THE QUESTION OF SURVIVAL:
UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF LIBERALISATION AND DEVELOPMENT
ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN MINDANAO, PHILIPPINES

BY

ADORA PENACO PUEBLOS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to study the impact of mineral resource development on the indigenous peoples in the Philippines, focussing primarily on the consequential effect of the destruction of their ancestral domains and loss of access to their sacred spaces as it relates to their survival. Further, it seeks to bring to the widest attention possible their little known struggles against the invading and destructive forces of development, particularly large-scale mining, in their traditional areas. Most of all, this research ambitions to (1) debunk the prevailing research trend of dismissing emotions as irrational, illogical and useless in research because it is unquantifiable, and therefore, unscientific; and (2) critique Western-influenced paradigms on development by shedding light on the limitations of Eurocentric commitment to orthodox discourses that valorise resource development as supreme over cultural meanings and view environment as something completely detached from humans. In this study is presented the conflicting sides found at the heart of this age-old problem: the opposing views of government/mining companies on one hand, and those of the indigenous peoples on the other, their differing perceptions and stance on the issue of exploitation and control of natural resources found in ancestral domains.

This research explored the deep emotional connections of indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains and how these are inexorably linked to their cultural identity. The data illustrate their profound sufferings in the hands of development agents and, paradoxically, the Philippine government itself through its open-arms policy on foreign investments and liberalised mining laws, heavily compounded by the unwarranted deployment of the military to ensure a smooth transition in approved mining areas.

Using de-colonising methodologies and research approaches to tackle the issue, empirical data gathered are drawn from participant observation, semi-structured interviews and informal indigenous communities, and later organised according to themes evident upon collation of data. The findings are linked to a wider theoretical context and complemented with analyses of academic literature orientated to post-structural political ecology, emotional geographies and indigenous geographies that support the arguments in this study.

As well as highlighting potential areas for future studies on indigenous peoples, this research points to the root cause of the problem to a people's fundamental loss of power that denies them their control over their emotional spaces, resources and destiny. Accordingly, this fundamental relation needs to be given greater consideration in policy formulation and implementation of regulations that govern environment, natural resources and ancestral domains.

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Acronyms and Terms Used

Ancestral Domains

Lands, waters and natural resources therein traditionally possessed by indigenous cultural communities or indigenous peoples since time immemorial (IPRA: Chap. II, Sec. 3, par. a)

Ancestral Lands

Lands possessed by indigenous individuals or indigenous cultural communities since time immemorial (IPRA: Chap. II, Sec. 3, par. b)

CADT

Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title; an official deed or legal title awarded to indigenous cultural communities formally declaring their ownership as possessors of their ancestral domains (IPRA: Chap. II, Sec. 3, par. c)

DENR

Department of Environment and Natural Resources; a line agency of the Philippine Government

Development Aggression

“[C]an be defined as the process of displacing people from their lands and homes to make way for development schemes that are being imposed from above without consent or public debate” (Nadeau, 2005:334). It consists of “development projects that destroy [a community’s] traditional economy, community structure, and cultural values” (International Coordinating Secretariat of the Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal, 2007:186). Another author opines that the “(b)latant connivance of the state and private capital is the essence of development aggression” (Capuyan, 2009:114).

Eminent Domain

Section 2, Art. III of the Philippine Constitution states that “(n)o private property shall be taken for public use without just compensation”. It is a power inherent in the State giving it authority to take away private property for public use after payment of just compensation. The very essence of the power of eminent domain is the matter of “forced taking”. Hence, consent by the property owner is waived or not required.

EO 79

Executive Order No. 79, signed by President Benigno Aquino on 6 July 2012, entitled, “INSTITUTIONALIZING AND IMPLEMENTING REFORMS IN THE PHILIPPINE MINING SECTOR PROVIDING POLICIES AND GUIDELINES TO ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND RESPONSIBLE MINING IN THE UTILIZATION OF MINERAL RESOURCES”

FPIC

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is a process established under the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act that guarantees the participation of indigenous communities in decision-making on matters affecting their welfare and common interests. The law defines FPIC as “the consensus of all members of the ICCs/IPs to be determined in accordance with their respective customary laws and practices, free from any external manipulation, interference and coercion, and obtained after fully disclosing the intent and scope of the activity, in a language and process understandable to the community” (IPRA: Chap. II, Sec. 3, par. g). This mechanism shields indigenous communities against oppression, threat to their existence or violation of their rights in that in the absence of their unequivocal consent and regardless of magnitude, a project cannot take off or be discharged within its ancestral premises.

IFIs

International Financial Institutions, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and others

IPRA

Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 passed into law as RA 8371; a law recognising the rights of Indigenous Peoples / Indigenous Cultural Communities to their ancestral domains/lands; a law governing the titling of ancestral domains and ancestral lands

IPs/ICCs

Indigenous Peoples / Indigenous Cultural Communities; as defined in IPRA: “A group of homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing

common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, become historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest of colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains. (IPRA: Chap. II, Sec. 3, par. h)

MGB

Mines and Geosciences Bureau; a line agency of the Philippine Government

MRP

Mining Revitalization Program

NCIP

National Commission on Indigenous Peoples; the primary government agency mandated to implement the IPRA (IPRA: Chap. VII, Sec. 38)

PCA

Philippine Commission Act

Regalian Doctrine

Jura Regalia or Spanish Royal Law is a feudal theory that promotes the idea that all lands, waters and all other resources belong to the state. In the Philippines, this doctrine turned original native possessors into the status of squatters in their own lands.

Foreword

This thesis deals with issues that are at the core of the struggle of indigenous peoples in the Philippines, written from the perspective of an ‘outsider’ looking in. Through this thesis, albeit written from a limited academic perspective, I hope to be able to capture and depict in part the struggle of indigenous communities in the Philippines to survive and protect their ancestral domains and sacred ecologies from aggressive development.

The Spanish conquest of the Philippine archipelago in 1521 marked the beginning of their infiltration and subsequent domination over the cultures of the indigenous peoples inhabiting the areas they have conquered. This assimilation continued through the centuries using various methods including the use of force and violence on indigenous cultures and communities that have lived there for more than 4,000 years prior to their arrival.

I ask the non-indigenous reader to keep in mind that my intention is not just to talk about the experiences of indigenous peoples in the Philippines, but more importantly, to bring their voice to the widest attention possible, so that you, the reader, could ‘hear’ their experiences in the face of development, from their own words.

I am aware that it will be a very difficult task to find ways to undo the brutalities and grave injustice done to the indigenous peoples for centuries. Nevertheless, I am hoping that, as more and more people become acutely aware of their sad plight, we might discover within us a common thread, a shared humanity that transcends race, status and culture. It is my prayer that this deeper awareness will ignite concern and generate empathy for them, enough to prompt the government to deliver them from their present situation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ancestral domains hold deep cultural meanings for indigenous peoples all over the world. Though diverse in their beliefs, ways, and experiences, they share a common bond in that they have a profound emotional attachment to their ancestral territories, aptly called their emotional spaces. It is from their land that they derive their identity, culture, integrity, and life. Their age-old values and traditions reflect their love of and pride in their land. They put a wealth of historical and emotional value to spaces they traditionally hold as sacred and therefore integral to their ways. The ways by which indigenous peoples ascribe meanings to their experiences greatly influence their daily interactions with their environment. These spaces shape their identities as individuals and as communities, and ground them to their ancient origins, culture, cosmologies, histories and destinies (Xu et al., 2005). Yet, indigenous peoples stand to lose this fundamental link to their past and hold little hope for the future as present exclusionary environmental and resource management laws and policies tend to ignore their unique worldviews in the formulation of development strategies. Moreover, policy-makers rarely acknowledge the unquantifiable emotional connections of indigenous peoples to the ecology of their ancestral landscapes, or the serious psychological effects of seeing their homeland and sacred sites buried underneath layers of development rhetoric. This leads to their further marginalisation, undermines their control over their resources and exacerbates their vulnerability and sense of powerlessness.

Controversies associated with large-scale natural resource development such as mining largely revolve around the environmental excesses, cultural disrespect and irreparable damage to these ancestral domains, emotional spaces and sacred landscapes of indigenous communities (Banks, 2002). In the Philippines, the issue of traditional lands and ancestral domains has perennially lain at the core of indigenous peoples' struggle for survival. More than perhaps any other form of development scheme, large-scale mineral resource extraction poses the gravest threat to indigenous peoples. In the Philippines in particular, where mineral resources are looked upon as amongst the keys to solving the country's economic slump, this threat is very real. It is a tragic reality that as multinational firms acquire blanket rights to explore and mine the resources found in ancestral domains, entire environments are mindlessly destroyed, and emotional landscapes and traditional spaces central to the survival of indigenous peoples are wrested

from their control. As a consequence of this grave injustice both to humans and nature, the environment, the dignity of the people, their human rights and sacred spaces are violated and wantonly defiled. Indeed, to this day, countless atrocities continue to be legally consummated against indigenous peoples in the name of ‘development’, without much hope for any retribution.

In the 1990s, economists promoted mineral exploration as one of the most viable, although as yet largely untapped, solutions to the Philippines’ twin concerns – social and economic development. Today, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) estimates the country’s potential mineral resources as being worth US\$1.4 trillion (MGB, 2012). Under tremendous influence from International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the Philippine government passed the Mining Act in 1995, paving the way for the conversion of swathes of ancestral domains into income-generating mines. Mining, along with exporting skilled workers and professionals abroad, was envisioned as a means to save the country from its worsening economy. However, in exchange for attaining this vision, government has, wittingly or unwittingly, placed so-called development gains way above the lives and welfare of peoples whose identities, emotional attachments and survival are inherently linked to their ancestral spaces. The destruction of these ancestral domains by unmitigated development has inevitably wrought untold misery, displacement, even loss of lives, to indigenous peoples in the Philippines, not to mention the great emotional and psychological damage done to them. This research therefore seeks to answer the question: “What is the real cost of development?”

Philippine history teems with heroic stories of resistance of indigenous peoples and their struggle to survive. Their historical route through colonisation didn’t include tea and sympathy. They still continue to bite the bullet of colonialism in the form of forced resettlements and removal from their ancestral domains, massacres, racial discrimination, harassments, disappearances and militarisation. In the face of this reality, however, any forthright appreciation of the depth of their pain still remains in the realm of intellectual abstraction. Our laws and policies seldom ‘speak’ of their cultures and worldviews. We ‘know’ of their plight and might have even ‘heard’ of their struggles, or perhaps ‘saw’ their dispossession on the news. Yet who will accept the responsibility for their situation? More importantly, who will provide them relief from these circumstances?

There had been a number of positive outcomes of struggles for self-determination amongst indigenous peoples in the Philippines, particularly in mining communities. Taking into account the resistance movements of the Cordillera Peoples in the northern

regions of the country against mining (Crisologo-Mendoza and Prill-Brett, 2009; Prill-Brett, 2007; Yang, 2012), their success surely occupies a bright corner in Philippine history.¹For example, the first Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT), a document issued by government officially recognising the ownership of a particular ancestral domain, was awarded to the Bakun communities in the Cordillera region. This model illustrates how existing policy frameworks and legal provisos can be used by indigenous peoples to demand for the recognition of their rights.

Although not entirely the only reason, what perhaps facilitated the favourable outcomes for the Cordillera peoples is the fact that indigenous peoples constitute the majority of the population in the Cordillera (Crisologo-Mendoza and Prill-Brett, 2009). The Cordillera experience has been critically explored by scholars and development practitioners (Crisologo-Mendoza and Prill-Brett, 2009; Prill-Brett, 2007; Yang, 2012). In numerous local and international fora such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Cordillera model has been the subject of much animated discussions. Consequently, more indigenous political leaders occupy electoral positions that wield decision-making powers. Some of these indigenous government officials rightfully used their positions to protect indigenous interests in government negotiations with foreign investors intent on implementing development projects, such as mining, in their ancestral domains. There are others though who brazenly turned their backs on their own communities and their long-held traditions. This is the unfortunate struggle of the communities who partnered in this research.

Taking their cues from the Cordillera indigenous peoples, other indigenous groups in the Philippines were spurred to also refuse to be browbeaten in their own territories. However, because the Philippines has diverse ethnic groups spread over 7,100 islands, not all of the 110 tribes could share in the benefits accrued from the victories gained by some of these northern Philippine tribes. In many areas, the indigenous peoples constitute the minority. As a result, they are conspicuously unrepresented in elective or appointed positions in government. In most cases, it naturally follows that their interests are not amongst the top priority concerns of their local leaders. They are even misrepresented in local governance and upwards to the higher echelons of decision-making. Because of this,

¹ Historian William Henry Scott wrote: "It is a strange thing that history textbooks commonly in use in...the Philippines never mention the fact that the Igorot peoples of Northern Luzon fought for their liberty against foreign aggression during the 350 years that their lowland brethren were being ruled over by Spanish invaders...They were never slaves to the Spaniards nor did they play the role of slaves. Quite the contrary, Spanish records make it clear that they fought for their independence with every means at their disposal for three centuries, and that this resistance to invasion was deliberate, self-conscious and continuous."

their efforts to ward off culturally misguided development and policies have been futile. These tribes found out the hard way that their efforts to emulate the success of their Cordillera comrades in fact only served to make their lives more insecure, suppressed and violent. This is the case of indigenous cultural communities in three mining areas in the Zamboanga Peninsula, the SOCCSKSARGEN² Region and the Caraga Region³, all in the southern island of Mindanao. Some of their experiences are spoken of in this study.

Written works have referred to the continuing uphill battles waged by some Mindanao tribes against mining and the ensuing militarisation to quell their resistance and undermine their autonomies (Sanz, 2007; Magana, 2003; Wenk, 2007; Mayo-Anda, Cagatulla & La Viña, undated; Doyle, Wicks, & Nally, 2007; von Benda-Beckmann, 1983; Gatmaytan, 2007; Short and Wicks, 2007). For example, the Tagbanwa of Coron Island in Palawan, B'laan of Tampakan in South Cotabato, the Subaanen in Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga del Sur, the Manobo and Mamanwa in Surigao del Norte, and other indigenous communities, still await their own successful deliverance from massive logging and mineral development in their ancestral domains.

Not to lessen the impact and significance of the Cordillera experience, it is beneficial to note though that “[o]ne hundred ten years of operations of Benguet Corporation, 77 years of Lepanto Mining Corporation and 57 years of Philex Mining Corporation did not bring development to the people of Cordillera” (Longid, cited by Olea, 2013:1). What this thesis is trying to point out is that the efforts of the people of the Cordilleras, successful as they were, are not necessarily applicable to the parallel struggles of the rest of the 20 million indigenous Filipinos. For most indigenous communities, even the Cordillera Peoples, community-led development as defined by Indigenous Peoples, continues to be an elusive dream.

My Position and Prejudices

As an ‘activist’ practitioner employed in the indigenous peoples sector of the Philippine Legislature, I do not find it easy to develop the necessary intellectual frameworks within which I can locate my experiences with indigenous peoples and my deep passion for their plight. My experiences are limited both by the length of time spent with them and my own personal background as a non-indigenous Filipino. Working in the

² The name is an acronym that stands for the region's four provinces and one of its cities: *South Cotabato*, *Cotabato*, *Sultan Kudarat*, *Sarangani* and *General Santos City*. The region is more formally known by its older name Central Mindanao.

³ The Caraga Administrative Region, designated as Region XIII, is the newest region in Mindanao, created on 23 February 1995 under Republic Act No. 7901. The Caraga comprises four provinces, namely, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur.

government and living for short periods of time in a culture vastly different from my own have served to influence and shape my interpretations of these experiences. It is a fact that whilst 'being with' indigenous communities, I continue to remain an outsider, enjoying advantages these peoples do not have, such as better access to good education and basic government services and the freedom to determine my future without harassment or injustice. Despite my being deeply empathetic to the plight of indigenous peoples in my country, I have, as part of the larger non-indigenous population, admittedly benefitted much from their historical dispossession. This advantageous difference, typical in a colonial relationship, tips the balance of power in my favour as researcher.

I am not a passive observer. In my line of work, I have shared some of the grief of indigenous communities. I have attended their funerals. I have seen gruesome deaths in their ranks. I have felt their fear. I have experienced their poverty. I have seen a stream of politicians, bureaucrats, social workers, humanitarian organisations, development agents and researchers come and go in their midst. Some meant well, but they arrived, like the colonisers before them, bearing what they touted as the best solutions and ideas on how to 'civilise the natives' and 'empower the savages amongst the cultured', regardless of whether or not the natives desired these for themselves. For instance, it is widely perceived amongst indigenous communities that government agencies conduct consultations with them with a hidden agenda set in advance. In short, the outcome of these agenda has been predetermined in the bureaucracies of their respective departments, as if indigenous Filipinos were bereft of their own agency to determine what is appropriate for them or not.

When I first took an assignment to visit indigenous communities in some parts of Mindanao, I was puzzled at the seemingly apathetic view of the people there about the blatant injustices committed against them. However, after months of observation, I realized that the attitude which I initially mistook for lassitude and lack of concern masked a hidden anger that could not find expression in words. Ironically, those who have been historically oppressed are not likely to direct their rage at their oppressors. They vent their anger on their own families, themselves and communities, their fellow victims who will not retaliate because they understand the reason for such misdirected rage. Their stories are recounted in this thesis.

Given the gravity of the situation, the major issue in the writing of this research is how to present it in a way that does not betray the privileged and trust-based relationship established with the communities, whilst adhering to academic rigour. I am careful to put

into words the stories shared by the host indigenous communities so as not to strip them of the passion, inner tumult, rage, fear, vulnerability and other emotions plainly nuanced throughout their experiences. These human feelings and psychological catastrophes are what must ultimately be taken into perspective in the formulation and implementation of policies on resource management and laws affecting indigenous peoples in the Philippines. A certain degree of empathy for their situation and emotional involvement with, for instance, their grief and anger, may be what is required to effect changes, if not total transformation, in land use laws and policy directions of this country. Admittedly, in many ways, the fate of indigenous peoples in the Philippines will depend, to a very significant extent, on the attitudes of non-indigenous officials who hold the reins of power and decision making. Like it not, the response that government makes will be greatly influenced by these attitudes. Laws and policies will always be a matter of the government's intent and commitment, or lack thereof. For instance, whose opinions will matter more for politicians in the course of their deliberations; who will government consult; how much weight will government give to initiatives for and/or by indigenous peoples; and how determined will government be in implementing long-term political solutions.

Statement of the Problem

The Philippine Mining Law and the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) provide for specific procedures and processes designed to ensure the protection of indigenous peoples' rights in the event that their homelands are identified as development areas. These procedures, however, rarely acknowledge the unquantifiable emotional connections of indigenous peoples to the ecology of their ancestral landscapes, the serious psychological effects of seeing their homeland and sacred sites destroyed, and the humiliation of being ejected from their homes like herded cattle. Such utter disregard for their welfare is evident in the government's thrust on accommodating the recommendations of IFIs for less restrictive laws on foreign investments to create a friendlier business climate for foreign ventures, whilst failing to provide a balance by implementing precautionary measures to protect and safeguard indigenous interests as constitutionally mandated. This lapse in fundamental governance, seemingly insignificant in the broader scheme and loftier goals of development, has hurt and caused immeasurable harm to millions of indigenous communities in the Philippines.

Research Objective

This study attempts to document how emotional attachment to and control over traditional landscapes, sacred spaces and livelihood resources within ancestral domains are vital to the communities' sense of identity, well-being and survival. It further endeavours to illustrate how the people's emotional, spiritual and historical connections to these sacred spaces are intricately woven into their histories, emotions, memories, identity and ultimately, their continued existence. It also describes their loss of access to their sacred spaces, traditional livelihood and ancestral resources. Looking beyond simple economic benefits, this thesis considers the broader impact of the emotional cost of mining, such as despair, disenchantment, apathy and a sense of powerlessness of human communities. It depicts their struggle against cultural hegemony and ancestral dispossession as a consequence of institutional policies on traditional territories and resource development that favour the more utilitarian views and practices of the dominant culture and political structure. The government's thrust on turning the environment from a subject to be reckoned with to an object of subjugation and exploitation has forced indigenous communities to a position of vulnerability where before they had been possessors of lands and resources handed down from generation to generation since time immemorial. This study, therefore, is envisioned to bring awareness of their plight to more people who may in turn sympathize, influence and perhaps galvanize political leaders into action favouring indigenous peoples.

The foregoing broad objective leads to the following research questions:

1. Do the legal, policy and institutional frameworks governing natural resource management in the Philippines recognise and support, or undermine, the rights and responsibilities of indigenous communities to govern and protect their ancestral domains and sacred territories, according to their customary governance systems and on their own terms? Parallel to this, is the state legal system reconciled to the legal systems of Philippine indigenous peoples?
2. Do environmental laws and policies in the Philippines speak of and affirm the desires of indigenous peoples? Specifically, in what ways have indigenous peoples' lives been shaped and transformed due to these laws? Do these laws stand up to the task of protecting the indigenous cultural communities?
3. How are indigenous peoples' physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional and spiritual connections to their ancestral domains and sacred landscapes linked to their survival?

Relevance in a Wider Context

At present, the non-implementation of many laws and policies in the Philippines ostensibly for the protection of indigenous peoples' rights is one of the major causes of all the problems besetting them. With the government's continued failure to enforce these laws, the culture, indigenous systems and customary ways of indigenous governance have in effect been disregarded and undermined. Majority of these national laws and policies have in themselves failed to consider cultural and spiritual-based approaches to protecting sacred spaces and traditional livelihoods of indigenous peoples. Other laws enacted years later relaxing the restrictions on foreign investments in the country and amending the Mining Act completely overshadowed the intent of these earlier legislations. Instead, they paved the way for State institutions and agencies to warrant the misuse of resources in ancestral domains for consumption purposes and individual enrichment by relegating indigenous communities to the side-lines in policy formulation and decision-making. Where the people's participation was required under the law, it was often scripted and controlled, and usually carried out under strict military watch. Moreover, decades of experience illustrate the disrespect, violation and dishonour done to the communities' legal right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). FPIC is the right to be formally informed and consulted prior to the implementation of any development project in their areas, particularly those that are potentially destructive to their ancestral domains, and, ultimately, to decide whether to give or withhold their consent on the implementation of such project. Their right to self-governance of their ancestral domains and sacred places has not been upheld and protected as the law intended.

It is hoped that this research will be able to generate empirical data that might be helpful particularly to policy makers at the national level. The findings of this project may also serve local, regional and national authorities, policy-makers and government agencies in assessing the impact of a liberalised extractive industry on the indigenous peoples in the Philippines. The findings could provide an alternative view to inform current and future development plans, internal security mitigation strategies, environmental management policies and development projects in ancestral domains.

Though small in scale, this study will hopefully make a modest contribution to the growing discourse on alternative approaches to sustainable development in ways that capture the worldview of indigenous peoples and will work for their benefit. Ultimately, it seeks to help in finding an answer to the nagging question: Are the benefits of development really worth more than what is being sacrificed?

Parameters and Limitations

Although this thesis focuses on the experience and emotional journey of indigenous cultural communities in Mindanao, some of the mining issues presented here may well apply to other areas with analogous circumstances.

I expect questions to be raised in regard to the peculiar manner by which this research was conducted. As will be discussed at length in Chapter 5 (Methodologies) herein, the field work for this study was confined to three unnamed mining areas in the Zamboanga Peninsula, the SOCCSKSARGEN Region and the Caraga Region, all nested in the southern island of Mindanao in the Philippines. Owing to the grave potential for threat, violence, and backlash to the participants and their communities, and abiding by the explicit request of the research participants to conceal and protect their identity/s, this research deliberately veers from categorically citing specific places where participant encounters were held. On this premise, I thought it prudent to hold back any reference that will allude to particular individuals. Moreover, any reference to specific mining firms, political leaders and related events that would even remotely give any indication as to the actual villages concerned and the identities of the host communities was purposely deleted. Although the generic ‘Mindanao tribes’ has found necessity to be mentioned herein, effort has been employed to leave out identifying the actual sub-groups, the location of their communities, their organisations/affiliations and their specific ancestral domains. This was carried out to prevent untoward negative repercussions on the host communities, organisations and persons involved in this study. This did not become a drawback, however. On the contrary, once assured of their safety, the research participants were able to express their thoughts freely and expansively, an important factor that is critical to the integrity of this research.

Structure

This thesis is divided into seven chapters with the addition of references. It is organised as follows:

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of land laws and policies in the Philippines from colonial times to the present which culminated in the liberalisation of the minerals industry in the Philippines. Of particular relevance to this thesis is how these laws affected the lives of indigenous peoples and their ancestral domains/ancestral lands. Moreover, it also examines how indigenous cultural meanings continue to be downplayed in the drafting and implementation of laws and policies that affect indigenous peoples.

This chapter also delves into how laws and processes governing land and natural resource use, rather than protect the indigenous peoples, have caused their further alienation from mainstream society and exacerbated their already impoverished life.

Chapter 3 cites and reviews literature that forms the theoretical and conceptual framework of this thesis. It includes relevant works that deal with emotional geographies, particularly those that delve on the importance of deep emotional attachment to sacred spaces on the survival of indigenous communities. Also cited are bodies of academic literature that discuss the political ecology of emotion, and how differing cultural meanings and divergent systems result to conflicts in the management of natural resources.

Chapter 4 briefly explains the merits of feminist and indigenous research approaches and the basis for adopting these particular methodological and philosophical perspectives for this study. The ultimate aim is to come up with the most suitable, albeit non-traditional, method of doing this research and eventually understanding how deeply development affects the indigenous peoples of the Philippines beyond what is quantifiable.

Chapters 5 gives a tentative analysis of the field data gathered in the course of the research and attempts to determine emerging themes in what the participants wish to convey. It describes the results of the field interviews undertaken to find out the real impact of mining on the lives of those directly affected by it using their own words.

Chapters 6 brings into focus the colossal effect of development on Indigenous Cultural Communities particularly on the resulting destruction of their sacred spaces. Using a political ecology framework, it argues that the survival of indigenous peoples is hinged on their unhampered access and control over their ancestral domains, cultural landscapes and livelihood resources

Chapter 7 highlights the fundamental importance of emotional and spiritual connections of indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains. It takes a second look at the research problem and objectives to draw significant lessons from the research findings, and point to areas for possible future research. It ends with an overall synthesis of the theoretical foundation and methodological framework, and a short reflection on my research journey.

CHAPTER 2

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF LAND LAWS AND ANCESTRAL DOMAIN PROBLEM IN THE PHILIPPINES

Numerous issues and concerns have confronted indigenous peoples both in the Philippines and internationally in recent decades. Defending the right to their ancestral domains and resources remains the major issue as the struggle to protect and preserve their indigenous culture and traditions is inextricably linked to their survival as communities. Whilst striving to adhere to their indigenous laws and cultural systems, they also must work within the constraints of the legal framework of the state.

It must be said here that prior to the creation of modern-day states or the invasion of the Philippines by Spain, the indigenous peoples already occupying the territories had their own set of laws. Worldwide, it is an acknowledged fact in this day and age that indigenous peoples have vested or native rights over the lands and waters declared by the invading European colonists as theirs by virtue of conquest. Even so, despite this international recognition of the said prior land rights, indigenous peoples still continue to suffer forced displacements or summary ejection from their ancestral domains. The reason for this injustice is rooted in the colonial history of the Philippines beginning in the 16th century at the hands of Spain, which has persisted unabated to the present state of affairs. Coming from a European colonial perspective, Spain not only seized the native territories, it also imposed its altogether different concept of land ownership on the natives.

Against this background, this chapter first describes the concept of land and resources of indigenous peoples in Mindanao, in particular the three communities involved in this research. Thereafter it gives a brief historical overview of land laws and policies in the Philippines and how the different colonising regimes infringed upon the prior and vested rights of indigenous peoples. The discussion examines the interface between these state laws and policies, and the customary practices in the context of indigenous concepts regarding natural resource use and control of ancestral domains. Of particular significance is the discussion on the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act as it explores the ambivalence of scholars over its effectiveness as well the views of those for and against IPRA. This chapter aims to show how the successive administrations of the Philippine government have been implementing policies that are hurting many of its poorest citizens.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, THEIR RESOURCES AND CONCEPT OF LAND

The Philippines is a country with rich bio-diversities. It is an archipelago comprised of over 7,000 islands, three of which make up the major islands, namely, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. It has a population of around 103 million people. An estimated 17 to 20 million persons⁴ belong to the 110 ethno-linguistic groups known as Indigenous Cultural Communities or Indigenous Peoples. Of this number, 66 per cent live in Mindanao, 33 per cent in Luzon and 1 per cent in the Visayas.

In the 1900s during the American colonial rule, indigenous cultural communities were referred to in the Public Land Act as ‘non-Christian tribes’, identified “with low levels of civilisations” (Leonen, 2007:45). In the latter part of the last century, particularly during the term of former President Ferdinand Marcos, they were called ‘national minorities’. This was later changed to ‘national cultural communities’. In 1997, after decades of vigorous representations in the United Nations and the Congress of the Philippines, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act officially labelled them Indigenous Cultural Communities and/or Indigenous Peoples. It is this law that recognises and protects their right to their traditional territories, called ancestral domains and ancestral lands, estimated to be 30 million hectares.

