

Froilan A. Alipao

Small Place, Large Issues: Reflections on the Journey of Partnership Between Bamnan Ayta Mag-Antsi and University of Santo Tomas (UST) Toward Kasighawan (Well-Being) Communities (From 2002 to 2018)

For the Indigenous Peoples (IPs), land is life. If their land is taken away from them, life will be disrupted and may lead to the disruption of cultural identity. Grabbing or exploiting indigenous peoples' lands, whether it is sporadic, organized or unorganized, systematic, legal or illegal, negatively affects them. The systemic act of gradual killing was experienced by most various tribal and indigenous peoples of the world from one generation to another. Today, the pattern remains the same. The scope and dynamics have become more complex and complicated. Hence, indigenous peoples' lives are always put in a compromising situation.

SOME IMPORTANT BASIS FOR COMMON NOTION

Concepts and practices of struggles and development become clearer or debatable in history. Before, it is only the land that serves as the basis for the claim of the indigenous peoples of their self-determination. It is more complex because the integration and interconnectedness of concepts, aspirations, and practices are realized.

Before, it was land. Now, it is the ancestral domain. History tells us that from different generations, a single thread proves interconnectedness among indigenous peoples' aspirations which is to become free to determine their own life without isolating themselves from the larger world. The concept of self-determination is socially located within their ancestral domain, and it is a political power to determine their life directions (Tauli-Corpuz, V., 2018). For the indigenous peoples, specifically the Bamnan Ayta Mag-Antsi, ancestral domain is a defined territory composed of land, bodies of water (such as rivers, seas, and spring), air, mountains, trees, living things and non-living things (though they considered them "with life" or "life" because of its

importance to their life) wherein they are practicing and living with/through their indigenous ways pertaining to their economic, social, cultural, political, health, environmental and spiritual life's activities since time immemorial (UST-OCD, 2003; CADT Application Documents, 2004). To encapsulate, the ancestral domain is their life and soul.

ATTEMPT OF THIS PAPER

This paper attempts to present the life of one group of the indigenous peoples in the Philippines, particularly the Ayta of Bamban from Tarlac. They are mostly known as the Ayta Mag-antsi, one of the sub-tribes of Aytas of Central Luzon. Though a vast number of literature and documents related to them are available, this paper presents reflections on the life of Ayta highlighting their struggles for development in recent years (2002-2018).

Bamban Ayta Mag-Antsi communities are partners of the University of Santo Tomas (UST) specifically with its University Community Development Program (UCDP). During the beginning of the partnership in the late 1990s up to early 2000s, only two partner communities are formed. Within the scope of years of partnership, there are six (6) partner communities through direct programs approach. While the rest of eight (8) communities are served through an indirect approach via advocacy and networking for the ancestral domain. Direct and indirect approaches are applied to empower the Ayta Mag-Antsi communities by having access to basic services including health and utilizing resources.

Working with the Bamban Ayta Mag-Antsi is part of UST's mission. It is a commitment of partnership for development and empowerment. A partnership is a process of working with one another to express concrete support and solidarity for and towards empowerment of the Ayta Mag-Antsi. This would assist them to achieve their plan and targets. To put in the context of the life of Bamban Ayta Mag-Antsi, it is rooted in their vision of owning, governing and developing their ancestral domain according to their culture and inspirations toward *Kasighawan*.

Kasighawan is a social concept of Aytas' vision of an ancestral domain and communities where there order and abundance are present. This includes lasting peace, social justice, healthy peoples and communities, risk-free environment, and integration of creation.

The journey to achieve the ancestral domain remains a challenge to Ayta Mag-Antsi along with UST. The university learned a lot from such experience, especially on how it goes beyond from the comforts of the classrooms to receiving accommodation to Ayta Mag-Antsi's ancestral domain to live with their members, eat, talk, work, dream, learn and struggle with them. The UST community stakeholders: individual and volunteer students, student organizations, faculty members, administrations, non-academic personnel, and development workers, imparted valuable contributions to Ayta Mag-Antsi communities. The journey of all stakeholders toward *Kasighawan* is connections between the various aspects of their existence (Eriksen, 2001).

In the process, it is not only the Ayta Mag-Antsi who acted as the subject and object of development and change. UST positively affected and absorbed the real essence of working with them towards development and empowerment. Bamban Ayta Mag-Antsi and UST mutually felt the process empowerment. However, this has to be critically viewed through complexity (Perry, 2003).

CONCERNS AND IMPORTANCE OF THIS PAPER

This paper attempts to present reflections on some processes that focus on the continuous aspirations and initiatives towards developed, self-determined and empowered communities of Bamban Ayta where health and environment serve as an integral part.

To present some processes, this paper aims to deliver the following specific concerns:

1. To lay down key and major historical, social, political, economic and, cultural conditions/situations of Bamban Aytas.
2. To describe key partnership initiatives, programs and strategies and their contributions toward the development of ancestral domain and empowerment of Bamban Ayta Mag-Antsi such as ancestral domain advocacy, basic services, organization, formation and capability building, Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP), and coordination and networking.
3. To locate the contemporary conditions and challenges of the partnership in the journey toward *Kasighawan*.
4. To present some challenges, points, and recommendations to be considered for the continuation of the journey.

