



Title:

LAUDATO SI': CLAIMING THE
CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE
SUBANEN PEOPLE IN THE
MOUNT MALINDANG
RANGES



ABSTRACT

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This research is an attempt to present the ecological status of the Philippines and how can the school collaborate with the local people specially the Indigenous people help in responding to the call of Pope Francis on *Laudato Si'* 145: Many intensive forms of environmental exploitation and degradation not only exhaust the resources which provides local communities with their livelihood, but also undo the social structures which, for a long time, shaped cultural identity and their sense of the meaning of life and community.

ABSTRACT

The disappearance of a culture can be just as serious, or even more serious, than the disappearance of a species of plant or animal. The imposition of a dominant lifestyle linked to a single form of production can be just as harmful as the altering of ecosystems.

Laudato Si' 146: In this sense, it is essential to show special care for Indigenous communities and their cultural traditions.



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Forest Depletion

- In 1940, the Philippines had over 20 million hectares of forest cover. By 1975, this had shrunk to 10 million hectares due to extensive logging and timber concessions post-independence in 1946 (Sicat, 2015).
- Today, only 23.3% of the Philippines' land area is forested, far below the ecologically healthy level of 54% (IBON, 2020).

INTRODUCTION

Mining and Extractive Activities:

- The Philippine Mining Act of 1995 has worsened the exploitation of mineral resources, causing significant environmental damage and impacting livelihoods and national sovereignty (IBON, 2020).

Climate Vulnerability:

- The Philippines is the 5th most affected country by climate disasters from 1998 to 2017 (Climate Risk Index 2019).

INTRODUCTION

Impact on Indigenous Communities:

- The Subanens, an ethnic group in Western Mindanao, are particularly affected by deforestation. As of 2022, only 21% of Mindanao is forested, making it highly vulnerable to ecological calamities (Gangoso, 2023; Raluto, 2022).
- Mount Malindang, part of the Malindang Range Natural Park in Mindanao, has seen drastic forest reduction. The remaining forest is mainly montane, with only 2.5% of lowland forest left (IBON, 2020).

Mt. Malindang



Source: <https://triptheislands.com/off-the-beaten-path/the-mount-malindang-national-park-natures-treasure-trove/> **The Mount Malindang National Park: Nature's Treasure Trove**



Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qp82inBteiY&ab_channel=BiodiversityManagementBureau **Our Fragile Earth S2E9 Mt. Malindang Range Natural Park and Pasonanca Natural Park**

INTRODUCTION

Call to Action:

- Immediate and concerted efforts are necessary to address environmental degradation, enforce sustainable practices, and protect the rights, livelihoods, and cultural identities of affected communities, particularly the Subanens.



ISSUES FACING THE SUBANENS

THE ISSUE

Economic Exploitation: (Sebrero, 2023)

- **Mining and Logging:** Granting of mining and logging to local and foreign corporations has exploited natural resources at the expense of the Subanens' land and livelihood.
- **Cultural Erosion:** (Sebrero, 2023)

Loss of Cultural Identity: Younger generations are increasingly disconnected from their heritage, leading to a potential loss of Subanen identity.

Color of the Subanen





STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

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With the massive ecological destruction, the Subanens are also losing their cultural identity since they have to prioritize their survival than their culture. During the initial visit and conversation with some of the families and leaders known as "timuay", there is a deep longing to claim their cultural identity again.

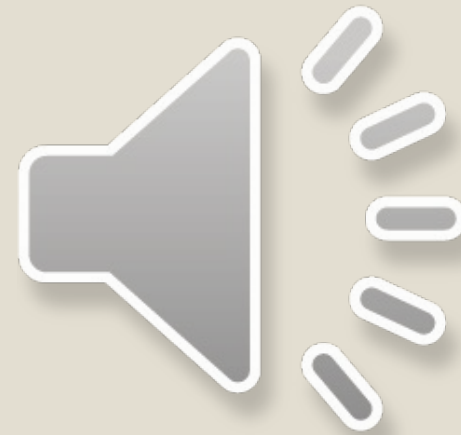


RESEARCH AIM

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This research aims to explore initiatives led by Holy Cross High School of Kolambugan, Inc. that empower the Subanen people to reclaim their cultural identity. It is anticipated that this study will provide practical examples of how we can contribute, in small but meaningful ways, to support Indigenous communities.

RESEARCH AIM





METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this research involves several key steps. A **Qualitative Research** establishing connections with the local government, Indigenous leaders, parish priests, and the military (this is the first and foremost since the place is highly militarized).

METHODOLOGY

Following this, conducting interviews and gathering oral histories will provide valuable insights into the cultural identity, history and ecological knowledge of Mount Malindang. Finally, a collaborative approach will be employed throughout the research process to ensure that the locals knowledge are included and respected.

METHODOLOGY: AREA OF STUDY


The Subanen focused in this study are residents of **Sitio Tonggo of Tudela, Misamis Occidental**. Information was gathered through visits and interviews with the Subanen people, who originally came from various locations across the Mindanao Peninsula, typically near water sources.

METHODOLOGY: AREA OF STUDY

Due to logging activities in Mount Malindang, they frequently relocated to follow deforested areas, where they practiced farming. They cultivated root crops, vegetables, and corn, selling some produce while consuming the rest. This nomadic lifestyle continued for many years until logging ceased due to severe deforestation.

