

A CASE STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE IGLESIA
FILIPINA INDEPENDIENTE AND LUMAD INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES: THE TRANSFORMATIONAL
POTENTIAL OF ECOLOGIES OF KNOWLEDGE.

by

EMMA BRIDGER

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Theology and Religion

School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion

University of Birmingham

1 October 2023

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham Research Archive

e-theses repository

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I position ecologies of knowledge as a tool for dismantling the limits the colonial matrix of power places on western imaginations. I adopt a case study approach through which I interact with the lived experience of Lumad Indigenous communities and the Iglesia Filipina Independiente in the Philippines and reflect upon my personal transformation throughout the research process.

I begin the thesis by introducing Mignolo's concept of a colonial matrix of power that marginalises all 'other' knowledges to the other side of an abyssal line. With a particular focus on our deepening climate and ecological disaster, I argue for an urgent challenge to this matrix and advocate for the dismantlement of boxhead, a term coined by Andreotti to illustrate the limits of western imaginations.

I trace the development of a colonial matrix of power in the Philippines, outlining the engagement between Lumad Indigenous persons, Spanish colonial powers and American imperialists. Following this, I introduce the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI), a Filipino nationalist Church and suggest that the formation of the church was itself an act of colonial resistance.

Adopting a scholar activist methodology and drawing from Indigenous and feminist methodologies I then leap across time to detail how corporations and successive Filipino governments, particularly that of President Marcos Duterte, have used the racist and anthropocentric hierarchies created during colonial rule to oppress indigenous people and those who seek to defend them in the present.

I use data gathered through ethnographic engagement and semi-structured interviews to argue for an expansion in what is commonly defined as *the* Lumad struggle, contending that failing to do so ignores the breadth of opposition to the colonial matrix of power and, in particular, neo-liberal capitalist oppression. I build upon this argument for broader understandings of struggle when examining the theology of the IFI, and acknowledge the importance of individual identity when considering how to manifest a commitment to struggle in ones own life.

Finally, I examine how engagement with Lumad communities who are part of *the* struggle has influenced the theology and practice of IFI leadership. I demonstrate that, through an ecology of knowledge, leadership of the IFI have defamiliarised themselves with the universalist thinking and hegemonic understandings of progress and development that support the colonial matrix of power. I conclude that standing in solidarity with the 'other' in their struggle can be a transformational act that leads to a re-thinking and re-valuing that is necessary for human and planetary flourishing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Partnership of the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

I owe my first thanks to Professor Candida Moss, for sticking with me throughout this process, for her wisdom, guidance, patience and motivation. Thank you also to others who have helped supervise this project, Professor Andrew Davies for encouraging me to take up a PhD and Doctor Wren Radford for inspiring me to question my own writing and giving me the courage to reflect in a different way.

A huge thank you is due to the members of the IFI and Lumad communities whose knowledges and experiences informed this work. For their inspirational courageousness, for all that I have learnt from them and all the ways this work has transformed me. I will always remember to take my shoes off and walk on the grass.

Padayon!

Thank you to friends and family who have offered support. Thank you especially to my mum without whom this project would not have been possible; for the endless support and the hours sitting by my side in coffee shops so that I could work and feed Luca, caring for him so incredibly when he had only just arrived in this world. Thank you to my husband Juan for helping me to keep things in perspective and staying by my side no matter what.

Finally, to my beautiful son Luca, thank you for being the light that kept me going.

Mummy loves you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
ACRONYMS.....	9
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	12
The Colonial Matrix of Power.....	13
Philippines Country Profile	18
Lumad and Spanish Colonisation	20
Lumad and American Imperialism	26
Present Oppression of Lumad Communities	29
IFI history	34
IFI in the Present	38
CHAPTER 2 - METHODS AND METHODOLOGIES	43
Introduction	43
Author Assumptions	44
Ethical Approval.....	47
Methodologies.....	54
Scholar Activism	54
Indigenous Methodologies	56
Feminist Approaches	58
Data Collection.....	59
Conclusion	66
CHAPTER 3 - FIELDWORK REFLECTIONS	68
Introduction.....	68
Pilgrimage.....	69
Trust and uncomfortable fieldwork situations.....	69
The importance of history	73
The Social Context of Trust Transferability	75
Risks, relationships and political realities: from ethnographic engagement to flying visits.	80
IFI engagement.....	80
Lumad engagement	85

The contextual nature of power.....	92
Power and positionality: Lumad Bakwit School	92
Ethics in the Bakwit School.....	94
Policy and Power	97
Time	98
Colonial structures and rules of engagement.....	100
Rules of engagement.....	102
Economics and politics	105
Scholar Activist Work Moving Forward	106
Personal reflections.....	109
Conclusion	116
CHAPTER 4 - <i>THE LUMAD STRUGGLE</i>	120
Introduction	120
Existing Literature.....	121
Unity.....	128
Education as the Highest Form of Resistance.....	133
Bakwit Schools.....	139
Persistent Persecution.....	140
Diversity in the Struggle.....	145
Struggle as Paramilitarisation	147
Struggle as Violence	153
Struggle as Small Scale Markets	154
Struggle as Development.....	156
Conclusion	157
CHAPTER 5 - <i>IFI THEOLOGY</i>	160
Introduction.....	160
History	161
Who are the Theologians?	168
Theologies of Struggle.....	172
Conservative and Progressive clergy.....	179
IFI Congregation members	184
The institutionalisation of the progressive view	188
Prophets.....	193
Church building, conversion and pluralism.....	199

Conclusion	202
CHAPTER 6 - PERSECUTION	205
Introduction	205
Definition of Martyrdom and Persecution.....	206
Persecution and Freedom of Religion or Belief	209
Prosecution or Persecution	211
Persecution and martyrdom narratives within the IFI	214
Pilgrimage	215
Statements.....	217
Competing narratives	225
Clergy narratives.....	230
Prophets.....	231
Internal differences	233
Younger Clergy	233
Older clergy	237
Intra-categorical differences.....	241
Congregation	243
Conclusion	248
CHAPTER 7 - ECOLOGIES OF KNOWLEDGE.....	251
Introduction	252
History of engagement.....	255
Accompaniment programme increasing understanding	258
Ecology of Knowledge	261
Bakwit School as a convergence site.....	267
Future challenges to the ecology of knowledge in Bayan	268
Building the Future	270
Expanding notions of <i>the</i> struggle.....	278
Engaging with policy spaces.....	279
Conclusion	281

The final challenge on which I continue to reflect, which I discuss further in the concluding chapter of this thesis, is the possibility that didactic intercultural leaders will perpetuate allochronic and evolutionary thinking in which they judge those who do not follow their new understandings. This is relevant for IFI congregation members, many of whom, as outlined in the theology chapter, are employed by, or benefit from elements of the neo-liberal capitalist system. It is also relevant for the Lumad communities excluded from dominant understandings of Lumad struggle. It takes away the potential role of the IFI as a mediator

and the potential of a pluriverse to demonstrate the breadth of resistance to the neo-liberal capitalist system. CHAPTER 8 - CONCLUSION 284

 Revisiting key questions 288

 Policymaking 297

 Research Limitations 301

EPILOGUE 303

INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS 306

BIBLIOGRAPHY 309

APPENDICES 350

ACRONYMS

ALCADEV - Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development

AFP – Armed Forces of the Philippines

BARMM - Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao

CHRP - Campaign for Human Rights in the Philippines

CPP – Communist Party of the Philippines

FCDO - Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

FCO – Foreign and Commonwealth Office

FNIGC - First Nations Information Governance Centre in Canada

FoRB – Freedom of Religion or Belief

FPIC - Free Prior and Informed Consent

HRC – Human Rights Council

IFI – Iglesia Filipina Independiente

INGOs - International Non-governmental Organisations

NCCP - National Council of Churches in the Philippines

NPA – New People’s Army

NTF-ELCAC - National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict

OM – Obispo Maximo

OCAP - Ownership, Control, Access and Possession

PCPR - The Promotion of Church Peoples' Response

TYRP - Three Year Rolling Plan

UCCP - United Church of Christ in the Philippines

UN – United Nations

UNPFII - UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

USPG - United Society Partners in the Gospel

WCC – World Council of Churches

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

I have always been one of those people to remember the bad, the negative; the difficult experiences from their childhood. I had a loving and privileged upbringing, but, for some reason, the moments etched in my brain until today are those I found most difficult. I made one such memory in reception, when the power of nature suddenly dawned upon me. I am not sure where my fear came from but all of a sudden, at the age of five, I developed terrifying visions of our street flooding. I remember wondering if all of my family could fit into one boat, a thought rapidly followed by confusion as to what then, would we just float forever? On the morning this fear began, my mother walked me the five minutes to school as she always did. Forever the “good” child, who does not make a scene; I kept my fears to myself, said goodbye and walked into my classroom. I felt as if I would explode any minute. My teacher saw the fear written all over my face and kept me back from assembly to ask what was wrong. I lost it; crying hysterically as I struggled to tell my kind faced teacher that we were all going to die. It was going to flood and we would all die.

Given that I grew up in a suburb, just outside of London, her response made sense. She reassured me that we had brilliant drainage systems and that no matter how hard it rained, the drains would whisk away the water and we could continue our lives without any inconvenience from the elements. Whilst a small part of me was reassured, I also felt that she was not taking me seriously. I knew the problem was bigger than she acknowledged. Now I am not claiming to have known, at the young and shielded age of five, that there was an ecological crisis, or that for many around the world such floods were already a reality. Maybe on some level I did know. For present purposes, this does not really matter. The point of me sharing this snippet

from my childhood is that I have the same fear and experience the same reaction today; the same downplaying of the power of Mother Nature based on an ill-founded belief in the human ability to control, or at least manage the impact of the elements. Despite media reports on increased extreme weather events around the world, there is a belief that we, here in the UK, in the leafy suburbs of London, will be ok. We can then help the rest of the world through aid. Money will solve ecological collapse. Such narratives ignore the interdependency of global ecological systems, the limitations of adaptation and the racist and gendered nature of the crisis. I use the first section of this introductory chapter to support my contention that anthropocentric narratives of human dominion over nature have a history and present day purpose. Moving from the 16th century to the present, I argue that the colonial matrix of power and the epistemic hierarchies at its roots support the obstinate persistence of such ill-informed narratives in order to ensure continued economic benefit to the global elite at the expense of the masses.

The Colonial Matrix of Power

The long 16th century (1450-1650) saw colonial powers commit epistemicide and genocide against Muslim and Jewish populations in Al-Andalus, against women in Europe, Indigenous peoples in what we now know as the Americas and people from the later named continent of Africa who were forcibly taken and enslaved (Grosfoguel, 2013). The knowledge of the Western European man seized an exclusive claim on truth and the ability to define what it meant to be civilized, to progress or develop (Grosfoguel, 2013). The result was an abyssal line, a term used by Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos to describe the invisible line

that divides social reality into the existent (the “this side”) and the non-existent (the “other side”) (de Sousa Santos, 2007). According to Santos, “...whatever lies on the other side of the line remains invisible or utterly irrelevant.” (2014: 71).

Through epistemicides, genocides and the creation of an abyssal line, European colonial expansion marginalised alternative¹ worldviews from the dominant imagination. It enforced the separation of people from their ecological surroundings, oppressing non-anthropocentric knowledges and those who held them (de Sousa Santos, 2007). This disconnection of people from planet and the silencing of those who held alternative knowledges vindicated Europe’s exploitative dominion over people and planet. The result was a racist and anthropocentric hierarchy in which nature and the labour of others became a resource for European economic benefit. By the end of the 1700s, political power, military authority and dominant economic systems depended upon the exploitation of land and labour for profits (Quijano and Wallerstein, 1992, p.551; Quijano, 2000) whilst hegemonic understandings of progress and development constructed newness, material and economic gain into markers of social status (Quijano, 2000). These knowledge hierarchies, understandings of progress, and the violent oppressions of the long 16th century enabled the intertwining of the colonial matrix of power and the ecological crisis that mark the present. According to Mignolo, colonial powers created the colonial matrix of power through their control of economies, sexuality and ideas of family, military force and claims of authority, all of which were dependent upon invented racist and

¹ I use alternative worldviews to refer to the countless diverse ways of knowing that exist outside of dominant thinking, commonly referred to as the ‘Western worldview’. See for example Wilshire (2006) who provides a helpful outline of the existence of multiple worldviews and the need to acknowledge them.

sexist knowledge hierarchies and the separation of humans and nature (Mignolo, 2007, 2018; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018).

The intersecting domains of the colonial matrix of power persist in the present, oppressing those deemed as other or not fully human and all non-anthropoc beings, to the other side of the abyssal line (Mignolo, 2007). Controlled by violent appropriation this line ensures the continuance of the colonial matrix of power, oppressing alternative worldviews, particularly those that challenge exploitative capitalism and understandings of material gain as progress (de Sousa Santos, 2007, 2018). One outcome is that demand for ecological resources regularly exceeds the world's carrying capacity and the speed at which nature can regenerate (Earth Overshoot Day, 2023). Those who have caused this situation are those least impacted by it and those most greatly impacted are marginalised to the other side of the abyssal line. As noted in the Summary for Policymakers of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report (IPCC 2022):

Between 2010–2020, human mortality from floods, droughts and storms was 15 times higher in highly vulnerable regions, compared to regions with very low vulnerability (high confidence). Vulnerability at different spatial levels is exacerbated by inequity and marginalization linked to gender, ethnicity, low income or combinations thereof (high confidence), especially for many Indigenous Peoples and local communities (high confidence). Present development challenges causing high vulnerability are influenced by historical and ongoing patterns of inequity such as colonialism, especially for many Indigenous Peoples and local communities (high confidence).

In order to address this ecological crisis we must challenge the abusive systems and structures of the colonial matrix of power. However, the thinking that supports the colonial matrix of power and the abyssal line on which it depends reproduces narratives to justify its own existence and mask its abuses. As Santos (2007: 63) argues “if not actively resisted against, abyssal thinking will go on reproducing itself, no matter how exclusionary and destructive the practices to which it gives rise.” I contend therefore, that resisting abyssal thinking must include the dismantlement of box-head, a term coined by Andreotti (2016), an indigenous land rights activist and Dean of Education at the University of Victoria. Andreotti uses the illustration of a box head to describe dominant neo-liberal capitalist thinking through and modernity’s frames of reference for knowing and being human (Andreotti, 2016). Included within these frames of reference is logocentrism. This encourages us to believe in only the knowable, the describable. It severs people’s spiritual connection with their surroundings. Box thinking encourages those trapped within it, myself included, to focus on our minds rather than our bodies through a formal and social education that ‘...attempts to tame or repress forces deemed unreasonable such as the aesthetic, the erotic, the more-than-human, the divine and the hilarious.’ (Andreotti, p.83, 2016). Box thinking oppresses religious, indigenous, inspirational and other knowledges to the realm of the non-existent. It convinces us of a universalism in which ours is the only real and reasonable interpretation of the world (Andreotti, 2016). The teleological dimension of box head leads us to believe that we understand the workings of the world and can design our future in to existence. This future is based on anthropocentric reasoning in which confidence in human superiority supposedly

justifies our control over all non-anthropoc beings (Andreotti, 2016). A colonisation of the imagination persists (Goldsworthy, 1998; Quijano, 2007; Andreotti, 2016).

The oppression of the colonial matrix of power, the abyssal line and box-thinking that enable it are global with ‘...a Third World included in the First...’ (Mignolo, 2002: p.62) and a first world within the third (Mignolo, 2002). The colonial matrix of power subjugates people from every country. There is resistance from those marginalised and those who stand in solidarity.

Throughout this thesis, I examine how the colonial matrix of power plays out in the Philippines, with a particular focus on Mindanao, the southernmost island of the archipelago, focusing on Lumad Indigenous² communities and the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI). I draw upon data collected from participant observation and semi-structured interviews that took place in the Philippines between January and April in 2020 and online meetings and discussions conducted between May 2020 and December 2022 (further details are included in the methods chapter). In doing so, I propose to answer the following questions:

- What ontologies and theologies inform the worldviews of Lumad and IFI communities?
- In what ways do Lumad communities and the IFI participate in the struggle against the colonial matrix of power?
- What impact does standing in solidarity with the Lumad struggle have on the IFI’s theology?

² There is a great diversity amongst those included in term Indigenous and Lumad. I highlight some of this diversity throughout this thesis.

There may be no universal panacea to the persistent abuses of the colonial matrix of power. However, as I aim to demonstrate throughout this thesis, engaging with the worldviews and experiences of those who struggle against it can be helpful. It can provide inspiration, help expand the imaginations of those who struggle to see alternatives and highlight the challenges of engagement between alternative worldviews and national and international policymaking. However, issues of power complicate any such endeavour. I consider the importance of understanding power, particularly for collaborative research, the contextual nature of power, positionality and questions of whose ethics count in the fieldwork reflections chapter. I also use the chapter to reflect upon the relationships that made this research possible and the challenges of attempting ethnographic engagement in complex security contexts. I finish the fieldworks reflections chapter by considering the impact the research process has had on my box-head.

The rest of this introductory chapter is then dedicated to familiarising the reader with the Philippines, and particularly Mindanao, as the geographical focus of this research and with Lumad communities and the IFI as research collaborator. Intertwined with this familiarisation is an outline of those chapters not already introduced.

Philippines Country Profile

The Philippine islands are located in Southeast Asia in the Western Pacific Ocean, along the Pacific Ring of Fire, with the sea of China to the East and the Philippines Sea to their right. An archipelagic country, the Philippines consists of more than 7,100 islands and is one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries (Pariona, 2021). It

is organised into three major regions: Luzon to the north, where the capital city Manila is located, the Visayas in the centre, and Mindanao to the south. Christianity is the largest religion in the country, making the Philippines the only Asian country with a Christian majority with those professing a Catholic faith forming 80.6% of the population (Anthony, 2019). The Catholic Church remains influential in the lives of the people, government and public policy, despite the constitutional secularity of the state and the wide variety of theologies espoused by the Church's leadership (Cornelio, 2014). Protestants make up 8.2% of the population (Anthony, 2019) and a heterogeneous Muslim population 5.6% (Anthony, 2019).³ The remainder of the population is comprised of those belonging to other world religions, such as Hinduism, Judaism and Bahaism and those professing Indigenous spiritual beliefs, diverse in their origins and practices but largely rooted in animist beliefs (Anthony, 2019). Each of the three regions, Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao, has a unique cultural, social and historical makeup, influenced by its topography and experience of Portuguese and Spanish colonisation, American imperialism, and Japanese occupation. Portuguese colonisation was relatively short-lived. In contrast the 333 years of Spanish rule laid a foundation of religious, racial, gendered and anthropocentric hierarchies, built on by American forces during their nearly fifty years of rule (Paredes, 2013; Rodil, 1994). This enabled the colonial matrix of power, which continues to influence life on the islands today.

³ Successive governing powers have marginalised and exploited Muslim Moros in a struggle that resulted in the agreement upon a Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in January 2019. The BARMM identified an autonomous region, inhabited by Muslims and non-Muslims (Abuza and Lischin, 2020).

Before taking a more in-depth look at the relationship between Lumad communities and Spanish colonists, the terms anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism need some elaboration. I use both of these terms throughout this thesis and am aware that they are the subject of much scholarly debate.⁴ However, it is not my intention to rehash these arguments or to advocate for the adoption of any particular definition as the 'right' one. What concerns me instead is how those whose worldviews, cosmologies and theologies informed this thesis use these terms. Analysing the information shared during interviews and through online resources produced by the IFI and Save Our Schools it appears that anti-imperialist refers to the struggle against foreign exploitation of the Filipino people and their lands. Such discussions often refer specifically to the United States but incorporate any foreign entity, whether a government or company, deemed to be misusing Filipino resources. They use the phrase 'anti-capitalist struggle' to discuss resistance to the economic and political systems the Filipino state uses to govern.⁵ As a result, I use anti-imperial to refer to the struggle against foreign power and anti-capitalist to refer to the struggle against the systems, policies and practices of the Filipino state.

Lumad and Spanish Colonisation

Spanish contact with the islands began in 1521 with an expedition led by Ferdinand Magellan (Kelsey, 1985) and in 1565 Miguel Lopez de Legazpi claimed the

⁴ For example, in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* Lennin (2010) argues that imperialism is sustained by capitalisms exploitation of labour, natural resources and finance capital.

⁵ For example, Duterte's 'Build, Build, Build' project, a key election promise that was 'designed to modernize the country's infrastructure backbone by rolling out 75 flagship projects worth a combined total of \$36 billion [USD] in investments.' (Department of Finance, 2018).

archipelago in the name of the King, beginning 333 years of Spanish colonisation (Paredes, 2013, p. 19). As with other Spanish colonies, the *Patronato Real*⁶ agreement between the Catholic Church and Spanish monarchy ensured missionaries played an important role in the takeover of the islands (Paredes, 2013), propagating a colonising Christianity that reinforced colonial power hierarchies. However, the Spanish operational paradigm had changed from when missionaries first encountered Latin American. In 1541, Bartolome De Las Casas gave an influential sermon, questioning the legitimacy of colonisation and the treatment of Indigenous people (Paredes, 2013, p. 22); in 1550, King Charles V of Spain convened theologians and jurists at the Valladolid Junta, questioning colonial conquests and the use of force (Hernandez, n.d., p. 95); in 1556, the Spanish Crown abolished the *Requerimiento*,⁷ banning forced conversion. Spanish colonial attitudes were greatly affected by these events and 'By 1565, Spaniards were not so sure of the righteousness of their cause.' (Cushner, 2006: p. 35). These changing colonial attitudes afforded native Filipinos some basic rights; however, the Valladolid Junta also entrenched the binary between 'barbarians' and 'civilised' with native people labelled 'barbarians' in need of saving through Christianity (Hernandez, n.d., pp. 99-100).

Such labelling enabled the 'saviour of the barbarians' narrative that supposedly justified colonisation of the Philippines (Phelan, 1957: p. 222) and re-entrenched the

⁶ For an explanation of the *Patronato Real* see Weber (1961). In relation to the Philippines, see Arcilla (1985). For its implications in the Philippines, see Mananzan (2002).

⁷ The *Requerimiento* was a legal document containing an interpretation of canon law that posited indigenous persons or infidels (someone whose faith and loyalty did not lie with the Spaniards (Paredes, 2013: p. 133)), had no right to land, property or right to political jurisdiction. It aimed to show infidels the way of the Christian faith so that they may avoid bloody conquest at the same time as allowing the government to avoid claims that conquest was heretical (Muldoon, 1980: pp. 302-303).

right to ‘dispose of’ (murder) any native who stood in the way of the spreading of the gospel (Phelan, 1957: p. 223). Spanish colonization and Christianisation of the archipelago did not follow the same brutal genocidal pathway as it had in Latin America (Paredes, 2013, p. 12, 22). However, it remained violent and Spanish rule profoundly affected all spheres of military, social, political and spiritual life.

Topological and cultural differences meant that Spanish rule differed across the three main islands of the archipelago. The southernmost island of Mindanao, where the majority of this thesis focuses, encompasses the ancestral lands of Lumad communities. The Spanish initially ignored Mindanao and engagement was so limited that even at its peak, Southeast Asian ethnographic archival specialist, Paredes questions whether Spanish presence ‘...constituted subjugation in the form of “colonial rule” or simply local alliance formation, confused by one-sided Spanish claims of overlordship.’ (Paredes, 2013: p. 145). The first missionaries to arrive in Mindanao were two Jesuits on a short lived, under-resourced mission in 1596 in Butan (Paredes, 2013: p. 20).⁸ The first sustained presence by a Religious Order on the island came later with the arrival of the Orden de los Agustinos Recoletos (a Catholic religious order formed in the sixteenth century) in 1622. Describing the native population as ‘so ignorant of all Christian ideas and as immersed in their ancient superstitions as if [these superstitions] had never been abandoned.’ (Archivo Provincial de los Agustinos Recoletos, quoted in Edgerton (2008), these missionaries wasted no time in propagating the knowledge hierarchies that contributed to the

⁸ Beginning with Iberian missionaries in 1543 Christian missionary endeavour on the Islands predates official Spanish colonisation.

colonial matrix of power. They divided the indigenous population in two, the *Moros* and the *Naturales*. The Moros were those missionaries labelled Muslim,⁹ an internally diverse group of people consisting of at least thirteen ethnolinguistic groups (Rodil, 1994, p. 34). According to Paredes' examination of archival sources, the missionaries viewed Moros and the influence of Islam as a barrier to the spread of the gospel, which supposedly justified their direct participation in Spanish armed warfare against this "enemy" (Paredes, 2013, p. 17, p. 43).¹⁰ The *Naturales* were the non-Muslim Indigenous population, who today self-identify as Lumad,¹¹ who became the targets of the 'civilizing' and 'Christianising' work (Paredes, 2013). Missionaries placed those following Islam firmly at the bottom of their knowledge hierarchy, supposedly justifying genocide and *naturales* in a slightly higher position, making epistemicide the preferred form of warfare as missionaries sought converts to Christianity who would emulate the knowledge and ways of life of the Spanish Catholic Church, pacifying others to the presence of the Crown.

Missions remained small and Mindanao marginalised. By 1820, there were fewer than 20 missionaries ministering to approximately 30,000 people, spread over large distances (Paredes, 2013, p. 39). Warfare with Moro Muslim populations, the terrain, grievances between local tribes and regular revenge raiding meant that 'being a missionary in Mindanao in the seventeenth century was a high-risk vocation' (Paredes, 2013: p. 43) with six Recoletos killed in their first decade of mission by

⁹ Not all of those whom the Spanish labelled Muslim were actually Muslim.

¹⁰ The complicated history between Christian Spaniards and Muslims on Spanish land (particularly the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula by Muslim troops from North Africa (Maser, 2013)) made the colonisers particularly sensitive to the presence of Muslims in Mindanao (Paredes 2015, p.134).

¹¹ I use the term Lumad to discuss the history of this collective as there were common origins and practices amongst the various group and this is how they have chosen to self-identify in the present even though the term itself was not adopted until 1986.

Moros or Moro sympathisers (Paredes, 2013: p. 43). In this context, missionaries often had to befriend Lumad for their very survival. With a lack of military support, the missionaries understood that 'They would have had to immerse themselves in the Lumad world in order to bring it in line with the world of Christianity.' (Paredes, 2013). One way in which they strove to achieve religious conversion was by winning over the Datu (male leader of the tribe). Missionaries were required to be more than just communicators of religious doctrine, they also had to be "men of prowess" to persuade Lumads, without the threat of force, to willingly turn their own worlds upside-down.' (Paredes, 2013: p. 50).

Despite the challenges and the significant changes that Christianity supposedly required, including the ending of polygamous relations, releasing of slaves (although slaves were not held in the traditional European understanding of the word (Paredes, 2013, pp. 132-133)) and ending revenge killing and raiding, a large number of Datus did convert. Once these individuals had publicly accepted Christianity and missionary authority it was common for their family and community members to follow suit (Paredes, 2013: p. 21, 53). Between 1859-1898, 191,493 persons in Mindanao were recorded as Christian, the majority of whom were Indigenous converts (Rodil, 1994, p. 35).

Encounters with missionaries did not only influence religious beliefs. It was through these encounters that missionaries fostered loyalty to Spain, Lumad began to understand European worldviews and ways of life and that Lumad life was systematically reorganised. Missionaries supported the relocation of tribes into strategic military positions, introduced European style combat, brought groups into

communal living under *encomiendas* (affecting the way food was grown and houses built), implemented racist tribute systems, and removed female leadership, displaced *Baylans* (shamans) and traditional forms of worship (Nadeau, 2002; Paredes, 2013, p. 71). This was the beginning of the impact of the racist and gendered colonial matrix of power in Lumad communities (Nadeau, 2002, Paredes, 2013).

Lumad communities did not accept every aspect of colonial life and relationships between Lumad and missionaries were not always cordial. The reception missionaries received varied from region to region with warm welcomes received by missionaries in Kagayanon, in the north of the island and violent receptions in the Karaga in the east where the local population had a profound mistrust of outsiders (Paredes, 2013: p. 89). Conversion did not mean blind loyalty to the missionaries or to Spain and not all alliances withstood the test of time. Lumad staged numerous revolts against the authority of the Spanish, of which the Caraga revolt of 1631 was the largest and bloodiest (Paredes, 2013: pp. 83-84). Despite such uprisings, the majority of Lumad communities retained their missionary ties using these relationships to engage with the state and local Spanish Chiefs to further their own tribal aims (Paredes, 2013). These requests often included tax concessions, support with defence from other local tribes and the provision of religious personnel, demonstrating ‘...collusion between Datus, resident missionaries, and local politicians...’ (Paredes, 2013, p. 138). That the Crown’s authorisation of requests by Lumad leadership continued into the nineteenth century is unsurprising given the agricultural and military benefits that Lumad provided, particularly in relation to the ongoing Spanish war against the Moros (Paredes, 2013: p. 143). Whether comprehensive colonial rule or not, the identities and hierarchies imposed by

Catholic missionaries were influential and laid the foundations for 18 tribes to adopt the collective Lumad identity later in 1986 (Paredes, 2013).

Lumad and American Imperialism

During Spanish rule, Lumad communities largely maintained control of their own economies. This changed in the period from 1899 to 1946 in which America became the formal colonial power of the Philippines and economic interest and interrelated oppressions in Mindanao increased. As summarised by Alamon (2017, p.25), a sociology teacher at Mindanao State University-Iligan and author of *Wars of Extinction: Discrimination and the Lumad in Mindanao*, 'Americans were finally able to achieve what the Spaniards for three hundred years failed to attain – the subjugation of the island of Mindanao and its people.' Arguably, the most impactful policies were those of mass relocation. Initially driven by a desire to address a rice shortage the American colonial government encouraged those rendered landless by colonial policies in the Visayas and Luzon to relocate to the fertile, supposedly untouched lands of Mindanao (Alamon, 2017). The result was the mass relocation of mainly Christian Filipinos to Mindanao. These internal migrants offered 'gifts' to Lumad communities, for which they later demanded repayment in the form of land (Alamon, 2017). At the same time, government 'development' projects, local elites and big businesses claimed large swathes of Lumad land (Alamon, 2017). The benefit for the colonial government from such relocation projects and the opening up of Lumad lands was twofold, the silencing of critique coming from the landless class in the Visayas and Luzon and greater integration of Mindanao into the world

economy from which the USA and newly created Filipino elite reaped the profit (Alamon, 2017).

This encroachment and the subsequent takeover of ancestral land had a profound effect on the previously self-sufficient Lumad communities, robbing them of their access to the natural resources that had sustained them for centuries (rivers for water, fruit bearing trees and common lands for food, plants for medicine). The result was that

the once mobile and free Lumad who practiced shifting agricultural practices in the verdant valleys of Bukidnon for instance would now find themselves fenced off from their sources of livelihood and survival – the once open forest, pasture land, rivers, and agricultural land. (Alamon, p.37, 2017).

This changing context drove many Lumad communities further into the mountains to find resources. Others took up low paid employment on the plantations and mines that now occupied their land. In 1903, Lumad formed 22.11% of Mindanao's population. By 1975, they had become a minority, forming only 6.86% of the population (Rodil, 1994, p.40-41).

Lumad resistance to such an exploitative economy and changing land arrangements was strong. However, the economic and military domains of the colonial matrix of power intertwined with racist, Christian centric colonial attitudes to justify the use of violent force against those who resisted. The American military protected government 'development' projects and ranchers used armed private guards or 'cowboys' to defend their projects (Alamon, 2017). The American government also enacted

Christian supremacist, racist violence through law and public policy, such as the amendment of Public Land Act No. 926 through Act No. 2874, which allowed 24 hectares of land to Christians but only 10 hectares to non-Christian, mainly Indigenous populations (later reduced to 16 and 4 hectares respectively) (Rodil, 1994, p.30). Not only was this policy racist in its division of the land but also in its understanding of the relationship between people and the land. The policy stated that the owner of the land must 'cultivate and improve the land' within six months of a permit being issued. (Rodil, 1994, p.30). However, 'improvement' did not include leaving trees that could be logged in place because spirits live there, or leaving minerals untouched so as not to destroy the ground. The policy did not allow for any relationship with the earth other than anthropocentric control and profit extraction, ignoring Lumad knowledge and reciprocal relationships with the land and spirits within it.

To justify their treatment of Lumad and other indigenous communities the American government labelled those who were not Christian as 'wild' (Rodil, 1994, p.24) and created a Bureau of non-Christian tribes to 'civilise' and bring such groups the American system of economic development (Rodil, 1994, p.24). These narratives used resistance to Spanish colonisation and the imposition of Christianity against Lumad communities.

By the simple act of official labelling, the American colonial government transformed the symbolic glory of retaining their freedom into a stigma and a marked disadvantage (Rodil, 1994, p.24).

The new colonial power labelled those who sought to resist the imposition of the American enforced capitalist economy as insurgents (Rodil, 1994, p.22).

Present Oppression of Lumad Communities

Violent and oppressive policies did not end with foreign rule. The Philippines gained their independence in 1946 and the colonial matrix of power morphed from something imposed by an external power to something inflicted by the Filipino elite. For example, relocation policies continued in the 1950s with the first Filipino government (Tigno, 2006). Building on colonial and neo-colonial histories of interaction and forced relocation, abuse of Lumad communities reached a high in 2015 under President Aquino. International and national concern skyrocketed (including within the IFI detailed in the ecologies of knowledge chapter). Major events began on 18 August 2015 with the killing of a Datu, blind from old age and four cousins between 13 and 20 years of age who were made to kneel and shot execution style (Conde, 2015; Espina-Varona, 2015; Alamon, 2017). Following this was the murder of the executive director of the Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development (ALCADEV) Emerito Samarca and Indigenous leaders Dionel Campos and Bello Sinzo on 1 September 2015. According to sources 'The two leaders were shot execution style in front of the whole community while the body of Samarca was later found in a classroom, hogtied and with his throat slit.' (Alamon 2017, p.118). In addition,

From September to October, three Lumad, including a minor, were killed by suspected members of the Dela Mance paramilitary group, which is affiliated with the dreaded Alamara (Ayroso, 2015).

These extra-judicial killings and the fear that accompanied them helped to once again facilitate the forced displacements of Lumad communities from their ancestral lands. In writing published in 2017, Alamon estimates that more than 40,000 indigenous persons were displaced in the past six years. He suggests that this was

because of a host of human rights violations against them which range from extrajudicial killings, harassment and intimidation, occupation of public facilities by the state armed forces, including sexual assault of women among others (Alamon, 2017, p.119).

These rights violations are often justified by labelling Lumad communities as members of the New People's Army (NPA).¹² Present day abuses against Lumad communities are then at least three fold: they are red-tagged as NPA and persecuted; caught in the bombing between the NPA and government military, tricked, and deceived by international companies into signing over their ancestral lands (Alamon, 2017; Karapatan, 2022).

¹² The NPA are the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). They have engaged in armed struggle against the Filipino government since 1969. In 2018 the Department of Justice launched a petition to have the CPP-NPA designated a terrorist organisation, however, this was rejected in by a Manila Court in 2022, who argued that whilst the group do use violence it is directed at the government and their purpose is rebellion, not terrorism. See for example, Bolledo, (2022) or Strangio (2022).

On the 30th of June 2016, Rodrigo Duterte became the sixteenth President of the Philippines. The beginning of Duterte's rule provided hope for peace, particularly in Mindanao, as the President announced a cease-fire with the NPA, indicating to displaced Lumad communities that it was safe to return to their ancestral lands (Karapatan, 2023, p.23). However, the counterinsurgency campaign of previous governments resumed, leaving Lumad communities in highly militarised zones (Karapatan, 2023, p.23). What followed was a reign of terror, not just against Lumad communities but also civil society more broadly. According to Karapatan, under the Presidency of Rodrigo Duterte, from July 2016 to June 2022, there were 442 documented victims of extrajudicial killings in line with the Duterte government's counter-insurgency campaigns (Karapatan, 2023). According to Karapatan records

Two hundred twenty-two (222) of the victims were human rights defenders, with the rest coming from the ranks of peasants, indigenous and Moro peoples, workers, environmental defenders, lawyers, church people and the urban poor (Karapatan, 2023, p.43).

Thirty-three were Lumad (Karapatan, 2023).

This oppression, and Lumad resistance to it, is the subject of the chapter four, entitled *the* Lumad struggle. Beginning with a focus on the importance of education as a resistance strategy, the chapter outlines how the colonial matrix of power continues to oppresses Lumad communities with their culture and knowledge labelled inferior, backwards, un-modern or simply absent from mainstream Filipino understandings and national historiography (Abinales, 2008). It argues that the state use this racist knowledge hierarchy to justify the violent closure of Lumad schools

and the forced removal of communities from their ancestral lands. The economic and knowledge domains of the colonial matrix of power interact to enable the continued appropriation of Lumad land for plantations, logging, cattle ranching and mining. The scale of the forced removals is such that Alamon (2017, p.179) describes as a War of Extinction in which Lumad are ‘...the contemporary victims of capital’s violent onslaught for cheaper raw materials to raise the rate of private accumulation.’ Current estimates are that ‘Roughly 12% of Mindanao’s agricultural land is now owned, managed and controlled by big multinational agro-corporations.’ (Imbong, 2021). The exploitation is set to continue and, as of the beginning of 2020, an estimated 600,000 additional hectares of land were to be converted into plantations by 2023 (Imbong, 2021). The experience of Lumad communities is an example of what Harvey (2003) terms accumulation by dispossession: the neo-liberal capitalist system facilitates the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a global elite whilst dispossessing those the other side of the abyssal line from their land and source of life. Through chapter four, I endeavour to make clear the connection between knowledge hierarchies, economic activity and military action as ‘...mining and militarization go hand in hand...’ (Simbulan, 2016). I strive to highlight the way in which the Duterte government, in particular, used military power to support their claims of authority over Lumad land with live-in military assisting the forced removal of communities. Throughout the chapter, I detail recent persecution of Lumad leaders who have resisted military and corporate encroachment on their land, highlight the use of red-tagging¹³ and briefly touch upon the gendered nature of the violence incited by the state and enacted by the military.

¹³ Red-tagging refers to the practice undertaken by the Filipino government in which they publically label those who oppose them (often human rights activist, religious leaders and journalists) as terrorist communists and

In addition to discussing Lumad resistance to the colonial matrix of power I also use the chapter to argue for an expanded understanding of what constitutes Lumad struggle, questioning who has the power to label one struggle as better, or more authentic, than another and the impact of such an hierarchy of struggles. I argue that broader understandings of what it means to be in *the* struggle can increase awareness of opposition to exploitative capitalist policies and the colonial matrix of power. Contrary to popular understandings, I suggest that there are times when membership to a paramilitary or the NPA, waging a tribal war, participating in small-scale markets or development projects are forms of struggle. I base this suggestion on the importance of remaining on one's land to Lumad struggles, arguing that this is also the key objective of many of these groups. As Santos posits

sometimes the struggles are very different from what we think they are.

For example, the struggle of the social movements and the daily struggles of the people that have to survive in hostile contexts in an exclusionary society (de Sousa Santos, 2016, p.25).

He draws on James Scott's (1985) idea of 'silent struggles' to remind us that there are times when communities cannot afford open confrontation or active resistance. Using the example of migrant communities who fear deportation if they openly resist imperial repression Santos argues that there are times when 'things that do not seem to move are in fact moving, but we do not have the instruments to understand it.' (de

members of the NPA. An interviewee described red-tagging as '...naming you in public that you are a member of the communist party in the Philippines, that you are a recruiter...a communist terrorist.' (10). According to a Human Rights Watch (2022) 'Red-tagging is a pernicious practice that targets people who often end up being harassed or even killed.'

Sousa Santos, 2016, p.25). Santos notes that this point is still work in progress. I hope that this thesis will contribute to this point, generate discussion and encourage acknowledgement of silent struggles. I also explore this idea in the IFI and persecution chapters.

IFI history

In the IFI theology chapter, I introduce the present day IFI. Formed in 1902, the IFI identifies as a revolutionary Church born from the people's revolution. Its formation grew from protests against the racist hierarchies within the Catholic colonial Church and the struggle of the Filipino people against Spanish and American colonisation. When the Spanish Catholic Church arrived in the Philippines, it brought with it the racist hierarchies of knowledge that meant the first Filipino Priest was not ordained until 134 years after colonisation began (Schumacher, 2003, p. 14). Even after this date, racist knowledge hierarchies within theological colleges demanded adherence to Spanish cultural and educational norms (De la Costa, 1947; Schumacher, 2003). This Spanish domination instilled discontent amongst the native clergy. Tensions subsided in the early eighteenth century as Filipino clergy took over the majority of parishes but discontent remained (Schumacher, 2003). One remaining tension was the 'gifts' Spanish Friars received from governors in the form of land wealth and trade monopolies, which benefitted landowners at the expense of the Filipino population (Whittemore, 1961, pp. 25-26; Demiterio, 2012, p.895).¹⁴ Many Filipino clergy

¹⁴ For a list of additional accusations against the Friars, see De los Reyes (1899).

opposed such exploitation as wealth began to accumulate in the hands of a foreign elite contributing to the beginning of exploitative capitalism in the Philippines.

In response to this exploitation, a small number of friars began using the Gospel to preach messages of social justice and liberation from colonial subjugation, challenging their fellow clergy and the Spanish government (de la Costa 1961; Fabros 1988; Schumacher 1979, 1984; Nadeau, 2002). The role of these individuals was vital as, until 1863, colonial agents had kept the majority of the population from learning Spanish, which, with no Bibles translated into Filipino languages at the time, left the masses dependent on the Biblical interpretations of the few (Whittemore, 1961, pp. 33-34).¹⁵ According to Nadeau (2002), these theologians exemplified pre-colonial Filipino ideas of leadership based on social relationships, communal wealth and wellbeing, teaching a relatable interpretation of the Bible in which Jesus challenged hierarchies of wealth (Nadeau, 2002, p. 81). The Spanish government attempted to silence this critique (Schumacher, 2011, p. 56), most notably with the public execution of three priests on 17 February 1872 who, despite a lack of evidence, were charged with leading the Cavite mutiny, an uprising of Filipino military personnel against Spanish colonial troops (Schumacher, 2011). The injustice of these executions fuelled growing indignation amongst the Filipino people and provided the spark that untied the people's resistance efforts. Just over twenty-four years later, on the 24 August 1896, these united movements led the people's revolution that ended Spanish colonial rule.

¹⁵ The first full translation of the Bible into any Filipino language was not complete until 1905 when it became available in Tagalog, followed by Ilocano in 1909 (Demitrio, 2012, p. 894).

The people's revolution played an important role in the formation of the IFI. Isabelo De los Reyes, the founder of the Church and Gecorio Aglipay, its first Obispo Maximo (OM), were both active combatants, greatly influenced by their interaction with revolutionary forces. Aglipay began as a priest in the Catholic Church. Whilst he associated closely with revolutionaries, it was not until the period from May 1899-February 1899 when Aglipay had been excommunicated, the Philippines gained independence from Spain, American forces held Manila and the Philippines revolutionary government held much of the rest of the country (Whittemore, 1961, p. 68) that Aglipay increased his engagement with guerrilla war tactics (Whittemore, 1961). From this date, Aglipay's commitment and reputation grew rapidly. He became the official military chaplain for the Filipino Army a position from which the revolutionary government promoted him as the religious leader of the head of the Catholic Church (Whittemore, 1961, pp. 73-75). Through his interaction with the ideologies of the revolutionary army Aglipay's stance changed from advocating for the freedom of the Filipino clergy within the boundaries of Spanish colonisation to critique and active struggle to overthrow America as the latest colonial power (Whittemore, 1961). In 1902, Aglipay was the last of the guerrilla leaders to surrender after the American government placed a price of 50,000 pesos on his head (Whittemore, 1961, p. 90).

De los Reyes was a journalist whose writings the Spanish government labelled as radical and dangerous. Spanish authorities initially imprisoned him in the Philippines before deporting and imprisoning him in their homeland in 1897 (Whittemore, 1961, pp. 54-55; Demiterio, 2012, p. 889). A fierce public critic of the Spanish Friars De los Reyes advocated for reform and the expulsion of the friars for their abuse of the

Filipino population (Whittemore, 1961, pp. 53-56; Demiterio, 2012, pp. 886, pp. 895-896). The Philippines declaration of independence was signed on 12 June 1898. Six months later on 10 December 1898, the Spanish sold the Philippines to the USA in the treaty of Paris for twenty million US dollars. Upon hearing that Aglipay had surrendered and the Americans had won the war De Los Reyes returned to the Philippines, using his bolstered understanding of socialism to form the first labour union, the Union Obrera Democtatica (Demiterio, 2012, pp. 887-895). He openly advocated against the treaty of Paris, with one of his primary critiques being that the document omitted any reference to the Spanish Clergy or the lands that they had stolen (Whittemore, 1961).

In 1899, under the American government, discussions of a National Church suggested that the Church remain Catholic and under the authority of the Pope (Whittemore, 1961, pp.84-85). However, Rome made its support for the Spanish Friars clear as the Pope denied appeals for all ecclesiastical dignities to be given to Filipino clergy (De Los Reyes, 1948, p.132; Whittemore, 1961, p.102). On 3 August 1902 at a Labour Union meeting De Los Reyes announced the formation of a Filipino Independent Church (Whittemore, 1961, p. 102) and labelled the Pope as the enemy of the Filipino people, unless he withdrew his support for the Spanish friars (Demiterio, 2012, p. 896). The announcement made the front page of national newspapers. After initially denying involvement with the movement, he accepted his position as Supreme Bishop of the Philippine Independent Church in September 1902 (Whittemore, 1961, pp. 103-106).¹⁶ De los Reyes became the executive

¹⁶ The delay in his accepting was in part, due to his not wanting to be associated with De los Reyes during his imprisonment for organising to force up labour wages (Whittemore, 1961, pp. 105-106).

president (Demiterio, 2012, p.887). The people's struggle and the theology supporting it now had an institutional expression. Approximately three million lay members and 100 priests left the Catholic Church as the IFI laid out its constitution; conservative in its preservation of Catholic doctrine but revolutionary in its emancipation of Native Clergy, provision of services in the vernacular and abolition of the fees associated with the sacraments that had previously prevented the participation of the poor (Reyes, 1948). The formation of the IFI was then the result of two separate but interrelated struggles, the struggle of the Native Clergy and the struggle of the Filipino people. Both sought recognition and respect, the ousting of those who oppressed and abused them and the freedom to determine their own futures. Both were theologically informed.

IFI in the Present

In the present, an OM heads the Church, supported by Bishops who govern forty-four dioceses and an Obispado Maximo, a team of lay and ordained members of the Church who lead its various programmes and missions from the National Cathedral. The Church has over 750,000 members and Chaplaincies in Germany, the United Kingdom and Morocco. It participates in regional and international Church events such as the South Asian Forum, has connections with international Church organisations such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) and receives funding from international organisations such as the United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG).

Despite their legitimacy in the eyes of the international ecumenical community the Filipino state have red-tagged the IFI. The most recent red-tagging of the Church took place on 8 May 2022 through a National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) Facebook post red-tagging. The post identified the IFI, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), the Promotion of Church Peoples' Response (PCPR) and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) as open sectoral organisations of the communist rebel movement (NTF-ELCAC, 2022). The state also targets individual leaders of the Church. For example, on 11 May 2017, the state arrested Bishop Carlo on trumped up charges of illegal possession of firearms and ammunition (NCCP, 2017 (a)). They arrested, red-tagged and harassed Bishop Ablon until he fled the country for his own safety (NCCP, 2019) (although state forces then red-tagged him for his online activity see appendix 1) and red-tagged the OM (appendix 2).

The history and theology that motivates the actions of IFI leadership, which provokes such red-tagging, is the topic of the theology chapter. In this chapter, I examine how the revolutionary beginnings of the Church, rooted in unionised people's struggle, affected its formation and how this history influences its theology in the present. I highlight the tension between those who continue to identify as revolutionary and those who are more conservative. I follow this with a focus on how liberal clergy understand and interpret their history and their call to be part of the people's struggle in the present. This chapter ends with a reflection on what constitutes legitimate struggle and who has the power to define this, contributing the continuing theme of silent struggle.

I follow the theology chapter with the persecution chapter, which examines martyr narratives within the IFI. According to present day interpretations, Aglipay and De Los Reyes were active combatants, willing to risk their lives for the struggle of the Filipino people (Whittemore, 1961, pp.82-85). Current Church leadership use this willingness as motivation and justification for the persistence of the IFI Lumad ministry despite persecution. Throughout the chapter, I highlight the harassment experienced by IFI members who willingly move themselves to the other side of the abyssal line. Following the triumphant way in which persecution is described, I caution about the importance of acknowledging individual positionality and the impact that this has on one's ability to pursue a particular mission. Finally, I use the chapter to reflect upon the Church as an institution, and the challenges that persecution poses within it.

I follow the persecution chapter with the ecologies of knowledge chapter, which looks at how interaction with Lumad communities influences the worldview of IFI leaders. Through this chapter, I highlight how engaging with the struggles of the Filipino people continues to influence the worldview of IFI leaders today. Ecologies of knowledge, a term coined by Santos, have the potential to help us think outside the box and act outside the norms of the oppressive colonial matrix of power. Ecologies of Knowledge form when groups discern commonalities and ways of working together for a common cause, defamiliarising themselves with knowledges that are no longer valuable with value determined by the contribution made to a particular struggle (de Sousa Santos, 2014). They involve groups building relationships and complementing each other's incomplete knowledges through relationships of reciprocity, strengthening the anticapitalist struggle whilst maintaining their own

motivations for social action (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p.227; 2018, p.78). They allow for multiple meanings and understandings of the world in a non-hierarchical way. Each struggle then contributes to the broader anti-capitalist movement that aims to dismantle the knowledge hierarchies imposed through colonisation and maintained through the colonial matrix of power. Throughout this chapter, I postulate that engagement with the Lumad struggle has expanded the boxheads of current leadership, educating them on the oppression of the current system, incorporating them into the broader struggle against the colonial matrix of power. This, in turn has increased their resistance to oppressive capitalism and the colonial matrix of power that it enables. However, I also argue that limiting understandings of struggle to those who openly identify as anti-colonial and anti-capitalist obscures the breadth of the struggle, creating the appearance of greater support for the capitalist system than may actually be the case. This obscuring contributes to narratives that most people benefit from the current colonial matrix of power, that there is no need for alternatives and those on the margins simply need incorporating in. This again contributes to the theme of silent struggle.

I conclude the thesis by linking Lumad ontologies in which land is life and IFI theologies, in which God calls the Church to stand with the poor and marginalised, with understandings of struggle. I argue that communities and individuals struggle against the colonial matrix of power in various and often-unacknowledged ways. Acknowledging the existence of a broader struggle expands our understanding of resistance to the colonial matrix of power. I recognise the importance of faith and spirituality as motivating forces in the lives of the majority of the world's population and conject that global religious network may offer fertile ground for the formation of

ecologies of knowledge and challenging boxhead. I question the fruitfulness of engaging with international policymaking spaces given the difficulty I suggest they have in hearing voices from the other side of the abyssal line. Finally, I reflect upon some of the limitations of this research and suggest potential areas for future study.

CHAPTER 2 - METHODS AND METHODOLOGIES

Introduction

As seen in the introduction chapter, epistemicide, or epistemic violence, was key in enabling the gendered, raced and anthropocentric colonial system. Colonisers used the supposed superiority of European-Christian knowledge to justify the subordination of Indigenous persons and the enslavement of African persons, whom they defined as devoid of knowledge. This laid the foundation for the knowledge structures that persist in the present (Spivak, 1988; Grosfoguel, 2013; Goto, 2017). There is increasing acknowledgement of this marginalisation and oppression; of the inadequacies of western knowledge as an exclusive form of knowing; and of the importance of so-called 'alternative' forms of knowledge, western rational capitalist knowledge remains hegemonic.¹⁷ However, western research methodologies often support this hegemony, particularly when engaging with non-western 'others' (Chilisa, 2019; Ryder et al. 2020). Scholars note the tendency of such research to marginalise the knowledge of communities involved whilst furthering the career of the researcher (Smith, 2012). In an effort to avoid such exploitative practices, I envisioned this research as a collaboratively designed project, benefiting the IFI and Lumad communities and enabling me to learn from their worldviews. I aspired to articulate alternatives to the western hegemonic knowledge that underpins the exploitative neoliberal capitalist system and suggest how one might go about decolonising individual and collective imaginations. To support this endeavour I used a scholar activist methodology, drawing inspiration from Indigenous methodologies

¹⁷ As an example of the acknowledgement of the importance of alternatives in relation to the ecological and climate crisis see United Nations Climate Change (2021), in relation to wellbeing see Hernández (2019) and in relation to medicine see National Aboriginal Health Organization (2012).

that encourage decoloniality within a feminist framework. I reflect on some of the successes and challenges of undertaking such research throughout this chapter and the next.