METHODS/ANALYSIS

This research had been conducted through personal narratives of the author-researcher (Atlasti, n.d.) but it was presented in the third person. Narratives were maximized from the direct experiences and reflections of the author-researcher from his multiple-roles in the university as a program staff-assigned/community organizer in working with Bamban Ayta communities (2002-2007), university community development program facilitator, faculty, researcher and advocate of Aytas' rights and development (2002-present).

The research used and tapped different data collection methods:

Documents review: Reviewed the documents such as program reports, student organizations' project proposals, and terminal reports.

Field and personal notes of the author-researcher (participant observations) on the practice (direct and indirect) of engaging in the university community development program with the Bamban Aytas.

Thematic analysis: Through the information and data from the documents, personal and field notes, reflections/insights were formulated and synthesized the highlights.

Theorizing: The author-researcher had theorized in terms of integrating and connecting his insights and narratives to the vital works of literature and concepts related to Aytas and indigenous peoples.

The Aytas of Central Luzon and Bamban (Tarlac) in a Historical Glance

The Aytas and other Negritos originated and predominantly occupied the mountainous region of Pinatubo in Central Luzon, including the lowland and upland of the present day Bamban, Tarlac and other areas in the periphery of Mount Pinatubo. The ancestral domain of Aytas consists of a vast track of forest areas including Mount Pinatubo as it is being surrounded by the provinces of Zambales, Pampanga and Tarlac (Bamban Journal, 1994; Tindowen, 2016).

The Aytas live in small clusters. They are separated into communities. They used to plant at the foot of the mountain, especially along the riverside and plateau areas as long as water is nearby. The Paruao River, popularly known as the Sacobia-Bamban River, was derived from the Ayta Mag-antsi language which means *flowing downwards from elevated lands*. This is considered vital to the Aytas that developed the area of Bamban. Also, their

presence and development effort in the area has a major role in the establishment of Bamban as a single political unit. The natural resources of Bamban, such as rivers, springs, mountains, and plateau are places of early working and economic activities of the Aytas. They expanded their territories as they develop their life (Bamban Journal, 1994).

The presence of Spanish authority in the area resulted in the institutionalization of a political and geographical system. The present-day municipalities of Southern Tarlac-Bamban and Capas, were formerly part of the Upper Pampanga including the municipalities of Mabalacat, Porac, and Magalang. The term "Tarlac", as one of the areas of Aetas in Central Luzon, came from Ayta Mag-antsi Malatarlac, which means "a plant like a grass" or *talahib* in Filipino (Bamban Journal, 1994).

In the late 1700s, due to circumstances of Christian conversion and military recruitment as contingent to fight pirates in Visayas islands, Aytas opted to leave their original settlement areas in the plain part of Bamban. Like the case of Juanico and his tribe, they left the plain and resettled in the mountainous areas. Thus, it served as the groundbreaking establishment of a new domain, and the end of the rule in the plain areas of Bamban. Some of the evidences that can show their historical mark were the names of communities after their dialect Ayta Mag-antsi like **Monikayo** (which means a plateau in the mountain area which has many trees), **Pantay Ko-Ngo** (a place where there were presence of many tadpoles) and **Taya-yag** (a place wherein there many forbidden acts and food) (Bamban Journal, 1994).

Bamban Ancestral Domain, Converted into a Military Base and an Arena of War

The Municipality of Bamban was under the control of the Americans on November 11, 1899. The American government consolidated that all their war facilities are within the region. Thus, Fort Stotsenburg (which later named as the Clark US Air Base) was established. Furthermore, the mountain areas of Bamban and Capas serve as a Military Reservation Area.

The Japanese occupation in Bamban had Kimijimi Detachments on January 1, 1945. Invasion of Clark Air Base and establishment of Japanese Military Regime right after "The Fall of Bataan" were related factors that pushed for the organization of the first joint

forces composed of 155 American soldiers and 3,000 Aetas that fought against the Japanese. These were the Squadron 30 and Squadron 40 of the Aytas that fought with the use of their indigenous bow and arrow. Their headquarters was based in Sitio Malasa.

The battle that happened in Bamban mountains, where the ancestral domain of Aytas, is considered as one of the bloodiest battles during the Japanese invasion in the Philippines. The Ayta warriors acted the role of logistic works, battle front line forces and mop-up operation's forces. Many Aytas died in the battle to protect their ancestral domain (Alipao, 2005; The Bamban Journal, 2004).

Continuation of Efforts to Recognize and Own Totally the Ancestral Domain

At the end of the war, Aytas continued their way of life in their ancestral domain. In general, Aeta Mag-Antsi's ancestral domain is composed of thirteen (13) major *sitio* or communities under four (4) barangays of Bamban Municipality.

In the year 1975, Aytas of Bamban, Tarlac; and Mabalacat, Pampanga signed and submitted a petition to then-president Ferdinand Marcos to recognize their ancestral domain. Their petition was dismissed. In 1978, Sacobia Development Authority (SDA) was established. The changes that occurred in the establishment of SDA did not hinder the Aytas to struggle for their rights to own their ancestral domain and to recognize them by the government. On November 20, 1982, another petition was filed after the former president Marcos through the leadership of Marcelo Gutierrez which indicated the seclusion of 2,628 hectares, popularly known as the Gutierrez line, within the mountain ranges of Bamban under the territory and control of SDA to declare as the ancestral domain of Bamban Aetas. Again, their initiative did not gain victory (PANLIPI Legal Documents for Bamban Ayta Mag-Antsi, 2000-2005).

To make their struggles stronger and sustainable, they organized themselves through the formation of a Bamban-wide organization named Bamban Aeta Tribal Association (BATA) which was registered in Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on March 12, 1985 (PANLIPI Legal Documents for Bamban Ayta Mag-Antsi, 2000-2005).

Bamban Aetas' Prevailing Social Condition, A Continuing Past (1991 to Late 1990s)

The Aytas are the predominant indigenous peoples of Central Luzon. They mainly inhabit the mountain ranges of Pampanga, Tarlac, and Zambales, although some are also found in Bataan and Nueva Ecija. In the municipality of Bamban, Tarlac, Aytas are also present and residing in their 10,400 hectare-ancestral domain (Bamban Ayta Mag-Antsi Documents for CADT Application, 2004).

The Aytas of Bamban, Tarlac face poverty and marginalization within their respective ancestral communities due to both internal and external factors. Poverty implies different explanation and perspectives based on Bamban Aytas' ancestral domain's context. The poverty situation of Bamban Aytas felt in different forms (Author's Notes, 2002-2005; 2017-2018).

The ancestral domain of the Bamban Ayta community has very rich and diversified natural resources. The Aytas are subsistence farmers. They plant root crops, banana, papaya, and some have small rice paddies. Most of these are consumed by their families. To meet their other needs, some of their crops are sold to the middlemen who make their way to these communities. This is where they lose control of their own crops. These middlemen, usually lowlanders, small capitalists or business groups, are the ones who determine the micro-economic policies that govern the valuation and marketing of their local or indigenous products. They would usually take advantage of the Aytas' illiteracy, their incapacity to directly transport their produce, and their lack of market support. Hence, they are offered very low process for their produce. Additional conditions are set and the middlemen would normally stand a "take it or leave it" proposition, forcing Ayta to reluctantly sell their products rather than see it spoil. In the end, they are forced to accept a pittance for their produce, and further compromising their ability to provide for their basic needs, such as proper nutrition, decent housing and health care (Author's Notes, 2002-2005; Distance Education Program Report, 2008).

Influences from the external factors that go in and out of their community, especially the regular mobility of the outsiders– the lowlanders and the *unat* (a locally coined term to straight-haired people) and the presence of former Clark Air Base (or even during its

operation and until it was converted as a special economic zone) have created major changes in the social, political, environmental, spiritual, and cultural life of the Ayta community. Changes can either be negative or positive. However, such changes have taken shape, thus, destroying the Ayta culture. Culture is considered as one of the most important resources of the Ayta communities as it defines the identity of their community (Author's Note, 2017-2018).

Aside from problems and issues mentioned above, one major catastrophe that they have experienced was the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in June 1991. It encompassed much of the life sphere of the Ayta community and created a new community, a social and environmental milieu. This is mostly particular for the Aytas who lived around Mt. Pinatubo during that time and who became the direct victims of the said tragedy (Hirai, 2015).

As they faced the biggest calamity of their life, the Aytas were hesitant to make a radical move. They were aware at that time that when they decided to leave the comfort of their homes in the primeval mountains to escape from death. This move would also inevitably plunge them into an alienating existence in the lowland (Hirai, 2015).

This fear eventually became a reality for the Aytas as they were relocated to various evacuation centers and resettlement sites. Life at the evacuation centers proved to be a big sacrifice for them because they felt undignified and lost in self-worth. The Aytas, who were not used to depend on other people, became passive receivers of relief goods and other "canned blessings" bestowed upon them. Hence, they always had that longing to go back to their normal life in the highlands. Though there were already a lot of previous government and non-government organizations' development interventions, genuine development of the Ayta itself did not take its fullest until the present (Author's Notes, 2002-2005).

Different Ayta villages are not so organized. It was determined in several identification points, such as the following:

1. There is weak leadership and management of the ancestral domain. There is an

overlap between the traditional-type and mixed-type of leadership. This is manifested through the decision-making power and management initiatives among the elders and the chieftain. The elders and the chieftains of the Bamnan Aeta communities are different persons, which lead to the conflict of their perspectives and leadership strategies. Until now, there is an absence of written, documented and practiced internal common and standard community laws, policies and procedures. Both the traditional-type or mixed-type of leadership is in its crises and limitations due to social, political, economic, cultural, spiritual and environmental changes;

2. Community chieftains, leaders and members have a lot of limitations and weaknesses in terms of strong coordination and cooperation among themselves; and
3. Ayta communities and members are really affected socially, politically, economically and culturally by the influence of the different groups coming from outside of their ancestral domain.

(Author's Note, 2017-2018)

Since the pull-out of US Military Bases in the country in 1991, a conversion program was implemented through power mandated by Republic Act 7227 or known as the Bases Conversion Development Act (BCDA). The Clark US Air Base was one of those bases converted from military facilities to economic zones. While in 1997, Indigenous Peoples Rights Act was approved. The passage of IPRA is a product of a long struggle of the indigenous peoples and indigenous peoples' rights advocates to establish concrete legal foundations of the indigenous peoples' rights, interests, and ancestral domain. To compare, BCDA is a special law while IPRA is a general law of Philippine society. These laws should be complementary from one another to achieve certain goals of development. Despite the Clark Development Corporation (CDC) practiced their function, it sparked a crisis and misunderstanding on how the Bamnan Aytas will be recognized as the sole owner of the ancestral domain (PANLIPI Legal Documents, 2002-2005).

History has proven that genuine development of the Ayta was disrupted by the lowlanders

and sectors coming from outside. Even the social, economic and cultural programs which were imposed to the Ayta community without due consideration to their internal dynamics are not even suitable to their needs. The society at large is inconsiderate of the dynamics that the Ayta community has to undergo for their development.

Despite the numerous issues and problems mentioned above, hope remains alive in the Bamban Ayta community. Conscious efforts and initiatives from the communities are received by themselves. People already initiated the presence of development programs through the assistance of government and non-government organizations where UST took its part in the engagement journey.

UST's Development Engagement as a Journey with the Bamban Aytas (Late 1990's to 2018)

The main point that was considered in development approaches in working with the Bamban Aytas was the enhancement and development of the capability of the Aytas communities to develop, lead and manage their ancestral domain.

The 1991 Mt. Pinatubo Eruption did not solely leave sad stories for the Aytas. One positive outcome of the eruption was that they learned to live collectively under the spirit of participatory development. It was in the resettlement sites that they learned of the need to unify themselves by forming organizations so they can regain their confidence and self-dignity. With this, as some returned to their original communities after the eruption, while some were given new places to live, their passion to organize remained.

This passion of the Aytas to have a better life as an organized community became the foundation of the partnership between their communities and the university. Initially, as part of its extension services, the University of Santo Tomas through the Office for Student Affairs and Community Service (from which the Office for Community Development - OCD was later on formed) rendered service, help, and partnership with the Aytas of Bamban, Tarlac through relief operations. But subsequently realizing the need for more holistic development, the University through the Office for Community Development reoriented its path towards more quality integration with these communities (Author's Notes, 2002-2005).

This is the reason why the relief operations done with the Bamban Aytas were later on transformed into community organizing efforts with the partner communities led by the OCD. The UST-OCD, in its commitment to community development, moved to debunk existing strategies in piecemeal interventions and one shot-deal community services. In its organizing efforts, it strengthened and advocated the new paradigm on working with the people that are guided by the principle of self-reliance, self-determination and people's empowerment (Author's Notes, 2002-2005).

Six partner Ayta communities are included in the institution's over-all Bamban Integrated Indigenous Peoples' Community Development Program namely: Sitio Malasa, Sitio Mabilog, Sitio San Martin, Sitio Santa Rosa, Sitio Haduan and Sitio Buok. The program conceptualized for these communities involves holistic projects and activities which show concrete manifestations of the Aytas' dream to continue and sustain their lives by working together as organized communities working toward self-reliance and development (Author's Notes, 2002-2005).

The preliminary instrument of the program used to organize their communities and process their development as individuals is the engagement of the adult members of the communities in non-formal education through the Distance Education Program of the University. This program allows the adult Aytas in the communities to learn the basics of reading, writing, and calculating through the aid of a two-way radio system with the assistance of a para-teacher coming from the community. It aims to uplift the dignity of the Aytas as they relate with fellow indigenous peoples, with lowlanders, with middlemen, and with society as a whole through being equipped with basic learning in literacy and numeracy (Author's Notes, 2002-2005; Distance Education Program Report, 2008).

Efforts to form a community core group through the spotting of potential leaders were also done in support of educating the community members through the Distance Education Program and as an initial step towards organizing their community. The established core group serves as the point persons to lead the community in its management, strengthening and training as it gears towards the establishment of its own community organization. Workshops, education sessions, and seminars focusing on the

overall formation of the community leaders are conducted to further enhance their indigenous knowledge and skills, and to better mold their leadership qualities. Capacity-building activities are also continuously organized among the leaders to facilitate the formulation of community development programs that are meant to empower them as they are molded to be self-reliant individuals and be able to self-sufficiently manage their own community in the future (Distance Education Program Report, 2008).

Upon its formation and establishment, the community organization, together with the UST-OCD, institutionalizes basic social services. These efforts include projects which focus on the health of the community through the assistance in the conduct of medical and dental missions, feeding programs, health teaching sessions and the formation of a pool of Community-based Health Workers (CHWs). All these are geared to sustain the health aspect of the community so they can better support and actively involve themselves in their development agenda (Author's Notes, 2002-2005).

A scholarship program for the youth from the different *sitio* is also established to support the communities in their dream of sending their children to formal educational institutions. The support granted to these schoolchildren, who walk an average of three kilometers every day going to and from their villages to their schools, come either in the form of transportation or food subsidy depending on their need and situation. Livelihood programs such as goat-raising, the establishment of a community store, and vegetable-farming are also part of the attempts to assist in the delivery of social services as part of the organizing these communities (Author's Notes, 2002-2005).

Aside from these projects, UST also aided the construction of housing units for the people of Sitio Mabilog in adherence to the community's need for stronger and permanent homes. Based on the needs assessment made before starting the project, it was realized that every time the community, which can be found on top of a hill, experienced a storm in the area, their houses made of cogon grass and *sawali* were blown away by the wind and they had no choice but to follow and pick up their lost housing materials because of the lack of resources to buy new ones. This occurrence was enough to convince the entire UST community, including students, faculty, alumni, and non-academic employees to volunteer

and support housing project for the community. With more stable and permanent homes, the community can focus more on taking concrete action towards reaching their development and taking a more active part in community projects as part of their organizing efforts (Author's Notes, 2002-2005).

The Sustainable Upland Agriculture Project aims to develop and enhance the capacities, knowledge, and skills of the Aytas in upland agriculture through organic, research-based and culture-sensitive means. The members of the communities have undergone training with the supervision of agriculture consultants from support groups and have also created self-managed community farms. This undertaking is also a part of the communities' endeavor towards the preservation and care of their natural environment through which they mostly depend for livelihood (Author's Notes, 2002-2005; 2017-2018).

Preservation and maintenance of the Aytas' cultural heritage and tradition are done through the facilitation of cultural workshops and assistance in the research and documentation. An annual Indigenous Peoples' Day is also implemented to promote the appreciation and sustenance of their culture. To further enhance these efforts, networking is also established with other groups supporting and advocating indigenous cultures such as peoples' organizations within Bamban, government and non-government organizations and the local government unit (Author's Notes, 2002-2005; 2017-2018).

Additionally, one social responsibility by the university is titling and the formulation of an integrated development plan for their ancestral domain. This plan formulated as a result of various consultations and focused group discussions (FGDs) with the communities that are primarily aimed for the improvement and sustainable protection of the socio-cultural, economic and political condition of their ancestral domain (Author's Notes, 2002-2005; 2017-2018).

Focus on Health-Environment Partnerships and Engagements

Particularly on health partnerships and engagements, different projects are implemented by the different student organizations from 2007 to 2018. In nutrition-related projects: 1 project in 2007-2008 with 8 days project implementation; 2 projects in 2008-2009 with 3 days project implementation; 3 projects in 2009-2010 with 4 days project

implementation; and 2 projects with 6 days project implementation. There were 7 medical missions conducted, 8 health research projects, 10 health education sessions from 2007 to 2014; 2 projects in 2008-2009 with 3 days project implementation; 3 projects in 2009-2010 with 4 days project implementation; and 2 projects in 2017-2018 with 6 days project implementation; and 4 deworming sessions. The following projects are also accomplished– dengue prevention with 3 days project implementation; a health infrastructure project with 5 days of project implementation; and an education project about lice/louse (*kuto*). All projects mentioned have a component of health education (Student Organizations' Community Development Project Proposals, 2007-2018; Student Organizations' Community Development Terminal Reports, 2007-2018).

Regarding environmental partnerships and engagements, the following are projects implemented by the different student organizations from 2007 to 2018: 1 project in 2007-2008 with 1 day project implementation; for environmental educations: 1 project in 2009 to 2010; 1 project in 2010-2011 with 5 days project implementation; 1 project in 2015 to 2016 with 2 days project implementation; 1 project in 2016-2017 with 1 project implementation; 1 project in 2017-2018 with 1 advocacy forum; and 1 project in 2017-2018 with 1 project implementation; 1 Vegetable Garden project in 2010-2011 with 5 days project implementation; 2 Water System Rehabilitation projects with 4 days project implementation (Student Organizations' Community Development Project Proposals, 2007-2018; Student Organizations' Community Development Terminal Reports, 2007-2018).

All these program/project partnerships and engagements were primarily geared toward strengthening the individual members of the community and for the enhancement of the community organization's capabilities. The delivery of these programs and activities is in the same way intended for the holistic formation of the members of the entire UST community which includes the students, faculty, alumni, administration, and non-academic personnel. Every aspect in the implementation of a community development program for the Aytas of Bamban was done through the partnership of the UST family and the Ayta communities themselves. With voluntarism and charity, the core foundations of the UST character, in hand, the UST community, more particularly involve

themselves in supporting Ayta communities to achieve their development agenda through coming up with project proposals and activities done in the communities. As these projects are executed, realizations are absorbed, in turn, which help the UST stakeholders form themselves to be better persons and members of society.

Dynamics of Paradigms and Strategies Vis-a-Vis Some Previous and On-Going Advocacies, Initiatives and Conflicts in Ancestral Domain

From 2003 up to this present 2018, important and crucial initiatives are done to sustain the community's development. The experience of regular stay and living with the Aytas of UST development workers served as opportunities to sense them deeply and consolidated the communities at certain levels. Through a series of consultations, group processes, previous initiatives and advocacies related to Aytas' ancestral domain and rights led them to gain victories. Hence, greater needs were identified.

One of the major initiatives was the organization of Bamnan Aeta Tribal Association (BATA). This was organized in 1992 led by Marcelo Gutierrez, popularly known for the majority as Tata Celo, for them to be formally recognized as Bamnan-wide Aytas' organization. The organization was legally and technically facilitated by PANLIPI, a Legal NGO with a long track of record of being partner of the Aytas (and even with other indigenous peoples in the Philippines) especially in terms of indigenous peoples' rights and advocacies and claim for ancestral domain even before Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) was enacted into a law. After eleven (11) years of BATA's existence, it was identified in the organizational evaluation that many components, requirements, and indicators as an empowered organization does not exist. From that point, revitalization of BATA was put into one of the priorities with close coordination and partnership of UST and PANLIPI as advocates and support groups. BATA re-organizing and strengthening together with Ancestral Domain and Sustainable Development Protection Plan (ADSDPP) formulation was given focus and priority as an arm for a strategic setting of direction and intervention for empowerment (PANLIPI Legal Documents, 2002-2005).

ADSDPP highlighted and emphasized the Aytas' vision, mission, and programs. A vision is a dream of an alternative and opposite of the prevailing situation of the whole ancestral

domain that will happen and can attain in the future with long term mission and commitment. This serves as a guide for each individual and all members of the Bamnan Aytas to sustain their identity, dignity, culture, and development. Highlights of the ADSDPP document emphasize the importance of their ancestral domain and the Aytas as the sole owner.

Bamnan Aetas' Vision states that:

We the Aeta Magan-tse of Bamnan (Tarlac) is dreaming of one Ancestral Domain where...

We own it totally and being recognized that it is ours;

We have efficient, effective and strong governance;

We have our own culture as our identity of ourselves and of our people;

We have sufficient and develop status of life, where there is order, peace, justice and development for all and integrated and;

We have interconnectedness as one and unified Aeta community.

We want to make fruits out from our initiatives and to leave our legacy for our children and for their children's children.

The original vision statement was written in Filipino (Tagalog and Ayta Mag-Antsi):

Tagalog:

Kaming mga katutubong Ayta Magan-tse ng Bamnan (Tarlac) ay nangangarap ng isang Lupaing Ninuno...

Na sariling amin at kinikilala na ito ay amin;

May sapat na kabuhatan, maayos at malakas ang pamamahala sa mga nasasakupan;

May sariling kultura na mapagkikilanlan ng aming lahi;

May sapat at maunlad na kabuhatan, may kaayusan, may kapayapaan, makatarungan at laganap at buo ang kaunlaran at;

Buhay ang malaim na ugnayan ng mga tao bilang iisa at nagkakaisang pamayanan.

Nais naming maipamana ang mga bunga ng lahat ng aming pagsisikap at pagpupunyagi sa aming mga anak at darating na salinglahi.

Ayta Mag-Antsi

Hikay ya katutubong ayta mag-antsi nêñ bamban tarlac ay mangarap hên mihay lutang ninuno...

Hên mihay sarilên kanaên boy kilalanên hên kanaên ya hatsi main hêpat hên kabyayan.

Mahampat boy makhaw hên panimuno hên angkasakupan

Main hariling kultura na kamwangan hên kanaên lahi;

Main hapat boy makwal hên kabyayan, main kaayusan,

Main kapayapaan, main kaagyuhan boy kal-atan boy miha ya kamwangan:

Mabyay ya ya pinaka malalêng mikakamiha hên tawo bilan mimiha boy milalamung pama-yanan.

Labay naên maipamana ya bunga nêñ kaganawan ya kanaên paghihipag boy an-itaguyud ha kanaên anak ha anlumatêng hên law lahi.

From their vision statement, they capsulated the main and specific sentiments and concerns anchored to self-determination and to own totally and manage their ancestral domain.

It is fair to mention that one Ayta community– Sitio Mabilog when they formed their organization, it was named *KASIGHAWAN*. Parallel to their vision, *KASIGHAWAN* is an Ayta Mag-Antsi term which stands for many and all positive state or condition of life, and it could be an integration of different good or positive state or condition like *kaginhawahan, kasiyahan, may kasunduan, nagkakaisa, masagana*, and others. In other words, it is their concept of *utopia*. It is their concept of *a new heaven and new earth*.

Bamban Aytas stated their commitment to make this vision a reality in a gradual process when they set their mission. They are committed to the vital tasks of the following:

1. To ensure that there are enough resources of sustaining the life of the Bamban Aeta communities.
2. To protect, maintain, care, nurture and develop the environment and nature of the ancestral domain.
3. To live-out, understand, analyze, develop and instill good culture as legacy and

identity to and of our people.

4. To provide basic services by tapping first the local and indigenous technology, skills and resources while considering outside resources as important support for local development.
5. To lead, govern and manage communities in effective, efficient, participatory, democratic, principled, coordinated and guided by policies (That leadership is an expression and proof of love and care of ancestral domain).
6. To ensure the ownership, nurturing and development of ancestral domain through building of development programs.