Interview with the Subanens





DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

Holy Cross High School through the support of Sisters of Mercy Ministry Fund Grant tried to help a group of Subanen improve their livelihood. The Sisters of Mercy through the initiative of the late Sr. Socorro Largo, RSM converted a barren area into a forest. It is about 17 acres. This is where the project is located.



Area Facing our Property

Reforested Area of the Sisters of Mercy



Reforested Area of the Sisters of Mercy



DISCUSSION

Sister Elva de Castro, the Campus Minister of Holy Cross High School and Mr. Jonel Baba accompanied them in this project. There are thirty (30) participants and they are divided into four groups. One group is to focus on Organic Agriculture, another group on making trails within the forest, another will focus on food processing and marketing and one group will focus on education.

“Maisan” or Cornfield



“Galingan ug Mais” or Corn Mill made of Stone

DISCUSSION

The process in this project helped them embrace their culture. They used their own language when they talk to one another. They helped in the planning and in the decision making. They also apply their cultural practice of having ritual for important activities. Their spiritual leader the “Timuay” or could also be a “Sorohano” will lead the ritual.



RITUALS AND LANGUAGES

Table 2. Different rituals performed by the Subanen.

Ritual	Description
'Buklog'	It is a week-long celebration of the Subanen as a thanksgiving to their good harvest.
'Samaya'	It is a ritual for thanksgiving (as general).
'Pangamo'	It is also a ritual for thanksgiving performed after recovering from an illness
'Palunto'	It is a ritual for remembering the dead and to leading them the way to heaven.
'Guwayan'	It is a ritual performed for all the dead relatives of a certain family.
'Gbla-i (bla-i)'	It is a union between man and woman. The community will celebrate it together with the couple's family. A dance called 'Pangalay' is also performed only by the couple during the ceremony.
'Kanubata' (Baptismal)	It is usually scheduled at the time of infancy of the child but it is also being performed for grown-up members especially in religious conversions.
'Magbinukid'	It is a ritual performed to stop the coming natural disaster.
'Kanobiton'	It is a ritual performed when there is drought.
'Nuglupa'	It is a ritual asking permission to cut down trees before 'Peles' (the process of cutting down trees for a certain celebration) is being done.

Elmedulan, A.,
Jr., & Villanueva,
H. (2017)

SUBANEN DIALECT SAMPLES (MANGANGOT, N.D.)

Sahop ri Pamilya (Members of the Family)

SUBANEN SOUTHERN	SUBANEN CENTRAL	FILIPINO	ENGLISH
ama	amay	tatay	father
ina	inay	nanay	mother
phated" dlibun/Dla'-ih	manong	kapatid	brother/sister
manong/manang	manang	kuya / ate	older brother/sister
Apo dlibun	lola	lola	grandmother
Apo dla'ih	lolo	lolo	grandfather
yoy	dadi	tiyo	uncle
anti	mami	tiya	aunt
Dhe'lan	katagsa	pinsan	cousin
gipag	bayaw na bai	hipag	sister-in-law
bhilas	bayaw na mama	bayaw	brother-in-law
phenugangan dla-ih	ugangan na mama	biyanang lalake	father-in-law
phenugangan dlibun	ugangan na bai	biyanang babae	mother-in-law
gmanak dla-ih	gamangken na mama	pamangking lalake	nephew
gmanak dlibun	gumangken na bai	pamangking babae	niece

“Aba aba” – a life story telling



DISCUSSION

When the decision was made by the group to start clearing the area for making a pathway, a ritual was made. According to the “sorohano” he spoke to the other “creatures” living in the area asking permission to work there. He told all of us who were present that we had the permission as long as it is for the good of the place and for everyone. No bad words allowed.



CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

They felt happy we have this project. They have the chance to speak their own language with one another as they work together. They are able to practice **“Hunglos or Alayon”**, which is a collaborative work. They felt empowered and respected. They are inspired to teach their children to speak their language which they are losing in the formal schools. At the end of their work, food packs are given to them which include rice, the most valued by everyone.

CONCLUSION

It is also challenging for me and my partners in this project. We really need the virtue of humility since there are many beliefs and practices they have that are very different from us. We need to be open and learn from them. There is a need of constant dialogue; the need to really listen to them. There is also the need for patience. It is truly stepping out of our comfort zones. They helped us experience compassion, hope and creativity.

CONCLUSION

Their greatest desire is for their culture to be taught to their children, ensuring the continuation of their practices. Their cultural dances, rich with meaning, need to be understood and not just performed. They also recognize the need for a Subanen language teacher in schools to prevent their language from being forgotten.

CONCLUSION

Working on this project really gave me a sense of fulfillment since it has been my heart's desire to work for the environment as well as the Indigenous people who are continuously displaced. To be and environmentalist also calls for the protection and really help them. I felt privileged to work with them on this project.

CONCLUSION

Their simplicity, honesty and being hard working deepens my commitment on the fourth vow of the sisters of Mercy: to serve the poor, the sick and the uneducated. I felt my relationship with them helped me to be more rooted in my Mercy mission and with joy. The Subanen are the poorest of the poor in our society. Pope Francis' call to take care of them rings loudly in my heart.



THANK YOU