a few months. Manual labour, harvested crops and meat can be used in baylo transactions. Aside from that, they can also agree to pay in cash instalments when they earn from selling farm products or timber. When I inquired whether all those who got a share of the meat had paid, people admitted that most of them were not able to pay in full. Some people did not turn up when it was time to work in the fields. Others acted as if they had forgotten about their debt, and if they were reminded to pay they put it off for another day or just gave any product like sardines or chicken instead. People admitted that they allow this kind of baylo system because they believe that they might also be in the same difficult situation in the future and they will also have a hard time in fulfilling their obligations. Whether or not they get the equivalent value in the exchange, they still allow it because they know that they can get what they need in other ways. As long as there is agreement in what is taken and given, they are amenable towards the baylo. They can complain, but this will make relationships difficult between them. They just keep grievances to themselves unless large amounts are involved when they have to settle payments with the leaders.

People lament that the practice of paghinatagay (sharing) has been lost already among the Manobo. They say everything now must be paid for or baylohan (exchanged). Even if two parties have already agreed the value of what they have exchanged, it is very possible that parties miss their promises to pay. As much as possible they give leeway in collecting their dues because if they become picky about it they will just start to bicker or fight. ‘Pasagdan na lang.’ (‘Just let it be.’) This is the remark I always hear when people cannot collect payments for debts. Sometimes owners of the meat will ask one leader (datu) to stand as the guarantor and make him responsible to collect the dues when the time comes for paying for the meat.

The teachers are part of this exchange system too. If people have exhausted their neighbours and kin whom they can baylo and still end up with nothing, they go to the teachers. The teachers are offered vegetables like cucumber, string beans, and eggplant which children bring
when they come to school. Later in the day, a parent will come and ask if the teachers can spare what they need, like a small bottle of kerosene or a can of sardines, and he will replace it when he is able to sell some bananas in the village and can buy kerosene for his family. Usually the teachers are the last to be asked because with them the people in the community say they are more masikaw (shy). Someone explained to me that ‘mao maulaw mi sa ila (sa mga maestra) usahay kay di man mi pareha nila.’ (‘That is why we are shy with them (the teachers) sometimes because we are not like them.’) Here, even if teachers are said to be part of the community, they are at the same time considered different because of their higher status as teachers who are educated. They are valued in the community not only because of the roles they play in the children’s education but because they are also alternative sources of economic support. Every time the teachers come back to Tagpalico, they bring enough goods to last until the next time they get their allowances in the city. People in the community know that the teachers bring back supplies with them and it is not surprising that some children are sent to baylo some goods soon after. Gina, the head teacher, observed this pattern and so she decided to sell some goods that are needed in the community. Goods for sale include instant noodles, sugar, coffee, salt, cooking oil, laundry soap, sardines, soy sauce, candies, biscuits and kerosene. For the first week people come to buy in cash. However, people soon begin to ask if they can get the goods on credit and pay later for the goods that they need, ‘ipalista lang’ – (literally means ‘Just write it on the list (for credit)’).

In a context where resources are scarce and money is difficult to acquire, goods that can be obtained with cash can only become more valuable. Anyone who has a surplus is expected to share and it is therefore understandable that thefts are prevalent. People find it irresistible not to take for themselves shop bought goods that they feel should be shared in the first place. Not even the respect for teachers can prevent people’s strong urge to take goods that in essence should not be kept and hidden or locked away but distributed among fellow residents in one way or another. All of us working in the school struggled to reconcile our Christian values, including the tenet ‘thou shalt not steal’, and the idea of private property with the Manobo practice of sharing with kin and distributing surplus through exchange with neighbours. However, there are certain goods that do not require a baylo when requested. These are medicines taken to cure wounds and as pain relievers, such as amoxicillin and mefenamic acid tablets. The mam-on (betel nut) and apog (lime) are also exchanged freely whenever available. These are usually given for free, but one is expected to give back to others when one has it and the others need it later. The medicines are essential so when a person is sick they are given for free to a friend or relative out of good will. Tagpalico has a young population as there are more children than adults in the total number. Fear of death is constant. Illnesses are treated with local herbs, big rituals (kahimunan), or prayers with chicken blood (buhat-buhat).

The mam-on is considered kendi (candy) for the Manobo and they give it to others freely when they sit around as a group to have a chat in the afternoons or mornings after and before going to their individual tasks. However, if a person always relies on others for their own mam-on, it is likely that that person will start to be refused. The elderly woman, Nanay Pasyang, when she
was not given mam-on by the manigaon, tried to outsmart him by using the teachers as an excuse to get the betel nut she wanted. Sharing has become a sensitive process in Tagpalico especially when it involves baylo. If one wants a portion of meat from a wild boar that was trapped by a person, one has to pay for the meat instead of trading meat for another product or service. Everyone prefers cash now. People remark that the real essence of sharing or paghinatagay is slowly diminishing. Before, meat from trapped wild boar was freely given and equally distributed among households. Now, only spoiled meat (hayo) can be given for free to those who want to get a share. As an example, I was told of a story about a horse that was hanged to death, accidentally, as it lost its balance on a steep slope. The owner, a non-Manobo settler who lived away from the Tagpalico centre just decided to bury it. After a day, the dead horse was dug up and the meat stolen. Nobody pinpointed who dug the meat up but the foul smell that escaped from the houses while the meals were cooked showed that the dead horse’s meat had been shared by the local residents. This event was not discussed openly because of the way in which the meat was acquired, but conversations later revealed that most of the families got their share of the dead horse’s meat. People remarked that it was illogical for the owner to bury the horse when it could still be of benefit as food.

Despite the observation that true sharing is becoming less important, parents still emphasise that children must be generous with what they have and must remain honest about what they have to give. Datu Ronny, one of the leaders in Tagpalico, says parents should always encourage their children to help other members of their katilingban or community if ever they become successful because these are also the people whom they can ask for help whenever they need it. For them, being successful or nilampos is to get an education and to have a decent job afterwards. When it is their time to raise a family, those who are successful will have secure employment to enable them to earn and support the family. Even if they remain in the village, it is important that young people know how to survive through their own efforts. Most importantly, if a person is nilampos, he or she should display positive values (maayong kinaiyahan) by being respectful to elders, by being honest and being helpful with family and community.

This chapter has described how the Manobo people in Tagpalico organise themselves through household groupings and settlement patterns. It has also traced the movement of people in staying with and leaving the community as reflected in the increasing and decreasing numbers of residents in the past years. The functions performed by family members in maintaining their livelihoods and other economic activities, and the role of sharing and exchange (baylo) in the social relationships of community members, show the fundamental relationships through which the Tagpalico community is organised economically and socially. In the next chapter I explain further how the Manobo of Tagpalico recognise relatives, how they start a family, and how they include non-kin in the social fabric of the community which has become apparent with the introduction of the school.
Figure 6. Spot Map of Tagpalico showing house groupings/clusters or banwa.
CHAPTER 2
Making Households and Maintaining Tagpalico as a Community of Relatives

This chapter describes how the Manobo recognise relatives, initiate married life and establish families. Because the Manobo have been working together with groups external to their community, especially in the community’s school program, this chapter also explores how social organisation and kinship structures are modified as outsiders become incorporated into the community’s existing socio-political setup. I explore how new forms of affinity are created with people outside of the kin group, particularly teachers, nuns, and visitors, like anthropologists, who are incorporated in the community’s social web as they share experiences and sentiments with a group of lumad (indigenous) people.

Studies of the social organisation of Filipino ethnolinguistic groups describe a cognatic or bilateral descent system of kinship relations. Primarily tracing kin through descent established by blood and marriage relations, the Manobo share this form of kinship system with the Bontoc Igorots (Bacdayan, 1977), Ilongots (Rosaldo, R., 1980), Agta Negrito (Headland, 1977), and Mandaya (Yengoyan, 1973), to name a few of the other social groups that have been studied in the Philippines. Bacdayan (1977) focuses on the cooperation and sexual equality of the Bontoc Igorots and identifies that kindred stand as the next most significant support outside of the nuclear family. Kinship influences the social life and daily behaviour of the Agta Negrito (Headland, 1977) and bilateral reckoning of kinship allows greater help for the group. In terms of support, the Ilongots in Rosaldo’s (1980) study stress the role of the kin group’s cohesion as a crucial factor in protecting their bertan (grouping or family) and executing raiding activities. These groups identify relatives from both the maternal and paternal sides and social behaviour is organised along established kin relationships that provide economic stability as mentioned in the study of the Mandaya by Yengoyan (1973).

The Manobo (Garvan, 1931; Bauzon, 1999; Buenconsejo, 2002), aside from reckoning members of the kin group bilaterally, also ascribe affinity to those who do not belong to this network of kin more usually known as relatives - paryente. This kind of affinity with outsiders is brought about by relationships that are established neither by blood nor by marriage. One example is the notion of being ‘kauban’, meaning an ally, company, friend, or being in unity with the Manobo people that allows a person to be welcomed as part of their social group. In the case of the Manobo, this is particularly highlighted in interpersonal relationships emerging from the establishment of the school in Tagpalico. It is achieved by sharing their aspirations as a community, by physically residing in the place, and experiencing the difficulties of everyday life which they encounter as part of living. ‘Kauban’ is similar to the notion of kaban among the Mandaya group that Yengoyan (1973) has described as the state pertaining to ‘belonging’ and ‘of the same side’. For the Mandaya group that also resides in the island of Mindanao where the Manobo are found, kaban is characterised by the formation of task groups and social units.
of common interest. According to Yengoyan, *kaban* extends further than the consanguineal and affinal kins and also comprises other activities that promote ‘togetherness’ and a sense of ‘belonging’. In the case of the Manobo in Tagpalico, *kauban* may refer to outsiders who have spent considerable time in their community, for example as teachers or volunteers, and to those who have become supporters of Manobo aspirations and those who understand their difficulties.

Idioms of kinship are also employed to refer to people involved in these relationships as non-kin outsiders. Terms for ‘mother’ (*Nanay*) and ‘father’ (*Tatay*) are used to address elderly women and men respectively as outsiders become increasingly integrated in existing social relationships. Although not addressed as daughters or sons, outsiders are regarded as *kauban* when members of the community become at ease with the newcomers.

*Kauban* can also have a political connotation which refers to a ‘comrade’ and can indicate that one is aware of the namesake being used among members of the guerrilla group. *Kauban* as a form of address used together with one’s name, e.g. *Kaubang* Ben, is then employed carefully because of this politically-associated identification. It might give the wrong impression to others and might put a person’s security at risk if used casually without considering the context of where and when it is used. The people of Tagpalico however do not use this term as a qualifier of a person’s name but as a referent to the state of companionship and belongingness that the people themselves recognise for one’s presence and service given to their community.

Explaining ‘relatedness in terms of indigenous statements and practices’, Carsten (2000:3) aims to provide a new way of looking at relationships beyond the usual biological and social explanations of previous kinship studies. As such, ‘relatedness’ gives way to ‘openness to indigenous idioms of being related’ (ibid: 4). Carsten’s study among the Malay exemplified how one becomes kin through various domestic processes of feeding and eating together; by living together in one house wherein food is prepared in one hearth; and by marrying and taking care of children (Carsten, 1997; 1995). She explains that children in Pulau Langkawi who have different biological mothers, but who happened to consume breast milk from one woman may not marry because mother’s milk is derived from the mother’s blood. Having to be fed with the same mother’s milk therefore makes the babies siblings. They also believe that blood is created in the body of a person through the food he eats. Sharing food that is cooked in the same hearth creates a relationship through the sharing of the same substance that creates blood. Becoming kin, therefore, is a process achieved as one is growing up and nurtured to adulthood and not by virtue of birth alone.

The concept of ‘relatedness’ opens possibilities for thinking about how the Manobo identify links with individuals within as well as outside their group. Starting primarily from kinship of consanguineal (blood relatives), affinal (relatives through marriage), or fictive (or pseudo-relatives because of rituals [Parkin, 1997]) relations, the Manobo have adopted others to be part of their kindred (Yengoyan, 1973) through a process of incorporation. This forging of identification involving ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ (Schweitzer, 2000:208) explains how others
become related or not to members of a group. Succinctly stated, inclusion pertains to acknowledging and establishing relations by incorporating non-kin whenever it is deemed to be advantageous to do so. Exclusion, on the other hand, tends to minimise and narrow the option of establishing new kin in situations when having more relatives would be disadvantageous. In societies where networks and alliances are useful, the inclusive function of kinship is logical and strategic. In situations when wealth distribution or inheritance is involved, inclusion is less reasonable. Schweitzer also notes that these two functions of kinship can be present simultaneously and can occur at various levels, whether individual or group; and can be situational as well.

Marshall Sahlins (2011:2) proposes that kinship can be defined as ‘mutuality of being’. This definition provides an explanation to cover diverse forms of relatedness and kinship linkages which are not only limited to procreation, filiation, and descent, but will also account for relations that are locally constituted by social construction or co-substantiality like sharing of substance (e.g. milk, food), experiences (e.g. feeding, sharing of residence) and even mystical relations (e.g. suffering of one person is also felt by another) that connect people. As Sahlins explains, a kinship system is ‘a manifold of intersubjective participations, founded on mutualities of being’ and ‘mutual belonging’. With this idea, different ‘performatve modes of relatedness’ can be subsumed in socially constructed kinship relations. ‘Mutuality of being’ describes well the ways and situations in and through which the Manobo establish kin relations through blood, marital ties, and sharing of experiences in one katilingban (community). Outsiders become part of the community’s social composition as they engage in a common social practice such as the schooling process.

**Recognising Relatives (paryente) and Name-giving**

Manobo people value their land as much as their kin. In talking about the place they call home, they always say ‘Halos paryente mi tanan diri.’ - ‘Almost all of us here are relatives’ - because they trace their affiliation to all other families either by blood relations or marriage. I ask an elderly woman, Nanay Pasyang, how each person is related to the other families in Tagpalico. She readily describes it to me by starting with the nearest house that can be seen from the balcony of the teachers’ staff house (See Figure 6. Spot Map of Tagpalico).

The first house, marked (1) in the spot map, is owned by the couple Romay and Pola. Romay married Pola, the eldest daughter of one of the leaders, Datu Koralas. Datu Koralas married Duyak and they have three children who already have their own families who chose to stay in Tagpalico. A kinship diagram is supplied in the Appendix to illustrate these relationships.

The next house to the right of Romay and Pola’s house is occupied by the family of Joel and Muya, which is marked (2) on the map. Joel is a non-Manobo and a brother of Manong Lualde (24) who lives on the other side of Tagpalico, Purok 7. Joel has moved to this place after accompanying Manong Lualde to help on his farms. Muya is the second child of Nanay Pasyang. The next house is Nanay Pasyang’s house (3) where she lives with her six children
and one ‘adopted’ child who is also her niece. Nanay Pasyang calls her ‘adopted’ because this child is an orphan of Nanay Pasyang’s cousin in San Isidro. She has taken the child to Tagpalico so the girl can continue to study and also be an added help to her with the tasks at home and on the farm. If a child wants to move to another relative’s house, s/he does so immediately. The child can always come back again later whenever s/he wants.

Beside Nanay Pasyang’s hut is the house of Noel and Kata (4). The couple own a horse and several pigs and chickens and also built another house (23) farther from the settlement centre so the animals they own will not cause damage to their neighbours’ plants. Their previous house (4) is now occupied by the family of Loy and Cris. Noel is the son of Nanay Thelma (24), who is the wife of Manong Lualde, and Kata is one of the daughters of Datu Korales (6). Noel came to Tagpalico after he learned that he could tend a farm together with his mother. He decided to stay in Tagpalico when he married one of the Manobo ladies. Joel and Noel are two of the four migrants who married local Manobo women. These men previously had to become acquainted with and known by the Manobo of Tagpalico before they were able to ask permission from the families to marry the women.

One of Nanay Pasyang’s cousins, Belen (10), has married a man who is a member of one of the largest families in Tagpalico, Eliseo (10). Eliseo’s brother, Noli (14), who is one of the identified datus, has married Nanay Pasyang’s niece. These men belong to a family that includes several half siblings because their father has several wives. A Manobo practice called duway allows a man to have two or more wives. In the past, duway or having several wives was accepted and prevalent. The oldest woman in the community, Nanay Siling (8), shares with me that she even asked her husband to take another wife as she has only borne one child and cannot have more children. Neither can she work on the farms for long hours alone. She recognises the need for more help to take care of the farms and she wants to take care of more children. She says it is not a problem for them as she herself wanted her husband to take another wife. She and the other wife get along well and she treats all the children like her own. One of her daughters even tells me that she feels closer to Nanay Siling even though she is not her biological mother. While Nanay Siling takes charge of disciplining all the children, the other wife takes care of the farm and assists their father in making sure that the family has something to eat. They have divided the roles of motherhood in such a way that they feel more comfortable and at ease. Today, duway is still accepted, but has become uncommon because men find it difficult to provide for a bigger family. Sustaining a larger family is difficult because there is only a little income being produced from the farms. What they are now earning from farming is barely enough to support the basic needs of the existing members of the family when they only have one wife. The last person to have two wives in the community was the husband of Nanay Siling. He was once a datu in Tagpalico and was one of the influential leaders of their people’s organisation, Yumbagan.

Yumbagan, a Manobo term meaning ‘a place where people gather’, is the name of the formal people’s organisation composed of the residents of Tagpalico, which was formed with the help
of a non-governmental organisation and the Missionary Sisters of Mary when the school was still being founded in 1997. *Yumbagan* was the group which supported the school in Tagpalico and that pressed for its institution. Among neighbouring communities, Tagpalico is interchangeably called *Yumbagan*.

**Establishing Identities**

Following the rule of bilateral descent, the Manobo recognises anyone who is related to their mother and father, from the ascending or descending generations, as also their relative. Even the wives and husbands of a blood relative can be reckoned as kin as they are an addition to one’s recognised relatives. Although they recognise a larger kin group including those who are living away from them, the nuclear family or the family of orientation consisting of the parents and the children is the most crucial social entity. The family is the basic economic and social unit of the community as it provides for the basic needs of each family member by providing food, shelter, clothing, and materials to meet the children’s needs in attending school. Community members, as relatives, provide substantial help in activities that require more people, like clearing a bigger farm’s land, arranging or negotiating marriages of younger kin, settling disputes, and even lending household goods when a family runs out of supplies. Domestic concerns and problems are often dealt with together with the elder male leaders (*manigaon*) as arbiters and negotiators.

Children take the last name of their father, but old people tell me that the Manobo did not usually have surnames in the past and are referred to only by the name or names of one or both of their parents, e.g. ‘son of Badong and Maning’, - ‘*anak ni Badong ug Maning*’. When there was a need for the people to be censused and identified by the government, the Manobo were given surnames. They follow the practice of lowlanders, whose children take the surnames of their father. Lowlanders who are generally called ‘*binunyagan*’, from the word ‘*bunyag*’ meaning ‘baptise’, have been baptised to Christianity and they are usually the people in government who are tasked with identifying the area’s population.

Having a family name establishes a legal identity for children and parents, especially when legal documents are provided. This is relevant when attending formal education, in the validation of marriage, for voting and for taxation purposes. In fact, any interaction with any of the agencies of the government (*’ahensya sa gobyerno’*) needs the use or reference of a surname. Generally, each Manobo person has a Manobo nickname (*dagnay*). Older people have more Manobo sounding nicknames based on the qualities they have exhibited while still young. Giving nicknames is a form of endearment and shows that people have become at ease with each other’s company because the terms of address have become informal. Giving nicknames happens spontaneously, especially among friends. For example, when I was accompanied from the village centre on my journey to Tagpalico, my Manobo lady companions referred to the only male among us as ‘*battery-low*’. This is because he kept on looking at his cell phone every time we stopped to rest and his female friends teased him that nobody bothered to send him a message so, he was just wasting the power of the battery of his mobile phone until it became
‘low-bat’ (battery low). Nicknames are also used, however, in sensitive situations to conceal and make a code of the identity of the person or a person someone might be gossiping about or referring to.

Today, not all children have Manobo-sounding nicknames as the children are given more Western names. These are adapted from the names of local celebrities they admire or are similar to those of other lowland children. One girl, for example, is nicknamed ‘Indang’ because she was born at their farm near the itchy indang grass. In school, she is called by her formal name, ‘Judy Ann’, which is taken from a name of a popular actress. Younger children now have first names like Dennis, Brian, Rica, Marilyn, Robert, and Mariel. These names are inspired by people whom the Manobo have had interaction with on their travels to the cities and village centres. They also imitate the names of their favourite characters in radio programmes or celebrities in television shows that they watch when they visit the lowlands. Being lumad or taga-bukid (people living in the mountains) has the connotation in the lowlands of being dirty and backward and so one way of protecting their children from discrimination, is for the Manobo to give Western names to their children to avoid bullying or teasing for belonging to a lumad (indigenous) group.

Formal names are recorded in the school registry and birth certificates. Most of these legal documents are not kept in Tagpalico. Some records are stored in Barangay Santo Niño, which is about four kilometres away from Tagpalico, or in the bigger municipality of Bayugan. A barangay, being the smallest government unit, does not have all the offices that provide services to its constituents. Record keeping in Barangay Santo Niño is also limited because most of the important documents are dispatched to the municipal centre which is in Bayugan. For records of live births, health workers stationed in Santo Niño forward the information to the Civil Registrar in the municipality. Oftentimes, however, parents do not bother to give the information to the health workers and so the child remains unregistered for a few years until there is a need for a birth certificate. In some instances, it is only when children reach the compulsory school age of six or seven that they process the registration papers. In most cases, the teachers are compelled to facilitate the late registration of these children. Copies of school-related records of children are forwarded from the school to the University of Father Saturnino Urios to which the Tagpalico school is legally affiliated. To ensure the safety of these papers, school records of the children are always kept in the University and the Indigenous Peoples Ministry Office of the Missionary Sisters of Mary in Butuan City. In the absence of birth certificates, these records also serve as valid proof of identity and residence of the children who attend school in Tagpalico and this might prove vital later, for example, for the purposes of registration for voting.

Marriage Practices, Land Ownership, and Settlement Patterns
When couples get married, wives take their husbands’ surname and their maiden names become the middle name of their children. After the ceremonies, wives usually join their husbands wherever the latter decide to establish residence, thereby following a virilocal
residence pattern. The husband and his relatives will bring home the wife to their own community, a practice which they call ganas. The wife is introduced to the man’s relatives and is integrated into her husband’s family. Later, the newly-weds may decide to move to another place where they have better opportunities to support a growing family; it can be in the lowlands if either or both the spouses have employment there, but usually the man’s family identifies a portion of their land where the couple can always cultivate and plant. Sometimes, if the relatives of the woman own wider farmlands than the man’s family, the couple will go back to the woman’s community to establish residence and nurture their family. They will always settle in the place where most resources are available.

The male is seen as the head of the family with responsibilities as the main provider and decision-maker of the family. The mother, on the other hand, takes care of the children and supports in the farm activities. Her opinions are considered, but final decisions are usually made by the father. Older women in Tagpalico, who are now grandmothers, recount that they were already living with their husbands before they had their first menstruation. They say, ‘Didto na ko nadalaga sa iya’ – ‘I was already living with him when I became a lady’. Younger women who are already mothers attest to this and agree that the marrying age was around the age of 13. Nowadays, however, female teenagers hope to work outside Tagpalico as nannies, salesladies, or house helpers in the lowlands or to continue studying and so they avoid getting married so young.

Getting Married and Failed Marriages

Nanay Pasyang explains that her marriage to her late husband was arranged by her husband’s parents. She herself comes from another Manobo community, in San Isidro, but stays in Tagpalico because her husband is a member of one of the original families from the Tagpalico area. Members of different Manobo communities distinguish themselves by stating what particular place they come from. In Nanay Pasyang’s case, she refers to herself as ‘taga-San Isidro’ (from San Isidro) when talking about her origins among her close friends, but if she is talking to an outsider of Tagpalico she will say that she is ‘taga-Tagpalico’ (from Tagpalico). Affiliating herself to a particular place of origin depends on who she is discussing it with and the context of the discussion. She was only 13 years old when she was ‘gi-buya’ (betrothed). Buya is the Manobo term for an arranged marriage. Parents of Manobo girls and boys agree to pair children at a young age – around three or four years old. Once the children reach the age of 13, they can already get married and live together in the boy’s family after conducting a marriage ritual and celebration. It is only in recent years that the Manobo have begun to agree to allow their children to choose whom they will marry. They say that times have changed and children are now able to say what they want: unlike before when they did what their parents told them.

During my fieldwork, three of the young ladies in Tagpalico got married to their partners with whom they had established relationships by choice. They met them while they were working in the nearby city as salesladies and house helpers, or when they attended village dances in
another community. Village dances, commonly called ‘disco’, are organised by communities celebrating their area’s anniversary (‘Araw’) or commemoration of patron saints (‘fiesta’). *Fiestas* are a manifestation of how years of colonisation by the Spanish and the impact of Catholic practices have permeated the social life of indigenous communities. The three young women were not able to finish high school education because they opted to stop schooling and help the family by working instead. They remarked that they had not wanted to stay in Tagpalico for too long because they wanted to avoid getting married early. They knew that if they stayed in Tagpalico suitors would pursue them until their parents were persuaded to give in to the requests of the men. They feared that turning down marriage proposals could cause negative consequences for them in the future as this is the belief of many old people in the community.

One of the young women, Jenny, went to find work in the city where her older sister was residing. She worked as a saleslady in one of the stores for a couple of years. She was introduced to a man who was a relative of her sister’s husband who eventually became her boyfriend. Later, they decided to ask permission from Jenny’s parents to marry. Another lady, Linda, worked as a nanny and met a man who was a relative of her employer. When they decided to get married, they went back to Tagpalico to seek the approval of her parents. Nining is a different case. Although she had experiences working in eateries (karenderya) as a waitress, she returned to Tagpalico to help her parents on the farm. She stopped schooling at Grade 5 because she lost interest (nawad-an ug gana) in studying; she felt it was difficult for her to understand the lessons. When she was in Tagpalico, she usually attended *disco* events in other barangays during fiestas and anniversary celebrations. These events have trade fairs and community dances where people from nearby areas come to attend. Some take part specifically for the purpose of finding boyfriends or girlfriends even if these relationships do not always last long. Nining had a reputation of ‘babae na daghay uyab’ (‘girl with many boyfriends’), which is not well-accepted behaviour for girls in Tagpalico. Before she married a relative of her sister’s husband, Nining kept another man waiting for her consent. She seemed not keen on marrying the man and so she left the community to avoid giving a decision. She was rumoured to have joined the guerrillas in the forest, only to come back a few months after she left Tagpalico.

The new husbands of these three ladies are also *lumads* or indigenous like them but hail from other *lumad* communities. This way of starting a family is contrary to the way older women start their married life. The old people know nothing about the arrangements their parents made for them. One mother I talked to explained how surprised she was when she was brought to another community by a relative and people were rejoicing when she arrived. She remembered there was plenty of food and she was asked to stay in the house to sleep for the night. At first her cousin was sleeping beside her but later in the night she discovered that a man was already beside her. In the morning, she learned that the man who had slept beside her would be her husband and that she must join him where he decided to live. She was in a state of disbelief, but later gave in to the arrangement because her relatives assured her that the man had a good family background and he would take care of her.
The usual process of asking permission to marry in a Manobo community today has two or three steps: *saka-sikreto*, *saka-tando*, and *kumbiti* or *kahimunan*. *Saka-sikreto*, wherein ‘*saka*’ means ‘to climb or rise’ and ‘*sikreto*’ means ‘undisclosed or secret’, is the time when a man goes to the girl’s house for the first time to declare his intention to marry the girl. It is said to be *sikreto* because it is kept from the whole community and the talks will be conducted privately. The girl is asked during this stage if she is agreeable with the man’s intentions. She may not be sure about her decision yet and she does not need to finalise it at this time. Her parents need to know what their daughter thinks before they can ask the man to come back for the *saka-tando*. *Saka-tando*, wherein ‘*tando*’ means ‘to nod in agreement’, refers to the moment when the man returns to the girl’s house to ascertain the decision of the girl and her family. The family does not have to accept the marriage proposal, but if both families arrive at an agreement and the girl has finally decided to accept the proposal, the *kumbiti* - a feast - will be scheduled. The *kumbiti* is a time when the family of the suitor will prepare food for the extended family of the bride and her community and is considered an event that is similar to a wedding.

If the husband-to-be wants the celebration to be lavish, he can invite a *baylan* or spiritual healer/leader to spearhead the *kahimunan*, or celebration. The last *baylan* in Tagpalico died in 2006 and so they have to invite the *baylan* who lives in Mahayag, another barangay just west of Tagpalico. *Baylans*, who can be male or female, perform a number of functions in a Manobo community but their main role is as a healer. Rituals are undertaken by the *baylan* because they serve as the medium through which the Manobo can communicate with the *diwata* or spirits. Not everyone can become a *baylan* as it is believed that *baylans* are to be chosen by the *diwata*. A *baylan* has a spirit guide called *abyan* which enters a *baylan’s* body during a ritual and will bring the *baylan* into a trance. If the *abyan* has entered the body of the *baylan*, his message will then be relayed in a language that is incomprehensible to most of the people around. Only those who have purposely learned the language can respond to the *baylan’s* statements and these are mostly the old people. Male *baylans* are also considered leaders (*manigaon*) and so they are also called *datu*. However, female *baylans* do not become *datus* because only the men can become leaders in a Manobo community.

During this first stage of asking permission to wed a Manobo woman, the *saka-sikreto*, the man may be accompanied by his parents or he may be alone. He brings a few presents, usually food, e.g. canned sardines and noodles, and local wine for the family. These items may not be very prestigious, but they are valued because they are scarce in Tagpalico. A *datu* or male leader, who is usually one of the elders (*manigaon*), is asked to listen to the man’s reason for the visit. The *datu* will serve as mediator and facilitator during negotiations and his opinions are valued. If he is requested to be part of the process of *saka-sikreto* his ideas will be considered during the discussions and whatever agreements will be adopted will be taken seriously.

The demands may involve farm animals, hogs, or chickens which will be butchered during the *kumbiti*. The more food that can be prepared and the more people that can be fed, the more
prestigious the celebration will be. Being able to meet the demands of the girl’s family will also signify the sincerity of the man which will earn him the respect of the girl's relatives. His relatives will also be regarded with similar respect as the girl’s family knows that it is not only through his own effort that their demands are met. During the *kumbiti*, every family in the girl's community is allowed to share the food. Food is served inside the house of the girl in batches until all the family and visitors of the girl have eaten and have been served. Food preparation is done by relatives of both families while the celebrations are on-going, starting on the eve of the *kumbiti*.

![Figure 7. Marriage ritual](image)

During a *kahimunan* for a marriage ritual, a pig is normally offered. The *baylan* calls on the couple to be seated in front of him and the other *datus*. They relay to them the roles of parents and husbands and wives, like parents giving reminders to their children. The couple listen intently to the elders’ advice and agree with them. Before the pig is struck by a spear in its heart, the *baylan* holds hands with the couple and utters his prayers. When this is over, the pig’s blood, rice, betel nut, lime, and eggs, are offered on the wooden *apugan* (altar) decorated with coconut fronds on the sides and hung near the ceiling above the front door. The dancing then resumes and continues throughout the night as the food is cooked and prepared for those who attend the celebration.

**The Case of Mona**

Mona was still in the fourth grade in the Tagpalico school when her parents and the *manigaon* agreed that she should marry a man ten years her senior. The man has a speech and hearing impairment and communicates through body language, hand signals, and stuttering distorted speech. Despite this condition, he is known to be very industrious and has already acquired his
own farms. He had been searching for a wife but was scared that nobody would like him. He
told his uncle, the leader Datu Korales, about his predicament and informed him that if he had
not found a wife by the time he reached the age of 25, he would commit suicide. As most
Manobo men get married before they reach the age of 20, a man who is already 25 and still
unmarried faces a lot of pressure that will question his personhood. Datu Korales, together with
the other datus of Tagpalico, decided to help the man by finding him a wife. They approached
the parents of one of the young ladies but their daughter disagreed with their plan. She said
she did not know the man and she could not be forced to marry him. The next day the elders
and the man came back but this time they talked with the parents of Mona. They also brought
pork meat, rice, and *kulAFu*, the commercially-produced wine that was popular among the
Manobo. They explained the suicidal thoughts of Datu Korales’ nephew and talked about his
intention of finding a wife. They asked Mona’s parents to allow their daughter to be married to
the man which, after further discussion, Mona’s parents agreed to.

When I asked Mona about this she said she did not want to marry because she wanted to
continue studying. However, she was persuaded by her parents to agree because she was
assured that she would be allowed to go to school even after the *saka-tando*. Although she was
hesitant, Mona was afraid to disobey her parents because her disobedience might bring her bad
luck in the future. It is believed that if women refuse an offer of marriage they will experience
‘*gaba*’ or negative karma. Mona admitted that she was afraid to be asked to leave her family if
she declined as this is a sign of disrespect to the elders. This shows that even if children are
encouraged to speak their thoughts in contemporary times, they are still afraid of their parents
and will most likely follow what is asked of them.

Just a few days before the marriage was due to take place, the *kumbiti* was almost cancelled
when rumours spread that the family of Mona only agreed to the marriage proposal because the
man had money, ‘*tungod kay kwartahan*’. When the rumour was heard by Mona’s parents they
withdrew their permission for the marriage to happen because they were being judged
negatively. However, the leaders convinced them not to withdraw from the agreement because
it was not for the reason of money that they decided to give consent to the marriage. One datu
offered his wristwatch to Mona’s father to appease him and reminded him of the commitment
that must be upheld. The leader was worried that the change of decision would put the leaders
in a bad light if they were not able to put into effect a binding agreement. They advised Mona’s
family not to heed the gossip and that it was not the man who said those words but the *paryente*
or relatives of the man. After a long negotiation, the family of Mona agreed to move on with the
marriage and the *kumbiti* was pushed through.

Unfortunately for Mona, she was not allowed to go back to school by her husband after she had
moved with him. When I talked with Mona’s mother a few months later, I learnt that Mona was
always crying because she was not attending school anymore. Mona’s husband did not want
her to attend school because she might be attracted to other boys or other men may be
attracted to her. Mona’s mother wanted to take her daughter back but that would mean
returning the money spent during the kumbiti, to the man’s family. She was also scared to visit Mona because Mona’s youngest sibling was still very small to be travelling; she was afraid that if she took the baby with her and they passed by the burial places of their dead ancestors, something would happen to the child. Manobo believe that the spirits of dead people dwell in the surrounding areas where the bodies are buried. Dead ancestors are likely to lure weak humans into the spirit world by causing them sickness or death.

Mona’s mother cried when she explained that if Mona ran away her husband’s family would retaliate against Mona’s relatives. Mona had written her a letter warning them that if she left she would ask them to leave Tagpalico too. Mona’s mother just hoped Mona would learn to accept her fate. She did not want anything to happen to her children. She told me that she was never allowed to speak while the discussions were going on about her daughter’s marriage especially when her husband, the manigaon, and the suitor sensed that she wanted to oppose their plan. And so, she believed, that she was never given the chance to express her ideas and feelings during the marriage arrangement.

Before I left Tagpalico at the end of my fieldwork, I learned that Mona had left her husband. Her father asked for the help of the manigaon to settle the problem. Repayments were again negotiated to approximate the value that had been incurred by the man’s family from the start of the marriage arrangement process until the kumbiti. There was also an evaluation of the possessions of the girl’s family in order to decide what could be given in exchange for the costs incurred by the man’s family. In this case Mona’s family had to give up a portion of their land planted with falcata trees, in order to appease the family of the man. This is a big loss and a shame for Mona’s family because the land and its products are very valuable to a poor family like Mona’s.

Mona has not yet returned to Tagpalico and has not resumed studying. She stays with relatives in another community where she is helping take care of her younger cousins. It is still unsure whether or not she will go back to Tagpalico in the future. Her friends in school all pitied Mona because her life has been disrupted. They say it was the fault of the leaders. Mona’s friends remark that maybe the elders were just so hungry for food that they exchanged Mona’s life for a feast. For Mona, she may not have the chance to marry again because of her history of running away and the experience of this failed marriage will adversely affect the negotiations of Mona’s family if she tries to marry again.

This incident is a striking example of how children have grown to value education and use it as a way to navigate new possibilities for themselves in the face of the traditions of the past which give young women less choice about their futures. In the past, only farm tools, food, and animals were demanded in marriage negotiations but today continuing one’s education can also be included in marriage negotiations. Nanay Pasyang confessed that at first she did not like to live with her husband, but because of constant persuasion of the old people and her parents, she learned to accept her husband. There were instances when she wanted to go back home
but later on she decided to stay with her husband. When they were older and had a few children, they both decided to join the revolutionary movement and so they had been moving from one place to another to evade military arrest. Their children also had to do the same and be in hiding. Finally, she said, they surrendered to the military because they pitied their children who were not properly taken care of and had not gone to school. She said they were lucky that the military did not hold them in jail and that they were later allowed to stay on their farm. She noted that as they settled in this place together with her husband’s relatives, they tended their land and her children were able to go to school. She feels more secure now because she does not have to hide and is living in a community of her paryente.

**Giving Birth and Having Children**

The average number of children for each family in Tagpalico is six. However, there are several households that have more than six children. When pregnant women give birth in Tagpalico, a ‘mananabang’ is called to assist. She is not a licensed midwife but she has experienced assisting mothers to give birth. Nanay Pasyang is one of the mananabang in Tagpalico and sometimes the husbands attend to the birthing process instead of the mananabang. Abortion is not talked about openly. Even though women speak of the herbs which can end a pregnancy, deliberate abortion is not accepted as children are regarded as blessings from Magbabaya, the god of the Manobo. News that a mother is pregnant is welcomed by everyone and a newly-born baby is anticipated with excitement.

Contemporary sociological and anthropological studies of childhood view it as a ‘social, cultural, and temporal construct which, cannot be understood as a universal given or a fixed entity’ (Brockliss and Montgomery 2010:4). It is a ‘social construction’ (James and Prout 1997:3) examined relative to the local and diverse contexts of children’s experiences (James and James 2001:27); children and childhood are viewed differently in every society. In Tagpalico, there are two ways in which a child is regarded. One, the child is viewed as a young individual (bata) and two, the child is considered as the son or daughter (anak) of a parent. The concept of ‘bata’ connotes small body size and a ‘bata’ is someone who still relies on his/her parents for survival and support. One mother describes ‘bata’ in terms of lacking physical dexterity or not being able to hold a machete firmly and not using it correctly. Children’s bodies cannot physically perform heavy tasks on the farm that adults are expected to do. If children become reliable in completing tasks on the farm like using the plough or cutting big branches then the term ‘bata’ becomes inappropriate to describe them. Being young (bata pa) can also mean being unmarried. In the case of a child who marries at the age of 14 and has a child at 15, she then becomes part of the adult group. Marriage and becoming a parent signal that one is already an adult and should perform the responsibilities of a parent regardless of one’s age. The other concept, ‘anak’, means child (of a parent) or offspring. This concept has nothing to do with body size or age because a person is always a son or a daughter. Parents call their children anak and they use this to refer to their children regardless of age and sex.
Outsiders as Kauban (Ally)

The teachers and the staff of the school are considered to be the ‘second parents of the children’ (ikaduhang ginikanan) and are mostly not from Tagpalico. They become part of the social fabric of the community as the residents consider them also as their ‘kauban’. Having chosen to stay and teach in the area for several months and only going down to the city to buy provisions once a month, makes the teachers like local residents. They have to endure the same physical exhaustion as the Manobo when hiking up the trails and be isolated from urban life for several weeks. Being in such a situation also makes them ‘like any person’ in Tagpalico. In this case, they become ‘related’ to the community and become part of the exchange (baylo) relations that exist among the people in the area.