I begin this current chapter by considering my own positionality and the assumptions with which I entered this research, reflecting upon how these interacted with and influenced the research process. I do so in the hope of illuminating to the reader some of the influences that affect my recalling of events, my interpretation and presentation of data. I follow this with a discussion of the university ethics process, which I argue would benefit from learning from Big “E” ethics, an indigenous axiology prioritising relational accountability (Kovach, 2021). I then reflect upon the risk assessment process and the challenges raised by the fact that collaborators in this research provided a different assessment of risk to that made by the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). After this, I begin outlining the methodologies from which I drew throughout the research. Whilst recognising that there is no single scholar activist, indigenous or feminist methodology, I provide a brief outline of these methodologies followed by an overview of the events that took place and the data collection methods used. Finally, I outline the data collection process and the challenges and changes necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Author Assumptions

I am a white, middle class, non-disabled woman, born in England, with British citizenship, conducting a funded PhD at a Russell Group university and, as already

noted, I was employed by USGP when beginning this research.¹⁸ The subordination of knowledges that form the basis of my university and USPG's understandings of the world have marginalised the very epistemologies with which this research seeks to engage.¹⁹ I am influenced by my engagement with these institutions and, as Manning shares of her own experience, I 'experience the world as a White woman whose Western culture and epistemology are considered transcendent under which all others must be subordinated' (Manning, 2018). My position and engagement with Birmingham University and USPG informed my assumptions throughout the research process. Radford (2019, p.58) notes that:

Essentially, our assumptions about what we will find and how we will find it – based on our experience, training, power, and privilege – influence what we think we have found, and how we construct those findings in our representations.

I had four main assumptions when beginning this research. 1. That I would find in the IFI a radical Church working with Indigenous communities. The IFI are a long-term partner of the USPG, the mission agency with whom I was working when I began my PhD. Those in USPG who had relationships with the IFI frequently referred to them as 'radical', always challenging the status quo. 2. That Lumad communities would be living examples of alternatives to the neo-liberal capitalist system. This was something I felt was missing from the scholarly literature I was reading and the

¹⁸ I use these labels and categories to describe my positionality whilst acknowledging that doing so re-inscribes the very categories feminist work seeks to problematise and disrupt (Nagar and Geiger, 2007, p.2). Doing so allows me to identify my position within the colonial matrix of power, highlighting the interaction between societal and institutional understandings of imposed categories and my positionality (Nagar and Geiger, 2007).

¹⁹ USPG were *the* mission agency of the Church of England during British colonial expansion and have yet to acknowledge their violent history or their reinforcement of the colonial matrix of power today.

activist circles with which I engaged in the UK. I knew that alternatives existed and wanted to learn from them. Interlinked with this was my assumption that Indigenous people, supposedly a homogenous group, were the solution to the capitalist ecological crisis. My engagement with policy spheres had particularly influenced my thinking and I had fully bought into the notion that Indigenous people were the solution to our climate and ecological crisis. This assumption also exists within development scholarship and is something that I reflect upon in chapter three. 3. That I could design the research in a way that benefitted those with whom I was working. While I did not know what this might look like, I knew that the IFI continually requested that USPG raise awareness of the human rights situation in the Philippines. I planned to contribute to the achievement of that request. 4. That I could enter into an ecology of knowledge with Lumad and IFI communities. An ecology of knowledge, as articulated by Santos (2012, 2014, 2016, 2018), is a transformational process in which knowledges of the Global South learn from each other, defamiliarising themselves with that which is no longer useful and familiarising, or refamiliarising, themselves with knowledges that further the struggle against persistent colonial oppressions. My knowledge is not of the Global South. However, I assumed that I could defamiliarise myself with oppressive, abyssal thinking through relationships and learning from the 'other', replacing my way of thinking with knowledge that supports the anti-imperial struggle. These assumptions affected every stage of the research: research design, choice of collaborators, to whom collaborators introduced me when in the Philippines, with whom I formed relationships, how I interacted with people and how they responded to me. They informed the questions I asked, my reactions to unexpected events, the data sources

I used and how I collated and interpreted data. I reflect on these four assumptions throughout this thesis in an attempt to bring to light to some of the ways they influenced the research process.

My positionality and assumptions also affected what I chose to write about and how. Richardson notes, 'Writing is never innocent' (2003, p.189) and what is contained in this thesis is my interpretation of conversations, experiences and data sources. By acknowledging my positionality and reflecting on it throughout the thesis, I hope to present my power and potential to misinterpret. Particularly in the early drafts of this thesis I struggled with evolutionary and logocentric thinking as I wrote in a way that supported the universalist claim 'I say, therefore it is' (Andreotti, 2016, p.82). Years of practice writing authoritatively for policy spheres (something I reflect upon in the following chapter) and the knowledge that I would need to defend my thesis, presenting myself as an expert of the knowledge and findings, added to this challenge. I strove to rise to this challenge. However, I implore the reader to remember that what is contained in this thesis is not the way it is but the way I see things based on the relationships I formed. By acknowledging my power as the author I am not claiming that the knowledge shared in this thesis belongs to me; it is a part of the research relationships and belongs to the cosmos (Wilson, 2008, p.121, p.110; Venable, Sato, Del Duca, and Sage, 2016, p. 345).

Ethical Approval

The university ethics review process is an example of the importance of identifying my socially ascribed position and the categories into which I fall. Historically, qualitative researchers in a similar position to my own have caused physical, spiritual

and/or ontological harm. They have interpreted the world of the “other” from their own cultural stance with findings used to eroticise, justify oppressive policies, practices or attitudes (Kovach, 2021). Riddell *et al.* (2017, p.4) describe a ‘history of disrespectful, exploitive, and oppressive research’. Whilst Riddell *et al.* and Kovach are speaking specifically about the relationship between non-indigenous researchers and indigenous communities; the same propensity to harm exists in research conducted by researchers from the global north working with communities in the global south. One instrument purported to ameliorate the risk of such harm is the university ethics review process, in my case, provided by the University of Birmingham.

The ethics review process initially helped me to think about obtaining consent, maintaining confidentiality and the storage of data. It then began to feel insufficient and even harmful as the research progressed. I noted in particular the power I had over the collection of data, its storage and future usage. That I did not identify these issues (that I will elaborate on below) during the university ethics process is evidence of how institutionalised doxa can influence the research process. Doxa are undiscussed, socially assumed and undisputed, meaning that we are often unaware of them, opening researchers to the risk of unknowingly inflicting violence. Goto (2017, p.182) notes that:

...when we act we are in part embodying a habitus shaped by institutionalized doxa. Therefore, we are disposed to enacting epistemic violence according to larger, pernicious social dynamics. Each of us interprets reality as members of communities of interpretation—

communities that have histories of ignorance, prejudice, and oppression.

I became aware of the influence such doxa had on my engagement with research participants when reading about what Kovach terms Big “E” ethics (Kovach, 2021). Big “E” ethics are Indigenous axiology that prioritises relational accountability ‘honouring qualities such as relationship (with people and place), reciprocity, collectivism, and sacred knowledges.’ (Kovach, 2021, p.96). Although I am an outsider, ‘There is an expectation that researchers who hold alternative worldviews will respect these values.’ (Kovach, 2021, p.96). One potential source of guidance for those wishing to follow big “E” ethics is the First Nations Information Governance Centre in Canada (FNIGC), who have developed a process entitled Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP). I address each of these in turn, outlining some of the challenges of simultaneously meeting the expectations of the university ethics and big “E” ethics.

According to Kovach (2021, p.121).

Ownership assumes that a community owns cultural knowledge or data collectively, in the same manner that an individual owns personal information, and so the community’s consent is required to use said knowledge.

Once I had overcome translation issues, obtaining consent from individual community members to use the knowledge they shared, as required by my university, was a relatively straightforward process. However, the challenge came when thinking

about the difference between individual ownership and consent, the focus of university ethics, and community ownership and consent, the focus of big “E” ethics. Given that there are different ways to define each community and different parts of the community hold different knowledges, presenting anything as *the* knowledge of a particular community felt impossible. The result was the focus on differences within communities seen in subsequent chapters. I did seek community consent for the use of data and different subsets of each community own different knowledges. I did not follow exactly the requirements of OCAP. However, it was through respect for these values that I made one of my primary arguments, that there are many forms of struggle against the colonial matrix of power. In my experience, a focus on big “E” ethics makes research more ethical and more valuable. If taken seriously it can create a situation in which the researchers are no longer working to prove, or even disprove, their own assumptions but allowing their thinking to develop through relationship.

Concerns for control, the second area defined by the FNIGC, expands on the above, asserting that

First Nations people have a right to control in various aspects of research that involves them, including the formulation of research frameworks, data management, and dissemination. (Kovach, 2021, p.121).

There were times during the fieldwork when meeting big “E” ethics understandings of control happened naturally given research collaborators’ understanding of the security context, something I elaborate on in the following chapter. However, the risk

assessment, another western research process, limited my ability to respond to participants' desire to plan other parts of the fieldwork. According to the risk assessment process, the University of Birmingham had to approve my travel. The University are in turn dependent upon the FCO labelling of geographic locations as 'green', 'amber' or red, depending upon their perceived safety. This process precluded my engagement with communities in the West of Mindanao, a 'red' zone. The IFI saw this labelling of geographical areas as devoid of contextual understanding and indicative of Islamophobia within the British government. They were initially insistent that the west of the island was safer than the east and that it was in the west that I should focus my research. Despite extensive conversations and my sharing my own frustrations with the system, my inability to follow the advice of collaborators placed a strain on the relationship and I worried that, at times, it appeared as though I did not trust their judgement. The risk assessment precluded my ability to give control of certain aspect of the research to the communities with whom I was working.

In relation to the third area identified by FNIGC, access, Kovach notes importance of 'the ability for Indigenous people to retrieve and examine data that concern them and their communities.' (2021, p.121). This was not possible with primary data sources firstly given the requirement by my university ethics board that I be responsible for storing transcripts and recordings in a safe place. Secondly, technological limitations mean that it would be difficult for many community members to request access to such data. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the university would have approved such a request given the difficulty of verifying the identity of the individual and the way they would store it. Secondary data sources, in the form of articles and my thesis were

available to communities, although only available in English. There was no discussion of wider community access or access of future generations.

The final area identified by FNIGC is possession. Questioning the right of the university and myself to possess the data in the first place could have been one potential solution to issues of access. In explaining this Kovach quotes Schnarch (2004, p.81) who shares that 'Although not a condition of ownership per se, possession (of data) is a mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected' (2004, p.81). I could have handed data straight to the communities in question and requested access when I needed it. This would have been problematic for university processes and raised questions over the safety of data in light of continuing military raids. It was also unclear who specifically should maintain possession, the community or the individual. If the community then who was the appropriate representative given the heterogeneity of the communities concerned? I decided to follow the process outlined in the University ethics review. As the funded and only named researcher on this project, I maintained access and ownership, primarily because I found it difficult to see other possibilities given the western research paradigm in which I was advised and funded. I chose not to raise issues of ownership with communities as I felt there was nothing I could do.

Finally, ethical concerns must consider the relationship between the researcher and non-anthropoc beings. In addition to being accountable for my relationship with the communities concerned, in conducting this research, I was also accountable for my relationship with nature, land and the cosmos (Wilson, 2008). COVID-19 served to reduce the planetary impact of this research as the second and third fieldwork visits did not take place, which meant that I took a reduced number of planet destroying

flights to complete the research. It also allowed me to refuse to travel cross-continentially to conferences, presenting electronically instead. However, had it not been for the pandemic, I would have chosen to fly. Even with travel limitations, I did fly to the Philippines for the first field visit, worked from a laptop built from the exploitation of people and land and plugged in in coffee shops powered by oil. These planetary impacts and the lack of concern given to them in ethics review processes is problematic as in Indigenous research methodologies 'there is no distinction made between relationships that are made with other people and those that are made with our environment. Both are equally sacred' (Wilson, 2008, p.87). It demonstrates the anthropocentrism of the western research process as well as the way in which I was able to benefit from knowledges, in this case Indigenous knowledges, to gain my PhD then ignore them, even perpetuating violence against them, when it suits me. This example highlights a major power asymmetry that persists throughout this research; I continue benefit from the very exploitative, anthropocentric, capitalist system against which the collaborators in this research struggle.

There are times when considering big "E" research ethics helped to shape this thesis, for example, when considering issues of ownership highlighted the diversity of the communities concerned. There were also times when the tension between Western and indigenous research ethics visibly affected the relationship between research collaborators and myself, for example in relation to the ability to control fieldwork locations. There were other instances when it was worryingly easy to ignore big "E" ethics, for example, when considering issues of access and there were instances when it was simply easiest, although not necessarily right, to stick to what I know. I believe that the successes and challenges I have shared indicate a need for British

ethics boards to review their processes and understanding of ownership, control, access and possession as well as their concern for non-anthropoc beings. Such a review could help counter the physical, spiritual and/or ontological harm that caused by western researchers in 'other' contexts as noted in the introduction to this section. Furthermore, there is a need to acknowledge that what constitutes ethical behaviour differs across space and time. Working across multiple worldviews where each individual and community holds their own bias and assumptions, means that what constitutes ethical research in practice is a continual challenge, something that I will reflect on throughout the methodology chapter.

Methodologies

I use this section to introduce the methodologies that influenced this research, providing the theoretical foundation for the fieldwork chapter in which I reflect upon these methodologies in practice.

Scholar Activism

In undertaking this research, I identified as a scholar activist where:

What unites past and present generations of scholar activists is their desire to bring together their academic work with their political ideals to further social change and work directly with marginal groups or those in struggle. This work goes beyond simply trying to understand the politics of our research and argues that our work is political. (Chatterton, Hodkinson and Pickerill, 2010, p.246).

Becoming a scholar activist required taking a political stance in my case against the Duterte government and their Whole-of-the-Nation approach that supposedly justifies the bombing of Lumad schools, the exploitation of Lumad ancestral land and the persecution of the IFI.²⁰ This affected the way I positioned myself during introductions with potential interviewees and likely influenced their attitude towards me as I reflect upon in the following chapter.

One key scholar activist text is Chatterton, Hodkinson and Pickerill's *Beyond Scholar Activism: Making Strategic Interventions Inside and Outside the Neoliberal University* (2010). In this, they draw from their experience as researchers to develop seven strategies for scholar activism, the final of which reads that scholar activists should 'Make collective strategic interventions which are accountable and relevant to social movements.' (p.265). Being relevant and accountable to social movements also features highly in Routledge and Derickson's article *Situated solidarities and the practice of scholar-activism* (2015) that discusses scholar activism as sustained collaboration, focusing on building and resourcing solidarity and potential. They address issues of power, noting the importance of challenging assumptions and norms alongside the need to create a collective vision that motivates the work. According to them, scholar activism is not just about the activist engagement, it is about the way in which you engage with communities and build relationships that allows you to become a small but useful part of a struggle. Through this research, I

²⁰ According to a government website, the Whole-of-the-Nation Approach focuses on 'defeating the local communist terrorist group and obtaining sustainable and inclusive peace throughout the Philippines.' (NTF-ELCAC, 2023). Based on Executive Order 70 (EO 70), issued by Duterte in 2018, it aims at 'synchronizing the government's instrumentalities of power with the capabilities of private sector stakeholders to end 50 years of deceit, lies and atrocities committed by communist terrorists against the Filipino people.' (NTF-ELCAC, 2023).

aimed to *do* something, to show the abuses of the capitalist system, the alternatives to it and, as mentioned when discussing my assumptions, to be of benefit to the IFI and the Lumad communities. I explore the details of this in the following chapter.

Indigenous Methodologies

As a non-indigenous person rooted in a Western tradition, I lack the epistemic centre from which to undertake an Indigenous methodology. As Absolon notes in her interview with Kovach:

they [non-oppressive methodologies] might be supporting of Indigenous methodologies or they might even be in alliance with Indigenous methodologies, but they are still not Indigenous methodologies. They happen to come from their paradigm and their reference point, and while they might fit, they are not based in Indigenous thinking. They are not based in spirit and where spirit comes from. (Absolon in Kovach, 2021 p.103).

I have nevertheless, been informed by Indigenous knowledges and approaches to research. There is a wealth of diversity within indigenous scholarship and amongst scholars, from various tribes and nations, concerning their experience, research focus and methodologies. There are however, key elements that Indigenous methodologies hold in common, primarily relational accountability. According to Wilson (2008, p.106), within an Indigenous paradigm:

We are accountable to ourselves, the community, our environment or cosmos as a whole, and also to the idea or topics that we are researching. We have all of these relationships that we need to uphold.

Being accountable in this way means continually reflecting on ways the research benefits or harms the community concerned and questioning whether one is building trusting relationships with collaborators (Kovach, 2021, p.100).

Indigenous methodologies then extend the notion of human accountability as understood within scholar activism to include relationships with nature and spirits. The western binary divide of objective and subjective is challenged as nature and matter are seen as vibrant and warm, not something static that can be objectively studied (Brinkmann, 2017). Because of the inseparability of one's relationships with humans, nature and spirits, Indigenous methods are often what Wilson terms 'extra-intellectual.' (2008, p.111), in which he includes dreams, prayer and conversation with the 'above' (Wilson, 2008, p.111). The extra intellectual methods of greatest relevance to this research were prayer, ceremony and song and I reflect particularly on the use of song and music in the following chapter. In addition, I use the final section to reflect upon how such performative texts supported the expansion of my own western frames of reference in which knowledge comes from the mind (Andreotti, Ahenakew, and Cooper, 2012, p. 235), with colonialism denying the senses and relationships as legitimate ways of knowing (Donald, 2009). They assisted my engagement with a 'Sense sensing' process, countering the Western 'sense making' denial of the senses (Andreotti, 2016). Acknowledging that each person who experiences these performative texts will respond differently and will be triggered by different things, in different ways (Andreotti, 2016) I recorded my sensual

responses in a researcher diary, attempting to avoid 'domesticating' the performance to make it fit a predefined agenda or idea (Andreotti, 2016).

Feminist Approaches

Within the plurality of extant feminist research, the personal is political and personal experiences connect to wider political and social structures. Feminist research requires politicization at every stage of the research process (Sharp, 2005: p.304, Moss, 2002: p.12). This politicization is analogous with the strong social justice agenda of scholar activism and Indigenous methodologies that resolutely connect research with the real world. However, if not purposefully addressed, individual diversity, standpoints and intersectionalities stand to get lost in Indigenous or scholar activist methodologies. This research therefore draws on feminist intersectional frameworks to gain insight into how individual characteristics are accepted and contested and how they affect experiences of inclusion, exclusion, difference and sameness (Valentine, 2015). In this way, feminist methodologies assisted the research to move beyond identity politics that, as Crenshaw notes, '...frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences.' (1990, p.1242).

In addition to this focus on individual experience and intersectionality, the use of a feminist ethnographic approach encouraged me to take an iterative, reflexive approach concerning my positionality. Reflecting on numerous texts, within which Jennifer Manning's text *Becoming a Decolonial Ethnographer* (2018) was key, I continually checked-in with myself, challenging my western assumptions and understandings, ensuring I was open to experiences, knowledges and cultural

practices. I reflect on the process of deconstructing some of my assumptions alongside reflection of sense making in the final section of the following chapter.

Data Collection

I knew about the mission of the IFI through USPG. However, it was not until September 2019 that I met with the OM and other staff from the Obispado Maximo who were travelling in London. USPG's director of Global Relations, who held a close relationship with the IFI for over two decades, introduced us and we discussed the broad aims of the research and the proposed methodology. I shared my desire to create a research environment in which members of the IFI and Lumad communities were co-collaborators within a scholar activist methodology, actively participating in the design, data collection and analysis. To begin forming the collective vision needed for scholar activism, the relationships of trust advocated by Indigenous methodologies and the dialogical relationships of decolonial and critical feminist ethnography, I discussed my personal motivation and desires for the research as well as its potential uses. I shared how I would use the knowledge communicated, with whom and what I was hoping to achieve with this. After taking time to reflect and discuss this with the rest of the Obispado Maximo and Lumad community contacts, the IFI approved the research. They asked me to ensure that I was in country by 1 February 2020 so that I could join them on a pilgrimage that would help me to learn about the Church and begin shaping the research.

Between the date of the meeting and my flight, we planned a preliminary timetable for the research that was to include three field visits. However, the COVID-19

pandemic prevented the second and third visits from taking place. The first and only field visit, took place from 30th January to the 13th March 2020, only four months after I had begun my PhD, purposefully limiting time for a literature review. The field visit then determined the direction of my reading.

During my trip to the Philippines, I spent time with IFI and Lumad communities; participating in daily life, mealtimes, worship and informal interactions, although was more difficult in Lumad communities due to the challenges posed by the militarisation of Lumad communities. I explore these difficulties and the changes they imposed on the research in the methodology chapter. During this field visit, I realised that despite the appearance of many overarching tribal authorities there was no authoritative governance structure that could decide whether Lumad communities would participate in the research. This was an assumption I held about hierarchical structures of power. Whether or not to participate in the research would be for each community to decide themselves. This was further complicated by the difference between traditional cultural leadership and the leadership authority given to some individuals by the Filipino military. The IFI's guidance in this matter was essential in ensuring that I negotiated the right relationships for the purposes of the research and respectfully followed the appropriate protocols.

Each interview began with a discussion on informed consent with all interviewees providing verbal or written consent to their participation, to the proposed uses of the research and to my recording them. I also discussed the purposes of the research

briefly with each interviewee. Sharing this information was one way in which my positionality would have become clear and one way in which trust and a collective vision began to be built. At the end of the interview I reiterated the continuing possibility for interviewees to withdraw from the research and where they could find my contact details should they have any further questions. Each interview included a discussion on how the research could best benefit those with whom I was speaking.

The interviews took a semi-structured, conversational format, allowing for joint sharing and questioning, with interviewees encouraged to discuss the topics of greatest importance to them. There had been some collaboration with co-collaborators concerning research questions, although they rightly believed that once I began talking with people, the conversations would just flow. Interviewees selected the space in which the interview took place and decided what language they wished to communicate in and therefore if we would need a translator. If requested, the IFI or Lumad collaborator fulfilled the position of translator. At this point, I should note that although I learnt basic Cebuano, my proficiency was nowhere near sufficient to conduct interviews. Furthermore, whilst Cebuano is the language most commonly spoken in Mindanao it was not the first language of many of the participants.

Language was a continual challenge as, despite good translation and many participants, particularly those in the IFI, being used to speaking in English, learning a language also reveals a lot about culture as people express concepts, ideas and experiences in different ways, in different languages and dialects. When interviewed for Kovach's research, Anishinaabe scholar Kathy Absolon, posited that 'the methodology is in learning your language because then you'll understand what the elders are talking about. The knowledge is in the language.' (Kovach, 2021, p.103).

There will be much that I missed for my inability to speak the primary languages of the research participants.

During this field visit, I conducted twenty-four individual interviews, two paired interviews with IFI leadership and one focus group with members of an IFI congregation. The IFI collaborator accompanying me in each diocese introduced me to the Bishop, with whom I discussed the research aims, who then participated in an interview and introduced me to other potential interviewees. I conducted four individual interviews and one paired interview with members of one Lumad community and six individual interviews with members of the Lumad Bakwit (evacuee) School. IFI collaborators introduced me to potential Lumad collaborators with whom I discussed the research aims, design and the possible future direction of the research. These individuals then introduced me to other interviewees. All interviewees were over eighteen years old.

Upon returning to the UK, USPG, for whom I was still working at the time, provided funds to transcribe the interviews. With the exception of the interviews conducted at the Bakwit School, which I transcribed myself due to the amount of background noise, I sent all recordings to TP Transcription Limited who signed a confidentiality agreement. Upon receiving the transcriptions, I began a data driven thematic analysis that focused on identifying themes arising from the interview transcriptions (Braun and Clark, 2006). During this analysis, I noted that which surprised me, that which linked to something someone else had said or to literature that I had read, that which indicated I needed to do more reading in a specific direction or areas that

required further discussion in the next set of interviews. However, I found reading insufficient and began also listening back to the recordings. Incorporating another sense into the analysis process helped me to transport myself back to the time and space in which the interview had taken place, helping me to feel more connected with the interviewee and the conversation that we had.

This analysis took place alongside a literary analysis of IFI Canons and Synodical resolutions, engagement with IFI and Lumad social media pages, live streams and online events, which had increased in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and became an official Save Our Schools volunteer. Through these online mediums, I was able to focus on the use of poetry, dance, ceremony, song, picture and protest that allow for collective and individual expression. These observations helped to highlight themes that I had missed during my analysis of the interview transcriptions and the literary analysis, performative texts analysis and interview transcription analysis became an iterative process, each informing my approach to the other. Through this tripartite analysis, I created a coding schedule, organising the data according to emerging themes and subthemes. The analysis informed the writing and structure of the thesis including a greater focus on the persecution of the IFI than anticipated as this theme developed into its own chapter. In Lumad communities, in contrast, there was a lower level of discussion on persecution than I had been expecting and a greater focus on education and resistance, which particularly influenced the questions for the second set of interviews.

I had intended for data analysis to be a collaborative process involving all collaborators, taking place throughout the research, with plans for the third field visit to focus specifically on my final interpretation of data, seeking respondent validation for what I had written. However, the COVID-19 pandemic meant that I had to develop an online process through which I shared chapters and interpretations with willing participants via email and facilitated online discussions where participants could provide feedback. Some important insights provided through this process, however, engagement was limited and I undertook the majority of the analysis process alone. There was a feeling from the IFI and Lumad collaborators that they had given all of the information I needed, now it was time for me to go and do my job. They were still more than happy to help with the odd question via Facebook but the pressures of COVID-19, the anti-terror law²¹ and numerous changes in the Bakwit School situation meant that they did not have the time or energy to engage in an in-depth way with this part of the process. This was interesting to note as much of the literature on Indigenous methodologies highlights community's desire to be a part of every stage of the research (Kovach, 2021, p.123). Lumad and IFI communities were clearly dedicated to sharing their stories and raising awareness of their situation, they were much less enthusiastic to be involved in other parts of the research.

There were times when I perceived this lack of engagement as a failure on my part and began to question whether the collaborators even still wanted this research or saw the potential benefits. However, with reflection it became clear that this lack of

²¹ The law replaced the Human Securities Act of (2007) and is discussed further later in the theses.

engagement was firstly because Lumad communities have a different historical experience with research to that of the Indigenous scholars in Canada, New Zealand and the United States of American, who make up the majority of the scholars writing about Indigenous methodologies. They also have different present circumstances, including their material conditions of oppression and challenge of accessing online communications. These differences may have contributed to the willingness of Lumad communities to hand over entire parts of the research process. It reminded me that whilst there might be similar themes in different indigenous contexts, it cannot be assumed that what 'works' in one context works in another.

Secondly, was the issue of time and priorities. Brunger and Wall (2016) discuss overly demanding community engagement and the pressure and stress that this can place on communities. This was the last thing that I wanted to do, particularly as my advocacy engagement with both communities provided me with a persistent reminder of the pressing challenges they were facing, including immediate threats to land and life. I decided to place as little stress on collaborators as possible along with ensuring spaces for collaboration wherever they desired.

The second set of interviews with the IFI took place online from February to March 2021. I interviewed seven IFI leadership, all of whom were responsible for different IFI programmes or the strategic direction of the Church's missionary activities. These interviews were semi-structured, but with more targeted, aiming to fill in gaps in my understanding. I had already interviewed six of these individuals in the first fieldwork

visit and had maintained relationships with them since. I had been collaborating with the seventh individual on advocacy efforts through which we had developed a good relationship. These relationships were essential given the sensitivity of some of the issues discussed and the difficulties of building new relationships, trust or reciprocity in the context of an online interview.

Due to funding limitations, I transcribed these interviews myself. This task gave me greater familiarity with the data and allowed a more organic merging of the transcription, reflection and analysis stages of the research process. Memories and thoughts resurfaced and developed as I listened back to conversations and transcribed them. I undertook a similar thematic analysis however, this time I focused on noting where conversations supported my existing interpretations and writing, where they challenged them or added another perspective.

Conclusion

Acknowledging the marginalisation of knowledges, the power hierarchies in research relationships and wider societal structures, I anticipated that using a scholar activist methodology, inspired by Indigenous methodologies within a decolonial feminist framework would help me to be sensitive to the knowledges and standpoints of Lumad and IFI communities. I hoped to achieve an ethnography that was 'morally engaged in ethical pursuits and questions of power...where power is shared and knowledge is produced together.' (Scheper-Hughes, 1995). I imagined that this collaboration would challenge my western conceptual framework, help me to articulate plausible alternatives to current exploitative systems and reduce the risk of

violence that I pose as the researcher concurrently increasing the possibility that the research would be of benefit to the communities concerned (Routledge and Derickson, 2015).

There were challenges in the practical use of these methodologies including increasing militarisation in Mindanao and the COVID-19 pandemic, both of which meant that there was limited time to build the relationships necessary to start dispersing power and challenge hierarchies, assumptions and norms. Whilst these challenges necessitated significant changes to the research design, it is true that in research 'theory and nitty-gritty decisions do not occur in different places but are constantly intertwined within the research process.' (Edwards and Ribbens 1997, p.1). The methodologies and the values, ethics and morals that underpin them that informed my responses to the changing and complex situation, which I reflect upon in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3 - FIELDWORK REFLECTIONS

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I established my justification for using an Indigenous, scholar activist methodology, rooted in feminist understandings of power. This chapter builds on the theoretical outlines provided examining the use of the three methodologies in practice. By doing so, it contributes to an improved understanding of the challenges and opportunities researchers may experience when using such methodologies, augmenting the growing field of collaborative research and scholarly activity that aims to influence beyond the academy. The experiences and challenges shared are also crucial for contextualising the writing and reflections that comprise this thesis, for example explaining why the thesis has a greater focus on the IFI than on Lumad communities.

I begin this chapter by looking at the benefits of sustained ethnographic engagement in forming relationships of trust. Whilst sustaining this initial argument I then highlight the need to be flexible and open to changes in research plans, advancing the importance of the social context of trust and trust transferability when spending extended time with research participants is not possible. I follow this with examples of when sustained ethnographic engagement was not possible, drawing from my own experience and scholarly literature on research in conflict contexts to argue that short-term, 'imperfect' engagement is at times preferable to waiting for an ideal moment of sustained engagement that may never come. I then move to look at the contextual nature of power alongside the conscious and unconscious use of power and positionality to achieve the desired research outcomes. I follow this with a

reflection on the power dynamics involved in making ‘ethical’ decisions, identifying the differences that can arise from individually and communally focused ethics. I then reflect upon policy engagement and the difficulties of managing expectations, timeframes and pre-determined rules of engagement before discussing policy engagement specifically in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. I finish the chapter with some personal reflections on the way this research has challenged me, encouraged me to deconstruct assumptions, engage in sense-sensing and reflect upon what relational accountability means if one is to be accountable to the cosmos.

Pilgrimage

Trust and uncomfortable fieldwork situations

Forming relationships of trust is a key aspect of collaborative research. As argued by Koonings, Kruijt and Rodgers, (2019, p.5) this is not for the instrumentalising reason of collecting ‘better’, more valid or reliable data, but because we are, and the research is, the relationships that we form (Wilson, 2008). Trust is an ongoing process with multiple layers. As mentioned in previous chapters, during the first week of fieldwork, I joined the Obispado Maximo on a 240-mile pilgrimage, travelling from the capital Manila to the northern city of Batac. We shared our hopes and dreams over snacks, songs, stories and struggles to sleep, often stopping for no more than a few hours to rest in a shared dorm room. Our heads bobbed along in the minivans as we chatted about everything from our families and K-pop to politics. As the journey progressed, stories became more personal and praise for the revolutionary history of the Church less encumbered. I felt that my willingness to be with the Obispado

Maximo, engaged and interested in their stories and the history of the IFI was the first step on an upward cycle of trust.

I believe that one particularly important event in facilitating this trust was the arrest of a paralegal on trumped up charges of murder. This paralegal is a member of the IFI and had defended an IFI Bishop whom the state imprisoned on trumped up charges of illegal possession of firearms and ammunitions. She was also one of two people responsible for planning my time in Mindanao. A member of the OM received news of this arrest via text message as we took a break to stretch our legs and admire the green valley below the winding road. I could feel the change in energy instantly. After calling over two others to share the news, he trepidatiously turned to me and told me what had happened. I do not know what response he was expecting but he was visibly surprised when the first thing I asked was if he was ok and if the person concerned had legal representation. As we returned to the minibus, the conversation began in Tagalog with the occasional summary in English for my benefit. I sensed that my willingness to simply sit with the IFI as they processed this news encouraged the openness that followed and the conversation gradually moved to English as they invited me to participate. Those present began to share their personal stories of persecution and the dangers of identifying as a 'progressive'. They asked my thoughts on the Duterte presidency, which sparked a long conversation about the neo-liberal capitalist system as people jumped from the personal and local to the global. This led to what I believe was a second key moment in building trust. Some IFI leaders began to share their empathy for more 'extreme progressive' positions. The eyes of others immediately turned to me, looking for my response with concern. I

believe that the understanding with which I responded signalled that it was safe for those present to share their challenges, fears and the difficult realities of their present mission. After this, the conversation flowed more freely and there were less nervous glances in my direction or questions directed at me before people shared particular positions or beliefs. It felt as though my willingness to be with the IFI in uncomfortable situations and join criticisms of systems and practices they understand to be oppressive facilitated my full welcoming in to the conversation to which I no longer felt like an outsider.

Scholars have criticised ideas of ethnographic research in which the researcher is required to demonstrate their strength and dedication through engagement with uncomfortable field situations. Berry et al. describe this problematic attitude as an 'institutionalized notion of fieldwork as a masculinist rite of passage or an exercise of one's endurance.' (2017, p.538). However, as they and others demonstrate, such assumptions ignore the gendered and racialised nature of ethnographic engagement; what one is required to endure or pass through depends on identity markers such as one's gender, race, ethnicity and age (Berry, et al, 2017; Kloß, 2017; Krause, 2021). I do not wish to reinforce ideas of fieldwork as a test of one's endurance. However, I found it difficult to move away from such a model when trying to build trust in a short space of time. Spending time in uncomfortable conditions (that even included sleeping on Church pews for a few hours one night), with extremely little sleep, allowed for a kind of crash course in trust building and understanding that informed my entire research journey. It helped to create situated solidarities that, as Nagar and Geiger describe

aim to understand the larger interconnections produced by internationalization of economies and labour forces while challenging the colonialist prioritizing of the West (2007, p.233).

As Nagar and Geiger (2007) predicted, throughout the pilgrimage I began to understand the interaction between the global nature of neo-colonial exploitation and marginalisation and the context specific struggle of the IFI.

I was not always able to maintain this commitment to uncomfortable field situations. Later in the fieldwork, I moved myself from Church accommodation to a local hotel due to safety concerns largely raised by my gender. Unfortunately, reinforcing the notion of endurance as a rite of passage, my decision appeared to affect my relationship with the local IFI Church. My concern was specifically about safety at night. Once I took the decision not to stay in the Church compound the leadership only invited me back for Church services, events and interviews. I no longer felt welcome to 'hang out', nor did Church leadership invite me to do so. I wondered whether the leadership found it hard to understand my concern because they were all male. Perhaps my decision made me seem rude and ungrateful for their hospitality. The difference in responses and subsequent relationships when I was and was not willing to endure challenging fieldwork situations highlights the potential difficulties researchers face in navigating between our commitment to the research and our own safety and wellbeing.

The importance of history

I return, for now, to the pilgrimage as site of reflection. As the journey progressed and the leader of the pilgrimage narrated the history of each site, the inseparability of history, spirituality and present day mission became clear. Ethnographic participation provided me with an appreciation of the way in which the Church constructs collective memories of the past where, as Halbwachs (1992) notes, collective memory uses collective frameworks to 'reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society.' (p.40).

Knowledge and collective memory evolved throughout the pilgrimage with the founders of the IFI described as revolutionaries and Filipino heroes who fought for the freedom of the people. There was also a non-linearity of time as staff linked a monument of an armed Aglipay, and discussions of Spanish colonial rule with present day government oppression; the burial site of murdered OM Ramento with the red-tagging of the present OM; the prison where the Americans held so-called revolutionaries with the wrongful imprisonment of Bishop Carlo. It was through this immersed ethnographic engagement that I began to grasp the central role of struggle and persecution within the life of the Church. This provided the socio-historical context that enabled me to understand the myriad of references made to persecution during interviews and the normalisation of self-sacrifice amongst IFI leadership.

The pilgrimage leadership used the final item on the agenda, a visit to a labour union and a community affected by unfair contracts and low wages, to discuss the IFI's present day mission. Approximately fifteen members of the Obispado Maximo and myself arrived in this community and the one person with a pre-existing relationship

led us on a 'tour'. Slum and developmental tourism increased in popularity in practice and academic literature in the early 2000s (Frenzel, Koens and Steinbrink, 2015). One of the main objectives of such tours is to motivate those participating to 'do something' (Norah, 2018). In this case, the organiser of the pilgrimage was using this community to 'open the eyes' of the Obispado Maximo, to demonstrate that this was not the Philippines their founders fought for, that the battle for the dignity and freedom of the Filipino people was far from won. Reflections at the end of the 'tour' revealed that the majority of the Obispado Maximo were unaware such poverty existed in Manila. They shared a frustration and anger that drove their recommitment to fight for social justice. They narrated the community as helpless and the IFI as their potential saviours.

These reflections drew my attention to the complex power dynamics involved in the pursuance of the IFI's mission. As Dogra (2013) notes in relation to images used by International Non-governmental Organisations (INGOs), images of poverty work to highlight 'difference', where *they* are poor and *we* that contrast with narratives of 'oneness' in which we are all connected by our humanity. During the 'tour', differences were clear and we must have looked extremely uncomfortable as we crouched through small dark spaces that housed two stories of family homes. We proceeded silently, as gawping foreigners, only talking to help each other over the uneven flooring and avoid stepping in the freely flowing sewage from which rose a smell that some of the IFI found so unbearable they covered their faces with their clothes. As strangers, we walked through the centre of people's open living spaces, peering into their homes and lives as parents bathed their children. I wanted to smile

at the people we passed, to show some humanity, some kind of connection, but this felt like an endorsement of the violence that our presence was imposing. I wondered about the implications of using poverty as a spectacle and whether leadership would have seen the community as helpless victims if we had first engaged with them at a rally or protest. Would we then have seen them as active participants in the struggle against neo-liberal capitalism rather than a poor community in need of aid? This experience ignited my interest in the power dynamics between the IFI and the communities, with whom they are in solidarity, complicating my understanding of the way in which the Church stands with the poor and marginalised and informing the ecologies of knowledge chapter.

[The Social Context of Trust Transferability](#)

As already articulated, trust is key to collaborative research. In line with my focus on building trust throughout the pilgrimage, Indigenous, scholar activist and feminist researchers recurrently discuss the importance of trust between research participants and the researcher (Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008 Kovach, 2021). Whilst the majority of scholarship focuses on this specific relationship, trust is also contextual and transferable. As Wilson briefly notes, ‘the strength of already established bonds between people can be used to help uplift others to bring them into the circle.’ (Wilson, 2008, p.81). Social contexts of trust are essential to understanding relational dynamics. In this research, the social context of trust included an organisational partnership between USPG and the IFI that spans more than fifty years, with some individuals connecting for over twenty years, facilitating friendships and high levels of confidence. The trust from these relationships then supported the development of my

personal relationship with the IFI in a process of ‘trust transferability’ where trust is transferred between different actors, in different social contexts, influenced by factors such as past collaborations and the number of third parties with whom both actors are engaged (Lambright, Mischen and Laramée, 2010). The first occurrence of trust transference took place after USPG’s Director of Global Relations introduced the research and myself to Bishops and members of the Obispado Maximo visiting London, evidenced by their willingness to collaborate and invitation to join the upcoming pilgrimage. The social context of trust between the two organisations facilitated my initial engagement with research collaborators and was essential during the nascent phases of the research.

Trust transference is a continual process and as the relationships between the Obispado Maximo, collaborating Bishops and myself developed, they formed their own context of trust that influenced new relationships. This trust was essential, as, whilst predominant ethnographic literature asserts that pre-existing relationships are essential for conducting interviews (Flick, 2018 p.235), changes to the security context (discussed in more detail below) resulted in me interviewing those with whom I had no previous relationship. Based on the literature and my pre-existing understanding, I presumed this would result in interviewees being less open. However, there was a high level of sharing regarding the institutional challenges facing the Church and interviewees shared an unexpected level of personal experiences and reflections in relation to persecution. I believe the history between the IFI and USGP alongside my developing relationships with the IFI co-collaborators and members of the Obispado Maximo, contributed to interviewee confidence that I

would act with good will, follow acceptable research principles and behave in the 'best interests' of the Church (Lambright, Mischen and Laramée, 2010). The social context of trust and the ability for trust to be transferred is then perhaps more important for research in complex and fluid situations where the researcher may not always have time to develop the desired relationships with all research participants.

Supporting the transference of trust was the fact that, in this context, USPG, the Bishops and members of the IFI who introduced me to potential interviewees identify as 'progressives'. I believe that my relationship with these progressives created a process of structural equivalence, a term used by (Ferrin, Dirks and Shah, 2006) to describe how the relationships we do and do not have influence the trust we are given. That I had formed relationships exclusively with 'progressives' and that these 'progressives' then introduced me to potential interviewees likely conveyed my support of the IFI despite government persecution. It likely also conveyed my pro-people, anti-military and anti-martial law position, assuring interviewees that it was safe to share their own experiences, critiques and opinions. However, it possible that this same structural equivalence also resulted in interviewees holding back information that did not align with the 'progressive' narrative of the Church. For example, informal conversations with congregants suggested that some clergy were more hesitant to continue with the mission of the Church given current persecution than they shared during interviews. Researchers commonly attempt to break such silences. However, as feminist cultural anthropologist Kamala Visweswaran contends, for interviewees, "Lies, secrets, and silence" are frequently strategies of resistance.' (1994, p.60) and researchers must respect them as such. I chose not to

cajole interviewees into sharing more information than they felt comfortable. My experience suggests that, in addition to being beneficial to the researcher, when considered alongside research motivations, relational context and potential uses of the research, structural equivalence can assist interviewees in only sharing that which they are comfortable.

By introducing me as a person of trust USPG, the Bishops and members of the Obispado Maximo, were potentially endangering the trust invested in them as organisations and Church leaders. Any unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour on my part would have reflected badly on them (Wilson, 2008) and they risked 'credibility stress' if I behaved in such a way (Burnette *et al.*, 2014). It was essential that I built upon and respected the trust that USPG and the IFI had gifted me. I strove to maintain the two-way relationship of empathy and support essential to the IFI-USPG relationship by sharing relevant information about USPG and myself. This included openly aligning myself with progressive ideas when introducing the research and honestly responding to interviewee questions. The explicit sharing of this aspect of my positionality would have been a further influence on what information interviewees chose to share. Whilst there is much critique of researchers sharing their position when conducting interviews, often labelled as a 'lack of neutrality', I believe that this sharing was ethical and in line with the moral guidelines that underpin the research methodology (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I consider personal disclosure essential when striving for a two-way relationship and that striving for such relationships contributed to the level of sharing and confidence during interviews. It is

my belief that conducting myself in a way that was acceptable to the broader social context was imperative to maintaining the continually developing relationships.

The transference and social context of trust created by my relationship with USPG and later with certain Bishops and members of the Obispado Maximo was essential to the research. It also posed a number of challenges and complicated power dynamics. For example, USPG's financial support for the IFI's mission with Lumad Indigenous communities raises the possibility that the IFI felt unable to deny the request to collaborate on this research. This challenge is not unique to the IFI-USPG relationship and in their reflections on researching in complex contexts, Cronin-Furman and Lake (2018, p.610) note that feelings of 'obligation' or 'duty' are common when local partners receive research requests from Western Universities, a dynamic further complicated when the researcher concerned is from a donor organisation. Whilst the historical relationship between the IFI and USPG makes it unlikely the IFI would agree to anything that they did not want to do; it remains possible that they felt pressured to collaborate despite reservations. In addition, my position as a USPG member of staff could have made participants reluctant to criticise the IFI's engagement with Lumad communities; hierarchical Church relationships might have resulted in hesitancy to criticise one's superiors; and as already suggested, my identification as a progressive may have prevented disclosure of concerns with the Church's pursuance of a progressive agenda despite persecution. I attempted to offset these risks, assuring the IFI that their funding was in no way dependent on their engagement and interviewees that their participation was voluntary and the information shared confidential. There were no tell-tale signs that participants had

been coerced to take part in interview, such as low cooperation, minimal sharing (Roitenberg, 2021) or suspicion of my relationship with their seniors (Cunliffe and Alcadipani, 2016), but the risks remained.

Risks, relationships and political realities: from ethnographic engagement to flying visits.

IFI engagement

Immersed ethnographic engagement is not always possible and there is a need for flexibility when engaging in research with marginalised communities. What might be considered the 'best' method of community engagement depends on a variety of factors including collaborator preferences and security contexts. As Krause notes 'For ethnographic research to be ethical, the duration and extent of observation must vary according to context.' (2021, p.330). Whilst taking time to develop relationships of accountability is central to Indigenous and collaborative methodologies, Krause argues that in contemporary conflict situations a 'flexible ethnographic approach' (2021, p.330) is often necessary. The first example of the need for flexibility in this research came on 5 February 2020 with the aforementioned arrest of one of the people intended to be my IFI co-collaborator in Mindanao on trumped up charges of murder. Accompanying this was the red-tagging of the other intended collaborator, who then left the island for her own safety. These women both held close relationships with Lumad communities and I was dependent upon their expertise, and introductions. Exacerbating my reliance on these women was the fact that many IFI leaders with close relationships with Lumad communities were now on bail or seeking sanctuary in other locations and this persecution had deterred others from

close engagement. The persecution of the IFI necessitated high levels of fieldwork flexibility and an in-depth understanding of the fluid context.

Whilst many ethnographers seek an in-depth understanding of the context in which they are working, the fluidity and complexity of the situation meant that I was not the contextual expert and I required the newly appointed IFI collaborators to take the lead. This provided an example of one way in which, in line with Big “E” ethics, power and control can be dispersed in collaborative research and ‘the power to define the field of collaboration can belong as much (if not more) to our collaborators as a result of their local knowledge’ (Routledge and Derickson, 2015). The complexity of the context meant I did not have, and likely would never have, the knowledge needed to navigate the changing situation. However, the IFI are used to dealing with such rapid changes. They took the lead on re-planning where I would be, for how long and with whom I would meet. As this planning progressed, it became clear that the IFI believed my spending time with one or even two communities would not provide me with sufficient understanding of the Church in Mindanao. They preferred instead for me to attend the aforementioned three-day diocesan conferences taking place across the island, speaking to as many Church leaders as possible. In this context, it was important to set aside my preconceived understandings of extended ethnographic engagement as ‘best practice’ and my academy informed intellectual arrogance (Bishop, 1994) by respecting the culture, context and way of generating knowledge within the IFI. Whilst this approach meant using different methods from those often foregrounded in the literature, the research remained true to Indigenous and collaborative research methodologies where it has long been established that

‘what is acceptable and what is not acceptable research, text, and/or processes is determined and defined by the research community itself.’ (Bishop, 1998, p.199).

However, as Krause notes, ‘Researchers’ motivations have important emotional dimensions that shape the research process’ (Krause, 2021, p.337). Despite knowing that I would need to be flexible, my teleological thinking (an aspect of boxhead described in the introduction that leads us to believe we understand the workings of the world and can design our future in to existence) (Andreotti, 2016) had given me an emotional connection to the original plan. I was initially resistant to changes. My resistance to attending the diocesan conferences as a way to understand the life of the Church was particularly strong. After years of working at USPG, I was tired of attending such events, which I saw as performative, telling you little about the daily life of the Church. My Western European separation of faith and development, not present in the majority world (Borchgrevink and Erdal, 2017; Freeman, 2019), influenced my expectation that the mission of the IFI would be visible only at the sites of interaction between the IFI and communities. I would now have to settle for hearing an overview of the activities during conference reports. Very little of this reporting took place and on day one and I was disillusioned by the difference between the radical Church presented on the pilgrimage and the financially and numerically focused diocesan reporting. Attending mass the following morning challenged my compartmentalised thinking. The OM was the preacher and he used the time to raise awareness of the human rights situation, reflecting on the role of the Church in Filipino society. His passion was infectious; the tiredness and reluctance with which I had recently rolled from bed was replaced by an energy and desire to be part of the Church’s mission, part of its struggle against the structures that the OM

identified as oppressive and responsible for the current human rights situation in the country. The service reflected an inseparability of worship and social analysis that informed my understanding of the link between theological knowledge and current mission. My researcher diary for that day began 'Finally the radical church I expected to find, although not where I expected to find it.' I was relieved to have found a situation that supported my assumption that I would find in the IFI a radical Church. My experience is an example of the way in which one can never be sure how research will work out and with what results. It highlights the importance of remaining open to knowledge shared in unexpected places despite the internal challenges in doing so.

That I would find evidence of a radical Church in programmatic reporting was not the only way my Western worldview affected my expectations of diocesan conferences. Despite an increasing number of scholars incorporating alternative means of knowledge creation and transfer into their research; from dreams (Hirt, 2012) to dance (Snowber, 2012) to drumming (Pedri-Spade, 2016), Western education continues to promote a linear, programmatic, textually focused worldview at the expense of these so called 'alternative' ways of knowing (Andreotti, 2016). Despite an awareness of these theoretical debates and the importance some of these 'alternatives' have played within my own life, my Western education influenced my response to different events held at the Diocesan conferences. On the first night, a co-collaborator introduced me to a group of musicians who would be performing at the various diocesan conferences. The head of programmes at the Obispado Maximo was the guitar player and I was quietly confused as to why such an essential

member of staff was being given time to play music when the Obispado Maximo were stretched so thinly during the diocesan meetings. It was not until I heard them perform in the third diocese that I understood; their music *is* the radical and liberatory Church. Their songs are protest, struggle and awareness raising. The songs were in Tagalog but spattered with names, English words and words I understood; Duterte, red-tagging, Lumad, OM Ramento, *Padayon* (continue the struggle). The impact of the performance was in more than the words. The constant, steady rocking of the guitarist and lead vocalist, the tapping of their feet to the continuing, steady beat. There was something fierce and menacing about their stance, something that said 'just try to move us, we're not going anywhere'. My assumption that the formal meetings, with prepared presentations and written text were the main form of knowledge exchange was inaccurate. The Church service and music performance highlight the benefit of engaging with a range of activities to begin understanding a community and challenge the biases within one's own thinking. These experiences demonstrate some of the complexities of collaborative research across cultures and the way researcher assumptions and understandings affect the research process, particularly when things do not turn out as expected. A theoretical understanding of the Western separation of faith and 'development' and of exclusion of 'alternative' forms of knowledge was not enough to change my thinking. However, an awareness of these debates and increased reflection in my researcher diary allowed me to understand my experience and responses to different situations, reducing potential harm to relationships and the research process.

Lumad engagement

The security context had the greatest influence on the feasibility and desirability of sustained ethnographic engagement when I was attempting to engage with Lumad communities. As Koonings, Kruijt and Rodgers contend

risky ethnography complicates the access to and movement in the field and poses considerable challenges for establishing trust and rapport with research participants (2019, p.15).

The ongoing battle between the Filipino military, the NPA, multinational corporations and Indigenous People outlined in the introduction means that many Lumad are living in conflict zones, with regular military violence conducted under a blanket of impunity (Alamon, 2016; Karapatan 2022). In such contexts, limited, uneven immersion and shorter community stays are often the only way of engaging. This leads to varying depths of relationships with research participants as well as times when not pursuing an opportunity for engagement may be the most ethical choice, given considerations of community and researcher safety (Krause, 2021).

My first insight into how the increasing militarisation of Lumad communities would convert my understanding of ethical engagement from an idealised sustained ethnography to a continually moving and changing concept came in Surigao, Mindanao. Between planning the fieldwork and the time I arrived in country, the idea of me staying in a Lumad community had already changed from sustained engagement to daily visits and then, as the situation worsened, to a one-day visit. As I travelled with two IFI collaborators to the community where it was proposed I spend

the day, we received a phone call stating that there were military patrols in the area and it would cause problems for the community if we were seen entering. Instead, the Datu suggested we meet him in a hidden spot on the side of the road. Five minutes later, as we were approaching the proposed meeting place, the Datu rang again. He was concerned that military had been following him and he was now 'unsure' whether it was safe to meet. Whilst the Datu's uncertainty left space for us to push for a meeting, the pauses and unspoken words of the conversation indicated a sentiment more akin to 'I do not feel safe, but I will do this if you really need me to'. Given the security concerns, not even a one-hour side of the road visit was possible and the only ethical option was to let the research opportunity pass. We aborted the plan, asked the Datu if there was any way we could help, which there was not, and were later relieved to hear that he had arrived safely back in his community.

Our inability to meet with anyone from this community demonstrated how difficult it was going to be to hear the voices of the anti-capitalist Lumads and highlighted the potential trade-off between challenging dominant narratives and minimising security risks. It was a clear example of the way in which 'The process of conflict manipulates information by promoting and suppressing voices.' (Goodhand, 2000, p.12). It stressed the importance of engaging with marginalised Lumad voices whenever and wherever individuals felt safe and comfortable to do so, even if sustained ethnographic engagement was no longer possible. Throughout the research process, listening to Lumad voices then became a way of resisting the information economy that the military depended upon for capitalist exploitation, primarily that Lumad are members of the NPA. There was a need to balance listening to and centring

knowledges of those marginalised by the capitalist system and the complexity of the security situation. This required high levels of flexibility, careful analysis of each context and listening to collaborators and the individuals concerned when discussing what type of engagement was possible, when and where.