This vision and mission were translated into concrete programs and projects with components. These were the socio-economic, environment, culture, social services, health, environment, leadership and governance, and ancestral domain. Other programs and projects can still be identified based on needs. There are already six (6) communities, whom we can state, who are consciously advocating and implementing the programs mentioned. Other communities are striving to make initiatives with and through the support of different groups, but the question of integrated and integrative approach is a major consideration to address.

There are influential outsiders who already offered and continue to offer different development programs and opportunities. Clark Development Corporation (CDC), a government institution that is in charge of the conversion program in the former US Clark Air Base is continuously implementing their master development plan despite that there is a living critical stand for Bamnan Aytas' ancestral domain (Author's Note, 2017-2018).

The process of organization of BATA, where there were already some gains, was disrupted. This happened due to interrelated factors like individualistic and non-culture-based leadership and management style; mobilization without vision; too much economic in perspective of development while marginalizing other concerns like organizational development; conflict in development perspectives and strategies; and indigenous cultural and values degradation. Because of the disruption, major tie-up commitment for ADSDPP and CBL ratification or adoption were also affected (Author's Note, 2017-2018).

The communities of Malasa, Mabilog, San Martin, Sta. Rosa, Haduan and Buok, formed a cluster or core group of direct partner communities. This effort was an implementation of KAMANLALAKBAY's resolution to form sectoral clusters to build strong coordination and advancement of common aspirations through programs and capability building. Tactically, there were efforts of coordination especially on the aspect of petition signing and some advocacy activities related to the ancestral domain, IP rights, CADT and ADSDPP (Author's Note, 2017-2018).

Coordination with the local government, Department of Social Welfare (DSWD), Department of Health/Ministry of Health Organization (DOH/MHO) and other agencies were only through one-shot and request-based project, but strategic partnership is a challenge on how to maximize with one's other resources and capabilities for Aytas development and empowerment. Strong coordination with different other NGOs/Private groups entering in the Bamban Ayta communities is an approach that is being done (Author's Note, 2017-2018).

Reality speaks the trend of fragmentation in giving importance and how they are going to apply and live their cultural traditions and identity as Ayta Mag-Antsi. Selfish attitudes and vices were already penetrated their life. It was observed in the case of leaders of BATA which they presumed that they are ready to deal with outsiders to pursue development. Empowerment had tried to be guided but the results are not as they are expected. There are different factors that affect the process, and this led to a different end. One of the factors is the influence of other outsiders who expressed the intention of false support (Author's Note, 2017-2018).

Aside from BATA, there are other three groups now, namely Mabalacat Ayta Tribal Association (MATA), Samahang Tribung Ayta (STA) and Tribung Ayta Mag-Antsi (TAMA). All of them are assuming the socio-political-economic power within and outside the ancestral domain. All of them are claiming for leadership (Author's Note, 2017-2018).

The tendency of the Aytas to dissent both from within among their ranks and outside groups who are acting as if they can assure and promise development only as an output without genuine process on how to attain development. Aytas are used of promises which

always turn-out to be false ones. Aytas' experience from the promises of the outsiders resulted in creation and aggravation of culture of dependency. The indigenous culture of independence and self-reliance was corrupted. It is already a given reality that any people-based development and empowerment processes would challenge.

Have to mention additional vital current realities

Despite of all development partnerships and engagements, including health and environment, recent community study shows that the following diseases and illnesses are prevalent: common illnesses: cough, colds, and fever; respiratory-related diseases: tuberculosis, and asthma; hyperacidity, rheumatism, anemia, high blood pressure, and UTI; eye-related diseases: sore eyes, and cataract; and chronic diseases: hepatitis, and diabetes.

Natural resources are depleting especially the river system resources due to quarrying of stones for gravel and construction business purposes (Community Organizing Report (2018)).

Challenges

Along with the journey with Bamban Aytas, it is proven once again that development should uphold, embraced and prioritized the local community for development. Development is the vision of all but it should recognize the right of the indigenous peoples. Recognition should be concrete. Development should not be a tool to marginalize, especially the Aytas.

Organization of Aytas is political while formulation and management of ADSDPP is an organizational and programmatic in nature. These are inseparable and integrative development approaches and strategies. The processes that took place were real cases in which it can be sources of learnings and insights in working with the Bamban Aytas.

In the end, this paper presents suggestions or recommendations and challenges through posing questions and projected possible processes and directions that can help the involved parties and other interested groups who will assist genuinely to resolve the crises in the recognition of their rights and development of ancestral domain of the Bamban Aytas.

For the Bamban Aytas

1. What are the mechanisms that Ayta communities should establish to protect their ancestral domain from the outsiders and straight-hair people who are staying in their ancestral domain? What will be their approach to the people who bought pieces of lands within their ancestral domain?
2. What are the mechanisms that can strengthen the coordination of different communities within their ancestral domain? An ancestral domain-wide organization is a need.
3. There is a need to go back to the formulated proposed ADSDPP, their development master plan so that it would serve as their guide in any activities, plans, coordination/networking with other groups and other related matters with regards to ancestral domain development.
4. There is really a need to strengthen the organization of the Bamban Aytas who would really represent their sector and communities in any important aspect of mobilization for their ancestral domain.
5. Since there is fast-tracking of changes in our society, the establishment of putting-up of a cultural program that would preserve, enrich and protect their culture from the influences and changes is a strategic need. Through this, it will serve as one of the mechanisms to ensure, maintain and adapt their identity to the next generations.

For the different support groups

1. The value of recognition and respect to the history and culture should always be adhered and uphold in working with the Bamban Ayta.
2. Recognize their ADSDPP as one of the considerations and guide in working with Bamban Aytas. Their ADSDPP stated their vision and directions for their future. This should be strictly considered by the support groups in coming up with development plan and strategies. Working with them is "not a liberation" and an end but a means to attain their *Kasighawan*.
3. To set-up clear mechanisms which uphold the development principles and ethics in

working with the Aytas.

4. To assist in the enrichment, protection, and development of Ayta culture through research, documentation, and promotion especially this present period of time where there are a lot of threats to their culture and identity.

A Sort of an Open Ending

From the start until to present, Bamban Aytas live with their indigenous way of life, means and processes towards the development of ancestral domain. However, along the way, many defined obstacles and crises hinder Aytas' indigenous development to sink-into their life, or even to the life of the larger society, and to own totally their ancestral domain. There are crises on how Bamban Aytas to find answers to their quest for their ancestral domain, but still, our social and collective commitment is to answer really the main social root cause of the existing problems of Bamban Aytas.

In the social development process, it is not just that marginalization of any sectors, including and especially the indigenous peoples like Bamban Aytas, to take place. Different social and economic development programs by the government, private and support groups can be implemented unless real and correct processes are done. The Bamban Aytas should and must be the main actors of development within their ancestral domain.

It is time to pursue an integrated development intervention and strategies that would assist and facilitate the Aytas' empowerment. Sixteen (16) years is not enough to realize their integral human development and to free themselves totally from the different forms of poverty, injustices, and disempowerment. From these basic foundations and concrete measurement of the integrated community development, it wanted to make sure that the Aytas will be the promulgators of their own history and development. The outsiders, like UST, are just supporters and facilitators (Manalili, 2017; Eriksen, 2001).

Thus, it is an opportunity under the partnership between the Bamban Aytas and the UST to pursue this Bamban Aeta Integrated Development Program. The program reflects Bam-ban Aytas' vision that can be achieved through participatory, democratic, humane and Ay-ta-centered development strategies, methodologies, interventions and projects as tools

for/towards self-determination, development, and empowerment. This is a journey toward *Kasighawan*.

REFERENCES

- Alipao, F. A. 2005 (Unpublished 2005 UGAT Conference Paper). *Ang Krisis at Pagsisikap sa Pagkilala ng Lupaing Ninuno ng mga Ayta Mag-Antsi ng Bamban, Tarlac* (An UGAT 2005 Conference Paper Presentation).
- Atlasti (n.d.). What is Narrative? Retrieved from <https://atlasti.com/narrative-research/>
- Author's Notes, 2002-2005
- Authors Notes, 2017-2018
- Bamban Ayta Magan-Tsi Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) Application Documents. (2004).
- Community Organizing Report. 2018
- Distance Education Program Report. 2008
- Eriksen, T.H. (2001). *Small Places, Large Issues (An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology)*. USA: Pluto Press.
- Hirai, K. (eds.). (2015) *Social Movements and the Production of Knowledge: Body, Practice, and Society in East Asia*. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- Manalili, A.G., (2017). *Pag-oorganisa ng Pamayanan (Mula sa tao, Para sa Tao, Tungo sa Tao)*. Philippines: Komisyon ng Wikang Filipino.
- Molintas, J.M. (2004). The Philippine Indigenous Peoples' Struggle for Land and Life Challenging Legal Texts. *Arizona Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 21 (1).
- PANLIPI Legal Documents for Bamban Ayta Mag-Antsi (2000-2005)
- Perry, R.J. (2003). *Five Key Concepts in Anthropological Thinking*. USA: Pearson.
- Shimizu, H. (1989). *Pinatubo Aytas: Continuity and Change*. Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Student Organizations' Community Development Project Proposals (2007-2018)
- Student Organizations' Community Development Terminal Reports (2007-2018)
- Tauli-Corpuz, V. (2018). Report to Human Rights Council (Attacks Against and Criminalization Indigenous Peoples Defending Their Rights) <http://unsr.vtaulicorpuz.org/site/>

index.php/en/documents/annual-reports/251-report-hrc2018 Retrieved: March 4, 2019.

The Bamban Journal. (2004). Vol. 1, No. 4

Tindowen, D.J.C. (2016). The Economic Life of the Aetas of Northern Philippines. *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol 19 No 2. pp. 97-109.

University of Santo Tomas-Office for Community Development (UST-OCD). (2003). Three Year Bamban IP Program Proposal (unpublished).