During my year-long stay in Tagpalico I was a stranger to them at first and regarded with reservation and shyness. I slowly became one of them over time, beginning with the ritual that signalled my entry and following my continuing participation in the school and community activities. I called the older people ‘Mother’ (Nanay) and ‘Father’ (Tatay) just like the other teachers and children. I was also called ‘Ate Raiissa’ by my co-teachers who were younger than me. ‘Ate’ is a term of address for an older sister. I noticed that Manobo women who were just a few years younger than me also called me ‘Ate Raiissa’ or ‘Ma’am Raiissa’. Later I found myself referring to Tagpalico as my own home whenever I talked to the nuns and my parents about going back to Tagpalico. I refer to it as ‘in our place in Tagpalico’ (‘didto sa among lugar sa Tagpalico’).

The time that I realised that I had become a kauban of the people of Tagpalico was when I was referred to by one manigaon using that term in a meeting with the parents. It was a gathering to discuss the opening of the school year and the nuns had arrived to witness the event. One of the manigaon gave a speech and told the listeners that he was glad that I would begin the adult class and that I had become their ‘kauban’ in their quest for learning even if they were already old (tigulang). Another occasion was when we were sitting around the balcony of the staff house removing the corn kernels from the cob, an old woman told me that I had really become their ‘kauban’ in Tagpalico because I had experienced how they live. Once, the teachers and I had to evacuate from the staff house because of a storm and we spent the night in a villager’s house. We had to take refuge in a more secure house in case the staff house was blown away. Upon our return to the staff house the following morning, other neighbours came to see us to check if we were safe. They remarked that ‘Kauban na gyud mo namo Ma’am sa among kalisud diri sa Tagpalico’ (‘You have really become a part of us Ma’am in our difficult life here in Tagpalico’).

The nuns of the Missionary Sisters of Mary are considered long-time and dependable kauban because they have always been helping the people of Tagpalico. They not only help them through the school, but they also assist them in different ways such as through medical assistance and the sustainable agriculture program. It is also because of this time-tested relationship with the nuns that the Tagpalico residents regard them with trust and accommodate
the people that the nuns introduce to the community with respect. This is what happened to me when I arrived in Tagpalico. I was accompanied by Sister Corrie, the nun in-charge of the school, and the staff in the Sustainable Agriculture program. They introduced me as one of the volunteers in the school. Later, I found myself becoming part of the community by becoming one of the teachers of the children in the school; a friend of the teenage girls; a godmother of several toddlers; and a kauban who supported Manobo activities. Like the rest of them, I shared with them the fear when we heard gun shots coming from distant communities; the fatigue when we hiked several kilometres to reach venues of meetings in another community; the anxiety when we were stranded in the riverside community when the river overflowed the banks; the happiness of partaking in the wedding celebrations (kumbiti) and dancing in the feasts (kahimunan) or rituals; the pain we felt from the bruises and wounds when the motorcycle skidded on the slippery road; and the anger when our stored eggs, sardines, coffee, and vegetable and bananas in the school farm were stolen. All these experiences enabled an outsider like me to become a legitimate part of the community and also a part of the established relationships of being relatives within the Tagpalico people.

In the next chapter, I describe other significant roles that Manobo leaders (manigaon) play in different situations within the context of Tagpalico. I show how leaders themselves are considered to be learners as they must be flexible enough to constantly adapt and negotiate the complex roles expected of them in dealings with insiders and outsiders, including those involved in the school enterprise.
CHAPTER 3
Indigenous Politics and Practice: Manobo Leaders

In this chapter I focus on the question of what it means to become a Manobo leader – a *manigaon*. I explore the different situations in which the functions and roles of leaders are emphasised and describe the dynamics and relationships of Manobo leaders with various groups that they have to deal with in the course of their leadership practice. The dynamics of leadership that emerges from a general political practice becomes part of educating young members of the community about how to relate to the diverse kinds of influential groups that the Manobo encounter. Whether they are facing the nuns, barangay officials, communist guerrillas, the military, non-Manobo people, or among various groups of fellow Manobo, the *manigaon* have developed specific ways of interacting with various interest groups. I highlight the ability of leaders or the *manigaon* ‘to play and manoeuvre’ or ‘to speak well with’ (*madudown nug dumaya* or *madudown nug pamaba*) different kinds of people as a form of a leadership skill, among other skills, that allows them to thrive in diverse politico-structural relationships that the Manobo have to deal with in present times. I also relate the leadership practices and political involvement of the Manobo to their notions of what skills the next leaders in their community must possess in order to function effectively as gatekeepers of their community. It is also important to relate their existing leadership practices to the discourse on ‘indigeneity’ and indigenous politics that are common in discussions about *lumad* or ‘indigenous peoples’ in the Philippines.

The Leader as Learner

To be a leader in the Tagpalico community is to be a specific kind of person. The role is dependent on the established family status of a person, most usually a male who has a father or a relative who is already a leader, and the personal qualities that enable an individual to demonstrate intelligence, leadership, responsibility, and even the ability to communicate with the spirits. Identifying a person’s potential as a leader is a social process because other members of the community need to concur with the selection or appointment of a person as a leader based on his personal qualities and his dealings with others.

A leader is selected to be in that position by virtue of being part of a particular family with a leadership history, by having the potential to be a leader, and by learning how to perform the tasks and duties expected of the role. This is done by observing and carrying out tasks with the guidance and in the company (*itain*) of the relative who is a leader and other older influential leaders in the community in different situations. Leaders do not act as leaders all the time; at certain times they are just plain fathers, husbands, farmers, friends or neighbours. The various moments described in this chapter when leaders are needed and influential, show that leadership practices are situated and nearly always involve decision-making processes within the community such as resolving disputes and disagreements, negotiating or arranging...
Given the volatile political environment of the place, leaders must also learn how to negotiate, deal, and manoeuvre through their relationships with other authorities that are more powerful than them. As the community is a militarised area due to the history of martial rule in the country and the intermittent presence of communist guerrillas and military forces in the area, the leaders are inevitably required to face and deal with these groups with calmness, tact, and diplomacy. They must learn not to show that they are taking sides with either of the two groups so that their lives and community will not be endangered. Added to that, they must also relate to the nuns who are their partners in the administration of the school and the sustainable agriculture program implemented in the area. In most cases, the leaders try not to disappoint and antagonise more influential authorities that they deal with although this does not necessarily mean that they agree with them all. In many instances it may appear as if they agree with the groups they are facing and yet, later, they will not do what they had promised to that group and even disregard commitments made. This does not necessarily suggest that their non-conforming behaviours are forms of everyday resistance, as described by Scott (1985) in *Weapons of the Weak*, because leaders’ responses are, arguably, forms of adaptation to certain situations that could, if dealt with differently, jeopardise their position or that of their people. Whether or not they follow what has been agreed with another more influential group or person, the leaders’ calculated acts of strategy do not mean they are resisting or that they are going totally against these groups or persons. These acts can be viewed more pragmatically as a way of positioning themselves strategically to make them and their community safe from the negative effects and eventualities that may result if they show outright disagreement with a group or show clear bias towards another.

**Indigeneity**

The way that leaders learn diverse knowledge in relation to the ways they must act in the many situations that confront them; how they must align their responses to the immediate happenings of their environment; and how they carefully manoeuvre themselves in various relations they establish, exemplify that leadership is a constant process of learning and that to become a leader is not only a personal undertaking or act of self-making understood as an inter-subjective process (Toren, 1999) but it is also a situated practice (Lave, 1993). Lave (ibid.) explains that knowledge gained in interactions of ongoing learning activity always undergoes transformation and construction in practice and that bodies of knowledge are not just plainly acquired but undergo ‘reconceptualisation’ as cultural and social products. The knowledge that indigenous leaders-to-be acquire while they are growing up and being trained, the way they understand and participate in social situations that will make them become leaders are always undergoing changes in practice. The differences in the situations that leaders of different generations go through create new experiences and opportunities for acquiring new knowledge in various ways.
For example, one of the situations in which leaders’ roles are crucial is during events that require their presence as representatives of the Manobo group. These events are usually programs, forums and meetings to discuss issues that are confronting ‘indigenous peoples’ (*lumad*) and which highlight the collective identity of these ‘indigenous’ groups. This kind of situation requires collaboration and networking with external groups like non-governmental organisations or farmers’ organisations. Representing the community in coalitions and networks and participating in social mobilisations that address issues confronting the general indigenous (*lumad*) population in the region are some tasks expected of a leader. In gatherings like these, issues relating to human rights, environmental concerns, and indigenous rights are tackled and become the main agendas for advocacy with other external groups. It is during these occasions too that Manobo leaders become aware of the strategic possibilities of organising around notions of collective rights, like demanding the right to self-determination (Seton, 1999; Smith, 1999). These are also the concerns that indigenous peoples around the world are discussing and trying to uphold. The idea of *lumad* identity as conforming to that of ‘indigenous peoples’ in the global sense of the term is learned in these kinds of venues and it is in this way that the Manobo leaders become participants of a wider global international movement involving discourses of ‘indigeneity’ (Merlan, 2009; Cadena and Starn, 2007; Niezen, 2000, 2003). By being involved in coalitions of indigenous groups and representing the Tagpalico community in various gatherings that discuss their collective rights as a people, the leaders become the link from the local community to the internationally propelled ‘indigenous’ movement and vice versa.

Learning to identify as both ‘native’ to the land (Dyck, 1985) and as ‘other’ (Merlan, 2009) to dominant groups in the Philippines means that identifying as ‘indigenous’ is about finding social ‘difference and sameness’ (Cadena and Starn, 2007:4) in highly specific ways. It creates a globally-supported phenomenon that involves coming out as a distinct group of people that has long been marginalised and discriminated against and it can become a legitimate call to gain respect and recognition from the state. This relationship of always being marginal to the state is somehow what defines indigenous peoples and tribal groups (Maybury-Lewis, 1997) and this marginality is defined economically, politically and through the experience of being socially and culturally stigmatised by the other majority members of nation-states. Despite its growing acceptance and worldwide status, there is also salient resistance among state agencies to the possible secessionist effects of acknowledging indigenous peoples’ rights (Niezen, 2000). As a consequence, the movement of *indigenism* and the topic of *indigeneity* have never been static and homogenous, but are in fact characterised by ‘eclecticism and dynamism’ (Cadena and Starn, 2007:3). *Indigeneity* has become a ‘relational field’ imbued with the processes of formation and reformation of ‘governance, subjectivities, and knowledges’ that encompass actors who are both indigenous and non-indigenous (Cadena and Starn, 2007:12). This makes ‘being indigenous’ always a provisional and situational condition in relation to the question of what it means to be non-indigenous. Thus, establishing *indigeneity* is an ongoing process of becoming and generativity (Pratt in Cadena and Starn, 2007:402-403).
In the Philippines, the promulgation of a law called the ‘Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997’ provided the legal basis for legitimate support of the demands of marginalised, minority, ‘tribal’ groups under the unifying international banner of ‘indigenous peoples’. Thus, claims that have been formerly regarded as nothing more than local became reframed as part of a global movement for recognition. Manobo leaders are in the process of accommodating themselves to this moment of post-colonial political transformation.

**The Manigaon of Tagpalico**

My entry to the Manobo community where I have done fieldwork could not proceed until the nun who brought me there gained the consent of the Manobo leaders. This group of male leaders is critical in the community affairs of Tagpalico as they are the gatekeepers and major decision-makers. Everyone who stays in the place, especially those who do not have relatives in the area, must seek consent and approval from them.

Often addressed as ‘Datu’¹, the manigaon’s roles become apparent in matters relating to dispute resolution, marriage arrangement, community decision-making, and ritual performances. Manobo spirituality is centred in their belief of Magbabaya, the supreme being of the spirits (diwata) that reside in nature and the environment where humans also live. These spirits can inflict sickness and cause death to mortals or can bring about good harvests and abundant blessings. If an illness that befalls a person is believed to be caused by the spirits, a healing ritual can be conducted to appease them. Some Manobo members admit that they believe in Catholicism, especially if they find it not to be antagonistic to their traditional belief system. The Catholic nuns are not telling them to stop practising their own rituals and respect what the Manobo revere and even encourage them not to abandon their traditional Manobo beliefs about giving respect to Magbabaya and the diwata.

The eldest son of a recognised leader is expected to be the next datu when his father dies or is unable to perform his duties as a leader due to illness or old age. However, if the son shows no interest or does not exhibit the qualities of being a leader in childhood, another male sibling or relative who has the potential to become a leader can be encouraged to take up the succession. Those who do not exhibit the traits of being future leaders will become ordinary farmers and raise their own families. One son who did not succeed his deceased father as leader left Tagpalico to work in another municipality. He also raised his family away from Tagpalico and only came back to visit his mother and siblings from time to time. A boy who shows interest in what his manigaon father does is most likely to become a leader when he becomes an adult, when he can take on responsibilities such as those of a married man or a family man, since he has the privilege to observe the roles that a manigaon must play. Women can, although rarely

¹ A *datu* is a term of reference that was adapted from the appellation for a leader of other Muslim groups in other areas in Mindanao. The Manobo in Tagpalico are not Muslims but they adapted the term *datu* as this has been the commonly used term by other lowland groups to refer to an indigenous (*lumad*) leader.
do, become leaders. Most women leaders usually perform as healers or baylan - people who can be mediums in communicating with the spirits (diwata).

The agreement and support of fellow members of the community (katilingban) is fundamental to becoming a manigaon. Even if you belong to a family of leaders, if you are not supported (gituboy) by the katilingban, you will not be regarded as a leader. Every manigaon has a territory of land (banwa) to govern. The banwa is comprised of a group of people who occupy a particular geographical space and who mostly belong to one kin group. In Tagpalico, there are five recognised manigaon and three of these men have their own banwa to lead: Banwa sa Kapines, Banwa sa Nahikyad, and Banwa sa Tagpalico. The other two leaders belong to Banwa sa Kapines but are still identified as leaders because they represent Tagpalico in the barangay council and other federations of indigenous (lumad) groups. The barangay is the smallest government unit and is composed of several household zones (purok). A zone or purok is a political and social grouping composed of several households clustered together in one geographical location. The barangay is usually the village centre where government services like elementary schools and health centres are found. The officials in the barangay council, composed of a Barangay Captain (Kapitan sa Barangay) and Barangay Councillors (Barangay Kagawad), are elected by the people from all the zones and they will act as legislators of the village who will create policies and ordinances for the community. Most of the government projects from the national government, such as infrastructure and social services, are channelled through the barangay.

In another social grouping, there are federations of solely indigenous (lumad) groups; these are coalition groups formed with the help of non-governmental organisations to allow leaders from different communities to discuss problems facing them. These coalitions organise meetings and forums to discuss current issues and legislations that have implications for the lumad. Mobilisations and rallies during Labor Day and State of the Nation Address by the President of the country are some of the activities organised by the federation and attended by the Tagpalico leaders.

One of the leaders, Datu Korales, is considered the head of the manigaon as he is the oldest of the five leaders. He became the next head as soon as Datu Tagpalico, the previous chief, died in 2006. He heads Banwa sa Kapines (See Figure 6. Spot Map). None of Datu Tagpalico’s sons followed in his footsteps so one of the older members of the community had to take on the leadership. Datu Tagpalico’s son has decided to live and raise his family away from Tagpalico and Datu Tagpalico’s wife says that they did not see in her son the inclination to become a datu while he was growing up.

When the logging industry was still at its peak in the 1970s, Datu Korales moved to Tagpalico from an adjacent community called Logdeck - a now deserted logging station. During these times, the region was one of the main sources of wood for the country’s timber export industry because of its dense forestation. When most of the mature trees in the area had been felled and
the government’s total log ban policy was implemented in the mid-1980s, the big commercial logging companies of the region stopped their operations. The Manobo had been wage labourers of the logging companies owned by wealthy families in Butuan City, Northern Mindanao. When the logging operations stopped and the concessionaires left the area, the Manobo, who were the original residents of this place, stayed. They continued to farm in the area and later planted the fast growing Falcata trees which became in demand in the market as this kind of tree served as a raw material for paper production and wooden crate manufacturing.

Datu Korales belongs to a big Manobo family, some members of which are also identified leaders. In one of our conversations he even boasted to me that he was a relative of a certain person named Nonito, whom I later found out was one of the existing local timber merchants and who had several bodyguards because of the constant threats made against him because of his buy and sell business. With his trading business, he always has cash with him to pay to those who sell timber to him. Carrying substantial amounts of cash makes him prone to being mugged or robbed and hence his need to employ bodyguards. When the major logging companies stopped their operations, there were still small-scale loggers who continued to harvest the remaining timber in the forests. Local merchants like Nonito act as middlemen between the larger companies and the small scale timber harvesters. The middlemen gather the timber sold to them by the local residents and later sell it in bulk to the bigger timber plants in the city. Datu Korales says he was encouraged by the late Datu Tagpalico to move from Logdeck to the place where the school is situated now. There are two reasons why he agreed to Datu Tagpalico’s request. Firstly for security reasons: because during the time when the military operations were incessant, residents could take care of each other if they lived together. Second is the accessibility of the school since he wanted his young children to study in Tagpalico because in Logdeck there was no school.

Another member of the manigaon, Datu Tasyo, heads the Banwa sa Tagpalico (see Figure 6. Spot Map). This banwa, although called Banwa sa Tagpalico, does not represent the entire village of Tagpalico because it is one of the smaller settlement clusters in Tagpalico. It is so called because most of the members who now live in the village centre previously lived nearer to that area. Both areas are also called Tagpalico because the road that leads to the place is meandering (galiko-liko). Datu Tasyo belongs to one of the bigger family groups in the area and he is a leader because his father was also one. He told me that when he was younger he observed attentively the tasks performed by his father. When it became apparent that he exhibited qualities of a potential leader, his father always kept him close (itain siya) and let him observe his activities so he would learn what a leader should do. When his father reached old age, most members of his kin group decided to appoint him one of the pillars of the community (gituboy sya sa katilingban). Datu Tasyo has learned from his father that when people ask for help for their problems, a leader must always find ways to respond to them. If he cannot do it by himself, he will consult with other manigaon and together they will decide upon the matter. Datu Tasyo further added that a datu needs to perform his tasks within his farm and family quickly because his role as a leader calls for him to attend to other concerns. He acknowledges
that he is primarily a farmer with a family to feed and farms to tend. Having the role of a leader on top of these basic tasks is an added equally-important responsibility and so he ensures that he attends to all of these functions.

The youngest of the five manigaon, Datu Noli, leads Banwa sa Nahikyad. The place (see Figure 6. Spot Map of Tagpalico) is called ‘nahikyad’ because the group cluster is located within an area where the mountain slopes look like a wide unrolled mat (murag gihikyad o gibukhad nga banig) when cleared for farming. Datu Noli, even if he is still in his 30s, was chosen (gituboy) by the rest of the family members in his banwa as their leader because he is the eldest son of a previous datu. He belongs to a family of leaders: his two uncles were a datu and a baylan (healing ritual leader) who both live in another village outside Tagpalico. As proof that he inherited the position from his father, Datu Noli is the keeper of a spear, considered to be a family heirloom, used for killing pigs during ritual sacrifices. He shared with me that he grew up witnessing the roles and tasks performed by his father and uncles in the community. With the spear being entrusted to him, he was given the responsibility of being the next leader. When I visited his home in Nahikyad, his wife pointed to the spear inserted beneath the beams of the thatched roof near the hut’s entrance. She said they considered it to be very important because it was the only one left in the community and Datu Noli would not lend it to anybody for any reason aside from ritual purposes.

Datu Ronny, who lives in Banwa sa Kapines (Figure 6: No.12), is part of the manigaon group because he was previously selected by the members of Tagpalico (Purok 10) to be their zone (purok) leader and the representative of Tagpalico to the Barangay Council of Santo Niño. He hails from another village but he joined his wife whose family lived in Tagpalico. They decided to stay in this place to avail themselves of free education for their children. While holding this position as a zone leader, he is also one of the officers of the Parents-Teachers-Community Association (PTCA).

Asided from being a manigaon, Datu Ronny, is one of the best carpenters in Tagpalico. Most of the men in this place know how to build or repair their houses but Datu Ronny can do the task efficiently as he owns a set of carpentry tools. He is often tasked to help in the repairs that the school needs because of his skill. I have also observed that Datu Ronny brings his six-year-old son with him wherever he goes; this boy just tags along with him and sometimes helps him in carrying tools. I remember Datu Ronny relating to me that he was also eager to accompany his father when he was younger and that was how he would teach his children too. He says it is important for them to learn as many skills as they can so they will be able to survive on their own when they have their own families. When Datu Ronny’s term as purok leader ended, an election was initiated to select another purok leader. Some teachers assisted in the election process and Datu Ronny was replaced by another male member of the community - Datu Perto (Figure 6: No.7). Datu Perto’s sister is Datu Ronny’s wife.
Datu Perto was the zone (purok) leader of Tagpalico when I did my fieldwork. Being the purok leader, he is Tagpalico’s representative on the Barangay Council. A barangay is the smallest administrative division of the Philippine government and the officials who will form the council are elected by the residents in different clustered households or zones. Datu Perto attends the monthly council meeting in Barangay Santo Niño and relays to the members what they have discussed in the meeting. Since he was the identified official on the Barangay Council, he accompanied me to the Barangay Santo Niño for the courtesy call and for me to log in to the Barangay’s record book. Every person, especially those who have no relatives in the area and who will stay a few months in Tagpalico, must personally inform the Barangay Council of their presence so that outsiders who come to the area can be accounted for if there are military operations and assistance can be provided to them if required.

The role of Datu Perto as link of the community to the Barangay Council is important in informing both groups about what is going on in their particular places. Datu Perto will report to the council on the activities in Tagpalico or if there are problems confronting the community. The Council in turn informs all the zone leaders about government plans and projects that are to be implemented. These may be health, livelihood, or infrastructure programs. For example, one of the problems Datu Perto reported is the difficulty of channelling potable water from the spring to the households in the settlement centre. The school, through the nuns’ help in getting donations from sponsors, was able to produce funds to buy water pipes. As these were insufficient in number, the remaining pipes were solicited from the Barangay Council. The Council also provided some sacks of cement to secure the water reservoir in Tagpalico. Another government project is the rubber planting project but I was told that the manigaon were not interested because they were afraid that the land they would use to plant rubber would later be taken away from them if they started receiving money from the harvest. They were also asked to pay for the rubber seedlings, which they said they could not afford to do. Health programs like pre-natal checkups, infant weighing, immunisations, and de-worming are promoted by health workers assigned to each zone. The national census, which happens every five years, is conducted by the barangay. While I was there, two barangay officials went to every household and identified the members of the family who were living in Tagpalico during the year. Datu Perto, as the purok leader, also makes sure that there is participation from Tagpalico in the barangay activities. It is also the task of Datu Perto to invite the Barangay Council officials to the activities in the school, especially the graduation ceremonies.

Conflict Resolution and Mediation
Manobo communities in the past existed in a condition of inter-tribal warfare, as is evidenced by the presence of male leaders called bagani. These individuals were the community’s protectors and warriors during times of intensified conflict between Manobo communities. Garvan (1931) and Bauzon (1999) mentioned bagani in their work as those leaders identified to direct attacks and protect the community from the raids of other communities. In the case of Tagpalico, there are no longer any recognised bagani and there is no mention of the community having conflicts with other groups. It is said that the causes of previous inter-tribal conflicts involved wife
stealing and vendettas. If a married woman leaves her family for another man in another community, her husband can plan an attack on the family of the man who has stolen his wife. Murders were also a common cause of raids and these could only be stopped if a truce or pact (tampuda) was initiated by the leaders of both feuding families and communities. Nowadays, raiding is non-existent, not only because it takes a lot of effort and resources to undertake, but more importantly because the presence of the guerrillas and military forces has affected all areas.

I arrived in the community of Tagpalico in a relatively 'quiet' and peaceful (linaw) time. This is what I heard from the school staff who I worked with during my stay. They said times had become better compared to four years ago when military operations were frequent. ‘Linaw na.’ – 'It is already peaceful', they told me. However, they are still in constant fear because they never know if the guerrillas and the military will have an encounter and they will be forced to evacuate and leave the community.

With relative peace being restored in Tagpalico due to the school’s establishment, the manigaon have respite from dealing with dangers related to external security threats. However, they still continuously deal with internal conflicts that arise among fellow residents. Some of these disagreements are caused by trivial reasons, but other grounds are more serious. One usual cause of bickering among neighbours is gossip. I remember very well on my second month in the community when the teachers and I heard loud voices coming from the house of Datu Korales. The staff house where we were staying is situated on top of the hill and so we had a good view from our porch, where most people converge to witness a fight or a quarrel.

We could see from our spot that some children were standing outside the porch of Datu Korales' house and a few of the manigaon were gathered inside the receiving area. We heard the voice of Nanay Pasyang, one of the mothers in Tagpalico, who was very upset and vehemently denying the claim that she had ordered her relative to kill one of the manigaon.

Nanay Pasyang had just arrived from her daughter’s house in another town. She was invited to Datu Korales’ house to talk with the manigaon. They told her that they had heard news that she had been to see her male relative who was once imprisoned for murdering a man and asked him to kill members of the manigaon because they were partly the reason why Nanay Pasyang’s son was executed by the guerrillas. Nanay Pasyang’s son had been executed because he was allegedly involved in a murder-robbery that happened in a nearby town. In my conversations with the teachers I learnt that a person can be executed if found guilty of a gross offence and no manigaon bars or contradicts such a judgment. It was believed that the death of Nanay Pasyang’s son had left her with grudges against the manigaon because they were not able to defend her son. The manigaon believed that she wanted to avenge her son’s death by also taking lives of the manigaon. Whether or not this gossip was true, it made Nanay Pasyang furious. When she learned that the gossip might have started from her cousin in another village, she ordered her son, who was the volunteer teacher in the school, to go and fetch her cousin from the next village. Even though this meant that her son had to abandon his task of
teaching for a couple of days, Nanay Pasyang insisted that he went. She wanted all those involved in the controversy to face the manigaon so the issue would be settled right away. She said that the accusation was so grave that she would not allow it to be left unsettled.

On his arrival back, the volunteer teacher was alone and relayed the message that his aunt did not come because she denied that she said anything about the intention of Nanay Pasyang to seek revenge. With all those involved denying that they had said anything, the manigaon decided to put the issue to rest as nothing had come out of the confrontation. They told Nanay Pasyang that if ever she indeed intended something negative towards them, they would find out about it and she would be held responsible if anything untoward happened to the manigaon.

Gossip or chismis is taken seriously by the members of the community in Tagpalico. Chismis is oftentimes negative as it is usually aimed at degrading or defaming a person. It is usually said without the subject’s knowledge and is oftentimes derogatory because it makes the subject appear bad. When the gossip spreads and reaches the person concerned, he or she will react to it and seek atonement. Those involved are usually called for a settlement in front of the manigaon. If one person accuses another person of theft or any offence and is proven wrong, he might have to pay the accused compensation of a chicken or another possession for the false accusation. An unfounded negative remark that can tarnish a person’s name can lead to the accuser having to pay a certain amount or bunae. The manigaon’s role in these situations is to facilitate and mediate confrontations so that disagreements will be settled amicably.

Even if disputes are inevitable, I sense that most of the people in Tagpalico try to avoid being involved in them. For one thing, they are wary of having a lot of opponents who will bear a grudge and pose a danger to their life. Manong Hualde, a non-Manobo who decided to settle in Tagpalico and play an active part in the running of the school because his son is supported by the nuns to study at high school, has experienced being hacked with a machete while having a drink with some of his Manobo neighbours in Tagpalico. He thought he was going to die because he had to walk eight kilometres to the village centre where the nearest health centre was located. He said he was lucky to survive. I asked him what could be the reason for that happening to him and he replied that he really had no idea. He was socialising with his neighbours and was just enjoying the conversations when the incident happened. He remarked that it reminded him that he was still an outsider even though he had stayed in the place for several years. Even though he had helped many of them when they needed money, food, or extra hands on their farms, he was still regarded by the Manobo as not one of them. His wife told me that because they were living in a Manobo area but not Manobo, they had to be patient and understanding. When they were called by the manigaon to settle the issue, the lad who hacked him asked forgiveness and said he was drunk and did not really know what he was doing. In order to prevent further conflict, Manong Hualde just accepted the lad’s apology. A small chicken was later offered to him as a peace offering. He told me that after that incident he avoided mingling with the people in Tagpalico, especially if drinking was involved.
If most of the people in the community complain about one particular person constantly creating trouble in the community and the reports are proven true, that person can be told to leave Tagpalico. As one father told me, ‘Kung maayo ang kinaiy sa tawo, handumon sya sa iyang kaayo bisan patay na siya.’ (‘If a person is good, he is remembered for his kindness even if he is dead already’). He further adds that, ‘Pero kung daghan syag kaaway, dili maayo ang mahinumduman sa iya.’ (‘But if he has a lot of enemies, there will be no fond memories of him’).

In cases when the manigaon themselves are involved in the conflict, fellow manigaon try to settle the conflict among themselves. There are cases though when the other manigaon cannot solve the issue and need other parties to mediate among them. Depending on the cause of the problem, the mediators can be from the Barangay Council or the nuns. One example is a misunderstanding which ensued during the selection of a zone (purok) leader. The previous purok leader questioned the result of the election and said it was not legitimate because there was no representative from the Barangay Council when the election happened. This was resolved through the advice of the Barangay Captain to repeat the election with a Councillor from the Barangay supervising the event. Another incident occurred when a manigaon decided to cut down a Falcata tree inside the area of the school farm and used it for his personal purposes. Other members of the community noticed what he did and reported it to the teachers and the nuns. When it was pointed out to him during a meeting, he offered to pay for it in instalments. The manigaons’ role then is to pacify, mediate, negotiate, arrive at a resolution, and agree on compensation; whether or not they are part of the conflict.

Decisions about payments agreed together with the manigaon are carefully negotiated, especially if the cases they are trying to solve involve deaths or murders. One case Datu Korailes shared with me is that of Nonoy, a man who has a son studying in the Tagpalico school. He recalled that Nonoy attended a fiesta in another village with his brother and they played card games with other guests. His brother got into a fight with another man who threatened to hack them with a machete. In order to defend themselves, they hacked the man first, killing the latter. This tragic event led both brothers to go into hiding for weeks. At first, Datu Korailes admitted he did not know what to do because Nonoy did not come to him or to any of the manigaon to explain his side of the incident and did not ask for help from them. Neither did the leader of the other village get in touch with them to discuss the matter. After a couple of weeks, Nonoy came to Tagpalico to talk to Datu Korailes and explained to him what happened. Negotiations were then arranged between the aggrieved family and the family of Nonoy with the mediation of the leaders of the two communities. Noting that what happened was partly self-defence on Nonoy’s part, the victim’s family agreed that a water buffalo (keybow) would be given to them. The settlement was reached after Nonoy’s family also offered apologies to the victim’s family. The negotiations for this took a while because the readiness of both families to enter a negotiation had to be established first. Nonoy feared for his life so it took him several weeks before he asked for the manigaon’s help. The victim’s family also took time to agree to enter into an agreement.
I asked Datu Korales why people go to the manigaon instead of going to the lowland courts. I also wondered why no police authorities came to investigate the crime committed. He told me that these areas are so far away from the village centres where the police stations are located that no police officer will search the vast mountains just to look for the offender. Even aggrieved families, he explains, will not take legal action in getting justice for a dead relative. They would rather ask straight away for the help of the manigaon to settle the matter because it is quicker. People accept that if a life is lost it can never be given back and so it is better to get what they can from the perpetrator’s family. People mourn the death of a relative for a few weeks but later they try to go back to their normal routine. With the help of prayers and a food offering on the ninth day, the spirit of the dead person is believed to enter the spirit world.

Datu Korales also noted that if cases involving the Manobo are lodged in legal courts in the lowlands, the complainants are most often told by the officers to try to settle it with the help of the ‘tribal’ leaders or mga datu sa tribu, as the leaders are called by the lowlanders. Datu Korales agreed that the justice system in the lowlands takes time and money to pursue the case through to finality. He said the Manobo members do not have the resources to go through all the delays of the juridical process and it is difficult for them to deal with the legal procedures as most of them are not familiar with the process. This is also related to the issue of literacy because not all Manobo can read and write, never mind understand the language of the courts, which is English. Added to that, they cannot afford to pay a lawyer to represent them in the courts. Even the basic costs of transportation and food needed in order to attend court hearings can barely be provided. The trip to the nearest court in the Municipality of Sibagat takes almost three hours of walking to the next village, which is nine kilometres away, and then a motorcycle ride lasting another 30 minutes to reach Sibagat. The process is just too long, cumbersome, and impractical for them.

Ritual Leaders and Speakers
Apart from their central role in marriage arrangements, the manigaon also perform the role of ritual leaders in Tagpalico society. Typically, a ritual leader is similar to a shaman, locally known as baylan, who leads healing rituals and becomes the medium for the Manobo to communicate with the spirits (diwata). As described earlier, spirits reside in nature surrounding the community. They can be found in bodies of water or in vegetation that abounds in the farms and forests. They can be responsible for inflicting good fortune, bad health, and even death to mortals. Rituals are conducted to give thanks after harvesting crops, before clearing and planting the farms with crops, or before going hunting. Rituals also mark special community and school events. If a baylan is not present, like in Tagpalico where there is no baylan, the manigaon lead the rituals.
A *baylan* is a chosen person because a particular spirit (*abyan*) selects him or her to be a healer early in life. If a child is chosen by an *abyan* to be the medium or instrument of his/her healing power, the child will learn the message in his dreams as he/she is growing up. These dreams will never stop until he/she takes heed of the message. The parents of the child will notice signs that a child has an *abyan* because he/she exhibits different characteristics from other children, like being able to see images or hear voices from nowhere. The child also exhibits a capability to heal family members. The child will catch a fever or become sick and will only be healed if a *baylan* performs a ritual. Noticing this in a child, other *baylan* will advise the parents and the child that an *abyan* has chosen him/her to be the medium. The child will have to accept the role because his/her *abyan* will bother him/her if he/she disregards the signs. Other *baylan* will also help the child by conducting several rituals and offerings as the child is growing up. The child will have to learn how to do the rituals by observing and staying close with other *baylan*. Nobody in Tagpalico has an *abyan* and so if a *baylan* is needed to perform healing rituals, the members of the community must invite the *baylan* from another village. Other rituals that only involve offerings for the spirits (*diwata*) can be performed by the *manigaon* and do not require the presence of a *baylan*.

There should always be a ritual for newcomers, as happened when I arrived in Tagpalico. The *manigaon* performed the ritual and most of the families in the community were there to attend the activity. A chicken was butchered and its blood was smeared on my palm. Datu Korales explained that the ritual, which they call *pangudab*, aimed to introduce me to the *tagbanwa*, the spirits that reside around the school and the environment surrounding it, and also to implore them not to harm me while I was staying in the community. He included prayers for the protection of the residents and more bounty in their farms. The chicken meat was then cooked and later offered with steamed rice and wine that was bought from the village. After the
prayers, we ate a portion of the chicken and drank the wine. They say that this is to show to the spirits (diwata) that we share with them the food being offered during the ritual.

This kind of ritual is initiated during the start of the school year. One of the manigaon explained that the school becomes silent for two months because children are not around in the building when the school year ends in March. It is appropriate that a ritual should be performed to inform the diwata and tagbanwa that children will start to roam and play around the school when the school begins again. The school building will be noisy again in the coming months. Parents demand that this ritual should be performed because they are afraid that untoward incidents might harm the children and the teachers if this is not done. The Manobo believe that the spirits share the same space people occupy and they can inflict harm on people if they are offended by loud noise or disturb the silence in areas where the spirits stay and roam.

Datu Korales prepared for the ritual a few days after the classes started. An altar (bangko) was built beside the school building with young coconut fronds tied to it. A chicken was butchered as an offering and Datu Korales especially apologised that the ritual was conducted late. Some parents expressed that their worries were alleviated after the ritual. They said that if the ritual was not done immediately they would hesitate to let their children attend school. They would be afraid that the children might get hurt or might suffer unexplainable illnesses because they believe that children can possibly offend the spirits since they are unruly and noisy. Even if the spirits are invisible, the Manobo believe that they can be found anywhere, in the trees, in the stones, at the streams, or burial places. The spirits can be kind if they are respected or they can be harmful if they are offended.

From the example above, leaders play a role in conducting rituals at the start of phases of the Manobo community life. Consequently, they are also needed in the rituals and events that mark the end of certain social processes. For instance, at the end of the school year, during graduation time, the manigaon will conduct the pamayas ritual. This is to thank the spirits for the successful events of the previous school year and to offer to them the achievements of the graduating students. The graduation rites will start only after the ritual is conducted. The graduation marks the official end of the school year and this is also the time when certificates are awarded to those who have successfully completed a grade level. The ceremony starts with the entrance of the graduates, their parents, the teachers, and the manigaon from the back of the Social Hall to the stage. The graduates will stay on the stage throughout the ceremony and they will be called one by one for the diplomas to be conferred to them by the teachers. The leaders will shake hands with them afterwards in order to congratulate them on their achievement. It is also a major part of their role to give speeches at special school events, when they address the students, parents, teachers, visitors, and the nuns. For example, in line with the national curriculum schedule, the school celebrates the month of July as Nutrition Month and August as the Language Month (Buwan ng Wika), with cooking activities and communication skills highlighted during these respective events. During the culmination
activities for these events, the manigaon are tasked with giving the Opening Remarks, to introduce a guest speaker, or say the Closing Remarks.

It becomes imperative then that a leader should have the ability to speak calmly and convincingly in front of an audience because it is an honour to be called on stage and be introduced as one of the leaders of the community. In order to give equal importance to all the leaders, the teachers make it a point to assign each leader with a speaking task that highlights his position and emphasises his status. Leaders, in their speeches, remind the parents to be always cooperative in the school's activities and the children to be respectful of their parents. They always challenge their fellow Manobo to show support and be united in the school and community activities. In fact, most speeches contain calls for unity and cooperation among the members. It is a time for them to thank the teachers for the effort that they exert to make the children learn and the nuns who continuously support the school. Since there are non-Manobo guests who attend these events, it is noticeable that the manigaon use the Bisaya language and not the Manobo language during these speeches. The Bisaya language is the language that non-Manobo use and it is the language used when dealing with outsiders. The ability to speak in front of people using the Bisaya language is a skill that a manigaon should master. Being able to speak fluently (madudown nug pamaba), especially in front of an audience and with outsiders, is expected of every manigaon because it means that one is capable of communicating with people with ease and is not afraid to face them. Part of this capability is to know how to relate appropriately with different groups. Datu Tasyo explained to me that most of them are afraid to face people they do not know but as leaders they must show that they can interact with anybody. If the military comes and asks them questions about any information about the movements of the guerrillas, the manigaon will have to deal with them honestly and calmly even if they are afraid. On the other hand, they must also show respect and provide assistance if ever they are asked by the guerrillas, the nuns, and the teachers. He admitted that they have learned to handle different situations as they have experienced them through the years. ‘Nakat-on ra mi sa kasinatian.’ (‘We just learned through our experiences.’) These experiences allow them to deal with visitors and outsiders. They may be shy at first but they have to overcome it because the situation calls for them to be self-confident and unafraid.