University risk assessments define the researcher as responsible for ensuring that research does no harm. In the risk assessment for this research, I committed to ensure that my presence did not exacerbate existing risks to Lumad or IFI communities. However, collaborative research and the distillation of power it promotes suggests that the researcher is often not best placed to make decisions about participant safety (Kovach, 2021), a claim supported by Ackerly and True's (2020, p.34) acknowledgement that 'A researcher's situatedness affects their assessment of whether or not a research context is dangerous, and if the risks outweigh the opportunities'. Balancing safety concerns and fears of silencing was not something that I could do alone and I was again heavily dependent on the contextual knowledge and expertise of research collaborators. However, even with local contextual knowledge, judgements concerning when to engage were not always easy to make. This was particularly true when individuals and communities decided to resist the silencing of their voices, despite risks, emblematic of the long history of Lumad resistance to state oppression despite persecution (Alamon, 2017).

As described in the introduction, the militarisation of Lumad communities has enabled the military to monitor who comes and goes and with whom they are speaking, with frequent reports of violent repercussions for those suspected of

speaking with the 'wrong' person (anyone from a progressive group). In an example of resistance to their silencing, two Lumad leaders from one of these highly militarised communities, made a last minute decision to travel to the diocesan cathedral to meet with me. The dark Bishops office, which was also his sleeping quarters, with its bright CCTV monitor in the corner, became our convergence site for twenty-four hours. Although there was a chance of repercussions for this decision, to argue that the trip should not go ahead because I was concerned about safety would have been paternalistic and based on incomplete information given my situatedness as an outsider. I simply listened to the phone conversations as the two individuals, both adults, came to the decision to travel despite the risks. Again, this situation evidences the importance of distilling power, engaging with research collaborators and those with a more thorough understanding of the risks as they arise. However, it also highlights some of the complex questions raised when thinking about risk assessments in relation to contemporary conflict situations. For example, what timeframe is one considering? The immediate harm that might result from individuals leaving the community or the long term harm to the wider Lumad struggle and future generations if they continue to be silenced? How does one respond when those with local contextual knowledge disagree with a decision concerning risk, particularly when they are adults and the decision concerns their own safety? Researchers may not have the answers, or even know all of the relevant questions to ask when writing a risk assessment.

The time spent with the two individuals from this community involved me interviewing people with whom I had no previous relationship, once again challenging the idea in

dominant literature that ethical research involves building relationships with participants in advance. These individuals had travelled five hours to meet us at this safe location and we had less than 24 hours before they needed to return. The fact that I had zero ethnographic engagement with any Lumad community before these interviews further complicated this experience. Until this point, the only understanding I had of Lumad communities came from the existing literature or the IFI. I had no awareness of the appropriate way to engage with interviewees or the customs and protocols that should be followed (Smith, 2012). Interviewing these individuals felt unethical. I tensed every time they called me ma'am (as they insisted on doing throughout the interview). There was no time to build relationships capable of challenging power hierarchies. The interview had no conversational flow and my stomach knotted with every short and direct response to my questions, as I worried about the extractiveness of this process. However, my judgement was that not interviewing these individuals, given the time, effort and personal risk involved in their being with us would have raised more ethical issues of power and participation than interviewing them. This experience provided a further example of where being respectful of collaborative research methodologies meant respecting the community's decision on how and when they want to share their knowledge. It reiterated the need to be responsive to context and the wishes of those whose lives are most affected when considering the most ethical behaviour in any given situation.

Whilst acknowledging that research participants are adults, capable of making decisions concerning their own security and engagement, they do not make these decisions in a vacuum. Within collaborative research, my positionality and the

assumptions that research participants make about me also influences their participation (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Throughout our short time together, it became clear that the reason these two individuals were so eager to meet with me was that they wanted the world to know about the Lumad struggle and there was an assumption that I, as a white British researcher, could make this happen. Such assumptions are common in research with unequal power dynamics. Cronin-Furman and Lake (2018, p.609) highlight the common use of the refrain 'We are happy to speak to you, because we want to share our stories with the world.' as a motivation for community participation in research. Despite these expectations, Cronin-Furman and Lake (2018) note that such awareness raising is unlikely to happen through the publication of a research dissertation. I had anticipated that the purposeful policy engagement linked with this research (discussed further below) would be sufficient to offset this risk. I had not anticipated the high expectations that research participants had of organisations such as the United Nations (UN) or the way in which they expected radical changes in short periods of time. There was a belief that if the world simply knew about the Lumad struggle, the world would respond immediately. I knew that this was not true and that the UN were not about to put boots on the ground to prevent human rights abuses, which it became clear, was what participants hoped for. Instead, I tried to highlight the importance of long-term advocacy and policy engagement, informing participants of the formal process for reporting human rights.²² Although I did not wish to dismiss the importance of international awareness raising and advocacy, these processes take years and focus on a different scale to

²² A recent example of the international community's unwillingness to act despite their awareness of the situation is the decision of the UN HRC not to send an independent monitoring team to the Philippines, as outlined in the introduction.

the community specific concerns raised by the two interviewees. This experience highlighted the importance of researchers being conscious of the way in which their positionality influences the assumptions and expectations research participants hold as, in this case, my positionality led to assumptions and expectations that I could not meet. These expectations affected the way in which community members engaged and the risks they were willing to undertake.

Other situations required me to relinquish control and ignore the power associated with my position and the supposed superiority of Western research methods. Conducting ethical research within a Western framework usually involves ensuring that interviews take place in a 'safe space', often defined as being away from others to ensure privacy (Bryman, 2012). However, in one Lumad community, it quickly became evident that we were not going to have a private space for interviews. I asked the interviewees to choose the venue for their interview with the options mainly being their own house, under a tree or walking. All chose their own house. In Lumad communities, all spaces are open and communal. Thus, even when interviews began in private, other people would come and join when they felt like it and leave when they wanted. Whilst I was initially unsure how to deal with this, I was not about to tell people who they could or could not have in their own house. Furthermore, the interviewees seemed relaxed, their body language did not change and those who came and went never tried to join in the conversation. Everyone respected everyone else's opinion and time. Reflecting on this experience, I wonder whether, as the results of the research will be public it is actually more ethical to ensure that knowledge holders only shared experiences they were happy to share in front of

other members of their community. Research data is pseudo anonymised. However, for a community that knows each other well it is impossible to say whether they would be able to attribute a particular quote to a particular person or assume attribution even if someone else made a comment.

The contextual nature of power

Power and positionality: Lumad Bakwit School

Understandings of power are essential to collaborative research and the co-creation of knowledge for which these methodologies strive. Knowledge is not neutral and the power it holds depends upon the type of knowledge, by whom it is held and within what context. A context specific perspective is then necessary when attempting to understand how people consciously and subconsciously negotiate and use their power and positionality to achieve their desired outcomes (Rose, 1997; McDowell, 1997; Krause and Kearney 2006). Whilst there is increasing awareness among many Indigenous communities of the importance of their knowledge and the abusive relationship between Western researchers and Indigenous communities (Lincoln, reported in Beld, 1994) the persistence of the colonial matrix of power means that, all too often, Western researchers conducting research in the global south hold a hierarchical position of power. This was evident in the Lumad community in Mindanao, who, as discussed above, believed I had the power and ability to change their situation, influencing their willingness to accommodate the research. After spending time in this Lumad community, it was decided that I should return to Manila as increasing militarisation was posing too great a challenge to my ability to enter other communities in Mindanao. Here I engaged with Lumad students and

teachers at the Bakwit School, who were, at the time, receiving sanctuary at the University of the Philippines. The Bakwit School community greatly value academic research. They are also acutely aware of their power as the gateholders of their knowledge. They understand the research process and understood that I needed them. If they allowed me to engage there was no question that, it would be firmly on their terms.

The difference between the way the community in Mindanao and those in the Bakwit School received me provides an example of the contextual nature of power and positionality (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). In recognising the presence of complexities, contested power dynamics and tensions in collaborative research Phillips et al. (2013) argue for its de-romanticisation; discussing the variability of what scholars mean by collaboration and the dependence of the lived collaborative experience on factors such as the researcher's willingness to relinquish control and power at various stages of the research. However, engaging at the Bakwit School was not a case of me choosing to relinquish control but of me being required to do so if I wanted to engage. This experience was more challenging than I expected and I realised how used I had become to my various privileges and the accommodating attitude that my positionality normally elicits. I was challenged by the fact that no one cared that I was at the Bakwit School and reflected in my researcher diary how unprepared I was for the feelings of powerlessness I experienced. I resonated with Harris who describes herself as having 'absolutely no status, power or even credibility in the setting' (Harris, 1997, p.7) during parts of her research. However, upon reflection, this perceived powerless may have simply been my response to

school leadership not prioritising me. The focus of the Bakwit School was their already busy schedule, the students' classes and keeping everybody fed and safe. If I followed their rules and fitted around their schedule, they were happy to talk to me and participate in interviews. If the research could raise awareness of their situation even better but if not, the struggle would simply continue without me. This affected the research process. Whilst I hoped to explain the research to the students and teachers as a group, asking them to decide collectively whether they wanted to participate, this was not a priority within their already busy timetable. Instead, leadership asked me to present the research to one of the teachers; if they approved it then they would find me people to interview. They were the formal gatekeepers to the Bakwit community (Harris, 1997; Reeves, 2010; Funder 2005).

Ethics in the Bakwit School

The means of engagement dictated by the Bakwit School meant that, once again, I was conducting interviews with those with whom I had no previous relationship. Any attempt at dispersing power (Routledge and Derickson, 2015) had to take place during the interview. Again, each interviewee decided the location and direction of the interview as we used the time to discuss what the research should focus on and what they would want people to know, with specific questions kept for later in the interview with those who seemed particularly open. However, the open plan of the space in which the Bakwit School is held highlighted ethical issues with this form of engagement not visible, although possibly present, in the other locations. When identifying potential interviewees one teacher approached a young man, who was visibly reluctant to participate and move from his seated position on the floor. The

teacher *persuaded* him to take part, holding his jumper and pulling him up from where he sat. This took place in humour, but the fact was that the student did not want to participate. For a second I froze, not wanting to cause a scene or offend the teacher, particularly in such a public space. I was also aware that the Bakwit School is not my space; I had no authority there and was concerned that not respecting Lumad ways of interacting risked imposing Western frameworks and understandings as superior. However, I was also reluctant to undertake an interview with someone who did not want to take part. I quietly raised the issue, reassuring the teacher and the student that he did not need to participate if he did not want. Both were insistent that it was fine; he was just a bit shy. After the usual discussion surrounding informed consent the student was still willing to take part so I began the interview slowly, asking him to tell me a little about himself. He responded with a three-minute monologue, which gave me the confidence to continue and he ended up being one of the most talkative students. This student's responsiveness made me question the degree to which, particularly when time and context mean that researchers are not able to build the relationships they had intended, we risk only hearing the opinions of the loudest, most confident and vocal who do not necessarily represent the views of others. The experience led me to question whether there is a role in research for encouraging those who are shy, for building confidence during interviews and using them as a space to reassure the individual that they have something important to say.

When reflecting upon this incident with Lumad collaborators it became clear that, in line with university ethics, I was prioritising the individual and the teacher, in line with

the practice of the Bakwit School, was prioritising communal ethics. There was a risk that had I insisted on prioritising individual ethics I would have encroached upon the ethics of the Bakwit School. As Kovach (2021, p.113) notes in relation to big “E” ethics:

The big “E” Indigenous ethics is more expansive than the individual consent process tied to institutional liability that is foundational to university ethical guidelines. Infringement upon an Indigenous collectivist ethical code, or axiology, can occur even if formal university ethical procedures are observed.

Lumad founded the Bakwit Schools on their understandings of education as the highest form of resistance. There is an expectation that students actively take part in raising awareness of the Lumad situation. According to the values and protocols of the space, and the community to which the student belonged, he had a responsibility to take part in the interview. For the teacher it was ethical to prioritise the communal goal of raising awareness over individual autonomy. This was an example of the way in which collaborative research requires researcher to be

continuously developing their understandings of ethics and community sensibilities and are critically examining their research practices continuously develop their understandings of ethics and community sensibilities, and critically examine their research practices (Smith, 2006, p.7).

Researchers must then find a balance between not pressuring individuals to participate when they do not want to whilst also supporting those who are less

confident to participate and fulfil their responsibility to their community, all respecting the given context.

I strove to create a research context in which collaborators could be confident to challenge each other and be vulnerable and honest in our discussion of such matters. However we had not predicted the conversations we would need to have in advance in order for me to be confident making quick decisions about such ethical differences, in a complex environment where theory, institutional requirements, power dynamics, different worldviews and understandings of ethics came together in a single moments clash. The only reason I knew about the student's reluctance to participate was that I witnessed the interaction. Whilst as already mentioned, none of the earlier interviewees demonstrated tell-tale signs that they had been coerced to take part in interview I still wondered how many had been *persuaded* to take part in interviews without my knowledge. This student felt able to demonstrate his resistance to the teacher; however, I wondered whether any of the clergy felt able to share their true feelings when their Bishop or a more senior member of clergy asked them to participate. These questions and experiences complicate understandings of participant recruitment and highlight the need for contextually appropriate ethical processes that respect the values and protocols of the particular community whilst also protecting interviewees.

Policy and Power

Scholarly attention to the interaction between research and policy is increasing (Willigen, 2018). Building on a long history, the current literature focuses on advising

researchers how to become relevant to the questions raised in policy spaces (Brown, et al. 2018) and the potential mutual benefit of interaction between research and policy (Birnbaum, 2000; Brown et al 2018). However, much of the literature ignores important power dynamics and the challenges experienced when marginalised communities engage with policy spheres. I seek to contribute to this space by reflecting upon the challenges that arose from a collaborative approach to policy engagement that aimed to decentre the researcher as the primary knowledge holder and centre marginalised communities. These challenges included differing time scales and levels of urgency, engaging with persistent colonial structures, pre-existing policy debates, language, economics and politics, all of which influenced how and with whom research collaborators and myself engaged and the issues that attracted international attention.

Time

In contrast to much scholar activist research, Birnbaum (2000), following Weiss (1982), is pessimistic about the potential for research to influence policy in a way that creates a 'blockbuster impact' (Weiss, 1982, pp. 621, 633). He instead draws on Lindblom and Cohen's (1979) idea of knowledge creep where the knowledge from research gradually circulates and influences the social environment within which policy decisions are made. He believes there is a 'worthwhile trade-off', where research trades its short term influence on specific, short lived policy decisions for its ability to influence the policy climate within which countless future decisions will be made (Birnbaum, 2000, p.130). In contrast to Birnbaum's knowledge creep Pickerill (2014) argues that research collaborators often desire immediate impact and that the

time needed to engage in policy spheres alongside the unlikelihood of any real influence mean there are no worthwhile trade-offs. How one defines 'worthwhile trade-offs' depends on one's positionality. My experience is that, when striving to be accountable to diverse groups of research collaborators, it is necessary to balance immediate impact with medium and long-term influence, which in turn demonstrates a long-term commitment to the cause.

To ensure immediate impact I began supporting small, time sensitive funding requests that I could personally cover, such as contributions to bail and lawyers' fees when illegal arrests or arrests based on trumped up charges took place. In terms of medium term impact, I began presenting at academic conferences, publishing papers and signing solidarity letters.²³ Whilst I had anticipated that this would be of greater benefit to myself than to research participants (Pickernill, 2014) those at the Bakwit School in particular highlighted the impact of such activities. In line with Koonings, Kruijt and Rodgers (2019) findings in other complex conflict situations, they argued that these activities added legitimacy to their cause. When considering long term engagement there was at times a need to manage expectations as, as mentioned above, some participants were of the understanding that if the international community simply knew about their situation then they would intervene to stop the forced removal of Indigenous people from their ancestral lands. However, there was an understanding amongst the majority of participants that although immediate

²³ The risk that the government may retaliate to any research or policy publications was discussed with all participants. Their responses can be summarised in this quote from a Facebook voice note conversation between myself and 10 in early 2022:

the repercussions you are talking about, we are already experiencing you know. Everyday. And there is much more violence to other sectors of society.... So for me I would take it as precautionary measures to inform as many as possible.

intervention is unlikely sustained policy engagement is essential in creating a picture amongst the international community of the realities on the ground. They understood that it often requires numerous reports over an extended time before the international community even contemplate beginning to act (Weiss, 1982). This engagement aimed to influence both specific policy decisions concerning trade deal with the Philippines and longer-term knowledge creep amongst the international community and the political elite of the Philippines, which participants hoped would influence the actions of future presidencies.

Colonial structures and rules of engagement

One area of focus for our policy work was the UK government and particularly the Church of England Bishops who, due to persistent colonial structures, continue to sit in the House of Lords (Holdsworth, 2019). This structure gives organisations such as USPG (a mission agency of the Church of England), and the IFI, (a Church in full Communion with the Anglican Communion), access and influence that others do not share. Through the Bishops in the House of Lords, the Church of England ‘is permitted to continue to attempt to influence law-making according to its doctrines despite an increasingly plural and secular society.’ (Holdsworth, 2019, p.169). Given our privileged position in relation to the UK policy-making environment, we focused our efforts on the UK’s proposed enhanced trade relationship with the Philippines, which includes military support and equipment. The aim was to raise awareness of the situation in the Philippines, educating the UK government on the impossibility of knowing whether state military were using their support against actual terrorists or in the war on dissent, against marginalised communities and human rights defenders.

As USPG and the IFI Chaplaincy, we reached out to Church House. In less than two weeks, the Bishop of Southwark had raised questions in the House of Lords on our behalf; something that campaigning groups such as the UK Campaign for Human Rights in the Philippines (CHRP), had been working to do, through ‘secular’ channels for nearly a year.

After our initial engagement, we had to follow the unspoken rules of British Church and policy engagement. This included using ‘policy language’, labelling, and framing experiences within a pre-defined set of policy areas, which influenced whose experiences were narrated, when, where and how. For example, the British government and Church of England have little interest in Indigenous Rights, particularly if the individuals concerned are not Christian, and they would likely ignore any attempts to engage them in such matters.²⁴ However, issues of Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) in relation to the world’s major religions are high on the British government’s policy agenda and Church House and the Bishops in the House of Lords willingly support concerns about the persecution of Church leaders.²⁵ Whilst the IFI would not usually narrate their experience as an abuse FoRB, doing so facilitated our engagement with Church House, Bishops in the House of Lords and the All Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group (PHRG). Throughout these engagements, Lumad experiences were only relevant because the religious

²⁴ Evidenced, for example by the failure to acknowledge Indigenous communities in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office’s (FCDO) document ‘Freedom of Religion or Belief - how the FCDO can help promote respect for this human right’ (2016).

²⁵ See for example, the government’s appointment of a Church of England Bishop to conduct an independent review into the FCO’s support for persecuted Christians and the Church of England’s support for the review (Mounstephen, 2019).

persecution of the IFI is a result of their mission with Lumad communities. We engaged in this way to garner interest but I was concerned that ‘the ways in which policy makers define a problem is often part of the problem.’ (Birnbaum, 2000, p.122). The narrow, pre-defined interests of policy spaces make it essential that those engaging in scholar activist research with different groups across multiple contexts and issues have the time and resources to engage with various policy fora. Fortunately, we also had the capacity to engage with the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), which allowed us to focus specifically on Lumad experiences, however, failure to do so would have risked re-marginalising those already marginalised from policy spheres.

Rules of engagement

The narrow focus of policy spaces often clashes with the complexity and internal group diversity highlighted within scholarly research. It is widely recommended that policy-relevant research be disseminated in formats that make sense to policy makers with clear and simple recommendations or implications (Birnbaum, 2000; Eriksson and Sundelius, 2005; Trainor, Stern and Subbio, 2018). This is essential as policy reports need to capture high amounts of easily digestible and compelling information in short amounts of time. However, the result is often the presentation of diverse groups as heterogeneous with internal difference and debates minimised, using blanket labels recognised in international law such as ‘Indigenous’. This was a key difference between writing for policy and writing for this thesis. For example, in our policy engagement, veterans of the UNPFII advised against discussing the reality that although some within Lumad communities want self-determination, centuries of

discrimination and subsequent poverty have meant that others are eager to join mining corporations and the military efforts of the government (something that I discuss further in the next chapter). The desire of some Lumad for self-determination in order to pursue their own capitalist development alongside the request of others for self-determination to preserve their land is an additional complication that policy spheres are not equipped to deal with. My experience is that policy recommendations focus on short to medium term 'fixes', not the complex impact of centuries of colonial oppression or how this might be dismantled. Whilst failing to simplify an issue for policy spaces likely means that it will gain little traction, failure to understand the complexity of a situation often results in inept policy 'solutions' that are open to manipulation by those who maintain colonial power. One such example is the manipulation of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) discussed in the following chapter.

In addition to using policy language and simplifying complex issues, policy reports must be in written format, in English. Policy reports remain 'factually' focused, unable to incorporate 'alternative' means of expression such as poems or song lyrics. This makes it impossible to capture the creativity of the IFI and Lumad struggle, the knowledge they share through their live streams, artwork and protests. The challenge of transplanting or 'grafting' knowledges from their natural place of origin and implanting them into other spaces (Ahenakew, 2016) is exaggerated within policy spaces as Western models of knowledge exchange encourage written reports in English with simple and certain language.

I experienced first-hand how the amalgamation of these challenges can encourage the researcher to speak on behalf of a community and reinforce these rules of engagement. My aim was to engage IFI and Lumad communities directly in policy circles. I often undertook the behind the scenes work, finding the right venue and audiences. Just like a stage performance, I promoted the show to the gatekeepers of the space, the CHRP, the PHRG, the UNPFII. If I used the 'right' language, we were allowed to enter. The stage (the in person or virtual meeting room) controlled the limitations of the performance with clearly marked boundaries of what did and did not fit in the space. My role was to make sure participants knew this, to ensure that the lighting assisted with dramatic effect, and that the "story" had a beginning, middle and end. I became the "expert" not only advising the communities on how to engage but answering questions as the performance turned to audience engagement with questions linking participant experiences with specific policies. I was the master in Goto's (2017, p.192) analogy of the researcher who 'is like the ventriloquist speaking for the dummy without moving his/her lips.' What was interesting is how normal this all felt, how used I had become to what has been referred to as 'translating' between different spaces but how closer reflection highlighted the dangers of doing so. In my researcher diary, I noted that we had spent an entire meeting discussing a report that two of the participants were not even able to read as I wrote it in a language inaccessible to them. I had framed the story with the report, which I had sent to all participants in advance. The participants had provided the personal narratives for dramatic effect, reinforcing the story as I told it. At the time, I simply viewed this as a way of raising awareness of the human rights situation in the Philippines as research

participants had requested. Academic research and policy reports can contribute to a global knowledge base where knowledge is freely disseminated for the common good (Chatterton, Hodkinson and Pickerill (2010). However, such experiences are a warning that whilst, there are still challenges to such approaches and the Western models of knowledge exchange they perpetuate.

Economics and politics

Human rights focused international treaties plentiful and governments regularly promote their own rights-related agendas. However, economics and politics continue to interfere with the international community's willingness to live out commitments and ensure respect for human rights. For example, despite the United Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner's (OHCHR) damning report on the situation in the Philippines in June 2020, in September 2020 the Human Rights Council (HRC) passed a weak resolution focusing on technical cooperation and capacity building for the promotion and protection of human rights (HRC, 2020). It entrusted a government openly inciting violence and providing immunity for the abuses of its police and military to improve the human rights situation.²⁶ Corridor conversations at the HRC revealed that this response to the High Commissioner's report was due to a reluctance on the part of the Council to intervene in the affairs of a country with relatively good political and economic relationships with its neighbours. The resolution was described by civil society as 'worse than the lowest common denominator' (Prove, 2020). This highlights the potential for policy makers to ignore

²⁶ Two prominent examples of Duterte inciting violence and offering immunity to those who undertake it are when he threatened to bomb Lumad schools (The Guardian, 2017) and when he ordered the military to shoot female rebels in the vagina (The Guardian, 2018).

copious evidence, scholarly and policy research. Despite this, conversations amongst civil society activists retain hope that there is a tipping point at which the international community will start to act. The job of the scholar activist and research collaborators is then to continue raising awareness, persisting until issues become something that the international community can no longer ignore in favour of maintaining the political and economic status quo.

Scholar Activist Work Moving Forward

According to scholar activists, research and policy can be mutually influential and beneficial. For example, the IFI's focus on the persecution of human rights defenders led to our engagement with the UK government whilst the Filipino government's questioning of the collective term Lumad in international policy spheres influenced the focus on Lumad identity in the following chapter. I found undertaking policy work as a form of activism throughout the research, rather than as a product or a 'final' report worked to ensure the research was always moving in a direction beneficial to research communities. Existing advice from scholars such as Chatterton, Hodgkinson and Pickerill, (2010) and Routledge and Derickson (2015), has been invaluable to this process. To their advice, I would add a consideration of digital, financial and time concerns when planning scholar activist research.

The interaction between research and policy helped maintain relationships when the COVID-19 pandemic presented unexpected disruptions to fieldwork. As governments across the world began locking down, restricting the activities permitted in public

spaces and limiting international travel, activists had to rethink the way they pursued their activities (Arya and Henn, 2020). For the IFI and many Lumad communities it meant moving their protests online. For myself, as with many other scholar activists, lockdown required new ways of engaging with research collaborators from a distance. I could no longer use coffee runs or the purchase of *pan de coco* (coconut bread) for the office as a way of demonstrating my willingness to be part of the struggle. This new physical distance increased the importance of policy work, which became my primary means of engagement, facilitating data collection and moments of collaboration. For example, my relationship with the Lumad Bakwit School strengthened as we worked towards the UNPFII. This led to an interview with two Datus who were instrumental in the envisioning and creation of the schools. Whilst the focus of the activist side of scholar activism must remain on encouraging social change and supporting the struggle of research collaborators these additional benefits are important to note. This is particularly so given the common concern that activist activities take away from 'real' research (Routledge and Derickson, 2015).

During online activities an urban-rural digital divide emerged creating and exacerbating many inequalities. During the pandemic, there was optimism that the online hosting of events such as the UNPFII would facilitate the engagement of a broader range of participants (UNPFII, 2021). However, the digital divide amplified some voices and obscured others (Storer, 2021). In my experience, this digital divide intertwined with existing linguistic divisions as travel limitations complicated the use of translators. My engagement became weighted towards those in the cities with stronger internet access who were able to speak English. Whilst there was little that I

could do to rectify these inequalities of access, I prioritised communication with digitally marginalised community members on the rare day they were able to visit the town and send messages, including their experiences in the policy reports and conversations as they progressed. It became evident that, at times, small financial contributions could help alleviate inequality of access, for example, through the purchasing of data for research participants and paying for official translators for online events. Moving forward in an increasingly digitalised world, researchers and funders must consider these costs when budgeting.

Engaging in scholar activist research can then be time consuming and expensive. A lack of support for the full extent of scholar activist activities can have a negative impact on the researcher as, alongside financial limitations, many activists seek to evidence their commitment to the cause by the time they dedicate to it (Chatterton, Hodkinson and Pickerill, 2010, p.257). Despite my privilege of having a mutually supportive consultancy and PhD project there were times when my commitment felt insufficient and I was concerned that research collaborators would interpret any unwillingness to work outside of work hours as a lack of commitment (Chatterton, Hodkinson and Pickerill, 2010, p.257). I began purposefully responding to messages on the weekends and attending events just to show my face, panicking about the few online rallies I missed. The fact that I lived alone, with no dependents and we were in the middle of a global pandemic facilitated my ability to engage in this way. I had nowhere else to be. Whilst this was helpful for this specific research project, my engagement reinforced the idea that 'dedicated' scholars can and should always work more than our academically funded hours and are able to work on evenings and

weekends. This problematic image of scholars and particularly scholar activists may contribute towards burnout and disadvantage some scholars, for example, those with caring responsibilities, as I found out towards the end of my research period.

Personal reflections

One of my desires when embarking upon this research journey was to think beyond my limited Western worldview. In his critical book, *Research Is Ceremony:*

Indigenous Research Methods Wilson shares a quote from one of his friends: “If research doesn’t change you as a person, then you aren’t doing it right.” (2008, p. 83). The most edifying aspects of research can be those that challenge and change us. This research changed me in a multitude of ways, many of which are difficult to explain in words, for the purpose of this thesis. I will reflect upon three, all of which were essential to the expansion of my boxhead and the description of the modern subject as illustrated by Andreotti (2016). 1) Identifying, re-examining and beginning to deconstruct assumptions I held, challenging my universalism, dialectical, allochronic and evolutionary thinking (Andreotti, 2016). 2) Experiencing the range of emotions often inherent in scholar activism, challenging my teleological thinking and focus on sense making (Andreotti, 2016). 3) Expanding my understanding of relational accountability in relation to cosmic connection, challenging my anthropocentric reasoning and logocentrism (Andreotti, 2016).

1) Deconstructing assumptions

One characteristic of Western thinking is its desire to organise the world into assumed objective and universally applicable categories with dialectical thinking making one averse to any complications to such categorisations. This is common in social research where:

Social research turns the chaotic and confusing experiences of everyday life into categories of people in society, categories that reflect prevailing political arrangements. The social sciences then assign causal relations to people and social relations in these categories.

(Harding and Norberg, 2005, p.2009).

However, this type of categorisation can lead to incorrect assumptions, a lack of attention to complexity and, when accompanied by understandings of development or best practice, can lead to judgement about the life choices of others based on one's own understanding of evolution (Andreotti, 2016).

Within the field of development, there are often romanticised notions of Indigenous People as a key solution to our current climatic and ecological crisis. This romanticisation draws on two assumptions. Firstly, as Hartnett (2021) notes, development literature assumes Indigenous communities to be unchanging, living in a 'pre-colonial' way. Secondly, that this way of life involves being in harmony with nature in a way unfamiliar to 'modern' capitalist societies (Pearl, 2018; Mc Gregor, Whitaker and Sritharan, 2020). These assumptions support ideas promoted by leading NGOs, such as Minority Rights International, that the 'traditional knowledge' held by Indigenous communities 'could be of immense use in developing adaptation and mitigation strategies on climate change.' (Mihlar, 2008).

As discussed in chapter two, my engagement with IFI and Lumad communities placed me into an ecology of knowledge through which I began defamiliarising myself with oppressive knowledges. This included a defamiliarisation with an assumption that Indigenous communities are un-changing and in an exemplary relationship with nature.

These assumptions and other biases I identified were in line with the mythical categorisations Berkes (2018) claims the Western world holds in relation to Indigenous communities. I began the research with a belief that Indigenous people were the 'Exotic other', with infallible knowledges and a deep spiritual connection with nature, with which they live in perfect balance and harmony (Berkes, 2018).

As mentioned in the methods chapter, I assumed that Lumad communities were a homogenous group who could provide an example of alternatives to neo-liberal capitalism as the dominant form of social organisation. Upon arriving in the community, I was shocked to discover that they were responsible for a portion of the visible deforestation. My shock and disappointment would have been evident as I moved from assumptions of the 'Exotic other' to Berke's second category, the 'Intruding Wastrel', where Indigenous people are said to be careless with the environment and I began asking questions about what could be done to better protect the land. Realising that increasing poverty and a desire for motorbikes and other material goods seen in the city was encouraging Lumad to join the paramilitary challenged my subconscious categorisation of Lumad as the 'Exotic other'. I labelled this group as 'Nobel savage/fallen angels', where Indigenous cultures interact with capitalism and begin to assert their land rights in a way that offends the environmental sensibilities and the idealised notions Westerners hold of the

relationship between Indigenous persons and nature (Berkes, 2018). It is possible that my visible disappointment with the decisions of this group influenced the way in which others spoke about them and narrated their own experiences.

Everyone has biases and the idea of researcher neutrality is a false construction of the neoliberal university (as discussed in the methodology chapter). The problem was that I had not acknowledged or understood these biases and was therefore at increased risk of imposing a Western homogenising gaze on an extremely complex and internally heterogeneous community. Challenging assumptions is one of the practices that Routledge and Derickson (2015) note as being crucial within scholar activism. I was fortunate that the Lumad community in Mindanao held space for me to process as I began to realise the assumptions I was making and the way in which I was projecting these throughout interviews and conversations. They allowed me to go back to previous topics and ask for clarification and elaboration wherever needed, correcting my assumptions and enabling me to gain a better understanding of inter and intra tribal differences that informed the way in which I analysed and wrote about the Lumad situation. I was grateful for my realisation and the grace of the community. This experience highlights another challenge of research where the security situation means that sustained ethnographic engagement is not always possible; I may have been making other assumptions that I still have not realised due to limited time in communities. These incorrect assumptions and the biases behind them will then have influenced this research, my analysis and write up without my conscious knowledge.

2) Emotions and sense making

There has been increasing scholarly attention to the emotions and emotional wellbeing of researchers with arguments for increased emotional support from institutions (Dickson-Swift *et al.*, 2009) as well as discussions of how to identify emotional risks and locate emotions in a way that deepens our understanding of the research area (Emerald and Carpenter, 2015). Emotions are not something unfortunate and unavoidable. They are an essential part of the research process to which the researcher needs to be open if the ceremony of the research process is to be transformative. This means inviting emotions in, not viewing them as risks to be managed. To assist with this Andreotti (2016, p.87) suggests a process of sense sensing, countering logic focused Western understandings of the world that limit our possibilities of knowing and fully experiencing what it means to be human, she suggests:

You need to recall

how to listen with your guts

how to see with your eyes closed

how to grow with your heart

how to connect through your flesh

how to heal with your breathing

some useful advice may help...

remember the sense of resonance

of being in unison with
the vibration of the universe
(feel it in the pit of your stomach)

Andreotti's poetic description sounds like a moving, but pleasant experience. My first sense sensing moment hit me like a tonne of bricks. It took place in Surigao, when one of the IFI collaborators took me to see the impact of open pit mining. As I stood in silence at the top of a deforested mountain and watched the bare red soil bleed into the sea, my gut angered, my eyes welled up and my flesh tingled. My breathing just about held me together. I felt the vibration of the abused earth and it haunted me. This moved me beyond my mind and my senses, hauled into the process of sense sensing, infused by sadness, anger and guilt. This was the first time I felt a spiritual connection with the research, that I was moved by a collective vision and understood the importance of land in Indigenous research methodologies, the importance of standing still and taking time to feel. It was in this moment of sense sensing that I became fully engaged with the research.

Whilst an essential and valuable part of the research process, the emotions that derive from sense-sensing are often challenging. Routledge and Derickson (2015), identify anger as a key emotion that can move scholars to engage in activist work. They also note the potential dangers if we cannot 'craft and direct our anger in ways that are effective both for our research and for empowering progressive political practices.' (Routledge and Derickson, 2015, p.397). Their argument is extendable to other emotions, including the sadness and guilt I felt on top of the mountain in

Surigao. These emotions were at times debilitating. For example, in January 2021 when a number of events in the Philippines left me feeling like everyone I had been collaborating with was in increased danger, that the research would go no way to alleviating this situation and I realised that the COVID-19 pandemic meant the end of all future fieldwork. My teleological thinking had attached itself to a plan in which I continued to build relationships and in which we could see real improvements in the situation. I was not prepared for the lack of connection alongside a worsening situation for many of the research collaborators. I was fortunate that the policy work and networks I engaged with gave me a productive outlet for this anger and helped me to avoid the lonely research journey (Chatterton, Hodkinson and Pickerill, 2010). Emotions should not be seen as an inevitable negative outcome of engaging in research that need to be managed. It is essential that researchers are supported as they undergo the often messy and confusing process of being transformed by the research in which they are engaged.

3) Relational Accountability and Cosmic Connection

Within Indigenous research understandings of relational accountability relationships extend beyond those held with humans:

We are accountable to ourselves, the community, our environment or cosmos as a whole and also to the idea or topics that we are researching. We have all of these relationships that we need to uphold.
(Wilson, 2008, p. 106).

Thinking beyond my initial anthropocentric plan of ensuring the research benefitted all human participants through policy engagement I wondered what it meant to 'Be the change we want to see'. (Chatterton, Hodkinson and Pickerill, 2010, p.265) in relation to the cosmos. Chatterton, Hodkinson and Pickerill encourage us to live what we are preaching and encourage others to do the same. This is not straightforward. I have not moved to an ecovillage because, although this sounds idyllic, I do not want to leave my friends, family and community. What being the change then meant for me was both something much smaller and more specific to my situation. The small way in which this research impacted my life daily included taking my shoes off every day and walking on the ground; hugging trees until I could feel their energy, it meant reconnecting with nature. It meant taking these small recommendations given by research collaborators seriously and allowing them to have a big impact on my life. These small changes facilitated a greater cosmic connection, allowing me to continue a sense of responsibility and personal link to the research even when I was separated from the 'field' by great geographical distances.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have highlighted some of the advantages and challenges I experienced when drawing from Indigenous, scholar activist and feminist methodologies. Extrapolating from my own experience, I have suggested that it can be helpful to approach extant methodological literature as tools that shape the value commitments of the researcher, rather than as lists of specific practices for researchers to follow. This approach allows for greater flexibility when reality calls into question commonly held assumptions, such as the ideal of spending extended

amounts of time with a community, and when research experience raises complicated questions, such as whose ethics count. Drawing on the values from these three methodologies allowed me to prioritise the desires of the community above the assumed 'best practices' of Western research, increased my willingness and ability to respond to community desires and encouraged me to be flexible despite having to comply with Western research practices such as university ethics reviews. It is only when researchers prioritise values over set practices that they are able to recognise divergent community desires from a multitude of contexts and the power of the researcher and the academy as the primary knowledge holders can begin to be decentred.

However, the possibility of decentring the researcher also depends on how the researcher's positionality is constructed and interpreted. The power that research collaborators assign to a researcher's position affect the community's involvement in the research and the way in which they construct and articulate the benefit the project will bring (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). One danger highlighted in this chapter is that communities assume the researcher has more power than they do. In this case, the mere presence of the researcher raises expectations that the researcher cannot meet, despite a responsive, scholar activist methodology. The difference between expectations and scholar activist realities is further complicated by different time-frames in which communities often desire immediate change but policy and activist circles move slowly. Scholar activist research must then balance the need for systemic, policy and immediate change in order to be responsive to the varied desires and needs of the communities to whom they are accountable. To

ensure accountability and maximise the impact of research, research funding and planning should ensure sufficient resources to address all three levels of change when desired. However, there is also a need to be realistic as policy research necessarily sits within existing neo-colonial structures. The research itself sought to expand and challenge the knowledge on which this system is built. However, the need to garner support for an issue often results in policy research drawing from existing law and policies, using existing categorisations and areas of interest that on a broader scale, support the maintenance of the neo-colonial status quo. For example, the desire of this research to use wealthy, colonial governments, such as the UK and those who sit on the HRC to effectively punish the Filipino government for its human rights abuses without looking at the internal and international actions of these countries themselves.

This chapter also addressed the role that non-academic partners, such as USPG, might play in scholar activist research, noting particularly how working through a third party can facilitate the transferability of trust, especially in the early days of a research project. Challenges to these relationships are not insurmountable and such collaborations provide a cost effective way of engaging in scholar activist research. They allow the researcher to build on the existing relationships of trust and the organisation to use the research to inform programming and policy whilst both maintaining independence. Furthermore, if research is to be a truly collaborative process from its conception then such relationships provide a way of engaging with potential researcher collaborators to understand their priorities and struggle before the research design and prior to any funding applications.

This chapter highlighted some of the ways in which involvement in the research has transformed me personally. I continue to reflect upon the need to see things in a different way, build relationships, and learn from those who are the other side of the abyssal line. This, I believe, is essential at a larger scale if those of us 'this' side of the abyssal line are to open our eyes to the oppression of dominant systems. This raises the question; how does a moving process of sense sensing that challenges the privileged West take place on a large scale? As I will share in the following chapters, it is through relationships that the IFI have been transformed, that their ideas of Indigenous people have been challenged, and that aid has become a means of continuing the struggle. However, the journey to this point has been complicated and involved exploitation and unequal power dynamics. How can this transformation happen without exploitation; without making it the responsibility of those already marginalised to educate the privileged; without returning to poverty porn; without copious air travel and slum tourism? Whilst I reflect on some of these questions throughout this thesis, for me, they remain largely unanswered.

CHAPTER 4 - *THE LUMAD STRUGGLE*

As I stand on a dusty rock on the top of a mountain in Surigao, where luscious forests once thrived, I see first-hand the remnants of the death and destruction caused by the capitalist system; a system rationalised and maintained by the colonial matrix of power. I stand frozen, looking across hundreds of acres of scarred, pitted land, bereft of trees and heavily mined. I am numbed by the extent of this destruction. The once pristine seawater in the distance has been stained red by the blood of the earth. The ability to freeze in the face of such destruction is a privilege and one that Lumad communities cannot afford. Instead, for them, the centuries of death, destruction and displacement are a call to action. They draw strength from their wounded landscape, the spirits of the land, trees and rivers and their forebears who fought tirelessly against the exploitation of people and planet for profit and power.

Introduction

Indigenous struggles around the world continue to resist the oppression of the colonial matrix of power and the neo-liberal capitalist exploitation of their land. As discussed in the introduction, the colonial matrix of power is the way colonial powers seek to control the economy of a given location, through the exploitation of land, nature and labour; demand authority through military and institutional means including the use of law; control gender and sexuality, subjectivity and the transference of knowledge (Quijano, 2010). This matrix is racist and gendered, oppressing those it deems as other to the other side of the abyssal line (de Sousa Santos, 2018). In the case of *the* Lumad struggle, the primary oppressor is the Filipino government and its military wing that forcibly removes Lumad communities,

red-tags and persecutes their leaders. The actions of the Filipino government aligns with Mbembe's (2019) description of a necropolitical state in which, building on the power it inherited from its Spanish, American and Filipino predecessors, the state maintains the right to decide who lives and who dies. Whilst connected in movements against this matrix and the capitalist exploitation it enables, each of these struggles is unique, rooted in a particular community with its own economic, social, spiritual and educational context. An understanding of the multiple and intersecting oppressions faced by individual communities can deepen our understanding of the local impact of the colonial matrix of power whilst bringing to light similarities between Indigenous movements around the world.

This chapter focuses on the Lumad struggle against the multinational companies who violate their lands for financial profits (Donson, 2003, p.297; Alamon, 2016). It discusses what is commonly referred to as *the* Lumad struggle beginning with Lumad schools as a site in which knowledge is purposefully passed between generations highlighting the key role of education in Indigenous struggle. Acknowledging the commonalities in Lumad struggles I then proceed to argue that if we expand our understanding of what is commonly understood as *the* struggle we will see that there is greater resistance to neoliberal capitalist ideas of development than might initially meet the eye.

Existing Literature

The accuracy of scholarly literature concerning Lumad communities diverges greatly with some articles sharing profound misunderstandings. For example, Droz et al., (2022) refers to Lumad as a language, included in a list of other languages in which

they include Filipino and Cebuano. They write that Lumad is ‘a third indigenous language used in the Philippines by the Manobo Indigenous Peoples of Mindanao’ (2022, p.8). However, Manobo are a Lumad tribe with great internal ethnolinguistic diversity amongst its sub-tribes (Paredes, 2016). When explaining this diversity to me, students at the Lumad Bakwit School shared that it was common for Manobo students from different tribes who did not speak Tagalog or Cebuano to be unable to communicate with each other.

Outweighing such factually incorrect articles, there is a plethora of work that contributes to understandings of the historical struggle of Lumad communities, their worldviews and experiences in the present. Lumad have been active agents in the creation of much of this literature and different tribes have partnered with non-governmental organisations, such as the Tebtebba foundation, and academics, such as Alamon in order to share their stories and raise awareness of their struggle.

One centrally important book is *A Mountain of Difference* (Paredes, 2013) in which Paredes offers an important history, detailing responses of Lumad communities to the arrival of Spanish missionaries and colonial officials in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. She makes a particularly strong case for Lumad as active agents, using religious clergy to negotiate with Spanish officials on their behalf (2013). I drew upon this history in the introduction chapter and build upon Paredes’ identification of Lumad as active agents throughout this chapter.

In addition to her book, and gaining her a reputation as a leading expert in Southeast Asian studies,²⁷ Paredes has published at least six articles concerning the lives of Lumad in Mindanao. Her work focuses on the Higaunon who belong to the Manobo family. As Paredes notes, the Higaunon people ‘comprise one of the largest Lumad ethnic groups today, with their territory reaching across five different provinces in northern Mindanao.’ (Paredes, 2016, p.330). Her work includes understandings of why tribes adopt the ‘indigenous’ label and how they use it (2019), conceptualisations of indigeneity (2022) and the relationship between Lumad and their Moro neighbours (2015). Through these papers, Paredes provides a clear understanding of the legal and political contexts in which Lumad communities find themselves.

Furthermore, Paredes shares the worldview and cultural practices of Higaunon stating, for example that:

water, more than any other element, transports the Higaunon along time and space, encapsulates their historicity and moral boundaries, and plays a profound and often transformative role in their identity and their oral traditions. (2016, p.331).

Whilst noting the importance of different elements and nature in the Higaunon worldview, Paredes (like Berkes, 2018) cautions against the assumptions held by the majority society that Indigenous people have a spiritual connection with nature that leads to an infallible relationship with it. She shares that ‘ethnic minorities are

²⁷ Evidenced, for example, by her invitation to give the keynote address at a two day SOAS conference focusing on Mindanao (Paredes, 2022).

expected to somehow be more ethical when it comes to nature and to personal relationships' (2019, p.88). Challenging this assumption, she shares that

individual Higaunons have several competing priorities that cut across different communities, generations, and religious or political alliances, as well as divergent cultural expectations of the Philippine state and Filipino society as a whole. It is a fierce debate over what, exactly, constitutes an authentic Higaunon identity (2019, p.88).

Such intra-tribal difference is an important theme of this thesis and something highlighted by other scholars in relation to Lumad communities. Yambo et al., for example, note that 'Communities and families are at times divided.' (2022 p.264) with some, for example joining the Armed forces of the Philippines (AFP) and others the NPA (Yambo et al., 2022). However, neither Paredes (2019) nor Yambo et al., (2022) offer any further details or analysis of why such differences exist or the impact they have on the communities concerned. I contribute to this gap in the literature by detailing different responses and their perceived impacts.

I further contribute to the literature by adding the worldview of the Bayan community. Extant literature often poses its findings as generalizable to all Lumad. For example, Paredes opens an article exclusively focused on the Higaunons by stating that 'Rivers give social meaning to the past and present lives of the 'tribal' Lumad peoples of Mindanao, in the southern Philippines.' (Paredes, 2016, p.329). This is untrue where Bayan are concerned. Their history is more fractious and they transmit no stories of Lumad as lowlanders who lived by the water that influence the community today. Projecting the worldviews of one community onto another risks hegemonising

the worldview of the larger, more easily accessible Lumad tribes such as the Manobo to whom the Higaunon belong, whilst marginalising that of others.

In outlining *the* Lumad struggle against the neo-liberal capitalist system throughout this chapter, I draw heavily on the second book mentioned, *A War of Extinction* by Alamon (2017). Alamon outlines the persecution of Luamd communities from American occupation into the present. He argues that successive governments have deliberately persecuted and harassed Lumad communities, using extreme measures including extra-judicial killings to instil a terror in these communities that forces them to leave their lands. These forced departures then open up the land to financially focused exploration and exploitation. Alamon argues that commonly used terms such as 'structural discrimination' are insufficient to describe the government's violent persecution of Lumad communities. What is taking place, he argues, is more accurately described as a war of extinction.

Whilst useful in understanding *the* Lumad struggle, Alamon does not acknowledge other forms of struggle. Countering this, Simons (2021) notes the presence of both 'radical-left Lumad groups' and

Lumad-led radical right military and para-military leaders [who have] made concerted, trans-tribal efforts to develop an armed, anti-communist network of indigenous counterinsurgency forces and intelligence assets across Mindanao. (2021, p.216).

Given such analysis he asks how we make sense of the fact that ‘Lumad leaders take divergent paths, yet with ostensibly the same goal of asserting Lumad rights to self-determination and protecting Lumad communities and culture?’ (2021, p.216). I aim to provide some insight into the answer to this question throughout this chapter. I suggest that such divergence is, at least in large part, a result of differing assessments of what path is most likely to result in Lumad communities retaining their ancestral lands, free to live and develop their culture as they see fit.

Simon’s work offers a further contribution of particular relevance to this research when in relation to the ‘Lumad-led radical right’ he highlights the recent conversion of Lumad communities ‘to fundamentalist and Evangelical brands of Christianity’ through which they ‘integrated a Biblically-centred moreal discourse justifying their counterinsurgency violence.’ (Simons, 2021, p.218). This suggests that whilst the ecology of knowledge between the IFI and Lumad communities encourages the IFI to consciously move themselves to the ‘other’ side of the abyssal line (as discussed in chapter six) there may be another such process by which Churches are encouraging Lumad communities to adopt more exploitative theologies and practices. Further research in this area could support understandings of the potential role of Churches and other religious institutions in the formation of knowledges that support or oppress the struggle against the neoliberal system.

The existence of Bakwit schools and the ease of access that they provide has resulted in more numerous relationships between scholars and these Lumad communities, resulting in an increase in publications. This welcome development is evidence of progress towards one stated aim of the Bakwit Schools: to raise

awareness of the Lumad situation across the Philippines and beyond. One example of such work is that by Jose Monfred Sy, a teacher at the Lumad Bakwit School hosted by the University of the Philippines whose work focuses on the pedagogical approach of Lumad Schools.²⁸ Sy emphasises the link between Lumad movements and the struggle to protect their ancestral domains citing “it takes a movement to build schools.” (Sy, 2022a, p.239) as the key phrase used to on-board new teachers. He highlights the efforts of Lumad communities and the importance of allied organizations and advocates in establishing Lumad schools, which ‘advanced the rights to education and self-determination of the Lumad youth not only by teaching them but also by participating directly in the Lumad social movement.’ (Sy, 2022a, p.458). He argues that the continuation of schooling despite persecution, primarily through Bakwit Schools, demonstrates how ‘the Lumad peoples engage in contentious politics against authoritarianism through schooling.’ (Sy, 2023).

The existence of Lumad Bakwit Schools served to increase the proximity between Lumad students from a variety of ethnolinguistic backgrounds. Existing literature provides insightful reflection on how students incorporated different practices into these diverse spaces. For example, Yambo et al., (2022) reflect how young Talaingod Manobo men would create makeshift spaces in which they could work together to solve problems. In this space, students would

²⁸ See for example, Sy (2021) *Lumad and Bakwit Schools amid the Pandemic Report from Teachers, Students, and Parents* and Sy (2022) *Till the land, defend the land: reflections on the critical place-based pedagogy of the Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural*.

enact what they had learned from their elders on how to be a datu (leader). Sometimes, they would wear the traditional Manobo kinaraan and tangkulo (head piece), depending on the gravity of the matters under discussion, the mood in the bakwit center, and circumstances back home. (2022, p.272).

In this way, the presence of the Bakwit Schools can provide insight into Lumad communities where engagement has previously been limited. However, Lumad Manobo form the majority of the student population and communities in the West of the Mindanao in particular remain marginalised.

Existing literature paints a picture of Lumad indigenous communities as active agents that continue to resist their own oppression, seeking support from allies and using schooling as an important vehicle of awareness raising. These are all themes on which I elaborate throughout this chapter.

Unity

For Lumad, land is life. Policy circles, civil society, community members, teachers and students I interviewed often use this refrain as *the* marker of Lumad identity. Lumad is said to mean of, or from, the earth, with land at the centre of Lumad spiritual and physical wellbeing. As outlined in the introduction chapter, Lumad ancestral lands have been under threat since the land grabbing practices of the Spanish that paved the way for subsequent powers' "development" policies, forcing Lumad communities higher into the mountains (Paredes, 2013). Forced removals have persisted throughout recent history despite the introduction of legal recourse

such as the Philippines Indigenous People's Rights Act of 1997 (RA 8371) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons, to which the Philippines are signatories. For example, Global Watch (2020) estimate that 636 thousand hectares of tree cover have been lost in Mindanao in the past two decades. In recent years the government have approved at least three mining tenements covering 17,000 hectares of land in the Pantaron region alone (IWGIA, 2020) and plans for dams in the Pantaron threaten to flood around 2,833 hectares, destroying biodiversity and displacing up to 30,000 people (Aspinwall, 2020). These abuses of the land and the rights of indigenous people have all taken place in the name of development within a capitalist ideology as subsequent governments have sought to facilitate the projects of national and international mining, plantation and logging companies (Alamon, 2017). Because of such projects, the struggle for ancestral domain and the right to self-determination was identified as the most important concern for the eleven Lumad tribes who took part in the Tebtebba Foundation's extensive research project on Lumad culture (Tebtebba, 2014).

The destruction of Lumad land is a direct threat to their way of life. Communities are intimately connected to their land and ecosystems where 'ancestral land is life...' (32). There is a physical reliance on the land for food, shelter and medicine and a spiritual connection through the spirits of the rivers, trees, rocks and air (Paredes, 2016; Alamon, 2017; Tebtebba, 2014). This connection is embodied through the respect with which Lumad interact with the environment. For example, one Bai (female leader or chieftain) shared how care is taken not to disturb spirits noting that

when we go to the forest we say excuse me or excuse us because we believe that there are spirits who are staying there and we are being careful of holding this peace (32).

Lumad connection with their land motivates the continuation of their struggle despite persecution.

An experience shared by one young male during my time in the Bayan community demonstrates the intimate relationship between Lumad communities, their land as life and their resistance to persecution. This community member shared how a few weeks before my arrival, he and another friend found themselves face down in the mud with automatic weapons pressed into the back of their heads as military officials accused them of being members of the NPA simply because they were out at night. What the military personnel had failed to comprehend was that these young men had been hunting a particular frog that only comes out at night. The community believe the frog has healing properties; they use it in the creation of medicines and as part of spiritual rituals. Human wellbeing is dependent upon nature; people and the build environment are part of an interconnected ecosystem, not separate from it.

When reflecting upon such persecution, the leader of one women's group shared that 'we are also worried that they will come and that they will be slaughtered, but still we will stand firm for our land drives Lumad struggle to continue despite persecution.' (8).

One way in which Lumad communities strive to protect themselves from such persecution is through ritual, which further evidences the interconnected ecosystem at the centre of the Lumad cosmologies. I experienced the practical outworking of

this cosmology during my time in Bayan. Before the evening meal outside our hosts' house, they selected a chicken for sacrifice. The gather of the family used a knife to cut the chicken's throat as his wife collected the blood in a small bowl. The father then invited each of us to paint our hands with the chicken's blood and smear it over the support beams that held up the house. Our host's family took turns to speak a prayer throughout this process and whilst it felt inappropriate to ask for a translation or to record the words spoken we were told that the purpose of the ritual was to protect us throughout the night. In a combination of spiritual and nutritional needs, the chicken was then cooked and served for the evening meal. Such a relationship with one's ancestral land suggests that the physical and spiritual wellbeing of those the military have already forcibly removed is at risk.

A further way in which communities strive to protect themselves is through engaging with supportive 'outsiders' such as the IFI. Lumad land practices are necessarily communal and events such as harvest involve the whole community. However, such large farming practices have attracted military attention, with armed military personnel ready to take that which the community harvest. As a result, some communities invited 'outsiders' such as the IFI to partake in these practices, based on a belief that their presence will offer protection from military theft. A belief that, to date has held to be true. The persecution of Lumad communities is a result of the vast gorge between Lumad worldviews, in which respect and connection with land are central to one's being, and the Filipino government's capitalist ideology, in which land is a resource to be exploited for financial gain. For example, the government are clear that 'The mining industry plays a very important role in the country's economic development.' (Philippine Statistics Authority, n.d.), noting the employment

opportunities, infrastructure development, foreign-exchange earnings and tax revenues it provides. Whilst the second of the two paragraphs on the government website outlining mining potential and benefits in the Philippines ends with a short acknowledgement that there is the 'potential' for environmental and ecological problems there is no mention of the human or spiritual cost of such activity. The government's lack of concern for those affected is evidenced by their absence from such literature.

It is the abuse of Lumad communities that results from these different worldviews and the government's lack of concern for indigenous people that unites Lumad tribes.

According to one prominent Datu:

The tribes are united in their evacuation, they are united in their stand and their plight on what happens in their respective communities back in Mindanao. So, it is their plight, their struggle and the evacuation itself that binds them together (33).

Not all Lumad share this sentiment, a theme that I explore shortly. However, it is this united stance against capitalist exploitation of Lumad land that the aforementioned groups label *the* Lumad struggle. *The* struggle engages the government, organises and participates in peaceful protests such as Manilakbayan (an Indigenous mobilisation that travels from Mindanao to Manila), and forms solidarity links with civil society within the Philippines and beyond, including links the IFI.

Education as the Highest Form of Resistance

The Philippines legislature surrounding the rights of Indigenous children to a culturally appropriate education is strong. The Filipino state recognises the right of Indigenous people to a culturally appropriate education, identifying the transmission of Indigenous knowledges as a way for Indigenous communities to ‘preserve and develop their cultures, traditions and institutions.’ (IPRA, 1997, p.1). In support of Indigenous peoples’ right to education, the Department of Education (DepED) adopted the National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework (DO62) that claims to value culturally rooted knowledge and raise awareness of Indigenous cultures amongst the wider Filipino population, working ‘to promote greater awareness and appreciation of the indigenous peoples’ cultural heritage and history.’ These frameworks are designed to enable the education of Indigenous children within the state education system, ensuring that government schools are

free from discriminatory content and erroneous accounts, descriptions, and visual depictions, which misrepresent the history and culture of indigenous peoples or do not adequately acknowledge them (DO62, 2011, p.5).

Despite such frameworks, the tendency of the colonial matrix of power to control subjectivity and the transference of knowledge reigns supreme. The situation outlined by Schirmer and Shalom (1987) in the 1980s persists with a large cultural distance between the state syllabus and the everyday lives of the Lumad students, which marginalises them within the classroom, justifies the neoliberal capitalist system that oppresses them and raises concerns amongst parents and elders about their children’s estrangement from Lumad culture (Tebtebba, 2014). For example, one

parent I interviewed noted ‘the kind of teaching is what is not included, like about the Lumad culture, and how to preserve ancestral domains, and how to preserve human dignity and human rights.’ (34). To exemplify the cultural differences between Lumad schools and state schools interviewees discussed the subjects not included within DepEd curricula, including agriculture and human rights.

In response to the challenges presented by the state education system Lumad formed their own schools in the 1980s. The schools are a result of the struggle and commitment of parents and leaders to ensure their children received an inclusive and culturally appropriate education. They are a response to the abuse of the colonial matrix of power and its attempts to control Lumad knowledge. They were created to enable a space in which Indigenous knowledge is transferred, Lumad identity respected and children prepared for the struggle against the subjugation of their culture and their economic exploitation (Torres, 2019; Sy, 2022b; Magdadaro and Sacramento, 2022). They teach Lumad history, dance and songs, drawing upon spiritual beliefs and ancestral teachings with learning undertaken for the benefit of the community and inspired by the lives of past leaders. The schools further Lumad thinking and develop their understanding of current events including politics and the global ecological crisis teaching common subjects such as economics from a Lumad perspective and retaining an agricultural focus (Torres, 2019; Sy, 2022b; Sy, 2022c)).

In addition to their concerns about subjects and subject matter, parents shared their apprehensions regarding the values and behaviour seen in state schools. For example, one mother who had two younger children in Lumad schools and two older children in government schools (as there was no Lumad senior high) shared that:

Children in the Lumad schools are very much well-disciplined and respectful, especially to the parents. Whereas here the government school, students, the children are not so very disciplined and sometimes disrespectful (34).

She shared how her children who were attending state school did not want to do any household work or work in the field whereas:

the other two, through the Lumad school is developing the skill of the child, in terms of agriculture, when they come home we don't have to talk to them, to tell them to do this, do that. They have initiative. They do the work, the household work, the works in the field (34).

This quote highlights parents' concerns that Lumad agricultural life was stigmatised within mainstream education with students instead taught to place value on individual financial gain and incorporation into the capitalist system.

Many of the older students at the Bakwit School shared similar concerns about the values encouraged within state education with one student describing a situation in which:

The Philippine educational system is a commercialised, colonized and fascist kind of education system. The dep ed [department of

education], they focus on the students to be exported like labour export policy, it is not just the goods that they export, it is the people too... the mind of the mainstream universities and schools is they study to gain more money to become rich because you know dollar is so big when converted into peso so they want to go abroad (3).

The student contrasted this export-oriented cultural and economic system with the local, communal focus of the Lumad schools where:

We study for the benefits of the community, not for the other country...In our school the concept of the students, they want to learn to defend their rights they want to graduate for the benefit of the other children who are not in school (3).

This decolonised education makes Lumad schools the highest form of struggle and resistance. Through a decolonial syllabus the schools facilitate the conscientization of the students, who are encouraged to analyse the failures of the existing system and the political and economic power relations that support it. Focusing on Maori, but acknowledging the applicability of his framework for other Indigenous communities, Smith (2009) identifies this conscientization alongside transformative action and resistance as the key elements of educational resistance that grows from struggle. For Lumad schools, conscientization begins with the youngest students. For example, when learning phonics 'The teacher will not teach like a is for apple because there is no apple in the Philippines' (36) and using apple as a reference point encourages students to view the environment of colonial powers as the norm. Agolade on the other hand is a type of corn that students can see in their immediate

environment. Amongst the older students, conscientization is more direct with students taught about the historic oppression of their people and the ongoing abuses of their lands and culture today. Particular focus is placed on ensuring students understand the link between the exploitation of people and planet and the neo-liberal capitalist system, with economics classes examining the failures of this system (Sy, 2022c).

To facilitate the students' understanding of their options for resistance to this abuse the schools teach about human and Indigenous rights as enshrined in national and international law. In recent history, military have forced or tricked Lumad into signing FPIC documentation that transfers ownership of their land to large corporations or tricked them into signing supposed confessions of their membership to the NPA (Perez-Rubio, 2019, p.13). According to the leaders at the Bakwit School, Lumad schools 'provides education for them to write for them to read what is the content of the letters that the government want them to sign.' (1). Students themselves understood the intention behind the process of conscientization through education to facilitate resistance, sharing that:

the tribal leaders are united to put up the schools for education and nourishment of the young people and if someone wants their signatory they can understand what is written in the documents.... so that they will not be tricked and cheated by the capitalists and landlords and landgrabbers and things like that. (2).

For Smith, Indigenous struggle can be entered into through any of the elements; conscientization, transformative action or resistance, which form a circular process with the possibility for experiencing multiple elements at a time. Whilst the experience of each individual and what led them to attend a Lumad school as an act of resistance is different, once in the school students described a clear process of conscientization followed by resistance. For example, in relation to the Pantaron mountain range one student shared how their school 'educates people about the Pantaron...At the same time it is also the form of struggle for resistance on what is happening on the Pantaron range...' (1). The resistance includes raising awareness of the abuse of the Pantaron range with legislators and amongst national and national civil society, registering concerns with the UN, organising rallies, participating in Manilakbayan and other visible acts of civil resistance. Lumad education is inextricably linked with the Lumad struggle for self-determination and their ancestral lands.

Lumad schools have paid a high price for providing an education that fuels and sustains their struggle. The schools initially received government support, winning awards and praise. Support waned as the struggle strengthened. By 2015, state harassment of Lumad schools had become the norm and on September 1st the executive director of a school in Lianga, Surigao del Sur and two community leaders were extrajudicially killed (Manlupig, 2015). Abuses and forced school closures gained momentum under Duterte's six year Presidency with early labelling of the schools as training sites for communist terrorists in order to supposedly justify their bombing, burning and harassment (Lingao, 2017). On the 11th of October 2019 the

Department of Education gave the order to close all Indigenous schools (Cagula, 2020) and by 2022 at least 178 of the 200 Lumad schools had been forcibly closed. According to Lumad teachers and students this abuse of their right to a culturally appropriate education is directly related to the government's desire to exploit their lands. One student described a situation in which:

the state forces and even the government, they forcibly close the schools...the government wants that the Lumad don't have an education for them to be cheated [so that] they can cheat the Lumad (2).

Government opposition to Lumad schools is a tactic to reduce to the consentization and resistance of Indigenous communities in order to reduce resistance to neo-liberal capitalist exploitation of Indigenous lands.

Bakwit Schools

One response to the persecution of Lumad schools has been the formation of the aforementioned Bakwit, or evacuee, schools, one on each of the main islands; Mindanao, the Visayas and Luzon. These schools are an example of transformative action (Smith, 2009) that strives to continue the education of those already displaced, whose schools have been closed or destroyed. The Bakwit Schools, like all Lumad schools, are a key site of struggle against neo-colonial capitalist policies and ideologies. They welcome students from all tribes and provide the same cultural education as those schools now closed in the communities. In their study of the three Bakwit Schools Yambo et al., (2022, p.261) adeptly describe them as

sites in which Lumads of diverse ages, ethnicities, and social standing actively remake their relations with themselves, with their surroundings, and with others; they are sites of intergenerational communication and consternation; they are sites of pan-ethnic identity formation and solidarity; and they are sites of despair, repair, and potentially transformation.

Establishing one school on each of the main islands was an intentional tactic to raise awareness of the Lumad struggle amongst the general Filipino population. This has resulted in a proliferation of literature and social media content on the Lumad situation, increased collaborations with civil society organisations and additional engagement with international policymaking spheres.

Persistent Persecution

The success of the Bakwit Schools in raising awareness and continuing Lumad education is also what led to their closure. Demonstrating the same opposition to Indigenous education as they did with community schools the government successfully forced the closure of all three Bakwit Schools between January 2020 and July 2022. On 25 January 2020, the UCCP mission centre hosting the Bakwit School in Harran was destroyed by paramilitary and suspected state agents after it refused to stop teaching in response to the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC)-11 resolution, which sought its immediate closure (NCCP, 2020). On 18

January 2021 the 1989 University of Philippines (UP)- Department of National Defense (DND) (Congress of the Republic of the Philippines, 2021) accord that prevented state forces from entering any University of the Philippines campuses was unilaterally terminated by the DND. Collaborators at the School used online platforms to share their shock and anger; a week later, this anger had turned to fear; a week later and collaborators were visibly exhausted as the stress of being on constant alert began to take its toll. On 15 February 2021, police raided the Bakwit School in Cebu arresting twenty-one students, two elders and two teachers (Save Our Schools Cebu, 2021). Upon the graduation of 30 students on 18 July 2021, in light of the termination of the aforementioned accord and the raid on the school in Cebu, students and teachers decided to close the Bakwit School hosted by the University of the Philippines. These closures, students and teachers shared, were due to forced harassment, intimidation and the difficulty of constantly living in fear. Despite this, the Lumad struggle for education continues with teachers and students returning home to consolidate their experiences and plan the next steps of the struggle.

What can we learn?

The Bakwit Schools offer important lessons for the next steps of the Lumad struggle, for Indigenous education, education of displaced persons and decolonised education more broadly. Those displaced are forced to interact with the dominant social, cultural and economic system within which they find themselves. Interviewees shared the difficulty of this given the location of the University of the Philippines campus in Quezon, a busy metropolitan city. They shared how the city could:

make your culture divert into bourgeoisie culture like the western culture so it is so hard...like pop culture and the way they dress...And then the food, like I don't want to eat vegetables I want chicken but in the community you eat the vegetables (3).

The increasing influence from popular culture in Quezon was said to include the increasing use of cell phones and social media, pop music and Jolibee (a popular fast-food chain). The geographical location of the Bakwit Schools was designed to assist the Lumad in their aim to increase the spread of their resistance and raise greater awareness of their struggle. However, it also poses a challenge to the School's aim to defamiliarise students from colonial values and ways of knowing, refamiliarising them with Lumad knowledge, culture and values.

Furthermore, those displaced are at risk of disconnection from that which gives them energy, belonging and supports their spirituality. For Lumad, land is life, and being away from their land, with no alternative land with which to connect or to farm was a challenge many students shared. Teachers noted the distance between the student's and Lumad's source of spirituality as particularly challenging given the secularised culture of Quezon. They shared that students' had begun questioning God. For example,

there is a Manama who protects the nature but...if there is God why he or she did not protect the Lumad, why the military wants us to leave our own community like that. That is the question for the existence of God (4).

When asked whether they still observed religious practices the students responded that ‘we don’t try to pray to God but we follow the culture, we have the prayer.’ (4) demonstrating religious bonding, behaving and belonging without necessarily believing (Saraglou, 2011). Their practice was more about cultural belonging than believing in a higher power or energy. These comments highlight the difficulty of providing a culturally appropriate education when separated from one’s land and way of life.

The hosting of the Bakwit School by the University of the Philippines posed a further challenge to students’ defamiliarisation with colonial values whilst highlighting the pervasiveness of existing epistemic hierarchies. When the University of the Philippines offered to host the Bakwit School, the Chancellor defined the Lumads as visiting Professors, stating that ‘It’s an opportunity to educate our students’ (Mateo, 2015). University spokesperson Professor Rex Nepomuceno referred to the hosting of the Lumads as both their responsibility as educators and a form of defiance against state abuses of the Lumad persons (Beltran, 2019). The presence of Lumad students and teachers provided an opportunity for the development of an ecology of knowledge that might support the decolonisation of the academy. The University of the Philippines is known as a liberal institution. However, like all major universities, rooted in a colonial system of knowledge based on universalising theories espoused by a small number of European men and entrenched in imperially-rooted power inequalities (de Sousa Santos, 2010; Grosfoguel, 2013). In an example of the epistemic racism (Grosfoguel, 2012) and colonial knowledge hierarchies, university students and professors taught classes to Lumad students with no reciprocity, or

purposeful attempt to draw from the knowledge of the Bakwit School, even when discussing the decolonisation of the university curriculum.

The experience of the University suggests that for those who are not indigenous, the resistance-transformative action-consientaziation cycle is often a more disparate experience than that seen amongst Lumad and other Indigenous communities globally (Smith, 2009), with one element not necessarily encouraging the other. The University was consientazied as to the needs of the Lumad and their struggle for demilitarisation and protection of their ancestral lands. The offer to host the Bakwit School was a form of resistance against the economic and military dimensions of the colonial matrix of power. However, whilst the University's hosting of the Bakwit School is an example of a non-indigenous institution taking part in indigenous resistance, limited conscientization meant that the University assumed itself to be epistemically superior. It continued its association with colonial hierarchies of knowledge that failed to see Lumad as decolonial educators who have much to teach. Racist epistemic hierarchies prevented the development of an ecology of knowledge through which the University could have learnt from Lumad students and teachers in a way that furthered their consientization and provided transformative action within the University itself. Their experience suggests that, whilst colonial institutions may criticise elements of the matrix of power, each institution is reluctant to criticise the part from which they most benefit. It provides an example of the challenge of forming ecologies of knowledge capable of decolonising the imperial imagination and a warning of the necessity of defamiliarising from colonial knowledge hierarchies and acknowledging limitations.

Diversity in the Struggle

According to the government, those who oppose them are not really Lumad but members of the NPA (Alamon, 2017). The government frames the anti-capitalist, anti-military Lumad struggle as violent terrorism. To support this argument they work with Lumad who follow similar ideas of development, demonstrating the supposed support of indigenous people for government policy and using this support to justify the labelling of those with other ideologies as terrorists (Philippine News Agency, 2021). According to civil society narratives these pro-government Lumad are not part of the Lumad struggle and are simply puppets of the state. Civil society in turn frame the anti-capitalist, anti-military struggle as peaceful protest, defining opposition to economic exploitation, government control of lands, militarisation and epistemicide as *the* Lumad struggle (Karapatan, 2022). Civil society work with those willing to further their ecological, anti-mining and land rights agendas.

In her book, *In the Struggle* (1994) Diaz argues that the purpose of struggle is to free subjugated knowledges and that it is only by doing so that we will fully understand oppression. However, subjugating knowledge can also be subjugated, particularly when subjugating others is the only option it sees for survival. For example, as I outline below the paramilitary seek to defend their land-based knowledge and remain in their ancestral communities at the same time as subjugating the knowledge held by those in *the* Lumad struggle. Neither the government nor civil society narrative leaves space for discussion of the complex reality and tension between the different

understandings of Lumad struggle. Both co-opt the public narrative to further their own objectives. However, these simplistic narratives mask a complex reality and response to centuries of abuse and oppression. Using a case study, I hope to expand understandings of what might constitute struggle against the colonial matrix of power, enacted through centuries of state tyranny.

The community with which I spent time was located beyond the city's watchful eye, high in one of Mindanao's vast mountain ranges. On the first day we visited Bayan,²⁹ we woke with the city as the bustle of local markets grew from a dull hum to their loud, imposing daily groan. We climbed onto the back of two motorbikes and began our ascent into the mountains. As the bikes negotiated the rocky contours and crystal rivers the anxious energy the city induced in me was gradually replaced by a calming sense of presence brought by the cooling wind. I felt temporary tranquillity, as if I was entering a peaceful refuge, divorced from the heat, noise and demands of the city below. Many Lumad communities have long striven for peace and harmony amongst tribes, with nature and with outsiders (Paredes, 2013). However, centuries of harassment and militarisation have resulted in a contrast between this desire for peace and harmony and the disunity and conflict now experienced on Lumad lands (Perez-Rubio, 2019). As we made our way down a mountainous ravine we were greeted by eight young men in makeshift military uniforms with machine guns by their sides and bullets decorating their chests. Such paramilitary parades have become the norm in Bayan, as has the presence of a military battalion who have seized the

²⁹ For the sake of anonymity, Bayan is not the real name of the area we visit. In Cebuano, Bayan means town.

community hall as their living quarters, patrolling where children play. This paramilitarisation and militarisation of the community is designed to support the state's control, authority and financial benefit from the lands. It enables the regular testing of the soil for minerals and the transformation of narrow windy pathways into roads capable of hosting large logging lorries, a source of severe anxiety for those I interviewed.

Struggle as Paramilitarisation

One crucial way that the militarisation of Bayan supports the state's control of the land is by dividing the community and reducing resistance. State supported tactics of division have been used throughout colonial history and, as detailed by Morrock (1973), most examples have three common components; the creation of difference, the augmentation of difference and the channelling of these differences for the benefit of the neo-colonial state power. In Lumad communities, the creation of difference is rooted in historic exploitation as lands were stolen and traded and Lumad communities had different levels of interaction and success negotiating with colonial powers (Paredes, 2013). These differences are evident in present day scholarship, which outline the particular situation of Lumads living in Muslim homelands (Paredes, 2015), of those forcibly displaced (IDMC, 2015) and of those whose land has been encroached upon (Gaspar, 2015). This literature helps to highlight intertribal differences, which, at its most extreme, has led some to call for a cessation of the term Lumad and the use of ethnic group names instead (Moaje, 2021). Less attention has been paid to intratribal differences and it is on these which this section focuses. The different responses of members of the Bayan community to

the abuses of the colonial matrix of power are a result of a myriad of factors from individual personality to positionality and are dependent upon varying health, nutrition and economic vulnerabilities. As Tebtebba (2014) notes, a Datu's willingness to sell their land may be influenced by their need to meet their own health, such as the need for glasses. The government exploit these vulnerabilities, offering low paid employment or small-scale development projects, encouraging engagement with markets and changing the relationship between people and land, augmenting ideological and political differences within the population.

The starkest example of the government's creation of difference to reduce resistance is the formation of paramilitaries. The government entice mainly young men to take up arms and support the military in exchange for financial and material benefits such as motorbikes. Supported by the military, these paramilitaries provide armed support to facilitate the entry of exploitative capitalist corporations and the forced removal of those within Lumad tribes, labelled as NPA, who resist. They monitor their tribe, installing fear, conducting raids, aiding forced displacements and undertaking executing extra judicial killings at the military's command, all in order to facilitate development projects. As one Lumad leader described:

the people who are in the community are being recruited by the military right now so they are the ones who are helping the military to vacate the community for the mining so the ones who are staying there are the paramilitaries. (1).

The military training, arms and state given power afforded to these paramilitaries has led to a climate of abuse in which, as a Human Rights Watch (2020) report noted

government-backed paramilitaries continue to harass, threaten, arbitrarily arrest, and in some instances attack and kill political activists, environmentalists, community leaders, and journalists.

These abuses led the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to call on the Filipino government to 'Urgently disband and disarm all private and State-backed paramilitary groups'. (OHCHR, 2020, p.17). However, government sanctioned immunity for those who target 'terrorists' enables the military to act outside of national and international law without fear of reprisal. In Bayan this has led to a situation in which:

The people of Bayan have no rights anymore because of what the government are doing and what the military are doing now with this paramilitary. If the military says that this is the things that need to be done, and for us it is not good, then we reject what the military and government offer and then the military and paramilitary give a reaction and we will be attacked, we will be beaten (5).

The result is that whilst some community members struggle to remain on their ancestral land others assist in its exploitation. The difference caused by this military tactic was raised in every interview with Lumad community members and summarised by one interviewee who shared that:

There are people in the Tribe who are pro-military, and there are people in the Tribe who are anti-military. And that is what is happening because the military now have a programme to train Lumad people to become paramilitary (5).

Those described as pro-military are often those who have joined the paramilitary. Within understandings shared by interviewees, these individuals are no longer part of the Lumad struggle but have instead turned their backs on their tribe and on being Lumad. These claims are supported with examples of when paramilitary take part in the massacre of other Lumads, the destruction of Lumad schools or when paramilitary are appointed by the military as Datus and then sign over ancestral lands in FPIC agreements. However, this complete giving up of one's tribal identity when joining the paramilitary was not what I observed in Bayan. Joining the paramilitary enabled these individuals and their families to remain on at least a portion of their ancestral lands and the paramilitaries still wore traditional dress and conducted traditional worship as frequently as other community members, often participating in the same rituals.

In the first half of this chapter, I outlined a Lumad identity centred upon the struggle for ancestral land, in opposition to neo-liberal capitalist development that resists epistemicide. However, in Bayan, as with other Lumad communities, not everyone is united in their opposition to the government's development agenda or the encroachment of foreign companies. Many individuals who appear to be working with the government maintain their customs, including tribal dress and rituals and are often allowed to remain on small portions of their ancestral lands or are relocated to a close location. Rather than becoming puppets of the state, their joining of the paramilitary could instead be described as another form of struggle, enabling them to continue as much of their existing life as possible, given their assessment of the current situation. For example, by joining the paramilitary, who have in theory been

formed to fight the NPA, these individuals are countering the refrain that Lumad are part of the NPA and enabling their family to remain on their land. Within this understanding their violence against their own community members is simply a struggle for survival as, according to the paramilitary, it is the leftist part of the community that has caused the association between Lumad and the NPA to be made. They use Lumad history and tribal customs to justify violence their actions (Paluga and Ragragio, 2016). It can then be argued that those who have joined the paramilitary are struggling to continue Lumad life in a changing environment. They are not, for example, taking the motorbikes they are given and attempting to set up a life in the city. Their struggle is often contrary to that deemed *the* Lumad struggle. However, it is still one against neo-colonial domination, the erasure of Indigenous persons and their forced removal from their ancestral lands.

The struggle of the paramilitaries has a shorter horizon than the anti-capitalist Lumad struggle. Their interaction with the government and military influences their worldview and understandings and supports the creation of difference that the state manipulates for its benefit. For example, scholars have noted key changes to Lumad ideas about ownership and ancestral domain as well as the interaction between different tribes amongst paramilitaries (Paluga and Ragragio, 2016).

Furthermore, by reducing resistance to the encroachment of exploitative corporations paramilitaries ensure Morrock's third category in which community differences are channelled for the benefit of the colonial power, in this case the Filipino state. They also enable the Filipino state to channel differences for their own benefit by

supporting the government's façade that they hold good relationships with Indigenous communities. This allows the government to claim that violence committed exclusively by the paramilitary is intertribal warfare and rather than state sponsored violence. As one community member shared 'they [the military] use them [the paramilitary] so that if there is a crime the government will say it is what they call tribal war.' (5). Labelling violence as an internal issue allows the government and military to publicly abdicate themselves from responsibility for the murders and instillation of terror that takes place in order to reduce resistance to development efforts (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2015). The government also attempts to provide cultural and tribal authority for their exploitation by providing a salary for a fake Datu (Paredes, 2019). In the Bayan community

...the Lumad has chosen a Datu, and they say that the Datu is chosen by the people in the tribe. But, the government also chooses a Datu, which is a Datu paid, has a salary. And then it happens that our tribe has two Datus. And we believe that the Datu that is paid is fake. (5).

However, this is just a further attempt at ensuring government control over Lumad lands as this individual is then legally able to sign over Lumad land in FPIC agreements and negotiate economic settlements for the land. The government then uses its relationship with Indigenous communities to support their claims that its development efforts are welcome and benefit Lumad and that those with alternative views are communist terrorists and members of the NPA. According to one community member 'the military are accusing us that the work we do is not for the benefit of the Lumad, but is for the benefit of the red people [NPA].' (5). This rhetoric then, according to the government and widely criticised anti-terror law, justifies state

violence against Indigenous communities making the long term effectiveness of the paramilitary struggle highly questionable.

Those with whom I spent time, who are part of *the* Lumad struggle, shared tensions, frustrations, and criticisms of paramilitary as a whole but there was less criticism of the individuals who had decided to join. There appeared to be an underlying understanding that all Lumad are simply doing what they can to survive, remain on their ancestral lands and continue their ancestral practices and Lumad who have joined the paramilitary and those who form part of *the struggle* often live side by side.

Struggle as Violence

Not all forms of Lumad struggle are non-violent. Civil society and many Lumad vehemently oppose the link made between Lumad and the NPA. Others openly admitted being part of this armed opposition to the state with one community leader stating that everyone had been a member of the NPA at some point. Those who join are an example of the way in which the systemic deprivation experienced by minorities, including indigenous persons, can be used to justify participation in rebel movements (Stewart, 2005). People's affiliation with the NPA has always been in response to government marginalisation of Lumad communities. For example, armed struggle against the state was a particularly popular move when peace talks were taking place between the government and the NPA as some Lumads strove to use this alliance to bring their desire for self-determination to the attention of the

government (Alamon, 2017). Whilst such affiliations were surprisingly openly acknowledged they were also seen as a last option with one Bishop questioning

They [state forces] force them [Lumad communities] from their lands, they force them from their schools, they destroy the evacuee schools, where else do they expect these students to go but into the mountains with the NPA (6).

In addition to affiliation with the NPA, which is often an individual decision, some Lumad communities have taken up violent struggle, a tribal war or *pangayaw* against their capitalist oppressors. This is for instance the case for Monobo communities who waged a war against Alcantara and Sons' logging operations in their ancestral lands in 1992 (Paluga and Ragragio, 2016). This form of armed resistance is not unique to this example and as noted by one Datu, 'We're organizing the baganis to protect our ancestral domain, to go after those who trespass our land, and those who destroy our forest.' (Tebtebba, 2014). Lumad communities taking up arms to defend themselves against capitalist oppression poses a challenge to the state's supposed monopoly on violence.

Struggle as Small Scale Markets

The militarisation of Bayan also creates community divisions and ideological and political differences through development efforts. For example, government funded programmes have allowed the military to encourage and support small scale development projects that enable Lumad families to sell crops and homemade

products in local markets. These activities have provided appreciated financial support for some. They have also encouraged individuals to view the land as a source of material gain and prioritise individualistic lifestyles over communal eco-centred values, altering understandings of progress. According to one interviewee:

the presence of the military caused divisions. One reason is through projects in the community...project to make sugar cane and others, but many still stand on their faith, their own principles (7).

The principles referred to in this quote are those in which land is life, with no separation of community and planetary well-being. Despite the different ideologies these programmes are now described by many as part of everyday life where,

with the programme of the municipal association, we produce herbal products, like turmeric and other ingredients, soap products, and ointment. We bring them to the market and have a booth where we display our products (8).

With centuries of exploitation making it increasingly difficult for land to sustain life as it once did such projects potentially provide a way to continue Lumad life without moving to the city in order to look for work. However, these government sponsored projects also pose a direct challenge to those who continue traditional farming practices. For example, the reduction in numbers of those participating in traditional subsistence farming reduces the ability of others to sustain themselves using this method as they no longer have sufficient people to plant or harvest enough crops. Interviewees then shared how the engagement of some community members with small-scale markets negatively affected the whole community, which was no longer able to meet its nutritional needs and had become increasingly dependent on

engagement with local towns. This was of particular concern given the military interrogation that some community members faced when they attempted to leave or re-enter the community. Furthermore, participation in small-scale markets risks diluting Lumad knowledge as an epistemology of the south and alternative to the capitalist system (de Sousa Santos, 2014) as Those engaged in these activities prioritise economic gain and reinforce the exploitative neo-liberal capitalist system, influencing knowledge constellations.

Struggle as Development

Finally, what constitutes Lumad struggle is also complicated by those who remain starkly opposed to the government but who undertake similar development projects on their own land. These communities engage with the capitalist system whilst remaining firmly opposed to the government exploitation of their land. The case of the Four Tribes of Monkayo who registered as a corporation in order to explore their ancestral domain for gold (Chanuday, 2008) is one such example. These tribes were united in their opposition to external actors profiting from their land 'their decision was that they would rather directly engage in mining and profit from it as a corporation.' (Chanuday, 2008, p.6). Cahnuday's contribution is a helpful reminder of the diversity in the desires of Lumad communities However, I question Chanuday's description of the tribes as 'venture capitalists' (Chanuday, 2008, p.6). As Chanuday himself notes, the aims of the Four Tribes project are based on principles of cooperativism designed to benefit the communities in areas including health and social services, justice and

human rights. These are not the principles held by a profit focused corporation. Reframing the actions of the Four Tribes of Monkayo as an alternative form of resistance against the un-filtered development of corporations contributes to the idea that opposition to the colonial matrix of power is more extensive than often thought. It also suggests that what may appear as complicity is actually a form of resistance when communities are left with few other options. Chanuday notes that the decision of the Four Tribes of Monkayo was that they would rather engage directly, suggesting that non-engagement was not a possibility. Their choice was instead whether to engage directly or have lands forcibly taken and at best be offered work for very little pay in the mines developed on their own lands. The case of the Four Tribes can then be seen as an alternative example of struggle against the neo-liberal capitalist system when complete opposition appears impossible and futile.

Conclusion

Whilst for many Lumad land is life, I have argued for an expanded appreciation of what constitutes Lumad struggle against the colonial matrix of power, contending that no singular understanding of self-determination or struggle exists amongst Lumad groups. Using the experience of the Bayan community, I illustrated the way in which state forces, driven by capitalist profit centred motivations, build on historic injustice and difference to challenge Lumad knowledges, create and augment differences within the community. History, positionality, spirituality, political, social and economic context all influence the form a struggle takes as communities and individuals balance their desire for self-governance, acceptance and survival. For the majority of people living in a community where corporate takeover is imminent or has already

taken place there are four main options: accept a job working for the corporation; join the paramilitary; continue opposing corporate takeover, risking persecution and forced evacuation; take up arms risking one's life and freedom. The suggestion that paramilitary or those who take part in capitalist activities have given up the struggle is overly simplistic and incorrect in many situations. I propose that a broad understanding of Lumad struggles would include struggles for self-determination to live out alternative values not determined by the capitalist system, those who participate in government "development" projects and those who struggle for self-determination to enable self-development, and any other form of resistance against the attempted silencing and elimination of Indigenous people. By appreciating the strength of the abuses of the colonial matrix of power and diverse manifestations of the struggle for self-determination that become necessary, we can improve our comprehension of diverse responses to neo-colonial rule and better inform solidarity efforts.

I also identified the challenges with the various forms of resistance. The military persecute those involved in non-violent resistance through education, attempting to silence them with school closures; those who join the paramilitary support divisions within the community; those who join the NPA support the government's claims that Lumad are terrorists; those who develop their own land degrade it; capitalist ideologies influence those who take part in markets. Violence between the different groups, for example, paramilitary violence against those struggling through education, may mean differences are insurmountable. In this way, the government's

divide and rule tactics enable the colonial matrix of power and the hegemony of the capitalist system to persist.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the theology of the IFI followed by a chapter that discusses their persecution. Finally, the ecologies of knowledges chapter draws on the example of the relationship between Lumad communities and the IFI to suggest one way to strengthen, sustain and expand counter-hegemonic movements.

CHAPTER 5 - IFI THEOLOGY

Introduction

The IFI is a living outcome of the 1896 Philippine revolution, whose leadership see themselves as called to be with the oppressed and marginalised, to be relevant to the struggle of the Filipino people. The pre-amble to the IFI Constitution and Canons (1977) states:

The Philippine Independent Church is a congregation of new men, women and children educated in and liberated by the teachings of Christ, dedicated to the worship of God in spirit and in truth, nourished and sustained in the Eucharist, commissioned to be witnesses to God's love in the world.

Whilst this statement may sound uncomplicated and archetypical of those used in Church constitutions around the world, there are untold interpretations of what it means to be liberated, questions of whose truth counts and discrepancies over the practicalities of being a witness of God's love in an unjust world. I begin this chapter by outlining the link between the IFI's interpretation of their history and their theology in the present. Following this, I place the theology of the IFI into conversation with other existing theologies of liberation and struggle, highlighting similarities and identifying the particular contribution of the IFI. After questioning the utility of denominational categorisations when talking about Churches in a struggle, I focus on the different stances held by so-called progressive and conservative clergy in the IFI. Contrary to common understandings, self-identified progressive leadership are those who draw most frequently from the IFI's history. Those labelled as conservatives are

those who, in a move away from the history of the Church, focus exclusively on their own congregation and activities within the church walls. Following this, I finish the chapter with a focus on the theology of the Obispado Maximo, clergy and Bishops across Mindanao who I interviewed, all of whom identified as progressive. The COVID-19 pandemic and relational concerns prevented me from interviewing conservative clergy. The one-sided data remains helpful in understanding how those responsible for institutional narratives, mission priorities, programmes and continuing clergy formation view their own progressive position and that held by conservative leadership.

The purpose of this chapter is three fold. Firstly, it is to outline the theological position of the IFI and explain their continued action with the oppressed and marginalised despite state persecution, which is the topic of the next chapter. Secondly, it is to argue for broader understandings of what constitutes struggle against oppressive political and economic systems, particularly in semi dictatorial contexts such as the Philippines. Thirdly, it is to highlight the pervasiveness of paternalistic attitudes amongst some who identify as being in the struggle, spotlighting the need to rethink power dynamics and knowledge hierarchies, a theme central to the ecologies of knowledge chapter.

History

According to the Obispado Maximo, the history of the IFI is one of enduring colonial rule and struggle for liberation during which the Spanish came with ‘their sword and with the cross...you should become a member of the Church because of the power

of the sword...there was no choice.' (9). IFI leaders interviewed described early Christianity in the Philippines as a foreign product, 'a Spanish import bringing in an Israeli product.' (10), later supported by the Americans who 'brought the Bible.' (10). To separate these violent, foreign beginnings from their faith today, interviewees employed DT Niles' (1951) popular metaphor of Christianity as a 'potted plant', brought by missionaries. They argued that 'this plant is in a pot and it can only be Filipinised if you break the pot and put it in the ground.' (10). Only by breaking the pot and allowing for an indigenous rooting and flourishing of the Christian faith, could Christianity take root and be nourished by the lived experience of the Filipino people.

For some IFI leaders, the breaking of this pot and the Filipinisation of their faith began in the 19th century when clergy and lay leaders began questioning Catholic teaching. Those who took this stance posited that the questioning of Catholic teaching provided a springboard for the founding of the IFI where 'Aglipay, de Los Reyes and other leaders of the Church began to work for independence, or the identity or the faith integrity of the Philippines.' (9). For others, the breaking began later with the formation of the *Union Obrera Democratica* and the people's movements that followed (6). Whichever event interviewees used, they agreed that the IFI is 'a living and tangible product of the 1986 Philippine revolution.' (11) and that it was from these revolutionary roots that it must draw if it is to break free from the constraints of neo-colonial domination in the present.

Interviewees described the first constitution of the IFI, *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales*, as ‘revolutionary’ and were proud that ‘Our first OM [Gregorio Aglipay] was a Vicar general of General Emilio Aguinaldo.³⁰ Our first OM is a revolutionary priest’ (12). They used Aglipay’s insistence that revolution is providential to argue that, ‘If you do not stand for your freedom you should be ashamed of yourself.’ (13). Inspired by their first OM, the IFI have an Aglipayan spirituality that drives this revolutionary spirit into the present. As described in official documentation, Aglipayan spirituality is:

our holistic response to the call of the God of salvation to liberate His people from all forms of dehumanization. It is our relationship with God, with the community and with the rest of creation rooted in the Judeo-Christian faith and tradition. It is living out the mandate of the Gospel of Christ and our historical heritage of serving God and Country (*Pro Deo et Patria*). (IFI, 1998).

According to those interviewed, being a revolutionary church that exists *Pro Deo et Patria* means being on the side of the people, being a nationalist church. The IFI hold this identity proudly despite an awareness of the post 1945 hegemonic synonymity of ‘country’ and ‘nationalism’ with nation state apparatus. For the IFI, ‘this Church is a nationalist Church, because it was established by the minds of the Philippines itself.’ (14), not because it was established by the powers that govern the nation state. This understanding supports the IFI’s identification as a national freedom loving Church

³⁰ General Emilio Aguinaldo led the Filipino revolution against the Spanish colonial powers and was President of the Philippines between formal Spanish rule in 1899 and American occupation in 1901.

that exists for 'the love for the God, the love the country needs' (15) and 'the love of freedom, of the Philippine freedom' (15). However, when understood from a hegemonic post 1945 perspective, it was suggested that *Pro Deo et Patria* may best retranslated to 'For God and people.' (10). Despite this identification, I believe that the progressive – conservative distinction discussed shortly raises questions about who the people are; all Filipinos, only those marginalised or those who form an official part of the IFI congregation.

Interviewees outlined how existing *Pro Deo et Patria* and fighting for the freedom of the Filipino people today means challenging two interdependent oppressive systems: neo-liberal capitalism and neo-colonialism. They argued that these systems encouraged Filipino and global elites to exploit the Filipino people, land and ecosystems for their own financial gain, causing material poverty and gross inequality. The OM shared that:

[The] Philippines is a beautiful country. It is rich with mineral resources, and yet you could see the indications of massive poverty. Where at the same time you will also see the manifestations of rich people controlling the whole system and living in a so wide gap now from the poor people, and this a product of the colonial system. We believe in the IFI that is our calling, to become part of so many instruments, so many movements that will free our Filipino people from these colonial vestiges.

These colonial vestiges separated people and planet whilst instilling racist and sexist hierarchies that supposedly justified the exploitation of large sections of society. They created environments that encouraged successive Filipino governments to exploit and exclude the working classes in order to accumulate resources in the hands of national and Filipino elite, supporting the continuation of the global neo-liberal capitalist system. They described a situation in which:

We are slowly killed by our own government...only those in the positions become rich. But those who are in the farm are still poor, among the poorest...the big company, the government, they never see about the real situation, what their concern is, in their pockets...The money that they use every day, has come from the tax of the people.

The people work hard, but they use the money as easy (16).

The government justify their position by framing national interest as synonymous with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and material development. They maintain the position that land is only worth the financial gain that can be extracted from it and that financial gains will eventually trickle down and materially benefit the entire Filipino population.³¹ In contrast, the nationalism of the IFI prioritises the people of the Philippines, the masses, over profit and the equal distribution of wealth above neo-liberal understandings of competition and economic growth.

³¹ One example of this attitude is the Duterte government's April 2021 decision to lift a nine-year ban on new mining agreements in order to boost the country's post COVID-19 economic recovery (Ocampo, Salaverria and Corrales, 2021).

The government use national law to support their economically focused development prioritises and silence those, like the IFI, who oppose it.³² This has led the IFI to disavow from the modern world's fixation with law (Kappen, 1980) and distinguish between law and justice. Lehman suggests this disavowal is necessary within revolutionary politics where 'justice is the foundation and the criterion of law: law is not the foundation and the criterion of justice.' (1975, p.240). The IFI deem as unjust any law that protects exploitative systems at the expense of the Filipino people. They believe there is a higher law and authority than the nation state, the authority of God, and that they have a Biblical mandate to oppose and raise awareness of earthly, unjust, laws. For example, on youth Sunday (18.10.2020), Father Chris Ablon, the designated representative of the OM, guided the Youth of the IFI (YIFI) in a virtual reflection of Matthew 22:15-22 in which he identified two laws at work: the law of the Emperor, described as a trap, and the law of God. Relating this to the present day experience of the Filipino people, he argued that:

this is very relevant today because there are so many laws that I can say that are trap actually. For example, very recently anti-terrorism law is a trap. Death penalty it's a trap. Mining act of 1995 it's a trap and I invite you all to study all of those because these are laws that are not good for you, not good for the people, these are all traps... (Ablon, 2020).

Ablon distinguished between the law of the Emperor, or the law of the Filipino President, and the law of God. Drawing from Matthew 22:21 in which Jesus tells

³² For example, the 2020 anti-terror law that labels anyone who interferes with government development projects through protest as a terrorist (Congress of the Philippines, 2022).

disciples of the Pharisees to 'give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's' (Mark, 12:17, NIV) he encouraged youth to 'Give to Duterte the things that are Duterte's. Give God the things that are Gods.' (Ablon, 2020). He then expanded Jesus' argument, stating that 'Everything is Gods, so give everything. You are Gods so you give yourself to God.' (Ablon, 2020).

The nationalism of the IFI transcends politics. History, being with the people in their struggle and scripture inform their people centred ideas of justice, rooted in the lived experience of the Philippines, with God as the highest authority. This hierarchy of authority was clear in the closing prayer of the gathering, which read:

God I praise you today, your authority is above all authorities in this world. God your authority is higher than Trump. Your authority is higher than Duterte. Your authority is higher than any president of any nation. And we are not a people of the politicians, we are a people of God and I will give to you, God, not to the politicians. Only to you. Amen. Amen. Amen. (Ablon, 2020).

By drawing on national law and naming both the Filipino president and the sitting president of the United States, this online YIFI reflection demonstrates an inseparability of theology and Biblical reflection from analysis of the present context. Being a nationalist Church that exists *Pro Deo et Patria* means that '...they [are] working hand in hand; the mission of church, and what's really happening in this community on society.' (15).

Who are the Theologians?

The intertwining of situational and Biblical reflection with action is common in theologies of liberation, often referred to as the 'see, judge, act' method (Sands, 2018). However, where the theology of the IFI differs from dominant global understandings of liberation theology is in its understandings of who the theologians are. Much global scholarship on theologies of liberation subscribes to the idea, spearheaded by Filipino scholar Carlos Abesamis at the Asian EATWOT meeting that the poor and marginalised are the theologians (Joseph, 2015). According to Abesamis, the poor and marginalised are then the only people able to theologise. Like Dalit theologian Aravind Nirmal (1990) before him, Abesamis challenged elites and intellectuals who believed themselves able to theologise on behalf of the poor and marginalised (Abesamis, 1978, Joseph, 2015). The role of the 'academic theologian', or the church leadership, according to Abesamis, is to serve these theologians, participate in their struggle and provide technical skills such as methods of exegesis, facilitating grassroots reflection that leads to action (Abesamis, 1978; Joseph, 2015). Within the IFI however, the Church leadership undertakes the exegetical task, not the poor themselves. One reason for this is that clergy believe the poor and marginalised of the Philippines are already conscious of the roots of their oppression. Many theologies of liberation assume the need for awareness raising, or conscientisation amongst the poor as to the intersectional causes of their oppression (Rowland and Corner, 1990). However, according to the IFI, the Filipino people have already developed this consciousness through years of struggle and persecution (6). Those interviewed believed that education is essential to awaken conservative clergy, a topic that I explore shortly, but saw no need to awaken the

already struggling oppressed masses, nor did they believe the oppressed masses have time to perform tasks such as theological reflection.

In addition, clergy argued that it would be unsuitable to expect non-Christian communities to undertake Biblical exegesis. Whilst the Philippines is a Christian majority country, the historic and ongoing persecution of adherents of non-Christian religions, such as Islam, or the spiritual beliefs held by Lumad communities, means that standing with the poor, engaging in resistance and liberatory movements with the marginalised, often means standing with those who do not identify as Christian. For the IFI, all people are created in the image of God and their mission is with those who are oppressed, whatever religious or spiritual beliefs they hold:

all of them in our land, all of us, they are not the only marginalised people, but in the grassroots, we say that, as Genesis said, you are created in the image of God. Lumad people are also a people, not only us, a Church people, but also them. Because they are created in the image of God. Even though they are not a Christian, but still, they are a people. (17).

Using the Bible as a common text to reflect with marginalised communities who are not Christian would then be inappropriate, as for this section of the IFI 'our mission is not to detach them from their own spirituality and their own life.' (18). They are explicitly Christian in their approach but inclusive of all those who are oppressed.

Some Asian theologies of liberation address the continent's multi-faith context and inter-religious realities. Following the work of Aloysius Pieris (1988; 2004; 2010), they compare sacred texts, whether Buddhist, Sikh or Islamic to understand the image of God in a multi-faith context.³³ Building on this understanding, postcolonial theologian Sugirtharajah (2011, p.142) argues that 'Different reading practices open up different ways of looking at texts.' However, this focus on scripture within theologies of liberation and postcolonial theologies reinforces the primacy of written text, a move criticised as an imposition of western modernity (Veronelli, 2015). Lumad tribes do not have written sacred texts. For the IFI, consistent with the process of discovering the Kingdom of God in Asia as described by Choan-Seng Song, (1999), theological discussion or Biblical exegesis is never the primary task; it is a reflection that takes place by engaging with the lives and stories of others, whether Christian or not as 'what makes the Spirit Spirit is freedom. The Spirit cannot be controlled by anybody, not even by Christians.' (Song, 1999, p.10). The Bible as a written text is decentred and the people, the image of God, become the key inspiration for any theological reflection. The struggle of the oppressed is the starting point for the IFI's theology, not the target of it: 'The poor and oppressed are the source of the IFI's theology but it is up to the theologians to then systematise this.' (6). This positioning of the struggling sectors of society as the source of theological knowledge is what opens the IFI to an ecology of knowledge and the transformation that it requires. The specific ways in which their relationship with Lumad communities challenges the theology of the IFI is the subject of chapter seven.

³³ For a comparison between Buddhist and Christian liberation, see Makransky, (2014). For a comparison between Sikhism and Christian liberation, see Cole and Sambhi, (2016).

Decentring the Bible gives rise to a situation in which, in line with the Johannine tradition, both the written and spoken word are thought insufficient for expressing love, understood as Agape (Callahan 2005). For the IFI, the poor are not privileged because of their interpretation of the written word of God; they are privileged because they are the living word of God in a model that prioritises lived experience. The implication of such an understanding is that, as evident in the YIFI reflection shared above, for the IFI, whilst the Bible is an important source of guidance and inspiration, Biblical reflection and the development of written theology is not a priority. Action-based solidarity with the poor is:

in the IFI we just do it. I mean like, they [the people] need us there, we just go there. I mean we don't hold a meeting like what does the Bible say? ...the general practice of the IFI today is more about doing and then reflecting. Not reflecting first, not praying first, not reflecting first and then doing. Our practice is doing and then doing and then reflecting and then maybe praying. (10).

Clergy undertake Biblical exegesis and document theology, but prioritise action and the knowledge gained from being in solidarity with the poor and marginalised. The reality of the people, the context in which they find themselves, their oppression alongside their hopes and joys are a key resource for theological reflection within the IFI (Phan, 2006). One leader shared, 'You can learn from them [Lumad communities] the true essence of Christianity, even though they are not Christians.' (18). However, clergy were also cautious that these priorities had led to a situation in which:

when you come to a progressive priest doing mass you will know. You will really know because you will try to ask yourself is this a sermon or a discussion of the national situation? Is this a sermon or is this a rally? Which from our end also, we should do better also. (10).

The aim, interviewees suggested, was a situation akin to the aforementioned YIFI gathering in which relationships with marginalised communities inform and transform clergy analysis of the present context and their interconnected Biblical reflection.

For the current OM, the Obispado Maximo and many of the senior clergy in Mindanao, resistance to the violence of their present context is not primarily about a Christian movement centred on the Bible. The theology of these individuals contrasts with those Christian traditions in which scripture is the main source of authority and resituates power from the theologian, or the one guided through a process of Biblical exegesis, to the one actively resisting their own subjugation. When the main source of authority is the image of God as exemplified in the people, Christianity as an institutionalised religion is deprioritised and the idea that Christians must respect national law challenged. Instead, the image of God informs those who strive for a Christian life with the possibility that the source of theology can be non-Christians.

Theologies of Struggle

The IFI's position of challenging national law and the primacy of the nation state has much in common with theologies of struggle. Fr. Louie Hechanova of the Catholic Church was the first person to write a Filipino theology of struggle that literature argues developed largely in response to the Martial Law imposed by the regime of

Ferdinand Marcos (1965-1986) (Brazal, 2019). Catholic activist theologians accepted the theology in 1982, as a reflection of the struggle of the Filipino people for liberation (Aguilan, 2013). Aguilan (2013) advances the idea that a Filipino theology of struggle strives for the emancipation of the poor from systems of economic, social and political injustices and focuses on lived experience to understand the present state of affairs. It acknowledges the way in which churches in the Philippines continue to legitimise oppressive systems and criticises them for responding to these abuses by providing paternalistic charity to the poor (Aguilan, 2013). It is a theology that 'is a companion of Filipino Christians in their struggle for liberation.' (Fernandez, 1994, p. 2). However, given the global theological context, in which theologies of liberation are often seen as a Latin American theology, or as having developed from the Latin American version (Fernandez, 1994), scholars strive to highlight the distinctiveness of their own theologies.³⁴ For Filipino theologian Eleazar Fernandez,

the theology of struggle, although it belongs to the same genre of theological reflection as the theology of liberation, offers a "distinctive" contribution to theological reflection (1994, p.2).

It focuses on being *in* the struggle rather than on the end goal of liberation (Fernandez, 1994). It draws from the lived experience of the Filipino people to understand their oppression and struggle towards a nationalistic, equitable society (Aguilan, 2013). The Filipino context is central to this struggle. However, this raises the question of who *the* Filipinos are. Other liberation focused theologies, such as the aforementioned Dalit or Minjung theologies focus on a specific group. Struggle

³⁴ The tendency for scholarship specifically focused on Asia to refer to Asian theologies of liberation as developing from Latin American liberation theology continues today. See, for example, Kee-Fook Chia (2021).

theology claims to belong to the Filipino people as a whole. Fernandez, (1994) argues that, the Filipino people were born from the struggle. However, the experience of oppression and marginalisation differs greatly amongst the current population. In such a theology, who is the theologian, drawing from their particular experience and who is the academic theologian tasked with supporting the process of exegesis? Who is the theologian *in* the struggle? The opinions shared by the IFI on the topic of struggle theology, as I interpret below, suggest a merging of Abesamis and Aguilan in which the poor and marginalised hold a particular position but it is from choosing to be with the marginalised in their struggle that the IFI theologise.

Although it is predominantly articulated from a Catholic perspective some members of the IFI describe their theology as a theology of struggle. For them, this label embodies the IFI's focus on being with the people. One young member of the Obispado Maximo described his understanding of a theology of struggle in which, true to Fernandez's suggestion, he focuses on continually being *in* the struggle where:

If there are still tyranny in the [government] leadership, if there are still structures of the society that oppress, I do believe that this church will not turn down its theology of struggle. There are more things still to be struggled. Of course, that is the IFIs teaching of heaven on earth.

Because that is the also, that is also one of the education or education about salvation... it is the establishment of heaven here on earth. A salvation where you have an abundant life and I guess if we do not

reach that type of salvation, if we do not reach that type of situation then the IFI is still holding the theology of struggle (14).

Other leadership rejected the use of the term struggle, describing it as a 'Roman Catholic thing' (6). However, this particular priest acknowledged that he has limited knowledge of what a theology of struggle actually is, and that there may be more similarities than he realises. His limited understanding was that theology of struggle is 'very dialectic...it is not very much about discussing it but about doing it.' Sharing how for the IFI 'if you do not struggle you cannot theologise.... And if that is a theology of struggle we are just living that.' (10).

Others labelled the IFI's theology as distinctively *Pro Deo et Patria*, which they argued predates Catholic theology of struggle, noting that the struggle of Christians in the Philippines predates both *Pro Deo et Patria* and struggle theology. According to one Bishop, the history of struggle has been the history of the Philippines since the Spanish arrived, with missionaries struggling to convert natives, natives struggling to resist colonial domination and the subsequent struggles for freedom against the Spanish, American and Filipino authoritarian governments.

Whether a theology of liberation, struggle or *Pro Deo et Patria*, interviewees were united in their understanding that, in the IFI, theology begins with action and it is this that is important, not the label used:

I could not find a specific name or maybe we are, because when I was studying in the seminary when we were studying history it is quite

coming naturally, not branding anything....We have a subject IFI theology and its more of connected with the people it's more of people's understanding of God. And we haven't coined it. But what we do have is Aglipayan spirituality....And that would be the framework of IFI's theology but I could not find any term. (19).

Sugirtharajah (2011) importantly reminds us to remain vigilant against the predatory nature of western values. Perhaps my desire to find the 'correct' label for the theology of the IFI was an imposition of my Western desire to categorise.

The way individuals label their theology must be respected. However, denominational categorisations must also be approached with a hermeneutic of suspicion.

Denominational categorisations can obscure similarities between those who struggle with the people whilst diminishing intra-denominational differences and tensions, a theme I explore shortly. In the present, IFI interviewees drew inspiration from the life of Father Frank Navarro of the Catholic Church who became a leading member of the NPA (1994, UCA News). They resist the persecution of those from other denominations, such as UCCP Pastor Benjie Gomez, arrested on June 6, 2021 on a trumped up charge of murder. They also experience the same internal challenges as other denominations. For example, a heated Facebook discussion recently broke out when the OM shared his support for Pastor Gomez and a UCCP congregation member commented:

Please, stop dragging the name of my church – UCCP, these so-called 'pastors' are a minority & discredited, they NEVER represent the

sentiment of peace loving uccp members, they're a threat to our unity, in short, these leftists 'pastors' are wolves in sheep's clothing. (Timbang, 2021).

In an acknowledgement of the similarities between those from different denominations who participate in the struggle, interviewees posited that human rights abuses and Church persecution was leading more Churches towards an institutionally progressive stance and encouraging increasing Ecumenical relationships. They evidenced this firstly by the fact that on the 3rd of August 2021, the day the IFI celebrates its founding, instead of celebrating its separation from the Catholic Church, the IFI planned to release a statement entitled *Celebrating the Gift of Faith, Learning from the Past, and Journeying Together*, that focused on thanksgiving and reconciliation between the two Churches. The statement posits that the separation of the IFI was not a movement against the Catholic Church, but a movement against the colonial control of the Spanish bishops and priests. As such, the movement was a continuation of the nationalist struggle of Filipino clergy, most commonly remembered by the GomBurZa executions described in the introduction chapter. IFI and Catholic priests across the country then read this statement in their parishes in an effort to renew the spirit of ecumenism at the grassroots level. (Antonio and Ledesma, 2021).

The second document used to evidence the movement towards increased ecumenism was a unity statement of the NCCP. This document, entitled *One Ecumenical Family*, was written for the 500th anniversary of Christianity in the Philippines and signed by the IFI, the Catholic Church in the Philippines, the UCCP

and the Council of Evangelical Churches in the Philippines. The statement acknowledged the colonial history of Christianity in the Philippines and described the way in which various Churches have

ruptured relationships not only among ourselves but also with God and all of creation.’ committing to ‘continue the healing process in the spirit of repentance and forgiveness (NCCP, 2021).

The Churches stated:

we reaffirm our preferential option for the poor, and our commitment to the protection of the exploited and oppressed, and the promotion of the rights of our indigenous brothers and sisters.... We furthermore commit to social justice and a simpler way of life; engage in peacebuilding and protect our sovereignty; and address consumerism and climate change. (NCCP, 2021).

The statement concludes by stating:

we commend to God our deepest desire and longing for an authentic reconciliation and fraternity among all Christians, believers, non-believers, and among all peoples of goodwill, as desired by our Lord Jesus *“That they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me” (John 17:21).* (NCCP, 2021).

These statements demonstrate an Ecumenical focus on the poor and marginalised that does not discriminate on denominational or religious grounds.

There are risks of being pressured to conform and losing one's distinctiveness in Ecumenical collaborations, particularly when one Church has a significantly greater membership than others, as is the case with Catholicism in the Philippines. However, my experience is that these risks are often caused by a desire for agreement. This in turn is rooted in the desire of our boxheads for a universal theory and based in Eurocentric Christian thought (De La Torre, 2022). In contrast, when ecumenical collaborations are based in the spirit of ecologies of knowledge between epistemologies of the global south, as outlined further in chapter seven, each denomination is able to maintain its distinctiveness whilst strengthening their cause. When there is equality and openness to difference there is much to be gained through collaboration between those who struggle with the people (Gozum, Galang, and Sarmiento, 2022). Increased Ecumenical collaborations have the potential to support each other in addressing internal challenges and acknowledging Church histories. They have the potential to challenge politicians and church leaders who use Christianity to subdue the poor and maintain the privilege of the rich (Aguilan, 2013, p.9-10) and to work collectively towards dismantling privilege and ensuring the rights of all of God's creation.

Conservative and Progressive clergy

As alluded to above, not all members of the IFI place themselves in the struggle. Interviewees identified differences between those they labelled as progressive and those they labelled as conservative. There are, of course, multiple dimensions and

scales of progressiveness and individuals change their stance throughout their lifetime. However, they categorised the Obispado Maximo and the majority of IFI leadership in Mindanao as progressive, influenced by successive governments' marginalisation of the Mindanao, its multi-faith context and the claims of autonomy and self-determination of its indigenous Moro and Lumad people. Progressive, according to this group, meant looking beyond the four walls of the church to focus on the people: 'Progressive means that you are with the people, you are also on the side of the people.' (14). They understood the role of the Church to be in the community, in their struggle against the forces that oppress them.

In contrast, they described their conservative counterparts as solely focusing on the structures of the Church and those within it. One programme lead judged that:

they [the conservative clergy, are] forgetting the grassroots history of the IFI...[the] mission, vision and life of the IFI, which is rooted actually from the Exodus story from the Bible. (20)

For this priest, the story of Exodus was comparable to the IFI leaving the slavery of the Spanish regime and finding the freedom of being an independent Church. His comment demonstrates how, contrary to popular understandings of the importance afforded to history in conservative and progressive narratives, it is the progressives in the IFI who seek to continue historical tradition.

Those I interviewed were proud of this history. They acknowledged that there are times when it has been lost and believed that this was 'probably because of the

context and probably because of the pressure from the powers that be at the time, the leadership being co-opted by the powers that be' (9). Building on this view one IFI leader shared his belief that the divide between the progressive and conservative clergy is rooted in a time when the Church had 'mellowed' in response to persistent government persecution and in particular after the murder of OM Ramento on October 3, 2006. He argued that, as the Church mellowed, political parties infiltrated it and those with money exploited the competition between Christian denominations, offering large financial donations for church buildings with many church leaders at the time following the assumption that 'Bigger church, more members right? And people tend to go to a beautiful church rather than go to a small church.' (21). The result was that

It becomes more politics inside the IFI. And so, there is lots of money involved... the Church is divided. It really creates division. Creates division from the conservative and the radicals (21).

Interviewees identified different levels of conservatism, measured by the engagement clergy had with the community outside of the church. They described the most conservative as those who focus solely on their priestly duties, inside the church building where 'you are a church and because you are a church, you don't need to go outside and to see people, what's happening there...you have [to] go only to the Eucharist.' (14) On the other end of the imagined conservative scale were leaders who engaged outside of the church building but only with the needs of their own congregation. Progressive interviewees were also critical of this position, arguing that the marginalisation of non-Christian groups in the Philippines has resulted in a hierarchy of needs in which the needs of other communities, including Lumad

communities, are often more urgent than those within their own congregations. They contended that the IFI is called to stand with the most marginalised, whether Christian or not.

Describing the tension caused by these different positions a young member of the Obispado Maximo shared that:

Some really are questioning us “oh, we have also poor members, why not we are going to help them instead of helping those people”?...But the vocation that we’re, the things that we’re doing for the Lumad, is between life and death situation. Because normally the problem of the church is the members don’t have nice roof, nice walls of the houses. (22).

This comment illuminates the link between the nationalism of the progressive members of the IFI and the hierarchy of needs. If, as I interpret it, *Patria* includes all Filipinos then the hierarchy of needs determines which Filipinos the IFI feel called to be with.

Differences in so-called progressive and conservative missional priorities cause conflicts. One member of the Obispado Maximo described the way in which:

You have priests or Bishops they are either, they are very much churchy, or very much socially.... So if I see a priest I say, ah this priest is this one, to the right, he preached really by the gospel, salvation and

the Church and most of the time they also, these priests also is very good in putting up churches and making the physical structure of the churches and a lot of that. Then you have the other one we saw, he goes to the streets, he goes to the people. He's very rah, rah, rah. They don't blend and most of the time they speak and you also find them to be debating each other (22).

The primary way the Obispado Maximo work to resolve these conflicts is through educational activities that propagate the progressive view. These activities target conservative clergy and lay leaders, working to increase their understanding of what progressive clergy frame as *the* IFI's mission; standing with the most marginalised, including Lumad and other non-Christian communities. Through these educational activities, progressive clergy hope to reduce internal resistance to their understanding of mission. For example, the OM shared that:

there were cases that there were lay leaders asking the congregation to somehow minimise their giving, to lessen their giving and it also challenged us. So, what we did in Surigao and I know that's also what the [other] diocese in Mindanao are doing, is to intensify our education.

However, tensions between the two groups remain and many with whom I engaged were concerned as to whether the House of Bishops would elect a conservative or progressive Obispado Maximo for the next term.

IFI Congregation members

In addition to these tensions between leadership, there were challenges between progressive clergy and some of their more conservative church members who, according to those interviewed, found it difficult to understand the missional activities of the progressive side of the Church. Interviewees estimated that, in Mindanao, 'Out of 100 persons, maybe 85% supportive, and 15% are conservative. So, big struggle still.' (16). They identified four main challenges when ministering to conservative members, all of which they hoped to address through education. Firstly, many of their congregation members believed the Church's focus should be on what takes place within the church building:

They're telling [us] not to do this, just do this, not to do this because we're a church. We're just came here and worship, Sunday worship, don't join the protest, don't join the rallies, don't join the mobilisation. (22).

One young deaconess who had recently finished her theological training shared how she was using her sermons to encourage her congregation to look beyond the four walls of the church where:

You really have to make the people aware of what is happening in our country. And sermon delivery is one of the best tools that I am making to make the people you know, be aware. And yes, incorporating them, telling them what is the role in life of the church. (11).

Interviewees hoped that by increasing congregation members' understanding of the systematic oppression in the Philippines, which often meant challenging the

narratives of national newspapers and other media outlets, they would begin to see the need to stand in solidarity with local and national people's movements.

Secondly, congregation members employed by plantation challenged leaders or mining companies struggled to understand leadership's objections to these so-called development projects. The same young deaconess shared that:

almost all of the members of the church are employees of the mining. So, when I preached about you know, defending the integrity of God's creation. After the mass you know, they came to my office and asked me "how can we say that we are against the mining if our livelihood, you know if the money we earn comes from them?" (11).

Again, this Deaconess defined education as the appropriate response, educating members on the need to be stewards of God's creation and the dangers of open pit mining. She simultaneously acknowledged their need to earn a living and the limited options available when living within oppressive systems.

She acknowledged the need to understand what she termed 'the Christian perspective' and 'the practical perspective' (11). Whilst she spoke of using the Bible to facilitate understandings of being a 'good steward' she also shared that 'as a priest you know as a minister you also have to consider the needs of your people.' This she said, often created a need to compromise. This reality allowed her to share the following with little concern for any contradiction:

I just told them that we are just God's stewards, as God's stewards our task is to care for what God has created. And the mountains, we are all

to be a good steward. And I just told them that the church is not really against mining as long as it does not really destroy you know (11).

I interpret this to be evidence of the complications of struggling within a system that makes every day a struggle. Whilst the Deaconness preached on the ideal of objecting mining projects, her response to individuals, as retold in through this quote, was more nuanced. It supports the need to complicate understandings of what it means to be in the struggle to incorporate those who appear to be supporting exploitative systems, for example by working in mining. But whom, in reality may simply be struggling to survive.

Thirdly, some congregation members believed any support given by the Church should focus on its members. For example:

If there is a typhoon, the Church members can easily give some donations or help people who are victims of the typhoon. But if, so in like the Lumad, they are taking of their land they were killed. No one will help them because they are not members. It is so hard for the IFI members to help them (23).

This section of the congregation struggled to understand why the Church cares more about the poverty of others than it does about its own members. Progressive clergy addressed this by drawing on their imagined hierarchy of needs:

When we think about our need, don't forget that there are those people that, when we eat three times a day, there are those people that cannot get something to eat. So when we have a problem today, that we have

no money, we have some, especially the Lumad, the worse problem.
(24).

Comparing needs is problematic and can result in understandings of Lumad as helpless. However, the aim of the hierarchy is to draw attention to the result of centuries of Lumad repression. One priest described a situation in which:

Some of our Church members then say, we are poor, we are in need.
But the bishop said, try to see your life, if you are poor, compare to the Lumad. Because the Lumad's are so very poor and needy because they are being threatened, harassed, they take their land. (25).

Fourthly, leadership believed the government's labelling of Lumad as communist terrorists, created resistance to this part of the Church's mission:

sometimes there are a few congregation members that they don't accept or receive the so called Lumads. Because in their minds, the Lumads, they will support the NPA. Of which that is a misnomer. That is why we have our education, input. (12).

Within the current dispensation of the IFI progressive education with conservative clergy and congregation members, is a priority summarised by one clergy member who shared:

Doing ministry for me is not converting people, but in order to teach the people to realise. Especially the Christians, to realise the message of what Christianity is. Or what Christ's work is. (26).

The institutionalisation of the progressive view

The Obispado Maximo have sought to institutionalise their missional priorities through the Three Year Rolling Plan (TYRP) (IFI, 2017). The TYRP outlines *the* IFI position on what it means to become witnesses of God's love in the world, stating:

Our calling is to follow in the footsteps of Christ, shaped by the Holy Spirit, letting God's love flow further in our social & pastoral interactions for which we were created.... The Challenge now is to receive and pass on the overflowing and self-giving love that we received from Christ. Through a life and work of love, we are able to carry the image of God further to the world. The Church then becomes the sacrament of Christ's incomprehensible love. The inexpressible becomes tangible through the Church, Christ's body. (IFI, 2017, p.26).

Within the TYRP, these tangible expressions of God's love are organised into to four focus areas: Worship, Education & Ministry (WEM) to strengthen member's understanding of the IFI faith; Stewardship & Resource Development (SRD) to support the Church's work; Witness & Service (WAS) for responding to societal need and marginalised sectors; Concordant & Ecumenical Relations (CER) for strengthening solidarity relations with other churches (IFI, 2017, p.18). IFI engagement with Lumad communities falls within WAS which, consistent with the idea of a hierarchy of needs, posits that God calls the IFI to act with the marginalised and oppressed sectors of society. This calling is commonly understood using Matthew 5:3-12 in which the poor, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, peacemakers and those who are persecuted, amongst others, are described as blessed.

Whilst there was a clear focus on action within WAS, leadership described it as ‘more than just special activities. WAS is IFI’s programmatic expression of our being good stewards of God!’ (IFI, 2017, p.29). The TYRP states that WAS centres ‘God’s image – the people; seeing through the eyes of the person in need; learning from Christ Jesus’s teachings and work.’ (IFI, 2017, p.29). This understanding is in line with the Johannine tradition where those who follow Jesus should walk as he walked (Callahan, 2005 p.3). Leadership understood that ‘he [Jesus] extends his ministry to the poor, the deprived, the marginalised and the outcast in the community.’ (13). The task of the IFI is then ‘continuing the legacy and just following the footsteps of Jesus...giving service to the poor, the needy, the oppressed and the marginalised sector[s] of the society.’ (22). The message of the TYRP is that through WAS activities one can follow in the footsteps of Jesus, living a Christ like life.

The WAS section of the TYRP also articulates the IFI’s commitment to diaconia: ‘God’s active love for his creation which is ultimately expressed through Jesus Christ.’ (IFI, 2017, p. 24) where according to the OM, the task of the IFI is to be:

A church that will be in constant company with the struggling sectors of the Philippines society and that includes the indigenous people... organising the whole church to become a church, whose heart will be in the right place. I mean the heart that beats for the struggling people.

Having one’s heart in the ‘right’ place is a further call to act in service where:

in serving God, you must serve the people, or you must serve the least of our brethren and sisters in our society ...as a Church, we need to

proclaim what the gospel says, and the gospel says love thy neighbour.
And how can you love your neighbour if you are just saying it and not
showing it to the people? (27).

This focus on action, inspired by God's calling, the life of Jesus as articulated in the Bible, the history and heart of the IFI, unites progressive leadership as they strive for the liberation of all people from oppression towards the coming of heaven on earth.

The importance afforded to action, and to WAS as more than just special activities, was evident in progressive clergy understandings of salvation. One priest outlined this position, sharing that:

Our declaration of faith, and articles of religion, states about salvation. Salvation means it would be obtained through the vital faith in Jesus Christ; in money invested in good works, good works, not bad works. So we can only obtain that what we call everlasting life, without doing good works. That is our Aglipayan spirituality. And by doing our ministries, to the people, for us, we believe, that this is a true manifestation that Christ as signs of God, to continue his ministry. That is our spirituality. (28)

Good works, or good deeds were terms used by the majority of those interviewed and was said to mean things done for the other:

these things that you do not only for yourself but also for others
because we believe that the best kind of love that is love for Jesus, love
for God must be manifested through the works of mercy through the

works of things that you can do for others. Most specifically for those who are in need (14).

Leadership agreed that the most important factor in determining whether an individual could achieve eschatological salvation was the action they had undertaken during their life on earth:

Salvation means to me, so was given to us by God, through Jesus Christ and through your good works, you will be saved. So you really need also work, it is not just a gift from God, so you need to work. So yeah it was given already but if you want to take it that salvation and do at least good things. (23).

Action was a non-negotiable aspect of their faith where whether you have been baptised or not, if you are not acting and standing in solidarity with those marginalised, you are not Christian:

if you are really saying you are Christian, you must show it in your action...if you are not doing into action the way you listen inside the church, the homily of the priest or the good news of the Bible, if you are not making it into action it is not really applying to yourself being a Christian (29).

Action and being relevant to the struggle of the people was a defining characteristic of a being Christian. Being a Christian did not depend upon following Christ but on the actions and moral standards by which one lives. Speaking about Lumad communities one leader shared that:

They are more Christian than us who claim that we are Christian, that we are God's followers. But the fact is that we are low in moral standards and those people in the mountains, the masses they are great. And for me they are yes, they are more Christian than us. (11)

Action was also central to existence of Christianity itself where, as one Bishop stated, 'If we cannot make it relevant to the people, what is the use of that, the faith that we have in God, that Christ, that so called Christianity after all?' (15).

This group also believed that those who are not Christian could achieve salvation through their actions. Their stance was rooted in understandings of religious pluralism where:

For me we have the same salvation to achieve whether I am an IFI or my friend is a Lumad, an IP (Indigenous Persons). Because we believe in one god yeah even we believe in one god even though their god had different names but the god we believe in is the god that created us all. So they can still have the same salvation that I will attain. (22)

This group of IFI leaders are firm in their belief that salvation is not exclusively a Christian thing. They also do not claim to understand salvation fully, or know who will and will not be saved. One young leader shared that:

salvation can be achieved with good words and good deeds but the decision of who will be saved is not for us but for God... we are not the God we are not the ones deciding who is going to be saved.... The

judgement does not lie with the church it relays to God not for us as humans as we believe that the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man is just limited to, has its limitations. (14).

Furthermore, who would and would not achieve salvation was not something with which the Church should concern itself

It is not our business who God will save so and I think the very big mistake of churches is that they have assumed the role of god in salvation. The role of the church is to lead the way. The role of the church is to bring people to god or bring god to the people or to make salvation possible. The church does not decide who will be saved right so why don't we just leave it to the almighty. I mean if he wants someone to be saved at one moment who are you to protest? (10).

Prophets

Intertwined with the IFI's focus on action is a belief amongst progressive leadership that clergy are prophets, sent to share God's love in the world where 'God's sending of Christ can continue in and through us, who are called to be Christ's church.' (IFI, 2017, p.25). Whilst progressive IFI leadership share many similarities, when engaging with interviewee transcripts a division became clear between understandings of the role of a prophet in relation to the 'other'. Some progressive clergy believed God calls prophets to protect. Others thought God was calling them to be with. Those who see themselves as called to protect considered that clergy, as prophets, have a special role in which God speaks to them directly, giving them a

certain power, with which they must protect the rights of the people, thereby protecting the image of God. In an example of this position, one priest shared that:

God speak[s] to all the new prophets, like us clergy, to defend and rescue his own people. Because they were harassed, and they will get their rights. Each of us has the rights to live, right to speak, rights to live in peacefully in that way. So that in the midst of darkness, oppression, the church is acting. Because God is the God of action, the God is the first move. The first move to take action to what these people need.

(12).

They draw inspiration from the prophets in the Bible to argue that the IFI are called to help the voiceless:

We are the modern prophets, because in the Old Testament, the prophets like messiahs, Jeramiah, they were prophets that rescued those who were oppressed, especially they are the voice of the voiceless in the community. So, we in our time today, we are the prophets of God who speak the truth about those who are Christ, those who are voiceless in the community. Those who are outcasts. So we in the concept of the prophets, we defend those people of God. For which those people of God cry for help. And we are the instruments of God as new prophets to help them. (11).

Within this view, the voiceless in the community are Christ, are the people of God; but the prophets must speak for them because they are 'voiceless'. The idea of

people as voiceless gained prominence in academic and policy spheres through interpretations of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's pivotal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988). Governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental groups quickly interpreted Spivak's response to her own question to be a resounding no; the subaltern cannot speak. Despite an increasing number of scholars arguing they were incorrectly interpreting Spivak's work these interpretations allowed the development sector to become the voice of the voiceless (Barrett, 2004; Saffari, 2016).³⁵ Whilst often well intentioned this approach of the development sector is criticised for legitimising NGOs, academics, activists and I would add religious groups, to speak about or for marginalised groups and thereby reinforce their marginalisation (Morozov and Pavlova, 2018). Furthermore, framing people as voiceless suggests that entire communities do not possess a trait used to differentiate humans from animals in anthropocentric hierarchies of worth.

The stance taken by these progressive clergy, that the IFI are prophets who can provide 'what these people need' (12), is underpinned by a sense of superiority in which leadership imagined they can achieve something that years of struggle, and in this case specifically Lumad struggle, have not been able to:

They [Lumad communities] will be red-tagged to be called NPA. And then they shout for the Lord of justice. That they need help, that they seek for this. They need a saviour so that the oppression and injustice that is happening in the Bayan will be gone, will be destroyed. (13).

³⁵ A simple google scholar search for 'NGOs and the voice of the voiceless' returns over 14, 500 articles.

Many of those who held this understanding of the role of a prophet also thought that 'What is the mission of Jesus Christ is also the mission of the IFI. Working for the poor, helping for the sick, helping for the other culture.' (25). Within the colonial and neo-colonial history of the Christian Church 'Helping another culture' has either overtly or surreptitiously included ideas of assimilation or progress towards the dominant culture, deemed the most advanced or desirable (Mignolo, 2002). Action for those within this group meant providing aid and encouraging Lumad communities to undertake development projects, producing goods for local markets. Whilst these clergy view themselves as important actors in *the* Lumad struggle, their approach encourages assimilation to dominant goals of capitalist accumulation in which nature becomes a commodity to be exploited for profit. These well-meaning approaches are at best paternalistic and at worst a tool of the neo-colonial system that seeks to silence dissent (Choudry and Shragge, 2011). They demonstrate the challenge posed by historical and current power dynamics when one attempts to stand in solidarity with those with different histories, cultures and epistemological understandings.

The other prominent interpretation, held by the Obispado Maximo, Bishops in Mindanao and long serving clergy, posited that God calls prophets to be with. In line with Saffari (2016) who suggests that questioning whether anyone is listening to, or chooses to hear the subaltern, is more illustrative of the way in which the voices of subaltern communities are marginalised from policy spaces, this group of leaders understood people to have a voice that dominant systems actively seek to silence. They saw the role of a prophet as being with the people, participating in the struggle

of the community and acting as a bridge, connecting and creating spaces for voices to be heard. The former mission to protect position implies that the poor and marginalised need others to speak for them. This position posits that either institutions must make space for voices of those marginalised by dominant structures or that the structures on which these institutions are based need deconstructing and decolonising. The task of the IFI is then to challenge existing power hierarchies, taking inspiration from the life of Jesus where:

He [Jesus] demonstrates an attitude that is not derived from the established viewpoint of the society, where the least and the marginalized are mere recipients, and those in power and have the resources decided for them (IFI, 2017, p.31).

This subset of the IFI do not see themselves as having the power to give Lumad communities a voice but as prophets supporting them to continue in their own self-determined struggle. They were aware of the historic role Churches in the Philippines have played in silencing dissent and the risk of repeating this error in the present. In a lecture to seminary students, celebrating the 500-year anniversary of Christianity in the Philippines, one Bishop shared that:

Historically, conservatives and reformists, have utilized programs to promote the Christian religion, as a humanitarian response to the needs of the poor, and to neutralize and defuse the growing demands of the people for revolution. In some cases, these programs were used as a counter-revolutionary tool. (Ablon, 2021).

They took this historic experience as a warning and focused instead on solidarity and standing with the marginalised, ensuring that any aid provided was only to support the continuance of a struggle for systemic change, not as a tool to silence critique or dissent. They were aware of the risk of paternalism, criticising aid programmes and their short-sightedness, where one senior leader questioned:

you feed them today, tomorrow what happens? You feed them again and then you feed them again. So, are you treating them as an animal or your pet? Your pet, you are giving food to your pet. So, you're treating them as an animal, you're not really helping at all. Yeah, I think you just put a bandage from a large wound. (21).

Standing with communities in their struggle does not mean that this subset of the IFI do not see the importance of aid but rather that emergency aid is a tool to enable the continuation of the struggle. There is a balancing of immediate needs and supporting the long-term struggle in which the TYRP states 'we stand ready to do our part in all work for that which is good and loving in the world and in the battle against evil and the powers of destruction.' (IFI, 2017, p.27). This model of standing with requires humility as it accepts that the IFI have neither the tools to fix the situation with aid nor the power to effect immediate systemic change. The leadership espousing this view take inspiration for this humility from God, through Jesus.

God is humble. Because God has humility. He came down, or he live with us A God who is giving practical things just like feeding, joining with the struggle of the people (23).

Rather than encouraging assimilation, their response to the subjugation of non-hegemonic culture was to support communities to maintain their distinctiveness and pursue their own, self-defined self-determination. According to this position, the IFI are not called to lead action but to participate in the action already being undertaken by the people. They look to those with whom they struggle, the image of God in the people, for inspiration and guidance. In recent years, leadership have actively participated in Manilakbayan, farmers struggles, workers unions, women's rights movements, resistance to Martial law in Mindanao and, most recently, in the movement against the anti-terror law; protesting, marching, leading awareness raising events and engaging in online advocacy with national and international institutions. For this group, being a prophet means listening and building relationships that strengthen collective struggle against the persistent oppressive societal order.

Church building, conversion and pluralism

Progressive members of the IFI are clear in their support for the continuation of the struggle. However, their missional activities raise questions of history, power and colonial legacies. For example, key leadership espousing the view that prophets are called to be with are planning to build an IFI church on Lumad ancestral land. The intention is to build on the fact that, despite Duterte's disdain for religion, Filipino law forbids the military from entering a place of worship without permission. In a demonstration of the colonial matrix of power, the law does not afford this right to Lumad ancestral land. Only buildings of global religions are included. As a result, churches across the Philippines regularly provide sanctuary to displaced indigenous persons and persecuted rights defenders. The idea in this instance is not to wait until

the military have forcibly removed the community but to provide sanctuary within a community who experience daily persecution. The building of a church is not based on ideas of proselytisation. For the IFI there is no need to proselytise. As discussed above, the IFI are aware that Lumad already have a God and a faith that pre-exists Christianity, understanding that 'The religious belief already exist in their communities even before Christianisation and Islamisation of the Philippines.' (22).

The IFI's understanding of history and religion encourages acceptance and respect of other religions and spiritualities. Whilst they believe the Spanish brought Christianity and Americans brought the Bible, no human or colonial power was able to bring God; God has always been present. Those in Mindanao shared that 'if we are not colonised by the Spaniards or we are not baptised as Christians all of the people here in the Philippines are Lumads.' (22). In line with Hick's (2004) idea that religion is just different human responses to the same Ultimate Reality, these progressive leaders argued that 'we [Lumad and IFI] have the same god we are praising the same god but they have different kind of devotion.' (29). Religion is then a human creation, resulting from a situation in which 'God manifests himself to the whole world and then the world interprets.' (10). Leaders used descriptors commonly associated with God to substantiate the idea that people worship the same God, including 'Omnipotent, the all-powerful, the giver, the sustainer, the owner of everything. It is just the same definition of God so I think we have the same God.' (23). Another leader shared that

It's another language and it is another people but these people here calls their God provider. Then we have the same people who also call provider by their own tongue. So I was saying if they call their God provider and we call our God also provider is it not that we might not really be talking about the same God. (10).³⁶

They proposed that, had the Philippines not been colonised, their understandings of God would have been more localised where 'we should have been worshipping a God that is just around here you know. A god where you can say oh god lives in that mountain.' (10). They believed that their faith would be more intertwined with their immediate environment, similar to how they perceived the beginnings of Christianity where 'You can see how the faith of Israel was so entrenched through generations because when they say transfiguration mountain, Mount Sinai and everything, it is there!' (10). However, for Filipino Christians 'We have an imported God right now and when we see Jerusalem we don't know it.' (10). This understanding of the same, ever present God, understood through different religious and spiritual practices supports their belief that not only Christians who act can achieve salvation.

Furthermore, leaders believed that a church would provide justification for the IFI to enter the community when encountering hostile military and paramilitary.

³⁶ The IFI take the same approach towards Islam, where 'The difference is our belief the religion the way we worship the way they worship Allah, the way they worship Macbabaya, and the way we worship God....I know that our father and their Allah have the same meaning. It is basically just the same.' (22).

Conclusion

The diversity of theological positions assumed by IFI clergy exemplifies a complex range of responses to the seemingly straightforward statement of being dedicated to the worship of God in spirit and in truth with which this chapter opened. Members of the IFI interpret their historic and current situation according to their own prejudices, or fore-meanings, formed by their identity and individual standpoints, influenced by factors such as family relations, political landscapes, social circumstances and geographic location amongst others (Collins, 1990). The interaction between an individual's identity, life experiences, group dynamics and the wider society of which they are a part affects their understanding and practice of their faith.

One important question that informs these diverse positions is whose truth counts? For the progressive members of the Church, who currently occupy most of its leadership positions, God calls the IFI to follow the actions of Jesus, drawing on their history and Aglipayan spirituality, to struggle with those most oppressed, whoever they are, regardless of religion. For this subset of the IFI, being commissioned to be witnesses to God's love in the world means understanding the truth from the perspective of the poor and marginalised, learning from their experiences. They choose to believe that the human and planetary costs of large-scale plantations and mining outweigh any financial benefits; to see Lumad communities as rights defenders, not terrorists; that unjust laws and corrupt institutions need overthrowing, not instrumental change. Informed by their understanding of God's preference for the poor and marginalised, the progressive members of the IFI dedicate their time and resources to participating in the struggles of the people. The IFI's instance on action

despite internal challenges and their educational programmes that challenge the state's stronghold on developmental narratives can provide a source of inspiration and learning for the countless other Churches who, in a time of worsening ecological crisis and persistent human rights abuses, are called to decide whose truth counts. The theology of the IFI is an example of what decolonial attitudes might look like within a Church setting and what the decolonial turn might mean for Christian institutions.

However, the position of some progressive clergy also highlights the need to acknowledge the pervasive impact of centuries of colonial hierarchies on understandings of what it means to stand with others and the power dynamics inherent in such relationships. As the different interpretations of what it means to be a prophet demonstrated, those who see themselves as part of the struggle risk reinforcing the status quo. Whilst these individuals are showing up to the struggle in the only way they know how, their paternalistic drive to protect demonstrates the need for transformative engagement that facilitates a process of learning and relearning. The way in which this transformation has taken place in many of those who saw prophets as called to be with is the subject of the ecologies of knowledge chapter.

Finally, there may also be a warning within the experience of the IFI. According to the progressive group, their conservative counterparts need educating as to the true calling of an IFI leader and the importance of acting against the violent

authoritarianism of the Filipino government. However, as with the Lumad struggle, there is also violence in opposing the state, as the Filipino government seeks to silence opposition. In such a context, is the inaction of all conservative leadership really inaction or a different form of action that focuses on reducing immediate violence against their Church community? Is it not understandable that people would not choose to, or more importantly, may not be in a position in which they are able to, invite state persecution upon themselves? When the expected result of action is violence, is perceived inaction really grounds to question the Christianity of the other? That progressive members of the IFI wish to influence and educate their conservative counterparts is demonstrative of the tendency to equate silence with compliance. This ignores those for whom merely surviving within oppressive systems and structures is struggle enough. Ignoring such experiences ignores repression and reinforces arguments for growth focused development models that simply incorporate more people into it. Broader understandings of diverse forms of struggle are required in order to understand the breadth of discontentment with current exploitative social, political and economic systems.

CHAPTER 6 - PERSECUTION

Introduction

The evening before Good Friday, 2023, a leading Bishop of the IFI wrote from his position or refuge in Europe ‘We are confronted with the stark reality of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, and we are challenged to ask ourselves: what does this mean for us?’ (Ablon, 2023). In his reflection, he asked ‘how can we follow in Jesus’ footsteps? How can we stand up against the systems of oppression and injustice that still exist in our world today?’ (Ablon, 2023). His response to his own question raises the topics of martyrdom, persecution and the role of suffering that were recurrent in interviews with IFI leaders across Mindanao and with members of the Obispado Maximo. He opined that:

The answer lies in our willingness to be revolutionary. Jesus was not content to simply go along with the status quo. He challenged the religious and political authorities of his time, and he spoke out against the injustices he saw around him. He was willing to suffer and die for what he believed in, and he calls us to do the same... This may not be an easy path to walk. It may require sacrifice and even suffering. But we know that we are not alone. We have the example of Jesus to guide us, and we have the support of one another as we work towards a better world. (Ablon, 2023).

Throughout this chapter, I reflect upon how the IFI pass their understanding of persecution and martyrdom from one generation to the next. I highlight the challenge of defining these terms and the power often embedded in one’s ability to do so.

Following this, I strive to understand how the IFI define their own experience of persecution, drawing from interviews, the pilgrimage I attended and official IFI statements. This leads to a discussion of competing narratives and opinions surrounding the use of violence and arms, the role of a prophet and common differences between rhetoric and practice. It highlights how standing in solidarity means some of the IFI have moved, either permanently or temporarily, to the other side of the abyssal line. I then look at how congregation members respond to church persecution and red-tagging. I conclude by reflecting on the utility of persecution as a label, the power to use such a label and its interaction with the status quo. I use this reflection to argue that engagement with international mechanism risks weakening struggles against dominant systems by forcing the use of labels. This, I posit has the potential to cause divisions and even competition amongst those in the struggle.

Definition of Martyrdom and Persecution

The roots of martyrdom are not distinctly Christian. Ideas of what it means to die a good death were prevalent in Ancient Greece and Rome and the book of Daniel contains narratives of Jewish martyrdom (Frend, 1965 p.65; cf. Bowersock, 1995; Moss 2013, p. 17). Regardless, Christians throughout history have adopted and adapted these ideas as their own and martyrdom has played an important role in the formation of Christianity from the distinguishing of Judaism and Christianity as separate entities (Boyarin, 1999, chapter 4) to the Catholic Donatist split and the Protestant-Catholic divide (Middleton, 2014, p.126-128).

Despite its significance in the development of Christianity, what counts as martyrdom is difficult to define and definitions are inconsistent even when looking to ancient texts (Moss, 2012; Middleton, 2014). In the absence of clear categorisations, those with the power and motivation to tell stories of martyrdom have adapted definitions to justify and support their own agendas (Moss, 2012; Middleton 2014). An early example of this is Clement who, in his late second, early third century analysis distinguished between 'true' martyrs and 'heretics', who rushed to false martyrdom and 'cowards', who avoided martyrdom altogether (Middleton, p.123-124). This definition allowed Clement to justify his own flee from persecution (Moss, 2013, p. 195) despite the fact that Christians in the period of study would not have differentiated between voluntary and normative martyrdom (Droge and Tabor, 1992, pp. 141–144, Moss, 2012; Middleton, 2014, p.124). Attempts to define and categorise martyrs have continued throughout the decades, today, perhaps the most commonly referred to is De Ste. Croix's 1963 categorisation, which built on Clement to divide martyrs into true, voluntary and quasi-voluntary martyrs. According to De Ste. Croix, a voluntary martyr was

a Christian who deliberately and unnecessarily provoked persecution and thus sought a death which [they, she or] he might have avoided without any sacrifice of Christian principle.

Quasi-voluntary martyrs, were those who fell somewhere between true and voluntary martyrs (De Ste. Croix, 2006, p.154). Categorisations remain important. However, scholars have critiqued these groupings for imposing debates about the voluntary nature of martyrdom on the second century whilst failing to account for geographical or temporal difference (Moss, 2012; Tite, 2015).

What counts as martyrdom is often not for the individual concerned to define. Whom a community include and exclude as a martyr tell us less about the martyrs themselves, or the time in which they lived, and more about the author and the community and context in which they are writing (Middleton, 2011, p. 30). For example, drawing from a more recent example, although the people of El Salvador immediately recognised Oscar Romero as a martyr, the institutional Catholic Church saw Archbishop Romero as a 'dangerous leftist and communist sympathiser' (Middleton, 2014, p.217) and feared that defining him as a martyr would encourage others to take up his 'leftist' struggle that challenged the existing order (Middleton, 2014, p.217). The Church did not officially name Romero as a martyr until 2015.

Narratives of persecution and martyrdom, such as that of Oscar Romero, are passed from one generation to the next and adapted to suit the society of the time, influence certain action, or inaction. In this way,

martyrdom cannot be defined; martyrdom is what martyrdom does; a narrative that creates or maintains group identity, by holding up an ideal representative of the community, who chose to or is made to die for its values. (Middleton, 2014, p.130).

Authors, and communities with power define and reconstruct stories about an individual's life and death in a way that aligns with their current ideology and worldview; 'the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present.'

(Halbwachs, 1992, p. 40). These narratives then support the formation of collective memories, help create and reinforce group identities and inspire particular behaviours by defining people as in or out of a group by whether they accept or reject a particular martyr narrative (Halbwachs, 1992, p.40).

Martyr narratives have been used to inspire generations to resist suppression (Moss, 2013, p.260). They have also been manipulated to justify the use of violence where one's enemy is seen as a demonic force that must be defeated at any cost (Moss, 2013, p.199; Middleton, 2014, p.120). The use of violence has long been debated within martyr narratives with some, such as Cunningham (2011), arguing that the use of violence automatically disqualifies one from martyrdom. Others such as Moss (2012) refer back to the fourth and fifth centuries to show that historically this was not necessarily true. In the 21st century, whilst dying 'in service', for example in the army, is viewed by many as a meaningful and good death, the term martyr is rarely used. In the majority of the west martyr has instead become equated with those who are violent, sick or insane, an argument espoused by De Ste. Croix (1963, p.23-24), Frend (1965, p.197) and Dodds (1994, p.135). This argument gained strength after the 9/11 bombings as the term martyr became closely linked to suicide bombers and violent sects of Islam (Cook, 2007).

Persecution and Freedom of Religion or Belief

Persecution has not seen the same fall from favour as martyrdom. Western governments are dedicating increasing time and financial resources to what they

define as countering religious persecution (Toft, Philpott, D. and Shah, 2018).³⁷ A report, commissioned in December 2018 by then UK Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, to look specifically at issues of Christian persecution is exemplary of this. The report, as with similar work, avoids defining persecution and, like martyrdom, what counts as persecution depends on how those with power define and narrate the circumstances. In addition, it depends on how the individual and/or group define their experience. The report's findings brought the idea that Christians have always been persecuted into political and policymaking circles, arguing that 80% of religious discrimination takes place against Christians, a figure that is unsubstantiated and widely criticised (Evans-Hills et al. 2019).

The supposition that Christians are always persecuted is then used, as it has been throughout recent history, to position Christians as morally superior and their counterparts as enemies (Moss, 2012, p.261), as British Christians and western politicians are encouraged to unite and resist those who persecute them. The lead role played by Western governments in defining and perusing the Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) agenda is positively discussed in the report, which largely

³⁷ In the international community, concern for persecution sits within the broad category of FoRB, concern for which was first documented in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948). Article 18 of the document states 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this rights includes freedom to change his [sic] religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.' In 1981, the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief followed the UDHR. Numerous other documents and declarations now support the initial sentiment of these initial UN agreements. For a full overview, see Stahnke and Martin (1998). According to Davis (2002, p.115), these documents were the 'modern era's response to history's 'religious intolerance, persecution, inquisitions, and religious wars.' Whilst he acknowledges that persecution continues he holds high hopes for international law that seeks to ensure civil liberties, thereby preventing terrorism and conflict. Similarly, in their book *The Price of Freedom Denied* (2010) sociologists Grim and Finke posit that religious liberty reduces inter-religious conflict and persecution. For a recent example of governmental concern with FoRB see Mounstephen (2019).

focuses on Christian persecution in the 'Middle-East' and 'Global South'. The report does not acknowledge the experiences of those it homogenises under the term 'other religions', throughout Europe or the United States of America, for example, the experience of Muslims amidst growing Islamophobia in the UK.

One positive recommendation that comes from the report is the need to acknowledge the intersectionality of persecution. The internal differences, disagreements and nuances within a particular group are often absent from persecution and martyrdom literature. In relation to the ancient world, it is likely that this homogenisation of experiences results from a dearth of written record. However, there have since been technological advances, increased literacy and a greater awareness of the importance of including the opinions of those often excluded across intersections such as gender, race, age and class when discussing societal opinions. It is therefore now possible to consider the diversity of internal narratives when looking at martyrdom and persecution in the 21st century. Doing so provides a deeper insight into the power dynamics and multiple understandings at play.

Prosecution or Persecution

An important definitional challenge for any such report is in distinguishing between prosecution and persecution where prosecution refers to legal proceedings and persecution is an abuse of rights based on particular characteristics. For example, scholars have questioned whether the deaths of Christians at the hands of Roman soldiers was persecution of Christians, specifically targeted because of their religion, or prosecution of those who challenged societal order and established legal norms (Moss, 2013, p.12; Rodriguez, 2017, p.261). Moss contends that:

Just because Christians were prosecuted or executed, even unjustly, does not necessarily mean that they were persecuted...As we look at episodes of “persecution,” we need to constantly ask ourselves: Is this religious persecution or is this ancient justice. (Moss, 2013, p. 164).

In relation to the IFI, we then have to ask whether the harassment of the Church is religious persecution or 21st century justice, based on the written rule of law. This may sound like a straightforward task. However, there is ambiguity when the legitimacy of said laws are called into question. This is the case with the IFI and the anti-terror law. The anti-terror bill, passed into law on the 3rd of July, 2020 expands the definition of terrorism, stating that

terrorism is committed by any person who, within or outside the Philippines, regardless of the stage of execution... [who]...Engages in acts intended to cause extensive interference with, damage or destruction to critical infrastructure...when the purpose of such act, by its nature and context, is to...seriously destabilize or destroy the fundamental political, economic and social structures of the country (Congress of the Philippines, 2022, p.347).

In union with Lumad communities and civil society organisations, the IFI claim that the anti-terror law actually facilitates persecution and injustice. They posit that it places all of those who believe in human, environmental and cultural rights at risk of life imprisonment, without parole, as a terrorist (Timbang, 2020). They argue that the subjectivity of the word ‘intended’ within the law enables the government to use this

label to legally prosecute the IFI and rights defenders for their mission. According to their interpretation of the law, anyone protesting a mine on Indigenous lands or peacefully resisting the development of a plantation where small-scale farming has traditionally existed is as a terrorist (Timbang, 2020). Prior to the passing of the law, the government's only recourse to silence the IFI, apart from extra-judicial killings, was to prosecute them on trumped up charges and accusations of NPA membership. However, under the 2020 anti-terror law such fabrications and trumped up charges are no longer necessary.

At a national level, this law facilitates the legal prosecution of those who challenge the status quo without the need for trumped up charges. The OHCHR (2020, p.9) report questioned its legality noting that:

The proposed Anti-Terrorism Act, slated to replace the already problematic Human Security Act, dilutes human rights safeguards, broadens the definition of terrorism and expands the period of detention without a warrant from 3 to 14 days, which is then extendable by another 10 days. The vague definitions in the Anti-Terrorism Act may violate the principle of legality.

Such criticisms from the Commissioner on Human Rights and the challenge civil society have waged against the law, highlight one complication when distinguishing between prosecution and persecution: there are often differences between national, international and community understandings of the legality of laws used to prosecute. In part due to their contention for this law, the UN committed to support church

workers, and other human rights defenders in the Philippines, whom government forces persecute and harass for their mission and peaceful protests. This, at least theoretically, opens space for groups, such as the IFI and Lumads to claim persecution and request international intervention in the national arena.

At the time of writing, civil society in the Philippines continues to challenge the legality of the anti-terror law and the latest HRC notes that the

OHCHR and special procedures mandate holders remained concerned that the law does not fully conform with international human rights standards, in particular its broad definition of terrorism, and that its implementation could result in human rights violations.

Whether such challenges are successful and whether the legality of such law is accepted determines who is seen as persecuted and potentially provided international support and who is defined as a terrorist and left in the cold. It affects whose arrests or deaths lead to outcry and whose are defined as acceptable or even a victory in the Philippines 'war against terror'.

[Persecution and martyrdom narratives within the IFI](#)

Definitions, national and international laws are important. However, it is essential to understand how the IFI narrate their experience. As I aim to show, how martyr and persecution narratives are shared within the Church impacts the actions and behaviour encouraged and the mission undertaken. The subjects of martyrdom and

persecution were raised frequently during interviews, however, the use of language within the IFI is fluid. In general, persecution is used when talking to international audiences and harassment is used as a catch all phrase for everything from surveillance to non-lethal shooting. A martyr is someone who dedicates their life to a cause (although they do not necessarily have to die for it) and a prophet someone who speaks God's truth, often to counter the lies of those in power, and acts against injustice. This section begins by looking at the official narrative of the Church and the way in which the Bible and the history of the IFI are used to encourage interpretations of historical events that contribute to the development of social memories and support the defining of 'in', and 'out' groups (Halbwachs, 1992). It then highlights internal divisions between the clergy and Bishops as leaders of the IFI and the congregations who make up its membership showing how official narratives are partially or fully accepted or rejected.

Pilgrimage

A key part of the IFI's story since its inception has been the willingness of its leadership to put themselves at risk for the benefit of the masses. The current leadership frequently draw upon this history, and in particular the life of the Church's founder Isabelo de los Reyes and first OM, Gregorio Aglipay when explaining why the Church persists with its mission despite state harassment. Current leadership of the IFI defines both historical figures as prophets, willing to risk their lives for God's mission.³⁸ This mission involved supporting, and at times take a leading role, in the

³⁸ The IFI leadership do not differentiate between types of martyrdom or even frequently use the phrase themselves focusing more on the life of the individual and their work as a prophet than the circumstances of their death.

people's revolution and struggle for freedom from imperial rule (Cabillas, 2020a). The annual pilgrimage of the national office team, which I was invited to join, focused on the life of Isabelo De Los Reyes. Leadership were encouraged to think about what it means to be a true leader of the IFI and member of a revolutionary church in their current context. Father Dionito M. Cabillas, who led the pilgrimage at the request of the OM, highlighted De Los Reyes' integral role in people's movements and his socio-theological reasoning for founding the first labour union. Throughout the pilgrimage, he narrated De Los Reyes' life in a way that would inspire the group and support present ideology and practice. For example, by ending the pilgrimage with a visit to a local community where the majority of people are employed on exploitative zero hour contracts in the shipping industry his stated aim was to highlight the importance of fighting for fair contracts and pay through unions. He shared that he hoped the experience would encourage those present to re-evaluate where they could, and should, do more to be part of the people's struggle as mandated by their faith and history. By doing so, he contributed to understandings of the way history determines how the 'in' group are expected to behave. However, there were other parts of the IFI's history subtly excluded from the narrative, assumedly because they pose a challenge to current institutional narratives. For example, the violence of the revolution, in which both Isabelo de Los Reyes and OM Aglipay participated, was not part of the pilgrimage narrative. At present, the official position of the IFI is one of non-violent resistance, a key way the IFI distinguish themselves from the NPA. When presenting the official position of the OM during an IFI pilgrimage Cabillas ignored the historical use of violence. Despite this omission, as I bring attention to below, for Cabillas himself (as opposed to the Cabillas tasked with presenting the official

narrative on the OM) non-violent resistance is not enough. This evidences the way historical narratives can be selectively used, by the same individual, to meet slightly different objectives.

Statements

Whilst the annual pilgrimage of the IFI is designed specifically for leadership at the national office, official statements by presiding OMs connect to wider audiences, articulating martyr and persecution narratives. These statements, which often also form part of preaching engagements, link the contextual challenges and harassment faced by the Church with its history, theology, mission and witness. I draw upon two such statements to demonstrate how they define 'in' and 'out' groups and establish communal memories (Halbwachs, 1992). The newly appointed OM, Reverend Godofredo J David, made the first statement to which I refer in 2006. The present head of the Church, the Most Reverend Rhee Timbang made the second in 2018. Both describe the life and death of OM Ramento who was murdered on the 3rd of October 2006.

The statement made by OM Godofredo at the time of Ramento's death begins with words reportedly spoken by Ramento to his family; "I know they are going to kill me next but never will I abandon my duty to God and my ministry to the people" (Godofredo, 2006). That OM Godofredo begins with this statement demonstrates his intention to portray OM Ramento as a faithful minister who willingly gave up his life for God and the Filipino people. Choice and willingness to die are positive

characteristics in contrast to De Ste. Croix's categorisation of voluntary or quasi martyrs.³⁹

Furthermore, in a sort of martyrdom by proxy, Godofredo's statement suggests that the Church had a choice and that it was willing to let the OM die. His death is describes as 'a precious offering in the continuing task of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ' (Godofredo, 2006). An offering made by the IFI, not the individual. The statement reads

The Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) has once again made a precious offering in the continuing task of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the brutal killing of the Most Reverend Alberto B. Ramento, the 9th OM of the church (Godofredo, 2006).

The non-violence of a peaceful offering contrasts sharply with the description of the murder as a 'brutal killing' and later of the assassins as 'barbaric' (Godofredo, 2006). This is one way in which OM Godofredo defines the in and out groups; those who are pro peace are 'in' and those who are pro violence are 'out'. This is consistent with the way leaders have historically compared their enemies with violent demonic forces (Moss, 2013, p. 199), although in the case of the IFI the purpose is to incite non-violent resistance.

³⁹ This contrast is likely because of understandings of the OM's death as murder and not suicide. Whilst scholars have often equated voluntary or quasi martyrdom with suicide, the OM's death, as presented here, was murder. He was willing to *give* his life but he did not *take* his own life. His willingness to die was evidenced by his continuing his ministry, his work with the poor and marginalised, his support for the struggle of small-scale farmers, his commitment to the peace process and his critique of the Gloria Arroyo government despite the death threats that this work invited.

As the statement continues, Godofredo outlines the parameters of the in and out groups as those who wish to be part of the in-group are encouraged to define the death of the OM as a politically motivated murder. The statement explains that despite official labels of the death a robbery-murder

the Ramento family, the clergy and the faithful of the Diocese of Tarlac believe that the motive is much deeper... We believe that the brutal killing was the inevitable consequence of his principled engagement with the people and their struggle for the fullness of life (Godofredo, 2006).

To question whether the OM's death was a consequence of his life would be unfaithful. The reference to 'fullness of life' shows how, although his murder was 'politically motivated', the OM's life was biblically motivated and he died for religious and not political causes.⁴⁰ The statement describes OM Ramento as an 'advocate of just peace' suggesting a contrast with the unjust peace for which the state strive where peace is simply a lack of physical violence and the exploitation of the poor and marginalised continues (Jeong, 2000). OM Godofredo reinforces this idea by including a quote from the last pastoral letter OM Ramento wrote as Supreme Council of Bishops chairperson that calls on the IFI

to find courage and confront the darkness that is engulfing the very soul of the nation and continue to tread the path towards the establishment of a just society under a government that genuinely serves the interest and welfare of the Filipinos.

⁴⁰ The phrase 'fullness of life' is associated with numerous Biblical passages, in particular, John 10:10. For a list of other Biblical passages that relate to this idea, see Open Bible (2023).

The statement uses the death of OM Ramento to encourage support from the 'in' group in continuing the mission of the church

The people behind his death might think that they have silenced him and maimed the prophetic voice of the church. They are mistaken. His death has become like a candle in a burning incense, sparking more fire, enflaming the hearts of the clergy and faithful of the IFI to remain faithful to her pro-people and pro-labor heritage.... They may have taken his life by opening his body with wounds – but these wounds have become the doorway from which Bishop Ramento's valiant spirit has been poured out and shared to many.

There are similarities between OM Godofredo's description of OM Ramento's wounds and the wound in the side of Jesus. John 19:34 describes how a soldier pierces Jesus' side with a spear, creating a wound from which flowed blood and water. Drawing comparisons between the wound of OM Ramento and Jesus reiterates that, at least for those in the 'in' group, there is no question that Ramento was unfairly persecuted for doing God's work. Common interpretations of John 19:34 within the IFI articulate the blood of Jesus as redemptive and the water life giving, taking away our sins. In the above analogy, the OM's spirit gives life to the Church and particularly its pro-people, pro-labour struggle. Drawing similarities between OM Ramento's murder and what is arguably the most important event in the Christian religion demonstrates the impact OM Godofredo expects this event to have on the life of the Church and the support he expects the 'in' group to afford the pro-life, pro-labour struggle.

Twelve years later, on the anniversary of OM Ramento's death in 2018, OM Timbang's statement fortified much of OM Godofredo's interpretation of events and reinforced many of the in/out group parameters. Through his statement, OM Timbang attests that the red-tagging and eventual murder of OM Ramento was due to his advocacy in relation to 'human rights, social justice and peace process' (Timbang, 2018) and, in particular, his final role in supporting the Luisita sugarcane workers in their struggle for fair wages and land distribution. According to this statement, OM Ramento was a living example of the mission of the IFI, a mission entirely religiously, not politically motivated. The statement describes the IFI's current mission as 'consistent with our [the IFI's] witness and history' (Timbang, 2018) again, defining the 'in' group as those who share in OM Timbang's interpretation of witness and history. This history now includes the life and death of OM Ramento, who OM Rhee acknowledges had been receiving threats and had been red-tagged but continued in his work none the less, deciding not to flee the persecution. Those who choose to witness in this way are 'simply followers of the Lord Jesus who wish to be faithful to him, to be zealous with our mission and ministry', with the suggestion that their specific ministry is *the* way to follow Jesus. Interestingly, neither the statement of OM Timbang, nor OM Godofredo actually uses the word martyr. However, by framing the OM as willingly giving his life for his faith, the statements enable the use of the word martyr in other aspects of Church life, for example, at the annual remembrance services and on the 'Martyr's wall' at the IFI National Cathedral. It also facilitated OM Timbang's advocacy with the general Assembly to institutionalize the observance of the Commemoration of All IFI Martyrs and Confessors every November 8 of the year (Timbang, 2023).

As with OM Godofredo's statement, OM Timbang affirms religious mission as the reason for the red-tagging, harassment and eventual death of OM Ramento which is labelled as an extra-judicial killing, despite official police statements that the death remains an unsolved murder-robbery with no political motivation.⁴¹ OM Timbang also uses his statement to define the more recent deaths of Bro. Meliton Catampongan and Bro. Erning Aykid 2018 as extra-judicial killings (Timbang 2018). This label ignores that fact that whilst there were reports that the military had questioned Aykid concerning his supposed affiliation with the NPA the two were shot by unknown assailants (NCCP, 2017 (b)). It remains unknown if these assailants were affiliated with government agencies. However, countering the OM's narrative would be to place oneself outside the 'in' group of faithful IFI followers.

The description of OM Ramento's death is graphic. 'the stabbing was so brutal that his blood spread out all over the walls and floor of his room.' (Timbang, 2018). Such a description renders those who committed the murder and by extension, the state who sanctioned it, as brutal and violent. In contrast, including the detail that the OM was asleep in his bed at the time of the murder portrays him in a peaceful and passive light. This is consistent with OM Godofredo's distinguishing the in-group as peaceful and the out-group as violent. Finally, similarly to OM Godofredo, OM

⁴¹ In a statement made in October, 2006, Tarlac police provincial director stated that, whilst activists alleged Ramento had received death threats, there was 'not a shred of evidence yet that could point to a motive in the bishop's killing other than robbery, although they may be other persons or groups who might have wanted the bishop dead.' (Legaspi, 2006).

Timbang uses OM Ramento's death as a call to action where remembering the OM is supposed to encourage a 'thirst of truth and quest for justice.' (Timbang, 2018).

A further statement made by OM Timbang in 2018 entitled 'On The Persisting Harassment, Threats and Incarceration against IFI Clergy and Lay Workers' broadens understandings of Church persecution to reflect the present reality of the Church, including, for example, arrests and trumped up charges.

We believe that death threats, harassment, intimidation, illegal arrests and detentions, and trumped-up charges are acts which the state only has the power and authority to do so. These acts violate the basic human rights of our lay and ordained leaders in particular, and of the people in general if these are likewise applied against them. We believe that these constitute acts of persecutions against the IFI and is a deliberate attempt to silent our clergy and lay who are involved in empowering communities and defending the country's patrimony. Indeed, we are now in worrying times that need the essential and critical witnessing of our faith (Timbang, 2018).

This statement was widely circulated amongst IFI leadership and congregation members. It implies that to be a faithful member of the IFI is to be driven by one's religious conviction, to stand with the oppressed and marginalised in the pursuit of justice, despite persecution. The statement suggests that the greater the persecution and risk, the greater the need to live out one's faith. IFI members are encouraged to side with God and follow the footsteps of those who have witnessed so faithfully.

They are called to 'demonstrate love to the Risen Lord Jesus not only in words or speech but with deeds or actions in truth (1 John: 3:18)' (Timbang, 2018) and dismiss the claims of a government led by a president who 'himself has no regard of the human and civil rights of the people he was sworn to serve.' (Timbang, 2018). They are encouraged to follow the IFI's narration of events where 'Church people working for justice, peace and integrity of creation and advocating for the defense of human dignity, human rights and civil liberties, national sovereignty and independence have fallen as victims, either thrown to prisons, involuntarily disappeared or summarily executed.' (Timbang, 2018).

The statement also uses ancient Christian history to support the idea that persecution results from fulfilling God's mission. The OM begins by linking the harassment of the IFI with the persecution of Christians under the Roman Empire, which he explains was due to their 'strong commitment to vigorously proclaim the Lord's gospel and live-out the values of God's kingdom.' (Timbang, 2018). Many Christians view persecution as a continual and even intrinsic feature of the Christian faith (Moss, 2013 p.261). The IFI draw on these narratives from the ancient world to encourage and justify their standing with the Lumads despite red-tagging and harassment. These interpretations normalise embracing current harassment and encourage the continuation of their mission with the most marginalised despite it.

The final call to action in this statement uses militarised language as the OM summons the church to

“put on the armor of God,” standing firm with “the belt of truth,” “with the breastplate of righteousness,” “with the sandals of readiness that come from the gospel of peace,” taking up “with the shield of faith,” “with the helmet of salvation” and “the sword of the Spirit” [Ephesians 6:14-17]. (Timbang, 2018).

The use of militarised language and St Paul’s letter to Ephesians (Ephesians 6:11, NIV) to compare the oppressive state with the devil has parallels with other martyrologies that have historically been used to justify violence (Moss, 2013). Despite the IFI current stance of non-violence, this language can support the call of those, such as Father Cabillas, who, as I explore in the following section, would like to see the IFI once again take up arms against the devil that oppresses them.

Competing narratives

Father Cabillas, who led the pilgrimage I attended, is also a regular writer for *Manila Today*, a popular independent online news service, through which his contextual and historical analysis are widely disseminated. Cabillas’ exclusion of violence from the historical analysis given during the February 2020 pilgrimage commissioned by the OM contrasts with his article on the 29 March 2020. In his article, Cabillas he argues that, given the history of the IFI and the role of their first OM as a member of the Filipino Revolutionary army from 1898 to 1901, the IFI cannot denounce armed

struggle.⁴² Cabillas uses the article to bring attention to a time when, whilst not advocating for violence, the highest level of the Church was unwilling to commit to non-violence. He shares how at a 1999 international conference looking at the challenges of globalisation, OM Ramento announced that the IFI could not sign any statement that would limit their opposition to globalisation to non-violent struggle because of the IFI's role in the Filipino revolution. In a kind of catch 22, he suggests that this inability to denounce armed struggle is the reason that the IFI are the target of state harassment then arguing that, given current government tyranny, 'the Philippine Churches are compelled to reconsider their position on non-violent struggle.' (Cabillas, 2020b). In its rhetoric, the present day international system affords the state a monopoly on violence. As a result, any change in the formal position of the IFI to reflect the stance of Father Cabillas could affect the way the way in which the international community come to understand and define the persecution/prosecution and martyr/terrorist situation of the IFI.

Extending understandings of struggle to include armed struggle allows Cabillas to expand the label of martyr. Cabillas draws parallels between those who fought in the battle for independence and the current 'people's army' (Cabillas, 2020b), labelling those who have lost their life in this continual struggle as martyrs, evoking religious language to encourage a valuing of the lives and deaths of these individuals. Whilst he acknowledges that he is being provocative, admitting that he would liked to have seen the faces of the congregation members when he suggested praying for those

⁴² The omission of this argument from the pilgrimage is likely due to Cabillas' position as a representative of the OM (who espouses non-violence) during that time, which contrasts with his position as an independent author when writing for Manila Today.

who have fallen in the revolutionary struggle, he is still a public voice of authority. The wide dissemination of his views demonstrates that the OM is not the only leader who is influencing the harassment and martyr narratives of the IFI. Furthermore, the difference between the subtle exclusion of discussions of violence during the pilgrimage and the explicit call for a return to violent-struggle in this article demonstrate how the stance of individuals in relation to such contentious issues is often audience, context and time specific.

Father Cabillas is the only IFI leader I encountered publically advocating for armed struggle. However, others shared similar opinions during interviews, often drawing from the revolutionary actions of OM Aglipay and Isabelo de los Reyes. For example, one interviewee shared that

Our first Bishop Maximum was a Vicar general of general Emilio Aguinaldo [the military leader of the Philippine revolutionary movement against the Spanish]. Our first Obispo maximal is a revolutionary priest (12).

There was also acceptance that the revolution was not the only time when members of the IFI took up arms. According to one programme leader

Actually, there existing where in the IFI, some of the IFI, some of the clergy, some of the IFI have taken up arms against the fascist and dictator Marcos, during martial law (14).

Key to these responses was the reason their fore founders took up arms. One priest shared that 'Aglipay is a revolutionary actually...he defended life that is why he took

up arms for the revolution but you are not going to kill a person if it is not to defend life.' (29). This theme of taking up arms to defend life was also discussed in the present. One Priest shared that

I think the role of any loss of life is at stake then all rules should be abolished... So I go for to take arms if your life is at stake and different people, even if it is not my life but people who are oppressed and experiencing injustices in front of my eyes and I just stop I don't just want to watch them I have to go meddling with them or defend with them (23).

Following the idea of abolishing laws in certain situations another leader shared that 'I think for me killing is not always a sin if it is just if it is just right it cannot be considered as a sin.' (22). This does not mean that they were all willing to take up arms. There was a distinction between defending life and engaging in armed revolution where 'we should defend the lives of others but not for revolt I am not going to take arms to revolt.' (29). However, this priest was also clear that 'I cannot decide for those who decided to take up arms. It is their own decision. Nor will I condemn them you know those who decided to go and take up arms.' (29).

Interviewees commonly espoused this stance of non-judgement with one young leader sharing that

we cannot simply demonise these people because these people, have their own ideological and political awareness of why and experience also and direct experience of threat that makes them decide to go there. (14)

If any IFI were to take up arms they would be defending life, and therefore not demonic. However, when referring to the state and those in the 'out' group many respondents used language similar to that used to describe the murder of OM Ramento in the statements above, including 'evil' and 'devil'. For example, one Bishop suggested that '...the power of evil is always in a hurry.' (30) and another that the IFI 'should have the power to stand firm and stand firm against the devil...there is the corrupt government, the murderer, like the state, and then oppressors.' (21). As previously mentioned, this type of language is often used to justify violence and, given the continued repression oppression of many Filipinos and the increasing harassment of human rights defenders in the Philippines, particularly through the anti-terror law, it is not unthinkable that historic and linguistic tools could be mobilised to support armed struggle in the future.

Given this context, I asked 23, why they had not taken up arms given current government oppression. They shared 'For me I want to take up arms but I cannot because I cannot afford to have it.' (23). I then asked if she would ever consider joining the NPA as she would be provided with free arms, to which she responded

When I am still younger, before and if maybe they recruited me when I am still in my 18 years in my early 20 years then I go. But now, because of my situation [referring to health concerns] it is so hard for me to go up in the mountains but if there will be a revolution then I will just join them. (23).

When I asked what she thought the Church would think of her stance she responded

But as an IFI, as the Church because the church is so conservative really the church is so conservative so the church will just say no we just have to campaign, we have to be a peace maker we have to just pray for them, join them. At least the maximum service we can offer them as a Church is go with them at the streets that is not the guns and killings. Because the church says no to killings. (23).

This idea that although the Church may not advocate for taking up arms, individuals may choose to do presented itself multiple times with one programme leader sharing that due to persistent red-tagging 'some people like some priests some lay sectors was thinking to take up arms. But not the IFI itself it is the individual members the individual leaders of the church, but not the institution itself.' (22). Understandings of when, if ever, it is acceptable to take up arms are understandably complicated and personal. Within such narratives there is a risk that armed struggle becomes idealised, creating a distinction between rhetoric and practice. It is possible that leaders may argue that armed struggle is the correct response to a situation without actually participating themselves. There is also the possibility that there is IFI participation in the current armed struggle that interviewees were unwilling to share.

Clergy narratives

In contrast to the opinion of Father Cabillas and the above quoted leaders of the IFI, others believed that the struggle must always remain non-violent. They based this view on religious principles where 'the clergies don't know how to shoot, because that is God's commandment.' (13). Part of the mission of the IFI was then to break

the current dehumanising cycle of violence (Sobrino, 1994, p.216). Interviewees used the Church's insistence on non-violence to distinguish it from the NPA, counter accusations of red-tagging and quell concerns of members who have seen public graffiti where red-tagging where IFI=NPA is written on highways and church walls.

There was an acknowledgement of the ideological similarities between the NPA and the IFI, both of whom believe that 'Human beings were made to create, to share, to love, and equally, to have their own rights. So that is why the church is red-tagged as NPA'. (12). There was also a recognition of the similarities in action that resulted from this belief 'one of the reasons that is why they call us IFI as NPA because we are always helping Lumads.' (31). However, those interviewed explained that the 'National People's Army is an armed people. We the IFI we don't have any arms...we will just help to those people who needs helps.' (31).

This group believed that red-tagging was firstly a result of the state's religious illiteracy. They argued that if the security forces understood the religious and historical motivations for the IFI's mission they would no longer be labelled as communists. Secondly, that the state know the IFI take a position of non-violence and are not members of the NPA but these accusations were simply useful excuses to enable the state to tag and silence those who criticise them.

Prophets

Despite the different reasons given for red-tagging the clergy and Bishops interviewed were united in their belief that this form of harassment should not stop

the Church from fulfilling their mission. They believed that the ordained are called to be prophets and that prophets have historically been persecuted but this should not stop them from fulfilling their mission. One participant stated that

being one of the Prophets of the IFI, even though there are already this red-tagging, threats, harassment, for my part, I will continue. Not only as a priest, not only as a Christian, but as a prophet (20).

The leadership used Biblical and historical links between prophets and persecution as encouragement for themselves and their fellow leaders to continue in their mission. When comparing himself with prophets from the Old Testament one respondent questioned:

How many prophets were killed? How many prophets were harassed? And so many of the clergy, of the IFI, some of them got killed. Some were in prison, harassed, and so we call them prophets of the Church, of the IFI (21).

Interviewees believed that God had specifically chosen the IFI to undertake their mission with the poor and marginalised where 'God chose the IFI...Then God speak to all the new prophets, like us, clergy, to defend and rescue his own people.' (13). Being persecuted for such work was then a direct result of being one of God's prophets. Supporting this narrative and the persecution faced by those who identify as prophets is an IFI programme entitled 'Project Prophets'. This programme aims to support church leaders who are harassed, threatened or incarcerated for preaching, advocacy or action in support of those who are marginalised and oppressed.

Internal differences

Whilst clergy and Bishops agreed that they were called to be prophets and that they must continue in their mission, there were differences in their experiences of red-tagging, harassment and death. These differences were particularly pronounced between the younger and older clergy.

Younger Clergy

Resulting from the narrative that red-tagging is a result of the IFI's work with the poor and marginalised, younger clergy saw being red-tagged as part of their calling, 'I see the red-tagging is part of the ministry, part of expressing and embracing the gospel.' (26). It was something that they aimed for and saw as 'a sign that you have been faithful to what God intends you to do.' (11). They believed that they should persist in this mission despite harassment 'Although we have this threat, although we have this so called vilification against us, yet our fear must not prevail. Rather, in ourselves, the gospel of Christ must prevail.' (12).

When asked where these opinions came from respondents regularly quoted Matthew 5:11:

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your rewards are great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (ESV).

One priest even incorporated the IFI into this passage, proclaiming

Blessed are the peacemakers, the church, the IFI, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, red-tagging. (28).

This biblical interpretation led many of the respondents to see red-tagging as something desirable, that they should strive for. One participant noted that 'I love [if I could] also can be red-tagged someday. Although that might mean you know, my rights will be limited, yeah. Glory to God yeah, that will happen.' (11). Red-tagging was seen as a sign that one had been faithful to their calling. For example, the same participant, upon hearing that a colleague had been red-tagged, shared 'I really had to thank God that B being now included in the black list. For me that [is] a sign that she have been victorious in her ministry.' (11). These younger clergy were also encouraged by the lives of the older clergy who had experienced red-tagging where 'Some priests, bishops, will be red-tagging, like the OM is also red-tagged, but they are not feeling fear. They are stronger to move.' (25). There was a general opinion that fear of repercussion for the Church's ministry with the oppressed and marginalised should be overcome. One argument in support of this was the idea that life on earth is temporary whereas life in heaven is eternal. One Priest shared that

We must courageously make the mission of Christ. So I know that as we are living here on Earth, it is a temporary, but the permanent life is with Christ, especially with the Kingdom of God (32).

The values supporting the stance taken by these clergy were disseminated through formal and informal sites of education including seminaries, ministries and mentoring.

For example, young clergy described how their Biblical interpretations, ideas of mission, harassment and understanding of what it means to be a prophet developed through the formal teachings of the IFI, primarily during their time at the seminary.

One priest shared how

I was being asked by my friends, like not IFI friends “why are you doing that?” So, since I was being nurtured and taught IFI’s teachings, so I keep on defending those people...We are taught Biblically to help those oppressed people. For sure God really will be glad knowing that, being one in the community, we need to help one another (32).

Participants also noted that the youth and women’s ministry helped to pass down and reinforce the missional work of the IFI. For example, the head of the youth sector for one of the diocese noted how he was taught, and now teaches that there are

three characteristics of the youth of the IFI; is a Christian movement, a nationalist movement and a progressive movement. Because it is taught to us, you are not alone, you have to care for others and you are not Christian alone, we are Christian, not I, not you.’ (14).

Bishops and clergy then complement these forms of knowledge and values transmission by mentoring those who begin questioning capitalist structures and government tyranny. For example, when 22 started questioning social inequalities based on what she was learning at university her priest directed her to a Bishop, known to be very socially active, and an IFI historian who ‘give me a clear

background of the IFI. So, it starts my motivation really in joining the ministry in the church.' (22).

Understandings of mission and red-tagging interacted with thoughts on martyrdom, which the younger leadership described as dying for a cause or what they believed. A supposedly meaningful way to die, which they contrasted with dying from sickness.⁴³ One participant affirmed that 'I would rather die being a martyr, defending those marginalised and oppressed people, die between fighting and promoting our church.' (32). Martyrdom was idealised, viewed as desirable and heroic by this subset of the IFI clergy. The same respondent described how dying a martyr's death would make him feel stating

I really feel victorious dying with, fighting for my church, fighting for those people, really victorious. Because this is what the church teaches us and we believe the church will never teach us wrong (32).

As with these two quotes, the language used to describe the actions leading up to a martyr's death was often combative. This stands in contrast to the way the IFI typically describe the life of a martyr after their death, as seen earlier with the example of OM Ramento.

Despite their descriptions of themselves as prophets, statements about continuing their mission in the face of red-tagging, and their martyrdom fantasies and desire to follow in the footsteps of the older clergy, the inaction of younger clergy reveals that they are more cautious of red-tagging and harassment in practice than rhetoric. Younger clergy had experience of leading within a harassed church: the majority of

⁴³ An example of this is provided shortly in relation to the OM and diabetes.

young clergy did not have personal experience of being harassed or red-tagged. It is from following what they believe to be their Biblical call to stand with Lumad communities as the oppressed and marginalised in Mindanao that many IFI have been red-tagged. However, few of the young clergy interviewed have had any engagement with Lumad communities since their participation in the Accompaniment programme (a programme in which IFI leadership immerse themselves in Lumad communities, discussed further in the following chapter). For example, after the assassination of Lumad leaders in his diocese, a priest shared how he felt unable to respond in person

unfortunately from that particular time we have no, we did not really respond there. But in our reflections, in our homilies and in our social accounts, Facebook, we really give voice to the Lumad there (35).

The focus of this subsection of the IFI leadership was on the use of preaching to expose the lies of the current presidency. One priest boldly compared himself with John the Baptist and the way in which he preached about the adulterous deeds of King Herod. This participant stated 'I am the new prophet of God who preach[es] the gospel, the truth in line with the oppressed people.' (13).

Older clergy

In contrast to the younger clergy's rhetoric about red-tagging, the older clergy and Bishops, who had direct personal experience of red-tagging and harassment, viewed it as something to be feared and avoided, although not at the expense of their

mission. This subset of the IFI's leadership had longer and more sustained engagement with Lumad communities and believed that preaching and action should always complement each other. They believed that as a Priest, 'Not only are you good in preaching, but also you are good in doing. That is our main tasks, as a priest, and that is our calling.' (36). These clergy were determined in their mission and strongly asserted that 'The red-tagging and other forms of silencing the church, it could never cow the ministries of the church.' (6). However, they were more cautious sharing that 'we should be careful enough to do our ministries. We are working not just we go easy go lucky.' (30). In contrast to the younger clergy they openly acknowledged their fear sharing that 'We fear for safety, we are wrong to say that we are happy on that red-tagging.' (30). This fear was felt by them as individuals and by their families with one Bishop sharing that 'There is a report that I am notable and under surveillance. And that is why my family is being afraid...that does make me cautious.' (37).

There is a sharp contrast with the jubilant discourse of some of the younger clergy. However, there was still a recognition that red-tagging is a result of their God given mission to stand for justice. For example, one Bishop noted

My experience being incarcerated was just a product of protecting life... those people who look for peace, we should be with them and that's the reason why I am incarcerated (30).

Again those who are red-tagged are simply peacefully protecting the oppressed and marginalised, who are also peaceful (in contrast to government narrative of Lumad as violent communist terrorists). There is a resolve amongst these clergy to continue

in their mission 'I still continue to do my work, because it is my work...I have this, I have sworn to this duty...Well if that will happen to me, well. I just leave it to the Lord.' (37). This resolve is fuelled by the idea that they are pursuing God's mission and are bound by their faith in God to continue despite the risk. As one interviewee shared 'as I was thinking and reflecting about stopping, it's never an option...our commitment is not with men, our commitment is with God, so stopping is not an option.' (10).

Whilst this group are willing to put themselves in danger, they are not rushing towards martyrdom. They take the action they need to protect themselves so that they can continue in their mission. What is difficult for this leadership group, and something that remains unaccounted for in some scholarly literature on martyrdom (De Ste. Croix 1963), is that it is not always clear to the leadership when their life is in danger. The decision of whether to stay and continue one's ministry despite persecution is complex. Historically, some levels of harassment have seemed minor but have escalated quickly whereas others church members have received direct death threats for decades and continue in their ministry unharmed. Furthermore, one's ability to flee persecution depends, at least to a degree, on social mobility, which is itself dependent upon factors such as economic status, family commitments and expectations and the possibility of continuing one's work or finding new work in a different location.

In the past year, two members of the IFI leadership have taken the decision to leave their homes because they fear for their lives. For A, this was a difficult decision that

took him a long time to arrive at. It meant leaving his family, diocese, mission and friendships. However, with no small children dependent upon him and with financial assistance from the church, a European based church offering to host him, support his visa application and assist him to raise awareness of the situation in the Philippines amongst international actors, the move was possible. He could continue to contribute to the mission of the IFI and protect himself. Similarly, for B, although leaving her home in Mindanao meant leaving her friends and family (whom she was unable to tell that she had been red-tagged due to their policing background) she has no immediate dependents and can continue her job and mission from the national office in Manila. In addition, the IFI were able to assist her with transport costs and temporary accommodation.

The point of these examples is not to diminish the experience of these two individuals or their emotional and psychological challenges. These examples show the difficulty of appropriating categories of voluntary or quasi-voluntary martyrdom to the experience of another person. If these individuals did not have the social resources necessary to leave and had been murdered, to what degree would this have been voluntary? Does the fact that they were both able to continue their mission mean that they were not simply fleeing persecution? What would this mean for someone with fewer connections, unable to continue their mission in their new location? Would their death be described in a negative way, as fleeing persecution just because they did not have the social connections of A or B? Furthermore, social mobility is a gendered issue and, for example, women are more likely to have caring responsibilities and therefore be less able to flee persecution. Not everyone faces the same constraints

on their decision-making. For many, as Diaz (1994) argues, the everyday is the struggle. An individual's action, or inaction, cannot be easily categorised.

Whatever level of choice those who have fled harassment did or did not have their absence leaves a void. For example, one clergy member shared that 'A went to Germany like recently we think like A, these people because of red-tag they will change course, it's a vacuum.' (10). This vacuum includes a lack of guidance for younger clergy who are unsure how to engage in action despite the red-tagging and contributes to the inaction of some of the younger clergy despite their self-proclaimed willingness to experience harassment. It also affects the willingness of future Bishops to engage. The interim Bishop in a diocese where the presiding Bishop left because of persecution explained that he had not engaged with the Lumads as

the clergy said to me Bishop not to go in Bayan because there were some threats and harassment. If somebody most likely if the bishop would go there I don't know what is going to happen (38).

[Intra-categorical differences](#)

In addition to the differences between younger and older clergy with personal experiences of red-tagging there are important intra-categorical differences that the binary categorisation of 'older' and 'younger' risks overlooking. For example, whilst maintaining some degree of a jubilatory perspective of martyrdom the younger clergy who have personal experience of red-tagging hold more nuanced understandings than others in their same age category. 17 illustrates this point by acknowledging the

fear that harassment causes him. He shared that ‘Yes, as a man, as a human, I feel also I am scared. I feel fear. Especially because I have a wife, I have two daughters.’ (17). He also acknowledged the incredible strain harassment puts on his relationship sharing that ‘when my wife says to me, we will go, we will separate each other because we are having some fear also.’ (17).

The complexity of the binary categories can be further illustrated by an older priest who has personal experience of red-tagging. Despite this experience, he jokes that his nickname is ‘red-tagging’ and shares many of the same views as the younger clergy in relation to fear and understandings of a good-death. He shared that

the OM said, “don’t be afraid, go”. Even Jesus Christ had also red-tag, that is our call. Whatever happens it’s better to die to serve the people than to die [of] diabetes [a condition from which the OM suffers]. That is my conviction. That is why, it is my privilege and honour to die beside the people who need us (39).

This individual did not appear to be concerned for his own safety. He was concerned that continued engagement with the IFI posed a risk to Lumad communities. He noted that ‘We bring risk and we bring danger to the community of Lumad if we bring people outside from their community.’ (39).

The risk of being persecuted from preaching or acting limits the freedom of the IFI to practise their religion and act upon their beliefs. In this context, it is complicated for the IFI to know how and when to pursue their mission.

Congregation

In addition to the dissimilarities within the IFI leadership, congregation members have different levels of engagement with the mission of the IFI. From interviews with clergy, it appears that there are three key factors influencing engagement: individual positionality, the progressiveness of Church leadership and the influence of an individualistic society. For example, although (22) has been a member of the IFI since birth, she shared that it was not until she attended university that she started questioning societal inequality. One possible explanation is that only those of a certain age, gender and economic status are able to engage with the missional work of the Church. For example, gendered caring responsibilities and the ability or inability to pay for travel or take time off work likely all affect an individual's ability to engage. There is potential that conversations about inequalities and their causes are limited to a select group. For this particular individual, the focus of Sunday school (which many shared did not include social analysis due to a lack of training of Sunday school teachers, questions of appropriateness and purpose), followed by the presence of a conservative Priest may have exacerbated the situation. Positionality and the Church leadership to whom an individual is exposed then likely affects their engagement with and understanding of the missional work of the Church, the social inequalities and unjust systems that drive it.

The current administration are working hard to rectify this situation. However, religious narratives and beliefs are inseparable from other influences in people's lives (Nongbri, 2013). These 'other' influences may even have a greater sway. Many clergy interviewees believed that people are more likely to talk about the last thing

that they saw on TV than what they heard in a Sunday service. Commercial advertising is more likely to influence ideas of a good life than the Biblical call to stand with the oppressed and the marginalised when 'individualism in society is rampant and even in the church.' (14). This point I believe is particularly salient given the focus of the Church on Martyrdom, which in the Biblical sense goes against the individualistic capitalist system. It requires one to value something or someone more than one's own life. It appears then that congregation members must choose between being part of the 'in' group with the church or the 'in' group within a materially driven society and capitalist government.

Congregation members' also face challenges when understanding leadership's persistence of their mission despite red-tagging. Whilst the climax of many early martyrdom narratives was the moment when an individual confessed to being a Christian or refused to renounce their faith (Middleton, 2014, p.122) there was no such defining moment for IFI martyrs such as OM Ramento. There is also no such moment for those who are harassed and red-tagged. If the IFI are telling the story then there is a God given mandate to stand with the oppressed and marginalised, which necessitates opposition to the government. In this story the IFI are harassed for peacefully living out their faith. When the state tells the same story, they are prosecuting members and supporters of a terrorist organisation.⁴⁴ Congregation members must choose whether to believe the narrative of the IFI or the government. However, there is a lack of space for these two narratives to engage. It appears that

⁴⁴ See, for example the red-tagging of Bishop Ablon Appendix 1 and OM Rhee Timbang in Appendix 2.

everyone has taken sides. From news outlets to schoolteachers, narratives are regurgitated to support a pro government or pro people interpretation of events.⁴⁵ Exacerbating this situation are low levels of prosecution of state officials and the dropping of trumped up charges shortly before court dates. This results in a lack of court dates where the two narratives are able to battle it out in a public arena.

These competing narratives and different levels of engagement with the missional life of the Church affect the responses of congregation members to acts such as the arrest of Bishop Carlo or fleeing of Bishop Ablon. In some cases, this has created distance between Church leadership and their congregation members. For example, parish priests initially kept the true reason for Bishop Ablon's absence from their congregations. They shared that this was firstly because they were concerned the Bishop's need to flee would bolster arguments that IFI mission with Lumad communities should cease due the risks involved and secondly because it would likely heighten critique of the Bishop. In relation to the critique, one Priest shared ‘

there are some congregations that also don't want also our bishop. So then, they said that it is good that Bishop Ablon is not here. Because Bishop Ablon called as NPA (12).

Leadership only informed their congregation members of the true reason behind the Bishop's absence once it became clear that he would not be able to return.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ For example, Rappler promotes a pro-people position (Wee, 2022) whilst the *Philippine News Agency*, the government's own news agency, is starkly pro government..

⁴⁶ There was initially hope that his persecution would calm after a few months out of the country and he would be able to return.

Clergy shared that there were differences in the way congregation members viewed red-tagging, understood harassment and martyrdom. These are important to understand as

the foundation of all evaluative approaches to martyrdom is in effect the community or communities (understood in its widest sense) to which the evaluator holds some sympathy (Middleton, 2014, p.130).

Whilst the limitations of this thesis did not allow for first person interviews with congregation members, it did outline what clergy believe the stance of their members to be which is helpful in understanding the actions and educational focus of said leadership. The first group of clergy mentioned are those who understand the call to stand with the marginalised and are not opposed to IFI activities with Lumad communities. However, they supposedly do not see them as essential and worry about the safety of the church leadership. They view the leadership in a similar way to which De Ste Croix (2006) described 'quasi-voluntary martyrs'. The leadership do not demonstrate a desire for martyrdom but they go '...beyond the general practice of the Church in their opposition to some aspect of pagan [Filipino] society...' Because of the danger that results from leaderships' solidarity with Lumad communities, these congregation members argue that this ministry goes beyond the expected practice of the church and is unnecessary, particularly given that it does not aim to convert anyone to Christianity. Mining and plantation companies or the government employs the second group clergy identified. This group of congregants worried that they will face harassment at work or that their jobs will be at risk because they are members of the IFI. They are those mentioned in the theology chapter who questioned the young Deaconess after her sermon. Both of these groups challenge leaderships'

understandings of themselves as prophets and their possible call to martyrdom. They are a challenge to collective memory. Some leadership shared that this opposition had at least caused them to mellow. Others shared how congregational concerns support those who are unsure of their own willingness for martyrdom.

The third group of congregation members identified by clergy are those who benefit from state sanctioned exploitation to such a degree that they oppose any action that would disturb the status quo. Reflecting on this group, one Bishop noted that

We know our people, some of them are working with the Government. Some of them are the big lands [owners] as well. So they are protecting their own interests also. That is why we are now struggling even within the Church, with how to pursue our mission with helping the Lumad's (18).

According to present leadership, this group need educating, something that they plan to do through the Worship, Education and Ministry strand of the TYRP mentioned in the theology chapter. Interviewees believed that these congregation members think Church leadership invite persecution, akin to descriptions of voluntary martyrs who 'by some deliberate act...clearly invited arrest and execution.' (De Ste. Croix, 2006). These members of the congregation portray voluntary martyrdom in a negative light, supported by the commonly held idea that those who die voluntarily are insane, a

view that is strongly held in Mindanao due to the increased association of ‘voluntary’ dying and suicide bombing since the siege of Marwari.⁴⁷

In some cases, members have left the IFI and joined the Catholic Church due to their desire to protect their way of life and the labelling of the IFI as terrorists.⁴⁸ Whilst the leadership of the IFI did not criticise these individuals and they were not seen as heretics or apostates they were described as not true IFI. If we are to understand the collective memory that surrounds martyrdom, there is a need to understand the position of those who the IFI define as ‘them’. The experience of the IFI demonstrates how, in addition to supporting collective memory, martyr narratives also create fractions. This requires further study and first person interviews. Interviews with those who have left the Church would provide a more complete understanding of how martyrdom narratives affect Church membership.

Conclusion

The intervention of the IFI in issues of justice can be described as unnecessary, voluntary martyrdom and one could argue that the leadership have a desire for suffering. They are not throwing themselves directly onto flames as the early Christian martyr Agathonike did (Moss, 2013, p:191-192) but they are knowingly putting themselves at risk of harassment, which could lead to death, through their preaching and mission. However, for many of the IFI leadership, to describe their

⁴⁷ The Siege of Marawi was an armed conflict in Marawi, Western Mindanao between militants affiliated with the Islamic State, including the Maute and Abu Sayyaf Salafi jihadist groups, which began on May 23rd 2017 and lasted approximately five months. For more details, see Fonbuena (2021) Eviota-Rivera *et al.*, (2023).

⁴⁸ Whilst the Catholic Church has in the past been seen as radical and some radical Catholic organisations remain interviewees described it as more conservative and silent about government abuses.

mission as voluntary would be to miss the point. For them, their mission to fight violent suppression is not optional, it is divinely mandated.

Whilst it is not the language that the IFI leadership would use, to say that the IFI is persecuted is correct to some degree given the red-tagging of the institution itself. Although this suggests a homogeneity of experience that is inconsistent with reality, it remains useful when engaging with western governments or multilateral institutions such as the UN. As discussed during the fieldwork reflections chapter, the replication of dominate discourse to describe one's experience of persecution is more likely to secure protection under international law.

Engagement with the UN encourages one to subscribe to notions of progress and development that are inherently capitalist and material based where green capitalism is the best possible outcome. The capitalist states who continue to control and fund the UN ignore and marginalise any action, thinking or relationship that does not contribute to this agenda and cannot be organised into measurable outputs and outcomes. Those who seek improvement within this system are labelled as rights defenders and activists. Those who seek to transform it are labelled as rebels and terrorists. The UN does not label the NPA as terrorists. They also offer no support for this organisation. Its concern, as evidenced by the resolution and focus of the joint programme, is on supporting those who have been incorrectly red-tagged as members of this organisation. The plight of those who are actually active combatants is ignored.

It is plausible that this is part of the motivation behind the new anti-terror law. If the international community does not officially challenge the legality of the law, then labelling human rights defenders as terrorists allows for the continuation of state impunity, already well documented within the Philippines, and the legal prosecution of those who challenge the state's continual abuse of people and planet.

Furthermore, engagement with international mechanisms forces groups to define themselves in different ways; the IFI must engage with FoRB and the Lumads must engage with Indigenous Rights. This encourages a compartmentalised way of viewing the overarching problem and risks encouraging competition between groups for international support and attention. This kind of competition could be damaging to the ecology of knowledge that is forming between the IFI and the Lumads and to their united resistance against exploitative capitalism.

CHAPTER 7 - ECOLOGIES OF KNOWLEDGE

The way we see the world shapes the way we treat it. If a mountain is a deity, not a pile of ore; if a river is one of the veins of the land, not potential irrigation water; if a forest is a sacred grove, not timber; if other species are biological kin, not resources; or if the planet is our mother, not an opportunity -- then we will treat each other with greater respect. Thus is the challenge, to look at the world from a different perspective (Suzuki, 2012).

This quote by Canadian environmentalist David Suzuki highlights the potential ecologies of knowledge hold in relation to the climate and ecological crisis. In previous chapters I depicted Andreotti's (2016) illustration of boxhead, a Cartesian subject limited by their logocentric, universalist, anthropocentric, teleological, dialectical and allochronic and evolutionary thinking. I used this figure of a boxhead to illustrate the difficulty those entrapped in their boxhead have in imagining another world beyond hegemonic understandings of development as progress and neo-liberal capitalist exploitation. Throughout this chapter, I use Santos' concept of an ecology of knowledge to consider how engagement with Lumad communities encourages IFI leadership to think beyond this box. I focus particularly on how, through an ecology of knowledge, the IFI are encouraged to defamiliarise themselves with neo-colonial understandings of development and racist stereotypes of Lumad communities. The creation of an ecology of knowledge was not purposeful and neither the IFI nor Lumad communities use this language when discussing their relationship. However, the concept is useful in illuminating cognitive changes within IFI leadership, their

defamiliarisation with universalist thinking and increasing acknowledgement that theirs is not the only 'legitimate and valuable worldview.' (Andreotti, 2016).

Introduction

According to Santos, who coined the term, an ecology of knowledge involves epistemologies of the south identifying and acknowledging other ways of knowing in a continual process of learning and relearning. This, Santos contrasts to abyssal western European thinking that 'seems to have lost the capacity to learn from the experiences of the world.' (de Sousa Santos, 2016, p.19). He posits that, as cultures and epistemologies of the south meet, a process of intercultural translation takes place. He described this as

a dimension of cognitive work whenever there are present ecologies of knowledges, exchanges of experiences, assessment of struggles (their own and others'), and careful examination of the knowledge that the dominant social groups mobilize to isolate or disarm the oppressed. (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p.33).

Intercultural translation is then '...a procedure that allows for mutual intelligibility among the diverse experiences of the world.' (de Sousa Santos, 2012, p. 43). This takes place in a third space, or contact zone and challenges boxheads' understanding of one universalisable theory of progress and development. Instead, it identifies commonalities, differences, understandings and possible collaborations capable of strengthening alliances and opposition to the colonial matrix of power (de Sousa Santos, 2016). For Santos, all knowledges are incomplete, but, through

engagement with other ways of knowing, epistemologies of the south defamiliarise themselves with knowledge that reinforces capital hegemony and western ideologies. This, he argues, allows them to familiarise or refamiliarise themselves with alternative, marginalised ways of knowing that strengthen the anti-capitalist struggle (de Sousa Santos, 2012). The aim is not for cultures to merge but for each to maintain its uniqueness and be enhanced through interaction with the other (Bakhtin, 1986, p.7). Through this process of defamiliarisation, refamiliarisation and increased understanding, ecologies of knowledge support the expansion of knowledge, contributing to the anti-imperial struggle for human dignity and the assurance of human and land rights (de Sousa Santos, 2012, p.57).

Key to the formation of an ecology of knowledge are didactic intercultural leaders. This term Santos draws from his reading of Oruka (1990) and the African concept of philosophical sagacity in which sages, or wise people (be they traditional healers, religious leaders, traditional authorities, storytellers etc.), act as protagonists in their community (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p.204). According to Oruka (1990, p.28), these individuals fluctuate between popular and didactic wisdom where, 'While popular wisdom is often conformist, didactic wisdom is at times critical of the communal set-up and the popular wisdom.' Drawing particularly on didactic sagemess, Santos describes the position of a didactic leader in an ecology of knowledge to be someone 'deeply embedded in the practices and knowledges they represent, having of both a profound and critical understanding.' (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p. 231). From this position, they are able to perform the task of intercultural translation.

Through their theology and positionality, I consider IFI leadership to be predisposed to entering into an ecology of knowledge. As outlined in the theology chapter, many self-identifying liberal IFI leaders believe all people worship the same God, often just by a different name and with different practices; that anyone can be saved and whether or not someone will achieve eschatological salvation depends on the action they took during their life. It is my observation that these beliefs allow deep relationships of respect to form between the IFI and communities that they might otherwise see as “other”. As I aim to show throughout this chapter, the beliefs of liberal members of the IFI enable these leaders to enter into horizontal relationships with Lumad communities and for ecologies of knowledge to develop. Furthermore, the red-tagging and persecution of the IFI and its leadership outlined in the persecution chapter provides a first-hand understanding that those red-tagged are not the violent terrorists the government label them to be. Conscientization about the situation of the equal other, intertwined with their belief in a God given mandate to act with the oppressed and marginalised, fuels leadership’s participation in transformative action. By standing with Lumad communities in their struggle, many of the liberal IFI leadership have been encouraged to re-think the way they see the world, challenging the influence of boxhead on their thinking and encouraging a different valuing of the world around them.

In the following section, I aim to show that members of the IFI who have built deep relationships with Lumad communities provide an example of didactic intercultural

leadership. I argue that by taking a critical approach to popular knowledge used to oppress Lumad communities, human and land rights defenders in the Philippines, the experience of these individuals illuminates the ability of ecologies of knowledge to support the deconstruction of colonial, capitalist imaginations.

History of engagement

IFI engagement with Lumad communities was initially sporadic. It differed according to the dynamics of the Lumad community, geographic location, the security situation and the interpretation of the call to stand with the oppressed and marginalised held by the particular IFI leadership. It was also rooted in unequal power hierarchies in which the IFI held imperial-south understandings of ‘helping’ by providing aid to the ‘poor’ Lumads. According to 10, the Church began by ‘...responding in whatever way the church can and I can say that, that can begin with relief.’ (10). Rooted in teleological, neo-liberal capitalist thinking, such understandings follow a model in which the provision of aid or relief helps people escape the cycle of poverty in which they find themselves, thereby enabling them to ‘develop’ and ‘progress’ towards a plannable, imaginable future (Andreotti, 2016, p.83). Such narratives often ignore the structural oppressions at the root of poverty, posing neo-liberal capitalist development and material progress as a universal panacea, ignoring the necessarily exploitative and oppressive nature of this system (Harvey, 2006).

The IFI's responses began to change in 2015 with the upsurge in harassment and extra-judicial killings of Lumad peoples across Mindanao noted in chapter four. Local and national people's organisations called upon the IFI leadership already engaged to support fact-finding missions and challenge government propaganda.⁴⁹ With the support of the Obispado Maximo, these leaders used the Mindanao Bishops' Conference of 2015 to invite testimony from Lumad leaders and increase conscientization of the Lumad situation amongst their fellow Bishops and clergy. They strove for a more coordinated response to Lumad persecution, bringing the church, as an institution, into a cycle of struggle built upon conscientization, resistance, and transformative action (Smith, 2009). Key to this task was the testimony of a priest who had taken part in the Ecumenical Accompaniment programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPI). Drawing on his deep embeddedness in IFI knowledge, his experience as one of the IFI leaders with greatest interaction with Lumad communities and his time with the EAPI, 11 played the role of a didactic intercultural leader; he demonstrated an individuality geared towards the benefit of the collective and the dismantling of abusive social structures (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p.33). Conference participants were responsive and tasked 11 with developing a Mindanao-wide response to the increasing abuses of the Lumad human rights (Mindanao Bishops Conference, 2015).

The result was an Accompaniment programme that invited clergy to spend approximately six weeks living in Lumad communities as a 'protective presence' (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS), 2017, p.10), increasing the

⁴⁹ For example, in June 2015 a member of the advisory group for the Armed Forces of the Philippines stated that "If the military has killed lumad, it is not because they are lumad but because they are NPA," (Mongaya, 2015).

connectedness of the Lumad communities to outside support whilst monitoring and raising awareness of human rights abuses. The aim of the project, approved by the Mindanao Clergy Conference in February 2016, was to accompany Lumad communities in their struggle to protect their ancestral domain (CPCS, 2017, p.10). This initially involved IFI members walking the perimeter of Lumad communities in bright pink t-shirts to let the military know that they were there, monitoring any abuses (CPCS, 2017). It drew from IFI understandings that although the Church has been red-tagged and the lives of particular leaders are at risk, state actions narrate a scale of expendability in which they deem Lumad lives as more disposable than those of the IFI. The Accompaniment programme then sought to use their position in this hierarchy to reduce violence against Lumad communities. The importance of this presence was summarised by one Lumad respondent who shared that 'in case the time will come that we are in an unfavourable situation, we just want a support from the church, a support to unite. To be united.' (34). This resistance strategy ran successfully from 2016-2020 as groups of IFI leaders and future leaders spent time living in Lumad communities.

The relationships that formed quickly challenged previous teleological understandings of a plannable and imaginable future in which defined programmatic outcomes can be achieved. The context in which IFI leadership found themselves necessitated greater flexibility than the initial dialectical design of the programme as one with concrete aims and objectives 'averse to paradoxes, complexities and contradictions' (Andreotti, 2016, p. 83). The thinking and response of the IFI adapted accordingly as they adopted a more flexible approach. They increasingly responded

to requests to attend special events (such as the aforementioned harvests where communities believed the IFI's presence could prevent the military's theft of their crops), be present at government meetings when requested and support Lumad whom the military had forcibly evacuated from their ancestral land. It also increased their participation in countrywide resistance efforts, such as Manilakbayan and heightened their attention to individual needs, for example, providing support for one Barangay captain and his wife after unknown assailants shot them. These different forms of engagement acted as contact zones and laid the groundwork for an ecology of knowledge. They challenged the IFI's boxhead, helped identify commonalities and alliances and form collaborations with a view to strengthening opposition to the colonial matrix of power.

[Accompaniment programme increasing understanding](#)

An expansion of one's boxhead challenges the colonial matrix of power by confronting its hegemonic narratives. As outlined in chapter four, the government justify their violent abuse of Lumad communities in two main ways. The first, in line with Mbembe's (2019) work on necropolitics, is by narrating Lumad communities as enemies of the state; red-tagging them as communist terrorists and members of the NPA. According to the state; such an identity makes Luamd communities legitimate targets of military violence. Through the Accompaniment programme as a contact zone, increased engagement and the building of relationships, the IFI were able to challenge this narrative. The majority of respondents held an appreciation similar to that of one lay leader who shared 'Because they Lumads protect their land, that is why they call the Lumads NPA.' (31). By 2021, when I conducted the interviews,

conscientization of *the* Lumad struggle as distinct from that of the armed resistance of the NPA had increased where 'I learned from them that it is very good to fight. They said, they will fight, not by making firearms, but we will fight for our ancestral domain.' (17).

The second way the government justify abuse of Lumad communities is by using neo-colonial narratives of Lumad communities as poor, uneducated and in need of incorporation into the neo-liberal capitalist system. Many IFI admitted to previously holding such understandings. However, through sustained relationships in contact zones and power differentials, these understandings began to change. The IFI begin defamiliarising themselves with the racist and ethnic hierarchies, challenging the way society taught them to view the Lumads as backwards and lazy. One Bishop described a situation in which

Some of them living there on the streets, and we are discriminating against them because of what they wear, what they look like...After the immersion, I know and I understand the life of them, and other people (36).

I interpret this quote to be an example of how sustained relationships challenged the allochronic and evolutionary identification of Lumad communities as 'behind' due to their perceived lack of material development.

A further example of how defamiliarisation with hegemonic thinking developed the IFI's consciousness was in their understanding of colonial labelling and manipulation of colonial hierarchies of knowledge where

especially in the government, they threaten the Lumads, and think they are the lower rank people, the illiterate people. They threaten them...They grab it [land] and they use constitutions; they use their powers in order to oppress, in order to harass (26).

Through the now fluid Accompaniment programme, many IFI leaders understood how the two narratives, of Lumad as NPA and Lumad as illiterate, lower rank people, were used to supposedly justify oppression of Lumad knowledge and way of life and the forced closure of their schools, in aid of neo-liberal capitalist development and financial gain. They demonstrated a conscientization of the link between financial progress, capitalist oppression and narration of Lumad suffering as necessary or natural (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p.225) where:

they are dehumanising the existence of our people in the Philippines. ...both of them are collaborating, the Government and the companies, using people and just to augment their capitalist ideas. To have more money at the expense of people. (18).

Being immersed in Lumad communities and engaged in the Lumad struggle was a transformative action, transforming the worldview of IFI leadership. It enabled an intercultural translation in which the culture of the IFI and the culture of the Lumad met as equals.

This transformation extended beyond the IFI's attitudes towards Lumad communities. Through the ecology of knowledge, the IFI begin defamiliarising themselves with capitalist notions of progress. For example, one priest noted the way in which Lumad 'are contented [with] what they have, they share what they have...I tell myself that I don't need big money, much money, big land.' (39). In this way, relationships with marginalised communities can challenge the idea that economic gain is necessarily positive or that the value of land can be determined by how much one stands to gain from its minerals in the global market.

Ecology of Knowledge

As I outlined in the theology chapter, for liberal members of the IFI, living out God's preference for the poor and marginalised means challenging the very structures on which current society is based. However, I also showed that people do this in different ways and that not everyone can afford to risk persecution. In addition to the practicalities and positionalities that affect an individual's ability to participate in the struggle, there is also an imaginary issue. As Santos notes, 'it is as difficult to imagine the end of capitalism as it is difficult to imagine that capitalism has no end.' (2014, pg.24). According to Santos, this difficulty elucidates two responses. There are those who, instead of imagining the end of capitalism, seek to ameliorate its violence through state intervention in the economy, for example in the form of the welfare state and targeted money transfers (de Sousa Santos, 2014). There are also those who are convinced that capitalism will and must end, even though they are not sure how or what will take its place (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p.25). Spending time

with the IFI, listening to individual stories and experiences, it became apparent that for many, being in an ecology of knowledge with Lumad communities has moved them from one response to another. Many began seeking to ameliorate the violence of the capitalist system, for example through 'development' projects. However, as their engagement deepened they increasingly sought the end of capitalism, trusting the knowledge of their Lumad counterparts and believing that this is possible even if they do not know how.

The collective cognitive work that took place often involved diffuse intercultural translation with interviewees describing an informal, orally focused process (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p.33). It also involved intentional knowledge transfer, in which didactic intercultural leaders purposefully supported their fellow clergy to expand their imaginations, repositioning their cognitive focus from struggling to ameliorate the violence of capitalism to imagining its end, defamiliarising from hegemonic, racist hierarchies of knowledge. For example, in 2015, a prominent Bishop in Mindanao, suggested that the IFI would benefit more from their relationship with the Lumads than the Lumads will from any IFI programme. He defamiliarised his own worldview and encouraged others to do the same, nominating multiple clergy to the Accompaniment programme. The role of the church according this Bishop, 11 and other didactic leaders was to stand with the Lumads in their resistance, learning how to challenge the political, economic and cognitive stronghold of the system whilst acknowledging an immediate need for aid and sanctuary given the impact of current exploitation. Through diffuse and didactic intercultural translation, power differentials

began to decrease with a gradual move towards horizontality in which both the IFI and the Lumad are learning from each other (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 78).

Defamiliarisation was a welcome process and during our interview, the OM identified three areas in which the Lumad were already supporting, and, could further assist, the IFI to defamiliarise themselves from imperial knowledge and refamiliarise themselves with what he saw as some of the core tenets of Christianity.

First is how they regard and treat the earth and the environment.

...Secondly, we learn much about how they regard their own God, their belief is part of themselves unlike the Christians, there is tendency for the Christians to have their faith separate from their daily life. ...The other one is a sense of being a community; they are part of one another.... That's the reason that many dioceses in Mindanao immerse with the Lumad communities (9).

This first point raised by the OM relates to the way in which, as explored in chapter four, for many Lumad communities, the natural environment is a treasure chest of deities and sacred groves. Their relationship with the land challenges neo-liberal capitalist ideas of land as a resource to be exploited for financial gain. Conversations with church leadership who had undergone the Accompaniment programme highlighted a refamiliarisation with the importance of land and ecosystems. Participants had begun to change the value and relationship they had with nature, challenging their previous anthropocentric worldview with one participant sharing his learning that 'When you feel tired, when you feel lonely and when you feel that you're

not good, you just put your feet on the ground and feel the sense of the nature.’ (14). For others, the value of land was no longer determined by the minerals within it but by its ability to offset the need to spend money. For example, one priest shared

I compared my life here in the city to their life. They are the ones who are rich, because for woods, for cooks, they have no problem with that. Water they have no problem with that, foods, vegetables, they have no problem with that...they are the ones who are rich. In the city, we are poor. Because everything here, we buy (12).

A further example of this is 39 who shared ‘the mountain, the area they live is their own hospital. The mountain is their own grocery because the town is sick they will take from the tree and they make medicine.’ These quotes demonstrate the complexity of defamiliarisation. It was my experience that, when seeking to understand alternative worldviews, interviewees’ points of reference often remain within dominant understandings and therefore risked obscuring aspects of boxhead underpinning them. In this case, in contrast to the non-anthropocentric Lumad worldview (in which land has an intrinsic value and there is an inseparability of self, land and spirits), the value of the land is determined by its anthropocentric usefulness in offsetting financial expenditure.

In relation to learning about their own faith, the second area identified by the OM, one of the key benefits of intercultural translation, as articulated by Bakhtin (1986), is where ‘A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning.’ (Bakhtin, 1986, p.7). Through this kind of cross-cultural dialogue, or intercultural translation (de Sousa Santos, 2014), the IFI

are encouraged to reflect upon who they really are. For example, when discussing the Accompaniment programme one Bishop shared that

we send our young priest or young people, so that they can learn to be real Christians...the church owes so much to the Indigenous peoples, because the Indigenous peoples are providing the space for the church to become a church (6).

This was reinforced by another Bishop who believed 'you can learn from them [the Lumad] the true essence of Christianity, even though they are not Christians.' (18).

Evidence of learning from the communality of Lumad communities, the third area identified by the OM, was the strongest of the three areas identified. Clergy and Bishops reflected upon the difference between their individualist relations and the communal relations of the Lumads. For example, after a party,

they [the Lumads] never eat the food that they bring, not like us, like us we bring food, we keep it in our refrigerator and we eat that food for us. For the Lumads, no, they brought it to the common table and call for those people who did not join in the fiesta. They are the sick, they are the lame, they are old, they are the first to partake (30).

From this, I take that the ecology of knowledge between the IFI and Lumad communities is more than just a collaboration. Such comments are demonstrative of the transformational potential of relationships of equality that inspires knowledge holders to rethink basic assumptions underpinning exploitative capitalist worldviews.

However, one challenge with this model is that only those engaged appear to undergo such a transformation. One clergy member who had taken part in the Accompaniment programme shared that

we actually experienced the real essence, or the real essence of what Jesus means about serving your neighbour, serving your brethren. So, we could actually say that we have experienced the things that we always preach, and that it is one of our benefits...it becomes our benefit that the minds of the IFI is being open and wanting to explore more in serving (27).

It was through direct participation that this IFI leader understood one of the key messages of Jesus. Clergy opined that such transformational experiences are not available at other sources. For example, one interviewee shared:

if we will just rely on the books that these people see, that they are living away from the city... so it's hard for us to internalise those things. But the best thing to appreciate is that we will go into their community, to live with them, to work with them and to go along, to enjoy living with them (32).

That direct engagement appears necessary highlights a potential limitation of ecologies of knowledge; they appear not to be transferable without interpersonal encounter.

Bakwit School as a convergence site

The dependency of transformation on engagement heightened the importance of the Bakwit School in Manila. Due to its location and the security context, the school provided a potential site of increased engagement where relationships could have extended to a greater number of clergy and even possibly beyond, to include congregation members. In turn, using the Bakwit School as a site of convergence in this way would have facilitated the School's desire to raise awareness and understanding of the Lumad situation across the Philippines. Those who had engaged in this space demonstrated a particularly acute understanding of the connection between Lumad oppression and the role of the Philippines in the global capitalist economy with IFI leadership describing state education as:

...a good manifestation of how the Filipino people are being brought into the cycle to be used for the global market, rather than for developing our own economy. For example, we have good doctors and good engineers and others, but they are leaving the Philippines, they are working abroad and being used by multinational corporations and other nations to help run their economy...our educational systems are designed to accommodate the interest of the global market (9).

Whilst this quote demonstrates increased conscientization, the idea that people are being used for the global economy 'rather than developing our own economy' (9) is again evidence of the complexity of any defamiliarisation process. In this case, the interviewees' imagined future involved a shift in the use of labour for global capitalist benefit to the use of labour for national benefit, rather than expanding beyond the

capitalist system. This again, demonstrates the immense impact of the capitalist system on imaginations (Andreotti, 2016, pp.82-83).

In addition, this convergence space was the newest in the ecology of knowledges between the IFI and Lumad communities. It was in an extremely nascent form when interviews for this thesis were taking place. Institutional power inequalities persisted with no purposeful knowledge sharing or discussions of what the students or teachers brought to this relationship. For example, at the time of the interviews the IFI were providing funds for school activities such as moving up ceremonies with no significant time spent with the graduating students to allow for mutuality within the relationship. This suggests that the natural way in which the IFI engage with Lumad communities is through giving aid and that the intercultural translations, subsequent diminishing of power inequalities and development of ecologies of knowledge are a bi-product of the development of these relationships over time. I imagine this to be problematic for a community with a transient population such as the Bakwit School and problematic for congregation members who are unlikely to have the time needed for deep engagement capable of supporting an ecology of knowledge. Although state and military harassment forced the Bakwit School, these experiences provide a warning for future engagement.

[Future challenges to the ecology of knowledge in Bayan](#)

As the ecology of knowledge between Lumad communities and the IFI was not intentional, the need for defamiliarisation from western or imperial south ideas of

progress has not been widely discussed. Nor has the link between these notions of progress or development, the oppression of Lumad communities and the exploitation of their land. Different degrees of transformation were evident amongst those who had taken part in the Accompaniment programme and forms of neo-colonial power hierarchies persisted in different forms. As highlighted above in the example of the priests who believed that Lumad lived a good life because they had less expenses, the priest who thought Lumad homes were too small to be called a house and the Priest who advocated for a more nationalist development, defamiliarisation is a complex, non-linear, personal process.

One way of evidencing the non-linearity of this process is to focus on one individual. For example, 14 had begun to defamiliarise himself from the importance of finance and material gain evidenced by the earlier quote 'I tell myself that I don't need big money, much money, big land'. However, racist hierarchies persisted in what he shared as he described the role of the church as to

 speak for them [the Lumad] because they can't speak, some of the
 Lumads they didn't know how to write, they didn't know how to speak
 English or even Bisayan language (39).

The idea that one would need to speak for someone else or that not knowing a colonial language means a person cannot speak is evident in other present day missionary situations (Milazzo, 2020) and is a product of colonial hierarchies that fail to acknowledge the importance of maintaining Indigenous languages (Viatori and Usbigua, 2007, p.7). Such examples highlight the complexity of intercultural

translation and the need for continual defamiliarisation to create horizontal, reciprocal power relations within an ecology of knowledge.

In addition, as is common elsewhere, there were discrepancies between oral critiques and personal practice (Moisander, 2007). Many clergy spoke of the damage caused by international companies and were resistant to their presence. However, they found it hard to change their behaviours that contributed to the same political, economic and social system that allows large-scale exploitation by foreign companies. Informal discussions highlighted how difficult clergy found it to incorporate environmental concerns into their own lives and they acknowledged how, for example, their increased dependence on the technological gadgets was partially responsible for open pit mining.

Building the Future

So far, I have shown the how diffuse and didactic intercultural translation contribute to an ecology of knowledge between IFI and Lumad communities. The institutionalisation of the Accompaniment programme and support from the highest IFI leadership for learning from Lumad communities provided hope that the process of defamiliarisation and refamiliarisation will continue, through new and creative means, such as having a Bai lead part of a diocesan Lenten retreat. Reflecting on such an intentional attempt at learning from Lumad knowledge one priest recollected:

the Bai was sitting there on top of that, the priest who were in cassock were down there listening to her.... The clergy are really learning from the

Bai...some of the clergy are now doing full retreat under instruction of the Bai (10).

These actions were strengthening the IFI's resistance to capitalist oppression.

However, continual defamiliarisation through this model of an ecology of knowledge is dependent upon sustained engagement between IFI and Lumad communities and the aforementioned militarisation of Lumad communities is making this increasingly difficult. One way the IFI and Lumad in the Bayan community intend to deal with this is by building a church, an idea that developed in a conversation between a Bishop and the Barangay Captain in 2017. Despite Duterte's anti-Christian rhetoric, colonial hierarchies of places of worship persist and, in contrast to the ancestral land of Indigenous People, Churches in the Philippines are respected as sacred spaces with military unable to enter. Given this context, the IFI believed that a Church building would justify their presence and allow them to spend time in the community. Lumad interviewees also understood the government's attitude towards Churches as places of worship and believed that the Church could provide them with a space in which Lumad identity would be protected. One interviewee shared that

if there is a Church there, especially the IFI, we feel secure...in that building we feel that we are free to do what it is a Lumad will do.

Especially in ritual, especially in preserving who we are (5).

However, building a church on Lumad land calls into question lessons from history, particularly when, despite attempts to diminish power hierarchies, one party have

more power than the other, even if power is sometimes implicit. Providing a warning about such power inequalities within ecologies of knowledges Santos writes it is:

imperative to elucidate the historical relations among the different cultures involved, as well as the cultural and political inequalities they create, and to bear in mind that such inequalities are very much part of the present, even when the need for translation is reciprocally and equally felt (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p. 217).

As outlined in the introduction, Christian missionaries arrived in the Philippines in 1521 with Spanish ships and military power and relegated Lumad beliefs to the category of local superstitions (Paredes, 2013, p.42). There are vast differences between the IFI and the colonial missionaries, not least that the IFI do not wish to convert Lumad communities, and the IFI want to challenge the oppressive legacies of colonial power. However, the hierarchies of beliefs created by these missionaries persist as Christian religion in the Philippines is afforded a status that Lumad beliefs are not. As already outlined, the Philippines is a Christian country with around 92% of the population professing a Christian faith (World Population Review, 2023). Whilst the majority of people are Catholics, Christianity is an understood, defended and respected religion within the country. The IFI are a well-organised national religion with chaplaincies in four other countries, have clear hierarchies, terms of engagement and a common Bible with material resources from the church building to crucifixes that, in a materialistic world, provide the faith of the IFI with authority. Lumad beliefs remain largely unrecognised within the general population and with every forced removal, and the subsequent destruction of ancestral land as a place of worship and spiritual dwelling, the government abuse the Lumads right to FoRB. The

idea that building a church will provide protection for the Lumads whilst their own space of worship is under threat of destruction demonstrates the present day legacy of the hierarchies enforced by Spanish colonial missionaries.

The labelling of IFI and Lumad beliefs is one example of the normalisation of Christianity throughout the Philippines. As described in the chapter on *The Lumad struggle*, Lumad faith or spirituality develops organically, it is an integrated part of day-to-day life. It is difficult to describe using western categorisations of faith or religion which as Nongbi (2013) notes, only appear in non-Western cultures after encountering Europeans. Acknowledging these debates, one participant stated that the beliefs and spiritual practices of the Lumads could not be categorised as a religion as this is a Western categorisation that is not applicable to them 'It is not religion, it is still belief, it is still the same but it is not religion.' (40). For others, it was important to define Lumad beliefs as a religion in order to give it the same importance. They used the common characteristics of 'religions' to define their faith:

we are also doing what the IFI are doing. We are also praying, but we call our God as Diwata or as Magbabaya...praying for protection, praying for what we need. Praying for and giving thanks for what we receive (5).

However, others used characteristics of Christianity, such as knowing the face of Jesus or having a Bible, to argue that Lumad beliefs are not a religion. One Lumad interviewee shared that:

The Lumads we have no religion but we have belief to the Dios we call it Manama but we don't have religion, you know Christians, Catholics, they can see the face of their God but we don't see Manama. We don't have things and particular face of Manama but they just have Manama who protects the nature (1).

The understanding I derive from these responses is that, Christianity sets the norms and parameters for what constitutes a religion (Nongbi, 2013; Chidester, 2014) and despite history and power inequalities, all interviewees in Bayan saw the building of a church in Bayan as a positive thing.

There were nonetheless, conflicting ideas of what the space would be. Some believe it will be a space to gather and work towards common goals, similar to the idea of convergence spaces within scholar activism (Routledge and Derickson, 2015). In this understanding, the IFI and the Bayan community would describe the building as a church to gain the relevant permissions from the military currently stationed within the community in order for the building to go ahead but it would then simply be a place to gather. Others believed the space should be for any worship and should be accessible to the Lumads and IFI where as a Lumad interviewee shared 'if the IFI has a Church activity, then we also join. And then if we have also an activity, then we will bring it to the Church.' (41). For this group it was completely feasible that the IFI would take part in Lumad rituals and the Lumads would take part in IFI worship, all within the church building. I believe that these responses are evidence of mutual trust and respect between the IFI and Lumads in Bayan who now see the IFI as

the only sanctuary that we feel very welcome...they welcomes the Lumad's as who we are, and what we are. We can make our own prayer, make our own ritual and are free to do what is Lumad (5).

This group believed that the church should be specifically IFI, as opposed to another Christian denomination, as the IFI is the only church who respect their religion, do not try to convert them and support them in their struggle, 'for us, the IFI was the only group who accept the Lumad of being who they are.' (5). Many of the Bayan community believed it was possible to maintain Lumad beliefs and become a member of the IFI. The IFI also believed that the church could be used for Lumad and IFI worship and that each could take part in the others' services or rituals.

One IFI leader saw flexibility in the building design as the start to horizontal relationships

a circular building, you can also come up with alter on the other side, put the cross there and also come up with an altar on the other side for tribal ritual, you know...multi-purpose, we can do that (10).

All interviewees were positive about this pluralistic approach to worship. However, there are complications such as the requirement for any Lumad to be baptised and during baptism renounce any other faith or spirituality to become a member of the IFI. Furthermore, it was at times unclear whether, with such high levels of pluralism, the space would remain a Church and be recognised as such by the military, which was an essential motivation in the building of the Church in the first place.

Reflecting upon present and historic inequalities elucidates some of the challenges building a church may pose for the future relationship between the IFI and the Lumads, the power dynamics within the intercultural translation and the development of the ecology of knowledge. Whilst the IFI seek horizontal relationships with Lumad communities, the power given to Christianity poses a challenge for any horizontal relationship between a Christian and Indigenous faith. There is a danger of knowledge integration (Sofoulis, 2015, p.769) where some elements of Lumad spirituality are added to the prevailing Christian norm, as Christianity gradually becomes the more recognised and dominant religion. There are also challenges posed by hierarchies between languages. Any worship space would primarily use the Bisayan language, the language of the imperial south and not a language that the majority of Lumads feel comfortable using (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p. 232). There are then likely to be times when Lumads have difficulty expressing themselves including their beliefs, dreams and cosmologies.

The IFI are aware of these complexities but prioritise their ability to respond to the present situation, sharing that ‘You don’t know the repercussion like 20 years, 30 years, 40 years after, you don’t know. But, like right now, what do you do?’ (10). However, prioritising the immediate needs of the struggle may contribute to the system of Imperialism against which the Lumads struggle is organised, reinforcing Christianity and Christian norms as the dominant form of social organisation (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p.213). The situation is inherently complex and there is a trade-off between meeting immediate needs and the long term aims of those in *the* struggle.

Further complicating the situation is the possibility that, even with a church building, the IFI may face difficulty entering the community, given that the IFI are already red-tagged and the military are already questioning this partnership. Retelling a conversation she had with a military captain, 34 shared that:

the military told us, why IFI, the IFI has an underground movement, the military doesn't want to have an IFI church here....the military said that, you have your own ritual, why do you want to have the IFI church? And then the military continues telling us that the IFI should not probably be allowed to have it here, to establish here. Because again, it has an underground movement.

Given the complexity of the situation, the IFI and Lumads must remain attentive to the ways power hierarchies work and their ability to neutralise the radical anti-imperial struggle of epistemologies of the south (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p.230).

There is need for caution as 'a third space may be very disempowering...The 'virtues' of the third space depend on the concrete social relations that constitute it.' (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p. 217). It is common within ecologies of knowledge that 'partners seek to understand and appreciate each other's life stories and cultural backgrounds, including cultural and religious (or spiritual) traditions...' (Dallmayr, 2006, p.79). If this intercultural translation can lead to improved intercommunication and understanding between the IFI and the Lumads (de Sousa Santos, 2016, p.22) then the building of the church and the sharing and appreciation of one's religious traditions may be beneficial to the process of intercultural translation.

Expanding notions of *the* struggle

The IFI's engagement is only with one form of Lumad struggle. The IFI seek relationships with those who are engaged in *the* Lumad struggle and their ecology of knowledge has developed from these relationships. Excluded are those Lumad who challenge oppressive systems through unconventional means such as joining the paramilitary. As I argued in chapter four, whilst it appears that those who join the paramilitary are siding with the government and supporting violence against their own communities, their immediate goal appears to be to remain on their ancestral land. They, as with those in *the* Lumad struggle, appear to prioritise self-determination on one's ancestral land above all else. They demonstrate no desire to migrate to the closest town and be incorporated in to the neo-liberal capitalist system for example. The relationship between the IFI and Lumad discussed above then demonstrates the difficulty of constructing a pluriverse in which multiple worldviews coexist for the flourishing of all anthropic and non-anthropoc beings. Whilst bringing the IFI into *the* Lumad struggle strengthens the anti-capitalist struggle it also contributes to narratives that this is the only legitimate form of struggle. Negotiations between some paramilitary and Lumad groups with solidarity partners such as the IFI as observers could be fruitful in this respect, although any suggestion of such an event is likely to receive stark opposition from the government and military.⁵⁰ In this way the divide and rule tactic by the government succeeds, weakening opposition and creating the illusion of greater support for current exploitative systems than is really the case.

⁵⁰ The level of resistance from Lumad communities is likely to depend on their history with the particular paramilitary group concerned. For example, the Almara have a reputation for being particularly violent where as those in Bayan were not known for regularly using physical violence.

Engaging with policy spaces

The ecology of knowledge between the IFI and Lumad communities also influenced Lumad knowledges. As Santos notes, each knowledge within an ecology is incomplete (de Sousa Santos, 2012, p.57). However, resulting from the changes to fieldwork plans outlined in the methodology chapter I have less of an understanding of how this process takes place within Lumad communities than my original research design intended. What was clear from Lumad interviewees was that they were unsure how to engage the governmental and intergovernmental institutions mandated to ensure the achievement of Indigenous Rights. Identifying this as an incompleteness in their knowledge, Lumad interviewees continually questioned ‘if the people don’t want the military here what could be the solution?’ (5). One way they strove to increase their knowledge in this area was through the Lumad schools as already discussed. Another was through ecologies of knowledges with organisations such as the IFI.

However, this highlights a further potential challenge. Engagement with institutions such as the UN also risks reinforcing imperial structures and knowledge integration (Sofoulis, 2015, p.769). There is a risk that ideas of Lumad struggle morph to fit prevailing advocacy norms within these spaces, that these then become recognised as ‘proper’ or ‘accepted’ advocacy and eventually dominant within Lumad communities. As seen in the persecution chapter, engagement with policy spaces requires the use of certain language and risks creating divisions between issues in a

way that weakens the struggle. There are times when engagement with imperial institutions appears necessary to ensure the short-term survival of the struggle. However, one has to wonder, (particularly given the inaction of such institutions outlined in the policy section of the fieldwork reflections chapter), if it is worth it. Too often recourse to international law is insufficient to protect those who are the other side of the abyssal line (de Sousa Santos, 2014). This is not a judgement call for the academy to make. It is an ongoing set of decisions that must be made by those in the struggle based on an understanding of the short and long-term pros and cons of such engagement. Those making these decisions must reflect upon at what point engagement stops contributing to the anti-imperial struggle and instead begins to legitimise the structures that support it.

The risk that Lumad conform to accepted language, behaviour and policy asks is heightened by the lack of confidence many of those with whom I engaged demonstrated in relation to their own knowledge. In some of Lumad communities, interviewees found it difficult to understand the value their knowledge brings to an ecology of knowledge, or any policy space, evidenced by the difficulty participants had discussing what others can learn from them. This likely results from centuries of colonial knowledge oppression and attempted epistemicide against Lumad communities. However, given the now common belief within many policy spaces that Indigenous knowledge is essential in dealing with our ecological crisis,⁵¹ there is also the possibility that such spaces increase the confidence Lumad communities have in

⁵¹ See, for example, UNEP (2020). According to this article According to the article, when Indigenous Peoples rights are protected 'nature thrives and Indigenous Peoples' contributions are essential in designing and implementing solutions for ecosystems.

their own knowledge. Furthermore, if the IFI are more explicit about how the ecology of knowledge benefits them and if the Universities with whom they engage in the future really treat them as visiting professors, there is the potential to increase Lumad confidence in their own knowledge and form of struggle. However, the willingness of each institution to do this and whether it is even possible in an institution such as the UN that was founded on neo-liberal state centred ideologies remains to be seen.

Conclusion

Whilst Santos provides a clear argument of the need for ecologies of knowledge, there is a lack of literature, communities of practice or other means of knowledge transfer available to assist those who wish to undertake this process. The ecology of knowledge between the IFI and the Lumad demonstrate how complicated this process can be. The purposeful sharing of how different ecologies of knowledge have formed may provide guidance or support for those embarking upon this journey to support the anti-imperial struggle and help expand the western imagination.

As I have shown through this chapter, through the support of each incomplete knowledge and the expansion of the anti-imperial movement 'ecologies of knowledges are no idle intellectual exercise; they serve to strengthen concrete social struggles against domination.' (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p.138). The ecology of knowledge between the IFI and Lumad supported some IFI leadership to imagine another world may be possible. This led to increased participation in the Lumad struggle. Their experience demonstrates that ecologies of knowledges can develop

organically, as a result of continuing solidarity, consistent with Smith (2009) and the aforementioned non-linearity of struggle. The early stages of the collaboration between the Lumad and the IFI in particular demonstrates 'diffuse intercultural translation', where the response was born out of necessity rather than curiosity, was fluid and largely based on oral discussion (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p.33).

The organic formation of the ecology of knowledge between the Lumad and the IFI challenges Santos' assertion that there are two types of motivation for participating in intercultural translation, intellectual or political (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p.220). The history and contextual theology of the IFI are the motivating forces for their engagement with Lumads, complemented by the didactic intercultural leadership, the formation of relationships, care and personal connection that lead to the development of intercultural translation and ecologies of knowledge. Political motivations were a result of these relationships, not the motivation for them.

Through engaging with Lumad communities relationships of trust and respect deepened and IFI engagement became institutionalised. For some of the IFI, interacting in convergence spaces led to reduced power dynamics that open the possibility for cognitive justice that supports the struggle against exploitative systems and structures (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p.234). Despite this, there is diversity within the IFI in relation to their view on the Lumad ministry and the power dynamics that they bring to these relationships. This I assume to be common in the early stages of an ecology of knowledge. However, with the support of the church leadership and the

plans of the OM to develop a more purposeful ecology of knowledge there is every possibility that unequal power relations will diminish and be replaced by horizontal, reciprocal relationships and cognitive justice (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p.78). This will enable the current nascent ecology of knowledge to realise its potential in contributing to the anti-imperial struggle. However, the power inequalities are not only individual but also structural and historic and will need continual and purposeful reduction.

One challenge upon which I continue to reflect is that, as I argued earlier, ecologies of knowledge appear not to be transferable. There is a global north in the global south and a global south in the global north, meaning that no matter where one is geographically based there are likely anti-capitalist struggles with which one can engage. However, the apparent necessity of sustained engagement seen by IFI leadership is unrealistic given people's work, time and family commitments. Furthermore, if direct engagement is necessary then the question becomes whose responsibility is it to deconstruct the neo-colonial imagination.

The ecology of knowledge between the Lumad and the IFI begins to suggest some of the challenges that existing imperially imposed power differentials create for the formation of relationships of mutuality. Each ecology will have its own challenges and those between the north and the south are likely to pose some of the greatest challenges. However, the potential benefits of such work make these efforts a necessity. The reduction of western knowledge to the role of a participant in

ecologies of knowledge can help to address its abyssal nature that, in turn, broadens developing pluriverses and supports alternative thinking that enables the flourishing of all anthropic and non-anthropoc beings.

Ecologies of knowledge can strengthen social struggles by providing opportunities for intercultural translation. These processes involve more than simply sharing communication and spending time in another's community. They require a deep listening and openness to transformation at an individual and communal level that will need purposeful development if the ecology of knowledge between the Lumad and the IFI is to grow in maturity so that it might provide greater support to their wider anti-imperial struggle.

The final challenge on which I continue to reflect, which I discuss further in the concluding chapter of this thesis, is the possibility that didactic intercultural leaders will perpetuate allochronic and evolutionary thinking in which they judge those who do not follow their new understandings. This is relevant for IFI congregation members, many of whom, as outlined in the theology chapter, are employed by, or benefit from elements of the neo-liberal capitalist system. It is also relevant for the Lumad communities excluded from dominant understandings of Lumad struggle. It takes away the potential role of the IFI as a mediator and the potential of a pluriverse to demonstrate the breadth of resistance to the neo-liberal capitalist system.

CHAPTER 8 - CONCLUSION

From marches to making ends meet, struggles in the Philippines have adopted manifold forms. Filipino people's movements have ousted Spanish colonists, American imperialists, Japanese occupiers and home-grown dictators. Whilst these movements were strong, each oppressive power has built upon the legacy of the last, entrenching an abyssal line that today oppresses indigenous communities, human rights defenders and those who speak against the state. Through claims of development and with the support of national law, the state treats those who oppose it as disposable. Labels of communist-terrorist, trumped up charges and state sanctioned murder create a *War of Extinction* (Alamon, 2017) against those who resist the trudge towards capitalist development and challenge the illusionary parade of policies said to benefit all Filipinos.

Throughout this thesis, I explored the ontologies and theologies that inform the worldview IFI and Lumad communities and their struggle against the colonial matrix of power. I outlined the historic and present epistemicide and cultural genocide against Lumad Indigenous communities. I showed how the Duterte government used laws, such as the anti-terror law, to justify these abuses and enable economic policies that exploit Lumad ancestral lands for the financial benefit of a small capitalist elite. I shared how, inspired by their history and theology, these violent abuses encouraged the IFI to institutionalise their mission with Lumad communities. I argued that it is through deep relationships with Lumad communities that key IFI leadership entered into an ecology of knowledge, expanding beyond western box thinking and strengthening their role in the anti-capitalist struggle.

These insights, developed throughout this thesis, are based on scholar activist research undertaken with Lumad communities and IFI leadership, informed by indigenous methodologies and rooted in feminist approaches to research in which I strove to be accountable to myself, the communities with whom I was working, the environment and the cosmos (Wilson, 2008). They were informed by ethnographic engagement, supported by semi-structured interviews conducted during my fieldwork visit to the Philippines in 2020. As is common with ethnographic engagement in *risky* places, safety concerns reduced the time I was able to spend in communities, highlighting the need for flexible ethnographic approaches, that in my case challenged my university based understandings of best practice and raised questions of whose ethics count. The COVID-19 pandemic prohibited further face-to-face engagement. However, through online platforms I was able to engage with 'extra-intellectual' (Wilson, 2008, p.111) methods and performative texts, conduct online interviews and seek confirmation, elaboration and clarification of emerging themes.

Whilst I was not able to develop the relationships of deep trust with all participants as anticipated, I was able to develop meaningful relationships with those members of the Obispado Maximo with whom I ventured on the pilgrimage and with whom I travelled over parts of Mindanao. Despite this, I was still an outsider, with links to USPG, a funding agency. I wondered what they had not told me, where silences had been purposeful. There were similarities in interviewee responses to complex issues, such as persecution, which made me wonder if interviewees focus on reinforcing group narratives meant I missed the particularity and plurality of people's experiences. Engaging with policy spheres heightened these concerns. Existing

literature on scholar activist research, indigenous and feminist research methodologies encouraged me to take a political stance against the Duterte government and make strategic interventions to support the IFI and Lumad struggle. However, as outlined in chapter three, these spaces encourage simplification, the omission of complexity and the fitting of every experience into pre-determined categories in a way I fear further encouraged silences and the promotion of group narratives. These concerns remain. However, I also believe that we should not expect research participants to bare all, or to say things that contradict their superiors, particularly in a hierarchical institution such as the IFI, just because it makes us feel better about, or makes for more interesting research.

Adopting a case study approach allowed me to highlight the importance of expanding one's boxhead and the role that an ecology of knowledge, between researcher and collaborating communities, can play in this process. Through a case study approach, I contributed an example of how decolonial methodologies may work in practice. I focused in particular on the process of decolonising the mind of the researcher as shown, for example, in my reflection on the importance of music as a means of struggle or the assumptions I held about Indigenous communities as the solution to the climate and ecological crisis. Adopting a reflexive fieldwork approach, I illustrated the challenges of this process and raised some important questions around whose ethics count, which I hope will generate further reflection and discussion.

Using such a reflexive approach further enabled me to reflect upon my own position within an ecology of knowledge, as my own box-head-informed assumptions were challenges. One important example was the romanticised belief I held that Indigenous People have an infallible relationship with nature. I held an understanding

of Indigenous People that Berkes (2018) labels the 'Exotic other'. However, the relationships and the realities with which I engaged encouraged me to defamiliarise myself with this fictional belief and enabled me to make one of the key arguments of this thesis, that breadth of the struggle against neo-liberal oppression is often obscured by narrow and idealised understandings of what it means to be in *the* struggle.

Revisiting key questions

Through these methods, I aimed to develop potential answers to the following questions:

1. What ontologies and theologies inform the worldviews of Lumad and IFI communities?
2. In what way do Lumad and IFI communities participate in the struggle against the colonial matrix of power?
3. What impact does standing in solidarity with the Lumad struggle have on the IFI's theology?

These questions cannot be answered in any definitive, universalising way. Through the insights I have drawn in attempting to answer them I aim to help expand and inform understandings of what it means to struggle against the colonial matrix of power and why such struggle is necessary.

1. What ontologies and theologies inform the worldviews of Lumad and IFI communities?

According to the analysis I shared in chapter four, spiritual connection with ancestral lands is at the centre of Lumad ontology; there is a deep connection between land, person and spirit. I used the familiar refrain that 'land is life' to demonstrate the role that land plays in the physical and spiritual well-being of Lumad communities.

Drawing on my experience in Bayan and the stories shared with me, I included in chapter four the violence faced by two young men who were hunting frogs and the sacrifice of a chicken. The first practice demonstrates the violence that results from the military's failure to understand the connection between nature and people for this Lumad community and the second, the spiritual practices that the community employ to protect themselves from such violence. The problem, I argued, is that the intimate connection between people and land clashes with the government's neo-liberal development agenda in which land is a resource for financial gain. It is this different relationship with land, I argued, that causes tension between the state and Lumad communities who resist the encroachment of development initiatives on their ancestral lands. After acknowledging the impact of centuries of exploitation, the chapter focused on present iterations of *the* Lumad struggle, honing in on descriptions of education and Lumad schools as the highest form of resistance. I framed Lumad schools as the greatest asset for the circular process of conscientization, transformative action and resistance (Smith, 2009). However, it is the important role played by Lumad schools that has made them the target of further state violence. During his Presidency, Rodrigo Duterte threatened to bomb the schools whilst the military forcibly close them, harassed and murdered educational

leaders. I argued that when viewed alongside other persistent attempts to silence Lumad communities, including forced removals, red-tagging and persecution, the actions of the Filipino government aligns with Mbembe's (2019) description of a necropolitical state in which, building on the power it inherited from its Spanish, American and Filipino predecessors, the state maintains the right to decide who lives and who dies.

In chapter five, I argue that this threat to life of their fellow Filipinos is what motivates the IFI's Lumad ministry. I began the chapter by outlining some of the tensions between so-called liberal and conservative IFI clergy before focusing on the present liberal leadership in Mindanao and within the Obispado Maximo. According to my analysis, understandings of the Church as created from the people's revolution that led to the ousting of the Spanish in 1896, encourages leadership today to act; to be with the people in their present struggles, to exist *Pro Deo et Patria*. I focused on the idea of the people, particularly the struggling sectors of society, as the image of God, introducing a hierarchy of needs in which engagement with the people's struggle is as a source of theology, regardless of the religion of those concerned. Following this, I highlighted the way leadership commonly described themselves as prophets, identifying a division between those liberal clergy who see the role of a prophet as protecting the marginalised sectors of society and those who viewed their role as being with these sectors. The stance taken by those called to protect, I argue, provides a warning of the power dynamics and epistemic hierarchies that persist, as this mission risks re-entrenching paternalistic ideas of communities as voiceless or

even acting as a tool of the neo-colonial system by encouraging assimilation and silencing dissent.

It is an ontology in which land is inseparable from self and a theology of struggle *Pro Deo et Patria* that informs the worldview of Lumad and IFI communities.

2. In what way do Lumad and IFI communities participate in the struggle against the colonial matrix of power?

In exploring the ontologies and theologies that inform Lumad and IFI communities I necessarily engaged in their understandings of struggle; how they narrate their experiences, what drives them and the challenges they face. The struggle against the colonial matrix of power takes a myriad of forms. Some of those mentioned throughout this thesis include Manilakbayan, Lumad schools, engaging with government officials, people's marches, immersion programmes, sermons and clergy training, national and international awareness raising and policy engagement. Policy spheres, NGOs and other people's movements recognise these actions as part of *the* Lumad and IFI struggle. I acknowledged the importance of these actions. I also strove to demonstrate a breadth of struggle often not recognised within these circles. I build on Santos' reminder that 'sometimes the struggles are very different from what we think they are.' (2016, p.25) and Diaz's (1994) argument that the struggle is in the everyday to argue that any attempt to remain on one's ancestral land and avoid integration into the economic and political systems of the city is struggle. I contended that outside of commonly held understandings of *the* struggle, communities, sub-sets

of each community and the individuals within them resist the oppressions of the colonial matrix of power in various and often-unacknowledged ways. I argued that subjugated knowledge can also be subjugating and in relation to Lumad communities, posited that, one could consider joining the paramilitary, joining the NPA, engaging in small-scale market activities or seeking to manage large-scale developments on their ancestral lands as part of the struggle. This finding makes an important contribution given that, as evidenced in chapter four, scholarly literature that acknowledges 'alternative' forms of struggle, such as joining the paramilitary, simply lists these activities with no reflection on their impact, interpretation by other tribal members or influence on communal worldviews. By providing such an analysis, I enable a deeper understanding of the various struggles against oppression and their costs whilst encouraging them all to be viewed as resistance to the oppressions of the neo-liberal capitalist system.

I emphasised that those involved in these different forms of struggle share the common aim of remaining on their ancestral land, they strive to maintain their understanding of a Lumad way of life, forms of worship, their own Datus and forms of economic and political organisation. Those forcibly removed from their lands return when possible. These, I argue, are not the actions of communities seeking incorporation into current systems. They are communities who are doing all that they can to remain outside of them, even if, realistically, that means engaging with them to some degree.

In the persecution chapter, I proposed that acknowledging individual positionality and ability to participate in the struggle is of particular importance in a church such as the IFI that places high value on leadership's commitment to the struggle. The existence of a recognised and bounded understanding of *the* struggle creates a hierarchy in which those who are part of this struggle judge those who are not. Not everyone is able to struggle in the same way and not everyone can risk persecution. As Diaz (1994) argues, when the everyday is a struggle is surviving the everyday not a form of struggle? Failing to recognise different forms of struggle and the potential limitations on an individual's ability to struggle, for example, due to the pressures of traditional gender roles, family and caring responsibilities, mobility and financial status, risks creating a male middle class understanding of struggle that fails to acknowledge the commitment of others. Exclusionary understandings of struggle potentially ignore and silence the experiences of many already oppressed to the other side of the abyssal line, contributing to the illusion of less resistance to capitalist oppression than is the case.

How then do we see those who are simply struggling to survive as having the agency to define alternative understandings of the future rather than merely seeking to be incorporated into a broken system? In a world of abyssal oppression in which hegemonic economic systems are dependent upon the land, labour and dehumanization of the other (de Sousa Santos, 2014) expanding hegemonic understandings of struggle can help illuminate the level of resistance and the vast array of alternatives to such exploitation. I suggest that acknowledging the breadth of struggle against the colonial matrix of power, and enabling ecologies of knowledge to

strengthen the struggle has the potential to improve our chances of creating a world in which people and planet hold a higher value than profit and power.

3. What impact does standing in solidarity with the Lumad struggle have on the IFI's theology?

Building on the IFI theology chapter, in which I contended that it is from standing with the marginalised in their struggle that the IFI theologise, I used the ecology of knowledge chapter to understand the claim of IFI members that engagement with Lumad communities is transformative. Taking direction from a quote made by the OM, I argued that an ecology of knowledge has developed that encourages IFI leadership to think about their relationship with the environment, bring their faith back into their daily life and encourage a sense of community. I strove to show that through engagement with Lumad communities, IFI leaders were encouraged to think beyond the limits of boxhead, to reconsider colonial hierarchies of knowledge and power and to imagine that another world is possible. I highlighted the complexity of such a process of defamiliarisation and refamiliarisation, based on the transformation described by members of the IFI leadership. I argued that entering an ecology of knowledge can create awareness of one's own boxhead, assist the development of critique of the capitalist system and address inequalities of power within relationships. However, the journey to this point has been complicated and involved exploitation and unequal power dynamics. How can this transformation happen without exploitation; without making it the responsibility of those already marginalised

to educate the privileged; without returning to poverty porn; without copious air travel and slum tourism? For me, it was through sense-sensing that this research became a transformative experience. How does a moving process of sense sensing that challenges the privileged West take place on a large scale?

I position faith and spirituality as an important motivating force for entering into an ecology of knowledge. As Santos (2014, pp.208-209) notes

The issue of the relation between religious and other knowledges acquires relevance when many social movements fighting today against oppression base their militancy on religious knowledge and on spirituality.

The information shared throughout this thesis demonstrates how the faith of IFI leaders inspired and drove personal and institutional relationships with Lumad communities. I also propose that the role of religion is greater than a mere motivating force. It is already a potential way of thinking beyond boxhead's limitations. By believing in something greater, in a divine, the IFI are already challenging boxhead, which Andreotti notes 'attempts to tame or repress forces deemed unreasonable such as the aesthetic, the erotic, the more-than-human, the divine and the hilarious.' (2016, p.83). This complicates depictions of Christianity as a colonising and universalising religion and reveals how ecologies of knowledge can take place across religious divides. As Augustine contends,

Undoubtedly, Christianity can make a lasting contribution toward inspiring and building a new global economic ethos that prioritizes

justice, compassion, and sustainability as guiding principles of economic management to the benefit of all God's creatures (Augustine, 2019, p.127).

This is not just true of Christianity. With approximately 85% of people globally professing a faith (World Population Review, 2023), with a higher percentage in the global south and with global religious networks already connecting knowledges across the globe could inter and intra religious relationships offer fertile ground for helping people expand beyond the limitations of boxhead? Could they encourage those elements of religious institutions that remain steeped in coloniality to decolonise?

According to Santos (2012), ecologies of knowledge support incomplete knowledge in a way that strengthens the anti-imperial movement and supports the articulation of alternatives to exploitative capitalism. In line with the predictions of the OM, IFI leadership who entered into an ecology of knowledge with Lumad communities noted challenges to their valuing of the environment, a re-thinking of their relationship with God and a change in the importance they give to community. This in turn led them to contrast the centrality of individual material gain within hegemonic, capitalist understandings of progress and development with the communal living and centrality of land in Lumad ontologies. Clear alternatives to capitalism were not articulated. What existed instead was a defamiliarisation with hegemonic capitalist ideas and a

refamiliarisation with the environment, with one's community and living out one's faith in the everyday.

I articulate this as a positive transformation that strengthens the anti-capitalist struggle (the aim of an ecology of knowledge (de Sousa Santos, 2012)). This is not a stance universally held. Throughout chapters five, six and seven, I outlined some of the internal challenges the Church faces when pursuing its Lumad ministry. For example, some IFI leaders and congregation members question why the Church should have a mission with a group whom the government label as terrorists. In addition, the application of this label to the IFI itself, and persistent persecution of its leadership, has caused some members to leave the IFI and join the Catholic Church. Whilst these decisions are made by free adults, they are informed by government campaigns designed to install fear and terror in those who dare to dissent. Government campaigns and red-taggings then raise issues of FoRB as leaders within the IFI feel unable to pursue what they deem their God given mission for fear of harassment and persecution.

[Policymaking](#)

From my experience throughout this research, I suggest that international policymaking spaces struggle to hear the voices of those oppressed to the other side of the abyssal line. There is a language and way of describing oneself that is necessary for engagement that encourages conformity to the existing global order. Reports and engagement are typically in English and those engaging must place their experience into distinct categories such as FoRB or Indigenous rights. This risks

dividing movements, obscuring the breadth of struggle and collective opposition to the colonial matrix of power. Even the most comprehensive body, the HRC is limited to anthropic concerns and is unable to incorporate indigenous understandings of the connection between people and their land. Created from colonial ideas of anthropic superiority, land ownership, development and progression, the international system is designed to incorporate people into ideas of sustainable development rather than re-hauling the entire system. How can we raise awareness of inequalities and oppression without categorising, or boxing, complex and intertwined lived experiences?

Such complexities raise questions for communities and scholar activists supporting research collaborators to engage with international fora. For example, does increased engagement with the neo-colonial systems of power, however well meaning, distort the ways in which communities express and describe themselves to such an extent that the costs outweigh the benefits?

Santos' (2018, p.21) contends that

These mechanisms, such as the liberal state, the rule of law, human rights, and democracy may be invoked but only as a form of deception...The mechanisms at work have evolved over time but remain structurally similar to those of historical colonialism.

The deception Santos speaks of, where those the other side of the abyssal line are deceived into believing these mechanisms can support their struggle is particularly

problematic when considered alongside the desire of Lumad communities to engage with international rights fora, and particularly the UN. As shown in the fieldwork reflections chapter, understandings of the role of the UN as an arbiter of international human rights has deceived some Lumad communities into believing that if the UN simply knew about the abuses they suffered, they would intervene. Santos argues that ‘the struggle for liberation does not aim at a better and more inclusive form of colonial regulation. It aims at its elimination.’ (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p.21). It is my experience that the pedestal upon which many Lumad communities place such organisations prevents them from advocating for alternatives. The colonial structures on which international organisations such as the UN exist then remain largely unchallenged.

The challenges I identified in engaging with international fora raise questions about the role of a scholar activist researcher. One particular difficulty I experienced was balancing an acknowledgement of the diversity of struggle and maintaining a narrative simple enough for policy spaces. Intertwined with this was the difficulty of acknowledging diversity without fuelling claims that Lumad are terrorists or that they are supportive of the government’s development agenda. Due to these challenges, it was largely with commonly held understandings of being in *the* struggle that I engaged with policy spheres as part of the scholar activist commitment of this research.

Another challenge I experienced related to ideas of scholar activism was that I expected to see something change. One of my assumptions when entering this research was that I could design the research in a way that benefitted those with whom I was working, raising awareness of the human rights situation in the Philippines. My expectations were lower than those of many Lumad interviewees but I did expect some impact. I worked in academic spaces, watching heads nod, eyebrows raise and pens scribble as I presented different aspects of this research. I engaged with policy spaces, listening as Lumad students and teachers passionately told their stories, with divergent reactions of horror and disinterest. But what has really changed? What benefit has there been to the communities concerned? Three years on from my first visit to the Philippines, with a new President who is already showing himself to be as tyrannical as the last, I wonder if there was any point.⁵²⁵³

The long-term engagement needed to encourage policy change conflicts with the immediate action needed to prevent the persistent theft of land and daily persecution. The response of the UN HRC to the situation in the Philippines has been described as 'worse than the lowest common denominator' (Prove, 2020). I continue to be frustrated by this and wonder to what degree it is due to the coloniality of these organisations; that they rely upon consensus amongst necropolitical states. Is there a purposeful silencing of particular forms of struggle aimed at the continuation of current levels of global consumption and the neo-liberal capitalist system? Whilst

⁵² On 30 June 2022, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr became the Filipino head of state.

⁵³ For example, the President is proposing a constitutional reform known as Charter Change. The challenges this were outlined by on IFI Bishop who shared that 'It will allow for the revision of the entire Constitution. ...greater foreign ownership and control of our lands, natural resources and the economy...removal of existing term limits of government officials and effectively extending the terms of sitting officials...deeper entrenchment of political dynasties, and the watering down of the provisions on social justice and human rights, national sovereignty and independence, limited as they already are.' (Morales, 2023).

these questions will likely remain unanswered, by reflecting upon them I hope to help others manage their expectations and plan their engagement. I would argue that for scholar activists moving forward there is a need to focus on the small things. As I acknowledged in chapter four (fieldwork reflections) there were some, limited benefits, some things that I could as an individual help fund, some things I wrote that helped add legitimacy to the IFI and Lumad cause. There have been small achievements. I have been filled with joy, watching the OM's response to the policy report I wrote, listening to him proudly present it as the IFI and Lumad story, feeling a massive sense of achievement as he requested more copies to distribute at the annual Bishops meeting. Maybe I had at least fulfilled his desire for the research to provide a reference point to support the IFI in their work.

Research Limitations

I have argued for acknowledgement of the different forms of struggle against neo-colonial oppression. However, data collection in the form of interviews was limited to those in *the* struggle. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, I assumed that I would find a radical Church working with Indigenous communities and Lumad communities who were living examples of alternatives to the neo-liberal capitalist system. This affected to whom collaborators introduced me during my time in the Philippines. The COVID-19 pandemic and the necessity of conducting online interviews meant that I could only engage with those with whom I had a prior relationship, or those very close to them. I was unable to interview those who interviewees identified as opposed to their struggle, to see how this group of paramilitary, conservative clergy or apparent development enthusiasts would

respond to my argument that they are in fact part of the struggle. Maybe I made this argument *because* I knew that I would not be going back. Perhaps knowing that I would not have to walk the tightrope of sitting with an armed paramilitary member to see if they have more in common with those they persecute than they might think made this argument easier. Furthermore, whilst community members who provided feedback on the chapters understood this argument, they were, out of necessity, those who speak English and have an understanding of academia. I wonder how other community members would have responded to my positioning the paramilitary as part of their struggle. Further study is necessary to explore the argument that the struggle against the neo-liberal capitalist system is broader than commonly thought, without it becoming something externally imposed.

EPILOGUE

Between 8 to 10 May 2023, four IFI leaders with whom I worked closely throughout my thesis were red-tagged as communist terrorists. Not by the state, but by members of their own Church. The election of Bishop Joel Polares to the position of Obispo Maximo during the 15th General Assembly held from 7 to 10 May, 2023 caused a dramatic change in tide that appears to have emboldened conservative IFI leadership to red-tag their progressive counterparts. Red-tagging is commonly executed by government entities such as the NTF-ELCAC. This internal red-tagging challenges the narrative of those leaders with whom I collaborated: that they are not communists but Church leaders executing God's will. Many expected electoral tensions; however they did not foresee some clergy willingly putting the lives of others at risk. One clergy member and the wife of red-tagged Cabillas shared that 'red tagging to fellow priests and bishops of the IFI is tantamount of killing them for risking their lives!!!' (Maga-Cabillas, 2023). She particularly criticised those who began their posts with 'Attention PNP' [Philippine National Police]/AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines]. Cabillas himself noted that

This red-tagging will become a license to the PNP/AFP to "destroy or neutralize" me, either arrest me without warrant, use a violent means to extra-judicially kill or forcibly disappeared me (as happened to many activists). The PNP/AFP may not be interested to harm me but other agency like the NTF-ELCAC will be interested to do it (Cabillas, 2023).

The majority of red-tagging took place on alias Facebook accounts that have since been deleted. Others instances took place on personal accounts of prominent Church members but have since been deleted. The only post that remains is on the Facebook page of Jonash Joyohoy, the Chair of the Council of Priests. His post states

fr Cris Ablon wants to destroy the image of the Church. I would like to confirm that as the newly elected chairman of the CoP [Council of Priests] I will pursue him to the best of my ability based on the disciplinary rules of the Church (Joyohoy, 2023).

However, Joyohoy's invocation of the disciplinary rules of the Church would make any action against Father Chris legitimate prosecution.

One challenge I highlighted throughout this thesis was the diversity of the communities concerned and the difficulty of talking about, for example, *the* theology of the IFI. I strove to overcome this particular challenge by focusing on the influential church leadership, the OM, Obispado Maximo and Bishops in Mindanao, institutional documents such as the TYRP and official Church statements. However, this red-tagging suggests a forthcoming change in dominant theology. Building on existing scholarly literature, one argument that I made in the persecution chapter was that what is defined as persecution and prosecution is determined more by the community of the person concerned than the life and actions of the individual. Young clergy often described red-tagging with a certain jubilation, an acknowledgement that one has been doing the work of God. This change in leadership poses a challenge to

such attitudes. It also furthers the risk to those who are persecuted. The social mobility experienced by A and B, which the Church facilitated to a large degree, is unlikely to be experienced by red-tagged clergy in the near future. This change in leadership will likely challenge understandings of persecution, martyrdom and the relationship between the institutional Church and Lumad communities.

However, as noted earlier in the thesis, with time, the IFI always returns to its revolutionary roots and to standing with the people. In the present day Philippines, this means standing with indigenous communities. I have shown how such solidarity leads to ecologies of knowledge and transformation within the Church. It is therefore likely that the ontology of Lumad communities will continue influencing the theology of the IFI, further motivating struggle against the colonial matrix of power, encouraging an expansion of knowledge and commitment to alternative understandings of capitalism.

INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS

- 1 - School leader
- 2 - Student
- 3 - School leader
- 4 - School leader
- 5 - Bayan community member
- 6 - IFI leader
- 7 - Bayan community member
- 8 - Bayan community member
- 9 - IFI leader
- 10 - IFI leader
- 11 - IFI leader
- 12 - IFI leader
- 13 - IFI leader
- 14 - IFI leader
- 15 - IFI leader
- 16 - IFI leader
- 17 - IFI leader
- 18 - IFI leader

19 - IFI leader

20 - IFI leader

21 - IFI leader

22 - IFI leader

23 - IFI leader

24 - IFI leader

25 - IFI leader

26 - IFI leader

27 - IFI leader

28 - IFI leader

29 - IFI leader

30 - IFI leader

31 - IFI leader

32 - IFI leader

33 - School leader

34 - Bayan community member

35 - IFI leader

36 - IFI leader

37 - IFI leader

38 - IFI leader

39 - IFI leader

40 - School leader

41 - Bayan community member

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abesamis, C.H. (1978) 'Doing theological reflection in a Philippine context', in Torres, S. And Fabella, V. (eds) *The Emergent Gospel: Theology from the Underside of History*. New York: Orbis Books.

Abinales, P.N. (2008) *Mindanao, nation, and region: the joys of dislocation*. Philippines: Anvil Publishing. (Accessed: 10 February 2021).

Ablon, A (2021) '500 Years of Faith Seeking Liberation' *The Theology of Struggle*. Available at: <https://antonioablon.com/2021/03/15/500-years-of-faith-seeking-liberation/>. (Accessed: 10 February 2021).

Ablon, A (2023) 'Love, Compassion and Justice' *The Theology of Struggle*. Available at: <https://antonioablon.com/2023/04/06/love-compassion-and-justice/>. (Accessed: 10 February 2021).

Ablon, C. (2020) No Title [Facebook] 18 October. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/sky.able/posts/3575589169131257>. (Accessed: 10 February 2021).

Abuza Z, Lischin L. (2020) The Challenges Facing the Philippines' Bangsamoro Autonomous Region at One Year. *United States Institute of Peace*. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep24906.pdf>.

Ackerly, B. and True, J. (2020) 'Designing Feminist Research for Impact', *Journal of Politics*, 82(4), pp. 1367–1372. DOI: 10.1086/708335.

Aguilan, M.V. (2013) 'The emergence of indigenous theology in the Philippines', *Asia Pacific Mission Studies*, 1(1), pp.3-28. DOI: 10.24987/SMP.Vol1.4.

Alamon, A. (2017) *Wars of Extinction: Discrimination and the Lumad Struggle in Mindanao*. Mindanao: Rural Missionaries of the Philippines.

Alamon, A.P. (2017) *Wars of Extinction: Discrimination and the Lumad Struggle in Mindanao*. Iligan City: Rural Missionaries of the Philippines.

Alejo, A.E. (2018). Strategic identity: Bridging self-determination and solidarity among the indigenous peoples of Mindanao, the Philippines. *Thesis Eleven*, 145(1), pp.38-57. DOI: 10.1177/0725513618763839 Andreotti, V. (2016) '(re)imagining education as an un-coercive re-arrangement of desires', *Other Education: The Journal of Educational Alternatives*, 5(1), pp: 79-88.

Andreotti, V. (2016) '(Re)imagining education as an uncoercive re-arrangement of desires', *Other Education*, 5(1), pp. 79–88.

Anthony, I. (2019) 'Philippines' Top 10 Religion Ranking Changes Significantly. Available at: <https://www.esq.ph/long-reads/features/top-ten-religion-philippines-beliefs-a2019-20190723-lfrm2> (Accessed: 27 February 2023).

Antonio, J and Ledesma S.J, (2021) 'From separation to reconciliation', *Inquirer.net*, 25 July. Available at: <https://opinion.inquirer.net/142412/from-separation-to-reconciliation>. (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Archivo Provincial de los Agustinos Recoletos, Marcilla, Spain, leg 84, num1, doc 1 quoted in Edgerton, C.J. (2008) *Remembering Lugami: History, violence and identity in the Philippines*. University of Hawaii Press.

Arcilla, J.S. (1985) 'Review of the state of the church in the philippines 1850-1875. The correspondence between the bishops in the philippines and the nuncio in madrid', *Tagaytay*, 33(4), pp. 548-551.

Arya, A. and Henn, M. (2020) 'The future is digital: reflections on cyberprotest in the age of Covid-19', *OpenDemocracy*, 7 September. Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/future-digital-reflections-cyberprotest-age-covid-19/>.

Aspinwall, N. (2020) 'Philippines' Pantaron: where life balances on the floodplains', *Eco-business*, 20 November. Available at: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/philippines-pantaron-where-life-balances-on-the-floodplains/> (Accessed: 30 June, 2022).

Augustine, D.C., 2019. *The Spirit and the common good: Shared flourishing in the image of God*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Ayroso, D. (2015) 'Paramilitary group kills two Lumád men, minor in Bukidnon', *Bulatlat*, 11 November. Available at: <https://www.bulatlat.com/2015/11/11/paramilitary-men-kill-two-lumad-men-minor-in-bukidnon/> (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Bakhtin, M.M. (1986) *Speech genres and other late essays*. Translated by McGee, V.W. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Barrett, M. (2004) 'Can the subaltern speak? New formations, colonial subjects and the legacies of subjection', *Cultural Studies*, 18(2-3), pp. 359-369. DOI: 10.1080/0950238042000201514.

Beltran, D. (2019) ‘Bakwit schools’ in UP fight social injustice – official’, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 1 December. Available at:

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1197844/bakwit-schools-in-up-fight-social-injustice-official>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2022).

Berkes, F. (2018) *Sacred ecology*. 4th edn. New York: Routledge.

Berry, Maya J., Claudia Chávez Argüelles, Shanya Cordis, Sarah Ihmoud, and Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada. (2017). ‘Toward a Fugitive Anthropology: Gender, Race, and Violence in the Field’, *Cultural Anthropology* 32(4) pp.537–565.

<https://doi.org/10.14506/ca32.4.05>.

Birnbaum, R. (2000) ‘Policy scholars are from Venus; policy makers are from Mars’, *The Review of Higher Education*, 23(2), pp. 119-132. DOI: 10.1353/rhe.2000.0013.

Bishop, R. (1994). ‘Initiating empowering research?’ *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 29(2), pp. 175–188. Available at:

<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1995-27100-001>

Bishop, R. (1998). ‘Freeing ourselves from neo-colonial domination in research: A Maori approach to creating knowledge’, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(2), pp. 199-219, DOI: 10.1080/095183998236674.

Bolledo, J. (2022) ‘Manila court junks DOJ’s petition seeking to declare CPP-NPA as terrorists’, *Rappler*, 22 September. Available at:

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/manila-court-junks-doj-petition-seeking-declare-cpp-npa-terrorists/>. (Accessed: September 30 2022).

Borchgrevink, K., and Erdal, M. B. (2017). 'With faith in development: Organizing transnational Islamic charity', *Progress in Development Studies*, 17(3), pp. 214–228. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464993417713276>

Bowersock, G.W. (1995) *Martyrdom and Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boyarin, D. (1999) *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), pp.77-101. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

Brazal, A.M. (2019) 'Introducing Filipino political theology', *Religious Studies in Asia*, 1(2), pp.135-54. DOI: 10.1163/24689980-12340034.

Brown, C., Fleetwood, J. and Roberts, J.M. (eds.) (2018) *The critical policy studies reader*. Bristol: Policy Press. DOI: 10.1332/policypress/9781447332925.001.0001.

Brunger F, Wall D. (2016) "What Do They Really Mean by Partnerships?" Questioning the Unquestionable Good in Ethics Guidelines Promoting Community Engagement in Indigenous Health Research', *Qualitative Health Research*. 26(13) pp.1862-1877. DOI:10.1177/1049732316649158

Bryman, A. (2012) *Social research methods*. 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cabillas, D. (2020a) No Title [Facebook]. Available at:

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10224429868958770&id=1367662380.

(Accessed: 19 November 2020).

Cabillas, D. (2020b) 'March 29, a Sunday, no celebration of Holy Eucharist but still a fruitful one', Manila Today, Available at: <https://manilatoday.net/march-29-a-sunday-no-celebration-of-holy-eucharist-but-still-a-fruitful-one/>. (Accessed: 19 November 2020)

Cabillas, D. (2023) 'THE FORMER YIFI CHAPLAIN MUST SPEAK...' [Facebook] 23 April. Available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile/1367662380/search/?q=destroy%20or%20neutralize>. (Accessed: 24 April 2023).

Cagula, S.E. (2020) 'DepEd strongly urged to reconsider closure order vs 55 Lumad schools in Davao region', *Davao Today*, 16 October. Available at:

<https://davaotoday.com/main/human-rights/depd-strongly-urged-to-reconsider-closure-order-vs-55-lumad-schools-in-davao-region/>. (Accessed: 30 June 2022).

Callahan, A.D., 2005. *A love supreme: a history of Johannine tradition*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Canuday, J., 2008. Diwalwal case: The rise of Lumad capitalists. *Unpublished manuscript*. Davao City: Ateneo de Davao University.

Chatterton, P., Hodkinson, S. and Pickerill, J., (2010). Beyond Scholar Activism: Making Strategic Interventions Inside and Outside the Neoliberal University. *Acme: An international e-journal for critical geographies*, 9(2).

Chia, E.K.-F. (2021). *Asian Christianity and Theology: Inculturation, Interreligious Dialogue, Integral Liberation*. London: Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367341619>

Chidester, D. (2014) *Empire of religion: Imperialism and comparative religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Chilisa, B. (2019) *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Choudry, A. and Shragge, E. (2011) 'Disciplining dissent: NGOs and community organizations', *Globalizations*, 8(4), pp.503-517. DOI: 10.1080/14747731.2011.621216.

Cole, W.O., and Sambhi, P.S. (2016) *Sikhism and Christianity; A Comparative Study*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Collins, P.H. (1990) *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Oxford: Routledge.

Conde, C.H. (2015) 'Dispatches: Killings of Philippine Tribal Members Spark Public Furor', *Human Rights Watch*, 8 September. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/09/08/dispatches-killings-philippine-tribal-members-spark-public-furor> (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Congress of the Philippines (2021). '*Senate of the Philippines. Eighteenth Congress of the Republic of the Philippines, Senate Bill No.2014*'. Congress of the Philippines. Available at:

<https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/lisdata/3430931109!.pdf#:~:text=On%2018%20January%202021%2C%20however%2C%20the%20DND%20unilaterally,the%20protections%20and%20courtesies%20afforded%20by%20the%20agreement.%223>. (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Congress of the Philippines (2022) *The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020*. Eighteenth Congress of the Republic of the Philippines, Republic Act No. 11479. Available at: https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2020/ra_11479_2020.html.

Cook, D. (2007) *Martyrdom in Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cornelio, J. S. (2014). Popular Religion and the Turn to Everyday Authenticity Reflections on the Contemporary Study of Philippine Catholicism. *Philippine Studies: Historical & Ethnographic Viewpoints*, 62(3/4), 471–500. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24672321>.

CPCS (2017) *A Homegrown Approach to Accompaniment in the Face of Violence: IFI's Lumad Accompaniment Program in Mindanao*. Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. Learning Paper.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>.

Cronin-Furman, K. and Lake, M. (2018) 'Ethics abroad: Fieldwork in fragile and violent contexts', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 51(3), pp. 607-614. DOI: 10.1017/S1049096518000648.

Cruz, G.T. and Havea, J. (2014) 'Weaving Oppression and Liberation: Postcolonial Theology as Theology of Struggle', in M.G. Brett (ed.) *Colonial Contexts and Postcolonial Theologies*, pp. 21–39.

Cunliffe, A.L. and Alcadipani, R. (2016) 'The politics of access in fieldwork: Immersion, backstage dramas, and deception', *Organizational Research Methods*, 19(4), pp. 535-561. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1094428116639134>.

Cunningham, L.S. (2011) 'Through many tribulations': The theology and politics of radical Catholic women religious in the United States. In: Blee, K.M. (ed.) *Women of the Klan: Racism and gender in the 1920s*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 167-188.

Cushner, N. (2006) *Why Have you Come Here? The Jesuits and the First Evangelization of Native America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dallmayr, F. (2006) *Dialogue among civilizations: Some exemplary voices*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dallmayr, F. (2006) Dialogue among civilizations: Some exemplary voices. In: Dallmayr, F. (ed.) *Dialogue among civilizations: Some exemplary voices*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 17-39.

Davis, D.H. (2002). The evolution of religious freedom as a universal human right: Examining the role of the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. *BYU L. Rev.*, p.217.

De la Torre, M.A. (2022) *Reading the Bible from the Margins*. London: Orbis Books.

De los Reyes, I. (1899) *La sensacional memoria de Isabelo de los Reyes sobre la revolución filipina de 1896-97*. Madrid: Tip. Lit de J. Corrales.

De los Reyes, I. (1948). 'The Iglesia Filipina Independiente', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, (17:2) pp. 132-137. Available at:
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/42971979>.

de Sousa Santos, B. (2007) 'Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges', *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 30(1), pp. 45-89.

de Sousa Santos, B. (2012) 'Public Sphere and Epistemologies of the South', *Africa Development*, 37(1), pp. 43-97.

de Sousa Santos, B. (2014) *Epistemologies of the South : justice against epistemicide*. NY: Routledge <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315634876>.

de Sousa Santos, B. (2016) 'Epistemologies of the South and the future', *From The European South*, 1, pp. 17-29.

de Sousa Santos, B., (2018) *The End of the Cognitive Empire*. NC: Duke University Press Books.

de Ste. Croix, G. (2006) *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

de Ste. Croix, G.E.M. (1963). Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted? *Past & Present*, 26(1), pp. 6–38. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/649902>.

Demeterio, F. (2012). Don Isabelo de los Reyes (1864–1938): Forerunner of Filipino theology. *Philippiniana sacra*, 47, pp.883-916. Available at:
https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/64706735/3_2012_N.142_Vol.XLVII_Don_Isabelo_de_los_Reyes_1_-libre.pdf?1602994097=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DDon_Isabelo_delos_Reyes_1864_1938_Foreru.pdf&Expires=1695995978&Signature=MU4~-CDYCtlSth1GogWc-zd~EnUz9TljTzfrTx2gh226Wjhp6ql6qcclY9vCYIPMBiW42~E9HHCWgCe1EC-T82ddkSyswmbloFhcJc-oXRpj3XcCwnUyU4mHQ-uP0J2uWUcObfZ-c~uyyneVOrr3oZnlRVrxoV6FTPhtwi7ufAi8hGCl0bqt3OJ6CrZEBX-bs-xeuP-g9eG90D9vvpYQV1HHY5n3xsp7CpoYME2oC3MYJVhDqu371hknqPBaZVV8r51IH LxFv~qdPctLPv1Yfv~vWHmiiTosJWjgzWJHF2E6eDderedH0L69-AkKCW8w1b5nSsb~9UXele8bXAgKQ___&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA

Demitrio (2012) Don Isabelo de los Reyes (1864-1938): Forerunner of Filipino Theology. Available at:
https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/64706735/3_2012_N.142_Vol.XLVII_Don_Isabelo_de_los_Reyes_1_-libre.pdf?1602994097=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DDon_Isabelo_delos_Reyes_1864_1938_Foreru.pdf&Expires=1696161273&Signature=aipMbSyObM8rpRCuAMEeZuciqlI5RPJ2CgTQkBvogb5Bia6Bd5nBLCuB3E6tPHjS1NH-rpRB2ATg-~3-HhRnJrfm-LMpcd-0-gvBgnKtaxqtclWr3fMW8GGP0B-iMYc0cilj0xdM3o0YRGd57xQ3GJV6asG2WSzgi3zaLh-Yu-FVMZy7moYBcl7YkleDD5b1LFoP~QGMEztuhvfMyAzJtzYlxbjv6y0TQa7s4gm-h-5PY7gEdS9jSrUQzaNQVvewvWxpCRimHiMHbovwTzbNHvCYovbUdy77nH0EPZ2B

RvCYQuBYZRNuICFgz3NSR9cXqDf8LGYToHxWkeJ~QubWRQ__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA.

Department of Finance (2018) '*Build, Build, Build*' to roll out 75 projects worth \$35.5-B', 23 January. Available at: <https://www.dof.gov.ph/build-build-build-to-roll-out-75-projects-worth-35-5-b/> (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Department Order No. 62, s. 2011 – National Adoption and Implementation of the National Indigenous Peoples (IP) Education Policy Framework, DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011 (2011). Department of Education.

Diaz, A. (2004) *En La Lucha / in the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology*. Tenth-Anniversary Edition. Augsburg Fortress Publishers: Minneapolis.

Diaz, M. (1994) *In the struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers.

Dickson-Swift, V. et al. (2009) 'Researching sensitive topics: Qualitative research as emotion work', *Qualitative Research*, 9(1), pp. 61-79. DOI: 10.1177/1468794108098031.

Dodds, E.R. (1994) *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dogra, N. (2013) 'The Mixed Metaphor of 'Third World Woman': Gendered Representations by International Development NGOs', *Third World Quarterly*, 34(2), pp. 333-348. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2013.785343>.

Donson, A.F. (2003) 'Indigenous Peoples and Extractive Resources on Mindanao Island, The Philippines', in Gottlieb, R.S. (ed.) *Liberating Faith: Religious Voices for Justice, Peace, and Ecological Wisdom*. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Droge, A.J. and Tabor, J.D. (1992) *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.

Droz, L., Chen, H.M., Chu, H.T., Fajrini, R., Imbong, J., Jannel, R., Komatsubara, O., Lagasca-Hiloma, C.M.A., Meas, C., Nguyen, D.H. and Sherpa, T.O. (2022). Exploring the diversity of conceptualizations of nature in East and South-East Asia. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 9(1), pp.1-12. DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01186-5>

Earth Overshoot Day (2023) *Earth Overshoot Day* Available at:

<https://overshoot.footprintnetwork.org>. (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Edwards, R. and Ribbens, J. (1997). Feminist dilemmas in qualitative research:

Public knowledge and private lives. *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*, pp.1-224. London: Sage.

Emerald, E. and Carpenter, L. (2015) 'Vulnerability and emotions in research: Risks, dilemmas, and doubts', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(8), pp. 741-750. DOI:

10.1177/1077800414566686.

Eriksson, M. and Sundelius, B. (2005) 'Molding minds that form policy: How to make research useful', *International Studies Perspectives*, 6(1), pp. 51-71. DOI:

10.1111/j.1528-3577.2005.00192.x.

Espina-Varona, I. (2015) 'They're killing teachers and children, Mr. President', *ABSCBN*. 4 September.

Evans-Hills, B., Moss, C., Davies, A., Bridger, E. (2019) *A Response to the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review for the former Foreign Secretary of FCO Support for Persecuted Christians, Final Report and Recommendations*. USPG and University of Birmingham. Available at:

<https://d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/uspg/content/pages/documents/1595335055.pdf>

Eviota-Rivera, G., Bayod, R., Racmat, A.L., and Serad, O.M. (2023) 'Narratives of Resilience and Solidarity during the Marawi Crisis: Preserving Marawi's Culture of Peace', *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 9, pp. 1-20.

Fabros, W. (1988). *The church and its social involvement in the Philippines, 1930-1972*. Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press.

FCDO (2016) *Freedom of religion or belief: how the FCO can help promote respect for this human right*. Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office. Available at: Freedom of religion or belief: how the FCO can help promote respect for this human right - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) . (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

FCO (2016) *Freedom of Religion or Belief Toolkit: How the FCO can help promote and protect this human right*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561516/Freedom_of_Religion_or_Belief_Toolkit_-_2016.pdf (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

- Fernandez, G.A. (1994) 'Origins of Filipino theology from an Asian perspective', in Wilfred, F. (ed.) *Theologies and cultures*. Jesuit Theological College of Toronto, pp. 184-202.
- Ferrin, D.L., Dirks, K.T. and Shah, P.P. (2006) 'Direct and indirect effects of third-party relationships on interpersonal trust', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(4), pp. 870-83. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.91.4.870>.
- Flick, U. (2018) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Fonbuena, C. (2021) *Marawi Siege: Stories from the Front Lines*. Philippines: Journalism for Nation Building Foundation.
- Freeman, D., 2019. *Tearfund and the Quest for Faith-based Development*. Routledge.
- Frend, W.H.C. (1965) *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus*. Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Frenzel, F., Koens, K. and Steinbrink, M. (eds.) (2015) *Slum Tourism: Poverty, Power and Ethics*. London: Routledge.
- Funder, M. (2005) 'Bias, intimacy and power in qualitative fieldwork strategies', *The Journal of Transdisciplinary Environmental Studies*, 4(1), pp. 1-9. DOI: 10.7358/tdes-2014-001-fund.
- Global Forest Watch (2020) *Philippines Mining Sites 2001-2019*. Available at: <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/dashboards/country/PHL/?category=mining&location=ws> (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

Goldsworthy, V. (1998) *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination*. Yale University Press.

Goodhand, J. (2001) 'Research in conflict zones: ethics and accountability', *Forced Migration Review*, 8, pp. 12-15. Available at: <https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/accountability-and-displacement/goodhand.pdf> (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

Goto, Courtney. 2017. 'Experiencing Oppression: Ventriloquism and Epistemic Violence in Practical Theology', *International Journal of Practical Theology* 21(2): 175–93. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt-2015-0051>.

Gozum, I.E.A., Galang, J.R.F., and Sarmiento, P.J.D. (2022) 'Integrating ecumenism and interreligious dialogue in peace education in the Philippines from a Catholic perspective', *International Journal of Christianity & Education*, pp. 1-14. <https://doi.org.bham-ezproxy.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/20569971221092397>

Grim, B.J. and Finke, R. (2010) *The Price of Freedom Denied*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511762345>

Grosfoguel, R. (2012) 'Epistemic Racism/Sexism, Westernized Universities and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century', *Universitas Humanística*, (74), pp. 203-224.

Grosfoguel, R., (2013) 'The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: epistemic racism/sexism and the four genocides/epistemicides of the long 16th century', *Human Architecture*, 11(1), pp. 73-90.

Halbwachs, M. (1992) *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Harding, S. and Norberg, K. (2005) 'New feminist approaches to social science methodologies: An introduction', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(4), pp. 2009-2015. DOI: 10.1086/428420.

Harris, F. (1997) 'Getting involved in research.' In: De Koning, K. and Martin, M. (eds.) *Participatory research in health: Issues and experiences*. London: Zed Books, pp. 1-11.

Hartnett, R. (2021) 'Climate Imperialism: Ecocriticism, Postcolonialism, and Global Climate Change.' *eTropic: electronic journal of studies in the Tropics*, 20(2), pp.138-155. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25120/etropic.20.2.2021.3809>

Harvey, D. (2003) *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: OUP Oxford.

Harvey, D. (2006) *Spaces of Global Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Hernandez B. L. (n.d.). *The Las Casas-Sepúlveda Controversy: 1550-1551*.

Available

at: http://userwww.sfsu.edu/epf/journal_archive/volume_X,_2001/hernandez_b.pdf

(Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022)

Hick, J. (2004) *An Interpretation of Religion*. 2nd edn. London: Yale University Press.

Hirt, C. (2012) 'Dreams of iron: Decolonizing Luapula Province in the age of postcolonial mining, Zambia', *Studies in Social Justice*, 6(1), pp. 33-55. DOI: 10.26522/ssj.v6i1.1065

Holdsworth, C. (2019) 'The role of bishops in UK politics needs further scrutiny'. The Conversation, 7 November. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/the-role-of-bishops-in-uk-politics-needs-further-scrutiny-126468>.

HRW (2020) 'Philippines Events of 2019'. Available at: *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/philippine>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

HRW (2022) 'Philippines: End Deadly 'Red-Tagging' of Activists', *Human Rights Watch*, 17 January. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/17/philippines-end-deadly-red-tagging-activists>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

IFI (1998) *AGLIPAYAN SPIRITUALITY*. Available at: <https://www.dgma.ph/rkaSEPu/parenchym990417/3J6LQryv>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

IFI (2017) *Three Year Rolling Plan*. IFI. Unpublished.

IFI Constitution and Canons (1977). Available at: <https://www.ifi.ph/wp-content/uploads/Constitutions-Canons-of-the-IFI-1977.pdf>.

Imbong, J.D. (2021) "Bungkalan" and the Manobo-Pulangihon tribe's resistance to corporate land-grab in Bukidnon, Mindanao', *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 17(1), pp. 23-31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180120967724>.

Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (Republic Act No. 8371). Congress of the Philippines.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (2015) *Internal Displacement in South East Asia*. Available at: <https://www.internal->

displacement.org/publications/internal-displacement-in-south-east-asia (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022). *Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271–314.

IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, M. Tignor, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem (eds.)]. In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, pp. 3-33, DOI:10.1017/9781009325844.001.

IWGIA (2020) *The Indigenous World 2020: Philippines*. Available at: <https://www.iwgia.org/en/philippines/3633-iw-2020-philippines.html> (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

Jeong, H.W. (2000) *Peace and conflict studies: An introduction*. London: Routledge.

Joseph, M.P. (2015) 'Asian theological perspectives on human dignity and human rights', *The Ecumenical Review*, 67(3), pp. 366-386. DOI: 10.1111/erev.12155.

Joyohoy, J. (2023) 'Fr Cris Ablon wants to destroy the image of the Church. I wish to confirm that as the new halal chairman of the CoP I will pursue him as far as I can based on the disciplinary rules of the Church' [Facebook] 9 May. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/profile/100001031358038/search/?q=destroy%20the%20image%20of%20the%20Church> (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

Kappen, S. (1980) *Tradition, modernity, counter culture: an Asian perspective*.
Bengaluru: Visthar.

Karapatan (2022) *Duterte term-ender and 2022 Marcos Jr year-end report*. Available
at <https://www.karapatan.org/report/duterte-term-ender-and-2022-marcos-jr-year-end-report/> (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

Karapatan (2023) *Successor of His Father's Reign of Terror and Copy-Cat of Duterte's Malicious Brutality*. Available
at <https://www.karapatan.org/report/karapatan-monitor-for-april-to-june-2023/>
(Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

Kelsey, H. (1985) Ruy López de Villalobos and the Route to the Philippines, *Terrae Incognitae: The Journal of the Society for the History of Discoveries*, 17(1), pp. 29-45, DOI: 10.1179/tin.1985.17.1.29

Kloß, S.T. (2017) 'Sexual(ized) harassment and ethnographic fieldwork: A silenced aspect of social research', *Ethnography*, 18(3), pp. 396–414.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138116641958>

Koonings, K., Kruijt, D. and Rodgers, D (2019), *Ethnography as Risky Business: Field Research in Violent and Sensitive Contexts*. Maryland: Lexington Books.

Kovach, M. (2021) *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations and contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Krause, J. (2021). 'The ethics of ethnographic methods in conflict zones', *Journal of Peace Research*, 58(3), 329–341. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343320971021>

Krause, K. and Kearney, R. (2006) 'Using self within research', *TESOL in Context*, 16(1), pp. 21-26. DOI: 10.21153/tc2006vol16no1art560.

Lambright, K.T., Mischen, P.A. and Laramée, C.B. (2010) 'Building trust in public and nonprofit networks: Personal, dyadic, and third-party influences', *The American Review of Public Administration*, 40(1), pp. 64-82. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0275074009342856>.

Legaspi, A. (2006) 'Cops say Ramento case 'closed' but activists don't', *GMA News Online*. Accessible at: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/17337/cops-say-ramento-case-closed-but-activists-don-t/story/> (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

Lehmann, D. (1975) 'A Latin American liberation theology', *The Ecumenical Review*, 27(3), pp.239-252. DOI: 10.1111/j.1758-6623.1975.tb01051.x

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. London: Sage Publications.

Lindblom, C. E., and Cohen, D. K. (1979). *Usable knowledge: Social science and social problem solving* (Vol. 21). Yale University Press.

Lingao, I. (2017) 'Duterte gov't hit for threats, rights abuses vs Mindanao Lumad', *Rappler*, 21 June. Available at: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/lumad-group-2017-sona-statement/>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

Louis, R.P. (2012) 'Community-based participatory research: Lessons learned from the Centers for ', in Angrosino, M.V. and Rosenberg, K.A. (eds.) *Observing and*

participating in the lives of others: Qualitative research methods. Volume 4.

California: Left Coast Press, pp. 205-216. DOI: 10.1289/ehp.7675.

Maga-Cabillas E (2023) ATTENTION!!! [Facebook] 23 April. Available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/erahvilla.magacabillas/posts/pfbid0mZFMaGpHDNnL9hqa3tNXSMjCTaAdzr5HMognwZGBBPMxjfNvoZCCQ7mQCCZQ93twl> (Accessed: 24 April 2023).

Magdadar, J.L.B. and Sacramento, J.N. (2022) 'Using Hip-hop Arts-based Approach in Teaching Science: Basis for Lumad School Science Curriculum Enhancement', *Asian Journal of Social Science Research*, 5(1), pp. 1-16.

Makransky, J. (2014) 'What Christian Liberation Theology and Buddhism Need to Learn from Each Other', *University of Hawai'i Press*, 34, pp. 117-134.

Mananzan, M.J. (2002) 'Church-State Relationships During Martial Law in the Philippines 1972–1986', *Studies in World Christianity*, 8(2), pp. 195-205. <https://doi.org/10.3366/swc.2002.8.2.195>

Manlupig, K.A. (2015) 'Surigao Sur Lumad leaders killed in clash with communist rebels', *Inquirer Mindanao*, 1 September. Available at: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/721528/surigao-sur-lumad-leader-killed>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

Manning, J. (2018) 'Becoming a decolonial feminist ethnographer: Addressing the complexities of positionality and representation', *Management Learning*. 49(3), pp. 311–326. DOI: 10.1177/1350507617745275.

- Mateo, J. (2015) 'Lumad 'bakwit school' at UP done deal – UP alumni', *GMA News Online*, 17 September. Available at:
<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/534981/lumad-bakwit-school-at-up-done-deal-up-alumni/story/>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).
- Mbembe, A. (2019) *Necropolitics*. North Carolina, Duke University Press.
- McDowell, L. (1997) 'The transformation of cultural geography.' In: Cloke, P. et al. (eds.) *Introducing human geographies*. London: Arnold, pp. 146-158.
- McGregor, D., Whitaker, S. and Sritharan, M. (2020). 'Indigenous environmental justice and sustainability.' *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 43, pp.35-40. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2020.01.007>
- Middleton, P. (2011) *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity*. New York: T&T Clark.
- Middleton, P. (2014) *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: T&T Clark.
- Mignolo, D. (2002) 'The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101(1), pp. 57-96. DOI: 10.1215/00382876-101-1-57
- Mignolo, D. (2007) 'Introduction: Coloniality of power and de-colonial thinking', *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3), pp. 155-167. DOI: 10.1080/09502380601162498
- Mignolo, D. and Walsh, E. (2018) 'The Invention of the *Human* and the Three Pillars of the Colonial Matrix of Power: Racism, Sexism, and Nature', in *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. NC: Duke University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11g9616>.

Mihlar, F. (2008) Voices that must be heard: minorities and indigenous people combating climate change. *Minority Rights International*. November. Available at: [mrg-brief-climatec.pdf \(minorityrights.org\)](http://mrg-brief-climatec.pdf (minorityrights.org)). (Accessed: 7 March 2024).

Mindanao Bishops Conference, (2015). 'Mindanao Bishop's Conference'. Mindanao.

Mitchell, B. (2017). *Faith Based Development: How Christian Organizations Can Make a Difference*. London: Orbis Books.

Moaje, M. (2021) 'Drop "lumad", use ethnic group names instead: NCIP', *Philippine News Agency*, 4 March. Available at: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1132620>.

Moisander, J. (2007) 'Motivational complexity of green consumerism', *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 31(4), pp. 404-409. DOI: 10.1111/j.1470-6431.2007.00586.x.

Mongaya, K.M. (2015) 'Whitewashing the killing of "lumad"', *Inquirer.net*, 30 September. Available at: <https://opinion.inquirer.net/88977/whitewashing-the-killing-of-lumad#ixzz82LCa7J1q> (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

Morales, C. (2023) 'The big discussion of today in our nation is the Charter Change' [Facebook] 15 March. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0xKCxjbojE6cDPqm7kePALXoT2kpiqAq8QRNso5hWvXbZPRF7dZCK2ULxg1MmJ4FGI&id=100009237467186. (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Morozov, V. and Pavlova, E. (2018) 'Indigeneity and subaltern subjectivity in decolonial discourses: a comparative study of Bolivia and Russia', *Journal of*

International Relations and Development, 21, pp. 689-716.

<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-016-0076-7>

Morrocco, R. (1973) 'Heritage of strife: The effects of colonialist "divide and rule" strategy upon the colonized peoples', *Science & Society*, 37(2), pp. 129-151.

Moss, C. (2012) *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions*. Yale University Press. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vkvg4>.

Moss, C. (2013) *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom*. New York: Harper Collins.

Moss, P. (2002) 'Taking on, thinking about, and doing feminist research in geography.' in P. Moss (ed), *Feminist geography in practice: Research and methods*.

Mounstephen, P.Rt.Rev. (2019) *BISHOP OF TRURO'S INDEPENDENT REVIEW FOR THE FOREIGN SECRETARY OF FCO SUPPORT FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS*. Available at: <https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

Muldoon, J., 1980. 'John Wyclif and the rights of the infidels: the Requerimiento re-examined', *The Americas*, 36(3), pp.301-316.

Nadeau, K. (2002) 'Peasant Resistance and Religious Protests in Early Philippine Society: Turning Friars Against the Grain', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41(75-85). <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5906.00101>

Nagar R, Geiger S. (2007) Reflexivity, positionality and identity in feminist fieldwork revisited. In A Tickell, E Sheppard, J Peck and T Barnes (eds), *Politics and practice in economic geography* (pp. 267-278). London: Sage.

National Aboriginal Health Organization (2012) 'Integrating traditional medicines into Western medical treatment', *National Aboriginal Health Organization*. Available at: https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/30603/1/2012_03_Fact-Sheet-traditional-medicine.pdf (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

NCCP (2017a) 'IFI Launches "FREE BISHOP CARLO MORALES MOVEMENT"', *National Council of Churches in the Philippines*, 14 May. Available at: <https://nccphilippines.org/2017/06/14/ifi-launches-free-bishop-carlo-morales-movement/>. (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

NCCP (2017b) 'The Ramento Project for Rights Defenders' statement on the 11th anniversary of the martyrdom of Obispo Maximo Alberto Ramento', *National Council of Churches in the Philippines*, 4 October. Available at: <https://nccphilippines.org/2017/10/04/fear-not/>. (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

NCCP (2019) 'Hands off our prophets', *National Council of Churches in the Philippines*, 12 March. Available at: <https://nccphilippines.org/2019/03/12/hands-off-our-prophets/>. (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

NCCP (2020), 'Two Lumad "Bakwit Schools" Shut Down in UCCP Davao Mission Center', *National Council of Churches in the Philippines*, 28 January. Available at: <https://nccphilippines.org/2020/01/28/two-lumad-bakwit-schools-shut-down-in-uccp-davao-mission-center/>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2023, 2022).

NCCP (2021) 'Statement of Repentance on 500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines'. 11 April. Available at: <https://nccphilippines.org/2021/04/11/statement-of-repentance-on-500-years-of-christianity-in-the-philippines/>. (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Niles, D.T. (1951) *Upon the Earth: The Mission of God and the Missionary Enterprise of the Churches*. London: McGraw-Hill.

Nongbri, B., (2013). *Before religion: A history of a modern concept*. Yale University Press.

Nirmal, A (1990) *A Reader in Dalit Theology*. Chennai: [Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute](#).

Norah, C. (2018) 'Slum Tourism: Representations and Realities', *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 16(2), pp. 113-130.

NTF-ELAC (2022) National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict [Facebook] 8 May. Available at

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=344403481125104&set=a.199097242322396>
(Accessed: 31 May 2023).

NTF-ELAC (2023) *Our Story* National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict [Facebook]. Available at: <https://www.ntfelcac.org/about> (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Ocampo, K.R., Salaverria, L.B., and Corrales, N. (2021) 'Duterte lifts 9-year ban on new mining deals', *Inquirer.net*, 16 April. Available at:

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1419780/duterte-lifts-9-year-ban-on-new-mining-deals>
(Accessed: 31 May 2023).

OHCHR (2020) *Situation of human rights in the Philippines: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at:

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/PH/Philippines-HRC44-AEV.pdf>. (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Open Bible (2023) Bible Verses about Fullness of Life. Available at: https://www.openbible.info/topics/fullness_of_life ((Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Oruka, O.H. (1990) 'Cultural Fundamentals in Philosophy', *Philosophy and Theology*, 5(1), pp. 19-37. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtheol19905113>

Paluga, M., and Ragragio, A. (2016). *Why do indigenous communities resort to voluntary evacuations?* A paper presented to the International Conference for People's Rights, Davao City, Philippines, 23-24 July 2016.

Paredes, O. (2013) *A Mountain of Difference: The Lumad in Early Colonial Mindanao*. Cornell University. Southeast Asia Program Publications.

Paredes, O. (2015) 'Indigenous vs. native: negotiating the place of Lumads in the Bangsamoro homeland', *Asian Ethnicity*. Routledge, 16(2), pp. 166–185. DOI: 10.1080/14631369.2015.1003690.

Paredes, O. (2016). Rivers of memory and oceans of difference in the Lumad world of Mindanao. *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and-National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 4(2), pp.329-349. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/tm.2015.28>

Paredes, O. (2019) 'Preserving "tradition": The business of indigeneity in the modern Philippine context', in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 86–106. DOI: 10.1017/S0022463419000055.

Paredes, O. (2022). Making Mindanao: place-making and people-making in the southern Philippines. *South East Asia Research*, 30(1), pp.3-8.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0967828X.2022.2027215>

Pariona, A. (2021) How Many Islands are There in the Philippines? WorldAtlas. Available at: <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/how-many-islands-are-in-the-philippines.html> (Accessed: 27 February 2023).

Pearl, M.A. (2018) 'Human rights, indigenous peoples, and the global climate crisis.' *Wake Forest L. Rev.*, 53, p.713.

Pedri-Spade, C. (2016) "'The Drum is Your Document' Decolonizing Research Through Anishinabe Song and Story,' *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 9(4), pp.385-406. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2016.9.4.385>.

Perez-Rubio, I.V.R. (2019) 'Mindanao as the Camp of the Philippines: Locating the Homo Sacer in *Subanons* and the Marawi Conflict'. Assignment for *Bachelor of Arts*, Ateneo de Manila University. Unpublished.

Phan, P.C. (2006) 'Method in liberation theologies', *Theological Studies*, 67(1), pp.40-63.DOI: 10.1177/004056390606700103.

Phelan, J. L. (1957) Some Ideological Aspects of the Conquest of the Philippines. *The Americas*, 13(3), 221–239. DOI: [org/10.2307/978945](https://doi.org/10.2307/978945).

Philippine News Agency (2021) 'Critical support from IPs gives soldiers edge in fight vs. insurgency', *Philippine News Agency*, 30 November. Available at: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1170854>. (Accessed: 1 March 2023).

Philippine Statistics Authority (n.d.) *Mining*. Available at: <https://psa.gov.ph/mining> (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Phillips, L., Kristiansen, M., Vehviläinen, M. and Gunnarsson, E. eds., 2013. *Knowledge and power in collaborative research: A reflexive approach*. New York: Routledge.

Pickerill, J. (2014) 'The timeliness of impact: Impact evaluation and struggles over resources in activist research', *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 13(2), pp. 278-287.

Pieris, A. (1988) *An Asian theology of liberation*. London: Orbis Books.

Pieris, A. (2004) 'Political Theologies in Asia', in Scott, P. and Cavanaugh, W.T. (eds) *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*. NJ: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. DOI:10.1002/9780470997048.

Pieris, A. (2010) 'Liberation-Hermeneutics in the Asian Church', *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*. 10(2), pp. 265-270.

Quijano, A. (2000) 'Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America', *International Sociology*, 15(2), pp. 215-232. DOI: 10.1177/0268580900015002005.

Quijano, A. (2007) 'Coloniality and modernity/rationality', *Cultural Studies*, 21(2–3), pp. 168–178. DOI: 10.1080/09502380601164353.

Quijano, A. (2010) 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality', in Moraña, M., Dussel, E.D. and Jáuregui, C.A. (eds.) *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*. North Carolina, Duke University Press.

Quijano, A. and Wallerstein, I., (1992). Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world. *International social science journal*, 44(4), pp.549-557.

Radford, C.L. (2019) '*My Story is an Opening to Another World*': poetic practical theology, lived experiences, and transformation. PhD thesis. University of Glasgow.

Reeves, C.L. (2010) 'A difficult negotiation: Fieldwork relations with gatekeepers', *Qualitative Research*, 10(3), pp. 315-331. DOI: 10.1177/1468794110366912.

Reyes, P.L. (2018) 'Claiming History: Memoirs of the Struggle against Ferdinand Marcos's Martial Law Regime in the Philippines', *Sojourn(Singapore)*, 33(2), pp. 457-498. DOI: 10.1355/sj33-2q.

Richardson, L. (2003) Poetic Representation of Interviews, in Gubrium, J.F. *Postmodern interviewing*. California: Sage Publications, , pp.187-201.

Riddell, J.K., Salamanca, A., Pepler, D.J., Cardinal, S. and McIvor, O. (2017). 'Laying the groundwork: A practical guide for ethical research with Indigenous communities', *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 8(2). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.18584/iipj.2017.8.2.6>.

Rodil, B.R., 1994. *The minoritization of the indigenous communities of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago*. Philippine Edition. Available at: file:///C:/Users/emmab/Downloads/zlib.pub_the-minoritization-of-indigenous-communities-of-mindanao-and-the-sulu-archipelago.pdf.

Rodríguez, R.R., (2017). *Christian martyrdom and political violence: a comparative theology with Judaism and Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roitenberg, D. (2021) 'Consent in ethnographic research: Reflections from sexualized violence research in South Africa', *Qualitative Research*, 21(6), pp. 814-828. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1468794120939672>.

Rose, G. (1997) 'Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics', *Progress in human geography*, 21(3), pp. 305-320. DOI: 10.1191/030913297673302122

Routledge, P. and Derickson, K.D. (2015) 'Situated solidarities and the practice of scholar-activism', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 33(3), pp. 391-407. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775815594308>.

Rowland, C. and Corner, M. (1990) *Liberating exegesis: The challenge of liberation theology to biblical studies*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

Ryder, C., Mackean, M., Coombs, J., Williams, H., Hunter, K., Holland, A.J.A., and Ivers, R.Q. (2020) 'Indigenous research methodology – weaving a research interface', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 23(3), pp. 255-267. DOI: 10.1080/13645579.2019.1669923.

Saffari, S. (2016) 'Can the Subaltern be Heard? Knowledge Production, Representation, and Responsibility in International Development', *Transcience*, 7(1), pp. 36-46.

Sands, J. (2018) 'Introducing Cardinal Cardijn's See–Judge–Act as an Interdisciplinary Method to Move Theory into Practice', *Religions*, 9(4), p. 129. DOI: 10.3390/rel9040129

- Saroglou, V. (2011) 'Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42(8), pp. 1320-1340. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022022111412267>.
- Save Our Schools (SOS) Network Cebu Chapter (2021) 'SOS Network Cebu condemns Mass Arrest in Bukidnon', *Save Our Schools Network*, 16 February. Available at: <https://saveourschoolsnetwork.wordpress.com/2021/02/16/sos-network-cebu-condemns-mass-arrest-in-bukidnon/>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2022).
- Savin-Baden, M. and Major, C.H. (2013) *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice*. London: Routledge.
- Schnarch, B. (2004). 'Ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP) or self-determination applied to research: A critical analysis of contemporary First Nations research and some options for First Nations communities', *International Journal of Indigenous Health*, 1(1), pp.80-95. Available at: https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/30539/1/OCAP_Critical_Analysis_2005.pdf.
- Schumacher, J. (1979). The Manila synodal tradition: A brief history. *Philippine Studies*, pp.285-348. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42632491>.
- Schumacher, J. (1984). Syncretism in Philippine Catholicism: Its Historical Causes. *Philippine Studies*, 32(3), pp. 251–272. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42632710>.
- Schumacher, J. (2003) 'The Early Filipino Clergy: 1698-1762', *Philippine Studies* 51(1), pp.7–62. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42633636>.

Schumacher, J. (2011) 'The Cavite Mutiny Toward a Definitive History', *Philippine Studies*, 59(1), pp. 55-81. Available at:

<https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.850111661832476>.

Scott, J.C. (1985) *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. London: Yale University Press.

Simbulan, R. G. (2016) 'Indigenous Communities' Resistance to Corporate Mining in the Philippines', *Peace Review*. Routledge, 28(1), pp. 29–37. DOI: 10.1080/10402659.2016.1130373.

Simons, J. L. (2021). Lumad Husay (indigenous conciliation). Decolonizing justice & re-storying culture in Mindanao, Philippines (Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy). University of Otago. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10523/12100>.

Smith, G.H. (2009) 'Mai i te Maramatanga, ki te Putanga Mai o te Tahuritanga: From Conscientization to Transformation' in Andrzejewski, J., Baltodano, M., and Symcox, L., (eds) *Social Justice, Peace, and Environmental Education*. NY: Routledge, pp.19-29 <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203879429>

Smith, L.T. (2006) Researching in the Margins Issues for Māori Researchers a Discussion Paper. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*. 2(1), pp. 4-27

Smith, L.T. (2012) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd edn. London: Zedd Books Ltd

- Snowber, C. (2012) 'Dancing a curriculum of hope: Cultivating passion as embodied inquiry', *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 28(2). Available at: <https://journal.jctonline.org/index.php/jct/article/view/369>.
- Sobrinho, J. (1994) *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical Theological Reading of the Jesus of Nazareth*. London: Bloomsbury Press.
- Sofoulis, Z. (2015). A Knowledge Ecology of Urban Australian Household Water Consumption. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14(3), 765–785. Retrieved from <https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/1232>.
- Song, C.S. (1999) *Third-eye theology: theology in formation in Asian settings*. London: Orbis Books.
- Spivak, G.C. (1988) 'Can the subaltern speak?'. In: Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L. (eds.) *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 271-313.
- Stahnke, T., and Martin, P. (1998) *Basic Religion and Human Rights Document*. Center for the Study of Human Rights.
- Stewart, F. (2005) 'Horizontal Inequalities: A Neglected Dimension of Development', in Atkinson, A.B., Basu, K., Bhagwati, J., North, D.C., Rodrik, D., Stewart, F., Stiglitz, J.E. and Williamson, J.G., 2005. *Wider perspectives on global development*. London: Pgrave Macmillan.
- Storer, E. (2021) 'Digital divides and the "datafication" of civil society during Covid-19', *Globalizations*, 18(7), pp. 1143-1159. DOI: 10.1080/14747731.2021.1976379.

Strangio, S. (2022) 'Court Denies Philippine Government Attempt to Declare Communist Party a 'Terrorist' Group', *The Diplomat*, 23 September. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2022/09/court-denies-philippine-government-attempt-to-declare-communist-party-a-terrorist-group/> (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Sugirtharajah, R.S. (2011) *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, colonial and postcolonial encounters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Suzuki, D., and Hanington, I. (2012) *Everything Under the Sun: Toward a Brighter Future on a Small Blue Planet*. Vancouver: Greystone Books.

Sy, J.M.C. (2021) Lumad and Bakwit Schools amid the Pandemic Report from Teachers, Students, and Parents. *Marginalized Societies and the State in the Time of a Pandemic The Philippine Case*, p.65.

Sy, J.M.C. (2022a). "It Takes a Movement to Build Schools": A Historical and Pedagogical Sketch of the Lumad Schools vis-à-vis the Lumad Social Movement. *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*. 70. 423-464. Sy, J.M.C. (2022b) Costs, Curricula, and Conflicts: Challenges and Resilience of Educators in Lumad Schools. Yukon University.

Sy, J.M.C. (2022c) Indigenizing Agricultural Education in Mindanao Lumad Schools. *Journal of Management and Development Studies*, 11(1), pp. 172-191.

Sy, J.M.C. (2022). 'Till the land, defend the land: reflections on the critical place-based pedagogy of the Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development, Surigao del Sur', *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 18(3), pp. 402–411. <https://doi.org/10.1177/11771801221115925>.

Sy, J.M.C., (2023). 'Indigenous Education as Contentious Politics: Lumad Schools in the Face of Duterte's Authoritarianism.' In: Regletto Aldrich Imbong. *Authoritarian Disaster*. Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

Tebtebba Foundation (2014) Understanding the Lumad: A Closer Look at a Misunderstood Culture. Pasig City: Department of Education, Indigenous People's Office.

The Guardian (2017) 'Philippines: Duterte threatens to bomb indigenous schools', *The Guardian*, 26 July, Available at:
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/26/philippines-duterte-threatens-to-bomb-indigenous-schools>. (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

The Guardian (2018) 'Philippines: Rodrigo Duterte orders soldiers to shoot female rebels 'in the vagina'', *The Guardian*, 13 Feb. Available at:
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/13/philippines-rodrigo-duterte-orders-soldiers-to-shoot-female-rebels-in-the-vagina>. (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Tigno, J.V. (2006). Migration and Violent Conflict in Mindanao. *Population Review* 45(1), <https://doi.org/10.1353/prv.2006.0013>.

Timbang, R. (2018) JUSTICE FOR BP ALBERTO RAMENTO AND FOR ALL VICTIMS OF EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS! Available at:
<https://www.facebook.com/profile/100069575861484/search/?q=JUSTICE%20FOR%20BP%20ALBERTO%20RAMENTO%20AND%20FOR%20ALL%20VICTIMS%20OF%20EXTRA-JUDICIAL%20KILLINGS!%20>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2022).

Timbang, R. (2020) Photo of a Statement on the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020

[Facebook]. Available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=3005128809524732&set=pcb.3004290126275267>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2022).

Timbang, R. (2021) RELEASE PASTOR BENJIE GOMEZ FROM DETENTION! 11

June. Available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile/100069575861484/search/?q=Pastor%20Gomez%20>2 (Accessed: 30 June, 2022).

Timbang, R. (2023) "'WE THANK THE 2023 GENERAL ASSEMBLY for approving the recommendation to mandate all local churches to institutionalize the observance of the Commemoration of All IFI Martyrs and Confessors every November 8 of the year.'" (OM Rhee)' [Facebook]. Available:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=268694425531645&set=a.197041789363576>. (Accessed: 30 June, 2022).

Toft, M.D., Philpott, D. and Shah, T.S. (2018) *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Torres, A.B. (2019) 'Politics of Recognition and Indigenous Peoples' Rights: The Case of Lumad Schools in Mindanao, Philippines', *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 10(4), pp. 1-22. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.18584/iipj.2019.10.4.3>.

Trainor, S.F., Stern, E. and Subbio, T. (2018) 'How can academics and NGOs work together to influence policy?', Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/dfid-research->

outputs/how-can-academics-and-ngos-work-together-to-influence-policy (Accessed: 30 June, 2022).

UCA News (1994) 'Tributes paid to slain rebel priest in Mindanao and in Manila', *UCA News*, 22 September. Available at: https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post_name=/1994/09/22/tributes-paid-to-slain-rebel-priest-in-mindanao-and-in-manila&post_id=46011 (Accessed: 27 February 2023).

UN (1948) *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

United Nations Climate Change (2021) 'Indigenous Peoples Increasingly Engaging in Climate Action', *United Nations Climate Change*, 9 August. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/news/indigenous-peoples-increasingly-engaging-in-climate-action>.

UNPFII, (2021) Report on the twenty-fourth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. *United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*. Economic and Social Council Official Records, Supplement No. 23. United Nations.

UNEP (2020) Indigenous Peoples and the Nature they Protect. *United Nations Environmental Programme*. 8 June. Available at: [Indigenous Peoples and the nature they protect \(unep.org\)](#). (Accessed: 7 May 2024).

Valentine G. (2015) Theorizing Multiculturalism and Diversity: The Implications of Intersectionality. In: Matejskova T., Antonsich M. (eds) *Governing through Diversity. Global Diversities*. London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Venable, J., Sato, B. A., Duca, J. D., and Sage, F. (2016). *Decolonizing Our Own Stories: A Project of the Student Storytellers Indigenizing the Academy (SSITA)*

Group. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 9(3), 341–362.

<https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2016.9.3.341>.

Veronelli, G.A. (2015) 'Decolonial thought and the biblical text: Subaltern readings from Latin America', *HTS Theological Studies*, 71(2), pp.1-5. DOI: 10.4102/hts.v71i2.2951.

Viatori, M. and Ushigua, G. (2007) 'Speaking sovereignty: Indigenous languages and self-determination', *Wicazo Sa Review*, 22(2), pp. 7-21. DOI: 10.1353/wic.2007.0013.

Visweswaran, K. (1994) *Fictions of feminist ethnography*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Walter D. Mignolo (2018) 'Decoloniality and Phenomenology: The Geopolitics of Knowing and Epistemic/Ontological Colonial Differences', *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 32 (3): 360–387. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.32.3.0360>

Weber, F.J. (1961) 'Real Patronato de Indias', *The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly*, 43(2), pp. 215-219. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41169521>.

Wee, S.L. (2022) 'Philippines Orders Rappler to Shut Down', *The New York Times*, 29 June. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/29/world/asia/philippines-rappler-shutdown.html> (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

Weiss, C. H. (1982). Policy Research in the Context of Diffuse Decision Making. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 53(6), 619–639. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1981522>

Whittemore, L.B. (1961). *Struggle for Freedom: The History of the Philippine Independent Church*. Greenwich: S.P.C.K.

Willigen, M.V. (2018) *Applied anthropology: An introduction*. 6th edn. London: Routledge.

Wilshire, B. (2006) 'On the very idea of "a worldview" and "of alternative worldviews"', in Jacobs, D.T. (eds) *Unlearning the Language of Conquest*. Texas: University of Texas Press. <https://doi.org/10.7560/706545>.

Wilson, S. (2008) *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

World Population Review (2023) 'Religion by Country 2023', Available at: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/religion-by-country> (Accessed: 31 May 2023).

- Yambao, C.M.K., Wright, S., Theriault, N. and Castillo, R.C.A., (2022). "I am the land and I am their witness": placemaking amid displacement among Lumads in the Philippines. *Critical Asian Studies*, 54(2), pp.259-281.DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2022.2059771>

Yambao, C.M.K., Wright, S., Theriault, N. and Castillo, R.C.A. (2022). "I am the land and I am their witness": placemaking amid displacement among Lumads in the Philippines. *Critical Asian Studies*, 54(2), pp.259-281. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2022.2059771>

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

25 September 2020



Appendix 2

11 November 2020

Mga Teroristang ayaw pang aminin ang katutuhanan na sila ay kulay pula



*Terrorists who
don't want to
admit the fact
that they are red*