Though diverse in many ways, Philippine indigenous peoples share distinctive traits that set them apart from the mainstream non-indigenous Filipino population. Owing much perhaps to a sense of self-preservation from the colonisers that threatened to erode their values, customs and traditions, rather than ‘a change of heart’, some indigenous members converted to Catholicism, a Western religion exogenous to their cultures. Even with their conversion to a different religious affiliation, their indigenous core beliefs as practiced by their ancestors have remained intact to this day. Thus, they are generally identified as ‘non-Christians tribes’. Their customs, beliefs and traditional ways are different from those of the general citizenry. They also have systems of self-governance and settlement of disputes that revolve around their customary practices and institutions that exist apart from the laws of the country. They domicile in remote rural areas that are ordinarily difficult to access. As a form of resistance against colonisation, they moved upland to less accessible areas, effectively locked away from the influences of Western ways, religion and lifestyles. This move, however, came with a steep price. Where once economically thriving, these much older base of archipelagic cultures had been reduced by colonisation into present-day marginal existence.

⁴ See http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1998_hrp_report/philippi.html.

In certain ancestral domains located in the southern island of Mindanao where this research was conducted, indigenous communities still follow the justice, religious and political systems of their forebears. Conflicts and disputes are settled by the chief, either alone or assisted by the Council of Elders. In some cases, a religious figure who has unblemished stature in their society is sought to resolve disagreements. Governance, power and authority are orientated towards patriarchal and kinship structures. This hierarchy proved to be beneficial for the colonisers who simply had to control the tribal leader, sultan, datu or chief in order to bring the entire tribe to a heel and establish dominion.

The spirit of communalism and mutual help pervades the economic life of these people. Their livelihood activities include 'barter trading' wherein they trade their produce and services for the things they need without requiring the exchange of money. They use money, however, in contracting commerce in the general marketplace, usually with non-indigenous population.

As in many indigenous cultural communities in the Philippines, the social structure is ordered not so much on one's status, but rather on the division of labour and distribution of functions in the community. Their cultural practices depict a range of social norms, protocols and comportment governing interpersonal relationships. These also include formal behaviours toward the elderly, women, priests in their communities, and visitors. Such social courtesies likewise extend to the vibrant manner by which they accord respect and reverence to nature.

Ancestral domain or ancestral land is the core of the existence of indigenous peoples in the Philippines. There is a thread that binds the Mindanao indigenous cultural communities together and that is the common tradition of people who view ancestral land and its natural resources as bounties to be shared communally. Amongst the indigenous communities comprising the Zamboanga Peninsula and the regions of SOCCSKSARGEN and Caraga, individual ownership of land, as understood in the modern sense of 'titled proprietorship' and 'possession by an individual', is not part of their ancient practices and customary laws. For these people, possession of land is understood as the right of a person to use it or bring it under his control to meet his needs and those of his family/s. As 'stewards', 'custodians' and 'guardians' of the land, a member claiming ownership must work on the property. To cease to make it productive through work means a surrender of his stewardship. The land then must be returned to the trust of the ancestral spirits who are its primary and real possessors. For this reason, land is held

sacred. This concept, anchored on the principles of inter-generational responsibility⁵ and responsible stewardship for the natural world (Holden, Nadeau and Jacobson, 2011), views possession as a matter of trust. In this case, the land does not belong solely to the present stewards but to future generations as well.

The tribal system of communal possession is founded on the subsistence and highly collectivised mode of economic production. These include fishing, hunting, foraging for forest products, and swidden ('slash and burn') farming. These modes of livelihood necessitate that bodies of water, swidden farms, burial grounds, sacred mountains, pasture, forest areas, and plantations should be governed by a system of communal ownership. A traditional practice common amongst the indigenous Mindanao tribes involved in this research is the preference for collectivised ownership. This practice finds a group of individuals or families who are related by blood or by marriage as possessors of the land. However, there is also a form of ownership not based on blood or marriage. In this instance, communal ownership is founded on team occupation sharing common economic base, such as the tending of large production, groves and plantations. Thus, the right to possess the land and the obligations entailed are collectively shared.

Although individual possession is sanctioned under the customary laws amongst certain tribes in Mindanao, such as the Subaanen, Mamanwa, Manobo and B'laan tribes, absolute ownership and individual alienation are not the norm in these communities. Except on the instance of marriage and sudden financial debacle such as loss of crops, death or sickness in the family, or to meet precipitous economic obligations, private or exclusive full ownership is strongly discouraged. Moreover, if such were the case, customary law prohibits the land to be disposed of, offered or sold to a non-member of the tribe. Only community members may purchase the right to 'own' and work on the ancestral land.

Evidently, for these indigenous communities, land titling in the individual sense under Philippine civil law⁶ does not exist in their customary laws, and economic and social systems. The concept of private individual land ownership is not organic to them. Inherently colonial in origin, Philippine national land laws and resource management policies do not look favourably upon indigenous assertions to their ancestral

⁵ This principle is expressed in the Stockholm Declaration, Principle No. 1, and the Rio Declaration, Principle No. 3, which states that "Man ... bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations".

⁶ Republic Act No. 386, Civil Code of the Philippines. See Book II Property, Ownership, and Its Modifications.

domains and land rights. Communal ownership is viewed as archaic and positively inferior. It is the tension between these opposing worldviews, with one obviously dominating the other that has resulted to destitution and privations amongst indigenous peoples. Particularly in the three mining areas in Mindanao where this study was conducted, the magnitude of violence against human communities has reached horrific proportions.

The manifold issues surrounding indigenous peoples in the Philippines and their ancestral domains evolved through the centuries. The land laws and policies historically pursued by colonial Spain and the United States reflected the dominant Western strain that refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of customary or ethnic precepts. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, this underlying colonial view continues to overshadow the formulation of present-day land laws and policies and accounts for the manner by which these are implemented by the national government.

A SURVEY OF LAND LAWS AFFECTING ANCESTRAL DOMAINS

The following discussion traces the evolution of land laws and policies in the Philippines from the colonial era to the present. It attempts to examine how these laws abetted to bring ancestral lands and the native resources therein into the orbit of domination and exploitation.

Land Laws under Colonial Spain

Colonial land laws in the Philippines were founded on the Regalian Doctrine (*Jura Regalia* or Spanish Royal Law), a feudal theory that basically undermined the sovereignty of the natives over their territories (Leonen, 2004). This doctrine harbours the “unquestioned belief” (Leonen, 2004:154) that all lands and waters belonged to colonial Spain. In support of this doctrine, a succession of laws and decrees were introduced in the colonised territories. This signalled the beginning of the denial both of indigenous laws and native control over resources as original possessors of the land. An example of this decree was the law on land titling and registration (Lynch, 1982), an edict written in Spanish and wholly alien to the natives both in language and concept. Predictably, the natives ignored the decree, prompting the colonial government to issue the Cedula (Lynch, 1982), Mortgage Law (Lynch, 1982) and Maura Law (Constantino, 1998), respectively. Aside from reaffirming the principles of the Regalian Doctrine, these laws proceeded to perfect the systematic dispossession of the natives of their lands by decreeing that all lands that remained untitled or unregistered within a year of the

issuance of the said decrees “will revert back to the state” (Lynch, 1982:275). After the prescribed period had lapsed, untitled lands were automatically declared as belonging to the royal crown (Corpuz, 2001). Because of this law, many natives forfeited the ‘legal’ ownership of their land by default and without their knowledge, became unsuspecting victims of a colonial doctrine.

Over the course of colonial rule, Philippine indigenous peoples evolved into a group so pushed to marginalised status to cause the drastic decrease of their social berth, economic influence, and political power (Ting, et al., 2007). Inexorably, they morphed from being once-flourishing civilisations into a sector almost always overlooked by government and looked down in society. The lure and appeal of Western modernity threaten their traditions and “infringe[d] on their rights” (Ting, et al., 2007:77).

Land Laws under the Colonial Rule of the United States

The American colonial administration that followed after Spain adopted the Regalian Doctrine of its colonial predecessor and strengthened its subsequent hold of the Philippines. As was with Spain, the doctrine cloaked US interests with legitimacy, and gave it legal authority to dominate the indigenous communities and dispossess them of their native lands. The Treaty of Paris in 1898 is a testament to its enduring colonial legacy when all properties under the Spanish Crown were surrendered to the United States and ceded for a sum. Whereas Spain employed brute force and tyranny to subdue native resistance, the United States manoeuvred the legal system to effectively serve its ends. For example, the colonial administration established the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes in 1901. Thus began the campaign for the rapid, if not forced, assimilation of the so-called ‘ethnic minorities’ into the mainstream culture and governance (Chaffee, 1969). They became widely known as ‘non-Christian tribes’, a name that made a mockery of their distinct cultures and disregarded their varied histories. This assimilation was legally consummated by the passage of laws that classified native lands into military and government reservations, public parks, forest reserves and town sites. These laws effectively denigrated various indigenous communities to a status of ‘squatters’ in their own ancestral territories, a defining moment in the history of Philippine indigenous peoples.

To illustrate this growing trend, the new colonial administration enacted the Public Land Act (PLA) in 1902. This legal mandate resulted to the expropriation of all public lands, including those held under native occupancy. The PLA was similar to the Maura Law, only this time; it was known by another name – the Torrens system of land titling.

Under this law, possessors of lands must present their land title; otherwise their property shall be remanded to the state; in which case, the indigenous peoples were automatically alienated as they had no documentary proof of either their occupancy or ownership of their ancestral domains.

Ironically, it was around this period of the American regime that the United States Supreme Court rendered a landmark decision contrary to the theory of *jura regalia*. Known as the Cariño doctrine, this unprecedented decision acknowledged the existence of native title to land, or ownership of land by indigenous Filipinos by virtue of possession under a claim of ownership since time immemorial and independent of any grant from the Spanish Crown. This case became the legal vertebrae along which indigenous peoples' rights in the Philippines have been campaigned. In *Cariño vs. Insular Government*⁷, the US Court declared that ancestral domains/lands were exempt from state ownership or subjugation. Moreover, such indigenous territories had never been part of the public domain. The reason was simple: the Cariño property remained with and was maintained by the Cariños as private lands. They owned them either by clans, communities, families or individuals. This celebrated case, however, turned out to be the only exception to the universal Regalian doctrine, its place of honour briefly found quoted in legal precedents not for its observance but for its breaching the Regalian principles. Years after the Cariño case, and perhaps to overturn its legacy, numerous laws were put in place which served to dispossess the country's indigenous peoples of their territories.

In 1903, the United States passed the Philippine Commission Act (PCA) 178 (Rovillos and Morales, 2002). This law declared that all untitled and unregistered lands including the resources thereat were, under the law, classified as public domain and therefore subject to exploitation and development as determined by the government of the United States (Gaspar, 2000). The PCA, together with the Torrens system, paved the way for the commodification of the country's natural resources. In 1905, the first mining law took effect. This legislation opened the floodgates for the exploitation of the mineral resources in the Philippines, encompassing all lands including the ancestral domains of indigenous peoples. This law legalised foreign intrusion into native territories by allowing foreign ownership and mining rights in these areas.

⁷ In *Cariño vs Insular Government*, the United States Supreme Court, through Justice Holmes declared: "It might perhaps, be proper and sufficient to say that when, as far as testimony or memory goes, the land has been held by individuals under a claim of private ownership, it will be presumed to have been held in the same way from before the Spanish conquest, and never to have been public land."

To further tighten the noose of colonial control in the country, the United States passed the Land Registration Act.⁸ This law formalised the adoption of the Torrens System of land titling, reiterating previous issuances wherein lands that were not titled during the Spanish administration automatically revert to state ownership, management and control. The years 1913, 1919 and 1925 saw the wholesale dispossession of indigenous peoples of their ancestral territories as the colonial government legislated laws that declared all lands in the southern island of Mindanao and other such lands falling within the public domain as open to appropriation by the state to private corporations and individuals (Gaspar, 2000).

To safeguard the mineral interests of the colonial government, Public Land Act 2874⁹ was legislated. This law clarified that titles to lands issued or awarded under previous land laws did not include ownership or right to minerals and other resources contained in the titled property. Further, should the property be found to contain minerals, ownership thereof again reverts to the state (Tauli, 1983).

Another law, Proclamation No. 217¹⁰, declared most of the domains of the Cordillera peoples as a forest reserve, effectively ejecting whilst dispossessing the indigenous Cordillera communities of their ancestral domains. Lands classified as forest reserve barred human entry and their use of forest resources. In effect, communities who relied so much on forest products for their livelihood had to seek elsewhere for their sustenance given that they were denied access to these forest grounds.

In 1935, a second mining act was passed to declare as illegal the mining activities of natives in their own ancestral domains. Again, the basis for this law was the concept that all lands and natural resources belong to the state. Paradoxically, through the Commonwealth Act 137 (Mining Act of 1936),¹¹ the state sanctioned large-scale logging and liberal water monopoly rights for the purpose of supporting the mining operations of big mining companies in ancestral domains. These laws violated the prior and native rights of indigenous peoples who were owners of the lands for thousands of years. The issuances also barred them access to their main water source and means of livelihood thus denying them of their customary control of their ancestral domains. This colonial concept

⁸ ACT NO. 496, or "The Land Registration Act", AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE ADJUDICATION AND REGISTRATION OF TITLES TO LANDS IN THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS. This Act took effect in 1903.

⁹ ACT No. 2874, or Public Land Act of 1919, as amended by Acts Nos. 3164, 3219, 3346, and 3517, TO AMEND AND COMPILE THE LAWS RELATIVE TO LANDS OF THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

¹⁰ Proclamation No. 217 of 1929 created the Central Cordillera Forest Reserve.

¹¹ COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 137 – AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE CONSERVATION, DISPOSITION, AND DEVELOPMENT OF MINERAL LANDS AND MINERALS.

of land ownership and use became the foundation of the first Philippine Constitution. As articulated in Section 1, Article XIII:

“All agricultural, timber, and mineral lands of the public domain, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum, and other mineral oils, all forces of potential energy, and other natural resources of the Philippines belong to the State, and their disposition, exploitation, development, or utilization shall be limited to the citizens of the Philippines, or to corporations or associations at least sixty per centum of the capital of which is owned by such citizens, subject to existing right, grant, lease or concession at the time of the inauguration of the Government established under the Constitution” (1935 Constitution).

It is ironic that whilst the constitution was supposed to declare the independent republic status of the Philippines, it also unerringly inked its official obeisance to its former colonial masters by adhering to the Regalian Doctrine. Indeed, this tenet has become the foundation and legal framework that continued to mesmerise government leaders long after the colonisers have withdrawn.

The discussion that follows looks into the land laws after political independence and leading up to the present.

Land Laws from Post-Colonial Government to the Present

The early years of the Philippine Republic saw the drastic conversion of ancestral territories to resettlement areas. Following the country's independence, the government retained the land laws and policies it inherited from the colonial administration of the United States. It passed laws that, rather than relieve the indigenous peoples, further aggravated their desperate state-of-affairs. The promulgation of Commonwealth Act No. 141 otherwise known as the Public Land Law vested the President with the power to classify and reclassify lands.¹² As can be expected, succeeding Presidents issued decrees and proclamations turning tracts of indigenous territories into reservations for educational, military, resettlement, health and other public purpose. Wide areas traditionally possessed by indigenous communities were classified into forest or timberlands, mineral lands and national parks. This law effectively prevented the indigenous peoples from exercising their rights to their own domains, particularly as watersheds and forest reserves were declared closed to human occupancy. As it turned out, the formal legal system, easily the visible imprint of its former colonial master,

¹² Sec. 6, Chap. II, Commonwealth Act No. 141.

turned native occupants into trespassers and unlawful residents. Where timber, water and mineral resources were found, these were designated as reserved for development and exploitation. Indigenous territories where most of the timber, water and minerals are located were then collectively viewed as resource base. In these areas were found dams, logging and mining where the communities were forced to give up their rights, justified in the name of national economic development. This development philosophy that leaves people at the bottom of priorities accomplished the lowering of indigenous peoples to the status of 'minority'.

Significantly, policies continued to be formulated that would divest indigenous peoples of their homelands. During the Marcos dictatorship, for example, Presidential Decree No. 705, known as the Revised Forestry Code of 1975, declared that all lands exceeding 18 degrees in slope automatically belong to the state and are classified as public forest land,¹³ and as such, become part of the public domain.¹⁴ As most indigenous communities inhabit mountainous regions, the imposition of this law automatically conferred upon them the status of squatters in their own ancestral domains. Indigenous communities who were domiciled in the highlands had lived on lands having slopes of at least eighteen degrees. In fact, others occupying the north highlands practiced agriculture on areas with slopes even beyond fifty degrees (Prill-Brett, 1994). This is illustrated in the many ancient rice terraces that dot the Cordillera peoples' domains even to this day. PD No. 705 showed how ignorant the proponents were of the realities of indigenous life or having knowledge, how little they cared for these people.

Further abetting the undermining of indigenous peoples rights was the export-oriented development program. Then President Marcos offered ancestral domains to dam construction, logging concessions and large-scale mining, the latter universally acknowledged to be a high-risk, precarious activity. Foreign investors and funders were seduced via ridiculous tax incentives to subsidize mega-engineering development projects destructive to both environment and humans. By design, the government's regulatory policy climate was relaxed (Swenson, 1987), and it was the indigenous communities who paid for it in spades.

Following the citizens' revolution in 1987 that toppled the Marcos dictatorship, a new constitution was drawn up purposely to reflect the real sentiments of the people

¹³ "Section 15. *Topography*. No land of the public domain eighteen per cent (18%) in slope or over shall be classified as alienable and disposable, nor any forest land fifty per cent (50%) in slope or over, as grazing land." PD 705.

¹⁴ Sec. 15 Presidential Decree No. 705 Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines, REVISING PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 389, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE FORESTRY REFORM CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES.

including that of the indigenous peoples. It now serves as the cornerstone of the present legal framework. This legal foundation and administrative framework affecting indigenous peoples and their ancestral domains are discussed in the next section.

CURRENT ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK AND LEGAL ENVIRONMENT OF ANCESTRAL LAND RIGHTS

Philippine laws cultivate a natural resource management paradigm rooted in the Regalian Doctrine that set the stage for wide tracts of ancestral domains to be unfairly lost to the State. Regarded as State property since the Spanish colonisation of the archipelago, these territories have been appropriated by the State and forcibly taken from the indigenous peoples, ostensibly for public use. The legal and political systems caused the legitimated sequestration of ancestral domains and the methodical dispossession of Philippine indigenous peoples, effectively substituting the use of physical power with the force of laws.

Given the extensive list of laws affecting indigenous peoples in the Philippines, the discussion that follows herein focuses on three of these laws that have a direct bearing on the substance of this research. These are the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the Mining Act of 1995, and the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997. Moreover, it also attempts to examine some Supreme Court pronouncements on ancestral land rights. It ends with a perusal of the current administration's development paradigm vis-à-vis these rights.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution

The Philippines is a republic that has witnessed the passage of many organic laws since the occupation of the United States in 1898. Only the 1987 Philippine Constitution can, however, be considered 'superior' to all the constitutions before it for the simple reason that it explicitly recognises the rights of indigenous peoples¹⁵ to their ancestral domains. The State vows to "protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to their ancestral lands to ensure their economic, social and, cultural well-being".¹⁶ Moreover, it guarantees to "recognize, respect and protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions and institutions." As a State policy, it upholds indigenous peoples' rights in that these are taken into account "in the formulation of national plans and development."¹⁷

¹⁵ Art. II, Sec. 22, 1987 Philippine Constitution.

¹⁶ Art. XII, Sec. 5, 1987 Philippine Constitution.

¹⁷ Art. XIV, Sec. 17, 1987 Philippine Constitution.

Promising though these State policies are, such constitutional assurances have to be viewed in the light of other related stipulations therein. One must necessarily situate, for example, the provision on the protection of indigenous peoples' rights to their ancestral domains "within the framework of national unity and development".¹⁸ In this particular clause, the indigenous peoples' rights are clearly subordinated "to the provisions of this Constitution and national development policies and programs".¹⁹

Despite its being called the People's Constitution, the 1987 Constitution is still heavily chained to its colonial past. It continues to uphold the Regalian Doctrine of the early administrations particularly in mandating a natural resource management system with the feudal notion as its bedrock. As previously discussed, the Regalian Doctrine was instrumental in the state-sanctioned dispossession of indigenous peoples of both their right to their ancestral domains and their right to live as communities using their customary laws. This mediaeval concept underlies the provision in the 1987 Constitution that states, "All lands of the public domain, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum, and other mineral oils, all forces of potential energy, fisheries, forests or timber, wildlife, flora and fauna, and other natural resources are owned by the State."²⁰ On this note, it follows therefore that the power to bestow or withhold the right of occupancy and ownership of all lands and the resources therein implicitly belongs to the state. Such dispensation or prerogative carries with it the sole authority to determine the course of life of indigenous peoples, in short, their destinies.

The bipolar mood of the Constitution in dealing with indigenous peoples' rights mirrors the very same legal framework on which all current laws, policies and structures of government are legislated and enforced. This suggests that governance even in this modern era distinctly evince the hypnotic restraint of a colonial past. Within this legal environment emerged two laws, one governing the mineral resource exploitation and development under the liberalised Philippine Mining Act, and the other protecting the indigenous peoples' right to their ancestral domains under the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act.

The Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and Supporting Laws

Amongst the many laws on resource use in the Philippines, the one that has caused bitter discord and fragmentation of indigenous communities is the Mining Act of

¹⁸ Art. II, Sec. 22, 1987 Philippine Constitution.

¹⁹ Art. VII, Sec. 5, 1987 Philippine Constitution.

²⁰ Art. XII, Sec. 2, 1987 Philippine Constitution.

1995 (Republic Act No. 7942²¹). This law governs the exploration, development and exploitation of the country's estimated US\$1.4 trillion mineral resource (MGB,²² 2012). In the name of national development, the law renders all public and private lands vulnerable to mining operations. It subverts indigenous rights when it opens up ancestral domains to large-scale exploitation.

As a direct outcome of the adoption of the structural adjustment programme of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 1980s, this controversial law is, without apology, an echo of the Regalian Doctrine. It reflects the view that ecosystems are dormant sources of potential rich profits just waiting to be tapped. The World Bank was one of the major actors implicated in influencing the liberalised Mining Act of 1995. Ignoring a legacy of historical failures and 800 abandoned mines, the Bank has played the aggressive protagonist in stridently promoting the adoption of the National Minerals Policy, the Mineral Action Plan and the revitalisation of the mining industry in the Philippines.

Formulated to attract foreign capital, the Philippine government gave assurances of support by offering ridiculous incentives to foreign firms, foremost of which allows them full land ownership. In the wake of this law was the liberalisation of legal frameworks leading to the dismantling of restrictive regulation. Lower duties and tariffs, and tax breaks and holidays were thrown in as added inducement. This is tantamount to an open invitation to non-Filipinos to exploit the country's natural resources.

The Mining Act is being implemented with no heed to the environmental destruction and cost to human lives, oblivious to the fact that these mineral-rich areas have been the lifeblood of, and home to, indigenous communities for ages. Because of this law, large tracts of ancestral lands were expropriated wholesale, summarily uprooting indigenous peoples from their sacred places and resettling them elsewhere to facilitate so-called national development. This law significantly reshaped both the lives of indigenous peoples and the state of their ancestral lands in ways that bore heavily upon the communities.

The Mining Law is incomplete without its complement, the Foreign Investments Act of 1991 (Republic Act No. 8179). This Act allows foreign companies to own up to

²¹ R.A. 7942 An Act Instituting a New System of Mineral Resources Exploration, Development, Utilization, and Conservation.

²² The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) is the primary government agency under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (Philippines) responsible for the conservation, management, development and proper use of the country's mineral resources including those in reservations and lands of public domains. MGB was formed on June 1987, pursuant to Executive Order No. 192.

100% of business ventures in the Philippines.²³ These two laws violate the People's Constitution which limits to 40% the share of a business that foreign nationals can own while engaged in business in the Philippines,²⁴ yet to this day, they remain unchallenged and in force. Implicit to these two laws is the surrender of the state's power of eminent domain to foreign mining firms. Used to be the exclusive preserve of sovereign republics like the Philippines, eminent domain is the power of the government to take lands from its citizens for government use or by delegation to third parties who will devote it to public or civic use or economic development. Reminiscent of its colonial heritage, the government retreated to its Regalian comfort – that “all lands of the public domain . . . belong to the State” (Article XII, 1987 Philippine Constitution²⁵), and by virtue of its being the sole authority in regard to land use and management, it appropriated mineral lands and sold to foreign mining investors. This action resulted to the massive land grab of indigenous territories. Aside from allowing multi-billion dollar foreign mining companies access to 18 million hectares of land for their mining activities (MGB, 2012), the government virtually accorded these companies legal authority to secure properties owned by indigenous peoples and eject them from their homes after a cursory payment of ‘just compensation’. These laws effectively extinguished the customary right of indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains.

In protest, indigenous peoples and environmental groups took to the streets and petitioned the judiciary to have this law abrogated. So far, their efforts for its repeal have all been in vain. In *La Bugal B'laan vs. Secretary of Environment*,²⁶ the Supreme Court struck down the petition and ruled unequivocally on the constitutionality of this divisive law. It asserted that:

“The Constitution of the Philippines is the supreme law of the land. It is the repository of all the aspirations and hopes of all the people. We fully sympathize with the plight of Petitioner La Bugal B'laan and other tribal groups, and commend their efforts to uplift their communities. We must never forget that it is not only our less privileged brethren in tribal and cultural communities who deserve the attention of this Court; rather, all parties concerned – including the State itself, the contractor (whether

²³ R.A. 7042 An Act to Promote Foreign Investments, Prescribe the Procedures for Registering Enterprises Doing Business in the Philippines and for Other Purposes.

²⁴ Sections 2 and 11, Article XII, National Economy and Patrimony, Philippine Constitution, 1987.

²⁵ ARTICLE XII NATIONAL ECONOMY AND PATRIMONY, 1987 Philippine Constitution.

²⁶ *La Bugal-B'Laan Tribal Association, et alis v. Ramos, et alis*, G.R. No. 127882. December 1, 2004.

Filipino or foreign), and the vast majority of our citizens – equally deserve the protection of the law and of this Court.

To stress, the benefits to be derived by the State from mining activities must ultimately serve the great majority of our fellow citizens. They have as much right and interest in the proper and well-ordered development and utilization of the country's mineral resources as the petitioners" (Supreme Court, 2004). Evidently, in cases of conflict of interests between the indigenous peoples and the mining industry, it has become obvious that the welfare of human communities occupies the lowest rank in the list of the government's urgent priorities.

The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997

Through the years, there has been a worldwide awakening about the serious need to take care of the earth due to environmental changes wrought by man's destructive ways. Amidst this growing urgency, the Philippine Legislature passed the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA²⁷), recognising the land rights of the indigenous Filipino peoples. During the long-drawn and heated debates in the Legislature at the formative stages of IPRA, the framers of the law clearly defined that the primary intent of the legislation was to redress "grave historical injustice committed" (Puno, 2000:1) against indigenous Filipinos, and it was "an attempt to heal an oppressive past by the promise of a progressive future".²⁸ It upholds their rights to their traditional resources, ceremonial and sacred sites. Thus, IPRA, touted as one of the most enlightened laws on indigenous peoples was envisioned as a platform whereby the government can devise ways to rectify these historical violations beginning from the colonial rule of the Spanish Crown, then that of the American government, and even up to the early decades of the Philippine Republic.

The IPRA was considered a 'first' in the history of the Philippines to recognise and protect the fundamental customary rights of indigenous peoples, including the right to their ancestral domains, lands and waters. It was viewed by some as a landmark legislation for indigenous peoples, a shining moment in their long struggle for recognition. In it is the acknowledgement of their indigenous concept of communal ownership of their ancestral domain, held in permanence since the past up to the future by

²⁷ R.A. 8371 An Act to Recognize, Protect and Promote the Rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous People, Creating a National Commission on Indigenous People, Establishing Implementing Mechanisms, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes.

²⁸ http://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/jurisprudence/2000/dec2000/135385_kapunan.htm

generations of indigenous communities. It also recognises the validity of customary laws and affirms their right to self-determination and governance. It is a law envisioned to empower this marginalised sector.

On paper, the Philippines crafted relatively strong laws that protect the environment and indigenous peoples. In practice, however, the strength of these laws is only as good as the will of those who hold the power to implement them. Obviously, where investments are concerned, laws become mere technicality and are thus often overlooked or circumvented. For this reason, despite its being extolled as “a comprehensive law on indigenous peoples’ rights unprecedented in the modern legal history of Southeast Asia” (Wenk, 2007:138), IPRA has received numerous criticisms particularly as its fundamental and philosophical underpinnings are in conflict with the Philippine Mining Act of 1995. For example, a most significant provision in IPRA is the law’s affirmation of the indigenous peoples’ right to a free, prior and informed consent (FPIC²⁹). This provision asserts that in the absence of such an unequivocal level of consent and regardless of magnitude, a project cannot take off or be discharged within its ancestral premises. This safeguard in the law, however, has been known to be circumvented by big players. Numerous studies have found that this consent is often secured through threats, misinformation, bribery, misrepresentation, and intimidation.³⁰ On closer examination, development projects such as mining are negotiated between government and the proponent. Having gained approval, the proponent then seeks entry into the mineral lands of indigenous peoples through a process of consultation to acquire the peoples’ FPIC. The right to be heard and be counted in a consultative process is one of the time-honoured traditions of indigenous peoples, and duly recognised in the law.³¹ Yet, experience in the field has proven time and again that consultations were held without the legitimate participation of the communities (Sanz, 2007; Malanes, 2002), and permits or licenses needed to operate the mines were granted despite vigorous complaints from the affected communities. It goes without saying that over and above IPRA and the rhetoric

²⁹ “*Free and Prior Informed Consent* – as used in this Act shall mean the consensus of all members of the ICCs/IPs, to be determined in accordance with their respective customary laws and practices, free from any external manipulation, interference and coercion, and obtained after fully disclosing the intent and scope of the activity, in a language an process understandable to the community;” (SEC. 3(g), CH II DEFINITION OF TERMS, IPRA).