When I listened to their speeches, I found the leaders very convincing and believed that they would actively participate in every activity of the school. I witnessed the leaders giving promises that they would help in the regular cleaning of the school grounds and encourage everyone to follow the policies they agreed during school meetings. However, most of these plans remain just as plans. In reality, a few parents are the only people who join in the regular cleaning activities and seldom do any of the manigaon participate in these tasks. The policies planned out during school meetings, like not allowing farm animals to graze in the school grounds, are often violated. The teachers cannot help but lament that, ‘Maayo lang sila sa plano pero sa lihok wala.’ (‘They are good at making plans, but you cannot see these being acted upon (in reality).’
In these situations, I can see that there is discrepancy between what the leaders say and what they do. If they face people who affirm their position as leaders, they act according to what is expected of them. It does not matter if what they say will not be followed up; what is important is that they will not be embarrassed in a particular situation because they are able to say and act out what is expected of them. This is why the ability to speak well and to rationalise is very important because they can justify why they have not carried out the pledges that they made. This way of manoeuvring and being able to sway listeners with the way they talk is a capability that they have to develop through time as they relate with others in particular situations.

**Representing the Community**

In addition to the roles that the Manobo leaders perform within the community, they are also expected to be the community’s link and representative to outside forums and organisations. As identified earlier, it is expected that a leader will have good communication skills (*madudown nug pamaba*) because he has to mediate and facilitate negotiations. This ability becomes more essential if a *manigaon* goes outside the community to attend events that require him to share with other groups the life of his people.

Datu Perto, for example, has become the spokesperson of Tagpalico to the Barangay Council of Santo Niño after being selected as the zone (*purok*) leader. As part of this responsibility, he is often invited to attend other training sessions, whether through the government or through the link of the Missionary Sisters of Mary. I noticed that Datu Perto has already acquired skills in facilitating meetings to catch the attention of his listeners, in the same way as facilitators in non-governmental organisation meetings. A case in point was when a fellow Manobo had just reported to the parents about the current situation of their cluster grouping (*banwa*), and to acknowledge his report, Datu Perto asked the audience to clap their hands ‘like raindrops’² (*murag taligsik*). When another resident had given an update about their *banwa*, Datu Perto asked the others to clap the ‘firework’³ (*murag pabuto*) clap. He claimed that he got this idea from attending other meetings and he thought of imitating it during their Tagpalico meetings.

Other *manigaon* are also called to attend assemblies of the Council of Elders organised by the Local Government through the Barangay Council. The National Government has a Commission in charge of the affairs of indigenous peoples known as the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). The NCIP is the implementing agency of the law on the ‘Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997’. Through this law, indigenous peoples are able to claim ancestral lands and get titles for them. With the help of the NCIP, indigenous groups can be issued with Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles. The law aims ‘to recognise, protect, and promote the rights of indigenous peoples’ (IPRA, 1997). Part of the implementation of the law is for the government to recognise and accredit leaders of ‘indigenous groups’ and also organise them into a Council of Elders. Through this Council of Elders, all the identified leaders of the

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² Clapping like ‘raindrops’ is to start by hitting one palm with one finger first, then two fingers, then three, until proper loud claps are produced by both the palms of the hand hitting each other.

³ ‘Firework’ clapping is clapping once and shouting ‘Boom!’ at intervals.
Barangay, including the manigaon of Tagpalico, are officially accredited (bunyagan⁴) as leaders. This has caused confusion in other areas because there are leaders who happen to be accredited by the NCIP but are not selected by the people (gituboy). People sometimes remark that some leaders are ‘fake’ because they are not recognised by the people as leaders but because the government have declared them as such they technically become leaders of the community. Tatay Romay, one of the old men in Tagpalico, observed that the process of accrediting leaders employed by the NCIP was not in line with the way they usually select a leader. He said that the kin group decides who will be their leader and the leadership qualities of a person will determine if he is appropriate for the position based on the socially defined attributes of a leader. Outsiders must not decide who will be the leader. However, since this method of accrediting leaders by the government has become a common practice, he noted that some lumads (indigenous) today even question the legitimacy of a leader if he is not accredited (gibunyagan) by the NCIP. It creates problems because on the one hand, some men claim that they are leaders even if they do not have the support of the people, and on the other hand, some locally identified leaders are disempowered because they are not accredited and acknowledged by the government. Tensions further arise when these new kinds of leaders stand as representatives of communities in which they do not have followers and still they have authority to sign documents on behalf of their ‘claimed’ constituents.

**Links to Other Organisations**

This section will describe further the link of the Manobo in Tagpalico to the wider sector of indigenous peoples in the region through the participation of their leaders in coalitions and meetings conducted outside Tagpalico. The leaders represent the community in a province-

wide federation of lumad (indigenous) organisations. By participating in this group, the manigaon are able to discuss laws that affect them and the issues that the lumad commonly encounter as a sector in the region, such as dislocation due to the establishment of plantations (e.g. palm oil, rubber), mining activities, and militarisation in areas where the lumads are residing. In one gathering that I attended together with a Manobo leader, human rights laws and indigenous collective rights were discussed. In this conference, lumad leaders of other provinces talked about the atrocities that are committed by business companies involved in plantation operations and mining activities in their areas. Other lumad groups also reported that armed men acting as company guards of the business establishments threaten the local residents that intrude on the companies’ acquired properties. Most of the areas where these plantations and explorations are undertaken are also the same areas where most of the lumad groups can be found. As businesses start their operations, they establish security measures by hiring guards and tapping into the help of the military. With the lumad groups sharing the same locality where these ventures are implemented, it is inevitable that they continue to move around in these areas to maintain their livelihood. By doing so they are often labelled as trespassers and are treated as a threat to the business operation. At the end of the meeting, resolutions were drawn up that called for the government to respect the rights of indigenous

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⁴ ‘Bunyagan’ is a Bisaya word meaning ‘to baptise’; the Manobo use the same term when a leader is formally identified and accredited by the government as a leader.
peoples and be firm in their promise to stop the threats to life and environment that the indigenous peoples encounter in their communities. In that gathering, the participants elected officers to represent the indigenous peoples of Mindanao, the island where all the indigenous participants come from, in wider forums to continuously campaign for the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.

This kind of movement that the indigenous peoples of Mindanao have organised in coordination with other non-governmental organisations and cause-oriented groups is an example of how the global discourses of ‘indigeneity’ have been upheld at the grassroots level. When the international movement to promote the rights of indigenous peoples gained advocates and the lumads also acquired the legal basis of converging and airing their plight, there also emerged structures that aided in strengthening the coalitions of the indigenous peoples. It may not be a conscious effort of the Manobo to be part of a global movement for promoting indigenous rights but the participation of the manigaon in these venues provides the link for their indirect involvement. Again, this is another situation that the manigaon must learn to grapple and deal with in the process of becoming leaders. Getting involved in the issues and concerns discussed in these venues is part of the learning process for young men who aspire to become leaders.

Being part of a wider lumad organisation has made the Manobo part of a broader collective identity through which they can participate in social mobilisations that seek recognition with other sectors, creating a wider network that is not limited to the indigenous or lumad, but also includes peasant and labourer organisations in the lowlands. With the help of other cause-oriented groups and non-governmental organisations, the hope is that persistent rights-based advocacy will be recognised by the government in time. This has become possible only since the end of the Martial Law in the mid-1980s when the government became more open to mobilisation of the people and many non-governmental organisations were formed. The Catholic Church has been supportive too, as seen in their continued missions and programs for
indigenous peoples. These groups and the coalitions they helped to form have been instrumental in the promotion of indigenous rights.

These gatherings and activities provide the opportunity for Manobo leaders to hear and learn what other groups are experiencing in other parts of the island of Mindanao. From their discussions emerge sentiments and discourses about being ‘indigenous’ or lumad as a collective body. Now that indigenous peoples are recognised in law and the government has the duty to promote their rights, lumad groups find an avenue to assert themselves about issues affecting them. However, they remain a marginalised section of society and the government is balancing opportunities for revenue that businesses can bring by utilising lumad lands, which are considered to be property of the state, and the concerns of lumad groups for the recognition of their right to self-determination, to decide over their ‘ancestral lands’, and to practise self-governance. When they go back to their own communities, leaders are then expected to relay to their fellow members of the community what they have learned from the forums that they have attended, but how far they manage to convince people that the agendas they have learned about in the outside world are ones that should preoccupy their own people remains to be seen.

I asked my students in the adult literacy class if they often thought about issues affecting other lumads in the region and other problems of the country. They replied that they could hardly even fathom how to better provide for their family’s needs locally, how much more difficult to worry about the bigger problems of the country? They admitted that external problems were not their main priority and they could not even think seriously about them. The basic and most immediate concerns for survival are still what preoccupied them. This clarifies that in their everyday life, the Manobo people in Tagpalico do not think of themselves as lumad or ‘indigenous’ in the first instance but as ‘utaw’ (persons) who have basic needs to meet. Providing for the family still comes first in their priorities. Being able to see one’s self as lumad is secondary to being a particular person or a family member among a collective group known to themselves not as indigenous but as a community, the Manobo in Tagpalico.

Dealing with various ‘Authorities’

The skills in how to manoeuvre and efficiently ‘play’ (madudown nug dumaya) in their dealings with various authorities are apparent in how leaders deal with the nuns. The nuns hold considerable power over the school because they are crucial to finding opportunities for the children to study at high school. All the children who are studying at high schools in the lowlands are supported by the nuns in funding their accommodation and school placements. The nuns look for sponsors for these children who will pay for their school fees, course projects, and uniforms. The nuns also provide help to community members if they are hospitalised in the lowlands. The sustainable agriculture program which introduced farming technologies and provided seedlings for farm products was made possible in Tagpalico through the assistance and presence of the nuns. It is also through the links of the nuns that the manigaon are able to attend coalition meetings and gatherings outside of Tagpalico. It is not surprising then that the manigaon always maintain a positive relationship with the nuns even if sometimes they fail to
meet their commitments in terms of tasks and decisions. I observed that during meetings the *manigaon* never opposed the suggestions of the nuns on the activities of the school, such as repairing the building, outlining school policies, or maintaining the school farm. However, when the nuns have left, only a few of the *manigaon* come back to complete and follow up on what is agreed during the meetings.

On one occasion, the *manigaon* agreed to repair a vacant house to serve as our new shelter after a storm, they agreed with enthusiasm in accordance with the nuns’ request. After the storm, the staff house was unsafe for habitation. The teachers and I had been staying in one of the classrooms in the school building for several weeks because we had evacuated the staff house after it became shaky while the strong monsoon winds were blowing. The school building, constructed with wood and galvanised iron roofs, was already the sturdiest structure in Tagpalico. The leaders and parents had promised during a meeting that they would forego attending a rally in the city in order to prioritise the repairs of the house. At that rally, federation and coalition groups like the unions, the peasant groups, and the *lumads* across the country had planned to hold street protests in time for an annual speech given by the President of the Philippines. Support groups in the city invited organisations and communities to participate in these demonstrations to show solidarity with other sectors and to collectively ask the government to listen to their demands for higher salaries, improved basic services, and recognition of rights. The Manobo were among those invited to participate in a rally in Butuan City, four hours away from Tagpalico. The leaders were supposed to accompany their members who were joining the mobilisation. However, they decided to forego this event because according to them repairing the teachers’ quarters would be their priority. Unknown to us, one of the *manigaon* had already committed to bringing a delegation from Tagpalico to attend the rally. On the day when the teachers’ house should have been repaired, which was also the day of the rally, we received a call asking whether the leaders had already left for the rally. The teacher honestly said that nobody was going since there was a task that needed to be done in the school. The woman at the other end of the line was so angry that she scolded the teacher for not respecting the commitment that the leader had made to attend. Later we learned that the woman calling her was in charge of the vehicle which was to fetch the Tagpalico delegation to join the rally in the city. There was so much confusion afterwards that we had to call a meeting with the *manigaon*. The leader later apologised that the schedule had not been clarified and he was not able to inform the woman that the plan had changed.

I can only surmise that the behaviour of the *manigaon* of not disagreeing with the authorities or antagonising them is a manifestation of their skill to *dula* (*play, get around*) their way in the myriad roles that they have to perform all the time. They know that they have to be responsive to the particular needs of their families and members of their community but they also have to deal with other groups that have become part of their present social milieu. If one views how most members regard the leaders who hold influence in the Manobo community, one can say that they respect and follow the decisions of their leaders. They normally agree with their leaders. In situations when the leaders themselves are faced with more influential authorities
than them, the most feasible way of handling this situation is to agree and follow them too. It is the best way to cope and survive in difficult situations and ensure that their positions as leaders are maintained and will not be jeopardised.

The *manigaon* are also careful in dealing with the two armed groups – the national military and the communist guerillas. If they are called for a meeting with the detachment commander of the military camp in the farther village, they have to go and present themselves. In Barangay Villangit, the village the people pass by before crossing the River Wawa to go to Tagpalico, there is a military camp that serves to watch over the movement of timber down the river. It also monitors the people who come in and out of the areas near Villangit, which is a path where the guerrillas might pass. The *manigaon* have to act accordingly whatever the situation calls for them to do and as much as possible refrain from antagonising any of the groups that they deal with in various sensitive situations.

**Inconsistencies**

Even if the *manigaon* have acquired the skill of manoeuvring (*madudown nug dumaya*) among the various roles and tasks expected of them, their credibility as leaders does not go unquestioned among the Manobo. People often remark that the *manigaon* always say that community members must help each other, but among themselves they are just as likely to pursue their own personal objectives (*nag-iyahay na lang*). Nanay Siling, the oldest woman in the village, complained that when an old man in the community got sick and needed to be brought to the hospital, the *manigaon* did not meet together to find ways of helping him. She remembered that this was not the case when her husband, the previous leader of the community, was still alive. She said he was always mindful of those who needed help in the community and he made sure that problems were responded to, dealt with, and resolved. She also lamented that the leaders did not help her when on one occasion the trees grown on her farm were harvested by one of the *manigaon* and sold to an outsider without her consent. Thefts of farm products and tools are reported too, but these are never probed. This is contrary to the claim of the *manigaon* that misdeeds must never be tolerated and each person must respect other members’ property.

I had my own expectations of the leaders too, and like the other Manobo in Tagpalico, I have on occasion been disappointed. To recall, my interest in ‘indigenous’ (*lumad*) education became heightened when I worked as an educator with a number of *lumad* leaders and teachers who expressed their desire to provide their fellow *lumads*, especially children, with basic education. I volunteered to provide training in basic research techniques to non-governmental organisations in Mindanao for teachers in *lumad* schools to enhance their curriculum and teaching content. During these gatherings, I was overawed by how these leaders were committed to their children’s education. I remember that most of the *lumad* leaders said that former generations had been unwittingly fooled (*nailad*) because they were too trusting with outsiders and were illiterate. However, the cases I have seen of Tagpalico leaders do not entirely meet my expectations based on the *lumad* leaders that I had previously met. The enthusiasm that I
witnessed with the leaders of my acquaintance compared to the real attitude of leaders in Tagpalico exposes the discrepancies between rhetoric and actual conditions. The Tagpalico leaders may have claimed that they desperately wanted education for their children but in the everyday experiences of maintaining a school, much is still desired from the leaders in terms of giving their all-out support. This is indeed a discrepancy but leaders, their associates and supporters are still learning to deal with the school set-up and its unfamiliar processes.

I not only have empathy for these people in my capacity as a teacher and anthropologist, but I become supportive of their vision for the children and those who they believe need education most. This has helped me to understand too that education is important to me, that education is at the heart of the values I hold dear as a person from the Philippines and that I cannot imagine a life without education. With my education, I have earned myself a living and I am able to travel and help other people in some ways, especially the lumads (indigenous) in their endeavour to establish their own schools. This helped me to open my eyes during fieldwork to the question of what it is to live and create value in life without education. My interaction with the lumad leaders propelled me to think about their roles in educating their children and also about their development as leaders who are now coming to think that education is important for the younger generation. In the next chapter I relate the political context of Manobo life and its leadership struggles to the formation of the school in Tagpalico as a military free zone, a collaboration with various kinds of outside forces, and as the site of political strategy to do with the furtherance of indigenous identity among the Manobo.
CHAPTER 4
The School as Military Free Zone and Mission in the Mountains

Figure 10. The School in the Tagpalico Community

The establishment of the school in Tagpalico in 1998 was the result of the concerted effort of the Manobo leaders (manigaon), the non-governmental organisation (NGO) SILDAP-Sidlakan¹ and the Missionary Sisters of Mary (MSM). As such it is an example of what was explained in the previous chapter – that the leaders are good strategists – and especially when it comes to dealing with outside agencies and mobilising others to support what is thought to be in the best interests of the Manobo. The school materialised after a request was made by the manigaon to concerned groups that a school be set up in their community to respond to two important issues that the Tagpalico community was facing. Firstly, it was hoped that the establishment of a school would alleviate the effects of military operations in the area, and secondly, it was desired to provide education for young Manobo children who were unable to attend school. The beginning of the school was not easy because the NGO volunteers who helped in establishing the school were branded by the government as guerrillas or guerrilla sympathisers. They were under constant scrutiny and the security of the community organisers was difficult to ensure because of the unpredictability of the government’s continuing anti-guerrilla operations in the area.

When the school finally opened in 1998, most community members, not just children, were able, if they wanted to, to receive free education in some shape or form. Manobo families living apart from each other came to live near the school so they could send their children to the school and also provide support and company to each other. This was not possible when military operations were prevalent in the more isolated areas of Tagpalico where the Manobo had been living previously. At the request of the manigaon, families converged in the vicinity of the school and thus, with the institution of the school, the community was reconstituted. This is similar to the case of the Arubamba community in Brazil where the school became a prerequisite for the constitution of a legitimate community to be recognised by the government (Gow, 1991). Immediately, therefore, the school in Tagpalico had a transformative effect on social and political organisation among the Manobo and this extreme case highlights what is true for all schools, which is that they cannot be understood separately from the mutually influencing context in relation to which education becomes meaningful in particular ways (Anderson-Levitt, 2003). The Tagpalico school was instrumental in creating a safe space not just for Manobo

¹ Silingang Dapit sa Habagatang Sidlakang Mindanao Incorporated, an NGO working with indigenous groups in the northern regions of Mindanao, Philippines. Instituting literacy schools is one of their programs.
children to learn, but also for the community to survive against the background of turbulent guerrilla and anti-guerrilla warfare and this relates to other cases in which schools are sometimes used as ‘ameliorative’ interventions in conflict-laden areas (Davies, 2004). The school is, in effect, a strategic initiative of the manigaon, one that is proving to be critical to the preservation of a degree of peace and stability in Tagpalico.

After the institution of the school, military operations in the area stopped for a while. Through the efforts of the manigaon and with the help of the nuns, an agreement was reached that the school be declared a war-free zone. Here the importance of ‘connectivity’, meaning working with others and asking assistance, is a point for attaining ‘resilience’ of turbulent areas (Davies, 2004: 108). If the military needed to conduct security patrols in the area, they agreed to do so outside a 500-metre radius from the school site. This agreement was also communicated to the guerrillas who agreed to respect what was decided. However, in 2004, when paramilitary groups were organised in the Manobo communities to co-opt Manobo people to aid in the government’s anti-insurgency campaign in the provinces and isolated communities, the political climate in Tagpalico again changed. Even after I left the field in 2009, there was again a military presence in the community and residents have been interrogated to provide information about guerrilla movements in the area. Luckily, there have been no head-on clashes between the military and the guerrillas which might have forced people to evacuate Tagpalico and when there are threats to its security, the school perseveres and tries to persist in conducting classes for the children. Even if the nuns are not physically present in Tagpalico all the time, they continue to support the operation of the school by recruiting teachers and paying for the teachers’ allowances. They also provide social assistance to the people in Tagpalico when the need arises. For instance, if the leaders feel there is an impending threat to their security, they ask for the presence of the nuns in the community because they believe that the mere presence of the nuns buffers them from further threats. The nuns command influence and respect from other sectors of the region because of their association with the local Diocese of the Catholic Church and deter any untoward treatment of the Manobo whenever military operations resume.

‘Peke nga Eskwelahan’ (A Fake School): Issues in the Institution of the School

After its establishment, the school was not, however, free of problems. One major issue which surfaced is that the school was branded by the villagers as a ‘fake school’ or peke nga eskwelahan. The accusation came from the villagers themselves, which seemed paradoxical because the school appears to have been so much desired by the people. The young ladies and girls who stayed with me in the staff house, and who were ex-students of the school, were eager to share their memories about their experiences of the early years of the school; they

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2 The official organisation of the Catholic Church in the Philippines is the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) which was established in 1968. The Philippines are divided into ecclesiastical territories called Dioceses, which are led by the Bishops. The CBCP has various Commissions under it to respond to concerns of different sectors. One of these is the Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples, which aims to respond to indigenous peoples’ problems.
explained that the school had been called a fake school because outsiders told them that the school had no permit from the government to operate in distant communities like Tagpalico and it is known to be most unlikely that a school could be opened in a place like this by a private organisation. Schools in isolated areas are operated by the government and this one is not, so people from the outside began to wonder about it.

Tagpalico is not situated in an urban area where schools can be owned and operated by private groups to service the educational needs of residents. In these cases, private groups collect fees in order to support educational institutions, and so, families sending their children to these schools must pay. In remote areas the government opening of a school depends on the prospective number of students reaching the quota of 40 students. The teachers to be assigned to teach in schools in these areas are also required to be holders of university degrees and must have studied education-related courses. The accusations that the school in Tagpalico is a fake one came about when it became known that the government did not operate the school and that the teachers were not university educated or fully trained. I happen to know from my conversation with Sister Martha, the nun who is in charge of the school, that the teachers who were part of the first few years of the school’s existence were volunteers who themselves had only finished elementary grade or reached high school and then been trained to be literacy teachers. These volunteers had attended workshops conducted in Butuan City by professional teachers from the Father Saturnino Urios University (FSUU) to learn how to teach reading, writing, and counting as these are the essential skills which students in Tagpalico needed to learn.

Sister Martha was aware that remarks had been made which questioned the capability of the volunteer teachers. Even if they had not even finished high school education themselves, she said, some Manobo wondered about the standard of the lessons the volunteer teachers were giving. There were concerns among parents that the subjects of Science, Maths, English, and Filipino, which are found in the children’s text books and that are used as references for teaching elementary students, are not subjects which these volunteer teachers knew how to teach. It was hard for the volunteer teachers to cope with these accusations when they were so dedicated and just wanted to help the Manobo. However, Sister Martha noted that the demands of the community for better standards helped the school to improve and in later years they started to recruit teachers who were education degree holders.

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3 Educational institutions in the Philippines can be categorised as public or state-run - those that get support and funding from the government for their operations, or private - those that are owned and managed by non-state organisations like religious congregations or private organisations. Private schools still get approval from and abide by the policies slated by the Department of Education or Commission on Higher Education in order to operate legitimately. Catholic schools had their beginnings during the Spanish times, mainly to provide religious instruction, but eventually incorporated other subject topics in accordance with state-approved guidelines.

4 Sr. Martha usually visits Tagpalico every two months to check on the teachers and the school. She travels to another school in Bagodanon, which is part of her duty as the person in charge of Literacy for the Indigenous Peoples’ Ministry (IPM) of the Missionary Sisters of Mary (MSM). When she is not visiting any of the schools, she is in the IPM Office in Butuan City attending to paper work and reports that need to be submitted to the Department of Education and other donors regularly. I accompanied her to scheduled meetings with the parents before the school opened in June 2009.
Aside from comments about the teachers, there were also questions about the legality of the operation of the school. In conversation with me, the young ladies who were staying with me remarked that accusations were made that the school had no legal papers to support its operations and it was thus called ‘eskwelahan sa mga rebelde’ (school of the guerrillas). In the Philippines, non-governmental organisations or private entities are required to meet the standards of the Department of Education in order to open a school. Important criteria to be met, among others, include a designated land area with clear documentation that the area is appropriated as a school site. Teachers’ qualifications should include degrees related to teaching and these are to be reflected in their remuneration. School facilities like classrooms and libraries have to be provided and a proper curriculum has to be in place for the grade levels being taught. Without these requirements schools cannot legally operate.

Rather than following these government regulations to the letter and because the school was instituted in response to a crisis situation, the organisers of the school in Tagpalico – the leaders, NGO and the nuns – just tapped into whatever resources were available. They worked with the Manobo leaders to build a small classroom using thatched grass as roofing and constructed it on the only available flat area of land in this sloping and mountainous environment. They also allowed those who were willing to be trained to teach in the school on a voluntary basis. These included people from the congregations in the lowlands who were enthusiastic for the task despite the distance of Tagpalico from urban centres and the length of time for which it was necessary for the volunteers to commit to living among the Manobo in their remote place of residence in the mountainous jungle environment.

Responding to local concerns, another, bigger school building was constructed. The Missionary Sisters of Mary were able to find funding from the Fulford Foundation5, a Netherlands-based sponsor that supports indigenous education, for the school to be completed. The locals provided the extra labour during the actual construction and the leaders identified a specific area where the larger and sturdier school building could be constructed. The parents and other members of the community assisted in transporting all the materials to Tagpalico, which involved numerous trips, going back and forth from the nearest village where the materials were dropped off and from where the villagers could collect them to move them to Tagpalico with the help of water buffalo and sledges.

The galvanised iron sheets used for the school’s ceiling, cement utilised for the base of the main posts, the nails, plywood, and other metals were purchased from the lowland. They were brought to Barangay Santo Niño, which is the nearest village accessible by truck, and where construction materials can be delivered. The nuns hired carpenters to complete the school building. Some residents assisted them in the actual construction work and other families donated timber and wood to be used in the school’s posts and walls. The joint efforts of the

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5 Fulford Foundation is a family-owned foundation from the Netherlands whose thrust is sponsoring education programs of indigenous groups. MSM was able to connect with them through a person who had helped the congregation in other projects. A representative of Fulford came to visit the communities where the MSM were helping and upon seeing the mission areas of the MSM the representative decided to fund the education program of the MSM starting in 1998.
parents, the leaders, and the nuns made the idea of a ‘real’ school in this isolated place a more stable reality. It was finished in the year 2000, with most community members having contributed time and effort to the endeavour. Even the children helped in carrying desks and chairs. The nuns were able to ask for discarded desks from the university in Butuan and these were transported to the Tagpalico School with the cooperation of the parents and children.

The rectangular school building, which measures around 400 to 500 square metres, is strategically located at the summit of a hill at the centre of the Tagpalico community. It overlooks the clusters of houses of Banwa sa Tagpalico and is part of the two-hectare area designated by the leaders as the school site. It is conspicuously located and can be seen immediately as one enters the settlement centre through the main road traversing the community. Everyone who goes to the school has to use a steep footpath from the main road leading up to the hill. One of the most striking aspects of this building is that half of its floor area is hanging on the edge of a slope, which meant that several long posts had to be used to brace the whole building. The hollow space beneath the building has become a playground as it is the only space which is clear of grass and vegetation around the school premises.

The building has three classrooms divided by wooden walls to which blackboards are attached. The divisions that separate the rooms can be moved depending on the number of children. There was a time when another classroom was needed and so they put a wall division in one of the rooms to make it into two classrooms. The windows are made from wooden jalousies which through the years have been damaged and some of the boards are missing. Some of the wooden planks that serve as walls are also missing and the children can just move in and out of the building through these gaps without using the door. The beams and the roof of the building can be seen from below as there is no ceiling covering the upper portion of the building. When it rains hard, the voices of the teachers can hardly be heard because the sound of the heavy downpour on the galvanised iron rooftop drowns out their voices. Sprays of water get inside the room and wet the desks, the seats, and the classroom floor. Classes are often disrupted because rains are regular occurrences.

Outside the three classrooms is a corridor with wooden railings. From here one can view the village Social Hall, houses, fish pond, and an old hut below which is an abandoned office structure of the Sustainable Agriculture (SusAg) program. One can also see, farther away on the horizon, a vast expanse of undulating land of green vegetation that surrounds the community of Tagpalico. The stairs that serve as the entrance to the school building are in the middle of this corridor and here is a small vacant room that has served as the library. Its wooden door is always locked with a metal chain and looking through the open wooden jalousies one sees an old broken typewriter lying below the lower shelf of a wooden cabinet which has already accumulated dust. On another shelf some old books are piled and a typewritten document laminated on a piece of frame is hanging from the wall just above the

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6 The Sustainable Agriculture program aims to improve food productivity of the families in Tagpalico as the teachers have observed that most of the children come to school hungry and without eating breakfast. Through the assistance of the nuns’ resources, persons are brought in to demonstrate farming techniques for sloping areas. Planting materials are also provided to parents and community members.
shelf. This framed paper states that the Department of Education has recognised the Tagpalico school as an extension school of the Father Saturnino Urios University7 through the efforts of the of the former Tribal Filipino Apostolate (TFA) of the Diocese of Butuan8. The nuns deliberately put it there so that anyone who questions the legality of the school can see the document that shows the proof of its legal operations.

Always aware of the need to maintain the image of being both a real looking school in terms of the basic physical structure that houses the classrooms and the library and also to appear properly formal and legally credible, the teachers make sure that there are other paraphernalia that reinforce the impression that this is a school - a venue for learning – reflecting what people expect schools to be. Part of the teachers’ responsibility is to decorate the school and the classroom with posters of work from the different subject areas and pictures that provide examples for the topics. The Science space, for example, shows drawings of the parts of the body that are used for the different senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, feeling, smelling) and kinds of animals that live on land and water. The English corner is displayed with charts of verb tenses (Present, Past, Perfect) and the figures of speech (Nouns, Pronouns, Verbs, Adjectives, etc.). A chart of the multiplication tables from one to ten is attached to the wall of the Mathematics area. Different pictures of landforms that are found in the Philippines are seen in the Filipino corner. At the other end of the classroom, on top of the chalkboard, are the letters of the English alphabet. There are also sentences such as ‘Ikagi nu Manobo.’ (‘Speak Manobo.’); ‘Magsalita ng Tagalog.’ (‘Speak Tagalog.’); and ‘Speak English.’, that are posted on the wall that show the different languages being used in the school. Manobo is the language used in casual conversations along with Cebuano or Bisaya. Cebuano is not included in the translations posted on the wall because it is not one of the official languages taught in school. However, Cebuano is widely used by the teachers in classroom instructions along with the Manobo language to explain and discuss the lessons. Tagalog is a language predominantly used in the northern Philippines and is the basis of the national lingua franca of the Philippines which is Filipino. It is one of the main subjects taught in formal schools in learning communication arts and social studies. English is another language that is learned in schools as it is the official language used in government and offices. Laws and documents are written in the English language. English has become a prestigious language because the people who can speak it are generally the educated and the rich. Being able to speak and understand English is an acquired skill that Manobo parents expect their children to have when they have finished elementary or high school. Being able to speak English is equated with being

7 Father Saturnino Urios University (FSUU) is a private Catholic tertiary educational institution located in Butuan City. One of its academic offerings is a Teacher Education Program and the faculty of the program conducts Teachers’ Training during summer time. This is a service they render for the community extension schools that they have adopted of which the Tagpalico school is one.
8 The Tribal Filipino Apostolate (TFA), now called Indigenous Peoples Apostolate (IPA) is an office under the Commission on Indigenous Peoples of the whole Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines that specifically responds to issues of indigenous peoples related to their ancestral domains and cultural heritage. In areas where indigenous groups are present, the Bishop of a Diocese creates an IPA office. The IPA in the Diocese of Butuan coordinates activities of the indigenous schools in the Butuan area, including that of Tagpalicho. The affiliation of the Tagpalico school with the FSUU and the IPA makes it a legitimate educational institution as per the guidelines of the Department of Education.
intelligent because it means a person can grasp foreign languages easily and it also proves that one has attended more lessons and has read more books written in the language. It is then expected that if a person has graduated from high school, he or she can communicate better in English. I remember how one mother questioned the capability of one of the high school graduates when the young person could not translate a question being asked by a foreign visitor who was in Tagpalico with the nuns. She said that even other parents were asking how come he had graduated from high school and he could not even understand the question that the foreigner had asked and could not translate it into Manobo language. This just means that parents associate schooling with being able to learn the language of foreigners that is used in global communication. Schooling allows a student to connect to the world by learning a foreign language like English, reflecting what world culture theorists describe as the movement towards learning and teaching in the world languages, and especially English (Anderson-Levitt, 2003:12).

![Figure 11. A Classroom in the Tagpalico School](image)

The teachers also make sure that there is a poster of the current President of the Philippines in the building to show that the people in the school acknowledge the head of the country. A flagpole should be seen in front of the grounds so that a national flag can be hung during the week while classes are going on inside the classrooms. To show that there are officially enrolled students in the school, they put the list of names of the students in each grade level on the doors of each classroom. Every list has a heading that bears the name of the main school, Father Saturnino Urios University, and at the bottom are signatures of the teachers and the nun who oversees the school. All these trimmings are symbols that the school is a ‘real’ (‘tinuod’) school and that it is not a school of the guerrillas. Gina⁹, the current head teacher, affirmed that

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⁹ Gina is a Manobo who hails from another community. She is one of the recipients of a college scholarship grant offered by the nuns. When she finished her education degree in 2003, she was assigned
they need to post these things on the walls and doors because these not only reflect what topics they teach the children but will help dispel the suspicion that they are instilling political propaganda in children. Every now and then the teachers remind the children to take care of the decorations in the classroom and not to tear them apart. The costs of these decorations sometimes come from the teachers’ own money and they know that they cannot replace these decorations immediately if they are damaged. The responsibility to make the school presentable lies with them because they will have to face whichever visitors arrive in the school. They fear that if the military comes to the school unannounced and they are unable to show proof that they are not doing anything illegal, their situation can be endangered. There was a case in the past when the military came and asked for the lesson plans of the teachers; they wanted to see what lessons were taught in the classrooms. Since then, the teachers not only had their lesson plans ready, but they also decorate the classrooms to show what subjects are included in the curriculum.

At the request of parents and leaders (manigaon), report cards are issued at the end of the school year. It had been a cause of concern that there were no report cards given in the earlier years, which had meant that the children who enrolled in the school had no proof that they had learned something in school. Also, without a report card, children could not enrol in other schools if ever they wanted to transfer. The report cards are designed to show the level of performance of the children and most importantly become further evidence that the school is legitimate just like other schools. Hence the accusations about the school being ‘fake’ have clarified Manobo peoples’ notions of what a school should be in order to be considered a ‘real school’ or ‘tinuod nga eskwelahan’. It also becomes clear that a school is more than a place for formal education; it is also a particular kind of material construction with outside and inside surface appearances. Far from being completely ignorant of or naive about schooling parents come to know, through the negative assessments of their school by outsiders, that schools, to be credible, must conform to government standards for national schooling, be substantial and specific in terms of the physical building, provide particular kinds of facilities and have properly qualified teachers who issue report cards at the end of the school year. These criteria and conditions for ‘proper’ national recognition are what make the school something worth having, what differentiate the school from affiliation with the guerrilla movement and are vital for the school in continuing to be considered a military-free zone. It is clear that the Manobo community has come to know, as a result of instituting the school, exactly what they need the school to deliver and that this is inseparable from a nationalist agenda – an agenda that envisions education to develop Filipino learners who are ‘makabayan’ (patriotic), ‘makatao’ (mindful of humanity), ‘makakalikasan’ (respectful of nature), and ‘maka-Diyos’ (godly) (Tanodra, 2003:171), among other things. This highlights the relationship between education and the state project of nationalist association (Froerer, 2007:5; Levinson and Holland, 1996:1) and that the Manobo want and need to relate to this state-articulated agenda. The clarity with which the Manobo have come to know what they need and expect from the school made it all the more

to teach in several indigenous schools supervised by the nuns, including the school in Tagpalico. She replaced another head teacher, Mariel, in the school year starting June 2009.
surprising when it became clear to me, during fieldwork, that many people are ambivalent in their support for their children’s education.

The School Re-makes the Community

The materialisation of the school led to an intensification of cooperative activities, which the Manobo call ‘pahina’. These included the clearing of the surroundings of the school and preparation of the school’s farm, where the teachers and children can plant vegetables. With the gathering of the people to perform these activities, a formal local people’s organisation was initiated. This was started by the community organiser of the NGO SILDAP - Sidlakan - and together with the Manobo they call it ‘Yumbagan,’ meaning ‘meeting place’ or ‘a place where people gather’. Other leaders from other Manobo communities have become part of the organisation in order to show support for the Tagpalico families in their effort to establish a school. Yumbagan turned out to be such a popular name that it was also used by people in neighbouring communities to refer to the community of Tagpalico. The motorcycle drivers who bring passengers into Barangay Villangit, the village where most of the residents of Tagpalico pass by before hiking up to Tagpalico, use the name Yumbagan more than they do Tagpalico. I was often asked by these motorcycle drivers if I was going to Yumbagan when I arrived at the motorcycle terminal.

Yumbagan, under the leadership of the leaders in the community, has become the body that collaborates with the nuns in the operation of the school. As a community-based organisation, it aims to function as a partner in the school’s operation as well as to explore other projects that will improve the living conditions of the people in the community. This shows the principles being upheld by the MSM of their commitment and compassion for the poor; inclinations that are also reflected in the transformation of the Catholic Church during the Second Vatican Council to give a ‘preferential option for the poor’ and allow Catholic education to gear itself towards commitment to the common good, to solidarity and community, and to the service of the poor (Grace, 2003: 37-40). One of the programs that Yumbagan partners with the Indigenous People’s Ministry (IPM)10 of the Missionary Sisters of Mary (MSM) is the Sustainable Agriculture (SusAg) program. This project emerged after the leaders and the nuns realised that the members needed to acquire more training on how to increase the food production of the community. Existing food resources in the forests are not enough to meet the demand for food among the people in the area and they cannot rely solely on hunting and food gathering to bring food for the family. The nuns and the Yumbagan members acknowledge that steps should be taken to increase the food resources of the community so that the children are more attentive in class and the efforts to educate the children are not wasted. This emphasises the relationship between school performance and food insecurity that shows that shortage of food intake affects

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10 The Indigenous Peoples Ministry (IPM) is one of the programs of the Missionary Sisters of Mary under their Social Services mission concerns, focusing mainly on indigenous peoples (lumad). The Tagpalico School is part of the education/literacy activity of IPM as well as the Sustainable Agriculture program. There are also activities for indigenous women and ancestral land advocacy but these are incorporated in the two programs earlier identified.
children’s scholastic performance considerably (Jyoti, et al., 2005: 2831; Roustit et al., 2010:1174) and which reinforces the belief that education provides the basis for economic growth and wellbeing (Basu, et al., 2008: 773; Anderson-Levitt, 2003:5). The group believes that in order for the education program to succeed, the economic state of the community must also be improved. With this belief, the SusAg program was initiated in the community and organic farming technology introduced, together with livestock-raising among the residents. There were training sessions in making and using alternative fertilisers as well as implementation of the contour-farming technology. Seeds for vegetables and corn were also distributed in order to initiate food production. This project, although well-accepted by the members of the community, has not been fully accomplished if assessed through the objectives it has set. The aim of developing a hectare of farm for every household participating in the SusAg program has never been achieved by Manobo families because they cannot cope with the long hours spent working on the farms. ‘Di ko kadugay sa init.’ (‘I cannot stay under the (heat of the) sun for long.’), one Manobo farmer admits. Another member remarks, ‘Di man pud mosunod sa sabot ang uban kung ting-hungos na.’ (‘Some members of the working team do not turn up at the time of hungos to work.’). The enthusiasm shown by the Manobo members for school activities and the SusAg program are similar in the sense that these two programs were well-accepted at first, but as the programs have unfolded the participation of the members and parents has waned as everyday tasks interfere with the organisation of the necessary additional work.

