

AYTA
VOICES OF SUSTAINABILITY FROM THE MARGINS
(A BOOK SYNOPSIS)

DR. EMILIANO Q. IBERA III

INTRODUCTION

Every book that is published has a story to tell to the readers. People tell stories to express themselves, to entertain, to remind, and to ensure that a significant aspect of one's life is passed on to others. It is an aged and very important method that helps people to obtain an understanding of life. Without the ability and commitment to telling a story, social life may be incomplete and in danger. This book, my first book, may be likened to a storyteller. It offers the story of the Mag-indi Ayta of Sitio Camachile in the Municipality of Floridablanca, Pampanga. Specifically, the book represents the story of the Mag-indi Ayta on a global concern on sustainable development.

Through this short review, I hope the readers may obtain significant insights from the story of the Mag-indi Ayta relevant to sustainable development. Readers may have the option to get hold of the fuller version of the story of the Ayta through the book which is now available to the public. I hope that as the readers go through the details of the significant insights through this review, they will be led to appreciate the whole book itself. And as they do that, they enter into a conversation with the Mag-indi Ayta themselves. A great portion of the book is constituted by the voices of the community narrators I engaged throughout the time I spent with them since 2018. I hope further that as readers engage themselves in learning the story of the Mag-indi Ayta, they may obtain an understanding of themselves. Listening to the story of the other bridges an understanding of the self as well. The

section that follows articulates the significant insights drawn out from the story of the Mag-indi Ayta.

Voices of “minoritized” communities

The global concern on sustainability or sustainable development (henceforth, I use sustainability) requires everyone to contribute to it. Many nations have indigenous populations that should be involved in a continuing reflection on sustainability because, in many ways, it appears that sustainability practices can be traced to their traditions and practices. I am inclined to believe that the indigenous populations on this planet have something relevant to contribute to sustainability concerns. The book, then, retells and re-presents the voices of the Mag-indi Ayta on the question of sustainability. I call this sustainability from the margins. Their voices are unheard, seldom consulted, and given value. So, if we think that sustainability is everybody’s concern, there should also be an opportunity for them to be heard.

Transforming their voices into a textual form captures a domain in the life of the Mag-indi Ayta which is called indigenous knowledge and practices. By listening/reading their voices you are given the chance to learn their perspectives on sustainability with which they deal with it daily. And so, the main assertion here is that the indigenous knowledge and practices of the Ayta relevant to sustainability are something we need to pay attention to and allow them to flourish for the good of humanity.

The available voices on sustainability point back to the dominant voices of institutions from the West, like the World Bank, United Nations institutions, and the like. Their voices influence the thinking of almost every nation on sustainability concerns. But it must be recognized that other voices on sustainability should have the chance to be heard as well. The voices from the “minoritized” communities of people must be surfaced and be recognized as equally important. Along this line of thinking, Patajo-Legasto offers a fitting term to surface narratives, and voices from the margins. She talks about the literature from the margins. “Minority” kinds of literature are those writings that have been excluded from the Philippine

literary canons for reasons that are not always "aesthetic" in nature, but political and economic" (p. 51). These works of literature challenge the dominant culture in Philippine society. "Pieces of literature from the margins...are the articulations of the varied experiences and feelings and thoughts of individuals and groups whose identities have been fractured by the imposition of a "common (Western) norm" of identity" (p. 51). They speak the language of the "minoritized" peoples. These writings are often subversive and radical.

This is not yet the case now when it comes to thinking about sustainability. In many instances, policymakers, experts, development scholars, and practitioners are compelled to focus their attention on the standard reference being set by the dominant institutions in the west, or from national agencies that are directly concerned about it. As this is accepted to be normal, the voices of the indigenous populations, who carry with them indigenous knowledge and practices, are continually being sidelined and dismissed as irrelevant to the national development agenda. The thoughts, norms, and practices of the nation have been referenced from the examples set by the west, rather than emanating from cultural groups comprising the Filipino nation. In that case, the models of development are something imposed from the dominant origins of development thinking from the west to a developing country like the Philippines.

The Mag-indi Ayta of Floridablanca, Pampanga is part of the Ayta world (or some would call it the Ayta Nation). The Mag-indi Ayta exists within a large ancestral domain that comprises the two huge and upland barangays of Floridablanca, Pampanga, namely: Barangay Nabuclod, and Barangay Mawacat. Being a group within the Ayta world, compared to the Mag-antsi Ayta, and other Ayta groupings (Ambala of Bataan, and Zambal of Zambales and Tarlac), the Mag-indi Ayta represent a minority voice on matters about their life, culture, and social agenda. If Philippine society follows the path of becoming an inclusive, just, sustainable, and truly democratic society, the "minoritized" groups of people from the margins must enjoy equal representation-representations in multiple aspects of social life. The academe, in its capacity, must endeavor to represent the "minoritized" people

so that they have the chance to be heard and arrest the tendency to be silenced. The literature, and other forms of studies along this line, and among these people like the Mag-indi Ayta are still in their infancy stage. While it is true that there are studies on indigenous groups in the different parts of the country, it also appears that there is minimal production of research on the life and culture of the Ayta in particular. There are recent studies (unpublished) on different groups of indigenous peoples (Iraya Mangyan of Mindoro by Bawagan, 2008; Talaandig of Bukidnon by Villaluz, 2012; Ayta of Zambales by Meneses, 2016), but it is a greater good to have more studies about their life and culture. The more that they are represented properly through different studies, the greater the chance of having them heard, and hopefully understood better.

Why a new book?

The book is important to the Mag-indi Ayta themselves. As the book highlights and re-affirms their indigenous wisdom, it is supporting their interest in equal recognition as citizens of the State. Along this line too, the book put forward pieces of evidence that the Mag-indi Ayta are equally significant people in the whole nation. Likewise, as the book re-presents the indigenous wisdom of the Mag-indi Ayta, there is a greater chance of enriching the models, or ways of resource management that have been learned from different sources. The book, therefore, can add to the continuing knowledge building on indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management, or knowledge relevant to sustainability. An attempt to capture and appreciate the life and culture of people from the margins is indicative of a growing sense of appreciation of cultures, solidarity, and inclusivity. There is a dearth of research undertakings on indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management, and the significance of this area in the sustainability agenda in the country. And so, there is a need to embark more in this area of study to broaden and deepen an understanding of the Mag-indi Ayta, and the goods they could bring to our collective life as a nation.