³⁰ See, for example, the articles by Daytec-Yañgot, “FPIC: a shield or threat to Indigenous Peoples Rights?” Available from http://www.thai-ips.org/Documents/FPIC_philippines.pdf; Mayo-Anda, Cagatulla and La Viña, “Is the Concept of “Free and Prior Informed Consent” Effective as a Legal and Governance Tool to Ensure Equity among Indigenous Peoples?” Available from http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/2204/Mayo_Anda_Grizelda_Cagatulla_La_Vina.pdf?sequence=1.

³¹ “*Self-Governance* – The State recognizes the inherent right of ICCs/IPs to self-governance and self-determination and respects the integrity of their values, practices and institutions. Consequently, the State shall guarantee the right of ICCs/IPs to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.” (SEC. 13. CHAPTER IV RIGHT TO SELF-GOVERNANCE AND EMPOWERMENT, IPRA)

about empowerment of indigenous peoples, in practice, customary law is subsumed to all government agenda regardless of whether or not the desires and long-term welfare of the people were given ponder.

The indigenous communities who participated in this research pointed to the failure of some personnel of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), to live up to their mandate to promote the rights of indigenous peoples. In their experience, rather than assist them in representing their views, certain NCIP personnel are inclined to collude with mining companies.³²

Many of these critics said that the Mining Law is the government's framework of development and that IPRA must be interpreted accordingly to align with the tenets of liberalisation. Further, they pointed out that, with the government's receptiveness to the World Bank and IMF, it will continue to impose land instruments inclined towards and reflecting its colonial orientation. After all, the Regalian Doctrine is still well-articulated in legal framework, not least of all in the Constitution. Until this feudal economic theory is formally repudiated through statutory amendments, then by all means, it is to be assumed as legal and valid. As such, it continues to be a force to reckon with in the context of indigenous peoples' self-determination and self-governance using their indigenous laws and systems. This is exemplified in *Isagani Cruz and Cesar Europa versus Secretary of Environment and Natural Resource*,³³ a case that sought to strike down IPRA as 'unconstitutional', therefore, null.

Although IPRA was ultimately declared 'constitutional', the questions raised in the case implicate fundamental provisions in the Constitution particularly on the national patrimony and the power of the State over all the natural resources of the Philippines. The Justices³⁴ failed to arrive at one absolute accord in their conviction of the constitutionality of IPRA. There is, however, a notable total agreement amongst the parties involved that Philippine indigenous peoples warrant the empathy of government leaders and the protection of the State. The parties were at odds with each other only to the extent of solicitude indigenous peoples deserve without compromising the Constitution. It is noteworthy to consider the opinion of former Justice Kapunan³⁵ in upholding the constitutionality of IPRA:

³² Conversations with Council of Elders, Mining Area 2, August 2012; and Mining Area 3, September 2012.

³³ G.R. No. 135385, December 6, 2000.

³⁴ The Supreme Court voted 7-7. Former Supreme Court Justice Isagani Cruz filed a Motion for Reconsideration. The voting record remained unchanged.

³⁵ Of accord with Justice Kapunan were Chief Justice Davide and Justices Santiago, Puno, Besillo and Quisumbing.

The ‘existing rights’ that were intended to be protected must, per force, include the right of ownership by indigenous peoples over their ancestral lands and domains.

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Examining the IPRA, there is nothing in the law that grants to the Indigenous peoples ownership over the natural resources within their ancestral domains. The right of the Indigenous peoples in their ancestral domains includes ownership, but this ‘ownership’ is expressly defined and limited in s 7(a) and does not mention ownership of minerals, coals, wildlife, flora and fauna in traditional hunting grounds, fish in traditional fishing grounds, forest or timber in the sacred places, and all other natural resources found within the ancestral domains. The IPRA does not therefore violate the Regalian doctrine on the ownership, management and utilization of natural resources, as declared in s 2, art XII of the 1987 Constitution (Kapunan, undated).³⁶

Whilst the seven Justices resolved the constitutionality of IPRA, their hallmark decision failed to overcome the Regalian Doctrine, the major blight to the indigenous peoples’ full enjoyment of their ancestral domains.

Notwithstanding the ideal provisions ensconced in IPRA, in the end, it is the state that has the last say as to whether to affirm or deny the rights of indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains and their control of the land’s resources. In the framework for development in the ancestral domains, which law would take ascendancy and be sustained -the IPRA or the Mining Act?

In summary, the unhampered and chronic land problems that plague indigenous territories are proof enough that it is difficult to reconcile indigenous law with formal state laws. The reason is quite simple. As shown and discussed, they evolved from two distinct and dissimilar contexts, coming from different histories, experiences and worldviews on land issues and ancestral domains rights. “There is lack of congruence between customary law and national law on the ownership and use of land which results in a conflict-ridden situation” (Gaspar, 2000:126). Moreover, what makes them irreconcilable besides the more obvious differences, such as concept of land ownership and the meanings the people ascribe to their environments, is the fundamental philosophy and deep human understanding of nature underlying each paradigm. These tensions

³⁶ http://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/jurisprudence/2000/dec2000/135385_kapunan.htm

stemmed from the fact that the right of the indigenous cultural communities to be heard has been sidestepped in the promulgation of important laws, such as the Foreign Investment Act, Mining Law, and related policies that directly affect their homelands and livelihood.

Indigenous concepts of land ownership are different from established state laws of the Philippines (Leonen, 2007). For one, ownership for the indigenous is not based on titles and registrations. Instead, possession measured in terms of ‘time immemorial’ is the accepted norm and tradition, and this custom has been observed and respected for millennia by indigenous peoples (Leonen, 2004). Moreover, ownership is communal rather than individual; hence, ancestral domains are not open to expropriation through purchase or lease.

Existing simultaneously, these two different modes of ideologies – the state influenced by a colonial feudal theory on one hand, and the indigenous peoples adhering to their long-held customs on the other – contrast with and often contradict one another. As already stated, this conflict is fossilised in a historical accident when Spain planted its flag on the islands and brought its own concept of land systems down on the heads of indigenous peoples who embraced a worldview that contrasted starkly with Spain’s legal fiction of Regalian Doctrine. The apparent incongruity between indigenous tenets and state laws on environmental resource use and land ownership is the core of this conflict (Leonen, 2004). It is unfortunate that the government, from the colonial regime to the present administration, insists on enforcing land laws and policies that impose the Western system of land ownership upon indigenous peoples. Colonialism, far from being a foregone feudal practice is, after all, still truly alive and well in this modern day and age (Yang, 2012).

The Development Paradigm Adopted by the Arroyo Administration

The story of colonialism in the Philippines is a long history of adherence to legal frameworks that puts ‘development’ way above indigenous concepts and the more fundamental concern for the welfare of indigenous communities. This is evident in the assertions of former President Gloria Arroyo that mines development fuels the Philippine economy in leaps and bounds. Her administration spearheaded the Mining Revitalization Program (MRP). This program virtually warmed the investment climate in the Philippines to propitiously favour foreign capital and large-scale mineral resource plunder over Indigenous Peoples welfare. Authored principally by President Arroyo when she was still

a senator, the Mining Act and the subsequent MRP, both accorded foreign investors as much right as Filipino citizens to exploit the country's mineral reserves. Aside from tax incentives, regulatory laws were eased to attract investment conglomerates and soothe their anxiety over environmental constraints in the Philippines.

The Development Paradigm of the Aquino Administration

In an attempt to right the injurious provisions in the Mining Act, President Aquino signed Executive Order No. 79, s. 2012.³⁷ EO 79 temporarily closes the door on new mining applications and banned identified protected areas from mining. On its flip side, however, the EO does not put on hold the operations and activities of hundreds of others with approved mining applications. It, in fact, directs the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) to expedite the processing of applications on pending approval status prior to the signing of the EO. According to data from the MGB, 771 large-scale permits have been approved as of 30 June 2012 (refer to Table 1 below). These permits cover 1,009,161.21 hectares, or approximately 1/30 of the country's total land area. The President alone has permitted mining operations in 270,000 hectares of lands.³⁸

Table 1. Approved Mining Permits with Corresponding Land Area

Nature of Permit	Approved	Area in Hectares
Mineral Production and Sharing Agreements (MPSA)	340	602,630.32
Financial or Technical Assistance Agreements (FTAA)	6	108,872.45
Mineral Processing Permits (MPPs)	72	No data
Industrial Sand and Gravel Permits	236	3,322.96
Exploration Permits (EP)	82	285,058.01
Lease Contracts	35	9,277.47

Source: www.mgb.gov.ph

Given that more than half of the areas covered by approved permits fall within Indigenous Peoples' ancestral domains, this seriously threatens their survival as communities and continued existence in their own territories.

In conclusion, it has been shown that from the time of colonial conquest of the Philippines up to present, the government has undertaken to subdue the people's will by forcible imposition of the feudal practices justified as the Regalian Doctrine. The Regalian Doctrine is a Western paradigm that is completely opposed to the system of land ownership of indigenous peoples. According to this theory, all lands and resources belong to the State. Through the centuries since colonisation, various land laws and decrees were

³⁷ "INSTITUTIONALIZING AND IMPLEMENTING REFORMS IN THE PHILIPPINE MINING SECTOR xxx"

³⁸ www.mgb.gov.ph

issued to strengthen this imposition. Through this doctrine, the State has found legitimacy in disregarding the customary laws and systems of indigenous communities – traditions and protocols that have been practiced unhampered for millennia.

Despite international recognition of the right of indigenous peoples to govern themselves on their own terms, indigenous law continues to be consistently ignored and sidestepped in favour of State law in the Philippines. The State's tendency to cling to its colonial precepts discredits indigenous law and pushes it to a position of mediocrity.

This chapter has given a brief overview of the legal framework of the Philippines from colonial times up to the present. Presented were some of the concepts and laws on land ownership and use that showed that Western paradigms, rather than indigenous ideologies, determine the course of development in the Philippines. This chapter also explored the conflict between State laws and customary or ethnic laws. As shown, it is immediately obvious that the legal bedrock upon which all other laws are based on has grievous shortcomings. In content and implementation, State laws are mostly derived or copied from foreign origins or sources. This is not to say that the rules and institutions adopted from extraneous jurisdictions are inadequate or not suitable to our desires as a nation. It is merely to underscore a historical fact that our laws and their administration have not been drawn from indigenous sources.

There is a need, therefore, to re-examine our key legal institutions and critical laws to make them more attuned to the needs, desires and aspirations of the Filipino people in general, and the indigenous Filipinos in particular.

The next chapter provides a theoretical discussion on the meaning of 'indigeneness' by pursuing a number of specific literatures on emotional geographies, indigenous perspectives, and political ecology advanced by feminist, indigenous and post-structural scholars. This will provide a comprehensive and critical discourse to illustrate that Eurocentric views, rather than enhance the quality of life of indigenous peoples, have furthered their colonisation, marginalisation and dehumanisation.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The subject of “emotion” in social research has increasingly figured in the work of human geographers and others who have been cultivating awareness across disciplines in recent years (Evans and Thomas, 2009; Davidson, 2001; Bennett 2004, 2009; Goleman, 1996; Mehta and Bondi, 1999; Herman, 2008; Dallman et al., 2011; Meth and Maleza, 2003; Barbalet, 2002; Parr and Philo, 2003; Berlant, 2004). However, the language of emotion has not yet found its way in development studies, and research exploring its significance in development practice has remained scant. Despite the growing interest in other disciplines, “the introduction of emotion into the vocabulary of geographical scholarship does not necessarily challenge dominant ideas about what constitutes knowledge” (Bondi, 2005:4). Williams, for example, observes that emotion has often been regarded as the “‘scandal’ of reason”, (2001:1) so that questions of emotion have long been “[b]anished to the margins of Western thought and practice” (2001:1). In this view, emotions can very easily be relegated “off to the side” (Thrift, 2004:57) and “excluded ... from knowledge that counts” (Bondi, 2005:4).

This situation is mirrored in the realities confronting indigenous peoples throughout the world. Emotionally and spiritually connected to their ancestral lands which shape their cultural identity (Jacobs, 1994; Little, 2003), indigenous peoples of the Philippines have suffered circumstances that most indigenous communities in other parts of the world are similarly contending with (Panelli et al., 2008). Collectively, they struggle through the onslaught and experiences of colonisation and flagrant exploitation of their natural resources. Social scientists have barely scratched the surface of the depth of connections between indigenous spaces, survival and identity to understand indigenous attachment to their ancestral territories (Johnson and Murton, 2007). However, critical studies on the impact of mineral development on sacred territories and ancestral domains do not particularly enjoy priority focus in development research in the Philippines. As a result, ancestral domains and cultural landscapes are often regarded, not as places of emotional engagement and spiritual connections, but as economic assets needed to sustain a society steeped in Western/capitalist/consumerist values.

Inspired by phenomenological and existentialist philosophical movements, this thesis is an attempt to overturn prevailing tendencies in development research, legislation and policy formulation to systematically objectify emotions, meanings, values and perceptions about the world in general, and the indigenous peoples in particular. I draw

from the literatures of emotional and indigenous geographies, and post-structural political ecology. As the theoretical approach in this study, this epistemology offers deeper insight into the complexities behind the struggles of indigenous peoples to fiercely protect their ancestral domains from development exploitation, even to the point of laying down their lives to prevent the desecration of their sacred landscapes.

EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHIES

Recent development in critical social research has seen geography increasingly engaging in political change, social transformation and policy-making (Anderson and Smith, 2001; Herman, 2008; Davidson and Milligan, 2004). This engagement took the form of understanding that “the human world is constructed and lived through ... emotions” (Anderson and Smith, 2001:7). This research argues that in the realm of human experience, human subjectivity and emotions pervade all activities, including economic and cultural, hence, must be given weight in any consideration involving human beings. Yet, in the context of governance and development policies, this reality is not recognised and, instead, what prevails is the popular notion that emotion is an element of obstruction (van Stokkom, 2005; Marcus, 2002). Critical geographers take exception to this view and have assailed the exclusion of emotions within the rational world of social discipline, law, policy formation and decision-making. This exclusion has served to devalue emotions or deny its existence on grounds that emotions impair rational judgement and obnubilate level-headed decision-making. Emotions are a “highly gendered” (Anderson and Smith, 2001:7) issue and therefore, a potential platform for brewing political discord. As such, keeping “one’s own emotions under control and others’ under wraps” (Anderson and Smith, 2001:7) are the hallmark of sterling leadership.

There have been attempts by feminist, post-colonial and post-structural scholars to study the intersections of emotions and indigenous sacred landscapes, and Western-influenced ideologies (Cresswell, 2004; Bondi, 2005). Their studies helped gain a deeper empathetic grasp of such phenomena as emotions, identity, place and power (Herman, 2008; Panelli, 2008; Escobar, 2006b; Davidson and Milligan, 2004). These academic endeavours, however, have yet to find a strong sympathetic audience in governments in most countries. In this context, not surprisingly, governance and decision-making processes gravitate toward logic, rationality and objectivity. To implicitly or explicitly articulate persuasive argument for the humane and subjective is construed as being weak, illogical, irrational and therefore feminine. Whilst to be detached from feelings and being devoid of emotions are attributes that come across as strong, reasonable, reliable and

therefore masculine. Such gendered connotations and prejudice, Anderson and Smith (2001) maintain, are without apology implicit in policy-making processes. These engendered assumptions that link femininity to emotionality and irrationality (Bondi, 2005:6), whilst framing decision-making in the masculine sense are what feminist researchers have been seeking to destabilise.

This research utilises the foregoing ideas to frame the experiences of indigenous peoples and examine their emotional attachments and spiritual connections to their sacred spaces and ancestral domains. Within the perspective of this framework, the discussions and analyses herein aim to establish that the present development thrusts in the Philippines and the corresponding environmental resource management policies have served to further marginalise the very sector that these policies purport to protect. In this thesis, I link emotional geographies, place-based connections, spiritual attachment, and cultural survival to feminist geography.

Feminist Perspectives: Deconstructing Rational/Emotional Binaries

Feminist critiques have argued that emotions are a most significant part of everyday experiences. They sought to nullify the notion that emotions are "mapped ... onto and into women's bodies" (Bondi, 2005:6) as if emotions were the monopoly of the female in the humankind, and that men are by nature emotionally detached and uninvolved. To experience "grieving" (Sharp, 2009:76) and being "overly emotional" (Davidson and Milligan, 2004:524) are characteristics and phenomena in the league of the feminine, therefore "outside the domains of rationality" (Bondi, 2005:6). Such convoluted social constructions associating emotions and femininity with irrationality have relegated the importance of emotions, from being vital elements in social research, policy formulation, and governance processes, to obscurity. At the very least, this view reeks of the medieval concept of masculine dominance in all social constructs.

Research on "emotional geographies encompasses a growing interdisciplinary scholarship that combines the insights of geography, gender studies, cultural studies, sociology, anthropology and other disciplines to understand how the world is mediated by feeling" (Thien, 2005:450-451). The growing interest in research on emotions has shown the tightly-knit link between geographies of emotions and the relationship of indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains (Davidson and Milligan, 2004).

Sacred sites, with their rich biological diversity, play an important role in maintaining the culture, and the emotional health and well-being of indigenous cultural communities (Adam, 2012). Understanding the prevailing dualistic perspectives is critical

in this research to highlight the precarious situation of indigenous peoples and the adverse effects of implementing environmental resource management policies that threaten peoples' survival by disregarding their deep emotional connection to their sacred sites and ancestral domains.

Emotional Connection and Attachment to Ancestral Places

The failure to respect ecosystems, and the sacred spaces within them, has a direct impact on the lives and well-being of both the present and future generations of indigenous cultural communities. Indigenous peoples revere their sacred spaces and set these apart as hallowed ground. "Sacred Sites are special reserved holy places where our elders go to pray and talk to our Gods. These places mean so much to our Indigenous communities and deserve a lot of attention and protection" (Mulenkei, 2000:1).

For the indigenous cultural communities, everything that is within their ancestral domains "are not mere accidents of creation" (Council of Elders, interview, mining area 2, August 2012); rather, these are spaces for emotional bonding, spiritual union, and intellectual connections. Their sacred landscapes are where they establish their identity as a people, specific places where their sense of belonging is historically, spiritually and psychologically rooted. Emotional geography provides a tremendous tool for understanding the complexities and depth of emotional attachments and spiritual connections of indigenous cultural communities to their ancestral domains. In this sense, emotional geography, as an analytic tool, is useful in comprehending certain profound dimensions that otherwise will continue to be ignored or trivialized in social research. These hitherto unacknowledged dimensions refer to the profound meanings that the communities ascribe to spaces, plants, animals, bodies of water, caves, trees, mountains, and resources found in their environment. As such, indigenous communities feel a strong link to their ancestral domains and develop a close bond with their environment along "attitudes of respect, restraint, humility, awe, care, reciprocity and love as well as an appreciation of the resources, utility, dangers and beauty" (Stevens, 1998, as quoted in Panelli and Tipa, 2009:21).

A study conducted by Kearney and Bradley (2009) amongst aborigines of northern Australia reveals the powerful emotional bond indigenous peoples have to their sacred homelands as a result of their awareness of their ancient origins and relationship to the spirits of their ancestors. Their daily social and sensory experiences with their natural environment directly influence the ways cultural communities ascribe meanings and substance to their landscapes (Kearney, 2009). "Emotions permeate [the] social and

physical environments [of indigenous cultural communities], and in the context of feminist critiques of binary thinking ... are understood to be generated by and expressive of the [communities'] wider social relations” (Bondi, 2005:6-7). Thus, for indigenous peoples, “emotion is the affective state of consciousness that is experienced in engagements with homelands” (Kearney, 2009:211). The extent of the relationship and emotional engagement that indigenous peoples have with their ancestral domains and ancestors, according to Kearney, is what defines them as a people and “ultimately shapes [their] cultural identity ... [and] emotional encounters” (Kearney, 2009:211). These emotions “include love, nurturance, concern, fear, anger, bewilderment, sadness and loneliness” (Kearney, 2009:211).

Holistic Approach to Well-being and Health

Different people respond to various circumstances in a myriad of ways. In like manner, different circumstances affect the emotional health of individuals and/or communities in varying degrees of impact. What is adverse and distressing to one may not necessarily be the same to another. A study on health reveals that one of the factors identified as crucial to a person's well-being is his/her emotional attachment to a particular place (Wilson, 2003 & 2005). Diaspora and displacement of indigenous communities, for example, have a strong negative impact on people who, after having developed a deeply-rooted cultural, historical and place-based identity from birth, are forced to leave their ancestral domains and re-settle in a strange land, possibly never to return to their places of origin again. How strong (or weak) that emotional bond is depends on the degree of entrenchment and the sense of belonging one has to his/her culture, memories, history, spirituality and politics. In this instance, due to the deep connection indigenous communities have to their particular place, the experience over the destruction of or loss of access to ancestral landscapes and spaces of emotional communion can become seriously traumatic.

“The current upsurge of interest in emotions within geography has the potential to contribute to critical perspectives that question conventional limits to scholarship” (Bondi, 2005:3). A number of scholars (Kearns and Dyck, 1995; Madge, 1998; Wilson, 2003& 2005; Gastaldo et al., 2004; Smith (B), 2006) argue that the depth of connection to one's place of identity and ancestral origin offers meaning to one's existence hence, in a sense, prophylactic for one's health. Their argument gives credence to the idea that physical health results from, facilitates, and/or goes hand in hand with mental, spiritual and emotional well-being. This puts paid to the notion that health is primarily a physical

issue and that emotions are a different matter altogether. As Bondi (2005:3) contends, “meaning-making”, health and quality of life are “directly relevant to geographical engagements with emotion”.

Indigenous cultural communities of the Philippines, like most other indigenous peoples around the world, consider the physical lands of their ancestral domains as intrinsically connected to, and the extension of, the symbolic, spiritual and social aspects of their life. For them, the unseen and intangible are equally as real as the manifest and tangible and one cannot exist without the other. In short, all these elements are essential without which life as they know it ceases to be. Hence, simply put, physical health is also emotional well-being, and vice versa.

Batangan, a Filipino medical doctor who conducted extensive research into alternative health care for indigenous cultural communities, discusses how their practice of traditional healing is linked to their sacred geographies and culture of volunteerism and community participation (Batangan and Ujano-Batangan, 2007). Parallel observations have been made on Canada's First Nations where the people's well-being is connected to specific geographies that shape their identity (Kearns and Dyck, 1995; Madge, 1998; Wilson, 2003). They argue that the daily lives of indigenous peoples revolve around social interactions specific to particular therapeutic places within their territories. As Wilson (2003) concludes, indigenous health is inextricably linked to their cultural identity and particular emotional sites, including those areas that provide them livelihood, food and medicines. For indigenous peoples, it is important to live attuned to the rhythm and cadence of their natural environments. This is achieved by living out harmonious relationships with individuals in the communities, nature and the resources thereat.

To add to the growing interest in indigenous research using indigenous perspectives of health and place, this study seeks to highlight the vital importance of sacred spaces to the emotional, spiritual, psychological and physical well-being of indigenous cultural communities. This framework also helps to analyse and understand concurrent issues such as the incidence of mental illness resulting from the loss of ancestral domains and access to sacred spaces. The involuntary severance of such deep spiritual connection to their ancestors' sacred sites, therapeutic places and geographies of identity has been known to drive some members of indigenous communities to the brink of insanity, even suicide; others commit crimes and a number of the youth have succumbed to chemical addiction. For indigenous peoples, depriving them of their daily link to their ancestors by prohibiting their access to their sacred places affects their lives

in a sense more profound than anyone could ever imagine and understand.

Emotions are an integral part of human life. Yet, policy-makers in the Philippines continue to ignore emotions, aligning instead with Western-honed meanings that operate against the realities of indigenous cultural communities. There is no apparent effort to understand the vital and intangible significance that indigenous Filipinos have for their sacred geographies. Their deeply-held beliefs and multidimensional relationship with their ancestral domains are belittled, if not completely devalued by sanctioning the wanton destruction of their natural sacred sites. Because of this, environmental policies, knowledge production and political, economic and social processes, bereft of their emotive foundations, “merely reflect the wider cultural trends that treat emotions as attributes available for commercial and political exploitation” (Bondi, 2005:22). Bringing emotions into greater focus contributes in a major way in our understanding of the deeper issues that lie at the core of indigenous communities.

INDIGENOUS GEOGRAPHIES

Colonialism and its subsequent successors – imperialism, modernisation and globalisation – descended upon indigenous peoples to cause wholesale systematic breakdown of the social, economic, cultural and political structures of indigenous systems. As a consequence thereof, indigenous peoples and cultures are often framed according to labels and stereotypes. Tuhiwai-Smith (1999), Said (1978) and Bhabha (1988), have shown how certain cultures have influenced, distorted and misrepresented other cultures, further exerting social, political and cultural domination over peoples in the post-colonial world order. These influences found their way in Eurocentric discourses and texts that reflect the seeming unease of the West toward the existence of ‘other’ cultures, such as indigenous cultural communities. In the minds of the colonising powers, assimilation to the mainstream dominant culture is the answer such that it became comfortable to lump together unique and differing cultures according to their particular geographic areas (i.e., Asia, Latin America, Europe, or Middle East). To these conquering powers, there is no room for social constructs and cultural identities separate and distinct from their own (McDowell, 1999). Thus, indigenous communities became ‘minorities’ and, because their cultures do not fit the mould created for them by the West, they are treated as ‘other’ (Smith, 2003). Colonising cultures introduced the ‘primitives’ to a different spirituality, superimposing the colonisers' beliefs, meanings and imaginings over peoples, and replacing or displacing the deep reverence of indigenous cultural

communities on nature, purposely to establish homogeneity under one world order through religion and religious beliefs.

As a matter of interest in this thesis, I contend that the emotional attachment of and reverential manner by which indigenous cultural communities approach their ancestral domains and sacred landscapes are the exact antithesis of Eurocentric paradigms. Indigenous geographies stand as barricades in opposition to the propensity of Western discourses to fuel, implicitly or explicitly, strong moves to further colonise and treat nature as articles of trade and commodities to exploit in the name of development.

Post-Colonial Geography

Post-colonialism emerged to address, account for and counteract the discursive legacies of colonial exploitation, dominance and subjugation by non-indigenous cultures over indigenous peoples. As an epistemology, it entails destabilising the inherent assumptions espoused in Eurocentric discourses. It challenges the hegemony of hierarchical and gendered dualisms such as First World/Third World, West/East, North/South, developed/underdeveloped, powerful/powerless, civilised/uncivilised, and so forth. It also critiques such notions as superiority/inferiority attendant to issues of identity and racism. Said (1978), a pioneer in post-colonial research, and Spivak (1988), point to the many ways by which the West conjure false images to misrepresent other cultures, depicting indigenous “Others” as inferior reproductions or mimics of the superior and progressive West. Stereotypes, labels and myths have been conveniently employed to legitimise the indiscriminate exploitation of peoples whose only fault is that their cultures and systems do not fall within the homogenising mould of the West.

Through the centuries, the use of violence and oppression against indigenous communities were aimed to silence their voice (Gilmartin, 2002; Moss et al., 1993). Colonialism has played a major role in the history of the Philippines. Power and physical dominion being the driving force behind European colonisation, the contemporary times see domination in terms of pervasive and effective control over natural resources, governance systems and processes. As a result, indigenous communities are robbed of their right to their ancestral domains and prevented from practicing their cultures (Harris, 2004). Even with laws in place that declare their native rights, indigenous peoples continue to grapple with the effects of colonisation on their cultures. Their sacred indigenous knowledge has been widely appropriated, both by colonial powers in the past and the Government at present, without due regard to their emotions and cultural

sensibilities. The so-called "white man's burden" has played a significant role in marginalising indigenous communities, with governance as the most potent tool for justifying their (dis)possession of their ancestral domains.

Exposing contemporary colonial practices (Johnson and Murton, 2007; Gilmartin, 2002) and their impact on the lives of indigenous communities are the main themes of this thesis. The pull of colonial mentality and practices continues to be strong and, if it remains unchallenged, will persist to govern the major aspects of our life at present and in the future. It is therefore incumbent upon geographers to come up with studies and robust debates, particularly in resource management and land use policies, to increasingly create anti-colonial research and knowledge. Decolonised geographies allows for displaced and oppressed voices to be heard and for their lived experiences to be fully represented in development discourse (Gilmartin, 2002; Johnson and Murton, 2007). "[The] commitment to attend to the full richness of subjective experiences of places and spaces has provided an important source of inspiration for geographical engagements with emotion. On the other hand, its failure to unsettle the alignment of emotion with individualised subjective experience meant that it has not developed in ways that necessarily problematize the politics of liberal and neo-liberal individualism" (Bondi, 2005:5-6).

Identity Grounded on Emotional Places

What makes for identity that reinforces a sense of belongingness? Indigenous identities are grounded on the ways by which indigenous peoples relate to and interact with their ancestral places and revered spaces (Panelli and Tipa, 2009). Therefore, impeding their access to their traditional territories has a more serious impact on their lives than we care to admit.