Yumbagan encountered another challenge when the peace and order of the area deteriorated again in 2004. A para-military group named Lupaka was organised in the mountainous communities of Agusan del Sur and they recruited Manobo residents to assist the military in the anti-insurgency programs of the government against the guerillas. When the Lupaka members came to Tagpalico they told the residents that Yumbagan and the school were illegal and were operating as fronts of the guerrilla movement. The Lupaka group had already succeeded in closing the school opened in another community in Hugmakan and they came to Tagpalico to do the same. The Tagpalico leaders reasoned with them, insisting that there was nothing illegal in the school as they were working together with the nuns and that the education their children were getting was more important than the allegations the Lupaka were making against the school. The leaders argued that to close the school would deprive their children of the opportunity to learn. Despite trying so hard to persuade the Tagpalico residents to believe in their campaign, the Lupaka members were not successful in closing down the school or destroying Yumbagan as an organisation.

Having now encountered questions about the legality of Yumbagan, the leaders again asked for the assistance of the nuns to help them acquire legal papers for the organisation and to register

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11 Technically defined as ‘using ridges and furrows formed by tillage, planting, and other farming operations to change the direction of runoff from directly down slope to around the hill slope’ (United States - Department of Agriculture National Resources Conservation Service) National Handbook of Conservation Practices Chapter 3, National Conservation Practice Standards.

12 Organised collective work wherein a team or group of people work together on one farm; after the work is done they all move to another team member’s farm until all the members’ farms are cleared.
it with the government’s Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The previously informal organisation then became formalised and registered. These events have been the inspiration for the leaders to surmount problems related to the closure of the school; they said that they have overcome problems in the past and so they can also overcome any problem in the future. I could feel how proud they were every time they recalled how they saved the school. By putting their lives at risk in confronting the Lupaka, they now feel they can be as courageous again if the situation calls for it. They will never let any group convince them to close the school as long as the Missionary Sisters of Mary remain willing to help them.

The construction of the school in Tagpalico does not only serve as the concrete manifestation of the people’s desire to give their children education. Although external assistance is crucial in the completion and continuation of the school, the cooperation of the people in the community plays an equally important role. The whole process of creating a formal learning environment for the children is a collaborative effort which also paves the way for the people to organise a community organisation. The school is a symbol of the people’s cooperation and their conviction to pursue and realise their aspirations.

**Learning to Teach in Tagpalico**

I asked Sister Corrie, another nun who works with Sister Matha in the Indigenous Peoples Ministry, about how they select the teachers for the school at Tagpalico. She noted that ‘Dili lang kay si bisan kinsa.’ – ‘It is not just anybody.’ She said there have been discussions with the leaders (manigaon) about their preference for the kind of teachers that they want to come to Tagpalico. The preference is for teachers who have reached college level or who have graduated with education degrees. If they cannot hire teachers of this calibre, they prefer those who have at least finished high school. A college or high school degree, though, is not the only criterion for becoming a teacher in Tagpalico. Aside from educational attainment, the nuns also emphasise the attitude of the teachers towards the lumad (indigenous) as being equally important. The manigaon hope that the teachers will understand the kind of life that the Manobo have because they fear that otherwise the teachers will demean and criticise their way of life and beliefs. Instead of helping their children to learn new things and also value their own traditions more, the teachers might end up condemning them. It is strongly felt that it is beneficial if the teachers have openness towards and understanding of the life of lumad because they will live among and with the people during the school year.

Tagpalico is situated far away from the lowlands and living in such a place is a struggle for those who are not accustomed to a life without electricity, comfortable amenities, and ease of

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13 The Securities and Exchange Commission has ‘jurisdiction and supervision over all corporations, partnerships or associations who are the grantees of primary franchises and/or a licence or permit issued by the Government’ (Republic Act 8799). Its major functions include registration of securities, analysis of every registered security, and evaluation of the financial condition and operations of applicants for security issues.
transport. Tagpalico is at least a three-hour uphill walk from the nearest road and so the teachers must be physically fit to cope with this strenuous challenge. They also need to report to the city office of the Indigenous Peoples Ministry of the MSM once a month in order to submit monthly reports, attend monthly meetings, and claim their allowances. They must be ready to make those arduous trips there and back. Because of Tagpalico’s distance from the city, the teachers have to accept that they cannot just go home when they want to and will not be able to see their families in the Lowlands until their monthly schedule permits them to go down. They must also be aware that there will be times when they will be prevented from leaving the area because of bad weather making it difficult to cross the Wawa River. The motorcycle ride from the town to Barangay Villangit, where the walk to Tagpalico starts, can be treacherous as the roads become slippery on rainy days. The current teachers complain that they never fail to get blisters on the bottom (‘kanunay mapal-utan ang lubot’) if they happen to be seated on the outriggers during the ride. It has become a joke between them that having to stay in Tagpalico for a month gives their bruised bottoms time to heal, but only to be hurt again when they go back and ride the motorcycle again when they go home. The experience of falling from the motorcycle and the possibility of getting hurt are part and parcel of the job.

Figure 12. Teachers on their way to Tagpalico

The teachers must also realise that it is not always possible for someone to meet them to help them carry their stuff to Tagpalico. Most of the time, they have to rely on their own strength to bring their food and supplies to the village. In addition, the Manobo do not produce a regular surplus of farm products and even the basic necessities are sometimes hardly met. Children may sometimes attend school hungry, with few or no school materials, come in dirty clothes or without having washed themselves properly. If the teachers fail to understand the situation, they end up harbouring negative criticisms of the Manobo and might become harsh to the students.
Sister Martha says that the *manigaon* also prefer those candidates for teaching who are sensitive to the general political environment of the region. The possibility that the military and the guerrillas may clash violently at any time is part of the social and political milieu that the Manobo are living through, and so those teachers who will be living with them must be ready to face this kind of situation. For them, the ideal candidates are those who are also Manobo because they share the same language and beliefs. However, in the beginning there was nobody in the community who had the necessary qualifications. To recruit the teachers, the congregation of the MSM advertises the vacant teaching positions in school departments and institutions in places where fellow nuns have rendered service or mission work. For example, they post invitations in colleges where MSM nuns have served as counsellors and have brought some students to visit the communities where the Manobo live as part of their interaction programs or field trips. They also ask students whose schooling is sponsored by the congregation if they are willing to serve the communities where the MSM has existing mission work.\(^\text{14}\)

Despite the challenging working conditions, teachers in Tagpalico cannot expect to receive large allowances. At the time of my fieldwork teachers only received a minimal amount of P4,000.00 pesos (£59.00) per calendar month, a sum not nearly commensurate to the effort they exert to serve as teachers for the Manobo. They know that the MSM get the money from their congregation\(^\text{15}\) and the congregation in turn relies only on pledges that are given by their sponsors\(^\text{16}\). I remember Ikoy, the male Manobo teacher whose high school education was supported by the MSM, telling me while we were walking for almost two hours and our bodies were drenched with sweat and moisture from the intermittent downpour of rain along the way, that all the hardships we were experiencing were ‘part of our commitment to serve, our mission work’ (*Kauban ni tanan sa atong misyon.*). He told me that at the moment he decided to work in Tagpalico he accepted the reality that it would not be easy. Since I was sharing with the teachers this difficult experience, in a way I became part of their group. On one level I was glad that the teachers saw me as one of them; however, I knew I did not entirely belong in that mission work because my participation with them was not permanent and I could only empathise with their experiences.

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\(^{14}\) Mission work of the Missionary Sisters of Mary involves catechesis and social services. The mission work in the Manobo community is not geared towards Christian education but part of providing a social service which is characterised as having ‘deep compassion for the marginalised people’ (MSM 50\(^{\text{th}}\) Founding Anniversary Yearbook, 2008:231). Unlike in other MSM missions, where the nuns are directly involved in catechesis, there is no direct religious instruction in the Tagpalico school. The nuns do not stay in the community for long periods and mostly meet the teachers in the city office. They primarily provide logistical help and support advocacy campaigns for *lumad* (indigenous) concerns.

\(^{15}\) The congregation is the whole religious community of the Missionary Sisters of Mary of which the main House is found in Butuan City. Founded in 1958 by a Dutch Catholic missionary priest, Reverend Charles Van Den Ouwelant, the MSM is basically composed of local religious Sisters trained to aid in Catholic catechism. Existing for only 50 years, MSM constantly needs partners in supporting its programs. A Foundation within the MSM structure is then formed to focus on fund sourcing for their mission projects, especially those under social services like the Indigenous Peoples Ministry.

\(^{16}\) Sponsors are well-meaning individuals or families who promise to send cash or goods regularly to support the MSM programs. Their donations are used to send children to school or aid in the daily operations of other programs related to women and health.
All the teachers, newcomers and old timers alike, must attend some orientation and training sessions before they teach in the school. In the summer months of April and May, they must attend classes organised by the instructors of the Education department of Father Saturnino Urios University in Butuan City which tackle teaching techniques and strategies. For two weeks, the teachers attend lectures about the different subject areas of Maths, Science, English, Filipino, and Social Studies. They are given hand-outs for the songs, games, and lesson plans that they can use when they go back to the schools. Some teachers attend conventions wherein other educators of indigenous communities in the country gather and participate.

The Social Organisation of Teaching

A few days prior to the opening of classes in June, the teachers arrive in Tagpalico. They clean the classrooms and identify repair jobs that need fixing like broken blackboards, wobbling desks and chairs, and dirty floors and windows. Outlines for their lessons are drawn up and they check the enrolment list. They also prepare letter cuttings and decorations to be posted on the classroom walls and check the books available for their references on the lessons that they will teach. When the cuttings are done and pasted on cardboard, these are covered with clear plastic cellophane in order to protect them from getting wet when rainwater drips from the ceiling or moisture from the mists engulfs the classroom. They will arrange a meeting with the manigaon (leaders) so that the manigaon can also call for a general meeting with all the parents who are sending their students to the school. The meeting often happens when the classes have already started so that the children can inform their parents of the date and time of the meeting. The teachers preside over the meeting and the usual agenda is the election of the officers for the Parents-Teachers-Community Association (PTCA) and a review of the obligations of the parents to the school. The PTCA is a parents’ organisation whose membership is based on the enrolment of the children. It also includes the parents of the high school students who were supported by the MSM sisters. It overlaps with the membership of Yumbagan, but the latter is led by the leaders or manigaon and its members are predominantly Manobo residents. The PTCA officers are a mix of the Manobo, non-Manobo parents, and the teachers. The PTCA discusses mainly the concerns of the school, for example, the obligation for parents to give chickens to the school in lieu of cash to serve as payment for school fees. Each family, regardless of how many children it has studying in the school, is required to give one chicken. They will also discuss during the PTCA meeting the repairs that need to be done in the school and agree on the time for the resumption of pahina (cooperative work). As part of pahina, every Saturday the parents are scheduled to do work for the school. Aside from donating a chicken, doing pahina is another obligation that parents have to meet.

17 These high school students, scholars as they are called by the locals, are previous students of the Tagpalico school who have been given financial support through the MSM nuns. Their parents are still expected to join the PTCA because their children are still considered part of the school community.

18 Some non-Manobo families who live at the nearby banwa (house cluster) of Purok 7 (see Spot map) send their children to the Tagpalico school because it is nearer to their houses than the bigger schools in the next village across the River Wawa.
They will clean the surroundings; clear the school farm so the children can plant vegetables and corn; fix the classrooms; and mend broken portions of the staff house.

This task of bringing people together to accomplish a task for the school requires organisational skills from the teachers and so teachers also act to a certain extent as community organisers. Sister Martha observes that some teachers, especially the younger ones, are not confident enough to deal with the *manigaon*. Some teachers are hesitant to facilitate the meetings and shy to request the parents’ help in some tasks. She acknowledges that teachers in the Manobo communities also need to act as leaders and organisers; however, this expectation may just be too much for the new and young teachers. The teachers that I first met were a bit distant with the parents. The head teacher then was Mariel\(^\text{19}\); she was not a Manobo and she seldom called meetings with the parents. If she needed to confer with the *manigaon*, she waited for Sister Corrie or the SusAg staff to come to Tagpalico to convene the meeting. There are two personnel in the SusAg program who regularly visit the community every month in order to meet with the project partners to check if there are problems on the farms that need attention. To avoid the need to hold several meetings in a month, the school meeting is held together with the SusAg meeting since the parents are also partners in the SusAg program.

The following year, Gina became the new head teacher because Mariel stopped teaching when she got married. Gina is a Manobo who hails from another town and she was able to finish her education degree with the help of the MSM Sisters. She has been teaching for five years in different *lumad* schools and wishes to continue teaching her fellow Manobo as long as there are schools that welcome her services. Gina is more of an outgoing type of person and she is unafraid to approach people if she wants tasks done. The *manigaon* find Gina outspoken and strict with the children in school. During her time in Tagpalico, the SusAg program has been completed. This means that Gina cannot rely on the SusAg staff to call for meetings with the parents. Since she is a Manobo, she speaks the same language as them and she can be more frank with them if there is something that upsets her. I saw that the community members regard Gina highly because of her leadership and achievement. She serves as a true example of a successful *lumad* who has persevered in school and then decided to teach her fellow *lumad* when she finished her degree. Parents regard her as a source for inspiration for the younger children to pursue their education.

The teachers become part of the community as soon as they come to live in the community. They establish themselves as respected individuals because, unlike most Manobo adults, they are educated. What comes with this status is also the expectation that the teachers will help the people in the community with their needs, especially those related to communication and documentation. I have witnessed a number of occasions on which old people asked the teachers to write letters for them to send to a relative. I also experienced this when a mother asked me to write a message that she dictated to me. She wanted her daughter to come home.

\(^{19}\) Mariel was a volunteer catechist when she first met the MSM nuns in the college where she was studying. She visited *lumad* communities together with the nuns during their field trips. When she graduated from college, the MSM Sisters asked her if she was interested in teaching in Tagpalico and she agreed.
to Tagpalico and visit her because she could not leave her work and she had no money for the fare to go herself. When she had finished dictating her message she required me to read again what I had written so she was sure that the message was correct. Another example was when an old woman requested Mariel to write a letter to a man living in the next village reminding him of a debt that he had promised to pay but which remained unpaid.

The teachers also act as record keepers of the proceedings during meetings in the community so that whatever points are discussed and resolutions agreed upon, there are notes which they can refer to when needed. Being responsible for record-keeping, the teachers list the names of individuals who come to work during the pahina every Saturday. Although not expected of them, they also prepare lunch for those who have joined the pahina. Food is not free during pahina day but since some parents bring vegetables with them, the teachers cook them for lunch. Even if nobody brings anything, the teachers still feel compelled to prepare food and so they take the budget from their own supplies. At certain times, they cook the goods brought by the nuns when they come to visit. They reason is that serving the parents food in return for their day's work on the school farm will encourage them to come back and help again. Some parents say that the teachers should not bother to prepare food because it is the parents’ responsibility to help the school and also the teachers, not the other way around. However, Gina says that most of the food being served comes from the harvests of the farm and so it should also be shared. She reasons that if there is nothing left to partake of then that is the time when they will not serve lunch on pahina day. I can see that even if the parents express these remarks and appear reluctant about the offer of the teachers, they are pleased that there is food waiting for them every time they finish work. This practice becomes beneficial to both the teachers and the parents because it encourages parents to work on the school farm and the teachers consequently have less work to do.

The people in the community know that the teachers receive allowances for their work in the school. Even if this is not much, they know teachers receive some cash at the end of the month regularly. It is not surprising then that when some families need cash, they turn to the teachers for help. They ask if they can borrow money or exchange (baylo) an amount of cash for farm products, chickens, or even piglets. If cash is not what they need, people come to baylo goods like cooking oil, sugar, rice, kerosene, soy sauce, sardines, noodles, and coffee. They will replace these when they are able to sell products in the market and buy provisions for themselves. Baylo is common in Tagpalico because there is no permanent retail store or shop that sells household goods in the community. Those who do not have the goods will just baylo (borrow), and then replace the goods at a later time when they have the money to pay or the same stuff to give back. Seeing this as an entrepreneurial opportunity, Gina decided to sell the basic goods that are usually asked for baylo. She includes the children in the enterprise and asks them to give a share of P10.00 (£0.15) each to buy and later sell snacks, candies, and biscuits, aside from the writing pads, pens, and pencils that they need in school. According to her, the entrepreneurial activity serves as the ‘canteen’ for the kids and also caters to some of the needs of the community. Every time the teachers go down to town at the end of the month, they also replenish the goods that have been used up and bring them to the school when they
return to Tagpalico. In the month of December, they determine the profit and then use this to buy gifts, prizes, and food for their Christmas Party. The usual problem Gina encounters is when parents promise to pay her but they fail to do so at the agreed time. She cannot then afford to buy more goods and is forced to use her own money.

I have observed that if the teachers are outspoken and assertive, they can make the parents and the manigaon more involved. If they are shy and not so confident, the response will be more distant and aloof. Being called ‘Ma’am’ or ‘Sir’ is a term of deference that people use not to everyone, but only for the teachers in the school. One of my students in the Adult Class noted that a volunteer teacher, Leo, was called only by his name before he was teaching in the school, but when he was given the position of teaching the Grade One class the children and the parents started to call him ‘Sir’. His status has changed from an ordinary member of the community to someone who is regarded with more value and respect. Even if he has only finished high school and is unable to proceed to college, his becoming a teacher in the school has made a difference in the way his fellow residents treat him. There are other high school graduates in Tagpalico too, but they are unable to work in the school. Even if they have high school education as a qualification, they do not get the same regard as Leo from their fellow Manobo and as such are not addressed as ‘Sir’ or ‘Ma’am’. Hence becoming a teacher in the school makes someone more valuable and respected.

One of the Manobo female teachers was about to get married to a local non-Manobo resident when I first arrived in Tagpalico. The couple were married according to Christian rites in the teacher’s hometown. She decided to stop teaching in Tagpalico in order to start her family. She returned to teaching a year after settling with her husband in Tagpalico. Aside from her, there are two other teachers whose spouses are from Tagpalico. They are male non-Manobo teachers who have Manobo wives. All their families have settled in Tagpalico so the children can continue to go to school. They also opt to stay in the community because they own lands where they can farm. Since the relatives of their spouses live in Tagpalico and provide support to them, the two non-Manobo came to a decision to reside in the community even though they are no longer part of the teaching staff.

The teachers in the school also become ‘kauban’ (friend, ally) of the community for the various roles they perform aside from being teachers. They avoid offending anybody because they do not know how the residents will react. There was an incident when a teacher caught a pig on the school premises and expressed her disappointment in her class about the policy of not letting pigs roam around the school yard not being adhered to. The owner of the pig must have heard about her outburst in the classroom through the student telling his parent about it. The owner reacted by shouting and threatening that ‘Mga klaseng tawo nga ingon ana dii

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20 It is a rare opportunity to be able to pursue secondary education in Tagpalico because not every Grade Six graduate is given financial assistance to study. A high school student who successfully graduates after the four years of high school education is viewed as qualified to teach younger children in the school. High school education is already a valuable achievement for a young person.

21 It is a school policy that teachers catch pigs that have strayed into the school yard and ask the owner to pay a fine of P50.00 (£ 0.80) when she or he collects the pig, as payment for the crops destroyed by the pig.
magdugay sa kalibutan.’ – ‘These kinds of people will not live long.’ The teacher knew that she should not let that threat pass without reporting it to one of the manigaon so that if indeed something did happen to her the people would know who was responsible. She wanted to leave Tagpalico because she feared for her safety. The manigaon assured her that he would talk to the person who threatened her and pleaded with her to continue to teach in Tagpalico. As a result of his assurances, the teacher decided to stay.

The teachers recognise that although they have attained a certain status in the community because they are educated, they are not totally secure. Their being welcome and being part of the community organisation is fluid and situational. They may endure violations to property such as having their shop-bought canned food or belongings stolen from them. They worry about complaining too hard because they know that it is dangerous to enter into conflict with the Manobo. They view theft as a manifestation of the difficult life that the people in Tagpalico endure. Patience, commitment to their task, and understanding of the general situation of the community are values teachers have to nurture in order to continue their service and fulfil their commitment. However, most of the teachers become exhausted after a time. Most often they decide to stop teaching after a year or two in the service. When this happens, the nuns recruit, induct, and train new teachers. If they cannot find appropriate teachers, they have to combine multi-grade classes or adopt half-day class schedules for different grade levels. These constant challenges have led the nuns to contemplate closing down the school: not only because of the difficulty in finding new teachers, training them, and most importantly paying them, but also because of the waning of support for the school from the parents and the decrease in the number of children attending the school.

Teachers Gina and Ikoy noted that it has become more difficult to encourage the parents to help in the school. Most of the parents who come to the pahina day are non-Manobo and even the leaders cannot be depended on for this regular cooperative work. As for the students, there were only 47 students in the school in 2008-2009, of which only three graduated in Grade Six at the end of the school year. The pre-enrolment survey conducted by the teachers in January 2009 identified 71 prospective students who would enrol for the next school year in June 2009. Of these, only 57 students began studying in the school when the classes finally started. Some had moved to other towns or the parents had transferred their children to other schools. This discrepancy between what the Manobo say about education and how hard it is to maintain children's attendance in school, highlights the discrepancy between the challenges of life inside and outside of school, which is the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5
The School as a Place for Becoming Educated

Many students joined and enrolled in the Tagpalico School. Those who were already past the normal starting age of six or seven years old for the first grade, and who had been unable to go to school beforehand, decided to begin their studies too, even though they were by now already ten or eleven years old. The grades are, therefore, of mixed ages. One of the women in the community who was one of the first students in the school remembers that she looked forward to going to school not because she was going to learn, but because she could ask for tuck money (baon) from her parents. This speaks of the relationship between the children’s lives outside school, where foodstuffs are scarce and life is a constant struggle to obtain the means for subsistence, and children’s lives inside school where it is assumed that children come to school ready to learn.

Even though there are no stores or shops in the village and no tuck shop in school, some children are able to buy home-made sweets or foodstuffs from other children at school. Other children’s mothers prepare steamed banana or cassava for their children to eat during break time. The very simple example of how being at school affects children’s access to foodstuffs reveals a broader issue, which is the huge discrepancy between what it is for the Manobo children to learn about life outside of school and what it is like to learn and to participate legitimately in school (Lave and Wenger 1991, Evans 2006a). Learning to become educated and finding out what counts as appropriate participation in schooling is still a relatively new and completely foreign practice for Manobo adults and children. The previous chapter made clear how this new activity of schooling becomes intertwined in community life as a complex social and political process involving all the community and not only the students in the school. For parents too, the school is seen as a place that is not just about learning, but as a place that mediates with the outside world, a place, for example, where the gifts of surplus foodstuffs and shop-bought commodities can be obtained in new ways such as in the festivities around Christmas celebrations that are new to the Manobo.

Schooling as Sacrifice of Time and Money
Now that the school is present in Tagpalico, children’s ideas of what they want to pursue in life are influenced by their new experiences. Parents and teachers give children the idea that they can achieve more in life if they continue with their schooling and they are encouraged to attend and stay in school. This requires a sustained sacrifice for adults whose work load increases without children around to help out and parents must accept more responsibilities too, for the school’s maintenance in addition to those tasks already performed at home, on the farms and in the community. For these reasons the incorporation of the school into Manobo life remains a negotiated and sometimes contested process. Even if Manobo leaders and parents have repeatedly committed their support and verbally expressed their sense of partnership to the school during village assemblies, the school still remains a distant and separate enterprise for
them. This is made worse by the fact that the topics being taught and discussed inside the classrooms do not necessarily have direct application to the community’s daily problems. Even though education is valued as a way to engage with ‘outsiders’, and especially people from the lowlands, there is such a degree of strangeness about the curriculum that it is hard for adults and children to engage with what schooling means.

Children learn at school about languages, social studies, mathematics, and science, which do not answer the immediate challenges of Manobo daily life. The curriculum followed by the teachers and the references they use in their instructions are patterned from the accepted framework of the national, government-recognised university to which the Tagpalico school is affiliated. Teachers do, however, try to incorporate local examples and relevant topics whenever they find it applicable and appropriate to the content of the lessons being taught.

The languages used in the textbooks and references are often English or Filipino, which are foreign to the Manobo. The teachers need to translate them to the Manobo or Cebuano language in order for the students to understand. The use of many languages inside the classroom is not, however, a major concern in Tagpalico. Unlike the earlier experiences of other indigenous people such as the Navajo, who had a history of being denied and discouraged from using their own language in schools (McCarty, 2002), the Tagpalico children are free to use any of the four languages - Manobo, Cebuano, Filipino, English - inside the school. Topics are taught in English or Filipino but the Cebuano and Manobo languages are used in discussions and conversations inside the school.

The long process of education sometimes becomes boring and creates complacency among the parents and their support for their children wanes as the months go on through the school year and through the years that education requires. Parents get upset every time their children ask for money to buy school supplies because there are so many other needs to be provided for. However, teachers also comment that some parents, instead of helping their children take care of their school materials, will use their children’s paper or notebooks to roll their tobacco. Children also complain that they cannot study the topics they have copied in their notebooks because pages of their notebooks are torn and used by their parents for non-literacy related purposes. Teachers sometimes question the sincerity of some parents in helping their children in their school needs because they see how children come to school without materials and yet their parents can afford to buy liquor in the lowland. This reveals the tension created in Manobo households by the new demands of schooling processes on the scarce cash supply of families, creating conflicts over what kinds of shop bought goods should be purchased and whose needs are to be prioritised, children’s or adults’.

Teachers have noticed, over time, that fewer and fewer parents are fulfilling their responsibility to participate in the *pahina* (cooperative work) at school every Saturday. As one teacher remarked, parents were only excited and very helpful in the school when it was still new. The parents do agree that the school is important to their children’s education and to the security of
their community, but maintaining their involvement in the school is a constant challenge because the time they invest in the school does not yield immediate returns and life outside school is hard.

Schooling Changes Children’s Lives

Figure 13. Grazing the keybow – a role that children perform outside school

Children are sent to school to study and their parents provide them with the necessary support to continue with their schooling by trying to make sure that school materials like notebooks, pad papers, pens, and school bags are ready at the start of the school year. Parents try to adjust the planting and harvesting times of the year in order to have available cash and food when these are much needed by the children during the school year. Compared to a time when they accompanied their parents and helped them work the land, children’s relationships with their parents and with each other change when they start to attend school and incorporate this activity into their lives. Before, their activities were more unstructured as play activities were incorporated with tasks at home and on the farms such as grazing water buffaloes, fetching drinking water, watching over younger siblings, or gathering firewood in the woods. When families were living far away from each other, children only played with their siblings but when they start to live closer to other families, their playmates now include other children who are most often their relatives too. They build miniature houses from wooden sticks and banana leaves in the house yard or improvise toys out of wood and rubber slippers. Games of hide-and-seek, chasing one another, and climbing trees are popular. When parents are away, older siblings are left to take care of the younger ones and these older children sometimes lead their siblings to roam the trails, heading back home when they become hungry or before their parents get home before dark.
Children generally play together regardless of sex, except when boys and girls decide to play separately. Boys normally go bird hunting together while girls group together to pick lice off each other’s heads while sitting around inside the house. Sex segregation between peers becomes apparent when children reach adolescence because they are then expected to perform gender-defined tasks for men and women. Men normally perform heavier farm tasks like clearing fields, cutting trees, and hauling logs. Women are usually confined to the tasks of weeding grasses, harvesting root crops, or taking care of children. However, if more hands are needed in other activities, then women help out in these as well.

**Getting Acquainted with School**

Very young children become excited as they see older children go to school on weekdays to participate in class activities like class recitations, writing, and reading together. School children also find joy in learning new songs, performing dances, and playing with their classmates after classes. The new clothes, bags, and school materials that are bought by their parents at the start of the year are good motivations for attending school and some younger siblings of older students accompany their brothers and sisters into school. When the younger children get bored, they just go out of the classroom and stay in the corridor or peep at the windows of other classrooms. One girl who is seven years old, in the Grade One class of children aged six to eight, always brings her younger sister, aged five, with her because her sister wants to be with her in school. Every time she prepares for school, her sister also does the same. Inside the classroom, she gives her younger sister a pencil and paper during writing time and she encourages her to participate in class singing. As soon as the class ends, both of them will go out of the classroom together with their classmates and play at the social hall below the school grounds before heading for home. Parents even encourage younger kids to tag along with their older siblings as this not only helps them to become familiar with the school environment, it also frees the parents from taking care of another child and makes it easier to accomplish more work and tasks at home or on the farm.
Being in the company of other children is a primary motivation for students who attend school. Young women who have been to school explained to me that the school created a place for them to spend time together with playmates; more than a place to learn, it is a location for socialisation with a larger number of friends, which is a new experience. Whereas before, the young women, when children, lived far away from each other and could seldom be together, they now have a chance to always see each other. The young women have witnessed how the community has become lively as families have moved to Tagpalico to avail themselves of the free education. Later, these women have also seen how the numbers of students and community members diminished when the military problems besetting the area arose again in 2004.

At present, compared to the original 60 families, only 28 families remain in Tagpalico to send their children to school. From over 100 children who enrolled in the school when it first started, there are only 40 today. Despite the political disruption, however, the young women who are completing their education have said they are not really troubled about the problems happening in the school. Their parents just keep encouraging them, and as long as the teachers continue to conduct classes and friends are still to be found there, these young women are determined to carry on going to school. In a study among Chicano students in Colorado, Delgado-Gaitan (1988) noted that family support and congruency of values between the school and family are contributing reasons for children completing their education and doing well. Despite the conflicting attitudes of students and parents to teachers and the school system, family encouragement plays a major role in helping students to persevere in school.

The same is true in Tagpalico. For example, Panggo, 20 years old, has worked as a saleslady in one of the retail shops in Butuan City and is one of the previous students of the school in Tagpalico. She noted that she did not really want to attend school when she first learned that her parents were sending her to school. She recalled that she was so used to accompanying her mother always that she feared separation from her even just for a few hours. However, with the persistent encouragement of her parents and when she noticed that other children her age, who were mostly also her relatives and playmates, were going to school with new bags, pencils, notebooks, and paper, she was convinced to go with them as well. In school, children learn how to write their names and they are taught the letters of the alphabet in English. They sing and memorise songs in four languages, which the teachers learned from their training; a song book with a number of Cebuano and Filipino songs is kept by the teachers in the staff house and serves as a ready reference for a repertoire of songs and all children will have mastered the English alphabet song by the time they finish their first grade.

All these activities made Panggo look forward to going to school although what encouraged her more, as other children have also explained about their motivation for going to school, is that her parents gave her tuck money every time she left for school. Some parents make candies from sugar and coconut milk, or buy a bag of affordable candies from town and let the children...
sell them in school. The school then becomes a place where enterprising children and parents earn some money from other students. Panggo remembered that at first she really did not care what her performance in school was like because she did not understand what the evaluation numerals in her test papers meant. There were times when she got ‘0’ - nil marks and she recalled how she would readily draw happy faces on her zero. She had no idea of the concept of a school ‘test’ or that her performance in the tests could be equated to the things she had learned. It was only later that she realised that it was a bad mark to get zero because her parents expressed disappointment when she showed them the marked papers. They told her that she had not learned anything from what the teacher was imparting and they were therefore just wasting the tuck money they gave her. Her parents also warned her that if she did not strive to get good grades she would be left behind by her other classmates when they moved up to the higher grade levels.

Panggo admitted that schooling was strange to her at first. She was used to being with her mother most of the time and being free to move around the house and the nearby surroundings. Being inside the classroom during the day was an entirely different routine from what she was used to, even though she still went home during lunch breaks and her house was near the school. Soon, however, the company of her classmates, and the fun they had during playtime, replaced her longing for her mother’s company. As she spent more time in school, she also realised that she needed to show what she had learned by getting correct answers during tests and by participating in the class activities. Along with her classmates, she learned that they needed to perform well so that they could move up to the next grade level and not be left behind by other children. Indeed, some of her friends were kept back in the previous grade while others advanced to the next grade level. Those who are not able to read, who often fail in exams, or are not quick to understand the lessons are considered ‘slow’ (bulok) and are retained at the lower level until they have shown progress. ‘Intelligent’ (utukan) children are those who are able to read and consistently come top of their class because they get higher scores in the quizzes and exams. They are not shy to participate in school activities and show leadership skills among other children.

Although it does not create a major rift among children in the community, an emerging differentiation among playmates comes out later since those who do not perform well in class are teased and labelled as slow learners, especially when children quarrel among themselves. Being ‘slow’ (bulok) and being ‘intelligent’ (utukan) in school create new categories of differentiation among the children as performance in school is used to isolate and humiliate certain children. As Levinson and Holland (1996:1) note, schooling processes can bring a sense of self that is ‘knowledgeable’ or to do with a ‘failure’ to become knowledgeable. This is noticeable when children fight and their poor school performance is cited as a way to embarrass them. Where previously, in order to be considered valuable, children just needed to show that they were already capable of helping or working on the farms and of performing household chores, that they were able to take care of their younger siblings when their parents were away or that they regarded their family and elders with respect, now they are also expected to
perform well in school. Education has been seen to introduce a new value system in Tagpalico and children and parents quickly learn how to mobilise this.

Those children who are showing potential in academic work may be shown more toleration if they avoid physically-intensive farm work. Despite this emerging categorisation of cleverness in school work, not all bulok children are condemned altogether. Some of these children find a way to excel in other aspects of the school curriculum and redeem themselves. Tisha, for example, who is ten years old, is bullied inside the classroom because she cannot concentrate in the lessons and she shows no great interest in participating in group work. She often borrows pens and asks for spare pieces of paper from her classmates at times of quizzes. She possesses a set of notebooks, pens, and paper at the start of the year just like other children but when her supplies run out she seems not to bring new ones. Children are used to sharing and will often share their resources with other children who do not have materials of their own to use. Despite this, stealing of school materials in school is prevalent. Parents admit that even if they want to replace their children’s lost materials immediately they cannot afford to do so because it will cost money. Teachers always need to have available extra pens with them so children can participate in tests. In a situation where hardly anybody owns more resources than anybody else, a display of surplus and abundance compels one to share with others. However, if a child relies too much on others and does not show willingness towards being sufficient at most times, she or he also irritates fellow members of the community. This is as true among children at school as it is among Manobo adults outside school.

Tisha, for example, has become dependent on her classmates for her school materials and she is, therefore, treated differently. This makes her quite unpopular among her classmates and she is often shouted at or her requests are refused by other children; which then means that she is not able to participate in the class exercises. Here, through the interactions of Tisha and her classmates inside the school, they negotiate among themselves their understanding of the ‘schooled identity’ (Levinson, 1996: 212) and of what is involved in ‘becoming somebody’ (Levinson and Holland, 1996:12). Her shortcomings in the academic aspect of schooling are, however, more than offset by her talent in dancing. Every time a presentation from the children is required, Tisha will not hesitate to perform the Binaylan dance – a dance imitating the movements of a baylan (healer) during festivities. She moves gracefully and so she is called to perform in every school activity. If there are performances outside the community, Tisha is always asked to dance and represent the community in the gatherings. Her talent, although not academic, allows her to earn the acceptance and admiration of other children and the parents. This mitigates the bullying she receives for being ‘slow’ in her school work.

Apart from being good at dancing and singing, another way to compensate for poor performance in class is by being industrious and responsible at home. One girl, Norielyn, age 12, has been a cause of concern for the teachers because it has taken her two years to pass Grade Two and it is also taking her the same time to get through Grade Three. Normally, primary school in the Philippines begins at Grade One, when children are aged seven, and they
finish their elementary school at Grade Six when they are 12 years old. Norielyn is considered a ‘slow’ learner and because of that her two younger sisters may be in the same grade level with her in the next year. Despite this weakness, she has earned praise because she is dependable at home and on the farm. When her parents are away, she looks after her younger siblings and does the cooking, washing, and cleaning. Even with her diminutive body, she is strong enough to carry loads of bananas and farm products from the Tagpalico community to the village, which is almost six kilometres away and a two-hour walk from their home. Her parents always bring her along when they need more people to help with harvesting their products. Her previous teacher told me that she admired Norielyn for her physical strength and attitude. She could depend on her to finish tasks on the school farm and keep the classroom tidy before the class starts. Despite her poor academic performance, Norielyn can do things other children cannot manage and the teachers recognise this.

Mila’s case is also similar to this. She is already 12 years old and still in Grade Three. She is always silent in class and she does not usually bring her notebook and pen with her to school. Mila is different from her two younger sisters because they always come to school prepared with their bags and things. Mila listens to the lecture of the teacher and soon becomes sleepy; if the teacher gives a quiz, Mila borrows a pen from a class mate next to her and asks for a piece of paper. Sometimes Mila will not even participate in the quiz and just stays at her desk listening and looking while the other children write their answers on their papers. I asked the teacher about her performance and he told me that Mila has always been like that, she likes being in school but she shows no interest in participating in the activities. The teachers have approached Mila’s parents before and have talked with Mila, asking her whether she still wants to go to school or not. Her parents have commented that if Mila decides to stop schooling she will be helping them on the farm, which means staying under the sun and carrying out manual tasks. I asked Mila what she preferred – being in school or being on the farm - and she told me that she wanted to be with her friends in school and to listen to what the teachers are discussing. She admitted that she cannot perform the heavy tasks in the farm because she becomes ill easily and so she prefers the lighter tasks instead. Mila often runs errands for the family: if her parents need something from the next village, they ask Mila to do it for them. Other parents also ask her to go and get things from the village in exchange for some goods for doing the task. At times Mila gets a few kilos of corn rice in exchange for an errand she does for another family. Mila’s mother recognises her help in the household and even though Mila does not get high grades in school she does not scold her. She knows that her daughter is capable of doing other things that are equally valuable in the household.

It is clear from these examples that performing well in school and being reliable on the farm are equally important for parents. They always tell their children that even if they are good in school they must also know how to do the tasks at home. Nanay Pasyang, the mother of the volunteer teacher, who still has three children studying in the school, clarifies that children should be equally adept in doing farm tasks because the income derived from their labour in the farm will support them in their schooling. Children who are considered ‘utukan’ (intelligent) but who show
disinclination towards physical work in the farm are met with negative remarks. People become disappointed if a child refuses to help and does not show compassion to other members of the family who toil to bring food to the table. I know that another girl, Freda, aged 15, whose sister consistently gets the highest marks in her class, complains that her sister chooses the lighter tasks at home and often argues with their mother if she does not want to do the task assigned to her. Freda finds this attitude disrespectful but thinks that her sister is tolerated because she constantly performs well in school. In my conversations with the children’s mother, she mentioned that she always reminds her children to follow elders’ requests and be helpful with the family even if they are smart in school. She believes that education should not make their children arrogant and not cause them to forget the values of respect for elders and their family. Education should make them better persons by teaching them about good manners and proper conduct. It is has been noted with alarm among the people, however, that some children who perform well in school are starting to challenge the values being held by other people in the community. The expectations that schooling should maintain and reinforce the positive values of respect for parents and diligence in working on the farm are challenged as children achieve higher status in school.

The achievements that certain children attain through their performance in school have given them self-confidence which is sometimes interpreted as arrogance and this contradicts parents’ ideas about what it means for children to become well ‘educated’. The idea of what a properly or fully ‘educated’ Manobo person is, reveals a ‘culturally specific and relative’ standpoint (Holland and Levinson, 1996: 2) that includes both the outcomes of learning inside school and what counts as valued knowledge outside of the classroom environment. For example, Leo, aged 20 and the son of Nanay Pasyang, is a high school graduate and is working as a volunteer teacher in the school. Leo was one of the intelligent students in his class and his talents in performing also made him stand out in school activities. He showed concern and high regard for his fellow Manobo children as he expressed his intention to serve the community if he ever got a ‘scholarship’ grant that would support his education through high school. Students avail themselves of ‘scholarship’ grants if sponsors are willing to pay for their tuition or they are accepted, like Leo was, to the San Luis Lumad Community High School (SLLCHS) upon the recommendation of the nuns and the leaders of the community.