There is a need to get hold of the indigenous knowledge and practices of the Mag-indi Ayta because they help in pointing out a way how to make a collective life sustainable. One of the best means to get hold of them is to tackle them through in-depth research undertaking. And so, this book can help in the process of getting hold of the indigenous knowledge and practices of the Mag-indi Ayta, and eventually can be incorporated into the current body of sustainability thinking.

There is a need to continuously build up the available local literature on indigenous knowledge and practices of our indigenous peoples in the Philippines. The Mag-indi Ayta, like any other indigenous group in the Philippines, is more at home in its oral traditions. And so, to benefit from their aged knowledge and practices it is important to have a continuing study in this area. It may help to see them as cultural treasures of the nation that should be protected and be engaged in crafting national agenda for sustainability.

The book has significance also in generating interest in other scholars in focusing their studies on local realities that are left unexplored because of the allure instigated by scholarship on other contexts, and fields. More studies on our local cultures may do good for the nation. They could bring more perspectives and insights into understanding the collective life of a Filipino nation.

The academe, civil society organizations, and the Church will also benefit from this project. Many of the social actors are beholden to an epistemological framework from the West. Understandably, appreciation of the local cultures will be difficult when the Western epistemological framework is the paradigm that is operational in the minds of the people behind these institutions. To advance the cause of the indigenous peoples, the Mag-indi Ayta in particular, there is a need to develop a local epistemological framework for sustainable development. By dwelling on the indigenous knowledge and practices of the Mag-indi Ayta on resource management, there may be a greater chance to achieve this.

The Philippine State is also more familiar with and sympathetic to Western ideals and systems. This is so because of the allegiance to modernization, and the neoliberal paradigm of

development. To a great extent, the State is operating under the influence of what is good in Western contexts, not from our local communities. This is modernization in working. And so, the chance of advancing the interests of the Mag-indi Ayta will be very dim given this kind of scenario. This project, in a way, is a challenge to the State to immerse itself into the indigenous worldviews of the Mag-indi Ayta, and other groups of indigenous peoples so that its actions toward them will be more significant and relevant. Issuing challenges to the State like this is a demonstration of an exercise of a critical democracy.

A direct mandated government agency that looks at the welfare of the indigenous peoples in the Philippines is the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). This agency of the government needs to utilize research production to be aided in its work with the indigenous peoples. NCIP needs to listen to the voices of the indigenous peoples themselves that are embodied in the studies being produced through serious research.

Key parts of the book

For lack of accuracy in representation, indigenous populations, oftentimes, are represented as living in harmony with their environment, yet at the same time prominently portrayed as inferior and distant from other ethnic groupings. Not much has been highlighted about the things that they are capable to do and being. Their indigenous knowledge and practices, for one thing, have not been extensively accounted. It is an area of their life that is still hidden and often misunderstood by many. It is most likely that one can see illustrations of what it means to be sustainable by looking closely into the indigenous knowledge and practices of the Ayta. There have been assertions that are advanced along this line of thought (Semali and Kincheloe, 1999; Eversole, 2015; and UNESCO 2016 among others). However, more research on actual cases that illustrate this must be intensified. The resource management capacity of a group of people has the potential to reveal important aspects of sustainability ideas and practices. Hence, the Mag-indi Ayta practices of managing and utilizing their land, producing their food, and utilization of water resources are

necessary to revisit, interrogate, and highlight what would surface as necessary elements and processes that may have value to sustainability.

Generally, the book aims to respond to the question of the value of indigenous knowledge and practices of the Mag-indi Ayta on sustainability. To do this, it is necessary to identify, describe and interrogate the positive value of their indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management that are embodied practices concerning land, food production, and water resources. The book offers the following to readers: Chapter 1 provides a synthesis of competing perspectives on sustainability; chapter 2 represents the current situation of the Ayta; chapter 3 offers the voices of the Ayta about sustainability, and chapter 4 advances further assertions on sustainability.

Influences and Methods

I acknowledge the following influences for the book: social constructivism, grounded theorizing, and privileging indigenous people's narratives. These perspectives are necessary because I am interested to build on the assumption that the Mag-indi Ayta can construct and re-construct a sustainable resource management practice. This is a reality that the indigenous people, like the Mag-indi Ayta, would construct because they see it as something meaningful and relevant to them. In other words, it is the people themselves who create and re-create realities in life.

Briefly, Berger and Luckmann (1966) assert that a significant experience with others would take place in a face-to-face situation (p. 43). This means that social reality is constructed within social interaction. They call the production of social reality an objectification of human subjectivity (Berger & Luckmann, pp. 49-50). And one of the most important ways of objectification is signification, or the production of signs (Berger & Luckmann, p. 50). Signs are further clustered. And so, there is what they call a system of signs. Language is considered the most important sign of human society (Berger & Luckmann, p. 51). Language is necessary for understanding the reality of everyday life (p. 52). It becomes the repository of meanings that can be transmitted to generations (Berger & Luckmann, p. 52). It makes me 'more real' to me my subjectivity, not only to others but to myself as well

(Berger & Luckmann, p. 53). Language can transcend the reality of everyday life. And as such, symbolic language exists. Symbolic language brings back the reality it represents to everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, p. 55).

The human person is viewed by Berger and Luckmann as the one constructing himself. But constructing oneself takes place within a social context. The human person cannot produce himself in isolation. In line with this, one can argue that social order is an ongoing human production. It is part of the process of externalization (Berger & Luckmann, p. 70).

The human person tends to habitualize his activity. And so, any activity that is habitualized can be repeated in the future (Berger & Luckmann, p. 71). By taking this argument, it is also logically necessary to follow the principles of grounded theorizing. *Grounded theorizing* is a constructivist methodology that pays attention to the experience and perspectives of people on the ground. People's experiences and perspectives are considered important elements in development thinking. In a sense, grounded theorizing is an exercise of participatory theorizing of both the people and the development scholar/practitioner. Grounded theorizing, therefore, is an opportunity wherein the perspectives of a development scholar/practitioner meet the perspectives of the people immersed in the daily realities of life. In grounded theorizing, the development scholar/practitioner avoids imposing his/her understanding of the human condition. His/her primary commitment is to listen attentively to people's narratives and draw out significant lessons that will help in bringing meaningful change to people's lives.