Previous studies on the effects of development on Filipino indigenous peoples have failed to focus on the aspect of cultural identities based on geographies of emotions. As pointed out by Wilson (2003) in her investigation on therapeutic geographies, places commonly and ordinarily used by indigenous peoples in their daily activities inexorably link them to their ancestral domains because these give them meanings and surround them with memories. These activities that are closely related to specific landscapes in the indigenous domains include planting and harvesting of crops, ceremonial and worship rituals, cleaning and burying their dead, healing of the sick, assembly meetings, chanting while washing clothes, traditional singing and animal sacrifices during celebratory dates,

birthing, fishing, food gathering, hunting, wood collecting, animal grazing, watering and other such activities that have been in practice for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Their daily participation in their traditional activities has evolved into ritualistic and powerful symbols for communicating and honouring their ancestors before them who have also, in the past, followed the same daily rituals and activities. These profound connections to their ancestors and ancestral domains are so deeply ingrained in their psyche that they shape the soul and identity of these people. For indigenous peoples, nature's resources, over and above their being necessary material elements for the sustenance of their physical well-being, have deeper and far more profound meanings. Everything in nature connects them to their past, their present and their future. For them, an abundant nature is symbolism and assurance of the perpetuity of their peoples in honour of their great history (Panelli and Tipa, 2009, Papayannis, 2009). Nature for them is an extension of their personhood. Nature, linked to the ancestral spaces of the communities, creates meanings and values for the indigenous who, in turn, ascribe their own meanings and values to their specific landscapes. Setting up the future of the next generation through their present experiences is crucial to the preservation and assured continuity of their cultures, further reinforcing the place-based identity of indigenous peoples.

Refusing indigenous communities of their vital links to their ancestral domains therefore, impacts adversely on these peoples who stand to lose their historical meanings and memories that constitute their communal and individual identity. These “emotional encounters” (Kearney, 2009:11) and experiences, in turn, have dominant and “direct impact on the lives and well-being of communities of present and future generations” (Adam, 2012:9) and “ultimately shape cultural identity” (Kearney, 2009:11).

Natural Landscapes and Sacred Spaces

Sacred spaces and natural landscapes hold significant emotive value for indigenous cultural communities. Besides being special places for social interaction amongst community members, and where rituals, worship, feasts and ceremonies take place, they are also revered for bringing comfort and healing to the sick (Wilson, 2003; Richmond et al., 2005).

Indigenous Filipinos derive nurturing from their ancestral domains. Nature for them is the epitome of motherhood, literally and symbolically Mother Earth. Their cultures teach them that Nature is the Great Provider and it is their responsibility to

protect Earth's life-nurturing gifts hence, land and its resources are sacred. As such, they see Earth as a place where the spirits manifest their presence through nature's resources and abundance. Everything is a gift by the Creator to the people through their ancestors (Wilson, 2003). Therefore, it is only fitting to show gratitude for these gifts by nurturing the earth and revering the sacred sites of the spirits.

Indigenous cultures equate their sacred territories with health and rest. For them, these places are not just random sites without any links to the past and the collective memories of the communities. Instead, these are specific and special sites that have been part of their own histories, legends and ancient stories. For example, a particular river or mountain may be revered by one community, but may not hold any special significance for others because it is not part of their memories, identity, traditions and histories. In short, emotional and spiritual connections are specifically tied to reverence to particular areas and/or objects in nature (Wilson, 2003). With the advent of development in ancestral domains, some communities have kept their sacred spaces hidden and fiercely protected from ruin and misappropriation (Dallman et al., 2011). Others keep them veiled from public knowledge for fear that these sacred places will be taken away from them, adapted to conform to the mould of Western perceptions, and commodified to advance tourism and trade. For example, the *Cordillera* communities in the Philippines have consistently parried Government-sanctioned projects that will submerge their sacred land in order to give way to state-of-the-art road networks and dams. Such adamant adherence to Western perceptions only show that Government is yet to grasp the real meaning of “sacred” along indigenous terms. This political disposition, given the diverse cultures in the Philippines, has contributed immensely to the pervasive cultural incoherence in the country that served to undermine the capabilities of indigenous cultural communities for self-determination and protection of their sacred spaces as well as their rights to their ancestral domains as provided under the law.

POST-STRUCTURAL POLITICAL ECOLOGY

The flowering of post-structuralist philosophy such as political ecology offer alternative notions to dispute the structures that institutionalise the existence of binaries (Bondi, 1990; Massey, 1994) in governance processes. Primarily, political ecology locates environmental issues at the centre of the dynamics of power relations and competing cultural meanings on ancestral domains and natural resources (Cronon, 1996; Willems-Braun, 1996; Robbins, 2000 & 2004). Within the context of indigenous cultural communities, environmental resource management and use is not a neutral discourse, but rather imbued with conflict and struggle arising from control of and access to these resources (Robbins, 2000). The rights and ecological beliefs of indigenous peoples as custodians and stewards of their ancestral domains clash with those of Western capitalist notion that nature is subject to the exploitation and manipulation of human beings. In the Philippines, however, discussions on political power, culture and conflicting views of environment do not figure conspicuously in the official deliberations by policy-makers, development agents and legislators. This begs the question of how the country's political leaders can represent the interest and protect the welfare of indigenous peoples when they themselves refuse to acknowledge, much less recognise, the true impact of hegemonic processes that prevent communities access to their sacred domains.

Several political ecology theorists (Merchant, 1990; Escobar, 2006a & 2006b; Shiva, 1988; Rocheleau, 1995a & 1995b; Nightingale, 2003; Biersack, 2006; Bryant, 1992 & 2000) have found links of their work with feminist scholarship. Specifically, their analyses help to explain how the confluence of power hierarchies, social structures and gender relations in the Third World has led to tragic environmental meltdowns. This unfortunately redounds to the detriment of indigenous cultural communities who are the most affected by government mismanagement. Their critique on the human-environment interactions in developing countries like the Philippines (Bryant, 2000) merits mention in this research because it draws attention to cultural distribution conflicts. At the same time, it brings to prominence the subjective experiences of indigenous peoples, “therefore vital to the capacity of emotional geographies to advance geographical knowledge in significant ways” (Bondi, 2005:6).

Cultural Distribution Conflicts

Historically, culture has been proven to be a potent tool for domination (Biersack, 2006). “Cultural distribution conflicts”, a term put forward by Arturo Escobar (2006b:10),

describes how cultures collide when one insinuates its power effectively above the rest and dictates upon the cultural meanings and practices of peoples. Through control and manipulation, such power subjugates by defining and regulating social life and creating distinct perceptions, attitudes, norms, and meaning-making values. Moreover, more than the takeover of the economic life of the subjugated culture are the insidious ways by which the dominant culture overwhelms and dictates on ways people think about ecology, family, person-hood, body, information, knowledge, property, and relationships. Issues associated with "place, difference, justice, and politics" (Escobar, 2006b:122), economy, culture, and environment (Escobar, 2006c), are what he calls 'cultural distribution conflicts'. In short, culture domination is the modern-day version of colonisation minus the physical war armoury. Cultural distribution conflict is about power and domination and the struggles that surround it. Such power to subjugate the physical world also influences cultural meanings, practices and social structures. At the heart of this power struggle is the fundamental conflict between Western and non-Western worldviews that underlie competing and disproportionate distribution of cultural meanings, conceptions and practices on environment and resource use. As Escobar observes, "Cultural meanings define the practices that determine how nature is appropriated and utilized" (Escobar, 2006b:10). "Western conceptions of nature perceive it as a resource base for human use; yet, Indigenous conceptualize nature as "resources" that provide emotional, spiritual, and intellectual connections and sensory experiences that maintain identity" (Ngo, 2010:30).

Using the framework of Escobar's post-structuralist political ecology, this thesis posits that Western cultural constructs facilitate the exploitation of nature's resources within ancestral domains. For example, the natural resources in ancestral domains are seen not as instruments to enhance the human dignity of indigenous communities, but as vehicles for economic gains to support the lifestyles prevalent amongst consumerist cultures (Loomis, 2000) like the West. Development that is perched on a set of perceptions and practices far removed and demarcated from the ways of indigenous peoples is a form of modern-day domination of the non-Western "Other". Thus the Western brand of development competes with and becomes the meaning that defines the domains of indigenous peoples. Such development dehumanises indigenous peoples because it silences their cultures, belittles their sensory experiences and ignores their profound emotional connections with their landscapes. "These competing views of the landscape create cultural distribution conflicts [resulting to] struggles over meanings and access to lands" (Ngo, 2010:30). Against such competing ideologies, most environmental

policies, resource management decisions and laws become tools for control over peoples and nature. These are the issues at the core of politicised environments where peoples are significantly subsumed and cultural meanings completely ignored.

By law, indigenous cultural communities in the Philippines are acknowledged as the original settlers and traditional occupants of the various landscapes that are endowed with nature's wealth. However, in the face of politicised environments and emergent conflicts over meanings of landscapes, this recognition is nothing more than lip service. The laws of the country, cocooned in the Regalian Doctrine³⁹, draw the line between occupancy and control. Using Escobar's post-structural political ecology framework, political powers and economic entities dominate over and control the resources (Escobar, 1998), not the human occupants of the land.

Survival and Access to Livelihood Resources and Sacred Landscapes

Governance, policy-making, laws and decisions regarding environment and resources play into the edicts of capitalism. Sophisticated market economics, an alien concept to indigenous cultural communities, push peoples to the periphery in the power hierarchy. Power relations and structural processes prevent communities from their free access to their ancestral domains including the resources within that are vital to their survival (Escobar, 1998; Robbins, 2000; Johnson et al., 2007). Conflicts over meanings of ancestral domains bear upon environmental resource development policies that serve to diminish their quality of life and dictate on the ways they carry on their cultural activities. The protracted struggles of indigenous communities to regain their ancestral domains and thereby their control and access to their sacred spaces has created a sense of hopelessness in them (Bryant, 2000). Their vulnerability and powerlessness in the face of loss of their traditional natural sites can only be described in terms of modern-day colonialism, reflecting the extent of exploitation and degradation of their homelands.

Inherently a tool of domination, Western conception of environment marginalises indigenous cultural communities. Indigenous perceptions flow against the current of capitalist/consumerist tenets thus the two cannot help but run on a collision course. Indigenous communities are bound to suffer the onslaught of full-blown cultural distribution conflicts over prevailing environmental resource management and practices. Whilst Western social construction of nature is fundamentally capitalistic and neo-liberal,

³⁹ "The so-called Regalian Doctrine, which was introduced into the country's legal system during the colonial period, effectively established State ownership of land and natural resources in the public domain. As a consequence, no land can be owned by a person, natural or juridical, unless expressly granted by the State through a title or similar land tenure instrument" (Arquiza, 2005:5).

indigenous peoples have long ago cultivated perspectives that view ancestral domains and nature's resources as geographies of emotional connections and therefore accorded protection, respect and awe. Therefore, development policies and institutions of governance that are heavily influenced by Western-prescribed values intensify the conflict between Eurocentric and non-Western/"other" binaries further alienating indigenous cultural communities.

Exploring the dynamics behind cultural distribution conflicts offers a wealth of opportunities in deepening our understanding of the adverse impact of the politicisation of environments and resource management processes on indigenous cultural communities. Moreover, the insights gained from engaging with Escobar's post-structural political ecology assumptions help to explain the interplay between powerful political, economic and social agents and how their influence shape and define meanings and governance processes. Furthermore, Escobar's framework provides the much-needed venue for indigenous cultural communities of the Philippines to speak with clarity and be heard using the language of their emotions to convey the meanings they ascribe to their ancestral territories. I examine these indigenous cultural constructions and conflicts of meanings in Chapters 5 and 6.

The foregoing chapter discusses the theoretical framework of this thesis. It argues that the survival of indigenous cultural communities is hinged on their continued and unhampered occupation and control of their ancestral domains, environmental resources and sacred spaces. The use of concepts underlying geographies of emotions, indigenous geographies, and post-structural political ecology offers insights into how cultural meanings, perceptions, knowledges and practices impinge on policy formulation and governance processes in the Philippines.

In the next chapter, I expound on the philosophical foundations and the necessity of utilising the appropriate methodologies that are culture-sensitive and historically contextual in order to have a clear grasp of the deep significance of sacred spaces to the survival of indigenous peoples.

CHAPTER 4

CRITICAL METHODOLOGIES, METHODS AND FIELD RESEARCH

This chapter discusses the methodological framework of the thesis. It underscores the crucial need to be culture-sensitive when conducting research with indigenous peoples. The purpose for this is to generate data that, in turn, will help the researcher better understand their struggles to protect and preserve their ancestral domains, long-held traditions, and their way of life in the face of development.

A number of studies have attempted to highlight indigenous concerns, experiences and worldviews within research, to understand theory through their unique perspectives, and to utilise the research outcomes for their benefit. This project, on the other hand, focuses the spotlight on the sentiments, emotions and perceptions of the indigenous peoples of the Philippines and places these on equal footing with concepts born, bred and nurtured in Western ideologies, hence, does not pay homage to Eurocentric views. It is envisioned to be a study driven and directed by the indigenous peoples themselves with the researcher acting only as facilitator. It is fully grounded on their deep-seated sentiments regardless of all other considerations such as national economy and development.

To map out the research process and to grasp the meaning of “indigenous-ness” from the viewpoint of the indigenous themselves (Louis, 2007), I draw from methodologies advanced in studies on geographies of emotion, and feminist and indigenous discourses. My purpose is to establish that the use of culture-sensitive and historically informed methodologies is pivotal in doing research amongst indigenous Filipinos as well as other marginalised groups wherein trust is a key factor in its success. In the following discussion, I attempt to explore in-depth why and how adopting feminist and indigenous methodologies is most appropriate for this research. The first part explains the regulatory research ethics at Victoria University of Wellington, including the process of obtaining ethics approval from the Human Ethics Committee. The second part discusses the foundations for selecting the appropriate research methodology with particular focus on feminist and indigenous methodologies. A full description of my field research follows after that and, finally, the qualitative data analysis process is discussed.

I. Regulatory Research Ethics at Victoria University of Wellington

The basic ethical considerations and principles of Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), and the processes pertinent to obtaining approval from the Human Ethics Committee (HEC) have their basis in human medical experimentation. In some

instances, social research and studies are exempt from HEC assessments (Babbie, 2010:72). This required permission for the VUWHEC review process is to ensure the protection of research participants from harm as well as free VUW from possible legal ramifications. The VUWHEC application and approval process, straightforward though it may appear, is a matter that must be dealt with most seriously and with utmost sensitivity especially as the study involves human subjects (Martin, 2007). There are established regulatory frameworks that must be strictly adhered to before approval is conferred on any research involving human subjects.

Of special concern in the HEC approval process is the signed consent form for research involving human participants. The goal of this particular HEC regulatory procedure is “to indemnify the University against any lawsuits as a result of research” (Louis, 2007:137) and protect research participants from possible harm. Louis (2007) argues, however, that these forms are inherently flawed in that the human subject protection clause “do[es] not really protect the so-called 'human subjects' from any negative consequences that the research may have on them nor do they provide for any reward from any of its positive consequences. As can be surmised, these deficiencies create a number of awkward situations for both researchers and indigenous communities” (Louis, 2007:137).

For all intents and purposes, the HEC consent form is an example of Western legal and business practices binding two parties in a shared commitment through signed documents. This university prerequisite, however, became a matter of personal concern to me during the negotiations for my passage into indigenous communities. The indigenous cultural communities of the Philippines have a long history of being victimised through legal contracts and documents that have been unscrupulously used as instruments of bondage and dispossession. Over the years, due to severe lack of education and Western sophistication, along with their trusting nature, they have been methodically deceived into signing away their lands in exchange for promises of development that never materialised. This type of Western practice, designed to protect Western interests, have been callously used in numerous deplorable ways, generating centuries of untold suffering, oppression and exploitation for indigenous Filipinos. Having learned their lessons the hard way, they can hardly be blamed for regarding all kinds of documents that require their signatures with wariness, suspicion, and even cynicism.

Despite this scenario, I began the process of applying for HEC approval in March 2012 in compliance with VUW requirements. This was accomplished in close

consultation with my thesis supervisor, Professor John Overton. On the matter of Consent Forms, the issue about the reluctance of the participant indigenous cultural communities to affix their identity marks or signatures on any document regardless of its nature or purpose arose as expected. I realized that due to their bitter experiences of being misled and deceived by individuals, government personnel and development agents wherein by the simple act of signing documents, they were unsuspectingly dispossessed of their ancestral lands and their sacred places destroyed, their wariness was understandable and justified and needed to be respected.

In applying to the HEC, therefore, I explained in detail the alternative manner by which I planned to obtain the consent of the research participants:

“Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is obtained following the time-honoured customs and practices of the communities. These involve rituals unique to the people themselves. Consent to participate is not in written form. The traditional ways of the communities involved in the study are bound by honour and personal vow of respect and mutual protection. The Information Sheet will be explained orally/verbally in detail to participants in their own language, emphasising that their participation is voluntary and that their identities both individually and as a community will be held in utmost confidentiality. It will also be explained clearly that at the end of the study, all records shall be turned over to the communities involved, should they expressly choose to, and in no instance shall copies of the original recordings and transcripts thereof be made available to the public at large.” (Item V-iv, Application for Approval of Research Projects form)

I also explained why consent could not be obtained in the manner prescribed by the HEC:

“It is the expressed will of the communities that the participants and the researcher undergo specific traditional brotherhood rites in obtaining the willingness of individuals and families to participate in the research. The Council of Elders and *Babaylan* perform these solemn rites. During the ceremony, the researcher is given the opportunity to explain the nature of the study to be conducted and to ensure that the whole community understands what it means to participate in the research study so they can make a conscious, deliberate and informed decision as to whether they wish to participate or not. Due to their lack of conventional or mainstream

literacy, these communities have constantly fallen prey to the trickeries and deceptions of ‘outsiders’. They have been asked to affix their thumb mark on documents which, in their ignorance, were used to strip the communities of their ancestral territories. Putting their “identity stamp” on any document has, therefore, been viewed with suspicion and looked upon as a threat to their survival.” (Item V-iv, Application for Approval of Research Projects form)

Bearing in mind that volatile issues close to the heart of indigenous peoples are involved here, I sought the advice of the tribal chiefs on the best possible arrangements that will ensure the protection of the communities from negative repercussions on account of my research, whilst allowing me to fulfil the HEC regulations. Unfortunately, despite their expressed desire to willingly participate in my research, the communities vehemently opposed the idea of signing documents of any kind.

Nevertheless, because the HEC requires it, I complied and submitted a written Consent Form, despite having mixed feelings about it, trepidation being foremost. I felt it was a futile exercise because the target communities had already expressed their overt opposition to it. Nevertheless, I showed the written consent form to the tribal chieftains and explained the circumstances surrounding its necessity. They reiterated their displeasure at signing such forms, emphasising that the very act of allowing an 'outsider' into their domains and premises is consent enough in itself. With this statement, the tribal chiefs could not have been more explicit in their refusal to be bound by any document.

In the ensuing interviews and informal conversations I had with the research participants, therefore, no mention was ever made regarding the written consent form. In fact, due to the firm stand of the indigenous communities on the matter, it was never put to the purpose for which it was formulated. Having followed the HEC regulatory procedures, the Committee conferred its approval on 26 June 2012.

Rather than privileging Western conventions by strictly conforming to HEC regulatory procedure such as a written formal consent, this research instead scrupulously adhered to time-honoured customary ways of indigenous peoples (Butz, 2008). My purpose was to convey, through action, my deep respect for the indigenous traditions of the host communities. For me, ethical research is not mere words shown on paper. It is a process founded on principles and achieved by deed.

II. Rationale behind the Choice of Methodology

In the field of empirical studies, there exists a wide variety of methodologies. To date, however, it has not been conclusively determined whether a particular research methodology is more appropriate and illuminating than others when used vis-à-vis diversity in both culture and population. In these cases, the choice of methodology largely depends on certain predetermined and prioritised factors that will ensure the best outcome for any such research. For this particular study, the overriding concern in the selection of the most suitable research approach is its efficacy in providing both a culture-sensitive method that will draw out the participants' deep-seated sentiments, and strategies for immersing in and reflexively engaging with data. The aim is to generate adequate data that will richly describe and illuminate, rather than simply narrate, the experiences of indigenous Filipinos living in mining areas to a degree that will help bring about a clearer, more meaningful understanding of their sensitive emotional issues (Davidson and Milligan, 2004; Bondi, 2005; Bennett, 2009; Thien, 2009). These issues revolve around the invasion of their domains and consequent destruction of their sacred spaces, and the effects of this desecration on their survival as a people. This knowledge, if integrated to existing literature on indigenous peoples, can offer a deeper understanding of their continuing struggles to uphold their rights and preserve their traditions.

In a study like this, sensitivity to culture is a major consideration in determining the suitability and viability of a specific approach. Given the nature of the subject matter of this study, it is necessary to employ qualitative methodological research to attempt to describe, understand and interpret the experiences of indigenous communities culled from the words and narratives of select informants (Creswell, 2007) and told from the first-person point of view. It also necessitates reference to (post) colonial literature (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Willems-Braun, 1996; Panelli, 2008; Johnson and Murton, 2007; Harris, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007; Louis, 2007) to aid in achieving this goal.

With the different ways of data gathering, understanding and/or applying information, intended researches on diverse cultures necessitate finding the most appropriate research methodology that will yield the best results. As Yin (1994) argues, a number of theoretical disciplines (e.g. feminist, post-structuralist, positivist or critical) can be applied to interpret and analyse data. Despite the attempt to follow a critical and objective data collection and interpretation, a variety of challenges are posed to the researcher focusing on developing countries and indigenous populations in particular. Brown (2004) identifies a number of critical factors to consider when conducting research

amongst vulnerable populations, such as indigenous peoples. These are, namely, (1) greater discrepancies in the power equation between the researcher and participant may likely result to questions on misconceptions, preconceived notions and biases, and “reflect artifactual considerations of the relationship between researcher and the researched” (Brown et al., 2004:6); (2) issues around Eurocentric binaries such as superior/inferior, developed/underdeveloped, North/South, etc. can unduly influence the interpretation and analysis of research data; and (3) oppressed and marginalised groups such as indigenous peoples may be faced with compelling pressure that impedes on their participating freely in research (Brown et al., 2004:1).

Actual field engagements with the communities through interviews, informal conversations, group discussions, and sharing of oral traditions (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Louis, 2007) provide a non-threatening venue wherein indigenous Filipinos find affirmation for, and freedom to express, their emotions. The history of indigenous Filipinos is not well-documented, such that there is paucity of information about them within government documents. They are conveniently lumped by government agencies with the rest of the mainstream population resulting in the unjust disregard for their unique cultural identities, rights, and well-being. Indigenous Filipinos have traditionally occupied the archipelago for millennia. However, centuries of political subjugation and cultural domination by three colonial masters (Spain, the United States, and Japan) have brought about the gradual dispossession of their ancestral domains. Indigenous peoples have “live[d] in a world [where] knowledge is used to maintain oppressive relations. Information is interpreted and organized in such a way that the views of a small group of people are presented as objective knowledge. Research ... has been largely [used as] instrument of dominance and legitimation of power elites... [rather than as mechanism] to serve the interests of dominated, exploited and oppressed groups” (Mies, 1983:123, quoted in Kirby and McKenna, 1989:15). Given these exploitative circumstances, it is therefore imperative for a researcher to be aware of, and sensitive to, the long history of indigenous Filipinos in the light of the government's thrust to develop the country's vast mineral resource potential for economic purposes with little, if not with total lack of, regard for their well-being and survival.

No methodology is perfect, and every methodology has some disadvantages (Creswell, 2003). There is no single accepted method for a qualitative research (Morse, 1991). Although some may argue that the choice of methodology here raises the possibility of biased outcomes, it is an apprehension that can be remedied by the

researcher's personal conviction and strong commitment to research goals and by the very structure of the methodology itself. The most outstanding argument in favour of my choice of methodology in this research is its being culture-sensitive, non-coercive and non-exploitative, and hence the most appropriate approach that will yield the most usable research data given the unique circumstances of the indigenous people.

III. Foundations for Selecting the Appropriate Research Methodology

Following is a brief outline of the theoretical concepts that influenced the design of this research and the rationale behind the final choice of methodology. It attempts to encapsulate the philosophy, principles and assumptions underlying data collection and analysis.

FEMINIST METHODOLOGIES

This thesis primarily focuses on the emotional connection of the indigenous Filipinos to their sacred spaces and traditional landscapes, emotion being an important and necessary part of comprehension, analysis, and interpretation (Wood and Smith, 2004). Attempting to understand emotional connections requires techniques, theories, and analyses on how research should proceed. Field researchers "employing qualitative methods ... [should be] attuned to the emotional and embodied practices of their research encounters, something highlighted by feminist and humanist geographers" (Davies and Dwyer, 2007:258). Aside from questioning feminine-masculine binaries and debunking a prejudiced notion associating femininity with irrationality and emotionality (Bondi, 2005), feminist geographers have studied culture-sensitive approaches on how to access from oppressed sectors information and knowledge with deep emotional content. It is a well-known fact that in the scientific world, there is distrust over emotions because these are associated with femininity and weakness (Bondi, 2005) hence, being emotion-less and controlled equate to being masculine, objective and rational (Smith et al., 2009). It is not surprising, therefore, that decision-making, actions and generation of knowledge are gendered. In the field of research, logic and reason, being labelled as "masculine" are afforded preference over, and considered more valid than, "more feminine" attributes such as subjectivity and emotions. It is for this gendered bias that feminist scholars developed alternative methodologies that are appropriate to research dealing on indigenous peoples, emotional geographies (Sharp, 2009), "complex questions of identity and identification around ethnicity, education, class, gender [that] will necessarily have influence on the data generated" (Brown et al., 2004:6).

Emotion in the Research Process

Feminist researchers have called attention to the fact that emotions play a significant role in the research process (Bondi, 2005; Smith et al., 2009; Thien, 2009) particularly in dealing with the emotional experiences of oppressed sectors of society such as indigenous peoples. To shift the emphasis from logical and objective reasoning to the more fundamental issue of emotional attachments creates the much-needed venue to understand an alternative and equally as important perspective – the importance of emotional landscapes. This alternative view challenges public policies and governance that persist in quantifying, in broad economic terms, the effects of mineral development on indigenous Filipinos, rather than qualifying these as actual deprivation of their emotional connections to their ancestral landscapes, a view conveniently dismissed by government agencies and development agents as trivial. Government documents, programmes, laws and policies associated with indigenous cultural communities and ancestral domains show ignorance, indifference and utter lack of understanding of the symbolic importance of sacred landscapes to the survival of these marginalised communities (Smith et al., 2009:11).

In-depth analyses of the significance of emotional geographies to indigenous communities have been the focus of feminist researchers (Anderson and Smith, 2004; Davidson and Milligan, 2004; Bondi, 2005; Thien, 2005; Smith et al., 2009). For example, in her discussion on “relationality”, Bondi (2005) points out that in order for a researcher to understand the experiences of his/her participants, he/she must first engage in their emotional environment. At the same time, a researcher must also always be aware of his/her positionality, feelings and emotions vis-à-vis the participants (Bennett 2009). Bondi (2003) further contends that being reflexive and empathetic can go towards building a strong trust relationship between researcher and participant wherein the researcher can actually identify with the experiences of the participants. This empathy will guide the researcher to the near-perfect and most appropriate formula by which he/she can best draw out and capture the struggles of his/her participants and encapsulate these in a manner that will move the readers, and hopefully the policy makers, to greater awareness of their plight.

Reflexity, Ethical Engagement and Egalitarian Relationship

Research that involves indigenous cultural communities calls for ethical engagement and reflexivity on the part of the researcher, aside from awareness and sensitivity to their historical oppression, exploitation and objectification. Feminist

methodologies are most suitable in understanding hitherto unexplored issues of emotional attachments of indigenous communities to their ancestral domains. Feminist research elaborates on the experience of marginalised communities over the loss of their sacred spaces (Davidson and Milligan, 2004) and "geographies of emotional life" (Sharp, 2009:75).

Feminist geographers are acutely aware of the subtle interplay of power between researcher and research participants. It is important therefore to be conscious that there are certain dynamics in the course of the research process with indigenous peoples that can tip the balance to favour the researcher, resulting to the development of an exploitative relationship. To avoid this, McDowell (1999) argues for ethical engagements based on an "egalitarian relationship between researcher and participant" (McDowell, 1999:236). This is crucial in attaining a high level of trust and confidence to coax the participants into revealing experiential accounts of their lives, as well as integrity on the part of the researcher who is the repository of that trust. Doing ethical research also requires that a researcher must be reflexive in word and deed as this will factor in on the final results of the research (Katz, 1996; Stevens and Howitt, 2005; Thien, 2009).

The flow of interaction and exchange of information and knowledge between researcher and participant is imbued with power. The person who possesses power in the research process has influence over the outcome of the research. For example, Katz (1996) discusses her having feelings of ambivalence with regard to sharing information with her participants and whether or not her answers to their questions might have, in one way or another, unduly compromised the data she collected. It is essential therefore for researchers to exercise constant reflexivity in the research process to ensure that the data collected, interpreted and analysed are outcomes of research rigour and ethical engagement.

INDIGENOUS METHODOLOGIES

Indigenous peoples have had a long history of violence and exploitation in numerous research works. Their cultures, particularly their intellectual knowledge, have been misused and misappropriated unscrupulously. Eurocentric research that favours scientific and objective processes exacerbates this oppressive situation. Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) speaks of the need to de-construct patriarchal domination which emerges in academic works and government policies in various forms, such as objectification and misrepresentation. This, she says, calls for a decolonisation of methodologies in no other time as crucial as now to halt modern-day colonisation of indigenous peoples. To do this,

Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) recommends for researchers to use critical qualitative methodologies that give credence to subjectivity, reflexivity, and non-hierarchical interactions based on mutuality or reciprocity.

Indigenous cultural communities have often been objectified in research in a clinical manner as if they were scientific projects (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). Such objectification conveniently eliminates the need to delve deeper and beyond overt verbal expressions. Ethnocentric discourse, perceived as 'superior', completely disregards indigenous processes and historical archives as a "storehouse" (Foucault, 1972:44) of histories, artefacts, ideas, texts, images. These deeply-held cultural knowledges are instead placed side by side with Western models and assumptions, like a square peg in a round hole, rashly judged as 'inferior' and cruelly labelled as 'Other'. The result is, as expected, the complete alienation of the 'other'.

Decolonising Indigenous Research through Cultural and Historical Sensitivity

Indigenous cultural communities have extensive experience in being "politically, socially, and economically dominated by colonial forces and marginalized through armed struggle, biased legislation, and educational initiatives and policies that promote Western knowledge systems" (Louis, 2007:131). It therefore takes great cultural and historical sensitivity on the part of the non-indigenous researcher to be able to build a trusting relationship and empathise with indigenous peoples. Together with other marginalised sectors of society, indigenous peoples have been grossly misrepresented, often maligned and inaccurately portrayed in history. Indigenous peoples and indigenous knowledges must be protected from "further ... fragmentation, mystification, commodification, and simplification" (Louis, 2007:132). Given this situation, it falls within the ambit of researchers to expand the production of decolonising knowledges through research rigour that challenge and confront Western objective ideologies, with the end in view of showcasing the gross ramifications of applying these ideologies to indigenous communities.

Advocacy and Reciprocity in Field Research

Conscious of the historical experiences of indigenous cultural communities, Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) emphasises the need for field researchers to foster reciprocal relationships with indigenous participants particularly in regard to the flow and exchange of information. This ensures that any knowledge created in the course of the research is a result of collaboration between researcher and participants, and generated through, or as

an outgrowth of, non-exploitative processes (Louis, 2007). This way, indigenous communities can steer the research process in a manner that will protect their long-held traditions and culture, and ultimately come up, together with the researcher, with a collaborative study that redounds to their benefit. To address these concerns, this research was particularly designed in conjunction with the traditions of the target indigenous communities. For example, tribal chieftains asked the adult tribal members of the host indigenous groups to decide whether or not to grant me access to the communities and to participate in the study. The decision was reached through a democratic process according to their traditional ways. Nonetheless, even after successfully hurdling these initial challenges, certain questions arise when contemplating research with indigenous communities. How does being an “outsider” influence the research process? Are community members more inclined to talk about their experiences to an “outsider” than to a fellow indigenous person? Or will they be more hesitant and guarded in expressing their ideas? What are the expectations on the part of the indigenous communities when an “outsider” visits to conduct a research?

The historical data available on indigenous cultural communities in the Philippines are seldom accurate. Often, these are misrepresentations of facts propagated to suit Western orientations or simply products of uninformed or insensitive writing. Feminist and indigenous methodologies, as opposed to Eurocentric approaches, focus on indigenous perspectives and are therefore respectful, collaborative and ethical. I believe combining the feminist and indigenous methodologies with qualitative research methods will produce rigorous research outcomes that will allow for hitherto silenced indigenous voices to be heard and accurately portray how the desecration of their ancestral domains relates to their survival and emotional well-being. This alternative paradigm challenges Western research models that favour rationality, detachment and objectivity over reflexivity, non-hierarchical relationality, subjectivity, and mutuality (i.e., building ethical research relationships with indigenous communities). The use of these alternative methodological approaches “will contribute to the body of knowledge about indigenous peoples and their relationship to the places where they live, those cultural landscapes infused with meaning” (Louis, 2007:131).

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Unfortunately, Eurocentric discourses have little to offer in terms of eliminating the objectification of indigenous peoples in various research. Biased misrepresentation of facts and indigenous knowledge and prejudiced portrayal of indigenous peoples as

'Other' have contributed much to their objectification (Haraway, 1992). Such studies, heavily empowered by Eurocentric views, dictate on the processes to determine the outcomes of cross-cultural research (Haraway, 1988). Recognising the gravity of this problem, Blackstock and Bennett wrote: "Research has long been the domain of the 'privileged Westerner', the 'elite scientist.' Research has been conducted ... by 'outsiders,' 'experts,' 'authorities,' who have all too often dissected, labelled, dehumanized Indigenous peoples while acting as helpers in the colonial dispossession of Indigenous land and cultural heritage. Volumes of research data and theory on Aboriginal people in Canada have been generated, but there is relatively little research that Aboriginal peoples have been able to determine for themselves" (Blackstock and Bennet, 2002:37).

The implications of misconduct on the part of the researcher have far-reaching negative implications for the much-exploited indigenous peoples (Stevens and Howitt, 2005). Crucial to cross-cultural studies is the establishment of a strong trust and collaborative relationship between the researcher and the participants and must first be founded before taking the next step towards collecting interview data. A non-threatening relationship, non-judgemental listening, mutual respect, reflexivity and reciprocity are hallmarks of qualitative research (Stevens and Howitt, 2005). It cannot be emphasised enough how critical the presence of these qualities in a researcher is for him/her to "hear" the emotions and completely understand what is being conveyed.

Partnership, Mutuality and Collaboration

Who benefits from the outcomes of cross-cultural research? Does the research process play up the conqueror master – colonial submissive relationship? Feminist and indigenous researchers caution against actions, bias and motives that foster exploitative relationships within research process (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Mason, 2002; Pain, 2004; Stevens and Howitt, 2005; Louis, 2007; Kobayashi and de Leeuw, 2010). Rae observes that "majority of research on Indigenous communities fails to be conducted in partnership with Indigenous communities. The result is weaker research – as discussed, Indigenous peoples may see their history, reality and needs differently than outsiders – and a violation of Indigenous peoples' collective intellectual property rights" (Rae, 2006:89).

Providing a venue for dialogue and feedback mechanism is critical in ensuring the research is undertaken in a straightforward manner. In relating with indigenous communities, researchers who are also "colleagues, consultants or allies" (Stevens and Howitt, 2005:36) are privileged to be presented with the opportunity to create an

environment conducive to collaboration between researcher and participants.

Research rarely discloses the manner of establishing initial contact with indigenous communities. Very few studies, if ever, discuss the difficulties, self-doubts and stumbling blocks a non-indigenous researcher encounters in trying to gain the trust of leaders, enough for the communities to welcome an outsider into their premises and allow him/her to share in their knowledges. During my preparation process, I was told that being a local myself should make the research process easier since community members will not fear that I may be working for the mining firms. But the question commonly faced by researchers, which I also asked myself, is this: “Would I be raising expectations and creating false hopes that my research will trigger imminent positive results such as tremendous improvements in the life of the communities?”

To address this quandary at the outset, I was straightforward about the objectives of my research, emphasising the unlikelihood of it brokering the kind of development that they are seeking from government. It is hoped, however, that the goals I presented in a sensitive manner to the tribal members have given them the respect and affirmation they so richly deserve.

After careful consideration of my research topic, and armed with a working grasp of the alternative methodological approaches of conducting research with indigenous cultural communities in the Philippines, I began to plan my initial link-up with leaders of indigenous communities whose ancestral domains are subject of mining interests. My target of six mining areas was of course flexible. As it turned out, due to lack of material time and also my failure to negotiate entry into the communities, I only managed with three.

Whilst undertaking an internship in December 2011 in the Philippines, I got involved in rescue activities during the floods caused by typhoon *Sendong* in three provinces and two cities in Mindanao island. In one such activity where the victims were to be relocated to safer grounds, I was presented with a rare opportunity to speak with the headman of one of the indigenous communities whose lands are under mining development. I told him of my research interests and how I would like to visit mining communities to explain my intent to conduct my study with them. The headman graciously promised to take up my concerns with his community. He also asked if his was the only mining community I was planning to involve in my study. He reasoned that there may be other Mindanao tribal chiefs interested to participate, provided they are assured of their safety. He then proceeded to introduce me to seven other chiefs whose ancestral

domains were currently occupied by foreign mining firms with a contingent of government armed forces to ensure the security of the miners. The chiefs listened respectfully as I launched a short explanation of my research and the need to conduct interviews and on-site observations. Three of these chiefs expressed cynical feelings over the uselessness of research when what their people needed most was expedient action. Two chiefs, however, extended an invitation for me to visit their communities, saying that the more people become aware of their plight, the better it can serve their cause. They explained that mining disrupted their lives. Most of them have been dislocated summarily and were now living in lands far from their farms and places of commune. After that occasion, I did not hear from the chiefs again in the weeks following our encounter.

On 21 January 2012, I received a call from the headman informing me that he has brought up my interests with the two other tribal chieftains during their assembly. The chiefs of these communities had agreed amongst themselves, he said, to grant me an interview and he inquired if it were possible for me to meet with them on 27-29 January 2012. From the first point of contact, I made it explicitly clear to them that I am not taking away any knowledge from their communities, nor will I divulge or share information in whatever form of media to any person, organisation or institution, including the academic community, without their expressed permission. Moreover, I emphasised that the research will be community-driven, that is, the community members themselves will determine the pace and direction of the research. I emphasised further that I will be writing their stories and experiences with their collaboration and that I was going to be a listener rather than the one leading the direction of the research. Through a deeper understanding of their experiences, I am hoping to be able to give back to the communities by writing about their struggles from their point of view, and not from my own perspective as researcher.

The chiefs asked me to wait until they have sought the sentiments of the members of their respective tribes. On 17 February 2012, I met with the chiefs again at which time they laid their 'rules of engagement' down, foremost of which is that they will determine at which points I may record interviews, take pictures, visit sacred sites or be granted access to their sacred places and well-guarded tribal knowledge. I agreed, and broached the topic of written consent. They informed me that they will not acquiesce to signing any document and that this matter was non-negotiable. They explained how their tribes have lost so much because they affixed their marks on a piece of paper that, they were led to believe, was a sign of commitment and the beginning of a long friendship. Several lives

were lost and because of this, they have become deeply averse to signing documents of any kind and are wary about accepting researchers into their domains. Furthermore, they assured me that their word is their honour and the very act of consenting to my entry into their communities is in itself a testimony of their commitment to participate in the research. It was a start of a unique and wonderful relationship the likes of which I have never before experienced, and may never encounter again in future.

On 21 February 2012, I had another meeting with the chiefs who were accompanied by a few elders of their communities. This time, they also brought along three of their womenfolk leaders. We discussed my goal in attempting to demonstrate how significant sacred spaces are to indigenous Filipinos and how their cultural identity and their survival are inextricably linked to their sacred lands. In the spirit of sharing, the women volunteered stories about the tribe's daily struggles to survive amidst mining in their areas and related how different their lives were before the '*Diablo*' came. They described the terrible feeling of loss at seeing the destruction of their ancestral domains. The elders also candidly related the positive and negative experiences the tribes had with some students and international organisations in the past. Finally, they expressed their hopes that I may indeed carry on my research in the spirit of collaboration in accord with tribal traditions.

In June 2012, I visited several government libraries in the Philippines, including those of Congress, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, the National Historical Institute, and the National Commission on Culture and the Arts. My purpose was to review the available records on indigenous Filipinos, ancestral domains and mining. I also searched for documented cases wherein mining has helped preserve and protect the ancestral spaces of indigenous Filipinos but sadly, my quest yielded nothing. Although this did not really come as a surprise, it was still disappointing to learn that mining has served as catalyst for the full-steam destruction of ancestral domains, contrary to its claim of 'responsible mining', 'sustainability' and 'corporate responsibility'. By the precipitated act of government of enacting and enforcing mining laws and policies, indigenous host communities were left to contend with the aftermath of aggressive development with no hope of government protection for their remaining sacred spaces.

Travelling back to the tribal communities on three separate occasions, I met anew with the tribal chiefs, spiritual leaders, and the Council of Elders. A schedule was drawn up to include the details of my activities, probable dates, duration and logistics, as well as

plans for visits to sacred sites, participation in ceremonial rites and attendance to assembly meetings, subject to the consensus of the community members. This activity was accomplished in partnership with the men and women of the tribes.

During one of these meetings, it was mentioned in passing that the Tribal Council has been trying for months to link up and seek audience with certain members of the Philippine Congress, but to no avail. Seizing this opportunity to help, I reciprocated their welcome gesture by personally arranging a series of meetings between them and the concerned Legislative Members with whom they lodged their Petition for Inquiry and Investigation, and who can bring their concerns to the Halls of Congress. I also took the time to personally accompany the chiefs to these meetings. It was a small token of gratitude for their wholehearted engagement with my research. The end result was a Resolution to investigate which Congress, at the time of this writing, is currently undertaking.

Finally, on 27 June 2012, my field work and community immersion commenced. On the second week of September 2012, I formally concluded my research in the host communities. On 18 September 2012, I exited with a fervent prayer to the Spirits to sustain the people in their struggles. I left with a heavy heart, and wishing I can do more for them.

Participant Observation

The act of observing offers tremendous opportunities to be immersed in the daily struggles of indigenous peoples. As a “prime source of data” (Kearns, 2005:193), participant observation allows the researcher to contextualise first-hand the experiences of individuals and communities within a particular environment. Thus, it complements information or data collected during interviews and focus group sessions. By itself, participant observation can mean living with the community, experiencing what they are going through and being in touch with the pulse and emotions of the people. Because it is unstructured (Emerson et al., 1995), it is a venue to bridge cultures and build relationships through spontaneous interactions (Kearns, 2005). With the researcher's involvement in the daily lives of the community, bonds of friendship are inevitably forged. The deep understanding of the nuances of community life achieved by the researcher in the course of this involvement may result to his/her becoming ‘as one’ with the community not only socially and mentally, but more importantly, emotionally and spiritually.

To gain first-hand perspectives in my research, I became involved in fishing, hunting, crop harvesting and gold panning. By participating in their day-to-day activities,

I found the perfect opportunities to engage them in informal conversations at the marketplace, during mealtimes, in tending the goats, sowing seeds, while washing dishes or hanging out the laundry. I also participated in community events such as tribal ceremonial rites and feasts. This approach complements my interviews with actual experiences alongside my participants whilst gathering food and firewood from the forest. Through spontaneous social interactions, participant observation reveals what audio recordings fail to document or capture, such as emotions, and cultural nuances and meanings (Babbie, 2010; Emerson et al., 1995; Kearns, 2005). The insights gained from observing and immersing in community life add texture and depth to data interpretation and analysis, and can therefore help in presenting real-life events and enhance the validity of research results.

Once during my stay in one tribe, I was invited to attend an Initiation to Manhood ceremony that took place along the banks of the communities' sacred river. I also attended a powerful healing ceremony from 7-9 July 2012, wherein they offered traditional worship. The healing ceremony was an invitation to outsiders like me to take stock of the plight of the communities who are at the receiving end of the destruction of their forests and waters. It was also a silent appeal to outsiders to join in the struggle of the tribes in dealing with depletion of water resources and loss of sacred spaces due to mining.

Traditional community dances and prayers were performed at the fire circle across their lakes directly facing their Sacred Mountain. I witnessed how powerful this ceremony was in educating the younger generation about the communities' history, ancestral traditions, stories and places, and in giving them pride in their identity, strength, energy and renewed vigour to continue their struggles to protect their ancestral domains and emotional landscapes.

It was agreed that I should return to the tribal territories to visit some of the sites mentioned during the Healing Ceremony to document the degradation of the landscapes due to open pit mining. However, the scheduled visit to these sites did not materialize. Perhaps due to the inclement weather, I fell ill within hours after my arrival. Because the roads were no longer passable at the time, I was forced to cancel my plan of returning to the lowlands to seek medical treatment. Instead, tribal healers were summoned to examine me. I was brought to the side of the lake where the healing ceremonies took place during my previous visit. I was given bitter herbs to chew and fluids to drink, and I spent the night feeling sick and emptying my stomach. From a distance, I heard continuous chanting and prayers to the spirits until sunrise. I was later informed that I had

ingested water contaminated by the toxic drain from the mining area. According to some tribal members, three mining engineers have already succumbed to the mysterious sickness. I was lucky. Perhaps I owe my life to the tribal healers. With a clear threat of landslides looming, my scheduled activities needed to be revised.

On my final field research visit from September 14-17, 2012, I was a guest at the house of a tribal chief. I observed and took note of the spontaneous interactions between tribal members, and listened to them discuss the sacred sites, their daily struggles with government officials and policies, the use of their prayer house, the ways they wanted to improve the creeks and prayer mountains, and how things once were in their ancestral domains. The chief, his wife and the tribal elders spoke of the struggles of their communities. I was amazed to hear their stories, and glad to know that they find comfort in the knowledge that they still continue to maintain traditional ways.

It came as an unexpected surprise when one of the tribes extended an invitation for me to join them in a visit to their burial caves where they hold special ceremonial rites and important feasts. These are located along the lower part of their ancestral domains and cover an area that had once been very active tribal foraging grounds as well as a place of worship and respect. Another tribe allowed me to participate in a rite to seek the intercession of the Spirits to stop the miners from “flattening out”⁴⁰ their holy mountain. Having seen these areas offered me a first-hand glimpse into the dire effects wrought by their desecration.

Interviews, Narratives and Story-telling

A series of interviews was undertaken with participants who were carefully selected for their profound knowledge of the research topic. The purpose of the interview was to discover what is foremost in the interviewee’s mind, to understand the person’s point of view, and to gain direct access to information which otherwise are not available through observation (Patton, 1990; Butz, 2008). Significantly, the interviews relied heavily on how the research participants perceive, interpret and ascribe significance to their situation. It was of paramount importance for the researcher to be able to draw out their deep and unguarded sentiments for this project to be a success.

The interviews provided in-depth discussions with regards to the key research issues and served to enhance the framework for other aspects of the research, in particular the narratives. Since the participants are mostly non-schooled, and therefore could neither

⁴⁰Interview with a tribal Elder, mining area 3, Mindanao, September 2012.

read nor write in the conventional manner, a methodology involving face-to-face interviews was used, utilising open-ended questions. The data gathered there from was used primarily to help shape and re-shape the research hypotheses rather than serve as an empirical test of proof (Morse, 1991; Atkinson et al., 1991; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Guba, 1990; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Moon et al., 1990; Menzies, 2011).

Sensitive issues were probed into more deeply by having the participants freely narrate their personal experiences about the research issues, underscoring their subjective views on the matter. From these, critical insights were gained as to the real impact of these experiences on their individual lives and on the community as a whole.

The interview strategy consisted of a combined approach in order to provide more flexibility (Dunn, 2005). A conversational strategy was used within an interview guide approach as it left room to explore certain subjects in greater depth, or even to pose questions about new areas of inquiry that were not originally anticipated. In general, standardised questions dominated the early part of the interviews, evolving into a more conversational exchange as the discussion progressed. Rather than adhere strictly to the prepared questionnaires, the researcher began the interviews by inquiring after family ties and the daily concerns of farming and fishing, and sharing ideas regarding how development should be done in ancestral domains. The questions were deliberately broad and general to give the participants ample opportunity and elbow room to determine how the research should be conducted in accordance with their customs and traditions and ultimately, to reflect the outcomes they desire. Specific questions were interspersed during breaks in the conversations. However, knowledge questions regarding historical events and their chronology posed a hindrance as indigenous' perception of time is very different from European understanding.

Each interview took approximately 30 minutes. However, due mainly to the heavy emotional content of the testimonies, the time allotted for each participant was relaxed, with a good number of conversations lasting up to about 45 minutes. I felt it prudent and respectful not to interrupt the flow of narrations up to the time the participants decide that they have nothing more to add. On several instances, the participants were so emotionally moved to tears that they signalled for the recording to stop. At other times, whilst contemplating their predicaments, they fell into long silences, in which case, they themselves pressed the 'pause' button of the recorder, continuing only after they have regained their composure and were prepared to talk again. Granting them the power to control the interview served to cement their trust on the research process.

The conversations and narrations in these interviews were later developed into narrative form, chronologically sequenced, if applicable, and faithfully presented from the narrator's perspective.

Audio Documentation

Some of the recorded material will be quoted directly in the thesis. However, a number of interlocutors opposed the use of the recording equipment due to security concerns. Having endured harassment from various entities, only a few of the participants consented to the one-on-one audio-recorded interviews, but most were amenable to such recording during focus group sessions only, again after assurances that the audio documentation will be held in utmost trust and will be used only according to our evolving agreements. They, however, totally declined video documentation and this was completely respected. Some were driven to explain how vulnerable and fearful they felt expressing their deepest sentiments in front of the reel. Thereupon, other participants volunteered stories about how a few of their men, after consenting to a video documentation on a different occasion, were later killed while they were out hunting. The relative anonymity accorded in audio recording gave them a 'blanket of security'.

Transcriptions of Interview Recordings

During the assembly, I explained to the volunteers that I would like to transcribe verbatim the interview recordings, if they are amenable. After a long discussion amongst themselves, they voiced their apprehension that the verbatim transcripts might fall into the wrong hands as they have experienced in the past, and their indigenous stories utterly disrespected and re-told in a mocking manner. The worst that happened to the communities was when their knowledge on indigenous medicine was misused, misappropriated and patented by pharmaceutical companies. To help me in my predicament, they offered a compromise. They consented to the verbatim transcription of those portions of their audio recordings which I will be quoting directly for the purpose of substantiating my ideas. Our verbal contract was sealed and celebrated with a feast.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were facilitated within the community to provide opportunities for information to emerge through discussions and personal interactions. The broader opinions, ideas and outputs were used to structure the questions for the one-on-one interview sessions. This group work and the resulting questionnaire served to draw the participants' in-depth views of their situation that, in turn, provided a rich illustration of their experiences under the specific circumstances targeted in this research.

Three focus group sessions were conducted to highlight not only themes and commonalities in the collective understandings of the community but also their differing perspectives and divergent worldviews. Five participants attended each focus group. This number swelled in trickles as more individuals joined in, initially as observers and listeners. Later on, they started to actively voice out their support for the ideas of the original members of the focus group. The participants were allowed to freely select the group they wished to join and discuss certain issues with. The instantaneous bond of the groups contributed much to the animated way the members discussed their issues and tackled the questions presented to them.

Languages Used

The interviews and discussions were conducted both in the language native to the tribe being interviewed and in Cebuano, a language spoken by most people in Mindanao, including indigenous communities. Tagalog, a language mostly used in Manila, is seldom spoken in Mindanao, except for areas with a large number of Muslim tribes.

Despite the researcher's familiarity with the indigenous languages of the three chosen groups and a high degree of fluency in Cebuano as well as in Filipino, expert interpreters who are native to the host indigenous communities were at hand to assist.

Sampling Frame and Selection of Participants

Whilst numerous factors must be taken into account in the selection of research participants, for instance the participants' convenience, availability and cooperation, there are certain considerations that should not be ignored when conducting research with indigenous cultural communities (Wilson, 2003:339). With their long experience of oppression, exploitation and misrepresentation, indigenous peoples are wary about revealing their sacred knowledges for fear of being ridiculed and disrespected. For this reason, I limited my interviews to those volunteers designated by tribal members during the assembly called to discuss with me their culture, ancestral stories, traditions, and sacred places.

It was not possible to employ random sampling or stratified sampling techniques. As the participants were purposely sought out and must manifest their consent to be interviewed, there was always an element of self-selection in interview studies (Seidman, 1998). Moreover, because the indigenous peoples selected for this research are largely 'undocumented' and "reside outside of formal institutional settings" (Schensul et al., 1999:125), there is no universal database from which a systematic random sample could be drawn.

To achieve the intended research goal whilst at the same time religiously adhering to the traditions and culture of the target community, selection of the research respondents was made on a community-wide basis, relying on the time-honoured practice of volunteerism on the part of the members of the indigenous group with whom this study was conducted.

Field visits and works were conducted with the assistance of local guides. Focus group discussions, key informant interviews and informal interactions were conducted among different groups: tribal council/council of elders comprising of women and men members, women groups, men groups, and informal mixes of both genders. A total of 18 women and 16 men participated.

Table 2 illustrates in detail the number of women and men who volunteered their participation in each of the three mining communities selected as source of data.

Table 2. Gender Distribution of Participants

Area	Council of Elders		Non-Council of Elders	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Mining Area 1 P1 to P11	4	5	2	-
Mining Area 2 P12 to P23	3	5	2	2
Mining Area 3 P24 to P34	4	3	3	1
Total Numbers P1 to P 34	11	13	7	3
Gender Distribution	Women – 18		Men – 16	

In each of the three communities selected as research venue, an assembly was called by the respective chiefs wherein I was given the opportunity to explain the scope, purpose and significance of my study. A detailed account was presented describing how the field work was going to be conducted within the community. I underscored the idea that this study was to be a collaborative undertaking between the community and myself as a student researcher. The aspect of utmost confidentiality and complete anonymity was emphasised and thoroughly explained to reassure the participants and the assembly as well, that their participation will not have any negative backlash on them. As expected, questions were raised afterwards, all of which were responded to candidly. When everything has been thoroughly discussed to the satisfaction of the assembly, the next step was the process of asking for volunteers to participate in the research. Once selected, the volunteers were apprised of my intent to conduct as many interviews and focus group

meetings as possible within the time frame allotted for my field work. I clarified from the onset that as much as I would like to interview all those who have expressed their willingness to participate, there was a time constraint that I must adhere to. Hence, not all volunteers were in fact interviewed. Nevertheless, during informal gatherings such as mealtimes, the volunteers endeavoured to share their thoughts and experiences whilst asking that their ideas, although given on condition of anonymity, be incorporated in the final outcome of the project. These informal interactions immensely enriched the research process and added to the valuable knowledge that went into the analyses of the data. Needless to say, as their trust was crucial to the success of this research, good personal conduct, establishing rapport with the people and sincere respect for their traditions and customs were of utmost importance in this endeavour.

Research Location

The field work for this study was confined to three unnamed mining areas in the Zamboanga Peninsula, the SOCCSKSARGEN Region and the Caraga Region, all nested in the southern island of Mindanao in the Philippines. As explained in Chapter 1, the potential for threat and violence to the participants and their communities constrained me to remove the names of persons, their communities, organisations and places from the transcriptions. At no time or occasion will these data be revealed in any form to any other person or entity aside from the researcher in order to avoid or prevent untoward negative repercussions on the host communities, organisations and persons involved in this research.

As per our verbal agreement with the host communities, all recordings and documentations shall not be made public and, as an added safeguard, returned to them within a prescribed period. Furthermore, despite the absence of a written contract between researcher and the host communities, this research nevertheless stands on the principle of mutual trust and the word of honour of all parties concerned, values that are critical to the integrity of this research.

Hereby, for purposes of data analyses, the areas identified are designated throughout the thesis as “mining area 1”, “mining area 2”, and “mining area 3”.

Positionality and the Researcher in the Research Process

Husserl (1970) states that research should essentially start from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions. However, more recent researchers refute the possibility of starting out on a research without preconceptions or bias, and emphasise instead the importance of clarifying how personal interpretations have been incorporated

into the research findings, thus also keeping the researcher 'visible' within the research, not as one devoid of biases and detached from the process, but as a partial and interested observer (Plummer, 1983; Stanley and Wise, 1993). The latter concept appeals to me as more realistic considering that, normally, one cannot fully dissociate one's self from his beliefs and biases when embarking on a research project.

It is, however, possible to 'bracket' (Lester, 1999) or set aside preconceived notions, conventional interpretations and usual ways of perceiving in order to provide illumination and understanding of the complex "lived experiences" (McCormack et al., 2011:273) and perceptions of the research participants from their own perspectives and not from the researcher's point of view.

Patton (1990) argues that a researcher should explain his/her motivation behind the project in order to establish the credibility of an investigation. The issue that I was pursuing in this study is of personal interest to me as I have, for many years, been dealing with indigenous peoples in my line of work. Hence, after having been exposed to a host of issues that confound indigenous peoples in the Philippines, I found it virtually impossible to completely distance myself from their struggles. This study therefore ventured to act as a vehicle through which the silent voices of this marginalised minority group could be heard and their deep issues to surface (Lester, 1999). Moreover, it strove to privilege the experiences, narratives and stories of communities over and above more powerful and competing or contesting positions (Gaventa, 1980). This, precisely, is the objective that moved and inspired me to veer away from a Western-influenced framework in embarking on this study.

Through the years, in the course of my work, I have established a degree of emotional affinity and trust with most of the communities involved in this research. As such, I was both an 'outsider', being a non-indigenous, and at the same time an 'insider' for the simple fact that for several years, I have been their constant visitor as much as they were mine. This profound human bond, coupled with a deep sense of understanding of and empathy for their circumstances, has served to guide me in carrying out this research.

At the outset, therefore, it is important to emphasise here that I fully recognised and acknowledged my personal biases and presuppositions on the subject of this study. For all intents and purposes, however, these personal biases and preconceived notions were distinctly bracketed from the actual research outputs and findings, particularly in the treatment of the data gathered. However, should they appear in any part of the study, they were clearly identified, marked and presented to reflect that they were my own ideas and

not of those of the participants. This was done in order to safeguard the integrity of the data, at the same time, adhering to established standards of ethical research. With this commitment firmly in mind, the quality of the outcome of this research was ensured to remain faithful to the participants' perceptions and had not in any way been compromised due to said personal biases and preconceptions.

IV. Treatment of Data

The language of analysis can be daunting and confusing. Deciding on the best and most appropriate analytical design for organising the data is one of the greatest challenges most researchers face (Kirby and McKenna, 1989; Starks and Trinidad, 2007; Aspers, 2009). Giorgi (1970; 1992), Colaizzi (1978a&1978b) and Merleau-Ponty (1956) have developed analytic strategies by suggesting a set of specific and manageable steps and processes for working with voluminous data. To manage my data, I will use Colaizzi's (1978a& 1978b) seven steps of data analysis. The seven steps are as follows:

1. Collect, review and become familiar with the data in order to immerse myself in the meanings the research participants try to convey.
2. Extract from the data those aspects that contain the most significant statements.
3. From these significant statements, formulate meanings within the context of the research participants' own terms.
4. Organise the ideas and statements into emerging themes. This step is adopted to highlight common patterns or trends as revealed in the data.
5. Describe in rich detail the feelings and ideas of the research participants
6. Organise the descriptive details under the themes already identified.
7. Get the participants to counter-check the findings to ascertain that nothing has been omitted or misrepresented.

This study is expected to gather a large amount of data. To manage the processing and analyses of these data, I decided on a technique of grouping them into emergent or main themes (Colaizzi, 1978a & 1978b), as illustrated in Table 3. Here, 'P' stands for Participant, with the number referring to the specific participant, where 'P1' means Participant #1; 'P2' is Participant #2; and so on. The 'Council of Elders' refers to the collective or collegial body of tribal leaders in the communities. They make up one group for each area identified or are labelled as such.

Table 3. Emergent Themes and Participants

Emergent themes	Participants
IDENTITY, CONNECTION, EMOTION, MEMORY	
1. Place-based Identity The sense of belonging to a particular geographic territory	P2 P3 P6 P8 P10 P14 P17 P19 P27 P28 P29 P30 P32 P33
2. The pain of loss due to the destruction of sacred spaces Experiencing grief and sorrow	P8 P10 P19 P22 P23 P26 P27 P29 P30
3. Dignity, Honour and Respect Losing one's honour and respect is a fate worse than death	P1 P2 P3 P4 P5 P6 P7 P8 P9 P10 P11 P12 P15 P16 P17 P19 P22 P23 P27, P28 P29 P30 P33 P34
4. Memories and Emotional Engagements Emotions linked to daily engagement with specific spaces or sites	P5 P11 P12 P14 P20 P24
5. Angered Spirits Belief of being abandoned by their ancestors who are displeased at the desecration of their high places	P10 P13 P16 P23 P31
6. Disoriented by a New Culture based on Money Decline of morality; disintegration of long-held traditional values; breakdown of close family ties	P1 P3 P4 P6 P11 P13 P14 P15 P17 P18 P19 P20 P22 P23 P26 P27 P29 P31 P33
7. Living Under Constant Fear and Threat Contending with powerlessness and acute vulnerability	P1 P2 P 6 P7 P8 P9 P14 P15 P16 P17 P18 P19 P20 P21 P24 P25 P26 P32 P34
POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF EMOTION	
1. Cultural Distribution Conflicts	Council of Elders
2. Hegemonies and Politicised Environments	Council of Elders

As previously discussed in the proposed methods of collecting and analysing data, field notes and personal logs, audio tapes of interviews and focussed group discussions, are used (Hycner, 1985) and, where available, examination of existing documents was also done. In the course of the interviews, it became necessary to make some revisions on the interview questions or add new ones to the questionnaire as the need arises. Subsequent conclusions drawn from the findings and interpretations were also added to existing literature and concepts.

To preserve the integrity of the narratives (Giorgi, 1970& 1992; Hycner, 1985), this research uses excerpts from the responses and narratives of the participants, taking

utmost care not to give away any clue that could lead to their identities. Their stories are re-told within the context and frame of their specific social, historical and cultural locations to illuminate how the community perceives and interprets their experiences. This ensures safeguarding against loss of contextual meaning (Caille, 2000 & 2001) and arbitrary interpretation of the data which would do a great injustice to the community and impair the overall vision of this project as well.

Whilst Kirby and McKenna argue that the object of an analytical design is to determine how data can “generate specific and general patterns” (Kirby and McKenna, 1989:130), the research method used in this study is not geared towards finding patterns and commonalities within human experience. Instead, this research seeks to discover some of the underlying facets or essence of that experience through the intensive study of individual cases. Rather than explain, for example, the experience of loss, anger and powerlessness, the qualitative approach chosen here attempts to uncover and describe the essential nature of the emotional experience and represent it in such a manner that a person who had not gone through the same event might begin to appreciate and understand the experience and the underlying emotions. This study shied away from employing cross comparison of individual cases, and instead oriented it toward describing the depth and rich details of the community’s life stories. This can only be appreciated through the reflective study of their actual experiences as they are lived. As a further guide in the interpretation of the research data and to convey meaningful information, relevant literature in the field of geographies of emotion and political ecology was used. This research takes the position that a good interpretive understanding is only possible through the uncovering of indigenous cultural meanings, the communities’ unique worldviews and their emotional connections to their sacred landscapes.

This chapter explores the literature and debates in feminist and indigenous methodologies. It explains the rationale for adopting alternative philosophical perspectives that distinctly veer away from Western approaches or Eurocentric ideologies. Moreover, in order to preserve the integrity of the narratives and develop the themes, this thesis employs critical qualitative research methods deemed as the most appropriate for this particular type of research.

In an attempt to merge the theoretical discussions with empirical findings, I further develop the themes enumerated in this chapter utilising data from field interviews. To this end, chapters five and six illustrate and capture the intersection between theory and the reality of indigenous people's identity, connection, emotion and memory.

CHAPTER 5

IDENTITY, CONNECTION, EMOTION, MEMORY

Earlier chapters of this thesis argued that Western-led development, rather than uplift the quality of life of indigenous peoples, only served to further facilitate their increasing alienation, oppression and exploitation. This chapter attempts to bring together the themes gleaned from the field research. Utilising the ideological underpinnings of feminist and indigenous methodologies, it examines and analyses the data gleaned from the field observations and interviews to emerge with a rich illustration of how the survival of indigenous Filipinos is intricately woven into the fabric of their cultural identity, communal memory and profound emotional attachment to their ancestral domains. I ground these findings in geographies of emotions and indigenous landscapes to convey a most-ignored truism that destroying the ancestral domains of indigenous peoples is an act of “cultural genocide”⁴¹ (van Krieken, 1999:1; Wood, 2001).

The excerpts of narratives quoted in this thesis are taken from the field interviews. These are English translations of the vernacular of the participants, translated in strict accordance with the context with which these were re-told. Utmost care has been taken in the written translation of these oral narratives to preserve their integrity. These excerpts were carefully selected to capture the raw emotions and unedited ideas of the indigenous peoples who are the subjects of this study. It is my guiding principle throughout this study that the discourse on ancestral lands, resources and sacred geographies can only be fully understood when framed against the beliefs, history, memories, customs and practices of the indigenous communities. With this in mind, the discussions below focus on the themes as enumerated in Chapter 4.

Place-based Identity

The culture, traditions and memory of indigenous cultural communities – in short, their identity as a people – rests squarely on the land of their birth. This connection with the land occurs at the soul-level and is “linked to the very core of who [they] are as a

⁴¹ “The precise definition of “cultural genocide” remains unclear. The term was proposed by lawyer Raphael Lemkin in 1933 as a component to genocide [...]. The drafters of the 1948 Genocide Convention considered the use of the term, but dropped it under strong opposition from western countries, especially the United Kingdom, who feared that too broad a definition of genocide could implicate its activity in its colonies.” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_Genocide#Cultural_genocide); “Acts and measures undertaken to destroy any nations’ or ethnic groups’ culture is called, ‘cultural genocide’. The word ‘Genocide’ coined by Raphael Lemkin, does not only refer to the physical extermination of a national or religious group, but also its national, spiritual and cultural destruction. The concept of a cultural genocide has not yet been accepted into the 1948 UN Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of Genocide.” (http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/cultural_genocide.php)

people” (P17 interview, mining area 2, August 2012).

For millennia, indigenous peoples, ethnic groups and cultural communities around the world have been custodians of ancestral domains, natural sites and traditional territories held sacred by their ancestors. Embedded within these ancestral domains are a network of critical areas vital to the ecosystems, namely, bodies of water, forests and mountains. Then again, within these critical areas are the sacred places long held by indigenous peoples as being of great emotional, cultural and spiritual importance, and considered as the “abode of [their] departed ancestors and their spirits” (P28 conversation, mining area 3, September 2012). The areas where these spirits are believed to reside, the people view as holy places. Thus, it is to these places that the communities go to offer their prayers, and hold their ceremonies, feasts and rituals. Unlike churches which can be built anywhere, their “worship grounds are very specific places on [the] land” (P2 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012) hence, non-transferrable. This notion of eternal permanence is expressed by one participant when asked about his willingness to relocate to much bigger and even more fertile lands:

“The spirits of our ancestors are right here ... and so the answer to that is no because our domains and our memories are not transferable. This is our home. This is where we were born and nurtured, [and] this is where we will finally join our forefathers in the afterlife. This is who we are” (P14 interview, mining area 2, August 2012).

For indigenous peoples, there is no other place on Earth that they would wish to be identified with (P3 focus group 1, mining area 1, July 2012). It is the land of their birth, and they have the responsibility to nurture it and contribute to its history for the present and future generations (P33 interview, mining area 3, September 2012). The level of relationship they hold with their ancestral territories is deeply personal “because this place is us; it is who we are and so we can only belong here” (P19 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012). It is their strong belief that the only place they can embrace as theirs is the land of their birth, which is the ancestral domain of their forebears (P32 conversation, mining area 3, September 2012).

To remove the people from their ancestral domains is likened by one participant to corporal amputation, equivalent to a head being severed from the body, or the present alienated from its past and denied of a future (P17 interview, mining area 2, August 2012). For indigenous peoples, it is unthinkable to want to destroy the resources and gifts of nature as such action is a “sacrilege” (P17 interview, mining area 2, August 2012) and

would only result to “indescribable suffering to humans and other living creation” (P10 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012). To destroy the land would not only defile their sacred places; ultimately, it obliterates the invisible ties that bind the present and future generations from their ancestors and histories (P6 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012) hence, their culture and identity.

The world view of indigenous peoples and their concept of sacred land show the complexity and depth of the significance of ancestral domains to them, as distinct, opposed and dissimilar to mainstream perspectives that view nature as a potential resource that may be rightfully exploited for financial gains. This is captured in the words of the participants:

“We do not waste this gift by destroying the source and origin. We can only honour our Creator by making sure that these lands He entrusted to our care will be enjoyed by generations to come long after our souls have departed to join our Maker” (P8 interview, mining area 1, July 2012).

“This is the place where our ancestors have willed upon us to nurture for the well-being of our souls. This is the cadence of our life” (P33 interview, mining area 3, September 2012).

For indigenous peoples, the Earth is where they draw their “life-force” (P30 focus group 3, mining area 3, September 2012) from. Their land, which “throbs with the memories of [their] ancestors” (P27 focus group 3, mining area 3, September 2012) is their source of sustenance, both physically and spiritually. It is these remembrances that root them to their beginnings (P29 focus group3, mining area 3, September 2012), linking them to their source and origin places they deeply revere.

As clearly illustrated in the foregoing discussion, what essentially distinguishes the indigenous communities from the mainstream Filipino population is their profound emotional attachment to their homelands, a gift of trust bestowed upon them by their spirit ancestors and their Creator. From generation to generation, they have imbibed and embraced the solemn responsibility to protect and nurture these ancestral domains from where the communities derive life.

Depriving indigenous peoples of their ancestral lands not only disturbs “the heartbeat of life” (P33 interview, mining area 3, September 2012), it also impacts directly to the core of their identity as a distinct people as the heretofore perceived inviolability of their lands and the last remaining links to their ancestral past are systematically destroyed. To continue to withhold acknowledgement of the emotional and spiritual bond

of indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands and environments effectively destroys their identity and undermines their cultural system that is based on reverence for both human beings and nature.

The pain of loss due to destruction of sacred spaces

Defending their ancestral domains, resources and sacred landscapes remains the single major issue for indigenous peoples because these are directly linked to their corporeal survival. More than simply to assert their rights over their traditional territories, their real struggle is to fight to preserve what remains of their culture, identity, traditions and memory in fulfilment of their avowed responsibility to their ancestors to do so and for the sake of the generations to come.

Several participants expressed sorrow over the loss of their sacred places, the disrespect accorded their dead, and the cold indifference of the government and mining companies towards their beliefs and humanity. “We cannot properly grieve over the loss of our lands and the deaths [of our loved ones] because there is no place left for us to offer prayers to them and our ancestors. Even their final resting places and sacred grounds were run over by miners. Where can we go to say goodbye? Where can we return to commemorate and pay homage to them?” (P22 conversation, mining area 3, September 2012; see also P8 interview, mining area 1, July 2012).

Mining has not only brought destruction to indigenous territories; it also destroyed the people because their very life is inexorably linked to their places. One participant offered this explanation: “With every hole they dig, a big part of us dies. As they bore holes into our sacred places, they also bore holes into our hearts and souls. There is a gulf of misery that stretches before us. And we cannot do anything about it” (P19 conversation, August 2012). A tribal Elder encapsulated his feelings with these questions: “Can a broken heart survive life? Can a shattered soul still live? Can humans breathe without hearts?” (P23 interview, mining area 3, September 2012).

There is no solace for indigenous peoples who experienced deep emotional distress while watching the death of their culture (P10 interview, mining area 1, July 2012). Can one recover from such trauma? In trying to relate their feelings after the loss of their ancestral domains, some participants went on to describe their existence as “empty husks of [their] former life” (P26 interview, mining area 3, September 2012), with neither connection to their ancestors nor a place to go to where they feel a sense of belonging (P10 interview, mining area 1, July 2012).

Indeed, I feel that there is no simple way and no words can ever be sufficient to fully comprehend the magnitude of their pain. Such incomprehensible agony may perhaps be truly felt only by those who stand to forfeit absolutely everything that is worthy in life (P22 interview, mining area 2, August 2012). For how else can we honestly commiserate with those whose lands have been submerged (P10 interview, mining area 1, July 2012) or who are forced to sacrifice in the “furnace of development” (P26, interview, mining area 3, September 2012) if we ourselves have not gone through their experience.

Pain and grief emerged as the most talked about and perhaps the most moving themes in this research. There is no greater agony for the communities than the loss of their ancestral domains and consequently, the death of their traditions as a result of the destruction of their sacred spaces. As expressed by the participants: A development that “ruins our sacred places” (P27 interview, mining area 3, September 2012) and “castrates” (P29 interview, mining area 3, September 2012) and “destroys ... human beings is not for us” (P30 interview, mining area 3, September 2012). Indeed, if this type of development grants a few privileged people to cause human communities deep suffering, one cannot help but question the ethical foundation of such a venture. There simply can be no moral sense or justification in making vulnerable peoples to suffer, even for the sake of economic prosperity.

Dignity, Honour and Respect

Amongst these cultural communities, honour and respect are a way of life and considered synonymous to life itself. Their ways are so steeped in the wisdom of the teachings of their ancestors and elders that to lose one’s honour and the respect of the community is a cause for shame. “Losing face” is considered a fate worse than death (P12 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012).

Following their indigenous traditions, the males in particular consider it their honour to be able to carry out their responsibilities in the community. Before a male is officially recognised as having attained full maturity and therefore worthy to be called a ‘man’, he must first submit to a sacred rite. This rite spans a period of twelve to fifteen years during which time, a male offspring must prove to his kin that he can already be trusted to protect his families as well as able to provide for the needs of his future children, wife or wives, and their extended clans. For indigenous communities, respect is earned through serious and hard work. A culminating ceremony in his honour is held at the sacred grounds specifically reserved for such conferment. Blessed by the women, community elders and the spirits of his ancestors, he is now ready to be part of the

decision-makers in his tribe. This ritual was practised unbroken for hundreds of years, interrupted only when the Philippine government began its aggressive mining campaigns in ancestral homelands.

For development agents and those from mining companies, for example, who lack in-depth knowledge of and profound appreciation for indigenous ways, these sacred rites and sacred places hold no special meaning and extraordinary significance (P3 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012). Lacking in knowledge of the traditions of the indigenous community, they carry on mining in the ancestral domains, unaware that they have tampered on the dignity, honour and self-respect of people in the communities (P1 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012). Moreover, unfamiliar with the ways of the people, they fail to associate the ritualistic ceremonies and sacred sites to the emotional well-being of the community who have traditionally lived cocooned in their own culture (P1, P5, P7, P9 focus group 1, mining area 1, July 2012). They do not, for example, understand that indigenous peoples' adherence to their traditions celebrating honour and respect underpins their profound relationship with their sacred sites. These ceremonies and ritualistic celebrations express their will and drive to survive and preserve their culture.

The indigenous concept of honour and respect also extends "even in the life hereinafter" (P9 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012). The following excerpt explains the importance of this time-honoured value accorded to their dead:

"The resting places of our reposed were dug out. The bones of our ancestors thrown away like dead seaweed. There was utter lack of respect. In death, there is still honour and veneration, but even a simple act of respect the miners refused to give our beloved departed" (P17 interview, mining area 2, August 2012).

This notion of honour and respect permeates in all facets of indigenous engagements in many forms. Consultation is one of their most revered traditions (P22, P27, P28, P29, P33, P34 focus group3, mining area 3, September 2012). It is a democratic venue for the community to share their ideas, deliberate on issues, and make consensual decisions that affect the members. To be invited to join or speak in a consultative assembly is considered an honour. By the same token, to be ignored and excluded from a consultation process without due cause is considered an insult tantamount to disrespect. In the matter, for example, of the conduct of a Free, Prior and Informed Consent, a process to secure the community's approval to a mining project, involvement covers the

entire tribe. Following their tradition, each individual has a voice in all deliberations and his or her opinion is valued and accorded a hearing.

Amongst the many complaints of the research participants concerned the consultation phase of the FPIC. The actions of stakeholders, namely, representatives of mining firms, local government officials and government agencies, “maimed the self-respect of the communities” by means of “underhanded one-one talks with tribal leaders and elders conducted behind the scenes” (focus group 1, mining area 1, July 2012). Such actions maligned the integrity of both the individuals and their tribe. One leader called these moves as a “sabotage of our dignity”; while another said it was “a contempt against everything that our ancestors stood for”. The general consensus was that these ploys in the form of enticements, bribery, intrigues, promises of prosperity, allure of affluent lifestyle, offer of highly paid jobs, harassment, veiled threats and other such methods, fluently communicated the low regard that these “outsiders” have for the intelligence of the community (P12, P15, P16, P19 focus group 2, mining area 2, August 2012; P27, P29, P30, P33, P34 focus group 3, mining area 3, September 2012). Their methods to secure the people’s consent were designed to pit the leaders against each other, creating anarchy and divisiveness within the tribe. This goes to prove that, according to one tribal priest, a development devoid of genuine empathy for the people brings wholesale humiliation to the communities (P11 interview, mining area 2, August 2012). “[Such development ...] attacks our dignity, precisely where it can hurt the most and could tear us apart” (P16 interview, mining area 2, August 2012). For this reason, one indigenous community stood firm in refusing to cooperate with the government (P10 conversation, mining area 1, July 2010). While they concede that mining does earn revenues for the country, it enriches only some people at the expense of the communities. As described by one participant:

“Greed and evil came with the backhoe and display of money. Arrogance being the result of money has no place in the land of our ancestors. It is unknown in our culture for one to feel superior and look down on the rest of our tribes-people. It is strange to feel so insubstantial simply because we do not have the things that only money can provide” (P22 interview, mining area 3, September 2012).

Indigenous sense of honour that is tarred by the same brush that lures miners and government alike of material prosperity is irretrievably blighted. In the eyes of indigenous peoples, a self-respect that has been reduced to tatters by one’s own will can never be restored to its original and perfect state no matter how wealthy the tribes have become

(P6 interview, mining area 1, July 2012). For indigenous peoples, the true measure of development is when all human beings treat them as their equals, not as mere source of national economic development.

The struggle of indigenous peoples to live in dignity is a mission that is intimately interwoven with that of protecting their sacred spaces. To inflict harm on those which they hold in reverence is considered an act to humiliate them and their ancestors. Their pride in their culture is embedded in thousands of years of history, memories and traditions. Because they are emotionally connected to their ancestral territories, they are severely affected by the changes in their environment wrought by mining. Thus the systematic destruction of their ancestral domains and sacred places strikes at the core of their culture.

Driving indigenous peoples away from their ancestral lands in exchange for financial gains guarantees not only the complete loss of their dignity in their identity as a distinct peoples but also the erosion of the government's moral authority to govern. In the end, to refuse indigenous peoples the respect and honour that they deserve takes away not only their lives, but the one thing that matters most to these peoples – their dignity. In its place is endless humiliation and deprivation with far-reaching impacts to generations of descendants long after 'development' has left the land.

Memories and Emotional Engagements

Indigenous communities identify with their ancestral domains (Dallman et al., 2011). They have intense emotional and experiential engagements with their sacred landscapes. These “emotional encounters” (Kearney, 2009:11) and experiences, in turn, have dominant and “direct impact on the lives and well-being of communities of present and future generations” (Adam, 2012:9) and “ultimately shape cultural identity” (Kearney, 2009:11). For them, their ancestral domains are as vital to their communities as breathing is to all living beings (P20 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012) such that “to drink poison would be more merciful [than] to witness the destruction of [their] ancestral homes” (P5 interview, mining area 1, July 2012). This emotive bond is illustrated in the following interviews and conversations with participants:

“Where will we go when the government submerges our farms, our histories, our memories, our ancestral homes? The whole peninsula will be annihilated and drowned when our sacred mountains are destroyed. Where will our memories go? What shall we tell our children – stories of failure? We lose our homes. We will die. But you know what? We would rather

perish here with our ancestors than exist without them in our midst. Without our holy lands, we wither away. Don't you realise it is already starting? We are dying as a people” (P11 interview, mining area 2, August 2012).

“If they force us to vacate [our ancestral lands], we will lose our vitality. You take us away from our land of nurture, we lose our being [tribal name]. Why? Because our being [tribal name] means we are meant to commune by the rivers and holy mountains of our forefathers. These worship and commune places are not located anywhere else but only here. This is where we derive our life from” (P14 interview, mining area 2, August 2012).

The participants speak of their sacred homeland as the one place where they can be themselves to emotionally, spiritually and intellectually engage with their forebears in specific sites in their ancestral domains (P12 interview, mining area 2, August 2012). For example, they have special areas designated for alleviating physical ills. They have specific sites, such as forests and caves, set apart to offer emotional therapy and spiritual healing. There are also other distinct places that bore witness to their hard labours, their tears of anguish and joy, the birth of children, the death of loved ones, and the forging of friendships, blood compact, marriages and alliances. Through the ages, the mountains, lakes and rivers are venues for ceremonial celebrations such as weddings, puberty rites, passage to adulthood, burials, and many more. These are the places that hold generations of their memories that chronicled their oral traditions, tribal stories and legends. As stated by a participant:

“Even the trees echo our history. All you see here is about us as a people. This is about what we hold sacred. This is our ancestral domain. Our sacred sites used to be places ringing with laughter and happiness, of healing and cleansing and spiritual renewal. Nowadays, these places bear silent witness to our anguish and sorrows. Our ritual gongs sound the sadness in our hearts over the misery of our situation” (P24 interview, mining area 3, September 2012).

Indeed, the connection of indigenous peoples to their sacred places bears witness to how they experience their environment. The memories they associate with each nook and cranny of their ancestral domain are not simply souvenirs of a recent past; rather, these are remembrances handed down from generations thousands of years into history. It

is this emotional engagement that researchers have only just begun to appreciate. It will take years for “outsiders” to fully grasp the depth of emotional engagement that indigenous peoples have with their environment.

The Angry Spirits

A strong belief in the spirit world and the spirits’ interaction with the living are major facets of indigenous life.

As the Philippine government stepped up its expansion of agricultural and tourist resort development and mining activities in ancestral territories, indigenous communities began to be denied access to their sacred spaces and traditional resource base. The elders of these cultural communities talked in hushed tones of their conviction that calamities, tragedies, droughts and pestilences have started to visit them often, and these worsened as their offerings and sacrifices began to dwindle, and their rituals became less frequent. Owing to the destruction of their revered places, they have lost the special grounds wherein to perform their ceremonies and give offerings to thank their ancestors for good harvests and weather, especially as their revered ancient trees “which were not supposed to be chopped off” (P31 conversation, mining area 3, September 2012) and special plants slowly disappeared.

The communities blamed the miners who desecrated their sacred places and destroyed the environment for their many misfortunes. The problems and series of calamities besetting them are believed to have caused the visitations of bad spirits said to come upon the land when the holy trees and sacred lands are defiled and nature disrespected. The massive landslides that buried entire villages including worship and ceremonial places, farms and waterways; and the spate of unexplained deaths, strange haemorrhages and “the rivers turning into blood were messages from the disturbed spirits who were angered by the destruction of the dwelling places of the rested” (P23 conversation, mining area 3, September 2012). The tribal healers were convinced that the spirits of their ancestors have abandoned them to the mercy of the miners. Their aggravation would not be easily placated by mere prayers for forgiveness.

Owing perhaps to toxic contamination from the mines, “hot springs have morphed from life-giving to cursed waters” (P23 conversation, mining area 3, September 2012). Moreover, the communities’ medicinal plants have slowly disappeared, and their disappearance was attributed to the withdrawal of the trust their ancestors used to have for the communities. The people therefore believed that the spirit world has separated from the mortals and closed its doors to humankind. This felt fear or dread is clearly

expressed in the following excerpt:

“... we watched in terror as tons of mud cascaded down the mountains, burying our huts and meagre belongings. To this day, the memory of those mudslides continues to haunt us, as if the spirits were determined to pursue us wherever we go. The spirits were hurt and angry, hence we are cursed. We are being punished for sins we have not committed and had no way of preventing. The Earth is bleeding. The spirits have abandoned us to its mercy. Soon, we shall all die.” (P23 interview, mining area 3, September 2012)

For indigenous communities, every little piece that comes from nature is a gift from their gods. Such is their belief that to take away these gifts with the intent of deriving personal riches from the exploitation thereof is unpardonable, as the following excerpt depicts:

“The gold and all resources in our ancestral domains are the property of the gods. We do not take what is not ours. Why do miners think they are gods by taking that which belongs to the gods and killing us, the guardians of these gifts? These resources are not ours, and therefore must remain in the realm of the spirits. Taking what belongs to the gods, regardless of what happens to our communities, is an evil blunder” (P16 interview, mining area 2, August 2012).

The actions of indigenous peoples are defined by their ancestral territories and the way they interact with the spirits of their forebears. They hold in awe the presence of nature's resources, appreciate them as gifts from their gods (Panelli and Tipa, 2009) with respect and honour, and “fear and trembling” (P10 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012). These emotional attachments define the ways by which indigenous communities live life and engage with virtually everything within their ancestral domains. As one participant shared: “When the spirits are enraged, the whole of humanity is best advised to shudder and to shudder violently” (P13 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012). Therein rests the spirituality of indigenous peoples – that both in life and in death, their ancestors in the spirit world continue to seek them out, whether peacefully or in anger, both in the physical world and thereafter.

Coping with Change - A New Culture Based on Money

As commonly practiced in many traditional societies, interpersonal transactions are based on familial ties and their connections to places of origins. Not surprisingly, the

language of commerce follows the same pattern of goodwill, trust and camaraderie. Communities thrived in the spirit of cooperation, looking after each other's benefit and well-being, extending help where and when needed, and sharing in the bounties of nature. Founded along this dynamic, ownership of ancestral domains is held communal.

The entry of mining ushered an era of drastic fundamental changes to indigenous peoples. Foreign mining firms introduced money as currency of commerce and economic transactions to indigenous communities who have hitherto remained uninfluenced by mainstream lowland ways of trading. This has led to a radical transformation in societal relationships that severely undermined deeply-rooted customs.

The following excerpts illustrate the glaring changes that occur with the arrival of mining in the communities' ancestral domains:

“Because of money, we are already fighting amongst ourselves. Now we are not only materially poor, we also suffer from a spiritual impoverishment as well, which is a worse form of poverty” (P17 interview, mining area 2, August 2012).

With the breakdown of customary systems came the dissolution of filial trust, as portrayed in the narration:

“We no longer trust each other. I have to dig deep [in my yard] to keep my money safe from others. I have become so suspicious that I have developed the habit of hiding my money in a place where no one can take it away from me. I began to fear being robbed. If that happens, what will I use to buy food for my family? This fear keeps me awake at night. When did we become so pathetic?” (P11 interview, mining area 2, August 2012).

Some participants reminisced of times gone. They “mourn the loss of [their] innocence” (P3 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012) as depicted in this narration:

“Time was when my neighbours would either lend me or exchange things for the items I needed. When my son got married, I did not have to worry about his wedding clothes because his cousins offered to provide them. Even my daughter-in-law looked so radiant in the wedding dress lent to her by her best friend. But those days of kindness and sharing seem like such a long time ago when in fact it has only been less than two decades when things started to change. These days, if I do not have the money to purchase basic needs like food, my family is forced to make do without them. Also, because of financial difficulties, many of our young

people chose to forego of weddings, deciding instead to simply live together without securing the blessings of the community elders and going through the marriage rituals. The children born to them are therefore considered illegitimate in the eyes of the law. This brings us shame. This is not the way things used to be” (P32 interview, mining area 3, September 2012).

Another participant added: “We no longer celebrate; nowadays, we simply toil and toil and toil. We will still be toiling until we die. The future has never looked this bleak” (P31 interview, mining area 3, September 2012).

Almost in the wink of an eye, the traditional security and reliance on the free exchange of goods, and services, based on familial ties and social-based network were gone. The use of societal relations for the exchange of provisions came to a rude and abrupt end with the advent of money, and along with it, the age-old trust-based ‘barter system’ that has been used for centuries. As mining operations gained ground in non-monetary-oriented societies, the barter system slid to obsolescence. In a major way, this forged the gradual breakdown of close family and neighbourly ties nurtured in centuries-old custom of trust and communal ownership.

As farms, forests fishing grounds gave way to mining, poverty gripped the communities. Almost overnight, their major source of livelihood, including their sacred spaces, residential plots and subsistence gardens, were closed off hence, no longer accessible to them, without their expressed consent. With “intolerable hunger stalking [them] at every turn” (P26 conversation, mining area 3, September 2012), the people resorted to keeping things to themselves. “The spirit of sharing departed from our midst” (P4 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012), and in its place settled greed and envy (P23, P26, P27, P31, P33 focus group 3, mining area 3, September 2012), “tightfistedness and this un-natural longing for what we cannot have” (P14, P15, P17, P18, P19 focus group 2, mining area 2, August 2012). “There was so much need for money, too much hunger in our midst” (P20 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012) such that a person “would have to be blind, deaf or numb not to sense how deeply deprivation has pervaded in our communities ... We virtually reek poverty. You can smell us from miles away” (P1 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012).

With this intolerable situation, indigenous peoples were driven to seek employment as labourers in the mining firms. The participants recounted that their skills and expertise as farmers and fishermen were useless in the mines. As a strike against their

confidence, the males in the tribe realised their ability to feed their families undermined. Morale in their ranks was low. As a consequence, crimes unheard of in the past were committed by the most peaceful amongst them. Incidence of chemical dependencies, alcoholism, wife-beating and child abuse became commonplace. Prostitution, albeit most frowned upon in the communities, emerged as a lucrative means to earn money for the families of the sex worker (P13 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012; P22 interview, mining area 3, September 2012). It can be said that mining for this particular indigenous community was a phase in development story marked by massive insecurity in and collapse of the moral fibre of the people.

The promise of a comfortable life via the mining route did not materialise for the indigenous peoples. On the contrary, after decades of mining in their ancestral domains, the communities remained poor, if not even poorer than ever, as they clearly stated in their own narratives. Moreover, farmers who lack the skills to work competently in the mines experienced for the first time in their lives being yelled at, being shamed in front of other workers and humiliated for doing a lousy job (P27 interview, mining area 3, September 2012). Because of this, the people felt that mining is not for them and many of the participants said they would gladly go back to farming and fishing than receive money each week for their hard labour and battered pride (P29 interview, mining area 3, September 2012).

Within the walls of their individual homes, the women bore their burdens in silence. One woman related that her “husband and sons have developed terrible tempers because [of the] lack [of] money” (P6 interview, mining area 1, July 2012). The women fear that because there will never be enough money to meet the basic necessities of the family, their husbands “will soon turn against us and raise their hands on us, too, those same hands that used to tirelessly provide food for us and keep us safe” (P6 interview, mining area 1, July 2012).

Consumerism and materialism are twin emblems of development that not only accompanied mining to the ancestral domains of indigenous communities; they made their mark in the communities. Capitalist/consumerist modes supplant long-standing indigenous modes of production, largely grounded on traditional forms of non-monetary exchange and reciprocity, such as the meeting of mutual needs. Money as a fleeting resource became an overnight fascination for most of the young generation in the communities (P6 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012). Having been inducted to the lifestyle of the miners, they began to adopt habits that necessitated their having to earn

more. As one parent in the community stated:

“Instead of ploughing the fields with their hands, our young ...cultivate a lifestyle that demands it be sustained with money. Nowadays they bide their time twiddling with their fingers, punching the keys of gadgets introduced to them by this development. But what have they learned about living? Nothing, nothing that will hold hunger at bay. What have they done to us?”(P18 interview, mining area 2, August 2012).

The many faces of abuses and neglect that indigenous peoples have to endure can best be summed up in the following Statement by the *Nanyuki* indigenous cultural communities:

“The future of our children and the children of all the species of Earth are threatened. When this last generation of elders dies, we will lose the memory of how to live respectfully on our planet, if we do not learn from them. Our present generation has a responsibility like no other generation before us. Our capacity to stop the current addiction to money from destroying the very conditions of life and the health of our planet, will determine our children’s future” (Statement of Common African Customary Laws for the Protection of Sacred Sites, 28 April 2012, *Nanyuki* Custodian Meeting, Kenya).

The tradition of goodwill and sharing are highly valued in indigenous societies. However, this tradition, along with trust and filial loyalty, is a fast-vanishing institution as more and more indigenous communities succumbed, not by choice or will but by force of a greater power, to the currency of money, which is the trademark of development.

Living Under Constant Fear and Threat

Despite the globalised focus on human rights, violence against indigenous peoples has increased at an alarming frequency (<http://www.amnesty.org/>). In the Philippines, the government has declared certain ‘hot spots’ and ‘critical areas’ under military zone “ostensibly because their presence keeps the bad guys from disturbing peace and order and also prevents the bad wolves from scaring Goldilocks away” (P16 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012). Decades of experience under military rule, however, has taught indigenous communities to learn to live in “silent fear” (P34 conversation, mining area 3, September 2012) for their lives and those of their families, knowing that this day may very well be their last (P26 conversations, mining area 3, September 2012). There is

a general feeling of insecurity with “no certainty of seeing another sunrise after this sunset” (P26 conversations, mining area 3, September 2012).

As I conducted conversations and focus group session with leaders of the communities, a terrifying sense of dread permeated the atmosphere. This perception was reinforced by the action of the participants who either talked in whispers or furtively looked over their shoulders before launching to narrate their experiences.

Some participants speak in coded terms. For example, ‘bad guys’ came to mean ‘insurgents’, ‘rebels’ or paramilitary groups who prowl their areas. The ‘insurgents’ also refer to indigenous members who are overtly or covertly opposed to mining in ancestral domains. The ‘bad wolves’ connote the leaders of insurgents, and the “mayor or his henchmen” (P15, P16, P17, P19, P21 focus group 2, mining area 2, August 2012) who come loaded with guns “to pay Goldilocks courtesy calls” (P15, P16, P17, P19, P21 focus group 2, mining area 2, August 2012) and just being visible “to sow fear in the hearts of the communities” (P19 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012). ‘Goldilocks’ is suggestive of the mining firms whose “big-time managers arrive sporting golden hair to cart away our gold” (P15, P16, P17, P19, P21 focus group 2, mining area 2, August 2012).

Living on the sharp edge of violence has made indigenous communities wary and suspicious, traits alien and contrary to their nature. This is the outcome of constant threats to their life. Ironically, whilst the government undertook measures to secure the communities through the intervention of the armed forces, the very opposite was happening in the field (P1 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012). Instead of forging peace, the people felt “unease” (P18 conversations, mining area 2, August 2012), “like a dark cloud following us everywhere” (P1, P6, P7, P9 focus group 1, mining area 1, July 2012), “a sword hanging over our heads” (P24 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012), or “a menace lurking in our midst” (P14, P17, P18, P19, P20 focus group 2, mining area 2, August 2012). Driven by fear, many become fugitives (P8 interview, mining area 1, July 2012), while others copped out by migrating. To protect themselves, a few joined the ranks of militia groups. Those who forced themselves to “accept their fate” (P15 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012) had to contend with checkpoints, submit to inquest when “unusual events” disturb the status quo (P26 conversation, mining area 3, September 2012) and coerced to betray family members.

Stark fear and insecurity gripped the communities in a culture of fear, particularly when the government instituted its counter-insurgency programmes, namely, *Oplan*

Bantay Laya and *Oplan Bayanihan*. These programmes ushered in a period of “heightened repression and intensified militarisation” in their ancestral territories, resulting “in more killings and increased human rights violations against our peoples”. The following highlights the experience of being at the negative end of misguided attempts to instil fear in the so-called “hotbed of internal terrorism”:

“The men in uniforms with arms call us bandits and subversives. When we deny their accusations, we are subjected to head butting and hazing. All because we do not subscribe to mining in our holy lands and we refused payment for the ceremonial caves of our forefathers and the trees they wanted to uproot” (P34 interview, mining area 3, September 2012).

Among indigenous cultural communities, there is growing fear that the government will one day forcibly deny them the right to their ancestral spaces and ancient practices. Laws, crafted with indigenous peoples’ welfare and well-being in mind, have not come up to par with their protection clauses in their actual implementation (P2 interview, mining area 1, July 2012). One participant had this insight:

“[These] laws in the hands of godless people are laws without soul. It makes criminals look like innocent babies, beasts like angels. The law [meant] to protect [indigenous peoples] is the same law that brings ... death [to the communities]. [A] good law ... is rendered cold ... by cold and heartless individuals”(P2 interview, mining area 1, July 2012).

At the core of their issue with development is a far deeper and more complex concern than a simple quarrel over land rights. It revolves around the invasion of their ancestral domains by mining companies in a government-sanctioned bid for the natural resources thereat. Through the years, the military has been instrumental in the onslaught against Philippine indigenous cultural communities. The government through its military arm has forcibly ejected tens of thousands of indigenous peoples, comprising entire indigenous communities, relocating them to far-flung areas in an attempt to quell resistance against mining. These threats and attacks directed against indigenous communities redound to the issue of ancestral domains ownership and occupancy. The following excerpt illustrates how indigenous communities describe their predicament:

“For the first time, we know how it is to be in want of the basic sustenance needed to keep our skin and bones together. But even this experience of having to face the day uncertain whether our children will eat or not becomes a pale second to the constant threats on our lives knocking at our

doors. We have no homes, no food, no identity, and no security. I do not know which is worse. Without the future we once knew was ours, there is no hope at all” (P25 interview, mining area 3, September 2012).

In all the years of indigenous peoples’ experience with mining in ancestral domains, lives have been lost to violent deaths; yet, seldom do these deaths have been given justice (P34 interview, mining area 3, September 2012). Thus, in these mining communities I visited, the notion of a “secured future” was discussed with a certain degree of cynicism, almost as if the people held little conviction that they, too, were entitled to it under the law. However, the daily pressure of living under the thumb of armed personnel had become an all-consuming concern for the people that there was no room left for them to see beyond the present (P32 conversation, mining area 3, September 2012). This is vividly illustrated by one participant in the following interview excerpt:

“We were driven off our ancestral homes by government troops. It is a choice between obeying them or losing our lives and those of our women, children and animals” (P14 interview, mining area 2, August 2012).

If one examines closely the negative effect of a military-backed development project, the greatest casualties are the people. If this type of development has turned communities “fearful even of [their] own shadows” (P29 interview, mining area 3, September 2012), isn’t it high time for government to examine its priorities? Development is supposed to empower marginalised communities, not to make mice out of strong men and women.

The crux of the issue of militarisation in ancestral domains lies in the basic question of survival of the affected indigenous communities – survival of their traditions, culture, and beliefs which ultimately translates to their survival as a people and as human beings. This, to my mind, should be weighed over and above all other considerations as contrary policy decisions, including putting certain mining areas under military rule on the pretext of protecting the people, would result not only in the loss of generations of meaningful lives but also in the eradication of an ancient culture that has withstood the test of time.

In summary, this chapter attempted to explore the themes that emerged in the course of the field research. These themes are as follows: (1) Place-based identity; (2) Pain of loss due to destruction of sacred spaces; (3) Dignity, honour and respect; (4) Memories and emotional engagements; (5) Angry spirits; (6) Coping with change – a new culture based on money; and (7) Living under constant fear and threat. From the

foregoing discussion, the participants' narratives illustrated the importance of the role of emotions in the lifeways, identity and memories of people. The data also showed that emotions cannot be downplayed, nor can it be ignored any longer. As illustrated in the foregoing discussion of the themes, to continue to disregard the significance of emotions in development pursuits results not only to the further alienation of communities but more critically, to their subsequent exclusion from governance, critical policy formulations and decision-making processes particularly on matters that impact directly on them.

Mining is being touted as the golden solution to the country's economic problems. But when mineral prospecting results in the eviction of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands, destruction of their sacred sites, complete disregard for their lives and human rights, such development is not sustainable, least of all humane. As the remaining links to their ancestral past are systematically plundered, the question of survival for indigenous peoples in the Philippines has never been more at stake than now.

In the next chapter, I examine emotions within the framework of the political ecology theory. I also attempt to present an analysis on the nexus between cultural distribution conflicts and politicised environments of indigenous Filipinos' sacred geographies.

CHAPTER 6

POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF EMOTION

The previous chapter discussed the depth of the significance of sacred natural sites to indigenous communities. From the narratives of the research participants, significant themes emerged that convey how sacred landscapes elicit deep emotional attachments and cultural meanings for indigenous peoples. The data also showed how indigenous identities are intricately woven with their memories and the histories that these ancestral domains hold.

This chapter probes deeper into the Political Ecology of Emotion to examine the role of political leadership as a critical determinant in the systematic and institutional process of the cultural sabotage of the indigenous peoples of the Philippines. Utilising the data gathered from participant observations, informal conversations and focus groups, the analyses focus on power dynamics that turned once-peaceful ancestral domains into highly politicised battlegrounds of competing cultural meanings.

Taking inspiration from Escobar's work, I liberally apply his post-structural analysis to underpin my discussion on cultural distribution conflicts. I link this to the ongoing debates between reductionist-utilitarian views on natural resources and human-centric theories of cultural and emotional significance of sacred spaces. In this chapter, I attempt to explore in-depth the ways by which hegemonic and homogenising Eurocentric perspectives reinforce their imperial domination over cultures and peoples through control of nature and its resources. Moreover, from the data gathered during field research, I examine the competing perceptions on ancestral domains, environment and natural resources to explain how Western-influenced governance in the Philippines has deprived indigenous Filipinos of their fundamental right to practice their traditional lifeways by restricting access to their sacred and ancestral sites.

Cultural Distribution Conflicts

Western conceptions perceive the environment as a resource base for exploitation and domination, as opposed to indigenous views that regard the natural world in terms of nurture, respect and preservation, a platform to enhance human dignity and the quality of life of all living beings. These two competing notions have been featured prominently in environmental laws and development policies in the Philippines, and nowhere more evident than in ancestral domains where the West collides with the cultural ideologies of indigenous peoples and vie for supremacy. This is well-illustrated in the words of a participant:

“Who cares about “improved export market”? What we know of market is our sacks of potatoes hauled to the marketplace on a Sunday morning. The work of our hands, the product of our dedication to our sacred land is what makes the market. Our market is right here in this land, in our house where our neighbours come to buy or exchange their goods with ours. It is as simple as that. But Mr. Mayor and Mr. Governor do not think so. And their minions see to it that we learn their meaning of “market” (P29 interview, mining area 3, September 2012).

This perspective reveals the cultural gulf between Western and non-Western ways and meanings. From a Western/masculinist perspective, ancestral domains and sacred geographies are objectified as mere inanimate resources, therefore suitable for exploitation. For indigenous Filipinos, however, the opposite is held true. Whereas Eurocentric gaze sees the environment in capitalistic terms, as objects to be manipulated for profit, or as commodities for economic gain (Cronon, 1996), for indigenous peoples, ancestral domains, nature and the resources thereat are looked upon as gifts bestowed on the community by spirits or deities (Molintas, 2004). Thus, due to its divine origin, ancestral territories are held sacred, communal and “usufruct” (Molintas, 2004:275), that is, they could not be taken from the community by force or purchase. More than that, they believe that their ancestors interact with the living through their traditional territories (Council of Elders 3, mining area 3, September 2012). As hallowed places, ancestral domains therefore are believed to be inviolable and not subject to exploitation, ownership, sale, purchase, or lease. Intrinsically at odds with each other both in concept and in practice, there is an enormous difference between these two contradictory perspectives with indigenous peoples struggling for control over sacred their spaces and natural resources, while the West dominates the conversation.

Ironically, Western-led development, touted by its advocates as superior to non-Western paradigms (P22 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012) is viewed by indigenous peoples as ‘weak’, ‘very white’, ‘too pale’, ‘overly bland’, ‘freckled’, and ‘wearing high heeled shoes’ (P6 P22 P2 P13 P10 P9 focus groups 1-3, mining areas 1-3, July, August, September 2012). Locked in ideological medley with agents of development who the communities called as “white angels straight from hell who arrived charging in their fancy cars” (P1 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012), indigenous peoples strongly disputed the notion that only those in the “market for development” (P14 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012) have the competence to know what is or is not appropriate

(P19 conversation, mining area 2, August 2012) “for dirt-poor savages like us” (P1 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012). Unfortunately, the mere presence alone of mining firms already creates new meanings for the ancestral domains that in turn, dominate the culture of indigenous peoples. As the dominant discourse, it can influence and manipulate government decisions to their favour. In effect, policies highly-influenced by powerful exogenous systems, rather than reflect the will of the affected peoples, instead, tend to push indigenous societies further into obscurity, trivialise their emotions and superimpose on their culture.

From the narratives of the communities, it became apparent that their collective voice was ignored and their desires held very little sway in decision-making. The cultural meanings they ascribed to animate and inanimate objects in their ancestral domains, even their sentiments, did not figure in the development melee. For example, consultations were conducted only as a formality “for the sake of appearances” (P1 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012) to give the impression that indigenous peoples were “in the loop” (Council of Elders, mining area 2, August 2012) in all the negotiations between government and development firms. In reality though, “negotiations were held over our heads like we do not matter in this arrangement” (P16 interview, mining area 2, August 2012), “like it was already a done deal and we were there simply to be informed of the terms and only as a matter of course” (P28 conversation, mining area 3, September 2012). The communities felt that the development in their area had nothing to do with them as human beings who have deep emotional attachments to their lands. Instead, it is all about what the government prioritises as vital and important, never mind about how indigenous communities feel or think. By paying no particular attention to indigenous perspectives, the government and the mining firms were able to exercise control over the negotiations, thereby making it very easy for them to dismiss the communities’ “inferior concerns” (P10 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012).

With their experience of development via the mining route, indigenous peoples were convinced that “the sole concern here was not the welfare of the communities, but on how much this mining venture can add to the Treasury” (Council of Elders, mining area 1, July 2012). “Everything was about the financial bottomline [or] how much money this business of development would bring the government” (P16 interview, mining area 2, August 2012). Valued at over a billion US dollars, “the staggering cache of gold” (P16 interview, mining area 2, August 2012) “could tempt even the saints to part with their conscience. Government officials, mere mortal souls and with the national economy

foremost in their agenda on top of their personal interests, could no more resist the promise of material gain than the next mining firm” (P1 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012). From this discussion, it is clear that there exists a vast divide demarcating Western utilitarian notions from indigenous cultural meanings “... and never the twain shall meet.”⁴²

At the consultation assemblies, the people felt they were not accorded due respect, “like we were negotiable instruments, a golden opportunity packaged with the deal” (Council of Elders, mining area 3, September 2012) that included infrastructure projects as part of the government’s expansion programmes in big cities. Describing one such public consultation, one participant spoke of subtle coercion tactics leveraging on money as incentive (P7 conversation, mining area 1, July 2012). Many revealed that they were “talked into agreeing” (Council of Elders, mining area 2, August 2012) that the big amount of money that was supposed to be had in mining would somehow “give [the] intrusion and destruction a veil of legitimacy” (P16 interview, mining area 2, August 2012). Hence, they cannot be faulted for harbouring feelings that these consultations were mere ‘formalities’, facilitated by mining companies to show compliance to the law that will legitimise their entry into indigenous territories.

From the point of view of indigenous peoples, the picture of development in the Philippines is incomplete. As explained by the Council of Elders, their experience of development has convinced them that government was not cognisant of their culture and therefore deflects from the people’s aspirations. Although they indicated a keen understanding of the government’s purpose to revitalise the economy and bring it to the level reached by other industrialised neighbours, they believed that their deeply-held cultural ideals have not been seriously taken into account in the formulation and consequently the implementation of development plans in their ancestral domains. This notion is portrayed in the following excerpt:

“Development is trying to extinguish our culture and ways of life to superimpose [a] lifestyle that rides high on money, driven by materialism and the consumerist spirit. Where is the soul in that arrangement? Where is the indigenous person in all that?” (Council of Elders, mining area 1, July 2012).

In imposing large-scale mining on indigenous peoples’ ancestral domains, the

⁴² “Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” This was used by Rudyard Kipling, in his *Barrack-room ballads*, 1892.

government ignored the worldview of the people who will be severely affected by such imposition. It did not take into consideration the communities' intimate connection to their sacred natural sites thus trifling with their deepest spiritual, emotional and intellectual ideas. Displacements of indigenous families, for example, remove them from their traditional environments with which they have deeply-rooted spiritual relationship. Their disquiet was rooted in their anxiety that their "sacred land will be at the mercy of those who do not know [their] history and are ignorant of [their] ancestors" (P16 interview, mining area 2, August 2012). For indigenous communities, such wholesale displacements can prove devastating (Tauli-Corpuz, 1996) and threaten cultural survival. To sever their spiritual connections to their ancestral domains deprives them of the fundamental source of their life support systems that is.

In the struggle for cultural ascendancy, the face of indigenous peoples is sadly absent in a Western-endorsed development (Council of Elders, mining area 3, July 2012), their voice muffled by the louder ones of government and mining firms (Council of Elders, mining area 1, July 2012) and their feelings trivialised (Council of Elders, mining area 3, September 2012).

Given this scenario, development that deprives communities of their dignity and self-determination, and denies their emotional connections to their environment is, in a sense, a failure (Council of Elders, mining area 3, September 2012) because it takes away from the people their decision-making agency and makes a parody of their culture. Development that fails to affirm the inherent connection of indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains wars with their core values that set them apart from the rest of the population. In a major way, it deflected from its avowed purpose – that of upholding the dignity of peoples and respecting their cultural meanings.

This observation is a strong argument that forcing upon indigenous communities a development apropos to their culture reproduces and reinforces patriarchal domination. Patriarchy is the idea that the strong have control over the weak by keeping marginalised populations mired in the web of violence, power, cultural dominance and political control.

In summary, the fundamental issues at the heart of indigenous peoples' struggles have not merited the just attention of the institutions and agencies mandated by law to oversee environmental resource management (Panelli, 2008). Indigenous perspectives, viewed from the vantage point of Western development, are considered irrational and/or illegal and labelled in uncomplimentary terms, such as "inconvenient flights of fancy" (P12 Conversation, mining area 2, August 2012), "out of order and context" (P16

Conversation, mining area 2, August 2012), irrelevant (P20 Conversation, mining area 2, August 2012), and therefore, obstructive (van Stokkom, 2005; Marcus, 2002). Consequently, their inherent spiritual connections and emotional attachments to their ancestral domains, livelihood resources and sacred geographies, elements critical to the survival of their communities, are swept under the rug. As gleaned from the foregoing discussions, resource management decisions, geared to satisfy Western-led development ideologues, tend to trivialise the cultures of the non-dominant sectors of Philippine society whose survival is emotionally, historically and spiritually interwoven with their free access to their sacred places and ancestral territories.

Hegemonies and Politicised Environments

In order to explain further the interplay of politics, power and emotions in the context of Filipino indigenous peoples, I utilise literature on emotional geographies like Escobar's post-structural political ecology. Emotional geographies offer an alternative perspective that argues for the emotions of the marginalised communities to be seriously considered in order to understand the depth of their attachments to their ancestral domains and ultimately come up with economic strategies and policy decisions that are indigenous-friendly. Works of political ecology scholars usually examine the dynamic interplay of people, resources, environment and land, and political economy.⁴³

In this thesis, I approach the issue of control over ancestral domains using emotional geographies side by side with post-structuralist political ecology framework. This framework will help illustrate how the Philippine government has compromised the survival of indigenous communities by its failure to give rightful credence to their deep emotional, spiritual and intellectual connections to their revered ancestral landscapes. These conflicting perceptions on the use of the environment and nature's resources are at the root of this controversy. I argue that these competing socio-cultural constructs has led to the marginalisation of indigenous interests and welfare.

The indigenous communities have a strong conviction that they are the anointed stewards and custodians of their ancestral territories. Because of this, they are under spiritual obligation to protect their areas from those who treat their resources as mere commodities to be exploited for economic gains (Cronon, 1996). This viewpoint stands directly in the way of Western development ideologies causing serious problems and hardships for indigenous Filipinos.

⁴³ Political economy is a Marxist perspective that views society as structured in such a way that some people reap benefits whilst others suffer from exploitation.

In the discussion of their emotions in this study, for example, the communities vividly describe in their language the feeling of being dehumanised in the face of more powerful figures in their midst:

“To be taken over in this way is similar to being conquered in the old days. They take over everything, leaving no stone unturned. They want us to think their thoughts, and act like they do. Our laws no longer matter because in practicing them openly, we put our lives on the line. I flinch at the memory of that day we climbed the massive trucks that will take us to our relocation sites. Our elderly and ageing women had to climb those trucks as well, pushed and pulled in all directions. Beside us are our pigs and goats, also pushed and pulled in all directions. I thought that perhaps to these rich people, including the government and miners, we belong to a category lower than human beings. On that day, the future stretched bleak before us. I remember thinking: so this is how the cows feel on their way to the butcher and the markets of the rich. This scenario kept on running in my mind as our truck pulled away and our ancestral homes became only a tiny speck in the horizon” (Council of Elders interview, mining area 2, August 2012).

This sentiment was echoed by others who said that ‘development’ has turned them into less than who they are. Because of this, they were helpless to stop their ancestral domains from being transformed into a political battleground where different ideologies and beliefs compete with one another (Council of Elders interview, mining area 2, August 2012). The communities felt their voices were not heeded, and the reason for this, according to them, was their inability to assert themselves because they were the “less powerful in the arena of development” (Council of Elders interview, mining area 1, July 2012). They were treated “like ants, and therefore must be squished before we can sting or cause allergic reaction to them (referring to the development proponents and government representatives), or worse grow horns for antlers” (Council of Elders interview, mining area 2, August 2012).

To quell resistance from amongst the members of the communities, the mining firms surrounded themselves with “men in black carrying very powerful killing machines. More than ever, we felt we should not say anything that will anger the mayor or displease the governor” (Council of Elders interview, mining area 1, July 2012). “We were expected to echo what they think should be reflected in the official documents. If our views are

opposed to their will, it is not worth documenting. We are being listened to, but our heartfelt wishes are not being carried out. So our views do not find expression in the records of the government. They want our gold, but they do not want to know what is in our hearts. And that is very unfortunate for us” (Council of Elders interview, mining area 3, September 2012).

Termed as "cultural distribution conflicts" (Escobar, 2006a:8), Escobar captures the poignant emotions and frustrations of indigenous peoples faced by a brick wall of indifference from government and development agencies. Although the indigenous communities have traditionally lived in these areas, and have historically protected the biodiversity and watershed for centuries, government refuses to acknowledge this fact. Unfortunately for the indigenous communities, the power to decide and influence resource management processes do not lie with the people and the communities affected. It strains credulity that in its bid to be economically robust, government forgot that its greatest resource is its citizens. Perhaps in the course of planning the development of this country, leaders lost track of their priorities, inebriated with power and blinded by the glitter of gold.

Politicised environments create cultural distribution conflicts that enable the Government to prevail and deny indigenous peoples their traditional ways of living by limiting their access to their ancestral territories. Having to compete with Western-influenced meanings of sacred geographies and domains of survival, indigenous Filipinos are left with no recourse but to go on struggling against their own political leaders and implementers of development. As succinctly summed up by a tribal elder:

“These modern-day Magellans control our lives. When they say it rains, we have to believe it even if the sun is shining. If they say the land of our ancestors is up for development, they expect us to give in meekly. Though we cannot defend our ancestral heritage and dignity with powerful arms, we can at least say to ourselves that our conscience have remained intact. If for this, we can say that we have not been conquered by the powerful people. They may be able to take our gold and our land from us, but they cannot bend our will.”

The struggle to live within environments that restricts them was to them “a “powerful learning experience” (Council of Elders interview, mining area 1, July 2012), “one that is bitter and makes us feel powerless” (Council of Elders interview, mining area 3, September 2012). As told by one participant:

“They are insatiable. It is of no consequence to them who owns the ancestral domains, in this case our communities. But this is a powerful learning experience for all cultural communities everywhere. Nowadays, the game is different. The question that should raise our fear several notches higher is this: who has power over the natural resources within our territories? For whoever controls our natural resources has in their hands the power to destroy us. Isn't this also cultural genocide?” (Council of Elders interview, mining area 1, July 2012).

The Council of Elders were united in their view that the development agenda pursued by the government and the laws enforced to support it only served the interests of the “more privileged people in the government and the project people themselves” (Council of Elders interview, mining area 3, September 2012). Clearly, as stated by the participants, the government's unrelenting and hegemonic pursuit of development along Western tenets has defined and influenced public policy directions and decision-making processes. One Elder said: “We cannot find ourselves in this maze called ‘development’. The only thing I see is what counts most for the people who implement the law. We can only stand helpless as outside people rule over us, our lives and in our turf in such a way that violates our most-valued traditions” (Council of Elders interview, mining area 1, July 2012). In politicised geographies, often missing is the recognition of the cultural meanings that indigenous peoples attach to their lands (Bryant, 2000). Instead, these are contested by powerful stakeholders such that their power to dominate the conversation on environmental resource use serves to discourage any engagement or questions on the morals and ethics of a project (Bryant and Jarosz, 2004).

From the foregoing discussion, it can be deduced that no longer is the right of indigenous peoples over their ancestral domains the prime concern of government, never mind that there are laws in place specifically protecting this right. Because resources within ancestral domains are globally in demand, these traditional territories have been turned into battlegrounds of conflicting interests and political manoeuvrings hence, ‘who controls’ has dominion over these natural resources.

To gain control, mining companies look to the government to secure their access and continued operations in ancestral domains, by whatever means available. In areas where resistance is strong, the military deploys its paramilitary or auxiliary forces. As the following interview illustrates, the communities do not welcome this interference:

“The CAFGU⁴⁴ has infiltrated our communities. They are in the pockets of the mining company and receive their instructions from them. We heard that some of our own members are in their ranks to spy on us. There is so much violence and deaths here. I cannot describe enough the extent of the brutalities committed against those amongst us who are against mining. We have to toe the line, or face execution, harassment or disappearance. I fear there is no law in our land but theirs [referring to the mining company] and the government’s” (Council of Elders interview, mining area 3, September 2012).

In this scenario, the presence of the government’s military forces disrupts the lives of peoples in a fundamental manner. In “politicized moral geographies” (Bryant, 2000: 674; see also Bryant and Jarosz, 2004), violence erupts as conflicts over the control of natural resources escalates. The result is that ancestral domains are transformed from being sacred places of indigenous peoples into “arena[s] for exerting power” (Bohle, 2007). This is accomplished through nefarious means, such as the use of violence in various forms that alter the face of both environment and relationships in indigenous communities.

As discussed in this chapter, alienation and marginalisation in politics, culture and economic development, as experienced by the indigenous peoples of the Philippines, have immense negative impact on the living conditions now besetting them. Their emotional and spiritual disconnection from their ancestral domains and sacred spaces (Richmond et al., 2005) has left a deep sense of hopelessness and despair, feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness, and disenfranchisement and paranoia on the communities – an unfortunate legacy that will reverberate all throughout the country, and will continue to be felt long after the resources of the land have been completely depleted. As indigenous communities suffer their ancestral losses, their struggle for cultural and social recognition and acceptance against government inclination towards policies that favour Western meanings and practices continues.

Post-structural political ecology brings into sharp focus the untenable situation of indigenous Filipinos and challenges Western-espoused development policy directions.

⁴⁴ CAFGU, or Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit, is the official paramilitary or auxiliary force of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, created through Executive Order No. 264. Article X, Sec. 61, sub-par. 2, R.A. 7077 stipulates its duties. Through the years, the CAFGU has been engaged in summary executions and blamed for the disappearance of suspected insurgents, including persons who are opposed to large-scale development ventures in the countryside, such as in ancestral domains. To date, 853 human rights abuse cases have been filed against it. (see also http://www.chr.gov.ph/MAIN%20PAGES/about%20hr/advisories/pdf_files/abthr009.pdf)

This theory can help researchers seek ways to offer viable solutions to the systematic institutional elimination of cultures and communities. The critical insights that post-structural political ecology argue for compel one to delve deeper into the power dimensions of politicised environments. As the power holders are on top of the decision-making hierarchy and are themselves the implementers, the question of ethics, moral obligation and genuine concern for the cause of indigenous peoples is not likely to be afforded any consideration in the formulation of laws and policy directions. Lacking such engagement with indigenous perspectives, the consequences of their decisions seriously threaten the very survival of the marginalised communities. Environment, a constant source of forceful debates in Philippine governance, may never be argued in favour of the indigenous peoples unless the political leadership develops a conscience to do what is right and just by these people.

I believe our only hope for the future of indigenous peoples is to adopt a new concept of humane and sustainable development, one wherein we start to reconstitute our view of the richness of cultures and diverse worldviews. A dogged adherence to Eurocentric systems and perspectives has maimed our way of thinking in the same way as when we mindlessly strip and mine our earth until it has nothing more to yield, leaving the future to take care of itself and the generations to come to grapple with the mistakes of the past. We have to re-think the fundamental principles upon which we base development. We have to right our priorities. Most of all, we need a strong political will to make this happen.

CHAPTER 7

LINKING LAND AND PEOPLES THROUGH DECOLONISED RESEARCH

The indigenous peoples of the Philippines have, for centuries, resisted the colonisation efforts of the Spanish *conquistadores*, hostile colonial governments, miners and resource extractors of every kind. The magnitude of violence from government agencies and state institutions, development organisations and various sectors, however, seem to have overwhelmed their centuries-old indigenous cultures. While academic attention on indigenous peoples has been high, it is only recently that their sacrifice as development's 'invisible victims' is being acknowledged. Genocide and ethnocide are on the lips and minds of many anthropologists and scholars, but would acknowledgement of their indefensible situation be enough? Obviously, it is not. What is imperative is positive government action stemming from deep awareness of their plight and a sense of genuine concern for their well-being. This action necessitates a determined political will to redirect present policy directions and set right historical injustices committed against indigenous peoples as no less than the survival of communities of human beings is at stake in this discourse.

This final chapter attempts to bring into relief and prominence the hitherto ignored but vital emotional connection of indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains and sacred spaces. I revisit the research problem and objectives of this thesis in order to highlight significant points that may hopefully contribute towards a deeper appreciation and understanding of the true impact of development on human beings. I reiterate the main arguments from my thesis and how they address the objectives of this study.

In every study, certain areas emerge that are worthy of further academic pursuit. In the course of my research, I encountered situations and opportunities that can offer both challenge and inspiration to future students. I indicated a number of these research possibilities by proffering recommended topics grounded on collaborative and decolonising academic undertakings. As clearly stated throughout this thesis, there was a deliberate search for and subsequent use of decolonising methodologies, hand in hand with my positionality as researcher and advocate for the right of indigenous cultural communities to self-determination. I also attempt to synthesise the body of literature that shaped the direction of my research, namely, emotional geographies, indigenous geographies, and post-structural political ecology.

As I write this concluding part of my work, I look back to and reflect on my journey with the indigenous peoples in the Philippines that culminated in the writing of this thesis. It was a journey marked with potholes and unpaved beginnings, but these difficulties only served to cement the enduring trust, partnerships and bonds of friendship that were cultivated along the way. Given a choice, I would not have it any other way.

Revisiting the Research Problem and Objectives

The principal goal of this research was to establish whether the cultural, social, and ancestral dispossession of indigenous peoples, in particular, their loss of access to their sacred spaces and emotional landscapes as a consequence of development, directly impacts on their survival as individuals and as communities.

To achieve this objective, this research documented the experiences of indigenous communities in three mining areas in Mindanao in an attempt to understand how their emotional attachment to their ancestral domains is linked to their sense of identity and well-being. The foregoing broad objective leads to the following research questions:

1. Do the legal, policy and institutional framework governing natural resource management in the Philippines recognise and support, or do they undermine, the rights and responsibilities of indigenous communities to govern and protect their ancestral domains and sacred territories, according to their customary governance systems and on their own terms?
2. Do environmental laws and policies in the Philippines reflect and affirm the desires of indigenous peoples? If not, in what ways have indigenous peoples' lives been shaped and transformed due to the implementation of these laws? Do these laws stand up to the task of protecting the indigenous cultural communities?
3. How are indigenous peoples' physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional and spiritual connections to their ancestral domains and sacred landscapes linked to their survival?

To propound some possible answers to the research questions, it was necessary to retrace the events that led to the advent of aggressive development in the Philippines.

The 1980s were bleak years for the country, marked by crippling external debt, recession and structural adjustments. In an effort to bail out the country's ailing economy, the Philippine government took steps to outfit the legal framework to suit the liberal reform template set by the World and IMF under the structural adjustment programme. Accordingly, all policy and institutional systems were modified to support the new liberalisation scheme. The byword being 'privatisation', the government began the rapid transfer of crucial industries from the public domain to the private economic players. To

lay the groundwork necessary to enforce the rule of ‘market forces’, restrictive laws and policies governing foreign investments and environmental resource management were relaxed to friendlier levels.

One of the major laws that underwent a radical change, at least in its fundamental interpretation and enforcement, was the statutory clause in the Philippine Constitution that explicitly limits to 40% the shares that a foreign investor can own while doing business in the Philippines (Section 2, Section 11, Art. XII, National Economy and Patrimony). However, this constitutional mandate was, in essence, foiled by the Supreme Court ruling that such limitation is not applicable to mineral resource development. Consequentially, the Congress of the Philippines passed the Foreign Investment Act, basically allowing 100% foreign ownership of crucial industries and resources in the Philippines, including mines. Moreover, the law also allows for 100% repatriation of incomes derived from the mines and drastically reduced the taxes levied on the export of these premium commercial products.

The Foreign Investments Act and Philippine Mining Act, however, are just but two amongst the many other Philippine laws that affect indigenous peoples. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) is another such law, specifically mandating the government to protect the welfare of indigenous cultural communities and their rights to their ancestral domains. IPRA requires the consent – free, prior and informed – of indigenous communities, before a development project, such as mining, may gain entry or be permitted to explore or allowed to operate. As shown in the discussions in Chapters 5 and 6, the process of securing the consent of the communities was seldom ‘free’. Coercive tactics, subtle or otherwise, bribery, and other such methods, were employed, threatening the indigenous communities into signing away their free will. Not only do these acts demean the dignity of the people, they make a mockery of the culture and deeply-held traditions of the communities. More often, the so-called exercise at self-determination was severely impaired given that the communities were only gathered to be informed of a prior agreement between the government and the potential project proponent. The presence of the Council of Elders, for example, in the ‘consultative’ process was a mere formality and conducted for the sake of compliance rather than a sincere effort to discuss and openly negotiate as equals, and to arrive at a decision without having to lose one’s self-respect into the bargain.

The story of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines, since the past up to this day, illustrates the instance in which the state’s framework of development is used to

invalidate, deny and, hence, defeat the one purpose that these laws and policies are promulgated – the protection of the rights Indigenous Cultural Communities to their ancestral domains and to be affirmed of their humanity, if only in the eyes of the law. “Those unfamiliar with indigenous culture may mistakenly believe that mining poses minimal risks, since indigenous peoples have little income or wealth to lose and [suffer from] high unemployment” (Mining, Minerals, and Sustainable Development, 2002:152). However, such a view is incorrect because “the wealth that supports the sustainability of their culture is found in institutions, environmental knowledge, local resources, and especially in land embellished with cultural meaning” (ibid.).

Needless to say, the implementation of the Philippine Mining Act and such other related laws and statutes, including the Constitution of the country, had severe repercussions on the population as a whole but more on the Indigenous Peoples whose mineral-rich territories suddenly became lucrative targets for development. Resolved to meet the World Bank’s liberalisation criteria in exchange for more and much bigger financial packages, the Philippine government pushed for the complete liberalisation of the mineral industry. Unfortunately, in its eagerness to raise the country’s much-needed revenues through large-scale mining, it missed considering the tremendous social cost of this decision. Political leaders and policy makers failed to project that the cost of such aggressive development would be paid for in human lives. This leads us to ask the question: Do the economic gains – the very essence of such ‘development’ – outweigh the destruction of indigenous cultural communities and the death of cultures? The Philippines, despite having won freedom and independence decades ago, appears to be still tied with the chains of colonialism and the colonial mentality.

As expressed both implicitly and explicitly by the research participants, the deficiency of Western-led development is its absolute reliance on the idea that material abundance is the gauge of real progress, and the government apparently believes that the only means to achieve this end is by copying everything West. This is certainly a very limited and timid view of development because there is no room in it for ‘others’ to determine their own path to development and the diverse means to achieve it. Eurocentric supremacy basically preaches ‘if you want to develop, be like us’, meaning, the West.

Protecting the rights of indigenous peoples to their ancestral domains is not only right in principle but is also a moral imperative and sound economics. Sustainable development entails putting the people at the centre and as the focus of development. In the absence of such vital element, we will find, as this research proved, indifferent

policies, directions and decisions that completely disregard their consequences to humans and environment, with indigenous peoples' welfare relegated to obscurity or arising only as a dismissible afterthought.

The empirical evidence gathered in the course of this research uncovers how little attention has been accorded to the impact of large-scale mining to indigenous communities. Obviously, the irrefutable fact that their survival is deeply intertwined with their geographies has not been factored into the deliberations attendant to policy formulation. It is indeed a discomfiting truth that in the face of the country's economic development, vulnerable human lives and cultures are being sacrificed through the forcible imposition of mineral resource extraction in their territories, apparently justifying their oppression with the expected inflow of billions in revenues for the country. Ironically, government itself and its policies and laws, instead of being vanguards of constitutional rights, have become a serious threat to indigenous peoples who strongly oppose the entry of mining prospecting in their ancestral domains.

This research joins the debate by encouraging those in the seats of authority to examine in detail alternative options to what has been favoured and acclaimed in Eurocentric discourse as the best course of action under the banner of the structural adjustment programme. Long-term economic recovery and fiscal growth must be anchored not on prospects of material prosperity alone; rather, any development must rest and be ignited on the principle of human development also. After all, are we not trying to save and invigorate the economy for the benefit of the people and not at their expense?

The struggle of indigenous Filipinos to protect their ancestral domains is the fulcrum upon which rests their survival as peoples. Their basic human right to live has been upheld in various conferences and agreements around the world by international organisations but in spite of this worldwide acknowledgement of indigenous rights, governments, signatories to a myriad of declarations recognising the equality of all humans, do not hesitate to run roughshod on this universal truth in the name of development. It is sad to note that what is put on paper does not necessarily guarantee its truth in reality and the innumerable declarations that call attention to and rightfully denounce the violence committed against indigenous peoples barely tipped the scale in favour of the oppressed. In more ways than one, this serves to bring home the stark reality of how Western hegemonic views have smothered cultures that do not fit into their mould. Evidently, the apparent discomfort of the West over non-western cultures has become the driving force justifying the latter's systematic annihilation, a sobering eye-opener that

colonisation, far from it being an archaic tool for subjugation, continues to plague vulnerable societies who have managed to survive against all odds, even if only to exist in the fringes of our consciousness.

Notwithstanding the Government's predilection towards rationality in decision-making processes and objectivity in environmental and natural resource management, I harbour high hopes that this research will be able to offer an alternative view when engaging with indigenous cultures and peoples. Understanding the profound link that indigenous peoples have for their landscapes is crucial to attaining national development founded on morally just policies and sustained through economic framework that makes sense. It is the sheer lack of comprehension on the part of authorities of what lies deep at the heart of the issues besetting indigenous communities that have caused states and institutions to commit grave injustices against those who suffer from their policies. This is ethically unacceptable. It is economically damaging. If this scenario continues, generations from now will still find indigenous communities struggling against threats to their survival and defending their right to live as equals with the rest of humanity. Hopefully, this thesis will serve as a reminder that development is not merely a question of economic performance aimed at achieving a state of material nirvana; first and foremost, development is a matter of political will. As has become apparent in the course of this thesis, and in the context of the survival of indigenous cultural communities, the hegemonic powers do not rest solely in the state, but are shared abundantly with both the multinational firms and the politicians. This research has argued that the government's lack of political will and genuine concern have reduced millions of people to a state of vulnerability with no means to defend themselves against the whims of their own government, while a privileged few reaped and enjoyed the benefits of their loss. In the absence of political will, the state perpetuates a culture of compelled and acquiescent silence and, in the face of such institutional oppression, the manipulation of indigenous rights, beliefs and traditions continues unchecked. It is this culture of oppression borne in silence by indigenous cultural communities that moved me when I first embarked on this project.

While working on this research, I discovered that the indigenous cultural communities are continually disadvantaged by a flawed neo-liberal stance that systematically favours the powerful few over the greater good of the people and short-term economic growth over long-term social well-being. I have journeyed with indigenous peoples and saw how historical blunders continue to spill over to and

influence the present. One wonders how government officials have time and again failed to recognise and learn from these lessons. As C. Wright Mills notes: “men are free to make history, but ... some men are indeed much freer than others. For such freedom requires access to the means of decision and of power by which history can now be made” (Mills, 1956:455). As the Philippine Government clings to its neo-liberal posture, the recurring question is: Whose interest does development really serve? While a better life, in terms of material sufficiency, may easily be denigrated by those already leading lives of abundance, it remains to be an elusive dream for indigenous Filipinos who, since the era of colonial subjugation, have never known a secure existence. Given their present predicament, any hope of achieving at least a life of dignity is eclipsed by their reality.

I earnestly encourage development scholars and geographers to extend their critical interests to further exploring the issue of development and the deep but hitherto ignored emotional attachments of marginalised groups to their traditional spaces. I further urge researchers to highlight the experiences of indigenous peoples and bring these to the forefront of development research and to the awareness of policy-makers. The possibilities and opportunities for these silenced human voices to be heard are endless if only more people in the seats of power would care enough to listen and institute corresponding policy changes.

Revisiting the Theoretical Foundation and Methodological Framework

This research explored and utilised a range of academic literature on geographies of emotion, indigenous geographies, and post-structural political ecology. This indicates how the focus of my thesis is located within the remit of humane geographies. A further attempt was made to peg this body of relevant literature to the arguments in this thesis particularly on the continuing disregard for the grave impact of aggressive development on indigenous communities.

After a critical examination of the various methodologies, this research adopted and applied a culture-sensitive approach in order to enter into the emotional experiences of indigenous peoples and thereby understand their struggles to protect their ancestral domains and preserve their histories, identities and cultures. This work is, in essence, an attempt to critique the excessively Eurocentric view of development that emphasises the universal supremacy of Western rationalism and Western institutions, barring non-Western systems and processes which have been vilified as irrational, illogical and inferior.

The utility of emotional geographies is embraced in this research as crucial to reverse the common trend that either constricts or trivializes the role of emotion in governance.

Correcting, if not making reparations for, the mistakes of the past is the aim of this decolonising research. I leaned heavily on indigenous and feminist methodologies which I felt were appropriate given the nature of my research. The choice of these methodologies ultimately ensured a culture-sensitive approach to rigorous research whilst cultivating trust through non-threatening and collaborative relationships with the host communities.

Implications of the Research

This research argues for the need for policy change and adopting a new and altogether different approach, one that takes into serious consideration the basic rights of indigenous peoples. As traditional occupants and owners of their ancestral domains under the law, people should have the first call on how their ancestral domains and the resources therein may be appropriated, a principle explicitly acknowledged in international declarations but which seems to have been missed in the formulation of national economic policy.

This research established the indisputable connection between ancestral geographies, emotional spaces, cultural identity and the survival of the indigenous cultural communities. Development, as understood in Western parlance, is too superficial to capture the dynamic and multi-faceted attachment of indigenous Filipinos to their ancestral domains. Eurocentric perspectives do not even begin to grasp the reasons why certain communities place a higher premium on non-tangible values and ethical standards than on material abundance, an ideology far removed from any sophisticated materialist-capitalist criterion. Sacred spaces, for example, that evoke centuries of memories and deep emotions, and such concepts as community, family, tradition, ceremonies and practices, do not fall conveniently within the delimiting box of neo-liberal principles. The root of the conflict lies in the fact that preserving what is valuable to indigenous peoples curtails the opportunities of outsiders to make money. The use of such lofty term as 'development' has led many government planners and decision-makers to believe that money is the ultimate solution to all problems. However, this research argues that 'development' fixated along neo-liberal concepts utterly disregards those systems, institutions, structures and processes that do not fall within the category of pure market logic or doctrine. This renders marginalised communities, who barricade mining fields and carry placards in protest of IMF policies, totally irrelevant.

Indigenous systems and processes defy the straightjacket parameters of modernisation theory. Thus, not surprisingly, their aspirations pose a nuisance to state development agencies. Governance and decision-making processes in the Philippines, under the direction of the powerful elite, follow the popular path patterned after Western models. It is inevitable therefore that political leaders and policy makers conditioned in neo-liberal thought would not bother to comprehend the complexities, meanings and connections that indigenous Filipinos have for their ancestral domains and sacred spaces. Given this scenario, the issues that plague indigenous Filipinos will continue to be shrouded in Western rhetoric to serve elitist desire for profit, whilst the heart of the matter remains buried in the red tape of indifference. I argue that the very idea of ‘development’ is an issue so saturated with Western dominance that it has become a wellspring wherefrom originates the problems confronting indigenous peoples. ‘Development’, in this sense, has become the cause of, rather than the solution to, the hardships of indigenous Filipinos.

I also explored Escobar’s theory on cultural and resource distribution conflicts. Again, as seen, ownership of the ancestral domains alone does not automatically guarantee decision-making powers. The power and authority to decide on matters affecting ancestral domains remain in the hands of the government, political leaders and multinational firms who wield control over access to and the manner of appropriating the resources within these territories. This research takes a closer look at what is missing in our governance and processes. The state, believing it to be its legitimate mandate, superimposed its will over the use of natural resources, failing to recognise the cultural meanings abiding in the issue of ancestral domains. In its blind bid to implement wholesale development, it has sidestepped its primary role as protector of peoples as it wrested from the communities their right to exist as viable communities and, along with it, their dignity, security and identity. The government has not respected the deep emotional, mental, cultural and spiritual connections of indigenous Filipinos to their ancestral domains, a factor crucial to the survival of the people. The failure of political leaders to acknowledge the consequences of their decisions on this matter will eventually crush the spirit of vulnerable cultures, effectively putting an end to their cosmologies, and thereby their existence.

This research strongly advocates for democratic governance based on community control, particularly in planning and decision-making on issues that affect their lives. Rather than extract compliance through the imposition of laws, political leaders could

learn much from observing how indigenous systems and structures work, namely, by adhering to and following democratic processes such as collective responsibility, social relations, equality of contribution and community participation. More specifically, rather than resorting to enforcing laws and Western concepts on indigenous cultural communities that are contradictory to their cultural practices, the Government should set greater store on engaging with indigenous ethical systems that values mutuality, cooperation, egalitarianism, a sense of deep history, and responsibility to people, to the environment and to the world as a total system. Once learned and understood, values and perspectives like these are intellectual gems that should find their way into the very foundation of institutional processes, development plans and governance structures. In other words, in order for development to be suited to the needs of the people, it has to be radical, compassionate and indigenous.

The state-sponsored legal framework and development policies in the Philippines have not worked in favour of many indigenous peoples as the majority found themselves in worse conditions after development invaded their territories. Perhaps the time is ripe for the Government to take a step backward and employ a more detailed and well-informed examination of the aforesaid laws and policies. With a deeper appreciation of indigenous systems and their meanings for indigenous cultural communities, national leaders would be able to determine those areas in governance that are in dire need of reform. It is not an exaggeration to say that the indigenous cultural communities have been bending so far backward to bear centuries of oppression and injustice. Now is an opportune time to attempt to meet the indigenous communities halfway.

Broadening the Latitude of Decolonising Research with Indigenous Peoples

The contribution made by this research is perhaps but a tiny speck in the vast knowledge within its field. Still, it is hoped that the empirical data herein has given constructive input toward a deeper awareness and critical understanding of the unique world of indigenous peoples, their ancestral domains, cosmologies, experiences, histories and sacred geographies. I am optimistic that further research into the emotional experiences of indigenous peoples in other areas affected by development can someday make inroads into altering the country's decision-making processes, structures and procedures. I do concede that the matter of interest of this research has a very limited base, restricted to indigenous communities who are currently undergoing, have undergone or are about to undergo mineral resource development in their ancestral domains. Nevertheless, there are considerable learning points that merit further research.

(1) Widen the scope of the research to include indigenous peoples in war-torn regions, particularly in Mindanao, who have been inevitably caught in the crossfire between the Government/military and insurgents/secessionist groups for decades. This has far-reaching implications towards bringing lasting peace and order in the regions encompassing the ancestral domains of Muslim indigenous cultural communities. There can be no lasting peace as long as the Government fails to recognize that the conflicts cannot be solved simply by disarming the insurgents. Rather, Government must realize that the indigenous peoples are arming themselves not to rebel against the state but to protect their sacred spaces, the last frontier of their cultures and identities, a task the Government has failed. In the recently concluded peace negotiations between the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front, hopes are high that this time, the Government will have learned from its past mistakes. As peace efforts continue, the need for more critical studies that can influence policy formulation and ultimately contribute to the quest for lasting peace becomes urgent.

(2) The discussion on development in ancestral domains cannot be comprehensively covered without touching on the issues confronting indigenous children. On top of the lack of proper schools, these children, heirs to a vast wealth of cultural knowledge, must suffer the early loss of their sense of security and be silent witnesses to the tragic reality of their circumstances. This is one area where development researchers, with the help of organizations promoting children's welfare, can have a huge impact on swaying policy directions and law-making to favour the indigenous.

(3) Studies dealing specifically on the impact of militarisation in their domains can offer various insights into the reasons that foster indigenous mobilisation and recruitment by insurgency organisations in the rural areas, their cause rapidly gaining support from radical movements in urban areas as well. These insights will benefit the different government agencies tasked with national security, peace and order and human rights protection.

(4) Studies that focus on the much-neglected rich cultural knowledge of indigenous Filipinos (i.e. the art of weaving, healing with the use of medicinal herbs, native dances) and how this could be integrated into the learning system in schools in their locality to ensure that it is handed down to the next generations, both indigenous and non-indigenous, and not lost with the passing of time. This will afford the non-indigenous youth a better appreciation of indigenous ways, aside from promoting understanding and tolerance and more importantly, gaining valuable knowledge and skills.

(5) Indigenous women are the most vulnerable in circumstances such as those that they find themselves in once mining comes to their land. In the Philippines, the loss of livelihood or access to livelihood resources compels them to find work in mining activities to help feed their families. As this set-up is contrary to their deeply held cultural practices, indigenous women work side by side with the men with some degree of ambivalence. They are aware that participation in such employment opportunities exposes them to the risk of being among unruly male outsiders and being ostracised by their kinsfolk to the point of losing their good reputation and honour in their communities, especially if they begin to entertain relationships with male miners. With no better options available to them, these women choose to take these risks to earn a decent living. Indigenous women in mining areas should not be victimised by policies that ignore realities on the ground and do not recognise their greater need for protection under the law. Given this situation, policy-makers can help restore culture-based sense of honour and dignity of indigenous women by paying greater attention to their plight, perspectives and recommendations for improving their lot in life. In this regard, research along this concern can perhaps prod those in power to formulate policies purposely to address the complex issues peculiar to indigenous women who can easily be the most neglected sector in the development discourse in the Philippines.

Being aware of the urgency of the issues confronting indigenous Filipinos, this research recognises the necessity to expand the limited base of research participants and the range of composite issues confronting indigenous cultural communities. Any research that evolves towards decolonisation offers vital alternative ways that may perhaps be used to unsettle political leaders and policy-makers enough for them to start re-thinking the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of our present government systems, development policies, institutions and structures that, in spite of our peoples' historical experience, are still steeped in Eurocentric traditions.

Reflections on the Journey of Decolonising Research

The Stockholm Declaration of 1972 affirms that “Man [sic] has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being.” Cultivating a life of quality, or in this sense, human-focussed development, is the universal fundamental aspiration of all peoples. For indigenous peoples, the fulfilment of such desires comes in varied shapes and sizes that carry with them centuries of emotional memories, cultures, experiences and histories, all of which define their identity. Being culturally unique, their differing ways naturally do

not follow the mould set by Western regimes. Development, as argued in this research, is a subjective project, and as such, attainable within differing cultural and other social contexts unique to a particular community. Development, as understood according to indigenous subjectivity, does not necessarily have to adhere to exact, straight-laced or objective canons, but should be flexible, collaborative, and tailor-made for a specific target area and above all, for the communities living therein. Unfortunately, market-oriented Western approaches pay no heed to the indigenous peoples' rights, most of all, their agency for self-determination. Indigenous views of development, in contrast, assert that survival or the mere existence of their communities does not even nearly dignify the definition of "quality of life" which they view as being recognised on equal terms with the rest of the population and being able to freely participate in creating solutions and substantially contribute to the realisation of the development agenda. Anything below these standards could be construed as reneging on the part of the political leadership on its obligation to protect the people, therefore a failure of the government in its mandate and a negative inference on its capabilities in addressing indigenous development concerns. As one Filipino human development advocate argues: "Development is development aggression"⁴⁵ consists when the people become the victims, not the beneficiaries; when the people are set aside in development planning, not partners in development; and when people are considered mere resources for profit-oriented development, not the center of development ... Development aggression violates the human rights of our people in all their dimensions – economic, social, cultural, civil and political" (Casiple, 1996:43; see also Abrash, 2002).

When I first began this research, I was appalled to witness first-hand the massive and permanent destruction to the environment, and the escalating disruption and abuse that mining has caused to the lives of the indigenous cultural communities. The new paradigms initiated and wilfully superimposed by Western-inspired development clearly did not have a healthy respect for the emotional landscapes, cosmologies, sacred spaces, economies, governance structures, customary laws and practices, spiritual values, ecological ethics, social engagements, place-based events and cultural precepts of the indigenous occupants of ancestral domains. In retrospect, perhaps the great flaw in the formulation of policies on

⁴⁵ "Development aggression can be defined as the process of displacing people from their lands and homes to make way for development schemes that are being imposed from above without consent or public debate" (Nadeau, 2005:334). Development aggression means engaging in "development projects that destroy traditional econom[ies], community [systems and] structure, and cultural values" (International Coordinating Secretariat of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal, 2007:186). The "[b]latant connivance of the state and private capital is the essence of development aggression" (Capuyan, 2009:114).

mineral resource management stems from a lack of empathy on the part of development agents to make it their business to uncover the hidden cultural meaning in indigenous systems – that indigenous peoples are happiest in their environmentally sustainable ancestral domains. Given our centuries of colonial experience and mind conditioning, it stands to reason that there have been no notable efforts to probe deep into how indigenous peoples view life as interconnected with nature, ancestral domains, resources and environment. If the Government, its decision makers and development agents only had a clear grasp of indigenous aspirations and ways, policies could easily be re-directed to produce more acceptable development results entirely different from the current economic agenda that benefits only a few. They must bear in mind that they are dealing with communities of real living breathing human beings who are not mere statistics on the pages of annual economic accomplishment reports; and neither are they mainstream communities where conventional economic, social and cultural measuring tools readily apply. Development affects lives, people at the grassroots and communities who will surely bear the consequences of any decision made by the government. Policies must be attuned not only to economic incentives and the political milieu, but above everything else, be able to withstand rigid moral, social, historical and cultural scrutiny. True development necessitates the involved participation of the indigenous peoples who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of such development. This requires a re-assessment and a new set of policies that do not pander to hegemonic objectivism by creating emotional space for indigenous cultural communities to construct their own models of transformation that will govern the character and direction of their own development and free them to determine their own destinies.

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