This San Luis School is located in the same province of Agusan del Sur where Tagpalico is situated, but it belongs to another municipality. The San Luis Lumad Community High School offers free secondary education and primarily accepts students from lumad (indigenous) communities who have been given positive references by the elders, the teachers, and their supporting group, which is usually a non-governmental organisation or a religious group. The Lumad High School is run by another group of religious nuns – the Missionaries of the Assumption. When Leo became a volunteer teacher in Tagpalico after his high school graduation, he became one of the organisers of the school’s activities in the community and served as an example that previous students can also be a part of the teaching staff in the school. Aside from his teaching responsibilities as the Grade One teacher, he was also
required to attend regular monthly meetings and occasional seminars in the Indigenous Peoples’ Ministry Office in Butuan City together with the rest of the teachers. The monthly meetings are conducted together with the nuns, and teachers report any problems they have encountered in the school. Activities for the next month are identified and the teachers’ allowances are given to them. The teachers who are not from Tagpalico have a chance to go home to their families at this time. They then buy their monthly provisions before they go back to Tagpalico. The teachers may also attend seminars, depending on invitations received by the nuns for the school staff. Teachers may attend courses about Indigenous Peoples’ Rights, teaching strategies, classroom management, and curriculum content in the different learning areas of science, mathematics, social studies, and language arts.

In exchange for Leo’s services, he received a minimal amount of around Php 2,000.00 (£30.00) for his monthly allowance. Although it was not as much as the other professional teachers received, Leo still received a sum of money that other members of the community can hardly expect to earn in a month. A couple living in Tagpalico typically have a combined monthly income ranging from Php 600.00 to Php 1,000.00 (£9.00-£15.00), depending on the volume of products they sell to the middlemen or the town markets. Leo’s monthly allowance was almost double compared to the combined earnings of the average couple. This made a great difference considering that Leo did not have to engage so much in manual labour to earn his wages. With this regular income, he could provide additional economic support to his family. Sadly though, he no longer helped on the farm as he preferred to stay at home and rest during weekends when there were no classes. His mother could not force him to take part in farming their land because he was already contributing something for the family and he had responsibilities to the school where he was teaching. The task of working on the farm fell on his younger siblings and his mother.

Everyone in the community recognised Leo’s accomplishment and fellow residents in Tagpalico knew that he was able to achieve his status because of his intelligence and talent which enabled him to get the teaching job. However, despite his ability to help his family with his income, his unwillingness to do farm work or get his hands dirty on the farm made him an easy subject for gossip and criticism. His fellow Manobo may not have said it directly to him, but they expressed their dismay by joking that he had already changed. He just disregarded these jokes and reasoned to himself that teaching young children is not an easy job and he needed time to prepare for his lectures in class. The changes observed in Leo’s attitudes because of his level of education and literacy may have had a positive impact on his family’s economic standing but his change of attitude towards working on the farm had the opposite effect.

To make matters worse, Leo suddenly left his teaching job before the school year ended because he was offended by a rumour that suggested that he had died. This all happened after he became ill and had to be hospitalised during one of the monthly meetings in the city. His extreme reaction to this rumour, which led him to abandon his duties and leave the village, earned him further criticism. The negative impact of this act was aggravated because he did not
take heed of the plea from the leaders not to abandon his responsibilities in the school. Parents were shocked by his reaction and his fellow teachers were angry because they had to take over his class all of a sudden and complete all the paperwork that he had left unfinished. The leaders who talked to him expressed their dismay and remarked that he had failed in his commitment to serve the community, which he promised to do as a condition of receiving free high school education in the *Lumad* High School.

Even if most of the parents say that being knowledgeable in school and being skilful in the farm are both important traits, there is ambivalence about the value placed on schooling. The incident of Leo’s desertion of his job has had an impact on how the people, especially the leaders and the parents, view children who are intelligent and educated. On the one hand, parents say that performing well in school and getting educated are important because they do not want their children to remain farmers and spend most of their lives toiling physically. They claim that life in the mountains is difficult because it involves mainly manual labour and can be tiresome. They keep reminding their children to persevere in school and get good grades because good grades can give them a better chance to get free high school education, which will open opportunities for higher salaries than they can earn from the farms. Parents can only support their children to a certain extent and most of the hard work necessary in order to be noticed and become a beneficiary of educational assistance is down to their children. On the other hand, those children who are good in school have been observed to develop an aversion to farm work and thereby alienate themselves from the basic means of subsistence in Tagpalico life. Worse, they become disrespectful and disregard the advice of their elders. This kind of character is regarded as undesirable. However, erring children are still tolerated and accepted because if children and young people excel in school, refuse to work hard in the farm, disregard their elders, but later bring financial help to the family, they may be frowned upon and viewed in a bad light in certain situations, but are also praised and tolerated if they later give something back to help their community and family.

Most of the parents admit that they want their children to perform well in school. The leaders always speak about this in school assemblies. Despite their constant reminders and encouragement, the parents also accept the fact that not all children have the same enthusiasm towards schooling. Some children do not have the drive to finish their elementary education, even though the school is located in the community now. One mother has confessed that she gets angry if her children miss classes because she remembers having to walk long distances and cross rivers just to attend school. She finds it ironic that now the school is situated nearby, some children still do not attend school. There are cases when children really do not want to pursue their education and if this happens parents just accept the will of their children. They have to be content that their children know how to read, write, and count, which is better than not knowing anything at all.
Parents’ Participation and Children’s Aspirations

Parents are always uncertain how far they can support their children’s education through their own resources. The active involvement and participation of parents in the activities of the school will have a bearing later on the selection of who among the children will be supported to go to high school. Therefore, the parents’ endeavour to participate in meetings, discussions, and activities like the pahina (cooperative work) that require their presence and help. The teachers keep a log book to record the attendance of parents at meetings, those who take part in the weekly pahina, who donate timber for classroom repairs, and who contribute to the activities in the school. Parents see to it that they sign the attendance sheet at every meeting because it records their participation in the school’s events.

Figure 15. Parents in the weekly pahina

When children finish their elementary education, the assistance of the nuns is vital in finding sponsors for deserving students. Sponsors may be well off individuals or families who agree to pay the fees of the child. Another group that works with the nuns in their educational program is the Mekong Foundation (Infants du Mekong), a French charity that supports their beneficiaries in finishing high school and college education. They pay for the tuition fees, school uniforms, and other expenses incurred in completing academic requirements. The amount that the sponsors give may be from Php 5,000.00 to Php 10,000.00 per year (£72.00 - £143.00). The amount is channelled through the nuns who will pay the tuition fees directly to the school and who will allocate fund releases as soon as the need to settle dues arises. If not enough sponsors are found to support interested students, the parents of these children have to be realistic about their situation and decide whether their children will stop schooling or whether they can find other means to support their children’s education. In most cases in Tagpalico, children who have no sponsors have to stop schooling after the elementary level or after Grade Six. They can find jobs in the cities or they will probably get married in due time if they stay in Tagpalico.
The possibility of not being able to finish their education is accepted as part of the possible outcome of the children’s educational journey. Students who are already in high school know that their situation is still uncertain even if they currently get assistance for their school fees. When children enrol in the lowland schools, their parents still have to provide for their daily living allowance as this is not part of the support given by the sponsors. If their families cannot sustain provision of money for food, there is a great possibility that the young people will have to quit school again and their aspirations of being able to finish high school and get through to college will end as well. By this time, however, children already have greater dreams because they have been able to succeed in their elementary years. These children are now more aware of what education can allow them to achieve as ‘educated’ individuals as they have been exposed to various occupations in the ‘outside world’ in the course of their schooling and interaction with others in the lowlands.

One young woman turned teary-eyed when talking to me because she realised that she still had such a long way to go before her dream of finishing her education could become a reality. She understands that her family is already having difficulty in providing her allowance and she has not yet even finished high school. She was quick to note though, that she just has to be realistic about it. If her dream to become a nurse is unattainable then she will take any opportunity that allows her to get a job. Some of the students remarked that they had known previous students who dropped out from school, but were able to find jobs in the city as nannies, house helps, and wage labourers in construction or mining work. Given these possible options, young people learn that even if they are not professionals, as long as they know how to read and write, they can find opportunities to make a living. They know too that if they are not successful in their undertakings in the lowlands they can always return to Tagpalco as farmers. They note that most of their parents do not have high school diplomas, but they are still able to raise them and take care of the rest of the family.

Contrary to the more lofty dreams that the older students have imagined for themselves and those who have developed notions of how education can open opportunities in the future, younger children have simpler ambitions. In an arts session of the Grades One and Two Class, the teacher allows the students to draw their visions of their future. Children normally have an hour for each different subject on alternating days. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays are the days for lessons in Maths, Science, and English; while Tuesday and Thursdays are for Social Studies, Music/Arts/ Physical Education, and Filipino. Classes are given in half-day shifts for different grade sets because there are only two teachers in the school. Grades One and Two students come to school in the morning and Grades Three to Six children have classes in the afternoon. The teacher is completing his lesson about the ‘self’ and he wants the children to express their dreams through drawings. At first I expected that these children would have similar ambitions to the high school students – to become teachers, nurses, nuns, priests. However, I noticed that as the activity progressed a lot of the children were drawing farms and little houses. They explain that the drawings show their future families and their own farms to cultivate. One child, Karlo, age 6, is very clear that he will grow coconuts because coconuts
can be sold easily in the market. He also draws chickens and pigs around his future house, which according to him can also bring money. The teacher tries to prod the kids further to think of something beyond their current environment and to dream of who they want to be in the future. However, the children, including Karlo, just go on with their drawings depicting situations that are closer to their experiences at home. This shows that young children are realistic about the importance of farming in Manobo everyday life but it also reveals that being in school and getting more education brings about changes in the outlook of the students. As children are able to move up to higher grade levels, their perception about the directions of their life also changes. Most of the dreams that the young children think about are based on their immediate experience and show that they ‘have a particular perspective on the social world’ (James and James, 2001:26). They do not yet see education as a way to get qualifications, but just as a way to be with friends in school and do things together. They will only realise later that if they stay longer in school and get higher education they can have the opportunity to become other kinds of person aside from being farmers like their parents. Moreover, the older students, who have met more people and who have more awareness of the possibilities education can open for them outside the immediate community have acquired greater expectations of life. The interactions they have with the nuns and other religious people like the seminarians and priests, the teachers and health professionals have influenced what they want to achieve in life and they also want to be like them. They realise that attaining such status in life requires getting the right education: and that entails a long process of schooling. Becoming ‘educated’ is a complex process of moral and academic learning which is often at odds with what it means to be a good child outside of school. Trying to balance their lives in and outside of school is no small task for young people as they navigate the world of educated values.

**Literacy and Numeracy**

The Manobo certainly operate with the notion that if people are ‘literate’, if they can read and write, they become knowledgeable and can avail themselves of opportunities in the environment outside of Tagpalico. In this sense they definitely think of schooling as a potentially transformative practice (Street, 1993:5; Street, 2001:1), but there is nothing straightforward about this. In reality, the acquisition of literacy skills is a complex social process and for the Manobo, many obstacles stand in the way of what it means to become ‘educated’ (‘edukado’ or ‘naay grado’). This chapter has shown that school in Tagpalico is a new social space and generator of activities wherein community members and outsiders in the persons of the nuns and teachers learn to get involved and participate together in different ways. Several kinds of relations have emerged as the school has become incorporated within the community that have initiated new forms of participation and therefore learning opportunities. What makes the Tagpalico school a unique ‘community of practice’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991:98) is that it is an arena where diverse notions of being a ‘real’ school, being ‘educated’, and being ‘indigenous’ are explored and learned all at the same time. In each of these notions, what counts as participation varies among the participants as students, parents, leaders, teachers, and nuns and this provides a continuous point of contrast for the Manobo to what it is to learn how to be valued as a person outside school.
Collins (1995) and Street (2001) have argued that literacy is a contested domain of action which involves negotiation of conceptions of knowledge, identity, and personhood. This chapter supports this view. Becoming literate is an ‘ideological practice, implicated in power relations and embedded in specific cultural meanings and practices’ (Street, 1995: 1). Engagements in various kinds of literacies are to be understood, then, as ‘situated’, ‘relativist’ and ‘multiple’ activities, which are ‘diverse, historically and culturally variable practices with texts’ (Collins, 1995). This view acknowledges the ‘social embeddedness’ and diversity of literacy practices, which are not simply about the neutral technical acquisition of the skills of literacy. Street notes that learning to become literate is ‘ideological’, a social practice or act ‘that is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles’ and ‘rooted in a particular world-view’ (2001: 7-8).

Street’s perspective on literacy challenges the ‘universalist’ or ‘autonomous’ explanation, which views ‘literacy’ as a straightforwardly technical process of learning to decode and encode letters with predictable social and cognitive outcomes. Goody (1968:1-5) earlier argues that writing as a ‘technology of the intellect’, is what spelled the difference between simple and advanced societies because of the inherent intellectual differences that come with the ability to utilise writing. Graff (1982:12) contradicts this and describes Goody’s universal model as a ‘literacy myth’ because literacy does not automatically result in ‘socio-economic development, social order, and individual progress’. Scribner and Cole (1981) also challenge the idea that the skills of reading and writing necessarily lead to demonstrable improvement of mental or intellectual capacities.

Kulick and Stroud (1990) studied the development of literacy practices among the Gau people in a remote Papua New Guinean village. They observed that literacy, instead of predictably ‘transforming’ people through the acquisition of reading and writing skills and making them more competent in predetermined ways established by outsiders, had unpredictable effects. People were seen to have ‘taken hold’ of literacy by utilising it in ways aligned to their pre-existing social practices and interactions. This is true too for Manobo adults who, like the Gau people, adapt literacy and literature materials to the already existing priorities of existence such as the need for paper for rolling cigarettes. Missionaries introduced literacy to the Gau people for the purposes of religious conversion and social control; however, instead of achieving this objective and intended impact, they were frustrated that people utilised their newly acquired reading and writing skills to attain goals and generate effects that were culturally accepted to themselves and not to necessarily please missionaries. Eamonn McKeown (2006) examines the literacy practices of another Papua New Guinean community and argues that literacy is never ideologically neutral. Those imparting literacy may have intentions about why they want to introduce literacy activities and yet how these skills are accepted depends on cultural notions of self-promotion and prestige. For instance, those who learned the skill of writing may not necessarily understand what they are writing, but the mere fact that they are seen doing the act of scribbling words accrues individual prestige to them. It heightens their reputation as literate
individuals. Being seen to know how to write a letter or a request, and then being seen to have that request granted translates to added prestige for the person who has written the request. These examples further clarify what this chapter has shown, which is that education and the acquisition of literacy cannot just be merely a technical skill because its uses are always nested in the social and cultural context of a community. The following chapter focuses on how education among the Manobo is also inseparable from the political and cultural context of the development of understanding about what it is to be lumad or indigenous people.
CHAPTER 6
Learning to Become ‘Indigenous’ at School

The Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples (ECIP), through its Indigenous Peoples Apostolate (IPA), is the Commission of the Catholic Church that leads the Indigenous Peoples (IP) education programs in the different Dioceses in the Philippines. The Commission heads the nationwide network of all the Catholic apostolate programs for indigenous peoples’ concerns. In order to assess the state of indigenous education and identify related problems, the Commission conducted several consultations and conventions all over the country. As a result of their consultations, two papers were released to collate the findings. These are entitled ‘Articulating the Foundations of IP Education System’ (ECIP, 2007a) and ‘From Alienation to Rootedness: Taking on the Challenge of Reformulating Education Interventions with IP Communities’ (ECIP, 2007b). The reports reflect general concerns that have been raised in other international documents and assert that indigenous education should be understood as a form of ‘decolonisation’, which should aim to achieve self-determination and highlight the value of indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSP).

To describe what it means to be ‘indigenous’ in terms of idioms and metaphors that are already used in such highly political domains as that of ‘indigenous education’ or under the banner of indigenous rights to self-determination, is to make the discourses difficult to contest, especially because the language and categories used are highly emotive, seem self-evident and are not usually explained as the outcome of a particular kind of historical development. This blurs the nuances of complex realities on the ground about indigenous peoples (Kuper, 2003) which are, in the case of the Manobo, much more to do with strategic positioning around discourses of indigeneity than idealised identification with the politics of post-colonialism. Previous chapters have shown how skilled Manobo leaders are in strategising with and mobilising through outside interests in order to achieve what are seen to be the best interests of the Manobo people. Just as the leaders have worked with the nuns and the NGOs to set up a school and thereby create a military free zone, the leaders have also worked out that in becoming legitimately ‘indigenous’ they could gain access to and learn how to operate in new zones of political action and the same is true with respect to utilising the notion of indigeneity in education. Rather than speaking of what it is to be indigenous or what it is to support indigenous education, it is more accurate and revealing to consider how the Manobo people are learning – pragmatically – to become indigenous in order to achieve certain ends. These processes of learning how to take advantage of the political discourses of contemporary times in the Philippines are happening both inside and outside school.

Henze and Vannett (1993) describe as partial and limited the metaphors used by others to explain indigenous education practice as being about enabling indigenous people to become skilful at ‘walking in two worlds’. My research supports this critique and shows how the dynamics and social relationships surrounding the organisation of the Tagpalico school are not limited to pursuing lofty aims of indigenous self-determination and cultural nurturance. The
analysis being presented here demonstrates the varied strategic and practical positionalities that are made possible for the Manobo by experimenting with ‘becoming indigenous’ and learning to perform culturally as ‘indigenous people’. The participation of the Manobo in indigenous discourse and practice is rooted in their own evaluations of what counts in the unique socio-political context which sets the conditions for their ongoing existence as people. What is happening in Tagpalico is a good example of what Holland and Lave (2000:5) call the ‘generative, conflictual participation of persons in practice’. What it is to be Manobo is an emerging expression of personhood against the background of ‘enduring struggles’ in relation to which people are ‘in part fashioned and yet also fashion themselves in historically and culturally specific ways’ (Holland and Lave, 2000: 5). This reflects too, the work of Toren (1991), who is also concerned to analyse the complex and contested processes of learning through which people come, over time, to be historically specific kinds of persons.

The previous chapters have shown how the Tagpalico School is through and through a national endeavour – intimately associated with state power and practices of political legitimation. It is also a Catholic Mission school, which means that it is inseparable from broader national and international religious concerns that speak of global preoccupations. The same is true of the use of the English language, which symbolises and refers to the ongoing influence of Europe and America despite a history of resistance and decolonisation. This complex national and global process of school formation and curriculum delivery means that the attempt to also make the school a place where the Manobo learn about their ‘authentic, rooted, untainted culture’ becomes something of a paradox. The Manobo are at once global, national subjects of complex processes of political and social influence and leaders must operate in this increasingly complex world of possibilities, and yet they must also learn to perform their ‘culture’ which must be seen to be uninfluenced by the outside world and performed as a product all of their own. Culture becomes in this way another domain for political action, the means for being recognised as self-determining. This is in complete contrast to the guerrilla movement, which is rendered illegitimate by the state because it posits Marxist revolution as the primary politically legitimate way forward. Against this background, culture assumes a loaded value, but it is performed as if its political usefulness is neutral.

**Learning How to Have a Cultural Identity**

The greatest challenge facing those who are directly involved in the administration of the school is to balance the objectives of creating a ‘real’ school and maintaining it as an ‘indigenous’ (*lumad*) school. The idea of a *lumad* school emerged when the leaders, together with the nuns, wanted to make the children aware of the issues surrounding the existence of the *lumad* and not limit the objective of the school to teaching formal literacy and numeracy skills. This awareness-raising objective involves the centrality of studying the Manobo way of life, understanding the history of discrimination and harassments of Manobo by lowland groups and logging and mining operations, and trying to gain back esteem and pride for Manobo ‘culture’.
Tuhikwai Smith (1999) has described the process of indigenous education as one of 'decolonisation'. This is because in the past formal education has been used around the world by colonisers to subjugate and even eradicate indigenous knowledge systems and practices. International laws and covenants have recognised indigenous education as one of the ways to counter discrimination and to achieve recognition of indigenous rights. The topic of indigenous education then becomes a political discourse as it has been closely linked to the struggle for indigenous rights. However, Stephen May (1999), focusing on indigenous community-based education, sounds a note of caution and has argued that it is also important to be wary of assertions for indigenous education because it appears at first glance to be a ‘separatist’ step which has a tendency to encourage indigenous peoples to ‘retnrench’ to their old ways in order to achieve self-determination. People are put at risk of further marginalisation if the whole political context of indigenous education is all about fighting against the political, social and economic marginalisation experienced by certain kinds of people in the past.

Figure 16. Schoolchildren performing a Manobo presentation during a school event

In order to surmount this problem of the discrepancy between cultural distinctiveness and national and global connectedness, the Tagpalico School must adapt to the operational structure of the national public school system, which, as the previous chapter showed, is not necessarily in conformity with Manobo ways of informal knowing. The school must appear to be nationally recognisable and also attempt to develop a school and curriculum that is sensitive to the needs and situation of the Manobo as lumad (indigenous). The school becomes a learning environment where nuns, teachers, leaders, parents and children explore what it means to become indigenous in Tagpalico. From the speeches that they give during school activities, to the management of the school’s curriculum and administration, the participants in the school always try to strike a balance between being a ‘real’ school, one that abides by the government’s criteria, as well as an ‘indigenous’ school, one that is cognizant of the people’s ‘culture’ and specific conditions of life in the mountains. This adaptive strategy deviates from
the principle embodied in the Coolangatta Statement of 1999 which requires that indigenous people should be in a position to ‘control or govern their indigenous education systems’. In the Coolangatta Statement, control and decision-making processes in an indigenous school must be centred on the indigenous peoples and outsiders are supposed merely to support and take secondary roles. In the Tagpalico School, this is not yet possible. Indigenous leaders (manigaon) could not cope with the task of operating the school because not all of them have been to school and most of them cannot read. In a very text-dependent context, the Manobo leaders cannot perform the major task of running the school and so the nuns have to handle this responsibility. Partnership with the nuns therefore places limitations on the leaders’ complete control of the school; it is only by working with the nuns that the operation of the school can continue and be ensured. The nuns, through their association with the Catholic Church, are in a better position to deal with government agencies that regulate educational institutions. This contradicts the idealistic simplicity of indigenous politics, and I see this as an example of what Holland and Lave (2000:6) refer to as ‘historically institutionalised struggles’, realised in ‘local contentious practice’.

The leaders identify among themselves who will head school committees that will focus on different concerns of the school like health, farming, education, and women’s issues. Each of these committees has projects for taking care of the herbal garden, school farm, repairs to the school, and mothers’ involvement in assisting the teachers in the school. These committees are patterned from the support structure that started in the previous school years and are organised always in conjunction with the nuns and the teachers. For example, the parents’ plan to build a poultry house for the chickens and have agreed that instead of paying school fees in the form of cash, they will donate chickens, which is more convenient for them because they raise chickens on their farms and cash is in short supply. They have decided too that every Saturday they will converge in the school to clear the surrounding areas so the teachers and the students can cultivate vegetable gardens and plant root crops to supplement their food resources while they are teaching in Tagpalico.

It turns out, however, that instead of the parents and leaders taking the lead in these activities, the teachers end up spearheading the implementation of the projects in the school. Only a few

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1 The fundamental principle of the right to indigenous education is to allow indigenous peoples to be Indigenous and therefore to respect their right for self-determination. This is the basic claim of the Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Peoples’ Rights in Education of 1999. To cite: Self-determination in Indigenous education embodies the right of Indigenous people: to control/govern Indigenous education systems; to establish schools and other learning facilities that recognize, respect and promote Indigenous values, philosophies and ideologies; to develop and implement culturally inclusive curricula; to utilize the essential wisdom of Indigenous elders in the education process; to establish the criteria for educational evaluation and assessment; to define and identify standards for the gifted and talented; to promote the use of Indigenous languages in education; to establish the parameters and ethics within which Indigenous education research should be conducted; to design and deliver culturally appropriate and sensitive teacher training programs; to participate in teacher certification and selection; to develop criteria for the registration and operation of schools and other learning facilities; and, to choose the nature and scope of education without prejudice. This vision reflects the general global sentiment of groups who are well aware of the debates and discourses of indigenous education. Abiding with such principles is supposed to work towards the ‘centring’ of indigenous knowledge and perspectives, and aim for the ‘decolonisation’ process of groups that have been greatly affected by colonial domination (Smith, 1999).
parents come to do their work on Saturdays and those who do participate regularly are parents of non-Manobo\textsuperscript{2} children. Manobo parents complain too about their leaders because they do not turn up at the times that they are expected to lead and bring together their committee members. They just send word that they have other tasks to attend to and promise to make up for their missed time at a later date. The teachers cannot do anything if the leaders and the parents do not turn up and so they often end up doing the tasks themselves. This discrepancy between what the tenets of indigenous education specify in terms of community ownership and participation and what the Manobo actually do in practice relative to the school’s running, highlights what has been explained in previous chapters, which is that in everyday terms the operation of the school is alien to and challenging of a life based on the extreme difficulties of managing a mixed subsistence and scarce-cash agricultural economy.

In the context of the Tagpalico School, the lofty principles written in documents and reports about indigenous education are not often heard or examined. The nuns and the teachers who may have access to these documents or who are able to attend conventions wherein these visions are discussed, may be the only people who are familiar with the objectives and ideas outlined in the Coolangatta Statement. They carry these visions and agree that the principles are perhaps the best guidelines for carrying out indigenous education programs, but most of the Manobo people are not aware of the specifics of the principles of indigenous education and instead possess their own ideas about why an educational endeavour should be conducted in their community. For example, one of the primary purposes of opening an indigenous school in Tagpalico was not for asserting indigenous rights to education, but to respond to a political problem pertaining to military and guerrilla warfare in the area.

As the process of their engagement in the school progresses, through participation in forums and seminars, the Manobo learn more about international and national discourses regarding indigenous peoples’ collective identity. The knowledge they gain in their participation in these gatherings does not, however, necessarily translate into prescriptive local practice. The vision of the Tagpalico community of how they will run their school reflects instead the particular socio-political environment of the community and forms the background against which their ideas about educational pursuits are implemented.

\textbf{The Mission School as an Indigenous School}

Taking the view that the school is not only a social space to learn to be ‘educated’ but also a place to learn to become ‘indigenous’, this chapter examines the processes by which indigeneity is used in the curriculum to give importance to the ‘culture’ (\textit{kultura}) of the Manobo community. It also explores how being ‘indigenous’ (\textit{lumad}) and being able to articulate the rhetoric of indigeneity can render practical and strategic benefits to parents, leaders, and students. As participants become articulate with the rhetoric of being ‘indigenous’, they must

\textsuperscript{2} The non-Manobo students in the Tagpalico school are few compared to the Manobo children; they study in the school because they live comparatively near to Tagpalico. Of the 29 households, only 5 are non-Manobo and they are migrants from the lowlands who have been able to buy portions of land near Tagpalico.
also learn when to highlight their newly self conscious cultural identity and when not to make it obvious.

The publications of the Catholic Mission show that in order to bring the perspectives and lives of indigenous peoples in the Philippines to the core of schooling, indigenous educational programs are expected to nurture local traditions as well as prepare learners to respond to both internal and external situations. ‘Makabalo mabuhi sa magkalahi nga kalibutan.’ (‘To know how to live in different worlds.’) This is often heard among educational practitioners and even community members in the region who are involved in indigenous education work. The metaphors of ‘to walk in two worlds’ (Henze and Vanett, 1993:116) or the ‘straddling of worlds’ (Valdivia, 2009:545) are used to describe the intent of indigenous education. Learners are expected to strengthen their indigenous beliefs and practices and at the same time also become better able to confront problems when they are outside their immediate environment.

With the links established by the nuns with other organisations that are supportive of indigenous rights advocacy outside the community, the leaders of Tagpalico are able to access external networks with other indigenous groups in the region. This has resulted in increased involvement of the leaders in discussions about indigenous issues that call for the protection of their remaining lands and recognition of their indigenous rights. The heightened awareness of the indigenous leaders is also reflected in their desire to include these issues in the topics learned by students in the school. Hence, the formal school started in the Tagpalico community is not only for making the Manobo children ‘literate’ and ‘educated’, as described in the previous chapter, but also to enable them to become ‘indigenous’ by learning about the issues they are confronted with as a community and also the concerns they face together with other indigenous peoples of the region. These political concerns are additional to the topics concerned with learning about Manobo basic cultural traits and expressions that identify them as Manobo, for example their language, rituals, and beliefs. It is a school that responds to the needs of their community (katilingban) and makes children aware of issues outside the community. As May (1999) notes, community-based indigenous education endeavours have to go beyond the issues facing the immediate community to also deal with the prevailing problems of indigenous peoples in general.

In the particular setting of Tagpalico, the school has become a space where becoming ‘indigenous’ (lumad) is negotiated and explored. It is one of the salient sites where notions of being ‘lumad’ are defined and shaped not only by the Manobo themselves but also by the teachers and the nuns who support the aim of the school to uphold ‘indigenous education’ (lumadnong edukasyon). Aside from acquiring literacy and numeracy skills, children and adults alike learn how to become ‘indigenous’ as they participate in the school’s activities. The teachers, in coordination with the nuns, and together with the parents and leaders, organise school activities like festivals, monthly culmination programs and classroom events that give importance to cultural expressions of what it is to be Manobo. These activities are geared towards making the students appreciate and perform their people’s dances, songs, music,
games, and oratory. In important school activities like graduation ceremonies and ‘indigenous month’ festivals, elaborate preparations and rituals are conducted. The teachers and the leaders will invite indigenous and non-indigenous guests from other communities to participate in the celebrations and to give support to their activities by expressing their encouragement to the school during the programs. These gatherings are agreed upon together with the Manobo leaders and the parents, and the participation of the community is expected. The leaders prepare performances as well as speeches about Manobo life, their hardships, and their aspirations for their children to value the ‘tribe’ (tribo), a usual term they use interchangeably with the term lumad (indigenous).

The teachers also prepare the children to perform dances and songs in groups. These occasions have served as a way for children to show what they have learned in school and experience performing on stage in front of an audience to show the beauty of their ‘culture’. Celebrations that showcase their traditional songs and dances create a joyous atmosphere in the community and generate a sense of pride among the people. For the leaders, showing their children the distinctiveness of being Manobo through their language and beliefs and the difficulties that they face and how they cope with them, will teach the young who they are as ‘indigenous’ people and how to value their ‘culture’ to ensure that the next generations of Manobo will still respect their traditions. Being able to explicitly examine their way of life in the school setting, it is hoped, will instil among the children the desire to protect their community and the resources around them.

Figure 17. Young children showing the Binaylan dance

Students who are good performers, who are not afraid to perform on stage, and who are articulate in their commitment to give back to the community after completing their schooling have greater chances of availing themselves of scholarship assistance which the nuns seek
from patrons. If children dream of getting higher education and they realise that their parents cannot afford to send them to high school, they can show the leaders, teachers and nuns through their performance in school activities that they have academic potential and cultural talents that deserve support. These children will also gain appreciation from fellow students and community members if they show sincere interest. Being good ‘indigenous’ students means participating actively in school activities that promote their ‘culture’ and learning to use the idioms of ‘helping back the community’ (‘moserbisyo sa katilingban.’) and ‘not being ashamed of being indigenous’ (‘dili ikaulaw ang pagka-lumad’).

On the part of the leaders, they do not find that emphasising being ‘indigenous’ in the school context and talking vocally within school about the difficulty of life of the Manobo makes them vulnerable to suspicions that they are agitating to encourage people to go against the government or to become guerrillas. In this extremely sensitive political environment, any attempts at discussing with fellow Manobo the dire conditions of their economic life have to be framed within cultural terms as part of an indigenous movement and not a political, radical revolutionary guerrilla one. It becomes common for the leaders to highlight being Manobo and being ‘indigenous’ in their speeches during school activities because this is the only place and time when they are safely expected and allowed to encourage the youngsters and the parents to regard their distinctiveness highly without jeopardising their position politically.

The teachers, who are mostly lumad, and the nuns, who have been supportive to the cause of indigenous peoples, share the sentiments of the leaders. Major activities at certain times of the academic year become crucial because these events are the chances for children and adults alike to showcase their talents in performing culturally specific dances, songs, and poetry that highlight the expression and language of the community. Although in everyday life the Manobo do not usually talk about being ‘indigenous’, the school becomes an instrument that draws attention to their dances, songs, rituals and allows them to highlight their uniqueness as a
group, including the social and economic discrimination that they have experienced. This emphasises that the goal of indigenous education is to overcome these oppressive indignities and the medium of ‘cultural expression’ provides a safe context for the appreciation of past injustices.

In the Tagpalico School, events like the Language Month (Buwan ng Wika) celebration in August, the Indigenous Peoples Festival in October, and the Graduation Ceremony in March showcase primarily Manobo language, values, and performances. There are allotted times when the elders (manigaon) are invited into school to talk to the students to relay the history of the community and tell stories about the life-ways of the past. Some old people also teach dance steps and how to play the drum during Sharing Time. A particular time of the month, usually one Friday morning, is allotted for community elders to come to the school and interact with the children. By conducting these events in the school, members of the community celebrate their ‘culture’ and give inspiration that their way of life is something not to be ashamed of but instead is a source of pride and appreciation. Equally important too is that during these events, they are not only able to witness dances and songs, but they are also able to see and hear children tackle ideas about issues of discrimination against indigenous peoples, depletion of their forest resources, and their aspiration to survive poverty.

**Indigenous Values and Catholic Assumptions**

The political uncertainty that the Manobo face keeps the teachers always on their guard. They must learn to deal with the military if ever they are asked about the school, their qualifications, and their intentions in teaching in the school. Teachers can be barred from going to the Tagpalico community by military officials who are camped in a village near the Wawa River, which is the main way of getting into the community. Teachers can be held for interrogation and questioned about what they have observed in the community or their lesson plans can be checked to see whether they are teaching subversive topics. They are also advised by the nuns not to interact with the guerrillas even if they are requested to attend a meeting. I have learned of instances in the past when teachers were seen talking with the guerrillas and this created a problem in terms of the teachers’ security because rumours spread that they were taking the side of the guerrillas, even doing them favours by bringing goods to them from the lowlands. In order to avoid getting involved in a situation like that again, the teachers have been instructed not to deal with requests from the guerrillas. The leaders in the community are aware of this and have agreed to protect the teachers from incidents that may endanger their safety in the future.

Parents regard teachers as the second parents (ikaduhang ginikanan) of their children during class hours because when the children are in school the teachers look after them and teach them to become responsible Manobo children. Teachers are not limited to imparting knowledge derived from reference books but are also expected to guide children to become ‘good’ persons who value their families and nurture the ideals of their indigenous community. Being a ‘good’ person entails being honest and respectful of elders and other people. Teachers constantly
remind the children of the importance of not stealing things. They say that if a person wants to own something they must work hard for it and not take away from other people. Although not directly referring to the Christian commandment of ‘Thou shall not steal’, teachers and parents use its moral underpinning to carefully inculcate the behaviour.

Teachers spend the first few minutes of every morning in school lecturing children about honesty, the value of helping one another, and of working hard. In a way, the teachers, who are mostly Manobo, serve as the best example for the children to show how diligence in getting an education can bring opportunities and help their fellow Manobo as well as making it possible to earn some income for themselves. Despite the teachers’ constant reminder, though, stealing and theft are still usual occurrences in Tagpalico. Even the teachers are not spared from these violations. They are disappointed and frustrated because the reality of everyday life does not reflect what teachers are espousing in class. It appears now that these claims to value honesty and respect the rights of others to private property are expressed by the Manobo only to impress outsiders such as the teachers, the nuns, and any visitors who are around. The notions of being ‘good’, honest, and respectful of private possessions could be a product of their dealings with people who hold Christian values like the nuns, the Catholic Manobo teachers, and other lowland Christians whom they have met. Most of the teachers, even if they are also Manobo, are practising Catholics and lived in dormitories run by the nuns while they were studying. It is not surprising then that the teachers have imbibed the values of their religious benefactors. As for myself, being raised in a Catholic family, I hold the same views about honesty and property and I shared the teachers’ disappointment and frustration when I was confronted with the reality of theft and routine stealing in Tagpalico.

I think that parents of the Tagpalico children and even the leaders of the community may declare honesty to be an important value merely in order to impress the teachers, the nuns, and other outsiders. Living with them has highlighted the discrepancy between what they are learning to say they value – in order to be strategic – and what is really happening in the community. In Tagpalico, where resources are scarce and sharing (paghinatagay) among fellow members is expected, any signs of abundance not being shared may lead to tensions. In this case, stealing becomes understandable as a check on those who refuse to share what they have, especially if the items are valued and limited. For outsiders like me, in contrast, who have been taught to keep certain things to ourselves in order to save for the lean times, sharing can be a challenging proposition and stealing is an outright offensive act against our privacy and property. On the other hand, if we have grown up in a community where people must share what they have with those who have not, sharing is just a way of life that also entitles us to partake in others’ abundance in later times when we might be the ones who have nothing to share. Whilst this experience is an opportunity for us to learn how to be a Manobo in Tagpalico, these more profound cultural values about how to be a proper Manobo person who knows how to share and feels entitled to take from others who do not distribute surplus when they are enjoying abundance, do not form part of the school curriculum on how to be indigenous Manobo people. In this case again, the taken for granted values of a Catholic education are imposed in a
hidden curriculum (Gordon, 1982: 188) about which values count as proper moral values in the Philippines.

Indigenous Education Discourse and Local Situational Practice

The idea of an ‘indigenous’ school is a school where children, parents, leaders, and nuns work closely together to sustain it with minimal assistance from outside groups. In practice, however, the school could hardly go on if not for the support of the nuns and the commitment of the teachers to stay in Tagpalico despite the meagre allowances they receive. The nuns’ support in giving the allowances to the teachers basically sustains the school. At one point, the Congregation thought about closing down the school, but because the nuns have committed to helping the community as part of their mission program, they decided to carry on supporting the school. Since the Manobo in Tagpalico have minimal access to the basic services of the government in terms of education and health programs, they are not always able to receive the same benefits as people in the lowlands. At times, when the nuns have met with the leaders to discuss the possibility of closing the school, the latter have begged the nuns to continue their support in order to ensure the safety of the whole community. Promises of community participation are then renewed between the two groups in order to help the school. The missionary nature of the Congregation, which articulates their charism3 of ‘compassion in solidarity with the poor and all of creation’ (MSM, 2008:241) has led them to persevere in helping the Manobo of Tagpalico. The Congregation, which pledged to serve the poor and the less privileged cannot just abandon programs that are also sustaining their spiritual vows.

Unlike the early colonisers of the country, whose main objective in relation to mission work was to convert indigenous communities to Christianity, the Missionary Sisters of Mary have stressed that their purpose in Tagpalico is not religious in nature but rather a social and political stand. The previous example of the moral education around stealing and what it is to be ‘good’ shows, however, that what is Catholic about the curriculum has become unconscious and ‘hidden’ rather than explicit in its missionary purpose. With the aim of helping the community to achieve respite from political strife, to educate their children, and to value their traditions, the nuns allow and encourage the community to practise their traditions. Being compassionate to the poor is part of their charism as a religious group and, therefore, the nuns respond to the Manobo and other lumad groups’ need for assistance. In this sense the relationship between the Manobo and the nuns is a mutually beneficial and mutually interdependent arrangement.