The social realities that are reflected in the book, therefore, are realities and insights of the Mag-indi Ayta. They are products of a commitment to privileging indigenous knowledge and indigenous people's narratives. *Privileging indigenous people's narratives* is not a form of blind and romanticized allegiance. It is a free and decisive decision that a development scholar/practitioner employs. Privileging indigenous people's narratives is a proper thing to do to be able to represent as accurately as possible the realities of the indigenous peoples. This is a way of fulfilling a development vision that considers no one must be left behind.

Being true to this development vision means being comfortable from now on to listening and understanding the narratives of the indigenous peoples.

The book is both descriptive and analytical type. It intends to put forward descriptively the life situations of the Mag-indi Ayta through their narratives. More than that, the book reflects on the data that carry the description of the life situations of the Mag-indi Ayta. As a whole, then, the book is a case study of the Mag-indi Ayta of Floridablanca, Pampanga. As a case study, it relies on the series of narratives of community resource persons. My integration into the community is necessary to have a closer view of the dynamics of utilizing and managing their community resources.

The area of engagement

The two upland barangays of Floridablanca, Pampanga, namely, Barangay Nabuclod and Mawacat serve as the homeland of the Mag-indi Ayta. Though these are designated now as barangays with delineated territorial boundaries, the community leaders still consider themselves to belong to a single community of the Mag-indi Ayta. The leaders would still refer to the original name of their communities as Camachile, Nabuclod, and Mawacat.

The respondents engaged in this project came from these three communities. While the communities formed a single ancestral domain of the Mag-indi Ayta, they are also constituent barangays of the Municipality of Floridablanca, Pampanga. The figure below shows the geographical location of the communities that served as the area of engagement.



The Ayta in the Province of Pampanga is composed mainly of two groups: 1) The Mag-indi Ayta; and 2) The Mag-antsi Ayta. These names are their self-ascription to themselves. The Mag-antsi Ayta settle in the towns of Porac, and parts of Angeles City. While the Mag-indi Ayta are mainly settled in the two barangays of the Municipality of Floridablanca, namely: Barangay Nabuclod, and Barangay Mawacat. Sitio Camachile, which is part of Barangay Nabuclod is originally a barangay, but later dissolved, and annexed as part of Barangay Nabuclod. Geographically, Sitio Camachile is distant from the other contiguous sitios that comprise Barangay Nabuclod.

Barangay Mawacat is approximately 10 kilometers away from the center of Floridablanca. It is 7 kilometers away from Sitio Camachile, and Barangay Nabuclod. Before becoming tribal barangays, these communities are already domains of the Mag-indi Ayta. However, the Mag-indi Ayta see themselves as belonging to one ancestral domain; and not as separate barangays.

The Mag-indi Ayta obtained their Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) on April 17, 2009. The CADT covers the three communities of Nabuclod, Mawacat, and Camachile. It consists of a total area of 5, 457.710717 hectares. This area includes the forest zone which is restricted from logging and other activities that may cause the gradual depletion of resources. The forest area is estimated to be around 1,000 hectares; more than 2,000 hectares serve as farmlands for the members of the communities. Within the forest area, the watershed of the communities is preserved. The leaders identified it as Mount Susuacan. Mount Susuacan is the main origin of the three rivers flowing down the three communities. The three rivers are the Kanlaman River, Pao River, and Limuran River. The waters from these rivers flow downstream of Floridablanca up to the town of Lubao.

The Mag-indi Ayta communities referred to in the book existed even before their constitution as barangays. Based on the initial accounts of the resource persons, their communities were convened as barangays sometime in the 1940s. Then, in the early 1950s up to the 60s and,70s massive logging took place in these communities. The 1970s were turbulent years for the

communities because of the intense insurgency and militarization. These turbulent years caused the relocation of their communities into where they are situated right now (except Mawacat). More than two decades after the 1970s, the communities had to face again another big disturbance—the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991. The years that followed the Pinatubo eruption were moments for the Mag-indi Ayta to reconstitute and reconstruct their communities. From here on, they reclaimed their lands and moved on in restoring their livelihood.

Resource persons

There were ten (10) resource persons engaged in this project (also called community narrators). A snowball selection process was employed in identifying the community narrators. I was introduced first to a native of Floridablanca who had previous engagements with the Mag-indi Ayta in the early 70s and 80s. He became my link to the Mag-indi Ayta community leaders. Subsequently, I was endorsed by the Ayta leaders. As I know them one by one I had also the opportunity to discuss further this project. Their consent was obtained after a series of meetings with the community leaders. It was only after gaining their consent for this project and gaining the trust and confidence of the community leaders that I could begin my community integration.

The following were the predetermined criteria for selecting the resource persons. But as the community integration rolled on, and the community leaders (resource persons) were introduced, these criteria became secondary concerns. The narratives of the resource persons were first attended to. The criteria for the selection of resource persons were as follows: 1) Openness and readiness in disclosing indigenous knowledge and practices; 2) Senior member of the community; 3) Assume leadership function in the community; 4) Can articulate thoughts on matters relevant to the subject matter being studied. All these were seen among the resource persons as I kept moving on in my community integration.

The resource persons as community narrators were mainly involved in providing the data required for this project.

More than that, they also played a role in the data verification and analysis. As they narrated their stories and answered different questions that were asked, they participated in the analytical process. In this sense, the data and its interpretation reflected in this study belonged primarily to them. It is also noteworthy to mention that the resource persons were also the ones who fed, sheltered, and accompanied me during the entire conduct of the project. They have offered a great service to me. With this, the conduct of the project was an enjoyable journey with the resource persons.

Specifics on methods

The data gathering methods in this project include the following: 1.) Methods of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (e.g., Virgilio Enriquez and Carmen Santiago); 2.) Semi-structured interviews (also called conversations in this study); 3.) Cluster discussions; and 4.) Community integration.

Sikolohiyang Pilipino. This study applied the method of data collection popularized by Virgilio Enriquez and Carmen Santiago (1982). The research methods proposed by Enriquez and Santiago are appropriate and sensitive to the psychology of the people. They proposed a set of research methods that can be employed by a researcher; and a set of research methods that can be utilized when there are participants involved in the research. The two sets are called: *Iskala ng mananaliksik* (*pagmamasid, pakikiramdam, pagtatanongtanong, pagsubok, padalawdalaw, pagmamatyag, pagsubaybay*), and the *Iskala ng pagtutunguhan ng mananaliksik at kalahok* (*pakikitungo, pakikisalamuha, pakikilahok, pakikibagay, pakikisama, pakikipagpalagayang-loob, pakikisangkot, and pakikiisa*). These two sets of research methods were applied by the researcher as he gathered the data. These methods were more appropriate in drawing out the information that is required in this study.

Semi-structured interviews. The ten (10) community narrators were engaged in semi-structured interviews to produce

the data needed in this study. The majority of the semi-structured interviews took place in the context of group conversations. The community narrators would always prefer to speak freely in the presence of a fellow community narrator. Guide questions for the conversations were provided before the actual conversations, but at the same time, I made myself aware of the flow of narration by the community narrators.

Cluster discussions. Cluster discussions involved a minimum of two and a maximum of eight participants. These took place mostly at different times and places whenever two or more community narrators gather for brief conversations or rest during the day. Other cluster discussions took place while walking for a visit to a particular place in the community.

Community integration. The community integration happened almost every weekend from May 2018 up to June 2019. Although continuing visits to the communities continued onwards for verification purposes.

Important procedures

This project went through the following phases: 1.) Preparatory phase; 2.) Data gathering phase; and 3.) Validation phase.

Preparatory phase. This phase includes the following steps. First, a request to conduct research in the communities was filed at the Regional Office of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples in San Fernando City, Pampanga. Second, I presented and research project to the Provincial Office of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples in Floridablanca, Pampanga. The officer in charge gave verbal approval to proceed with conducting the research. Third, a series of meetings with the leaders of FAAD (Floridablanca Ayta Ancerstral Domain, Inc.), and the two barangay captains of the two barangays agreed that I can pursue the conduct of the research.

Data gathering phase. This phase happened from August 2018 up to May 2019. Verification and transcription of the data were also done simultaneously during this period.

Validation. The validation of the results of this project was done immediately after the data were organized. Although initially, the results of the study were already presented to the community leaders because of the project that was proposed for funding by a foreign funding agency. Another round of discussion with the FAAD leaders on the results of the study was also conducted given a continuing collaborative engagement on social development.

Data analysis

Part of the data analysis in this project was the transcription of the audio-taped interviews/conversations, cluster discussions, and field notes. The data analysis followed the six phases of thematic analysis which is provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). The six phases of thematic analysis include the following: a.) Phase 1, familiarizing the data; b.) Phase 2, generating initial codes; c.) Phase 3, searching for themes; d.) Phase 4, reviewing the themes; e.) Phase 5, defining and naming themes; and f.) Phase 6, writing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 16-23). The data extracts that are presented were organized according to the predetermined themes/categories indicated in the conceptual framework. From here, conclusions were drawn and articulated.

Further assertions and implications

The book aims to assert that indigenous wisdom on sustainability is a valid path for sustainable development, and it will be a disaster if this is continuously ignored by the development actors. Two questions appear as important to be addressed in line with this main assertion: 1.) What further assertions can be made about indigenous knowledge and practices on resources management? and 2.) What can be established as implications of the findings to social development?

1. *Indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management as a social development resource.* Indigenous knowledge, in general, is part of the overall day-to-day life of people. To use Berger and

Luckmann's idea (1966), indigenous knowledge is, on the one hand, an objectivated reality. It is created and therefore exists as an entity in itself. But, on the other hand, being a creation of humans, it is also internalized. As an internalized reality, it is now an integral part of human subjectivity. It is part of one's human consciousness.

As time moves on, humans confront new problems and needs in their ever-changing environment. They are challenged to re-invent their internalized knowledge. They have to find ways to address new problems or needs that emerge in their day-to-day lives. In this sense, indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management keep on being re-invented. Re-inventing something is not bad at all. It is the proper and inevitable response of humans to the new questions, problems, needs, or challenges that come their way.

The indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management are, therefore, part of the continuing tradition of the Ayta. And as part of it, they have tried and tested aspects of their lives for a long time. They have earned the status as institutions. It is part of their daily habits or lifestyle. It is something that they keep doing in everyday life.

Indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management are not simply ideas in the minds of the Ayta; not something memorized and then translated into practice. It can be given a new name as embodied wisdom. It is embodied wisdom that goes along with the Ayta in their everyday life. Embodied wisdom is needed for humans to sustain their lives. It is something like intrinsic energy that empowers one to keep going and to continue developing in one's undertaking. Indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management understood this way is something worthy to learn from. It is a lesson to be learned in social development. If social development is understood as a multifaceted process towards achieving the well-being of people (Midgley, 2014), then that process must consider that long before an expert enters a community of people, they already have instituted/invented their embodied wisdom that serves their varied needs and questions in life. A social development scholar/practitioner must be "baptized" into the vast

river of people's embodied wisdom. He/she is not an expert who brings salvation to the people. The people have and will be playing that game themselves.

A reverential approach to embodied wisdom must be put forward as part of the social development undertaking. A reverential approach to embodied wisdom of people means that it must be allowed to be heard. It means, further, that a social development scholar/practitioner embraces it as a resource to understand, not something to be transformed according to the ideas and canons of the lowland academia. Arrogance before the embodied wisdom of people must be treated as a taboo.

An outright sidelining of people's embodied wisdom has caused many undertakings (government-led, or non-government organization-led) to fail. Failures will continue if no amount of learning a reverential approach to embodied wisdom of people. It will be a waste of time, effort, and money if development actors continue playing the game of an arrogant and all-knowing expert.

2. *Indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management as a sustainable development resource.* There is no one true way of doing and achieving sustainable development. The policymakers and development actors need to be awakened by the fact that there are existing models of sustainability that are already practiced by indigenous peoples like the Ayta. Their embodied wisdom needs to be re-affirmed.

It is argued repeatedly in this study that sustainable development is primarily a question of a people's capacity to imagine and construct a pathway/model of sustainable community living. As a people's capacity, the case of the Ayta shows that sustainable development is reinforced and can be observed in their practice of sustainable resource management. This practice is part of their overall vision of sustainability. Having said this, it is worthy to say that indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management are worthy to be taken as part of the evolving resource in understanding sustainable development.

3. *Indigenous peoples (Ayta in particular) as a social development resource.* Indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management exist because there are people that create and re-create them. They have embodied the wisdom of the indigenous peoples. As embodied wisdom, they are sustainable. They are primarily characterized by a deep sense of ecological sensitivity. This is evidenced by the fact that in their procedures of producing food, the Ayta allow natural processes to take over. Beyond this, they construct and sustain a social arrangement that is founded on the values of sharing, solidarity, and sufficiency. They produce an amount of food primarily for their sustenance, and for sharing with those who lacked. It is argued in this study that these values are not corrupted through the years. They still exist today as an important basis of their social arrangement, even though they have engaged themselves in producing cash crops and entered into trading activities in the lowland communities.

Another level of their reality is their sustained beliefs in the spirits and *Apo Namalyari*. The Ayta are trusting people with the power of their spirits and *Apo Namalyari*. They draw out strength from their beliefs. By sustaining this, they show an example of being spiritual without being affiliated with an institutionalized form of religion. Having said this, they deserve to be taken as a social development resource.

Implications for social development

1. *How to break the dominance and the desire for power maintenance of the leading group (sakadora) which is the root cause of oppression of the subaltern group (Ayta)?* From the data, one can see that oppression exists as part of the social realities among the Ayta. It is presented in the previous chapter that the Ayta confront the dominance of the sakadora, as well as the discrimination from the lowlanders. Given this as part of their context, social development must take it as an important question to be addressed. An immediate remedy can be provided by Gramsci's theory of hegemony. In every situation of hegemony, there must be a corresponding counter-hegemony. This is easier said and done. It is not

immediate to launch a counter-hegemony to the dominance and power maintenance of a leading group. The leading group will employ force, and coercion to subjugate the subaltern group. In this case, the Ayta are compelled to submit or to use Gramsci's term, they give their consent to be subjected to the dominance of the sakadora. Anyhow, the way out is that an oppressed party will never be settled on its condition as a subordinating group to the will of the dominant party. Being unsettled, it will continuously launch ways to transform that condition. That is how counter-hegemony works in a condition of an overwhelming hegemony. But it appears that Gramsci's theory of hegemony is short of mapping out how to effect change when the subaltern group gives its consent to be under the dominance of the leading group. How could counter-hegemony be functional when the mechanism of the leading group for power maintenance is strongly established? Gramsci's theory appears short to offer thoughts along this line to build up an argument.

2. *Freire's complement.* The oppressed know their situation. The case of the Ayta has shown that can name and narrate the details of their oppression from the oppressive party like the sakadora and other lowland groups of people. As a starting point, it is good to go back to how Freire (1973) offers a good way of defining oppression. He says: "Any situation in which "A" objectively exploits "B" or hinders his pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with man's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human" (pp. 40-41). Further on, he adds: "There would be no oppressed had there been no prior situation of violence to establish their subjugation" (p. 41). With this in mind, the case of the Ayta shows that they are subjected by the sakadora to an enormous oppressive situation. Part of social development as a process must be attention on what is the condition of the people. Social development must be concerned also with ending the oppressive condition of people like the Ayta. It cannot bypass people's experiences of negativity.

One may propose quickly that the way out here is through reversing the situation and changing the roles played by the parties involved. This is not acceptable as a way out for Freire. He believes that the oppressed must struggle. He says: "It is therefore essential that the oppressed wage the struggle to resolve the contradiction in which they are caught; and the contradiction will be resolved by the appearance of a new man: neither oppressor nor oppressed, but the man in the process of liberation. If the goal of the oppressed is to become fully human, they will not achieve their goal by merely reversing the terms of the contradiction, by simply changing roles" (p. 12).

To advance the liberation struggle there must be an instrument that guides it. Freire proposes a reflective instrument which he calls a humanizing pedagogy (p. 55). This humanizing pedagogy takes a concrete form through problem-posing education. "Problem-posing education affirms men as beings in the process of *becoming*—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (Freire, 1973, p. 72). Being a humanizing pedagogy, problem-posing education must engage the oppressed toward their emancipation. Freire (1973) would assert it by saying: "Problem-posing education, as a humanist and liberating praxis, posits as fundamental that men subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation. To that end, it enables teachers and students to become Subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating intellectualism, it also enables men to overcome their false perception of reality" (p. 74).

The Ayta are now in mainstream education. While the leaders of the Ayta communities believe that this is the way out for them from oppression, it may not guarantee that. The evidence of high dropouts among the Ayta when they advance higher in their schooling can be taken as evidence that their schools are not real locations for their liberation. They experience discrimination in varied ways which may be sufficient reason for an Ayta student to push himself out of school. Schools could have been an effective instrument for the emancipation of the oppressed, but even schools are invaded and influenced by the oppressor. There are copies of oppressors in many schools that

cause the continuing oppression of young Ayta minds. Schools' roles must be redefined if they are committed institutions for human liberation. This direction of school reformation may take policymakers, school administrators, and teachers to be re-oriented on the social development role of schools. It must be emphasized that they do not exist as an extension of oppressive institutions. They must symbolize human liberation from any form of oppression. This is an engagement of a development actor. While he/she may not be an expert in curriculum and other things about a school, a development actor must be keen on noticing if a school is performing well on matters of emancipating the students, and other actors in it.

But this may only be possible if as Freire would say, one has engaged himself/herself in dialogue. Dialogical action, as he puts it, is characterized by love, humility, faith in man to create and re-create, hope, and communion with other men (Freire, 1973, pp. 78-79). This is contrasted by the way of the oppressor which is represented by Freire as anti-dialogical action. Anti-dialogical action aborts any possibility of life. It is characterized by conquest, manipulation, division and rule, and cultural invasion (pp. 133-150).

3. *Importance of a rights-based approach.* Theories and other perspectives are good. But, at the end of the day, even the most benevolent theories that explain a human phenomenon can be set aside by anyone determined to oppress people. A rights-based approach is necessary in this regard. Human rights serve as a protective mantle for people, like the Ayta, against abuses of oppressors. The Indigenous People's rights (hereafter, IP rights) are composed of four major categories: the right to land, the right to cultural integrity, the right to self-governance and empowerment, and social justice and human rights. All details hereof, have to be under the duty of the state to protect, respect and facilitate.

IP rights can be taken as a mechanism to bring forward the agenda of the Ayta to be free from oppression. The data show that other than actual cases of land-grabbing, the sakadora can continue to oppress the Ayta even if he/she does not grab their

lands. By using unfair economic arrangements, with which the Ayta are pushed to have no other option than to take it, the sakadora maintains his/her power over the Ayta. The government which serves as the primary duty-bearer of human rights must intervene in this aspect. It must go beyond just focusing on actual cases of land-grabbing. The right to land, must, therefore, include the notion of preventing capitalists (like the sakadora) from exercising dominion over the productive ventures of the Ayta. The Ayta entertains the sakadora because the state has no viable or alternative option for them to take. If the government provides better opportunities that support their productive ventures, then for sure, they can avoid becoming prey to the sakadora.

While the sakadora may be a direct, and concrete manifestation of oppression to the Ayta, the existence of a larger source of oppression of the Ayta cannot be denied. The lowland society of people continues to oppress the Ayta as long as discrimination operates in the mind of a lowland citizen. Yes, for sure, the IP rights, will help to remind every citizen that the Ayta are equal citizens of the state, and they must enjoy equally the rights as any other citizen. But more than the IP rights, the schools must play a vital role to uphold those rights of the Ayta. If the young people continue to see that their teachers can violate the rights of the Ayta, the students may have no qualms about doing the same. Schools must be a locus of human rights so they must bring forth better opportunities for ending oppression among the Ayta.

4. *Culture-based capacity for sustainability.* It is innate or natural for humans to exert some form of control over their environment. They do that by sustaining themselves. These practices are informed by their culture. These are considered by cultural ecology as cultural adaptations. People have learned ways to adapt to changing, or challenging situations in their environment. The ways the Ayta in controlling their environment can be categorized as conservation. They have been oriented from the beginning that they will only produce for their needs. They are expected as well to share their products with others who lacked material provisions. By resting the land, they also allow the soil to recover

fertility without resorting to chemical fertilizers. By implementing a diversity of crops on their farm, they employ a natural way of managing pest control. And by maintaining thick vegetation on both sides of their rivers and streams, and maintaining forest areas surrounding their farms, they contribute to the natural ways of water conservation.

In contrast to active environmental manipulation which is a purposeful large-scale manipulation of the natural environment, the practices of the Ayta can be categorized as a combination of passive and active resource management. Resources are actively managed given productivity, and beauty (Sutton and Anderson, 2010). On the other hand, resources are passively managed when a group invokes the application of their rituals, and knowledge in their productive activities (Sutton and Anderson, 2010).

The Ayta have combined these two types (passive and active) of resource management. These two types of resource management are undeniably considered sustainable pathways for treating available natural resources. It makes more sense then to speak about sustainable development when its link to resource management is shown. As one speaks about resource management, sustainable development is narrated in a concretely operational way. When sustainable development is devoid of any link to resource management, it would run the risk of talking in a very abstract term.

By linking sustainable development to resource management, the former earns the meaning that it is concretely about resource use and management in a manner that conserves the available resources for the benefit of all. One conserves the use of resources to ensure that there is available life support as time goes by. If this is the meaning that is generated, one can also claim that sustainable development is a form of people's capacity. In the way people use and manage their resources, one can also detect whether they can be sustainable or not. As mentioned, there is a sufficient basis for affirming that the Ayta have the capacity for sustainability.

This capacity for sustainability must also be seen as part of the consciousness of the people. It is argued here that when sustainability is not part of one's consciousness, then that cannot be affirmed as sustainable. On contrary, when it is part of the consciousness of people, they can practice it. It is part of their embodied wisdom. Embodied wisdom endures as part of the practices of people. In the case of the Ayta, their indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management are embodied wisdom. They have more chances of enduring as part of their lifestyle, and worldview through time.

At a certain point, embodied wisdom is subjected to re-invention. Re-invention means the accommodation of new elements that are seen as relevant and meaningful to one's existing set of embodied wisdom. The new elements of practices of the Ayta (e.g. cash crop production) are not originally theirs. But since they accommodate these, they see them as relevant and meaningful, then no outsider can judge it as a corruption of their embodied wisdom. They are to be considered as part of it, when, they own it. Now, the Ayta do not recognize cash crop production as part of their re-invention of their embodied wisdom. It is something that they accommodate, and something that they can also disown anytime they want.

Sustainable development needs mediating structures so that it can be appreciated better. Mediating structures are the concrete practices, or visible elements in a particular worldview, or culture of a group of people. In the case of the Ayta, their indigenous knowledge and practices on resource management (also called here embodied wisdom) function as mediating structures of sustainable development. As a mediating structure, it reveals what it means to be sustainable in concrete. To be sustainable means that there must be resource use and management that is conserving in nature. This practice is real among the Ayta. But, more than this, as a mediating structure, this practice among the Ayta tells about their vision of living well (*Manged Biyay*). Sustainable development may be short to describe the sustainable vision of the Ayta. It appears that *Manged Biyay* captures better their consciousness and vision of sustainable living.

CONCLUSION

I must say that the book is the story of Ayta. It tells who they are. It gives a picture of what they can do and what they can become. It is a story of people who have been "victimized" by the misrepresentation of dominant actors and voices. This study is aimed to advance knowledge that is relevant to a global concern named sustainable development. As this study is about to be completed, there are many things left to be done ahead in line with the goal of sustainability. And there are a lot of aspects too that can be discovered among the Ayta along this line.

As I went through the process of completing the study, I can claim an inward journey that brought me to a better understanding of myself concerning social development practice. There are important lessons I learned as I interacted with the Ayta. The Ayta is never an accidental subject matter for this dissertation. My interaction with the Dumagat/Agta of Quezon began in 2003. This was the beginning of my exposure to the Ayta world. This experience stayed with me as I work with other groups in difficult situations. When the time came to decide on what topic to pursue the dissertation, I was greatly interested to pursue something more that can be discovered among the Ayta. Their indigenous knowledge and practices came forth as an area of interest that can be discovered. These are their "treasures" that require more attention and understanding.

While having the journey with the Ayta I learned to put on eyeglasses that help me in perceiving the Ayta, primarily, not as problems that need a diagnosis and be given solutions. The problem, most of the time, is coming from those who are seeing the Ayta with their respective eyeglasses. The problem begins the moment one decides to problematize them. In contrast, I decided to see the Ayta as people with capabilities; people with special "treasures" to contribute to social development. In one's attempt to understand people, like the Ayta, it is important to decide on what kind of eyeglasses one must put on. I call my eyeglasses an appreciative view. It is a perspective that exalts the Ayta as people with positive attributes and capacities to offer for learning.

One consequence of putting on an appreciative view has nothing to do with putting the dirt under the rugs. One can have an appreciative view, but be equally attentive and critical to real problems that disturb the development of people. My experience with Ayta has proven that this is possible. When there is a firm resolve on the appreciative view one is wearing, and energy to act in solidarity and partnership with the people is generated. A stronger commitment to work together is possible when one knows the strength that one must build on in dealing with the problems that are equally part of social reality.

One's desire to be an actor for social change comes out as he/she keeps being grounded on the positive realities, where he/she can affirm in confidence his/her positive qualities as a person. The agenda for social change need not necessarily begin with the overwhelming problems that await solutions. Brilliant minds, talents, and aspirations of people must be channeled into building more positive realities. This is an equally valid route to social development.

The Ayta themselves are an inspiration to a development scholar/practitioner if he/she sees them from an appreciative view. People learned to be at peace with others if they see others as peaceful in themselves.

Aside from the real people serving as inspiration in the development practice, other sources of inspiration keep informing one's lens. I recognize two important streams of inspiration/thought: Berger's social constructionism and Paulo Freire's humanizing pedagogy. Paulo Freire's prominent idea is the capacity of the oppressed to achieve liberation, and thereby pursue their human vocation. The oppressed, who are also poor, are the ones who have an intense aspiration for change as opposed to the oppressor who wants to maintain his/her interest and status in life. That energy of the oppressed in achieving change is a necessary aspect that a development scholar/practitioner needs to focus on. That energy of the poor can also be taken to mean the "positive core"/strength of a person. The starting point of positive change comes from recognizing the power of the positive core of a person, community, or organization. The poor and the oppressed are the

ones who possessed that energy. And they alone can teach us a better way how to act properly with them in transforming their oppressive conditions. The development scholar/practitioner needs to be a companion along with the oppressed/poor carrying that energy towards social change.

The completion of my study paves the way for a continuing conversation and collaboration with the Ayta. *Manged Biyay*, as the Ayta would say, is an unfinished business on the table. Things have to move forward every day. The patience to work with them must continue until the desired results are achieved. Constructing positive realities must remain a focus to pay attention to Peter Berger comes in along this trajectory. As positive realities are gaining ground there is more chance of a better community to live on. The positive realities that are objectivated are part of the externalization process of human subjectivity as Peter Berger would put it. These positive realities are expressions of a creating, constructing society. When our creations/constructs gained objective standing, they also begin to challenge us to internalize them.

The positive realities that we construct must also be seen as part of human subjectivity. It will be grave hypocrisy on the part of the development scholar/practitioner if he/she espouses the construction of positive realities without internalizing them at the same time. There must be no disconnect between the externalization and internalization of the positive realities we help to construct with the poor/oppressed. This is a powerful image of a development scholar/practitioner. One who knows to journey with the poor/oppressed in building a better world by maximizing the positive resources of people and internalizing them must be seen as part of the individual reality of the self. I look forward to becoming that kind of a development scholar/practitioner. We hope this “tribe” will grow for the sake of a sustainable world.

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FOREWORD

This book retells the story and ongoing struggles of the Mag-indi Ayta in Pampanga on the issues of human and communal sustainability. Dr. Emil Ibera intends to give voice to the often suppressed, sidelined and silenced voices of this indigenous population in the field of development studies. The mainstream forces of the country and the international community have imposed their frameworks on the margins. Their discourses – be it in business, politics, religion or academe –

drown the voices of peoples who have resisted colonial oppression in the past, local abusive politics at present, and recently, the inroads of the late capitalist global economy.

The May-indi Ayta, like all other cultural minorities, continually experience being “minoritized” – quite an apt word for indigenous communities – by these hegemonic forces represented by government bodies, mainline religions, educational institutions, media, development NGOs and others. Beyond the medieval use of force, present hegemonies exert no brutal coercion, except for the “red-tagging” done by the military instigated by anti-insurgency program of present regimes. In late capitalism, subjugation is expressed through cultural cooptation of these small groups calling for consensus which is quite difficult to detect. In one instance in this research, it is embedded into the discourse of the “good of the majority”. One Ayta respondent articulated this clearly in one of the interviews.

Lumapit kami sa gobyerno. Kaya lang ang government may mga priorities. Ang gobyerno kasi iniisip nya yung pang-marami. Magrequest ka sa probinsya e kung sampu kayo na may request bibilang muna ng ilang taon bago matugunan request mo. Yung request namin last year pa. Hanggang ngayon wala.

(We sought the help of the government. But the government has priorities. If you request something to the Provincial government, you have to count for years before they respond to your request. We submitted our request last year. Until this time, they don’t respond on it.)

Hegemony, the power of one group over another, comes from the Greek term “*hēgemonia* (“dominance over”) and has been extensively analyzed by the Sardinian neo-Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1971). According to Gramsci, late capitalist political economies imposed the legitimacy of their oppressive rule not so much through coercive force – that is too overt for (postmodern) mind – but through consensus. All socio-cultural forces (schools, religions, media, etc.) are the ones which disseminate these ideas

and norms as common sense. On the one hand, these beliefs and practices now called “culture” are accepted to be normal. On the other hand, their normalization mystifies the oppressive character of such norms, thus, legitimizing the rule of the dominant culture. One respondent in this research shows how religions, despite their revolutionary potentials, are also instruments of (post)colonial control.

Noong panahon ng Kastila sinakop tayo. Bukod sa giyera naging Kristiyano tayo. Na-christianize. Hindi pa tayo Kristiyano bago ang Kastila. Na-christianize nila yung napasok nila. Ganun ang sistema ng pananakop.

(We were colonized by the Spaniards. Aside from the war, we also became Christians. We were Christianize. We were not Christians before the coming of the Spaniards. They Christianize the territories they occupied. That is the way of colonization.)

Andami nang pastor na Ayta ngayon. Iba-iba ang sponsor nila. May mga Korean missionary. Meron American missionary. Sabi ko nga sa kanila darating ang panahon magkakaroon ng problema sa salinlahi natin dahil sa inyo kako. Kasi balang-araw, dadami kayo at ipagpapatayo kayo ng mga sponsor nyo ng simabahan. At dahil Ayta kayo doon nyo ngayon itatayo ang mga simbahan nyo sa ancestral domain natin. Alam nyo pagkatapos nyo meron pang susunod na maging pastor katulad nyo. Alam nyo ang ancestral domain mapupuno ng simbahan at ala nang mapagtatamnan ng gulay. Puro simbahan na lang... Dito sa Pilipinas napakadaming relihiyon. Pinaghihiwa-hiwalay ang tao sa pamamagitan ng relihiyon. Para hindi maunite, para hindi maempower

(There are many Ayta who became pastors this time. They have different sponsors. There is Korean missionary; American missionary. I tell them that there will be a problem in the future.