To allow the community to be who they are and to practise their beliefs are part of giving respect to the people they are working with in their missionary work. In fact, even the nuns learn how to become indigenous as they participate in the rituals and offerings organised by the leaders at the start and end of every school year. They contribute to the ritual materials needed in every gathering by giving shop-bought wine, eggs, and rice. During community festivities (kahimunan), the nuns also participate in the dances and eat the food that the Manobo have prepared. They learn the Manobo language, even though only at a limited level of vocabulary. Sister Martha explained to me that the Congregation and the community have already been

3 Charism is the term used by the MSM to refer to their religious vocation, mission, or calling.
working together for several years and so it would not be easy to just abandon the Tagpalico community. The institution of the school was their initial reason for cooperation and through the years they have established a working relationship that goes beyond school concerns. Even if the school were ever to close there would still be instances when the Manobo leaders would come to the nuns and ask for their assistance, for example, to accompanying them on visits to hospitals and other government offices that they think require the nuns’ presence. They know that the school has been instrumental in maintaining the relative calm in the community during the past years and the elders who have experienced what it is like to be caught in the crossfire of government forces and communist guerrillas insist on the need for the nuns to maintain a presence through the ongoing operations around the school. Thus, the continuation of the nuns’ help is forcefully requested by the leaders and the parents every time they discuss whether the school should be closed or continued in the next school year.

Figure 19. Parents discuss their concerns with a nun during a school activity

This kind of relation has worked both ways for the nuns and the community because both groups derive a sense of relevance from each other. The nuns feel that they have become true to their mission of helping the poor and the marginalised. By becoming a part of the life of the Manobo and helping them to respond to their problems, the nuns fulfil their religious pledge to demonstrate compassion for the less privileged. In fact, the Tagpalico community has become a major part of their religious development process because most of their novices have to live among the Manobo households for a month, experience the life of the Manobo people, and become like members of Manobo families. The novices go through the difficulties that the Manobo people experience because they have to help on the farms and really live like the ‘indigenous Manobo’.

On the part of the Manobo community, they have learned through their interaction with the nuns, how to negotiate being indigenous in order to achieve their own goals. By using their difficult living conditions as a way to appeal to the religious missionary goals of the nuns, they
maintain their relationship with and align their interests with the Catholic ideals and consequently secure the continued existence of the school and the community as a military free zone. By taking advantage of their identity as Manobo and as ‘indigenous peoples’ who are poor and who live in difficult situations, the people are able to get assistance and win the compassion of the nuns. They have also learned strategically to show just enough support and know when to express their promise of involvement in the school so that its operations are ensured year after year. At times when there is no immediate impending threat that makes the presence of the school imperative, interest among the parents and leaders in helping and maintaining the school wanes as becomes evident through their lack of involvement in the everyday operations of the school. At such times, help from parents and the leaders becomes hard to get; however, when military operations are imminent and the possibility of closing the school is discussed, parents and leaders readily defend the school. Promises of support are expressed and attendance at meetings of community members increases. This shows that the presence of the school also serves an instrumental and situational function. The lofty objectives of preservation of ‘culture’, understanding issues that confront the community through education, and preparing learners to be adept with modern life are blurred by more immediate domestic concerns that the Manobo face every day.

The organisation of the school can be cited as an example of how indigenous education is implemented in a particular community. More importantly, it can be viewed as part of a localised and situational contingency in which the idea of indigeneity is appropriated in order to respond to a particular socio-political condition that calls for a strategic response. Hence, the opening of the school and the development of its ethos provided a practical solution to a political and social problem. Looking into the specific social practice inside the Tagpalico School, the next chapter describes the processes of formal learning and classroom discipline that children and adults engage in as they negotiate their roles in this particular social sphere.
CHAPTER 7
Formal Learning and School Discipline

Formal Learning and Indigenous Education
May (1998) and May & Aikman (2003) suggest that indigenous education is inevitably situated in relation to other indigenous struggles. Whether these are struggles for political independence, social justice, or a fight for self-determination, educational initiatives are always part of these efforts because education is thought to help indigenous peoples gain and define their strategic purpose. These authors acknowledge that colonisers used education in the past to suppress the identity and cultural integrity of indigenous peoples but they are equally cognisant that the latter have also identified education as a way to reclaim and re-value their languages and cultures. Thus, examples of initiatives to set up community-based indigenous education are evident and numerous. May and Aikman (2003) also recognise that indigenous peoples’ current efforts towards education are not intended to isolate indigenous peoples but are reflective of processes of cultural negotiation. This means that even if there are constant reactions to the colonial experiences that indigenous peoples have undergone, indigenous peoples’ education initiatives do not aim merely to go back and retrench to previous positions and practices. Instead, contextualised and relational approaches arise. By looking at the international and local issues facing them, indigenous peoples are at the same time coming up with localised efforts expressed in particular indigenous education initiatives. Indigenous education activities, according to May and Aikman (2003), have to be situated in the diversified, complex and yet concrete experiences of indigenous peoples in particular places. This is true with the case of the Tagpalico School, which has its own history and reasons for its establishment in the area.

In keeping with the aim to make the Tagpalico School a ‘real’ school in response to suggestions by some that it is a ‘fake’, the teachers and nuns, in collaboration with the parents and leaders in the community, have opted to make the school as similar as possible to nationally recognised, state-funded legitimate schools. This does not mean that they are not also pursuing the intention to be relevant to their group’s particular purposes in establishing the school. The school of Tagpalico follows the structure of the lowland schools while also incorporating components that allow indigenous knowledge to be part of the curriculum. Following the format of mainstream schools, for instance by having the same calendar of activities, learning materials, and the same topics to learn and competencies to achieve as in the case of the lowland students, is one of the ways indigenous schools try to emulate government-approved schools. In addition, they also have to include local indigenous expressions and discuss current problems in order to fulfil the objectives of being an ‘indigenous’ (lumad) school. With these aims, it has been a constant challenge for the school not to be called ‘fake’ (peke) and to maintain a curriculum that is both deemed to be appropriate for a formal school as well as relevant to local perceptions of what an indigenous school is. This experience appropriately exemplifies the observation by Rockwell & Gomes (2009:107) that actual practices of schooling are not usually in accordance with ‘structural and practical
aspects’ of the ideal school form. This challenges the idea that ‘schools around the world are becoming more similar over time’ (Anderson-Levitt, 2003:2). Actual experiences of schooling are always embedded in a process of ‘coconstruction of alternative arrangements and practices’ (Rockwell and Gomes, 2009:106) among actors, given the limitations of the pervading environment. This shows that even if schooling has become a common phenomenon across nations there exist numerous ways in which schooling is experienced differently in diverse areas.

In this section, I describe how the people involved in the Tagpalico School base the organisation of the academic year on the integration of the goals of maintaining legitimacy without falling short of the expectations of the community and meeting the requirements of a formal school as demanded by the government. In order to counter doubts of its legitimacy, the nuns and the leaders of Tagpalico have arranged for the school to be recognised as an annex school of the established Father Saturnino Urios University (FSUU) – a private university based in Butuan City. This university, a Catholic university, has served as the main school relative to all extension schools serving indigenous communities assisted by Catholic congregations in the province. By officially taking the name of FSUU, the Tagpalico School1, along with other schools that are run by the nuns, must follow the structure that FSUU requires of its extension schools, which is also the approved structure of the Department of Education (DepEd). All the documents for student records and progress reports of the Tagpalico students are in accordance with the FSUU formats. Teachers draft the reports and submit them at the beginning and end of the school year to FSUU, which later forwards them to the DepEd. As a precautionary measure, one important step they take to overcome their insecurity is to ensure that the overall appearance and operation of the school follow the accepted structure as outlined by the DepEd and FSUU.

The Tagpalico School must start its classes on the month and date mandated by the DepEd and FSUU issues a general academic calendar for all its extension schools to follow every year (see Appendix 2). The school calendar starts in the month of June and ends in March. A monthly plan is created within this time frame and this makes use of the themes outlined in the academic calendar. So that it acts as a constant reminder for the Tagpalico teachers, the printed calendar is posted on a wall in the staff house where it is visible for everyone to see. It is used as a reference for schedules of periodic exams and monthly themes and also to plan what activities will be undertaken in line with the identified themes.

**Monthly Highlights in School**

In June, the teachers start preparing the classrooms several days before the opening of classes. It is essential to ensure that the building and the classrooms look like a real school and are on a par with the rest of the schools in the country when the school opens. As the school

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1 The Tagpalico School is commonly called ‘eskwelahan (school) sa Tagpalico’ by the locals and referred to as ‘Father Saturnino Urios University Extension School – Urios Tagpalico Elementary School’ in official reports and documents.
has been left unoccupied during the summer months of April and May, it needs cleaning, repairs, and new decorations. The teachers come to Tagpalico in advance, bringing with them art materials, cardboard, and some textbooks in order to adorn the classrooms with posters and pictures. Weeds and grass have usually grown tall on the front lawn and back gardens of the school so these need to be tended to as well. In the summer vacation, children play around the school premises or sneak inside the classrooms and as a result, some facilities get damaged and are in need of repair. Quite often the nun in charge of the school will visit Tagpalico a few weeks after the school has started to meet the parents and leaders and confer with them about what remains to be done. They discuss what materials are needed for repairs and together they decide who will do the tasks. Since resources for repairs are lacking in Tagpalico, the nuns make provision for them, especially those materials that are only available in the lowlands like nails, paints, and plywood. The timber and labour are supplied by the parents because they can afford these.

Like the schools in the lowlands, in which parents create partnership organisations with the school, the parents and leaders of Tagpalico form a body called the Parents-Teachers-Community Association (PTCA). This support group addresses immediate problems in the school that the teachers cannot respond to on their own. Many of these issues relate to the policies about parental contributions to the school and the times at which they are required to render service to maintain the school farm and surrounding areas of the school building. Aside from the PTCA, they also create committees to look after certain concerns of the community, including the following committees: Education (Edukasyon) is responsible for problems in the school; Sustainable Agriculture (SusAg) is in charge of maintaining the school farm; the Organising Committee keeps members aware of community issues and activities; the Women’s (Kababayen-an) Committee spearheads projects for mothers; the Youth (Kabatan-unan) Committee looks after concerns raised by the high school students studying in the lowlands; and the Health (Panglawas) Committee ensures that medicinal plants are available in a herbal garden. A leader (manigaon) is assigned to head each of the committees and becomes the person responsible if projects need to be carried out by the committee. Cooperative work, (pahina) as agreed to by the parents, is done on Saturdays for the rest of the year to help maintain the cleanliness of the school. Even if there are challenges in sustaining these committees throughout the year and encouraging the parents to cooperate, the mere presence of these committees creates a semblance of how schools are organised in the lowlands. It also reinforces the sense of belonging and participation of the parents in the school because responsibilities for the school are allocated to them.

The participation of the parents and leaders is crucial in other activities that regularly happen in the school. In the academic calendar, the months of July and August are scheduled as Nutrition Month and Language Month (Buwan ng Wika) respectively. The teachers plan a school programme at the end of each month to culminate the lessons taught. When I was in Tagpalico, the teachers decided on a cooking day as a culmination activity for July. Children from Grades One to Six were divided into groups and each group had members from different grades. This
was done to ensure that every group comprised both older and younger members, with the former leading the group to cook a vegetable dish. Vegetables, because of their nutritional value, were the main focus of the month's lessons. Children brought the necessary cooking utensils and cooked vegetables harvested from their farms. This activity became a big community event because parents gathered at the school and partook of communal eating. As a result, the whole community came together and enjoyed the food prepared by the children. This practice is similar to food sharing activities that take place on other occasions outside the school.

The event at the end of the month of August displays different talents of children as well as adults. As a celebration of the Language Month, the Manobo language is highlighted in the form of presentations of song (tud-um), poetry, dance, and oration. Whereas in the lowlands Language Month is celebrating by highlighting the Filipino language (the national language), in the Tagpalico School the focus is on the Manobo language. In preparation for the event, children are asked to write compositions using the Manobo language and to memorise Manobo songs. Teachers put aside a certain amount of time for the children to rehearse presentations for the programme in addition to the time they spend on studying specific subjects such as Maths, Science, and Civics². To make the gathering more exciting for the community, the teachers invite visitors from other indigenous schools outside Tagpalico. The visitors are also allowed to perform a presentation during the programme in order to show their solidarity with the host community.

These activities make the Tagpalico School similar to and yet different from other lowland schools. They take the themes that are mandated by the DepEd into their curriculum, but they make them their own by using local expressions in the content and form of events. As long as the general structure approved by the government is followed and the children achieve the learning goals and competencies³ expected, the teachers feel comfortable to explore other activities that highlight Manobo cultural expressions and art forms.

The month of October is particularly important for the community in terms of highlighting what it is to be ‘indigenous’ (lumad). It is a very special month for the Tagpalico School and other schools in indigenous communities because this is the nationally recognised Indigenous Peoples Month. It has become an annual activity of the school to hold a festival that highlights traditional games, dances, and quizzes. There are activities for children, parents, and leaders. While I was doing my field research, the festival was conducted in another school in the village

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² Civics is a subject area which incorporates topics to do with social studies, geography, and history.
³ Competencies are particular kinds of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in each subject area. The general objectives of the elementary level curriculum include: 1) To develop functional literacy in Filipino and English as basic tool subjects for lifelong learning; 2) To acquire health knowledge and form healthy habits and practices; 3) To acquire basic knowledge, attitudes, and skills in Mathematics, Science, and Technology; 4) To understand one’s rights, duties and responsibilities in the family, in the community, and in a democracy; 5) To develop a basic understanding of Philippine culture and of the desirable traditions and virtues of our people; 6) To imbibe spiritual and civic values such as love of country and faith in God; and 7) To acquire basic knowledge and skills in geography, history, arts, livelihood, and home economics (Tanodra, 2003: 178).
of Bagodanon. In preparation for this inter-school activity, the Tagpalico children spent a lot of time practising dances, reviewing their lessons for possible questions in the quiz show, and rehearsing songs and chorus lines. Children who were assigned to participate in contests featuring traditional games of setting up wild animal traps, tug-of-war, arm wrestling, and the Manobo way of harvesting crops, practised to gain speed and mastery. Long before the festival, children collected the materials they needed. Parents, for their part, met to agree on the amount of money required to buy the pig that they would contribute to the festival ritual and food reserve. The leaders also planned their participation in the Datu (leaders) Assembly which was scheduled to happen after the children’s events.

This festival is a central activity for the school during the year because this is the only time when the children, parents, teachers, and leaders from Tagpalico and those from other communities come together in one venue and celebrate what it is to be ‘indigenous’ (lumad). Even residents of Tagpalico join in and refer to the festival as their ‘fiesta’ (commemoration of a patron saint) or ‘araw’ (a day to celebrate the founding anniversary of a place) although it is not a religious or government activity. The essence of the festival is to uphold being ‘lumad’ by performing rituals (kahimunan), showcasing Manobo songs and dances, and discussing issues concerning the communities. Representatives from the Department of Education, sponsors who support the school and officials of the local government are all invited to attend the programme to give their encouragement to the Manobo. Speeches of the Manobo leaders and the visitors all ascribe importance to the maintenance of traditions and sustenance of lumad identity so that the young Manobo will continue to value their ‘culture’. The nuns and the teachers are the main organisers of the whole activity and so the task to oversee the logistics and to ensure the successful carrying out of the event falls on them. They solicit food and money from local businesses and private individuals to add to the contributions of the parents and leaders coming from different communities. They plan daily activities and make sure that preparation of the festival venue is in progress days before the event starts. It is therefore necessary for the teachers to meet together with the nuns several times before the festival to coordinate all the activities.

After the festival, in order to identify areas for improvement for the holding of the next festival, a post-festival assessment was conducted. The teachers met with the nuns to examine the positive and negative impacts of the activities. They identified the highs and lows of the event and what could be improved in coming festivals. They admitted that the budget was not big for such events and the leaders and parents needed to work harder to ensure the festival continued to be celebrated. The children were also given the chance to express their feelings about their experiences. They commented positively on the event because they were able to meet and interact with other lumad children. The children said they were thrilled when they were performing in front of many spectators and visitors because they were not used to meeting a lot of strangers. Nevertheless, they expressed that they were dismayed when they saw their leaders drunk at one point before the activities started. The children saw this as inappropriate behaviour because they believed that the elders should help them settle into their
accommodation area before drinking with other leaders. The students felt it was not a good example for leaders to set, especially at an official school activity. When the teachers relayed this observation to a few leaders to make them aware of the children’s comments, the leaders reasoned that they had already started to meet with other leaders at that time, and drinking, which did not always happen, was only a small part of the gathering. They noted the children’s remarks and said they would be more mindful next time. Talking about the event as a whole, the leaders saw the festival as the right time to meet with other leaders and discuss the problems in their community in a more formal venue. Furthermore, there was a consensus that the participation of representatives of non-government organisations who came to give them input about the situation of other indigenous peoples at a national level was helpful in increasing their understanding of their plight as marginalised groups. They said that they would not have the opportunity to learn about their potential participation in national events like the elections if these were not discussed in big gatherings like the festival. According to them, the festival was not only for the children but also for adult members of the communities and the visitors from other groups to converge and exchange ideas and news about fellow lumad in other areas. ‘Being indigenous’, in this light, is not solely about educational content highlighted in the school, but it is also used as a political strategy that links the Manobo with their fellow indigenous peoples and other networks.

**Classroom Instruction**

In between major festivals and events, the school concentrates on classroom instruction. Teaching materials are limited to the reference books the school receives from FSUU. The few textbooks in mathematics, science, English, and Filipino serve as basic guides to the content of the lessons taught inside the classroom, with modifications of content for local Manobo examples whenever applicable. The teachers admit, though, that they cannot teach all the topics in the books in one year because they have to consider the pace at which the children grasp the lessons and then manage the available time for all the different subjects. Children sometimes miss classes when the teachers have to attend regular meetings in the city, but there are also instances when bad weather interrupts the schedule of classes. Attendance by families at activities in nearby communities, like founding anniversary celebrations, can also lead to students missing classes. The teachers sometimes then find time to conduct additional classes on Saturdays. Generally, as long as the teachers follow the basic structure that the school calendar has identified, they feel that they are working in compliance with the guidelines. The nuns have also assured them that upholding the ‘culture’ of the Manobo is more valuable than teaching topics that are foreign to the life of the Tagpalico people. The leaders agree with

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4 Drinking alcohol, especially commercially produced wine (Vino Kulafu), is a common social activity among Manobo men during festivities and rituals. Drinking among men is associated with tension, fighting, and conflict, which is why it is prohibited within the Tagpalico community during ordinary days. There have been instances when men have become drunk and started a fight with their neighbours, which prompted the leaders to forbid drinking inside the community. Hence, male members drink when they have a chance to go to the lowlands. Although drinking alcohol is seen as a way to socialise with relatives and friends and as part of community rituals, it is unacceptable if done excessively, especially during school-related activities. If men are drunk, they can no longer perform the responsibilities expected from them. It is also not considered to be setting a good example for young children to let them see adults drinking alcohol rather than conducting tasks in a responsible way.
This because they believe that the children should learn to value solidarity among lumad groups more than topics that they feel are not relevant to their lives. For them, being able to read, write, and compute, can only be more significant if these skills help them make their lives become better as lumads and allow them to overcome everyday problems. Part of the point of children attaining literacy and numeracy skills in school is for them to become more appreciative of their culture.

Hence, the leaders and elders are important sources of knowledge in the education of their children in school. In order for them to be involved in classroom instruction, they are invited to a ‘Sharing Time’ once a month when they talk about the community’s history, values, and stories about the supernatural world. For example, they explain the reason why the community is called ‘Tagpalico’. All children know that Tagpalico is from the phrase ‘liko-liko nga dalan’ (meandering road) because the place they live in is situated in a very mountainous area which can only be reached by following the meandering trails to the village. The elders also teach them the basic dance steps of the Manobo and explain when these are performed. Before the children attend school, they have already learned the Binaylan dance, a dance simulating the movements of a baylan (healer). The instruction they get in school builds on what they have learned during community rituals and celebrations. If they show that they are graceful dancers, they are often selected to perform in school programmes or are invited to give performances at gatherings of lumad groups in the lowlands. This form of participation of the elders in the school is an important modification of the usual way of teaching in formal schools.

As the description above has shown, the annual academic calendar is the main organising factor of the school’s operation and serves to make it a ‘real’ school. The day to day activities that happen within this context enliven the schooling process in Tagpalico. Children learn to participate as students as they negotiate their involvement in the more confined space and time limitations that the school environment imposes. In the next section I discuss how class schedules and discipline are enacted in the Tagpalico School, and how participation of those involved is shaped inside the classroom.

**Daily Class Schedules**

Despite the existence of a set school calendar (see Appendix 2) and specific time allotment (see Appendix 3) mandated by the FSUU and the DepEd, the implementation and framework vary at local school level. Time allocation, as defined by the national guidelines, is often modified in practice. In Tagpalico, the actual determining factor for day-to-day routines and how classes are divided or merged is the availability of teachers willing to work in the Tagpalico School. It is up to the teachers how they divide the total number of hours for one day or one-half-day to cover the topics and lessons that are expected to be covered in the different grade levels. This kind of system has worked well for the situation in Tagpalico because it is the most effective way to manage the problem of the limited availability of teachers and also the small numbers of children within various age groups.
The lack of money available for allowances also limits the number of teachers assigned to Tagpalico. Aside from that, some teachers do not want to teach in an isolated area like Tagpalico. When I first arrived in Tagpalico, there were four teachers handling four different classes. Grade One and Two classes were handled separately by two teachers. Grades Three and Four were merged together in one class and so too were Grades Five and Six. All of these groupings had classes for the whole day. The following year was different because the nuns could only afford to pay two teachers. One teacher handled Grade One class and another teacher was in charge of the Grade Two class. Grades One and Two children came in the morning. In the afternoon, one teacher would teach Grades Three and Four and the other teacher would take the Grades Five and Six group. This multi-grade class system, whereby a teacher groups together several grade levels in one class, is a strategy used in Tagpalico so that all the students in the school can be accommodated despite the limited number of teachers. The parents and leaders agree to this setup because they understand the difficulty of hiring and paying teachers. For them, what is important is that their children have access to education and that they get report cards as proof that their children have been to school. Even if the parents are not sure if their children will succeed, given the challenges of sending them to and keeping them in school, they are amenable to the changes in the school schedules and arrangements as long as their children still learn the basic numeracy and literacy skills.

The time allocations for each day also vary depending on the shifts of the classes and the number of subject areas covered by different grade levels. Normally a day will start with a flag ceremony at 8:30 in the morning. An improvised school bell made from old scrap metal from a truck’s wheel is hit three times to indicate that the flag ceremony is about to start and children should line up in front of the flag pole. Flag ceremonies are part of the structure of the national educational system for developing patriotism (makabayan) (Tanodra, 2003) in students. The students regularly sing the Philippine National Anthem (see Appendix 4) and recite the Filipino Pledge of Allegiance (see Appendix 5). After this, children selected by the teachers to lead the physical exercises go to the front of the other students. They perform repetitive actions composed of head rotations, shoulder rotations, jumping jacks, and body stretching. The whole process takes around 20 minutes and children then enter their classrooms in single file and classes start soon after that. For classes that start in the afternoon, there is no flag raising ceremony but they gather around the flag pole for the flag retreat. There are no physical exercises this time and so the flag retreat takes up less time. Subjects like science, English, mathematics, and Filipino are allocated 40 minutes to an hour per lesson. These school rituals are an important part of the school’s daily routine because this is part of what makes the school

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3 There is a constant challenge for the teachers, nuns, parents, and leaders to achieve a balance between learning literacy and numeracy, and indigenous education. First and foremost, parents and leaders want their children to learn how to read and write in school. Apart from that, they also want their children to learn how to value their culture, which they expect to be incorporated in classroom instructions. This is a highly negotiated situation because there are times when being literate seems to be the primary reason why parents want their children to be in school and yet there are also instances when parents want indigenous issues and concerns to be the core for teaching and learning. What is salient is that indigenous education becomes more highlighted in the context when collective identity is discussed in connection with various issues affecting indigenous peoples and in relation to external groups such as other indigenous communities, the nuns, teachers, and outsiders.
a ‘real’ school. They reflect the same activities that other children in other schools do even though the exact time appropriations may be different.

The specific time allotted for each subject is also identified by the guidelines given by the FSUU and the Department of Education. However, with the limitations that the Tagpalico School is currently experiencing in its class schedules, modifications are again inevitable. Teachers thus have the leeway to manage and implement what is stated in the guidelines provided for them. For example, they know that subjects like mathematics and science must predominate. However, if contact with the students is restricted, the standard mandated time cannot be followed and they need to adjust. What they do is follow the outline of the textbooks given to them and chart the topics that they will teach the children for the time available. There are times when the teachers spend days discussing one subject in order to achieve greater depth and consequently decide to skip other topics. When they see that the children have understood the lesson they proceed to other subjects. As long as the teachers do not teach topics that are highly political and subversive in nature and are in line with the materials provided by the FSUU, there are no problems because the children are being taught the expected lessons. Of course, any major decision relating to administration and instruction within the school must be made known to the nun in charge because she is responsible for explaining these modifications to FSUU in discussions of the school’s performance. A representative from FSUU periodically visits the school to conduct consultations with the teachers. This is usually done when there are special events in Tagpalico and upon invitation from the nun in charge. During my fieldwork, no consultations with FSUU representatives took place because the person in charge could not make the arduous journey involved in reaching the Tagpalico community.

Classroom Interaction and Discipline
Parents often describe the teachers as the ‘second parents’ (ikaduhang ginikanan) of their children when the children are in school. They expect the teachers to act as disciplinarians as well as caring mentors. They even admit that teachers are more influential than they are because their children are more obedient to their teachers and most likely follow what their teachers tell them to do. They say they do not worry if teachers get angry or scold their children because they know that sometimes their children become noisy and unmanageable.

The classes are handled in different ways, depending on the personality of the teachers and the behaviour of the students. The younger students, those in Grades One and Two, are often very noisy and so the stricter teachers are assigned to handle them. Those teachers who are more lenient and have softer personalities are assigned to the older kids who are believed to be more attentive to instruction. Children in the school are ideally divided by age groups and grade levels. Six and seven-year-old children belong to Grade One class; eight-year-olds are Grade Two; nine-year-olds are Grade Three and so on until they reach the Grade Six group at the age of 12. However, these groupings are not definite because some grade levels are merged, either due to lack of students or because there are not enough teachers to handle one class per grade.
level. Some students also take several years to successfully attain the pass mark of a grade level and so they are kept back at the same grade level for a number of years.

The time allocations for each subject organise the activities of the day, but within this time teachers and students create dynamic conditions inside the classroom. A lot of time is spent copying work from the chalkboard because textbooks are not available for every student. Often the teacher’s book is the only copy of the textbook. The teachers usually do the writing on the board but if they have other tasks to complete, such as writing reports or checking papers, they let a student, usually one with clear handwriting, do this for them. After work has been copied into the children’s notebooks, teachers allow time for class recitations and discussions. Teachers often lead the discussions by translating the copied work, which is usually written in English or Filipino, into the local Manobo or Cebuano languages. Students raise their hands in order to answer questions that the teacher asks and children stand up if they are chosen to reply. When children get really excited with their answers, they shout in unison while simultaneously standing on their feet, making the class very lively. It is a constant challenge for teachers to keep students still because Tagpalico children are used to freely playing outdoors when they are out of school. Their spontaneous behaviours outside the school are manifested inside the classroom and so they become playful and unruly.

When teachers are satisfied that most of the students have participated in discussions and most have answered the board exercises correctly, they then give the students time to review their work on their own so that they can be tested on it. The announcement of a test is often met with complaints, but the children always do what the teachers ask of them. Teachers dictate the questions and children answer, but in long formal examinations, teachers write the test and post it on the board so children can answer as they read the questions.

Cheating is discouraged but children do it anyway, especially if they are sitting beside their close friends. If they are caught cheating, children will be reprimanded and have points deducted. As soon as test papers are collected, the children gather around their teacher’s table in order to watch while the papers are marked. Children immediately start comparing scores among themselves and noise in the classroom builds again. Sometimes the checking of papers is done as a whole class activity. If this happens, a student is called to write the answer on the board; but if he or she does not know the answer, other students shout and raise their hands while saying ‘Teacher, tabangan nako siya’g answer.’ – ‘Teacher I will help him/her with the answer.’ Cooperation in finding the correct answer is highly desired among students and they are not condescending to those who have made a mistake. This attitude also reflects how they do things outside the school because being cooperative and helping one another are valued traits among the Manobo. Students rarely tease a classmate if he or she commits an error; they attract the teacher’s attention instead so that the mistake can be corrected. They cheer if their answer is right and express dismay if they are wrong.
Children are allowed to go out of the classroom when they need to drink water from a water hose or urinate in the surrounding bushes. They approach the door of the classroom and raise their hand to get the attention of the teacher and shout in English 'Ma’am/Sir, may I go out!' or ‘Excuse me Ma’am or Sir.’ This usually happens when the teacher is busy checking papers or writing on the board. Children are relatively free to go in and out of the classrooms, especially if they ask permission and when a test has just finished. Other children are also allowed to come in, especially when the door of the classroom is not locked. At times, when younger siblings do not have company in their houses to look after them, they are sent to school with their older brothers and sisters. They are free to sit beside their siblings in the classroom as long as they do not interrupt or disturb the activities inside. There are also moments when their friends from other classrooms come in and ask to borrow pens or papers to write on. Classroom discipline is therefore quite relaxed and there is a light and easy atmosphere during class times. Corporal punishment is not encouraged. ‘Physical discipline and bodily comportment’ (Froerer, 2007:3) are not used as rigid pedagogical forms and are not the usual ways of controlling children’s behaviour. Despite this, classroom discipline creates a far more structured atmosphere compared to the freedom children experience while they are outside the school environment. This ‘spatio-temporal rhythm’ (Evans, 2006a:82) or ‘spatiotemporal organisation’ (Rival, 1996:156) that is characteristic of classroom-based experience organises the way children behave inside the classroom and leads to a constant process of negotiation while they are inside it. Inevitably, this spatio-temporal rhythm is slightly different in every school and in each classroom.

The personalities of the teachers and their behaviour while in class also impact on how children act inside the classroom. Children are more attentive and silent when their teachers are strict and have a loud voice. However, when they see that the teachers are a bit shy and soft-spoken, children tend to overpower them. Children do listen to these teachers for a while, but they soon become unruly and noisy. They often go out of the classroom and are unafraid to engage in chats with their seat mates. These teachers admit that teaching is a struggle for them.

Children know that they are free to move to other seats or around the classroom as long as they do it silently and do not disturb the whole class. It is typical to see them move over to another desk whenever they feel uncomfortable in one place or want to sit beside another classmate. They often change their body positions while the classes are going on. They can squat on the benches while they are writing, rest on their forearms while copying notes from the boards, or stand whenever they want. However, if the teacher demands their attention and the students feel that the teacher is getting angry or becoming annoyed by their frequent movements they will stay in one place and keep quiet. A teacher raising her voice to call a student to behave while the latter is moving around is a sure sign that the student must pay attention. Other students also take this as a warning for them and so they listen and sit still. Children are also afraid that teachers will deduct points from their marks or report them to their parents if they

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6 There is no toilet in the school.
misbehave often in school. Telling the parents how their children behave in class is becoming a reliable method of instilling discipline in the children because teachers do not have to directly deal with difficult students and the children are afraid that their parents will get angry with them. Putting children on the spot makes them calm down, especially when they are expected to respect and obey those who are older than them. If they do otherwise, they know that there will be consequences for their actions.

Despite the relatively lenient atmosphere of the school environment, children adhere to the routines that are in place from the beginning of the day until the end. The ‘everyday student regimentation’ (Simpson, 2003:81) they undergo within the school is organised within the framework of spatial and temporal boundaries corresponding to behavioural expectations that are reflective of and at the same time often contrary to the children’s experiences of outside school life. For example, children are expected to be still and stand straight while the flag ceremony is going on in the morning. They all line up before the flag pole as the Philippine flag is raised. They participate in a series of physical exercises before they move into the classrooms. They recite a Manobo prayer together and are expected to bow their heads and be steady while they do this. They stand as they greet the teacher and their fellow classmates with ‘Good morning’ or ‘Good afternoon’ before classes start and say ‘Goodbye’ as soon as the classes end. During these times, children are aware that they have to do the same thing as the rest of the students. Although no punishments are given to those who do not participate, children generally perform the expected actions because it is their classmates who check on them if they do not conform. During classes, children are also expected to participate in classroom activities that require them to either sit still and tone down their voices or be active and cooperative. However, these ideals of bodily control are often socially contested as expectations at school challenge Manobo social norms pertaining to children’s behaviours and child rearing practices.

Teachers believe that children should be encouraged to talk and say what they think. However, there are moments when teachers find the students uncontrollable as they become overexcited and begin to shout at each other. Bickering among classmates also happens and so teachers must raise their voices to stop this. When this happens, children know what it means and they become quiet. One teacher in the Grade One class often carries a stick with him and hits the chalkboard every time he is annoyed with the behaviour of his young students. He normally uses the stick to point to words for reading drills, but if students do not pay attention he uses the stick to strike the wall or the children’s desks. He does not, however, use this to hit his students, because inflicting physical pain on students is highly discouraged in the school. This teacher has a loud voice which frightens his students. One student even decided to drop out from class because of this. The other teacher in the adjacent room complained too, because she and her students are jolted every time he strikes the board. When this topic was raised during a teachers’ meeting, the teacher at fault did offer an apology. Unfortunately, it had become a habit that he could not easily stop and so the other teachers and students just had to get used to his way of teaching.
Teachers’ Dilemma Pertaining to Classroom Discipline

Teachers are expected to instil discipline among students while they are in school, cultivating the values of obedience, respect, and honesty. According to some parents, they prefer teachers who have strong characters and who are not afraid to reprimand the children when they go wrong to discipline their children. They say that they understand if teachers sometimes hit children because children may become too mischievous inside the classroom. However, the teachers feel that this is not precisely the case with all parents. The teachers feel that although some parents may insinuate that the teachers can inflict physical punishment, the truth is that they believe it is the parents’ role to do this and not the teachers’. Instilling classroom discipline is, therefore, a sensitive aspect of teaching in the Tagpalico School. On one hand the teachers are seen as second parents of the students and are given leeway on how they deal with their students inside the classrooms, but on the other hand they are not really allowed to discipline children by hitting them like real parents do because only the latter have the right to do so. The teachers are aware of the contradiction in the parents’ expectations and feel the dilemma of performing the roles of being second parents as well as disciplinarians. The teachers have to be careful that their ways of disciplining the children do not go beyond the methods used by Manobo parents. Despite the remark that they are the second parents of the children while they are in school, some teachers are uncomfortable with being strict to the students because of the potential for conflict with parents.

The head teacher, Mariel, noted that when she was new in Tagpalico she was assured that she could be stern in dealing with children’s misdemeanours inside the classroom. With this assurance, she tried to be strict inside the classroom, especially in relation to absences and children chatting with other students while she was giving a lecture. Since her students seemed not to be heeding her rules, she sometimes threw chalks at students when she became annoyed and lost her temper. She later found out that some parents were complaining about her way of dealing with the students. In order to lessen negative reactions from the parents, she tried to limit her actions and rely on language to impose discipline in class. She could not continue being strict and angry with students. I asked the teachers why they thought it would be detrimental for them if they adhered to strict ways of disciplining the children and they said they were afraid that the parents would get upset because they were not Manobo or they did not come from that place. If they acted as if they had more power than the parents to discipline their children this would contravene the accepted way of handling Manobo children.

The teacher mentioned above who frightens his students with a stick is a Manobo and so he is at ease with being strict in instilling discipline in his students because he comes from the community. The other teachers who are not Manobo are more careful because their being stern might not be accepted positively by the parents. This shows that disciplining children with the use of force and pain is only allowed to parents and community members. Outsiders, like the teachers who are not from Tagpalico, are not entitled to use strict disciplinary methods even if they are accorded the status of being the ‘second parents’ of the children. This is a telling
example of how being a member of the community matters to how children are managed inside the classroom. This could also be the reason why classroom discipline is generally relaxed and lenient as most of the teachers act cautiously inside the classroom because they do not come from the community and do not want to take the risk of offending parents.

**Convergence of the Global and the Local**

The schooling experience in the Tagpalico community supports the argument of Anderson-Levitt (2003) that even if the schooling process has become more similar globally through time it also has diverse local expressions. It can also be described as a process of ‘glocalisation’ (Jungck, 2003:28) by which global aspects of educational systems are locally negotiated. The particular situation of schooling in Tagpalico is a product of the interplay of different notions of local and international forms and trends in educational practice. This observation has become more significant in the case of indigenous education initiatives, in which educational efforts, as May and Aikman (2003) have noted, are the products of diverse conditions. Schooling therefore has to be situated relative to the broad, multifaceted and particular concrete experiences of indigenous peoples in specific places. Indigenous education may aim to address indigenous peoples’ concerns but its expression comes in different forms. The Tagpalico School is a case in point. It shows that the school is a means to respond to local social concerns and it has faced particular challenges in becoming recognised as a real school. It is also a social space where national guidelines and local limitations are continuously being negotiated in the playing out of the required social relationships in the school setting that is being created by its participants. These relationships are however being equally undermined by accepted social norms that govern how people behave inside and outside the school setting.

Schooling in Tagpalico manifests both global and local aspects of the educational experience. It follows the trend of mass education as a national model that is reflective of most countries in the world. The time and space structures, the method of instruction, and curriculum content are just some of the features that the Tagpalico School shares with other nationally-approved schools. At the same time, it is a unique example of educational practice. It was first instituted in order to create a war-free zone in a heavily-militarised community. At the same time, the leaders and parents also wanted Manobo children to learn the Manobo culture and to be literate and numerate. The school has become a social space in which diverse expectations are negotiated. For example, the Manobo grapple with their notions of what a school should be; what it means to be educated and what it involves to be an indigenous person. The Manobo are learning to perform roles as participants in a system which they are not familiar with and they are having to learn to cope with the added responsibilities that the schooling enterprise brings. Moving beyond this locally situated practice of education, the following chapter explores the theories of learning that informed my inquiry about indigenous education practice. This brings out the different perspectives that allow a better understanding of why learning is both a biological and a social process.
CHAPTER 8
On Cultural Transmission: Theories of Learning and the Manobo

In 2007, when I began this study about indigenous people's engagement in education programs, I was greatly influenced by explanations given to me by indigenous leaders and teachers I had worked with during my volunteer work in 'indigenous schools' during the years from 1998 to 2005. They explained to me that one of the reasons why they wanted to engage with formal educational processes was because they wanted their children to value their 'culture' more as they learned to deal with 'modernity'. Teaching the young their culture meant ensuring that the Manobo way of life would be transmitted to following generations despite the changes that present day realities are bringing. Hence, cultural transmission was seen to be one of the primary purposes of education. For them, making children learn their 'culture' would assure the maintenance of the Manobo’s distinctiveness as a group of people and if children learned to value their culture they would be more grounded when facing the challenges of the future. This viewpoint was shared among the Manobo people of the Tagpalico community and also by those who are helping them in running the school where I carried out this study. In view of the socio-political environment in which they live, which positions the Manobo as marginal to the majority of lowland population, the Manobo look at education ('edukasyon') as a form of 'cultural transmission' and survival strategy.

I observe that whilst local indigenous education practitioners use the concept of 'cultural transmission' as an ethnographic term, anthropologists interested in the field of the anthropology of education use it as an analytical concept. For example, George Spindler (1974; 2000) and Frederick Gearing (1984) systematically examined the concept of cultural transmission and took different approaches. It is therefore important to understand how anthropologists view cultural transmission in order to better relate and distinguish these notions vis-à-vis the commonly-held ideas of indigenous people.

Cultural Transmission
The discussion of 'cultural transmission' as an analytical concept in anthropology gained prominence in the Culture and Personality School of American anthropology in the 1950s. Within the cultural transmission framework, the argument that 'culture is learned and not genetically inherited' (Middleton, 1970:xii) emphasised that education involved processes through which members of a society become learners and teachers of a certain way of culturally specific, collectively distinctive life. Middleton noted that the basic anthropological questions to be answered were to do with the way culture is transmitted between generations, how members share what is being transmitted, and how learning and transmitting culture are intertwined with how society is organised. Education, then, was understood as a way of learning a culture and this process mostly dealt with the formation of the child. Durkheim (1956) also shared this view that education was the way in which society prepared children for

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1 In the first instance in this section I am using ‘culture’ with inverted commas to indicate its use as an ethnographic term but the following instances will not be marked.
the essential conditions of their existence. Middleton's edited book *From Child to Adult* represented the interest of anthropologists in cross-cultural comparison of groups of people and in finding out how cultures are transmitted through generations. The book included ethnographic descriptions about diverse societies such as the studies of Fortes in Taleland (1945), Firth in Tikopia (1936), and Raum in Chaga (1940). In a way, all these studies were influenced by the Culture and Personality School and despite the decline of the School in the 1950s, the focus on childhood socialisation remained an important topic in American anthropology, along with an overlying concern with education as a form of cultural transmission. In fact, a conference in North America organised by George Spindler in 1954 and attended by educationists and anthropologists was considered to be the event that signalled the emergence of educational anthropology as a sub-discipline of the study of anthropology. Dubbed as the 1954 Stanford Conference on Education and Anthropology, the conference participants discussed four themes that the practitioners in the field were dealing with at that moment. Spindler (1984:4) remarked that there were four themes that structured discussions during the conference, namely: ‘1) the search for a philosophical as well as theoretical articulation of education and anthropology; 2) the necessity for socio-cultural contextualization of the educative process; 3) the relation of education to ‘culturally phrased’ phases of the life cycle; and, 4) the nature of intercultural understanding and learning.’

The first theme was concerned with the need to search for a solid model or theory that would explain the cultural transmission processes of societies; processes which included formal education. It was at this point that cultural transmission became a popular term for referring to the reproduction of society and culture from one generation to the next. The second theme looked into the different ways and processes of schooling, which were viewed in relation to other aspects of societies, like home, family, ethnicity, etc. The third was concerned with the relationship of teaching and learning to the life cycle. The fourth theme related to emerging issues concerning the question of how anthropology could somehow contribute to broader understanding across cultures about the shared conditions for human existence. At this juncture, the idea of cultural transmission was recognised not only as processes of social reproduction, but it also included forms of schooling, teaching, and learning. In addition, it also became a specific subject to be studied in anthropology in order to understand both human diversity and similarity.

Several criticisms were raised about the school’s psychoanalytically informed methods and central notions about societies having patterned configurations characterised by basic and modal personality displaying national character as personality types (Lindesmith and Strauss, 1950). Bock (1988) summarised these criticisms, arguing that the school overemphasised childhood socialisation as if adult life were somehow less important. He suggested that the scholars ignored variations in personalities within societies and attributed to modal personalities the cause of all society’s errors. The school’s methodology also came under criticism because it relied overly on projective tests to validate observations and underestimated the ethnocentric bias of Western anthropologists. Bock argued that a failure of the school had been its inability to
define clearly the two concepts – culture and personality – and, citing Spiro (1951), Bock implied that culture and personality was somehow one and the same thing.

Despite the widespread criticism it is important, however, to recognise the achievements of the Culture and Personality School. The work of Margaret Mead (1961) in Samoa, for example, allowed the American public to think cross-culturally about concepts, such as adolescence, that they had taken for granted as biological/natural categories of human development. The focus on adult society as the outcome of childhood socialisation in domestic units and schools led to the cross-cultural comparison of educational systems and the birth of educational anthropology in America.

**Spindler on Cultural Transmission**

The work of Spindler (1974; 2000) and Gearing (1984) was proof of the growing interest in developing the concept of cultural transmission as an explanatory model for education. Spindler (2000:141), in his essay on *The Transmission of Culture*, initially explained that cultural transmission is about ‘how neonates become talking, thinking, feeling, moral, believing, valuing human beings – members of groups, participants in cultural systems.’ In order for a cultural system to be maintained, the young must ‘come to want to act as they must act’ (*ibid*). He likened initiation rites to education systems and pinpointed educative techniques in the forms of reward giving, modelling and imitation, play, and dramatisation. Processes of education could also be realised through verbal admonition, reinforcement, and storytelling. According to Spindler, the transmission of culture was ‘reflected in the ways people raise their children’ (*ibid*:142) He referred to these educative processes as methods of ‘recruitment and cultural maintenance’ (*ibid*: 141). These were processes that created and transformed individuals to become members of a group and by being members of that group those individuals would uphold the practices of the group. At this point, Spindler’s idea of cultural transmission could be construed as those social processes that happen within the family and community as children are reared and inducted into a particular social group.

To stress his point, Spindler mentioned the Palau case, in which a mother ignored her child’s request to carry him when he declared he was tired of walking. The child was extremely angry and he cried very hard, but the mother remained unmoved and did not heed his request. Spindler made this an example of how a certain patterned way of teaching a child a lesson could lead to a consistent result. He referred to this result as a patterned emotional attitude that would prepare the child for the cultural system. He clarified further that there was a pattern of child training that reflected the world view of the group, a modal personality trait, and a pattern of behaviour in the context of many subsystems (economic, political, religious, etc.) governing adult life. Thus, transmitting culture was, in part, about letting children obtain an emotional attitude that would be incorporated in other aspects of behaviour.

Spindler observed how people could transmit culture unintentionally. Without experiencing the conscious effort of making children learn, adults showed children how they were expected to act
and behave. Suddenness and phasing of points of discontinuity or changes in life stages varied among cultures as well. Spindler referred to these points as times of cultural compression, stages when certain behaviours of a member were curtailed due to the introduction of new rules and expectations which required the individual to learn and adapt quickly. As demonstrated in the initiation ceremonies usually performed in preadolescent and adolescent periods, this point of breach in roles entailed intensified learning and was considered the most significant of all processes involved in cultural transmission. Spindler suggested that in a ceremony there were different ways to dramatise roles and teachings. These could be indirect, direct or metaphoric dramatisations that would present the interplay of important roles and highlight salient aspects of community life as well as presenting to the individual the severity of growing up. As forms of initiation ceremonies differed in various cultures, this served to illustrate that different societies’ ways of managing cultural transmission were diverse.

In any event, people engaged in cultural transmission or those who were regarded as cultural transmitters displayed certain attitudes, performed activities for children and acted as models to them. However, these processes of cultural transmission were embedded with conflicts and inconsistencies. Ideas expressed by old members and the behaviours they practised often did not match. Children learned as much, if not more, from the discrepancy between ideology and practice as they did from adults’ lessons about how things were supposed to be. Other forms of cultural transmission involved direct verbal instructions and admonitions. Some cultures adhered to numerous ways of learning by doing, learning by hearing, and imitating adult models. Spindler’s acknowledgement that children learned from conflicts and inconsistencies did not really give credence to the capacity of the child to figure out the lessons by himself, but framed these discrepancies as a form of external instruction for children. It is clear that in Spindler’s idea of cultural transmission, knowledge is handed down to children. Despite the mention of schooling as part of cultural transmission, it was not yet fully articulated by Spindler at this point. Spindler’s idea of cultural transmission evolved through his studies and a focus on education came later. Nevertheless, the same problem which plagued the Culture and Personality School remained pertinent: with the focus on group reproduction, anthropologists could not account adequately for individual differences. More contemporary accounts, such as those of Toren (1990) and Evans (2006a), critique the idea of socialisation at the heart of cultural transmission models. They suggest that this model of learning, because it renders the child as the passive recipient of adult ideas, is deeply problematic.

Spindler concluded his essay by discussing the disruption to cultural transmission processes in small communities as a result of external influences, especially from their encounters with Western culture. He emphasised that during the period of global transformation, almost all societies had been reached by Western modernisation, wherein one of the major impacts was the institutionalisation of formal schools. This development had brought discrepancies in the ways older members of the population were educated and how the young were being prepared for life. For Spindler, formal schools interfered with the traditional forms of educating children.
Furthermore, Spindler clarified that the function of cultural transmission and education during the pre-modernisation process was group recruitment and maintenance. Recruitment pertained to the process of getting people into the cultural system and into specific roles therein. This showed that recruitment came in two levels: recruitment in the sense that children became members of a cultural system, and recruitment in a way that they were able to act in specific roles and statuses within particular castes and classes. Maintenance, on the other hand, meant instilling particular beliefs and practices that assured the perpetuation of the structures that held the cultural system together. It referred to the process of keeping the social system stable and assuring that skills and competencies were acquired by members to make the system work and continue to function.

The introduction of an entirely different form of education brought discrepancies as members of society then had to also come to terms with entirely different ideas and practices to do with a new knowledge system. Conflicts between the old and the young started to ensue because children were, in some cases, no longer taught the content and the methods by which the elders expected knowledge and behaviour to be formed. Spindler noted, however, that Western education could potentially bring further changes in a society since this type of education produces new kinds of literate individuals whose thinking and outlook on the world are not the same as their parents (Spindler, 2000). By this time, Spindler had already acknowledged the presence and impact of formal education in his theory of cultural transmission.

From the discussion above, it can be inferred that Spindler was influenced greatly by the culture and personality school of which he was a product. His viewpoints showed adherence to the belief that patterns of childrearing practices would create eventual behaviour configurations. He also used the notion of basic modal personality or patterned ‘emotional attitude’ (Spindler, 2000:144) as the outcome of how children were raised in diverse cultures. Espousing the explanation that recruitment into and maintenance of a cultural system were the functions of education, Spindler’s initial ideas about cultural transmission reflected a view that it was a process that promoted cultural continuity. The implication is, however, that change seems to come from the outside and that the individual is a passive recipient of knowledge. Moreover, Spindler was cognisant of the changes brought about by Western influences in the traditional education processes of local communities. With the institutionalisation of formal schools in these areas, discontinuity in the methods and content of education became apparent. As a consequence of this event, Spindler developed a method that offered other ways of explaining cultural transmission.

The Spindlers’ Instrumental Model

Spindler (1974) recognised that there were several models of cultural transmission. Before he expounded on his instrumental model, he traced how cultural transmission models had evolved. First, he cited Henry’s Cross Cultural Outline of Education (1960) as an omnibus model that provided an array of elements on education that could be used in cross-cultural studies regarding this topic. Next, he identified the socialisation and enculturation model that
emphasised processes of becoming members of a society. The kinds of studies produced using this model involved describing the growing up processes of young children. Later, he categorised the cultural compression and discontinuity model that highlighted the events through which children experienced accelerated learning due to rites of passage that inculcated changes in the roles expected of them. In realising that no communities remained homogenous and that people in communities had varied adaptive strategies as they encountered the ‘white-man’s culture’ (Spindler, 1974:3), George Spindler, together with his wife Louise, developed the multiple acculturative adaptation model. This model used the Rorschach projective technique – a psychometric technique that is used to study perceptions using inkblots, coupled with collection of life histories, participant observation, and interviews to chart perceptual, cognitive, and emotional responses among individuals. However, this model could not account for perceptions of reality or the rationalisations that these perceptions accompanied. Neither could it consider possible courses of action that an individual might take in that perceived reality. This led them to develop an instrumental model that could explain the above limitations, but could additionally provide a way to code the data systematically.

This instrumental model used the Instrumental Activities Inventory (IAI) (Spindler, 1974; Funnell and Smith, 1981), which the Spindlers also developed from their previous fieldwork. This model aimed to account for realities happening in the immediate environment of certain communities and how individuals reacted and adapted to them. A major premise inherent in this model was the belief that perception of specific activities and the goals corresponding to these activities were situation-dependent. It also relied on the idea that these activities were related to subsistence, social control, housing, etc. and that these activities were similar across cultures. Studies using this model would then be able to compare results as the elements being examined were similar to each other. How did this model work? The method used precise line drawings that were based on previous ethnographic studies. These drawings showed particular activities that took place in the respondents’ (who were mostly children) environment and from these drawings the respondents would later choose the most appealing ones and the least favoured. They would then be asked to give their reasons why they chose the drawings and why they classified them as favoured and not favoured. They would also be asked to write essays comparing contradicting situations, making explicit the reasons for their judgments. The connection between the reality being depicted in the drawings (of activities) and the reasons for choosing or not choosing them would reflect the children’s perceptions of what they would like to sustain or change (goals). The underlying link between the activities and goals they perceived would form the instrumental linkage. These linkages, according to Spindler, were systematised and were upheld by the belief systems in particular cultures. Imminent changes confronting these cultures could be tackled and possible reactions would then be inferred. It was at this point that the factor of cognitive control became apparent in the ability of an individual to maintain these linkages. The sense of a degree of continuity in an individual’s identity, a precondition of cognitive control, became a factor in how he or she preserved and modified his/her choices amidst changing situations. Using the model would therefore establish
the possible cognitive organisation of instrumental linkages that would provide insights on cultural transmission processes.

A study among a group of children in a German school located in a rapidly urbanising setting was conducted using ethnographic techniques and the IAI. The Spindlers wanted to find out whether 'the culture transmitted by the school constrained instrumental choices children make to do with urban lifestyles and what that means to them' (Spindler, 1974:5). They found out that the school still espoused traditional ideas and this produced idealised identification with the community’s land and village life. When the children had to make choices whose bases were not available in present conditions the children still resorted to their idealised identification of their village life. However, when it was possible for them to decide on adapting to urban ways of living the children decided towards factors that they perceived as significant for urban life. As a conclusion, the traditional leanings of the school did not limit the choices that the children made. It had provided a sense of idealised identity on which the children based their perceived decisions on possible changes. These decision making processes were said to be based on the method of cognitive organisation that the children possessed, which was composed of their idealised identity, their pragmatic instrumental preference system, and their romanticised instrumental preferences.

At this moment, Spindler acknowledged that the element of cognitive organisation in the instrumental linkages of cultural transmission was crucial. He admitted that IAI might have established relationships of how choices and preferences were linked with actual and imagined situations but he recognised that there were still no sophisticated conclusions dealing with cognitive organisation, cognitive control, and conceptual ordering that made cultural transmission possible. For him, this remained to be explored.

**Gearing’s Theory of Cultural Transmission**

Frederick Gearing was another anthropologist preoccupied with developing a theory of cultural transmission. Gearing’s (1984; Gearing and Tindall, 1973) notion of cultural transmission relied on the ideas of equivalence and transaction. He proposed that cultural transmission involved transaction of equivalences in encounters that happened mostly between adults and non-adults, meaning children. It was his claim that cultural transmission processes ‘are ‘constituted in regularly occurring patterns of encounter’ (Gearing and Tindall, 1973:96) or face-to-face interaction, in which transactional exchanges create ‘equivalences of meaning’ (ibid). These equivalences become the network and cultural system of the group. This network of equivalent meanings is made possible by collective perception. Equivalence, according to Gearing, could be gleaned in an encounter when two parties with separate cognitively mapped prior experiences met together and produced various kinds and degrees of ‘fit’ or ‘ill-fit’ (Gearing, 1984:29) that would result from the encounter. The researcher should then uncover the content of the cognitive maps of the parties and identify the kinds of fit between the two to be able to establish equivalence. The contents of these cognitive maps could come from four realms, namely: the setting, sense of nature of the world, social identity, and implied agenda.
The setting was composed of categories of situations based on how each party defined the encounter. These situations could be groups of events or even linguistic domains where particular sets of relationships were expected; for example work and play, ritual or non-ritual, or sacred and profane. In an encounter, cognitive mappings about nature were also inherent. Each party had a sense of nature and how things around them were classified, for example human and nonhuman categories. How things were connected to each other, the categories of folk science, and the rules of logic that were stored in the mind were part of this kind of cognitive map that each party brought to the encounter. It is evident here that Gearing was already considering the cognitive structures in terms of how people interacted with one another and he referred to cognitive maps and cognition as the categories and domains that define people’s encounters, the sense and perception of how things are related and grouped together, and the expectations that people have in situations and events.

Mappings of social identity and how these were incorporated into roles and power relations became important aspects in the encounter. Understanding these cognitive notions would give insights into how social relationships were structured. The mappings of implied agendas entailed exploring how the encounter was supposed to happen. These mappings consisted of the expectations that each party had as a result of the encounter. An implication of this was the positioning and re-positioning of one party in relation to the other as each one engaged in the encounter. All these cognitive maps would affect the perceptions of the parties involved and would have implications for whether the encounter would fit or not. Equivalence could be established if the two parties shared enough similarities in their cognitive maps so as to predict each party’s behaviour.

Another aspect of cultural transmission that Gearing emphasised was the notion of transaction. This dealt with the ‘inter-psychic’ (Gearing and Tindall, 1973:95) processes wherein cognitive mappings could change as the encounter ensued. Transaction involved forms of communication, the kind of cognitive change, and the direction of the change. The cognitive change that could occur depended on the form of agenda that each party brought to the encounter. The form of communication involved the interchanges among parties in relation to how the messages were transmitted – whether through verbal or nonverbal means, and how the messages were received. The cognitive change consisted of the changes that occurred in the four realms discussed above, whether in the setting, the notions of nature, social identity, or agenda. If the encounter had changed the parties’ cognitive maps to make them more similar or less similar then this would illustrate the direction the transaction had taken. However, it should be noted that central to the notion of transaction is agenda. Agenda would determine the ways in which the parties placed themselves throughout the encounter. Their specific agenda would channel how messages would be transmitted and which realms of the cognitive mappings would be utilised and affected.
Gearing’s proposition can be problematic because he neglects to consider the negotiation process, which is a product of a creative interplay of the parties involved (Funnell and Smith, 1981). According to Funnell and Smith, Gearing puts emphasis on the flow of information in encounters rather than on the processes which reconstitute knowledge as part and product of the encounters. In my opinion, following Gearing’s idea of adults fitting and non-adults being ill-fitting, children at the very start are considered at a disadvantaged end of the encounter or the transaction of equivalence because they still have to acquire the necessary cognitive maps and agenda to participate meaningfully in the transaction. The question still remains as to how children’s maps are to be made to fit. The process by which children are to acquire the appropriate cognitive maps remains unexplained.

As one can see, Gearing’s theory of cultural transmission put emphasis on the age levels of parties and the degree of congruence of their cognitive mappings. The notions of equivalence and transaction became synthesising ideas, with the underlying factors of cognition and agenda taken into account. In the theory espoused by Spindler, the focus was more on what influence different linkages and actual activities could have on perception and choices of action. Spindler realised the need to look into the cognitive organisation of individuals as he evaluated his model of the IAI. Gearing moved further to articulate the importance of cognitive maps and individual expectations that people possessed as they engaged in diverse regularly occurring encounters.

By 1976, Tindall, who attempted to synthesise the work of Spindler and Gearing, stated that there was still a gap in the knowledge of what really was cognitively involved in learning culture and there was a need to explain the role of cognition in cultural transmission. Funnell and Smith (1981:294) echoed this same apprehension about the intra-psychic and inter-psychic models of cultural transmission. Their comments implied the inadequacy of these models in terms of locating the content or codes of the knowledge being transmitted, especially as these two models were mainly explaining psychological processes of cultural transmission. According to them, the entire content of the cultural transmission process still needed to be taken into account and incorporated in order for the theory to become coherent as a theory of how learning actually happens. The development of Cognitive Anthropology in the 1960s (Colby, Fernandez, and Kronfeld, 1981), which followed that of the Culture and Personality School in the 1950s (Bock, 1988), challenged standard definitions of cognition. Cognition was defined as ‘the collection of mental processes and activities used in perceiving, remembering, thinking, and understanding, as well as the act of using those processes’ (Ashcraft and Radvansky, 2010:9) and the focus in anthropology came to be about cognition understood as ‘a series of constructive processes’ (Toren, 1990:5) that span a person’s lifetime and which is a product of historical, socially-embodied experiences. The development of cognition is tied to the social contexts and experiences to which children or people belong. Cognition is also understood as a ‘nexus of relations between the mind at work and the world in which it works’ (Lave, 1988:1), focusing on the convergence of mental processes and how they are applied in real situations that people are involved in.
Other Theories of Learning

Anthropologists began to turn to theories of knowledge formation and learning to help explain further how collectively distinctive groups of people become who they are as they learn to interact with others in their socially and materially specific environments. Relevant to this theoretical exploration are the works of Piaget (Piaget, 1952, 1964; Flavell, 1963; Saxe, 1983; Beilin, 1992), Vygotsky (1978; Lloyd and Fernyhough, 1999), Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Swartz, 1997; Harker, 1984), Toren (1990), and Lave & Wenger (1991).

Jean Piaget

The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget was a pioneer in exploring the relationship between cognition and human knowledge. His research and theory on the development of childhood thought and intelligence were so significant that they became a central reference point for generations of scholars to follow and influenced educational practice. Gruber and Voneche (1977) illustrate that Piaget's work focused on uncovering a theory of knowledge that would explain how a biological organism comes to know and adapt to its world. Tuddenham (1966) explains further that Piaget illustrated how such knowledge develops and changes as the outcome of growth and experience. For Steiner (1974), the core of Piaget's theory was about understanding the transformative construction of the cognitive structures of persons. Piaget called these structures schemas (Piaget, 1952; 1964). For example, Manobo children learn to grip things around their environment for balance, support, and feeding. They later adapt this skill into more elaborate gripping actions that will make them more adept in handling tools and things that are required in everyday tasks to function fully as a Manobo person. Very important to the Manobo is when children master the use of the machete because this leads to their acceptance as productive members of the family and community. Gripping, in this sense, is one schema that requires physical and mental maturation that Manobo children have to develop as they experience their immediate environment. Mastering this basic skill later leads to the assimilation of other objects and tools; for example, handling farm tools or manoeuvring the buffalos to graze by holding the ropes in the proper position with the right force to guide the animal - skills that are needed to survive as a Manobo person. As children grow older, they continuously develop more schemas and situational cognitive maps that they acquire through their personal experiences.

Human knowledge was regarded by Piaget as a continuous process of change and growth, leading in maturity to rational structures of thought. According to Saxe (1983), structures of thought or schemas organised a person's experiences by ordering them into a system of logical relations that reflected experience and related structures of thought one to another in a complex, constantly adaptive system. In relation to this change and growth, Flavell (1963:16) stated that the principal scientific concern of Piaget was the 'theoretical and experimental investigation of the qualitative development of intellectual structures'. Flavell explained that Piaget was concerned with explaining intelligence, development, and structures through experiments that brought about qualitative and descriptive results. Intelligence referred to the
ability of organisms to make adaptive choices (Phillips, 1981) between self and environment (Fisher, 1964). Adaptation consisted of dual processes of learning, namely assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation, according to Tuddenham (1966), was the tendency of the mental apparatus of organisms to integrate experience of the world into a system of thought schemata. This process arose from the action of the organism upon the surrounding environment (Fisher, 1964). Accommodation, on the other hand, was the action of the environment on the organism. It referred to the process by which an internal structure or schema would change in order to adapt to external reality. For example, when Manobo children are mastering the schema of gripping, they try to grip objects around them within their reach. They do this repeatedly until they encounter other conditions or objects that not only allow them to grip but also permit them to do other actions. A boy who finds a piece of wooden block on the floor can hold on to it and find satisfaction by merely holding it in his hand. However, he discovers that the wood creates a sound when he accidentally taps it on the floor. In order to produce the same sound, he holds the piece of wood and starts to tap it on the floor several times. He then discovers that different sounds can be produced if he taps the wood on different surfaces and with varying force. He ends up pounding the wood on the wall, door, chair, and other spaces. From the initial schema of gripping, the child discovers other actions, such as tapping, pounding, pulling, as he moves within his environment. As he grows older, he builds on these schemas and discovers new ones in other actions that he performs. The schemas are then translated and incorporated into other bodily movements that he uses in the household or elsewhere.

As a product of his work on this subject, Piaget (1952) was able to describe the stages of cognitive development of children through to adolescence. These stages were identified as the sensorimotor period (0-2 years), the pre-operational period (2-7 years), the concrete operations period (7-11 years), and the formal operations period (11-15 years) (Piaget, 1952; Phillips, 1981). These stages charted the behaviours of children through to adolescence, from being infants and creating and organising realities through biological reflexes to maturity as children who can process experiences through groupings, classes, and relationships as well as acquiring later the facility to do abstract problem solving. Although the specificity of these stages has been criticised, the basic idea is that children interact with the world in order to make sense of it.

Piaget (1964) emphasised the importance of the sensorimotor stage because this forms the substructure of later mental representational stages. The sensorimotor stage stresses that children’s knowledge of the world starts as an embodied experience. It is through the senses and bodily action that children get to act upon, experience, and make sense of the world around them. Flavell (1963:16) referred to these processes as ‘successive ontogenetic states’ that illustrate behaviour changes. These stages were said to be closely linked in such a way that previous stages would not just disappear when the next stage emerged but become incorporated into the later stages, an event called ‘inclusion of attainments’ (Gruber and Voneche, 1977:xxiii). Piaget espoused the idea that developmental stages necessarily occurred in a certain order and required maturation of individuals, although he also recognised
that there could be unevenness of development within stages or along different stages. This supports the overall idea that cognition is not just a mental activity, but a biological and a ‘micro-historical’ phenomenon (Toren, 1999:20).

Piaget’s schemas were referred to as the structures of the mind. Gruber and Voneche (1977:xxxi) described structures not as things or beliefs but general coherent sets of embodied or sensori-motor ‘mental operations’ that would allow children to discover and surpass hurdles and problems that they would encounter as they experienced being in the world. These structures and mental operations would also allow them to control and regulate experience and actions. Flavell (1963:17) defined structures as the ‘organisational properties of intelligence’ and cognitive processes, whilst Saxe (1983) articulated that these structures were not preformed but were constantly constructed and would lead later to the formation of new structures. When these structures reach a degree of stability they are said to have reached equilibrium.

Beilin (1992) noted that Piaget, by taking a biological perspective and an empirical approach in his attempt to understand cognitive formations and the development of children, was able to change the commonly-held view that children were passive in the process of knowledge acquisition. It became clear that children developed as they acted on their environment. The contributions of Piaget, however, did not pass without criticism. With Piaget’s strong leaning towards universal claims of cognitive developmental stages and the view that learning was constructed from the child’s interaction with the environment, the question about the role of social relations and culture in the overall learning and development of a child was raised. By focusing mostly on cognitive processes, Piaget was often criticised for not being able to incorporate social factors into his analysis or explain how these cognitive processes could be differentiated across cultures (Saxe, 1983). By using his observations with his own children as they grew up and arriving at conclusions that eventually led to universal generalisations of children’s developmental growth and maturation, Piaget risked being criticised for his methodology. He was not able to consider the socio-cultural contexts of human cognitive development because of the inherent Western-orientated notions of childhood in his theory.

**Lev Vygotsky**

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, was one of the figures critical of Piaget’s universal and purely cognitive stance in explaining children’s development. According to Lloyd and Fernyhough (1999), three themes unified Vygotsky’s theory: his genetic explanations of development; the view that higher and more abstract mental processes could trace their origins in social interactions; and the presence of psychological tools, in particular language, that mediate mental processes.

Vygotsky’s developmental theory highlighted the intrinsic social characteristics of human affairs and like Piaget he believed in the ‘genetic’ – the progressive, developmental – framework (Smagorinsky, 1995:193). What differentiated the two psychologists was that Vygotsky’s developmental perspective was built on social interactions with reliance on tools, mainly
language signs, for the mediation of thinking processes. He placed emphasis on the roles of language and instruction in helping children achieve overall intellectual development (Emihovich and Souza Lima, 1995). This explained why learning was a social process that also required the active engagement of others in the child’s world.

In explaining his ideas about learning and development theory, Vygotsky came up with the theory of the zone of proximal development. This theory was defined as ‘the distance between actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving of the child and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers’ (Vygotsky, 1978:86). He referred to actual developmental levels as those points of physical and mental development that had already matured within the child as a result of the kind of processes Piaget described. The zone of proximal development involves those processes which are still developing and in formation as a result of the guidance received under social instruction. Inherent in this view was the pivotal role of external social factors that involved instruction or teaching in order to achieve development. The zone of proximal development is illustrated by the case of a child who, with the help of an adult or more knowledgeable other, develops to the extent of being able to deal with higher-level problem solving situations than could be dealt with by the child on his/her own. The difference between these two points of achievement in the child is said to be the zone of proximal development.

It is important to note that Vygotsky’s theory was the result of his assessments of prevailing notions of learning and development (Newman and Holzman, 1993; Veer and Valsiner, 1991). For Vygotsky, learning would only lead to development when learners had internalised what had been taught as a result of social interaction and engagement in the learning process. All these processes involved the mediation of language tools and signs that would affect the learning and developmental environments. These signs mediated and structured how cultural values were represented and communicated throughout the learning process. Thus the particular organisation of social relations and associated cultural values would later translate to how activities and relationships were ordered in real life.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that comprehending the zone of proximal development would lead to the acceptance that maturation levels, once achieved and mastered, should not be viewed as completed tasks; instead they should be regarded as beginnings of other numerous subsequent developments among children. At the same time, Vygotsky posed the further challenge that the concept of the zone of proximal development should be applied to solving problems relating to how learning and development take place in diverse social contexts. His theory has also impacted on educational practice.

**Pierre Bourdieu**

Although Piaget and Vygotsky were psychologists, their work on cognition was influential in other disciplines including anthropology, where the quest to understand the process of social
reproduction had become central. For example, Pierre Bourdieu was interested in the ways people collectively reproduce who they are as collectively distinctive people and he drew on ideas from cognitive studies. One of Bourdieu’s (1977:72) central concepts was ‘habitus’, a concept that supported the unity of the body and society by emphasising the interpenetration of individual subjectivity and societal objectivity. He defined this as ‘systems of durable, transposable dispositions’ (ibid). Bourdieu regarded the body as the place where the rules of society about how to properly move, talk, think, etc. are unconsciously embedded. The rules, when deeply internalised through repetitions in childhood as children socialise and become adults, become taken for granted guides that bind individuals to appropriately act within a particular social group and material environment. He also looked at habitus as a kind of ‘generative structuralism’ (Swartz, 1997:102) – a ‘structured structure’ (Bourdieu, 1977:72) that stemmed from socialisation within the family and social groups. As such, habitus is formed through early socialisation leading to the internalisation of external structures that set structural limits for action.

Bourdieu’s notion of habitus represents an attempt to explain how people are shaped in relation to their ‘material conditions of existence’ (ibid: 85). These are the material, social, and cultural conditions of a particular social group which are regarded as the ‘system of objective determinations’ (ibid) of existence, or, to use a similar concept proposed earlier by Piaget, schemas, that are internalised by its members. The internalisation of these structures gives rise to the consequent bodily dispositions which members live by. Habitus is a legitimising mechanism that explains how members come to terms with whatever social conditions they are part of, including mechanisms that shape bodily postures, movements, and mannerisms.

The problem, however, is that Bourdieu’s idea of habitus can be viewed as an overly deterministic theory which emphasises the embedding of social rules in people which renders them passive, and does not allow sufficiently for social change and transformation: a similar critique is made of the theory of cultural transmission. However, the key to understanding habitus is through its attempt to deal with how power works in society – ‘habitus involves an unconscious calculation of what is possible, impossible, and probable for individuals in their specific locations in a stratified social order’ (Swartz, 1997:106-107). Like Spindler and earlier theorists, Bourdieu wanted to uncover ‘master patterns that represent deep structural patterns’ (ibid: 109) that were revealed in the different dimensions of social life, how these patterns were carried on and remade inter-generationally.

Bourdieu’s ideas on education, especially in terms of the school system, also focus on the problems of power, and especially the perpetuation of social and cultural inequalities across generations (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Harker, 1984; Foster, 1986). Bourdieu’s thoughts on education involved the exploration of the disparity between the conservative and innovative perspectives of education. The former referred to the preservation of knowledge while the latter pointed to the generation of novel knowledge. This tension was complicated further with the question of what and whose knowledge would be preserved and perpetuated. As identified in
the premise of his ideas about education, Bourdieu noted that the knowledge important to the
dominant group or groups would be promoted. The habitus found among these advantaged
groups would most likely be the habitus supported by the school system, thus reproducing
social inequalities. The reproduction of these disparities was referred to by Bourdieu as the
perpetuation of symbolic violence. Symbolic violence pointed to systems of power which
depended on symbolic forms of coercion, such as education, which functioned to regulate the
distribution of social and cultural capital. Symbolic violence also meant that agents who were
drawn into such forms did not recognise their subjection to it and even accepted such conditions
as the natural order of things (Webb, Schirato, and Danaher, 2002).

An important feature of Bourdieu’s insights on the educational system was his idea that it had
‘relative autonomy’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 11-12; Swartz, 1997:191). This meant that
the education system had the capacity to create and develop different status cultures as well as
its own interests, apart from those that reflected the interests of the dominant class and market
demands. Education systems had a virtual monopoly in their operations and could pursue
directions that would serve their own interests. What is striking about Bourdieu’s view on the
educational system as a structure for either preserving or innovating knowledge is his view that
the system reinforces symbolic violence because it promotes the interests of the dominant
class.

Christina Toren

Toren (1990) argues that in Bourdieu’s work the over-determination of habitus makes people
prisoners of their own history by not allowing them to change their cultural constructs. She
became interested in working out a model of cognition/ learning that would explain how
ontogeny – the development of the human from birth – necessarily involves the embodiment of
social history but also the potential for transformation, as Piaget suggested. She aimed to
expound the idea that mind is an ‘embodied’, inter-subjective and therefore necessarily
‘historical phenomenon’ (Toren, 1999:3). Mind is not limited to what individual subjects can say
about knowledge processes but includes all the complexity of what people learn to be in
practice among their people. Focusing on micro-historical processes of development, Toren
explores how the mind develops by looking at children’s cognitive processes as the outcome of
social processes.

In Toren’s (1990;1999) study of Fijian children and their understanding of hierarchy, she noticed
irregularities between how children view the world compared to their adult counterparts.
Uncovering the views of children at particular phases of their development made clear to Toren
which aspects alter over time and which later become similar to those of adults. This is
important in order to understand key features in adult life, such as the social distinctions and
hierarchy incorporated in Fijian sociality associated with rank, seniority and gender, as the
outcome of transformation of earlier childhood notions.
Toren argues that children’s ideas are not immature and that they live their lives according to how they perceive and understand the world around them. Children’s ideas might be different from those of adults but what they articulate is based on their concrete experiences and so these are valid ideas. Her studies with children in Fiji showed that they did not identify status as expressive of persons but as being to do with the spaces – above and below – where adults positioned themselves. However, adults in the community believed in the immanence of status in particular individuals. In identifying what Toren described as inversions of adult concepts, she became aware of the times when children had different ideas from adults, and when and how these ideas became similar with adults’ ideas as children matured. Toren believes that the way children mature into particular historically located persons is not a passive process, but the outcome of a developmental and transformational process of learning over time. Toren was keen to develop a model of learning that could explain both continuity and change, and demonstrate how transformation can occur from within society and not just from without, as Bourdieu’s overly deterministic model seemed to suggest.

Toren (1990) relates how children in Fiji learned about social hierarchy through their experiences in relation to spatial positioning and distance. The notions of being above (i cake) and below (i ra) are experienced by children in how they place themselves during social gatherings involving the community. Their placements in social space make them gradually aware of how rank, seniority, and gender are incorporated in the whole fabric of social relations. Coming to understand this entails learning to exhibit the necessary bodily postures, language reference, and use of space. Children learn the nuances of these factors as they continuously experience for themselves the demonstrations of their group’s hierarchical structure. The development of cognitive processes is therefore influenced by the social structure and is in turn manifested in their social dealings and bodily posturing as they develop to become adults during their lifetime in a particular environment.

In looking at how people become who they are, Toren (1999:3) proposes the interplay of the relationships of concepts about ‘culture/biology, society/individual, mind/body, ideal/material, objective/subjective, and structure/process’. She believes that people are ‘individually social and socially individual’ (ibid: 4) as they develop into historically specific persons.

**Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger**

Also influenced by Bourdieu’s theory of practice and the convergence of mental processes, embodied social practices, and objective activity, Lave and Wenger (1991:32-34) developed the idea of ‘situated learning’. Influenced also by Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, Lave and Wenger located learning within the context of social co-participation and environmental situatedness. They developed the theory of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ (ibid: 35) wherein learners are involved in settings which they call ‘communities of practice’ (ibid: 98-100). Part of this theory is the proposition that certain social processes are at play as newcomers learn to become members and to participate fully in particular kinds of socially structured activity.
This means that in every social event there exist corresponding expectations of roles that participants are expected to learn and play in order to engage meaningfully. Participants learn the interplay of power among co-participants as they engage in activities so they will know how to situate themselves and gain entry to the social space. So, as a novice in a situation learns to become competent in a certain kind of practical, material participation, s/he also learns at the same time to become competent socially at relating to others and working out what kind of person s/he can become among them.

Lave and Wenger (1991) trace the origins of their theory of legitimate peripheral participation from the notion of learning as apprenticeship and later moved towards the idea of situated learning. This theory of legitimate peripheral participation considers learning as a primary factor in generating social practice of the everyday lived-in world. It is proposed as a ‘descriptor of engagement in social practice’ (ibid: 35), where learning is a basic element and always happening. To get involved in social practice one has to learn how to participate and move about in it. The notion of ‘peripherality’ (ibid: 35-36) is, for Lave and Wenger, both varied and multiple. It pertains to the location where a person places him or herself in relation to the ‘fields of participation as defined by the community’ (ibid). Peripherality can refer to how engaged and included one has become in the social setting or practice. It refers to how meaningfully one can be involved in a social setting. Peripheral participation describes how a person is being positioned in the social world. It involves the changing perspectives and placements of one’s self as one learns the ways of the social community, until one’s membership of it is identified and established. This involves negotiation of access to the social space that is bounded by existing relationships of participants.

This leads to the notion of legitimate peripherality, which necessitates a consideration of relations of power among those who can influence who is to be included in or excluded from the social practice and are able to control the participation of actors. If one becomes more involved and one’s participation is more intense, a more empowering position, enabling further engagement and participation, is developed. Gaining legitimacy for one’s position is crucial in one’s accessing of other relations. It is important to remember that the notion of periphery does not mean that there is an identified precise core of social practice. Peripherality does not necessarily connote that a member is marginalised, unrelated or irrelevant. Peripherality, in relation to the variability of the periphery, is a changing idea that is linked to how one gains engagement in social practice. It is a process of getting nearer to points of knowledge and understanding of communities of practice whereby a member becomes more involved and attains further participation in relation to other participants who have relative power to control, permit, or exclude others’ participation.

Lave and Wenger (1991: 36-37) note that ‘participation’ involves varying degrees and intensity of engagement. They propose levels of participation that include central participation, complete participation, or full participation. Central participation means that there is an accepted centre to
a community of practice and one can identify one’s place in relation to it. The centre might be political, physical, or even metaphorical. One primary consideration is that the centre has been recognised as such by the community. Complete participation refers to a ‘closed domain of knowledge or collective practice’ (ibid) that new learners have known and attained. This refers to the condition of newcomers being able to acquire the knowledge and ways necessary for them to participate in the community of practice. Full participation signifies the condition which allows a participant to gain access to the diversity of relations that one engages in varying situations through one’s attainment of membership of the community.

The formulation of the theory on legitimate peripheral participation opens ways to examine processes of learning which are not only limited to the contexts of instruction and teaching. The theory takes as units of analysis the communities of practice in which members gain participation through learning the comprehensive aspects of their social practice. This theory allows a rethinking of the concept of learning by not confining it to particular institutions and cognitive processes but situating learning in a wider array of social relationships that propel or constrain individuals to gain active membership of or to be excluded from groups and communities.