When they grow more in numbers, their sponsors will tell them to build churches. And since they are Ayta they have to build their churches in our ancestral domain. Then more Ayta will become pastors. Time will come that the ancestral domain will be full of churches, and no more lands for planting crops. It will be churches all around... In the Philippines, there are many religions. They want us to be divided through religion. This is a way so that we do not become united and have power.)

Social philosophers have long ago theorized the notion of totalizing hegemonies. Erving Goffman (1961) studied “total institutions” such as asylums, prisons, concentration camps or religious monasteries. Some of these social institutions are organized for persons who cannot take care of themselves, for instance, orphanages or hospitals. Others are structured for people who pose threats to society, for example, prisons and mental asylums. Some others for disciplinary training of bodies like monasteries or labor camps. These bodies are hegemonically organized showing total control over their inmates, patients or novices. Uniforms are imposed; punishments and incentives are given; a view of order is enforced in order to keep all their members conform to the necessary objectives of that institution.

The Marxist philosopher, Louis Althusser (2014), extrapolates the concept of total institution into the State. For him, the totalizing hegemony against the dominated classes is expressed in two forms: repressive state apparatuses (RSA) and ideological state apparatuses (ISA). The ruling classes uses the repressive function of the State to control society through the police, courts and political organization. When the dominant social order is threatened, the State uses the repressive force of prisons and the military (RSA) in order to curb dissent. But in normal times, it uses its non-coercive and ideological forces (ISA) like religion, education, family, culture to keep the working classes under control. It is only through this total ideological-repressive control that a ruling party can hegemonically rule a population.

These ideological control of society is totalizing in such a way that no one recognizes that he or she is under its spell.

Antonio Gramsci, resonates with Althusser on this notion of hegemonic social control through the use of both force and consent. However, for him, there is always a “counter-hegemonic moment” – a time and space when the dominated resists the dominant (Im 1991). To go beyond Althusser’s all-encompassing view of society, Raymond Williams re-reads Gramsci’s position in this famous phrase: “*No mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy and human intention*” (Williams 1977: 125). In a social space, there are several distinct forces: the dominant, the residual and the emergent. Though the “dominant” exerts all its efforts and resources to maintain the hegemonic status quo, the “residual” voices mostly considered as coming from the past (one of them the Aytas knowledge and practices) and the “emergent” (ecological sustainability, for example, which is also inherent in the Aytas epistemologies) – both of which are dominated voices – exert their resistance over and against the dominant. The dominant thus need to continually defend, revise, alter its own way of domination to keep its hegemonic control. Williams thus intends to show that no matter how totalizing are the dominant social voices, no social organization can fully encompass all communal energies, all human intentions and all social practices. He decisively points to the “human dimension” of any social organization. This is where the refusal of “humanness”, the assertion of human freedom and the collective resistance of the dominated springs from.

It is in the context of this philosophical framework that we understand Dr. Ibera’s attempt to recover the suppressed collective human energies, local epistemological frames and practices of sustainable development among the May-indi Aytas that is most often drowned and muted by society’s dominant voices.

What is foregrounded in the whole book are the voices of the Aytas themselves. They are made to tell their own stories – quite different from the mainstream portrayal of them as

“uncivilized, uneducated and dangerous” people. Dr. Ibera points to the Ayta’s capacities and sense of adaptability during moments of crisis and change – quite different from the mainstream picture of them as object of “perpetual charitable interventions”. The Ayta social organization are not closed communities; they are open to other cultures as shown in their willingness to send their younger generations to educational pursuits. They are also a people capable of resistance against intruders; they can sense sincerity or its opposite from “lowlanders” who are most often people of power – both political and religious power. Religions for them pose as a two-edged sword. Thus, they are also critical about them. On the one hand, religions can create havoc and division as their experience tells them. On the other hand, they possess positive potentials for empowerment.

Sustainable resource management is fully based on indigenous knowledge, to what they learned from their elders. However, they are also open to other practices that may complement their age-old traditions. On the one hand, they keep their nomadic way of life like what their culture taught and, on the other hand, they adapt to sedentary lifestyle in order to sustainably support themselves. Agriculture is seen as a communal and collaborative act, oriented towards the conservation of natural resources. Upland rice production symbolizes this adaptive tension in the Ayta’s lives as it reaffirms the handed down traditional knowledge, demonstrates solidarity among themselves, and trust in the spirits whom they believe as continually guiding them.

From beginning to the end of this great work, Dr. Ibera is clear with his intentions: “The indigenous peoples, like the Ayta, are supposed to be the primary authority of their own development. Their voices should have the chance to be heard. Listening to them means verifying the possible contributions of their indigenous knowledge and practices to social development undertakings. Listening to their voices would also mean allowing their indigenous knowledge and practices to continue flourishing, and free from external threat of domination and subjugation. “

I would like to end this introduction with Williams' notion of cultural formation. Be it among the Aytas or lowlanders, or the interaction between these communities and others, cultures should not be imposed from above or from outside. It should be respectful of the communities' own processes as they live their common life together. Raymond Williams writes:

“The culture of a people can only be what all its members are engaged in creating in the act of living: that a common culture is not the general extension of what a minority mean and believe, but the creation of a condition in which the people as a whole participate in the articulation of meanings and values, and in the consequent decisions between this meaning and that, this value and that” (Williams 1988:3).

Respectful of the Aytas' emphasis of sustainable developmental processes, the notion of culture as “the tending of natural growth” is quite clarificatory (Williams). Culture is, on the one hand, a process of natural growth. Any living and growing reality displays complexity, spontaneity and extraordinary multiplicity. Stifling this creative impulse in human life and human communities means posing obstacles to the natural growth of the cultural process. Culture, on the other hand, is also a human tending. It is, a conscious struggle for equality in the context of a class-dominated society. We have seen these twofold direction in the life and resistance of the May-indi Aytas. With the first aspect alone, we would be ‘cultural romantics’; with only the second, we fall into the trap of the same class-dominative thinking the Aytas wanted to avoid (Williams 1993: 337).

Mary Lilian Akhere Ehidiamhen

Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium

marylilianakhere.ehidiamhen@student.kuleuven.be

lilykhere@yahoo.com