Lave and Wenger (1991:98) define a community of practice as ‘a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time.’ Each community of practice is understood to exist in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. Hence, being able to participate in communities of practice involves learning not only the body of knowledge that forms part of the communities but also other conditions and power relations that go together with them. Wenger (1998:73) clarifies that in looking at communities of practice, three dimensions come into play: ‘mutual engagement’, ‘joint enterprise’, and ‘shared repertoire’. Mutual engagement revolves around actions of people who do things together and whose relations are continually established and negotiated among themselves. Being able to engage in this whole set of relationships signals one’s membership in the community. Joint enterprise also means a negotiated enterprise. This means that members collectively define and pursue actions and responses which they modify among themselves as a product of historical engagements of common activity. Mutual accountability comes into existence as participants produce negotiated responses to their changing situations through time. A shared repertoire indicates that the members have developed resources for acting and negotiating meaning among themselves. Shared repertoire involves communal resources like routines, sensibilities, vocabularies, etc. that members have acquired through time and which they use to maintain as well as modify relations and actions.

It should be noted that the overall question that Lave and Wenger aimed to pursue in the development of the theory of legitimate peripheral participation is how learning takes place in social practice and in particular historical contexts. They aimed to channel learning away from the traditional notions that it can only happen through intentional individual instruction toward the idea of a kind of learning that is often unconscious, historically-situated, socially-negotiated,
and never separate from questions of power. This kind of approach to learning now encompasses both formal and informal learning processes.

**Learning ‘culture’ among the Manobo**

A review of theories of learning and their relevance to anthropological studies of social reproduction has demonstrated that learning is both an individual and social process and is always historically informed. The most recent theories make clear that cognition is an embodied phenomenon leading to the production of structures of understanding that are worked out in practice and which are transformed as persons adapt to particular social situations and material environments. My ethnographic study of the Manobo of Tagpalico highlights the role of learning as people struggle to adapt to highly unstable and often dangerous processes of contemporary change. The study focuses on local engagement with education as a nationalist enterprise and traces the intersection between education and politics, local and international discourses of culture, indigeneity, and education as the means to negotiate relations with the outside world. Treating the school as a highly specific social situation and material arrangement, I am able to reflect on what kind of ‘community of practice’ is created (in contrast to everyday life) by the institutionalisation of indigenous education among people living in a remote area of the Philippines. And I conclude that there is a paradox at the heart of their process of schooling.

Spindler recognised that education is part of the ‘white man’s culture’ (Spindler, 1974:3) and worried that indigenous cultures would be undervalued and undermined as a result of the expansion of formal education. It is certainly true for the Manobo that the school brings the outside world (and its regional, national, and global concerns) forcefully into the very centre of remote Tagpalico life. As there is no doubt that formal schooling is an alien institution to the Manobo, this only makes it more fascinating that the school should be co-opted as the institution through which Manobo children should learn formally about their ‘culture’ – the Manobo way of life. This begs the question of what the difference might be between what children learn about the Manobo way of life at school and what they learn about what it is to be Manobo outside school.

Outside school, Manobo children must be knowledgeable and skillful about the ways of tending the farms. They must learn to be respectful of elders and helpful to other members of the family and community. Children learn the traits associated with being a valued Manobo person as they interact informally with other members in different social activities in the community. Inside the school, children are expected to learn to read, write, and deal with numbers as well as conform to classroom discipline. They have to study maths, science, language, and social studies – the subjects identified as the basic areas for learning in the nationally-approved curriculum. To meet the objectives of the school as one promoting indigenous culture, teachers are, however, also expected to incorporate local dances, songs, poetry, stories into the system of instruction that children must learn formally. They also have to be informed of the issues relating to the environment and ancestral domain that are facing other indigenous peoples like the Manobo.
What becomes interesting is that the cultural aspects of the indigenous curriculum refer mostly to the inclusion of performative aspects of culture, which include songs, dances, stories, rituals, and oratories into the school curriculum. At school, therefore, Manobo children are learning to perform their culture and there are good political reasons for them to do so. Through the process of schooling children become aware of the various issues that other indigenous peoples encounter and through the staging of events shared with other groups, a kind of political solidarity is built and established. For adults, the school becomes a place where they are able to discuss their problems and the situation of other communities with the help of other groups like non-governmental organisations. These meetings not only provide opportunities for talking and learning about local concerns, but also international issues like environmental laws and indigenous peoples’ rights have become part of the school’s programs. By giving importance to indigeneity as a form of collective identity, with indigenous culture as the basis of such identity, indigenous-ness becomes central in the way the Manobo learn who they are in relation to the wider Filipino community and other indigenous peoples of the world. Culture, in this situation, becomes the new way of doing politics and formal education is central to this endeavour, especially in the context of a militarised zone and now a relatively armed conflict-free zone.

This focus on cultural survival puts me, as an anthropologist, in a difficult position because as the ‘culture expert’, I am expected to help the Manobo by advising on how their culture can be highlighted in the school curriculum and classroom instruction. I am confronted with the reality that the self-conscious notions the Manobo have about their culture are not the same as the anthropologists’ preoccupations when they mobilise culture as an analytical category. As I worked with them I came to realise the general idea of what culture means to the Manobo as a group of indigenous people, and this has to do mostly with the expressive and performative aspects of culture, for example dancing, singing, storytelling, conducting rituals, and oratories about the importance of identity and their ancestral land. My interest in Manobo culture, in contrast, focuses on discovering how they, as a people, structure and understand their social life. My understanding of culture goes beyond the superficiality of what can be seen and performed, but has to do with what is not discussed – ideas of the person, gender and age hierarchies, particular notions of economy and politics, the slippage between rhetoric and practice, and the relationship of environment to social life. This puts me in a sensitive position because somehow I am expected to be supportive of Manobo ideals and what they want to achieve, but, at the same time, I am also in a position to be attentive to what the school curriculum omits, as it performs indigeneity.

The performance of indigeneity as a particular kind of political strategy problematises Bourdieu & Passeron’s (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) argument about the educational system necessarily being a perpetrator of symbolic violence. In the case of the Manobo, indigenous education is being mobilised precisely to counter existing forms of symbolic violence. The institution of the school has emanated from a specific political, socio-cultural purpose, which is
to stop militarisation in their community, to make their young members ‘educated’, and to foster pride in the Manobo ‘culture’. Although they have adapted the general form of the mainstream educational system in terms of structure of the curriculum and instruction, they have appropriated the content of classroom instructions and the activities in the school to make it responsive to their particular objectives and own purposes. In their engagement with the educational system within their community and by appropriating it to suit their goals, the Manobo are highlighting their agenda as a disadvantaged group. This shows clearly that even though the educational system is viewed by Bourdieu as something that upholds the interests of its dominant group(s), it can also be re-appropriated as a means of reversing and countering symbolic violence. Hence, the Manobo and their partners in the school endeavour do not just passively accept and implement the mainstream system of education, but also modify it to fit their identified objectives. Thus, the process of ‘glocalisation’ (Jungck, 2003:28) whereby global trends and discourses are appropriated and modified at the local level also applies here.

As my study has shown, there are varied reasons why the Manobo engage in education. Parents want their children to be literate, to gain self-confidence, and to be well-mannered so that they can avail themselves of better opportunities and, in turn, help with the economic needs of the family. The leaders expect the children to be equipped with the knowledge to face the challenges that the community is facing. Apart from wanting to learn to read and write, children come to school to be with friends and playmates, to socialise in a new way. The teachers and nuns also want the children to be literate and numerate and, at the same time, they want Manobo children to be proud indigenous persons who work together along with other indigenous groups. The similarities and differences in the expectations of the Manobo about why formal education is being implemented results in a school which is a highly-negotiated and contested space and Manobo children have to make sense of this.

For example, the explicit curricula, which are directly part of the instructional process, must also be considered in relation to the ‘hidden curriculum’ (Gordon, 1982:188) at the heart of educational process. The Manobo are constantly trying to figure out what values outsiders espouse and what needs to be done and adapting to please or gain approval from those whose judgement is decisive in terms of the continued operation of the school. The outsiders’ value system, which is greatly influenced by Catholicism, must be accommodated with what is understood by the local Manobo. Interactions with nuns, teachers, and other outsiders, including me as an anthropologist, allow new ways of learning and knowledge sharing among the Manobo. For example, in a community where sharing is important, the teachers’ values of hoarding provisions and saving for the lean times are tested by instances of theft of material things and food supplies. This reveals that many of what outsiders espouse to be desirable traits are not necessarily congruent with what holds together the social life of the Manobo and what are considered to be essential aspects of personhood in the community. Nuns and teachers also have to be reminded that for people struggling to maintain a subsistence lifestyle, education entails sacrifices that can add more stress to the already difficult situation of the
Manobo. It is not surprising, therefore, that there are discrepancies in the extent to which parents are able to continue to show their support for their children while in school.

For children, acquiring education is to do with learning to ‘become somebody’ (Luttrell, 1996:93) in the community. This is a new role that differs from the usual roles that Manobo society provides and assigns to its members. With their participation in the schooling process, children are given the chance to become persons to whom other opportunities outside the confines of the Tagpalico community are available and whose roles are not just limited to tending the farms and providing for the family. Children are realising that they can be responsible for their own decisions and that they can attain the confidence needed for them to function outside the community if they pursue their education. These children are not only changed by education, but they are also part of the reasons why change is inevitable in the Manobo society. These are transformational times for the Manobo and learning to become ‘somebody’ – a person marked out as a special and specific individual – not only provides a window of transformation for the self via the outside world, but also an opening for the transformation of basic social relationships within the Tagpalico community. Given that most of those who make it in schooling are female children and that they are the main contributors in augmenting their family’s incomes, there is the chance that this male-dominated society will also have to accommodate the changes brought about by transformation through education. The models of learning we are working with teach us that, as anthropologists, we are able to account for processes of learning that are happening at the individual level as well as at that of the social realm. The learning theories that have been discussed help us to understand individual differences and transformations, as well as defining group similarities. People who share the same history and similar value system are alike in certain aspects, but, at the same time, the individual capacity to make sense of the world and the situations people are involved in makes each person also unique in the history they embody as they make sense of both continuity and change. The struggle for continuity is always in tension with the struggle for processes of transformation. This explains why siblings who are members of the same family will grow to be unique individuals in their own right, both physically and socially. The next chapter discusses what difference education makes to children inside the community and in the outside world. Children who have reached the level for high school in the lowlands are seen coming to terms with what it means to be a valued person outside the community of Tagpalico.
CHAPTER 9
What Difference Education Makes in the ‘Outside World’

This final chapter deals with those students who made it through high school and how their values as persons have changed through education. There are three high schools in the lowlands where lumad children are sent to study after their schooling in the Tagpalico School. The first is Father Saturnino Urios College of Sibagat, a Catholic school in the municipal centre of Sibagat. This school is an annex of the Father Saturnino Urious University (FSUU) and because it is a regular, private high school it follows the national curriculum mandated by the national government. There is no special curriculum for indigenous students and students are not segregated by ethnic group. The Missionary Sisters of Mary have been able to arrange for students from Tagpalico to be accepted at FSUU because the management know that the Tagpalico school is affiliated with the main university of FSUU. A nun is in charge of the scholars and manages the scholarship fund that the congregation is able to collect from sponsors such as the charity organisation, the Mekong Foundation. Most of the scholars from Tagpalico prefer to study here in Sibagat because it is nearest to home; if they need to go to Tagpalico or if their parents want to visit and bring them provisions they can do so anytime.

The MSM congregation has also provided a house that has been converted to serve as student accommodation. Male and female students have separate sleeping quarters and cooking and dining areas are separate from the main house. The students are organised into working groups to keep the quarters clean. A nun is assigned to supervise the students, but she does not stay with them in the accommodation. She stays in a prayer house located nearby, where other nuns of the Missionary Sisters of Mary also live. The students are expected to help in the maintenance and upkeep of the prayer house by keeping the lawn clean and the footpath leading to the prayer house clear. They also work in the backyard gardens that are provided for them in order to supplement the provisions sent by their parents and when parents visit them in Sibagat they are allowed to stay with their children in the quarters.

The second school that Tagpalico students can attend is the San Luis Lumad Community High School (SLLCHS), located in San Luis, Agusan del Sur. It is a boarding school run by another Catholic religious congregation of nuns, the Missionaries of the Assumption. This school is known as a lumad (indigenous) high school because the students come from different indigenous communities. The school follows the required subject topics outlined in the

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1 Sibagat is a town along the National Highway. It is the nearest trading centre for selling Manobo corn harvests because a rice mill is situated there.
2 Mekong Foundation (Enfants du Mekong) is a French foundation which awards educational assistance to students who come from poor families. The Foundation partnered with the Missionary Sisters of Mary to facilitate identification of deserving students.
3 This was a deserted property with a floor area of 50 square metres, old wooden walls, and galvanised iron roof. Parents of the students repair the property at the beginning of the school year so it is ready when their children occupy it. Wood needed for the repairs is hauled from Tagpalico and other materials, like nails, are given by the nuns.
national curriculum and also incorporates topics that focus on indigenous practices. Lumad leaders as well as lumad teachers are part of the teaching staff. The nun, who is the administrator of the school, is also a lumad. Students are organised to maintain the farms owned by the school because these support the food needs of the students. Teachers at the boarding school often remark that the students in their care are like ‘packages left in a corner’ (‘putos nga gibilin sa daplin’) because once the students are in the school they hardly ever hear from their parents again until the school year ends and the children go home. Parents do not visit regularly because they lack the resources to travel.

A salient component of the SLLCHS curriculum is to do with sending students to immerse themselves in other lumad communities for a period of one month. During this time the students volunteer to participate in the farming and other social activities of the families they live with. The aim is to allow the students to relate their personal experiences to another lumad community and encourage them to reflect on the similarities and differences of their experiences as lumad people. The hope is that the learning that students get from these interactions will strengthen their resolve to go back and help their own communities after they finish high school.

Another school, the Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development (ALCADEV)\(^4\), is an alternative secondary learning institution that provides technical, vocational, and academic training especially for indigenous students. It is called ‘alternative’ because the curriculum focuses on teaching agricultural and leadership skills instead of following the usual academic secondary curriculum. Like the San Luis Lumad Community High School, Alcadev is also a boarding school and the children help in maintaining farms in order to support their everyday needs. Administrators of the San Luis and Alcadev schools claim that their main objective is to serve the lumad children in their education. They uphold the ‘culture’ of the lumad as the basis of their curriculum and hope that by providing education for these children they will develop future lumad leaders who understand the concerns of indigenous peoples face at present. Thus, even if the schools are run and supported by religious groups, religious education is not the primary aim of the schools. If they encourage their students to value any kind of spirituality, it is the spirituality that their communities follow. For them the priority is to provide lumad students with the knowledge and skills that they need to be effective members and leaders of their respective lumad communities.

High School students explain to me that they find their lessons interesting and challenging because they are taught about new things that they would not normally learn about if they had stayed in their communities, but they also express a sense of hardship: there are times that they do not understand the topics taught; they admit that they become lazy too and sometimes miss the extra curricular chores that are assigned to them and that their freedom is limited by the

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\(^4\) ALCADEV is located in the province of Surigao del Sur. The students are indigenous youth who are selected by their communities because of their leadership potential and demonstrated interest to pursue their studies.
strict schedule for working and studying. They also complain that they are not supposed to establish romantic relationships with the opposite sex while they are still studying and if they are determined to disobey this regulation they risk being sent home. This is the rule that is, however, most often violated because the young people are away from home and turn to each other for care and to share feelings. Simpson (2003: 58) has aptly described this situation in a mission school in Zambia, saying that order and discipline are ‘constantly liable to disruption and subversion’ and are the basis of a ‘negotiated order’ that students have the power to manoeuvre and appropriate. Indeed, students in these schools claim that they have tried to find ways to undermine school policies out of fun and curiosity, and they are happy when they are not caught out in their adventures. They say about fellow students’ misdemeanours: ‘Malas kung masakpan.’ - ‘Unlucky if they are caught.’

The students admit that it is difficult to stay at high school because they often get homesick and the tasks that they have to do aside from studying are physically taxing. However, they also know that the opportunity given to them to attend high school on a scholarship is valuable and they are ashamed to go home and be called a failure by other members of the community. They remind themselves that not everyone at home has the chance to study high school for four years and if they stayed at home they would still be working on the farms; at least if they persevere in the school they will get their education and have more choices in life. This opportunity will allow them to develop self-confidence and make them unafraid. I often heard parents say that educated persons are ‘dili mahadlok mobyuhe’ (‘not afraid to travel’) because they are not shy to ask questions if they are lost and they can read written signs to show where they are going. Those who have been scholars are invited to participate in conferences and seminars to showcase their talents and share their life experiences. When the students come home from these gatherings, relatives and friends look forward to hearing the stories of their trips. One scholar who had the chance to join a trip to Manila\(^5\) with her classmates was ecstatic about going on an airplane for the first time and her parents speak with pride about this to their friends.

Since the school in Tagpalico started in 1998, only 14 Manobo students have made it to one of these high schools and out of those, only one has gone on to study at college. Of these 14 students, eight are females, which for them, means putting off getting married and trying to build a different future by becoming educated. As soon as they have finished school or have decided to leave school, high school graduates search for employment as wage labourers, house helpers, sales ladies, or nannies in the lowlands. They only come home to Tagpalico to visit their parents and have a short break and to also give their parents some money or shop-bought goods.

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\(^5\) Manila is the capital city of the Philippines. Most people in the rural areas consider Manila as a dream destination because of its reputation for offering numerous employment opportunities and being the hub of modern life.
The Value of being Educated

The Manobo call a person who has gone to school and who has been educated ‘naay grado’ or ‘edukado’. It is a reflection of the attainment of higher stature that is a product of formal schooling that involves several years of school attendance, starting from a young age. Not many children can persevere in their education and so, for those that do, the quality of ‘being educated’ is an achieved social value that children and young people learn to appropriate as they continue to stay in school and as they relate with other people in the community. Learning to become eduado makes one a more valued person in the community, which translates into significant differences in the children’s sense of self or personhood. Acquiring a different kind of value through education allows children to negotiate further their social position within the family and the community. Evans (2006b: 248) argues that becoming a particular kind of person involves ‘ongoing learning about the specific structure of one’s relations with others…’ This is certainly the case in Tagpalico, where tensions and discrepancies are inevitable as members try to figure out how to appropriate this new element – education – that creates a different way of recognising valued members of the community. Education becomes, therefore, a ‘site of cultural politics’ and a ‘contradictory resource’ for competing definitions of identities and practices (Levinson and Holland, 1996:1). Although education is perceived to bring social advantage, it also creates new forms of ‘inequality’ and ‘social separation’ (Froerer, 2011:695). In the Tagpalico case, as previous chapters have shown, education creates discrepancies in the idea of what it is to be a child and disappointments when children begin to act in their own interests – becoming more ‘individually’ assertive.

Figure 20. Graduates of the Tagpalico School
No matter how zealous high school students are to finish their studies, there are those who never make it. The schooling process takes time and it is not surprising that if an opportunity to go to work and earn money arises before graduation, the students find it hard to resist. For example, a student named Renato, aged 18, who was only in his second year in SLLCHS, without hesitation, soon accepted an invitation by one of his friends to go to Manila to work as gardener for a rich family. Finding this a very good opportunity to earn and travel to the capital city, he easily agreed to take the job. His family and the leaders were all dismayed, however, because they expected him to finish his studies. They were also ashamed about Renato’s lack of consideration of the sponsor who supported him through school; they all had high hopes for his success. After a while, though, once Renato began sending money to his family and even though his family members regretted his decision at first, they soon began to appreciate his help.

This case is seen as an example to other community members that children who go to school learn to become ‘somebody’ (Luttrell, 1996:93) and are independent, having gained the confidence to decide for themselves about their futures. Even if their parents or the leaders are constantly reminding them of their promise to focus on their studies, children are decisive in charting their lives. They are ‘competent social actors’ (James and James, 2001:26) who have the capacity to assess the implications of social change for themselves; and their separation from their parents, acquired education, and being able to live outside Tagpalico on their own all have a bearing on the way they chart a course in their lives. Acting in their own context, they act on and react (Vanderbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie, 2006:128) to the situations that confront them.

For example, Aisel, 21 years old, worked as a store keeper after she finished her high school education. She says that her employer brought her to the city to open another shop and she was hired to assist in running the store. It had been part of their agreement that she would get her salary at the end of every month so she could send money to her family on time. She felt betrayed when her employer started to give her wages late and so, she left her job. Aisel is now back in Tagpalico and her parents welcome her presence in the household. However, they keep asking her if she plans to get married soon. They believe that at age 21 she is already at the right age to settle down. She vehemently disagrees with them and explains that she hopes to get another job in time. She is aware, though, that if she stays longer in Tagpalico men in other villages will start to woo her. Her parents accept her plans because, according to them, she knows what she wants and they cannot force her into doing something she does not want to do. She has already experienced how it is to work away from the community and with her experience and education she has shown that she can take care of herself.

Similarly, Leah, aged 17, used to go home to Tagpalico during summer vacations to help her family tend the farm and to help support her siblings’ needs for the next school year. One summer, however, Leah opted to join her cousin, working as a nanny in Butuan City. She
decided to stay away from Tagpalico because she was afraid. She relates that she has been involved in a misunderstanding with a man who was wooing her. The man came to confront her in front of her family and she was deeply upset when her father scolded her afterwards. After that incident she resolved not to stay in Tagpalico during school breaks. Thus, she avoids being bothered by suitors and has decided not go in Tagpalico, even though this is against her parents’ will.

Girls like Aisel and Leah, who have become educated, are viewed favourably as possible spouses because of their achieved social status and their capability to contribute economically. They know that if they stay in the community men will come to try to win their approval. They also know that to decline visitors will be interpreted negatively by others. Being in that situation not only affects them, but, most importantly, their parents because it is considered impolite and rude to turn down visitors. Being able to decide for oneself is only possible when children show that they can stand on their own and, through the help that they can contribute, win the respect of their parents and their community.

**A Group of their Own**
During the time that scholars are away during school time, their families lose an important member of their labour force. When scholars return home to Tagpalico during the breaks, they organise themselves into workgroups (hungos). They learn this practice from the boarding schools where they work in groups to complete tasks on the school farms. They find the practice effective for finishing manual work quickly and so they do the same when they are back in Tagpalico. Parents think of hungos as a positive activity in this context because their children have learned how to cooperate with each other. ‘Sila mismo magkatinabangay.’ (‘They provide help among themselves.’) They witness that their children are able to transfer what they have learned in the schools into their community and see this as a good sign because they will eventually end up working together when they become adults and leaders of the community.

For the students, working together not only makes the tasks lighter, but it also allows them to catch up with each other’s lives from the time that they last saw each other. In these meetings they are able to discuss their ideas and plans for the future and the community. From foolish plans to serious ideas, they talk about their ideas when they are together. However, not all of their voiced plans are accepted by the adults positively. One time the leaders found out that the boys were planning to form a ‘fraternity’ among themselves and that they were thinking of trying to procure arms so they could protect themselves and the community from strangers. The leaders, who have witnessed political strife in the past, were greatly alarmed about this

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6 Hungos is a practice when a group of people converge together to help finish a task on one of the group members’ farms (e.g. clearing an area, planting crops, and harvesting products) or in workgroups. As soon as one farm is finished, the group move to another farm owned by another group member until all the farm tasks are done.

7 ‘Fraternity’ is a term that is locally used to describe a group of males that bind themselves together so they can help each other in times of need. Fraternity groups are common organisations in big schools and members are recruited from among the students. The boys in Tagpalico loosely adapted the term to describe their plan for an organised boy group in Tagpalico.
because it would pose greater danger to the community. They contacted the boys who had initiated the plan and confronted them about it. Realising that the leaders were not pleased with their idea, the boys claimed that they never really aimed to pursue it.

Although it has been dismissed as another senseless story, this incident created a stir among the youth and their parents. It put into question the kinds of thinking that educated students are now entertaining as a result of the experiences they encounter in the lowlands. The question arises of whether the students will come back to Tagpalico to serve the community or bring influences that may cause harm to the community. The adults hope that the scholars will remain true to the commitment they made when they were awarded their scholarships. They are aware though that they are no longer in control of how their children will make use of what they have learned. A father remarked once that ‘Sila kay nakaeskwela dapat maghuna-huna para sa ikaayo sa uban.’ ('Those who are able to go to school should think about what is good for others.').

On the part of the scholars, as a group, they make fun of themselves and are open to discussing their experiences and ideas. They may come up with contentious ideas, but they acknowledge that they still have to listen to what their leaders and elders tell them. This shows that even if the scholars have to a degree achieved a valued identity in the community through their education, they still have to learn to figure out who they should become according to what significant others in the community, like the leaders and their family, consider as appropriate and right. As they engage in new situations, they acquire an ‘ethical disposition’, which worried community members see as a result of their education (Evans, 2006a:6). This disposition is ‘a continuously emerging and embodied understanding about what is good … to become’ which children learn through time and transform as they engage with significant others in their life.

**Lenny and her Process of Becoming Educated**

Lenny, aged 21, was one of the first students of the Tagpalico School and she is the only one who has gone on further to study at college. Her placement in the Pamulaan Center for Indigenous Peoples Education, the first college in the country to offer degree courses aimed primarily for indigenous peoples, was due to the recommendation of the Tagpalico leaders and the link with the Missionary Sisters of Mary to the Pamulaan Center. She was considered one of the most promising high school students of San Luis Lumad Community High School (SLLCHS) and her determination to serve her fellow lumad allowed her to get a place in the Pamulaan Center. She hopes to be an educator-researcher when she finishes her degree in Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development⁸, the course which she decided — together with the nuns and her parents — would be the most advantageous. They believe that the

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⁸ The Pamulaan Center for Indigenous Peoples Education also offers degrees on Agricultural Technology, Peace Building and Multi-cultural Studies, and Indigenous Education. The Center is located in the University of Southeastern Philippines Campus in Davao City, Philippines where the academic subjects are administered. Students go back to their communities for practical training and work experience.
community needs somebody who knows how to conduct research about their ‘culture’ and make the information available for use in planning community and school programs. With that in mind, she has pledged to the Tagpalico leaders that she will serve the Tagpalico School if she finishes her degree. The nuns, who helped in finding the scholarship, expect her to assume responsibilities in the Tagpalico School and to organise projects with her fellow Manobo scholars when she returns after her fourth year in college. Lenny recognises that without the concerted support given to her by her family, the community, and the nuns, she would not have been able to make it to Pamulaan and get a college education. In order to gradually fulfil her promise to the community, she makes a point of spending her summer vacations in Tagpalico so that she can help her parents and also take part in the hungos with fellow scholars, which she oftentimes initiates. Due to her achievement as the only college student in the community, Lenny is greatly admired by her family and friends in the community. An old woman has noted that she is filled with joy every time she sees Lenny come home to Tagpalico because she sets a good example for the younger children.

Lenny recalls that her parents were not supportive at first of her interest in going to school. She says that her parents were not keen for her to make it even through the elementary level. She even admits that her father was hesitant to allow her to study at high school because he worried that she might suddenly get married before she finished school. He would have preferred her to stay at home and help take care of her younger siblings. However, Lenny’s personal interest in school has been steadfast and she has shown that she never wants to miss a class even if she is not feeling well. Her earnest interest towards schooling eventually convinced her parents that she really wanted to pursue further studies. She had good grades to prove to them her positive performance in school and, as a result of her achievement, her parents have changed how they regard her in the sense that her opinion about family decisions is already sought and valued. She can talk with her parents about their problems and can even argue and reason things out with them if she does not agree with their decisions.

When she is at home, Lenny shares with her family what she has accomplished in school. She tells them about the gatherings she has attended and the places she has visited as part of her activities in school. She has also told her father that she has learned about indigenous leaders who are used by big businessmen to convince their fellow lumad to convert their lands into plantations. She has also told of cases of lumad leaders being persecuted because they did not cooperate with business ventures on their lands. As a student of a lumad college, she is aware that indigenous peoples are generally marginalised and belong to the poorest sector of the country. The life stories of her schoolmates attest to the difficulties that they all share as indigenous peoples and as students they are challenged to do something for their communities when they finish college. They are encouraged to share what they have learned in school with

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9 It is interesting to note how just as anthropologists are critiquing the notion of culture, anthropological discourse about culture is being co-opted by indigenous peoples and, in the effort to mobilise culture as a postcolonial political tool, people are training to become anthropologists themselves.
other members of the community and to become examples to them through their actions and behaviour.

Lenny became tearful when she aired her support for the school during a meeting that discussed the possibility of closing the Tagpalico School. She said that she could see herself coming back to Tagpalico to teach her fellow Manobo children. She plans to do research and write books about their practices that can be used in the school. ‘Kung sirado na ang eskwelahan, asa na man ko magserbisyo?’ ('If the school is closed, where will I serve?') In order to get support from the leaders, she reminded them to think about the future of the young kids who, if they do not go to school, will become more disadvantaged. After her emotional speech, the leaders said that they did not want to close down the school either and that they would do all they could to keep it open. They promised to those present in the meeting that they would negotiate with the nuns for them to continue helping them with the school.

Whilst adults have good things to say about Lenny, younger children have noticed that Lenny has changed to become a different person (nabag-o na). This comment was made by some girls in the Grade Six class. One girl notes that Lenny talks a lot about her activities in her school and she finds it annoying when Lenny uses a lot of English words and expressions when telling her story. She finds this unusual because she thinks Lenny should still use the Manobo language when she talks with her fellow Manobo. It appears to her that Lenny is showing off her achievement to those who have not achieved the same level of education as her. She finds it undesirable for Lenny to talk to them in another language, especially when the situation does not call for it. Another girl has remarked that she finds Lenny to have become very opinionated and consequently she tends to show that what she believes is better and she is above the rest. They both think that Lenny and all the scholars must remain humble despite the achievements that they have had compared to the rest of the children.

Adults hope that Lenny will remain respectful to others, especially to those who have been part of making her who she has become today. Changes in Lenny's behaviour have earned diverse reactions from her fellow Manobo. In some instances she is regarded with praise and admiration but at other times her behaviour is viewed with disapproval. These differing impressions reflect how others look at her transformation at different points in her life. Having self-confidence together with educational qualifications forms part of the 'schooled identity' (Levinson, 1996:211) that spells advantage for educated young people in finding employment later on compared to those who left school and decided to make do with farming. The educated children are better off because, as one mother explains, ‘dili na sila mahadlok moatubang ug tawo ug dili na maulaw mangutana’ ('they are not afraid to face other people and are not shy to ask questions').

Even if high school students are regarded as more knowledgeable within the Tagpalico community, they do not necessarily enjoy that status in the lowlands. As a result, the wages that they get from employment are still limited. On the brighter side, they see this as better than
nothing at all. No matter how meagre their salaries are, young people still find ways to send a
certain amount to the family. As Froerer (2011:695) noted, even if education is believed to bring
social advantage, in reality it also gives way to ‘new forms of social separation’ and
differentiation, with both positive and negative effects.

The emergence of educated female members creates a social space that is beginning to
transform the leadership status of women. The case of Lenny, for instance, prompts male
leaders to consider her acquired knowledge and capability in dealing with situations that involve
external linkages and handling community concerns. With the reality that current male leaders
do not have the same educational attainment as the younger members, the presence of more
schooled women in the community creates pressure for gradual transformation in the political
and leadership aspects of Tagpalico. Added to this, other female members are also bringing in
more economic resources to their families, allowing them to become more valued as
‘individuals’.

This last chapter encapsulates the difference education makes to Manobo individuals, not only
inside but also outside the Tagpalico community. It also shows the implications of learning how
to become ‘educated’ as well as ‘indigenous’ in present times, now that basic education has
become accessible to more members of the community. It is this change that this study is
wholly devoted to describing as a complex process of learning to be ‘indigenous’ today.
Appendix 1. Kinship Diagram of Residents in Tagpalico

The following kinship diagrams of the families living in Tagpalico show how they are related to other families in the area. The number in the box signifies the household number of the family as shown in the Spot Map of Tagpalico (Figure 6). Only the names of persons that I have mentioned in the text are identified in the diagrams. Δ - represents a male; O – refers to a female; □ - means undefined sex; and / - slash sign over a figure means the person is deceased.

Nanay Pasyang (3) lives with her unmarried children and the married ones have left Tagpalico aside from the couple Joel and Muya (2) who have just built their house beside the house of Nanay Pasyang. Nanay Pasyang is the cousin of Duyak, the wife of Datu Koroales (6).

Datu Koroales (6) has three married children who are living in Tagpalico – Pola (1), Kata (22), and Loy (4). His grandson (21), who already has his own family, has also chosen to live in Tagpalico. Jenny and two other married daughters are living outside Tagpalico in their husbands’ communities. Kata (22) married Noel, one of the non-Manobo residents in the area.
These are the non-Manobo families who are living in Tagpalico. They are mostly living in Purok 7. The brother of Manong Lualde (23), Joel (2), married Muya who is the daughter of Nanay Pasyang (3); while his son, Noel (22), married Datu Korales’ daughter, Kata. These non-Manobo families were able to buy portions of farmland from the Manobo and so they have settled in the area. Most of their children are studying in the Tagpalico School.

Datu Tasyo (20) and his two married sisters are living in Tagpalico because they own farms there. They raise their families in Tagpalico while also taking advantage of the free education that the Tagpalico School offers. Aside from them, there are also other families who are in the same situation, like those of Ling (18), Datu Perto (7), and Selya (11).

Ling (18) is one of the daughters of Nanay Siling and Bado, the old women who were the wives of the late Datu Tagpalico, the manigaon (leader) who requested the institution of the school.
Datu Perto (7) and the wife of Datu Ronny (12) are siblings. The two men are identified as leaders of Tagpalico.

Buyaw and Selya (11) have two children who are already married and have chosen to stay in Tagpalico. Selya, who died while giving birth to her 12th child, had two brothers who are also living in this place.

Datu Noli (14), one of the leaders of the community, is the brother of Eliseo (10).
Relatives of Noli and Eliseo who live outside Tagpalico have married the siblings of Nining (9), who recently got married herself. Nining has just left Tagpalico to live with her husband, as what also happened to her older sisters.
## Appendix 2. School Calendar

**SCHOOL CALENDAR**  
**School Year 2008-2009**  
Father Saturnino Urios University Extension School  
Graded Literacy Program  
for Higaonon, Banwaon, Manobo, and Talaandig Children  
Agusan del Sur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Classes Begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Independence Day (Holiday)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Nutrition Month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24-30</td>
<td>Domalongdong (Higaonon term for Reconciliation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Culmination of Nutrition Month/Week (Health Program/Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td><strong>Buwan/Linggo ng Wika</strong> (Language Month/Week)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-21</td>
<td>First Periodical Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>National Heroes Day (Holiday)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Culmination Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>International Month of Peace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Indigenous Peoples Month</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Indigenous Peoples Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-22</td>
<td>Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23-24</td>
<td>Second Periodical Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27-28</td>
<td>Festival</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29-31</td>
<td>Semestral Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>All Saints’ Day/All Souls’ Day (Holidays)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Classes Resume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Bonifacio Day (Holiday)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Christmas Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Start of Christmas Vacation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2009</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Classes Resume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Review for the Third Periodical Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>Third Periodical Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Valentine’s Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Year-end Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Fourth Periodical Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Week 3 or 4</td>
<td>Graduation and Recognition Day</td>
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</table>
Appendix 3. Elementary School Curriculum – Time Allotment

Department of Education
The Elementary School Curriculum
Time Allotment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Areas</th>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Health</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAKABAYAN</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibika at Kultura</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HKS</strong></td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EPP</strong></td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MSEP</strong></td>
<td>(20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Min. Daily</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Heograpiya, Kasaysayan, Sibika (Geography, History, Civics)
**Edukasyong Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan (Livelihood and Home Economics)
***Musika, Sining at Edukasyong Pangkalusugan (Music, Art and Health Education)

The Elementary Basic Education Curriculum makes value development integral to all learning areas. There is a great focus on value formation in all subject areas.

Science and Health as a separate subject starts in Grade III. Science and Health concepts for Grades I and II are integrated into English.

MAKABAYAN (‘Love of Country, Patriotism’) as a learning area in Grades I, II, III is focused on Civics and Culture (Sibika at Kultura) with the integration of Music, Art and Physical Education (MSEP).

MAKABAYAN in Grades IV, V, and VI consists of HKS, EPP and MSEP with a separate time allotment for each component in the daily programme. Each component can be taught separately, when integration of the three components is not possible.
## Appendix 4. Philippine National Anthem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Filipino</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lupang Hinirang</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Filipino)</td>
<td><strong>Land of the Morning</strong>&lt;br&gt;(English Translation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayang magiliw, perlas ng silanganan.&lt;br&gt;Alab ng puso, sa dibdib mo'y buhay.&lt;br&gt;Lupang hinirang, duyan ka ng magiting&lt;br&gt;Sa manlulupig, di ka pasisiil.&lt;br&gt;Sa dagat at bundok, sa simoy at&lt;br&gt;sa langit mong bughaw,&lt;br&gt;may dilag ang tula at awit&lt;br&gt;sa paglayang minamahal.&lt;br&gt;Ang kislap ng watawat mo'y&lt;br&gt;tagumpay na nagniningning.&lt;br&gt;Ang bituin at araw niya&lt;br&gt;kailan pa may di magdidilim.&lt;br&gt;Lupa ng araw, ng lualhati't pagsinta,&lt;br&gt;buhay ay langit sa piling mo.&lt;br&gt;Aming ligaya na pag may mang-aapi,&lt;br&gt;ang mamatay ng dahi sa iyo.</td>
<td>Land of the morning&lt;br&gt;Child of the sun returning&lt;br&gt;With fervour burning&lt;br&gt;Thee do our souls adore.&lt;br&gt;Land dear and holy,&lt;br&gt;Cradle of noble heroes,&lt;br&gt;Ne'er shall invaders&lt;br&gt;Trample thy sacred shores.&lt;br&gt;Ever within thy skies and through thy clouds&lt;br&gt;And o'er thy hills and seas;&lt;br&gt;Do we behold thy radiance, feel the throb&lt;br&gt;Of glorious liberty.&lt;br&gt;Thy banner dear to all hearts&lt;br&gt;Its sun and stars alright,&lt;br&gt;Oh, never shall its shining fields&lt;br&gt;Be dimmed by tyrants might.&lt;br&gt;Beautiful land of love, oh land of light,&lt;br&gt;In thine embrace 'tis rapture to lie;&lt;br&gt;But it is glory ever when thou art wronged&lt;br&gt;For us thy sons to suffer and die.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Appendix 5. Filipino Pledge of Allegiance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Panatang Makabayan</strong></th>
<th><strong>Filipino Pledge of Allegiance</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(Filipino)</em></td>
<td><em>(English Translation)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iniibig ko ang Pilipinas, aking lupang sinilangan,</td>
<td>I love the Philippines, the land of my birth,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahanan ng aking lahi, kinukupkop ako at tinutulungang</td>
<td>The home of my people; it protects me and helps me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maging malakas, masipag at marangal</td>
<td>Become strong, hardworking and honourable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahil mahal ko ang Pilipinas,</td>
<td>Because I love the Philippines,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diringgin ko ang payo ng aking magulang,</td>
<td>I will heed the counsel of my parents,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susundin ko ang tuntunin ng paaralan,</td>
<td>I will obey the rules of my school,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutuparin ko ang mga tungkulin ng isang mamamayang makabayan,</td>
<td>I will perform the duties of a patriotic citizen,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naglilingkod, nag-aaral at nagdarasal nang buong katapatan.</td>
<td>Serving, studying, and praying faithfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iaalay ko ang aking buhay, pangarap, pagsisikap</td>
<td>I shall offer my life, dreams, successes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sa bansang Pilipinas.</td>
<td>To the Philippine nation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES


