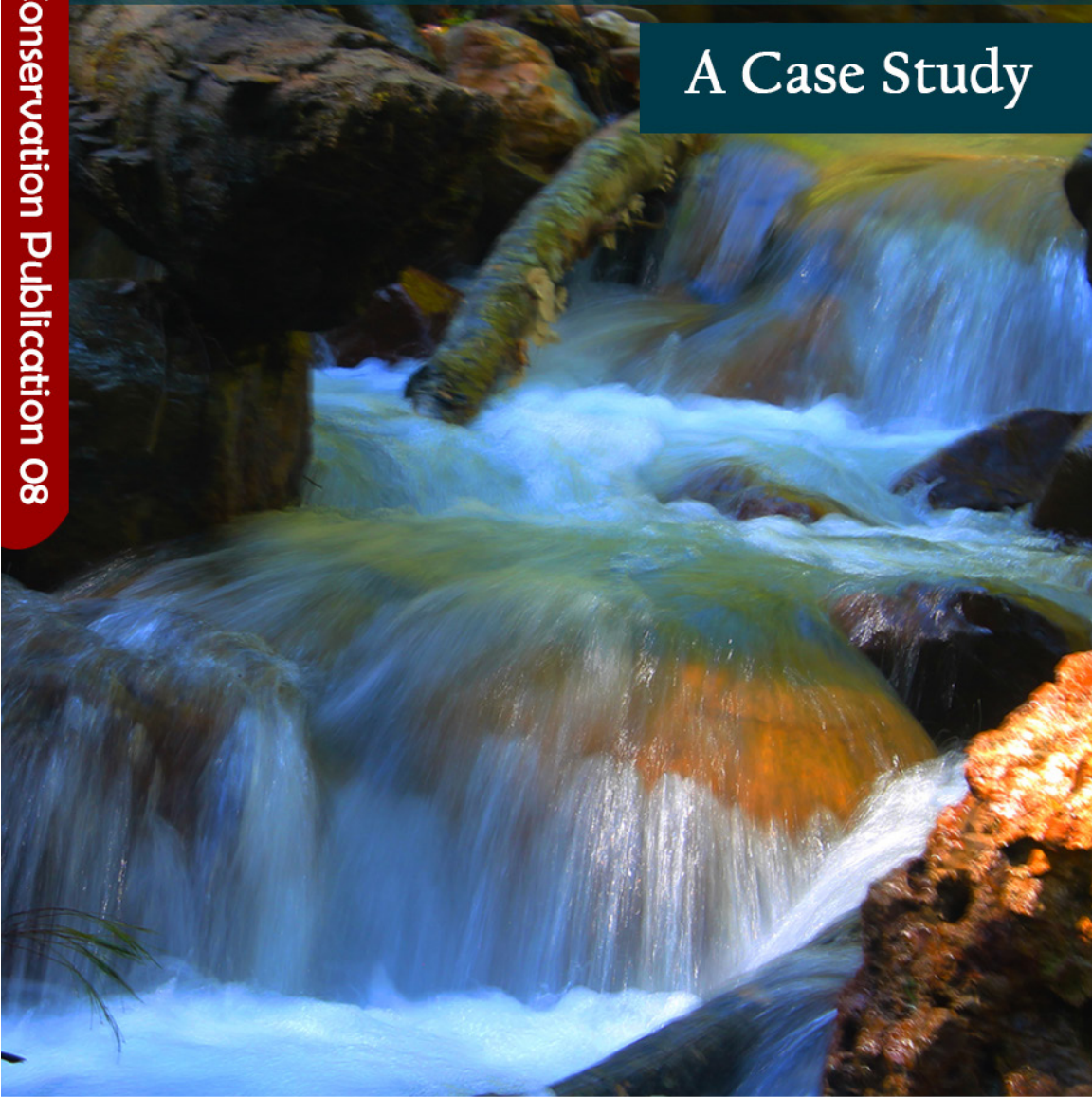


# Indigenous Resource Governance Systems

## Obo Monovu of Magpet

A Case Study




**Indigenous Resource  
Governance Systems  
Obo Monuvu of  
Magpet, North Cotabato**

**A Case Study**

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**W**hen talking about governance, we generally refer to how a government creates, implements, and oversees policies and legislations over its constituents. Governance often refers to the institutions that create spaces and guidelines for individual actions. And from a simplified perspective, governance is about how people organize themselves and undergo decision-making processes as a group (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2011).

Understanding governance is understanding how members of various groups or communities come up with and carry out decisions that influence the ways they live. And to realize how other groups may or may not influence each other's decisions is to understand the types of governance at work. Mikkel Berg-Nordlie divided the modes of governance into hierarchical, market, and network governance. The hierarchical mode of governance is when state structures exclusively control the decision-making processes. The market mode relies on a free interaction between market-based actors. And lastly, network governance is about the active involvement of civil society groups or private business players in policy formation (Berg-Nordlie 2015).



## STATE GOVERNANCE OVER RESOURCES

**F**or many years, international environmental agreements were made under the assumption that nation-states are legitimate entities with the capacity and willingness to manage all the resources found within their territories (Peluso, 1993). The assumption has inadvertently reinforced the legitimacy of states to exercise control not just over resources but also over peoples living within the states' established territorial boundaries. That, in turn, has contributed to further disenfranchisement and marginalization of indigenous communities with traditional claims over resources (Peluso, 1993). Apart from that, the initial intent to preserve and conserve threatened species and environments also struggled against conflicting claims over resource management.

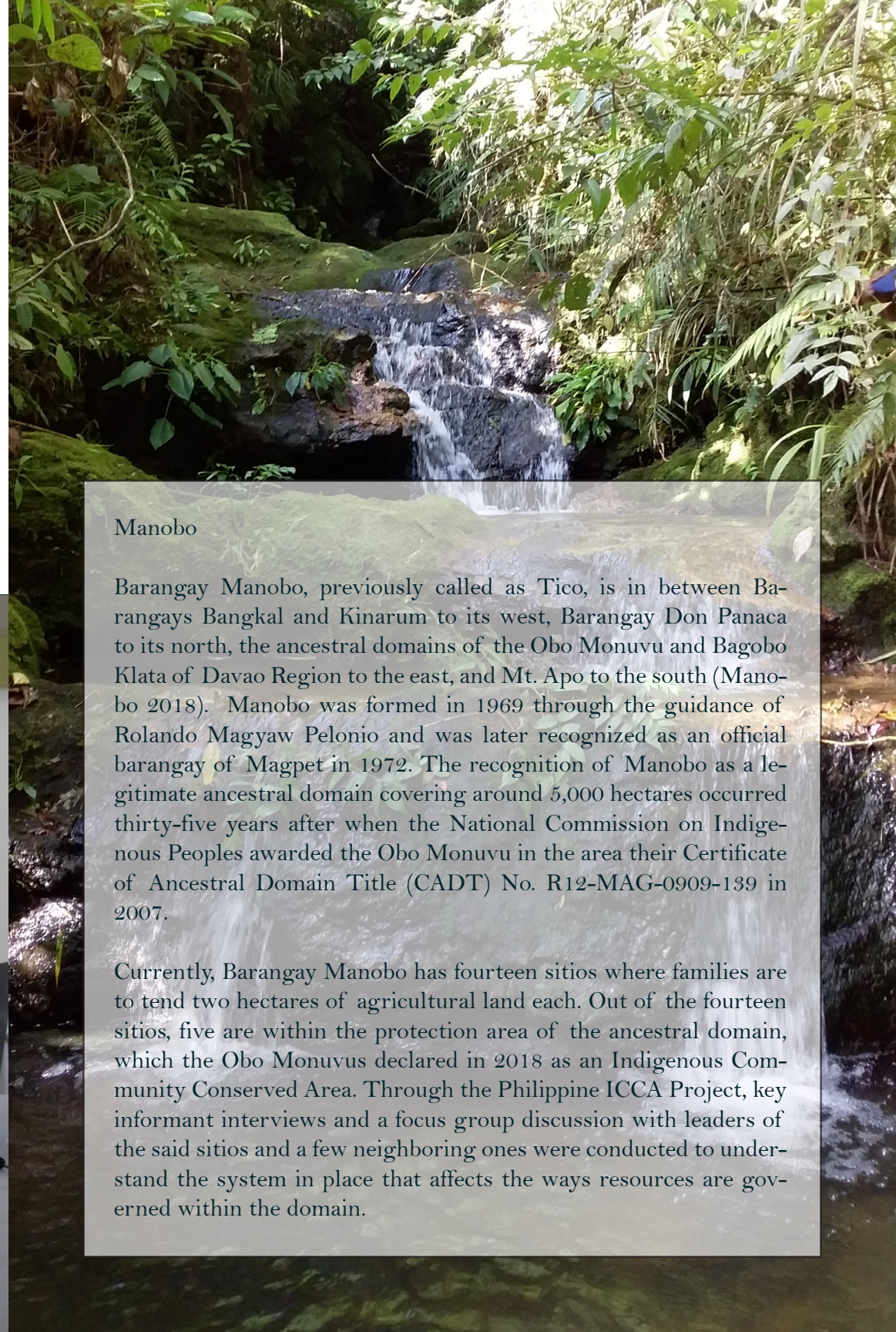
There are also instances when states have initiated 'development' efforts along with the implementation of their resource management programs. Illustrations of the protection of elephants in Kenya as well as the forests in Java were drawn in Nancy Lee Peluso's classic article on state resource control politics. There we see not just a picture of development alongside resource management of the state but also descriptions of how disregarding local political ecology and indigenous resource use can lead to ineffective conservation (Peluso, 1993).

When advocates and states saw the need to involve communities in natural resource management and conservation, there arose an image of a unified community that uses a set of local rules and norms (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999). However, particularly because of a homogenic view on communities, some conservation approaches failed despite a supposed collaboration between the state and its peoples. In some cases, states exercised their legitimacy through a so-called "top-down territorialization" that they implement within community-based conservation programs where communal landscapes transform into exclusive conservation territories (Bluwstein & Lund, 2018). Territorialization or the means to implement projects that make use of territorial strategies in order to control spaces or territory, often to govern the movements of people and resources within that space, has been present in environment-development discourses (Bassett and Gautier 2014) all over the globe and particularly in developing countries.



To improve the efficacy of conservation initiatives, there is a need to understand social processes like decision-making and management and their role in social phenomena such as governance, cultures, and worldview (Bennett, et al., 2017). In time, international organizations that focus on protecting the environment and improving the management over it developed a growing commitment to promote programs that support dialogues with various stakeholders particularly indigenous communities who maintain and exercise their customary rights over their ancestral domains (Walter & Hamilton, 2014).

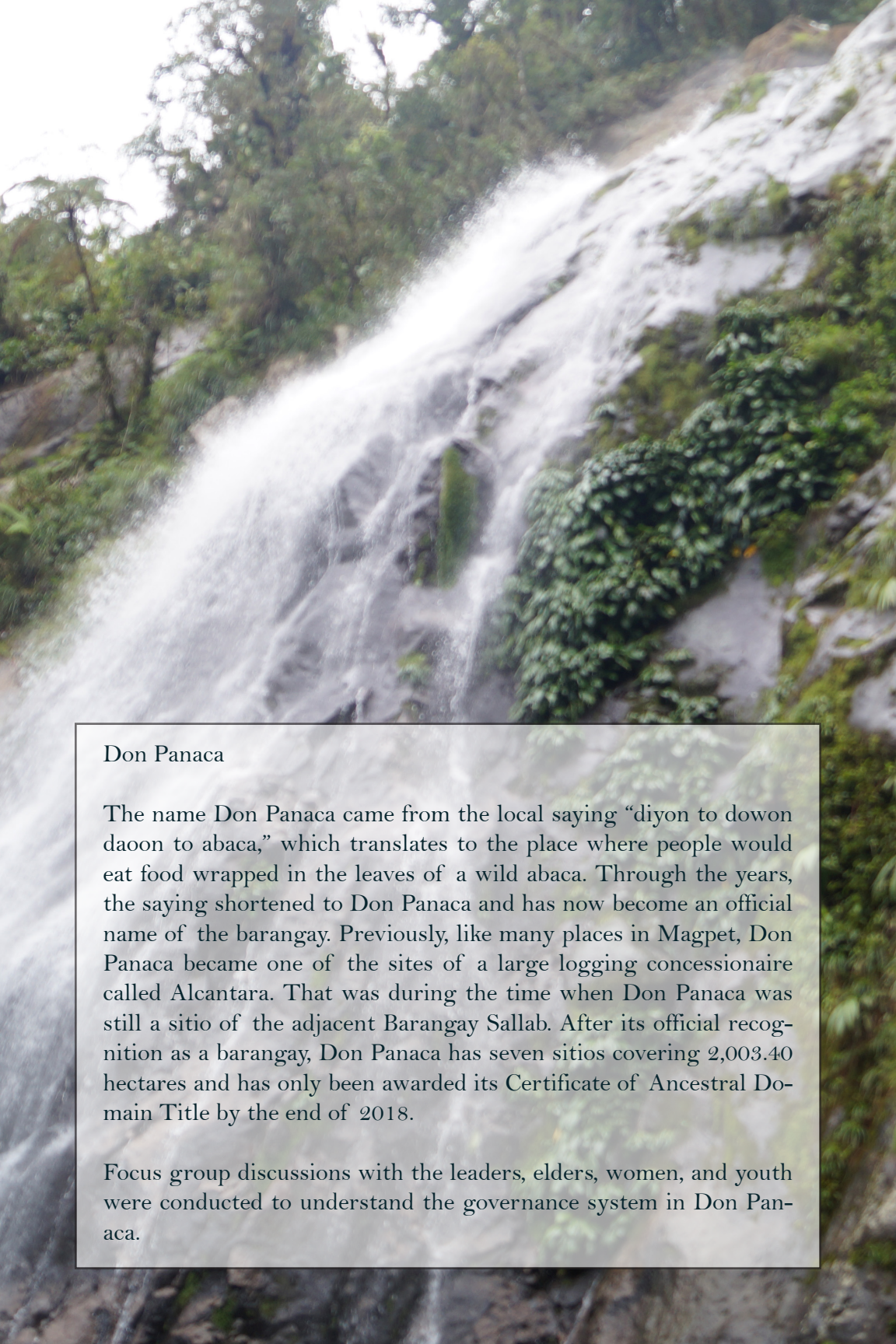
In this study, we will look at how three Obo Monuvu-dominated barangays in the Municipality of Magpet come up with decisions that affect their ways of living – from movement within the areas, livelihood, and land access, use, and ownership. Though situated alongside each other, we will see how their modes of governance particularly on resource use differ depending on how the state has integrated itself into the everyday lives of today's indigenous peoples.



### Manobo

Barangay Manobo, previously called as Tico, is in between Barangays Bangkal and Kinarum to its west, Barangay Don Panaca to its north, the ancestral domains of the Obo Monuvu and Bagobo Klata of Davao Region to the east, and Mt. Apo to the south (Manobo 2018). Manobo was formed in 1969 through the guidance of Rolando Magyaw Pelonio and was later recognized as an official barangay of Magpet in 1972. The recognition of Manobo as a legitimate ancestral domain covering around 5,000 hectares occurred thirty-five years after when the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples awarded the Obo Monuvu in the area their Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) No. R12-MAG-0909-139 in 2007.

Currently, Barangay Manobo has fourteen sitios where families are to tend two hectares of agricultural land each. Out of the fourteen sitios, five are within the protection area of the ancestral domain, which the Obo Monuvus declared in 2018 as an Indigenous Community Conserved Area. Through the Philippine ICCA Project, key informant interviews and a focus group discussion with leaders of the said sitios and a few neighboring ones were conducted to understand the system in place that affects the ways resources are governed within the domain.



### Don Panaca

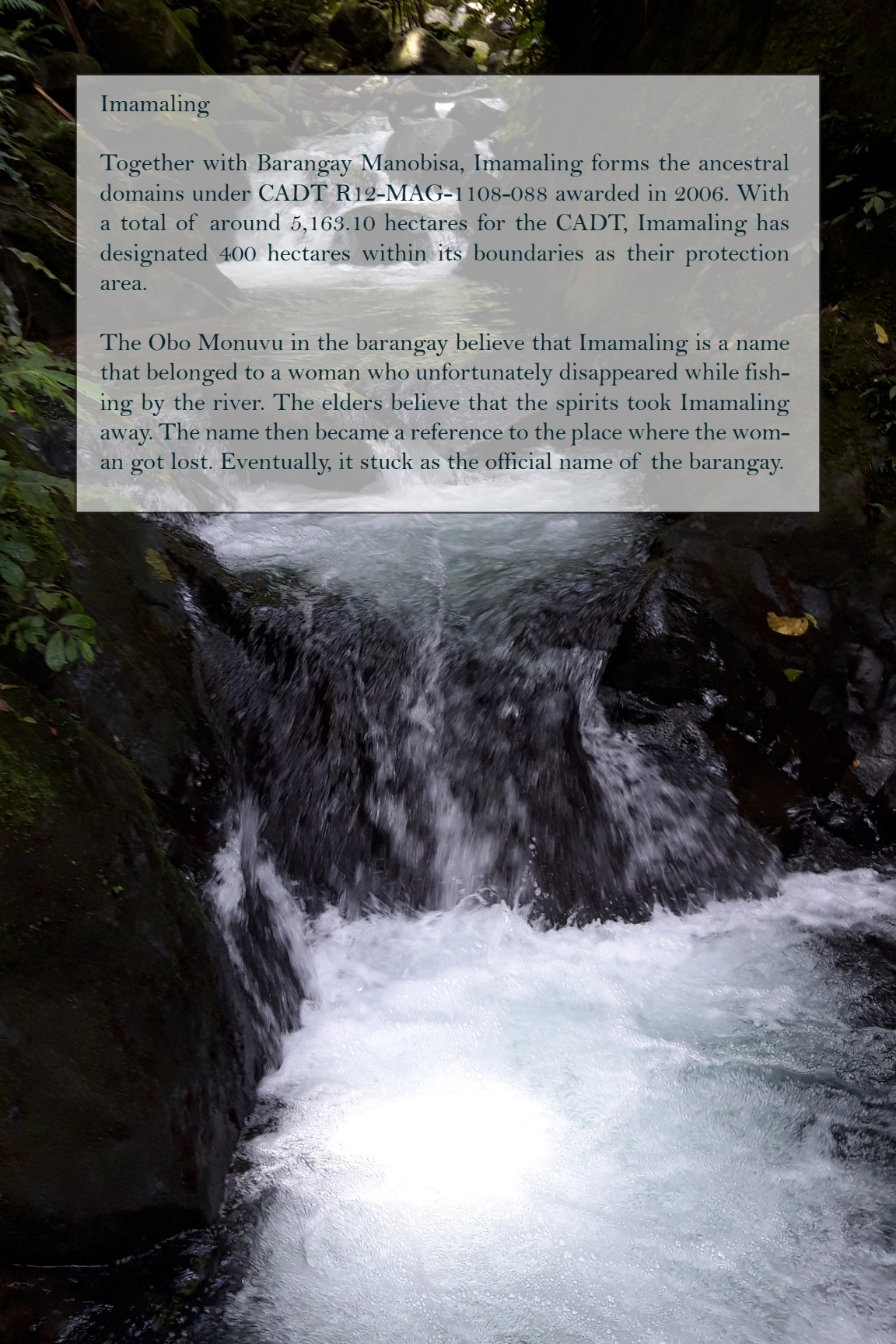
The name Don Panaca came from the local saying “diyong to down daon to abaca,” which translates to the place where people would eat food wrapped in the leaves of a wild abaca. Through the years, the saying shortened to Don Panaca and has now become an official name of the barangay. Previously, like many places in Magpet, Don Panaca became one of the sites of a large logging concessionaire called Alcantara. That was during the time when Don Panaca was still a sitio of the adjacent Barangay Sallab. After its official recognition as a barangay, Don Panaca has seven sitios covering 2,003.40 hectares and has only been awarded its Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title by the end of 2018.

Focus group discussions with the leaders, elders, women, and youth were conducted to understand the governance system in Don Panaca.

### Imamaling

Together with Barangay Manobisa, Imamaling forms the ancestral domains under CADT R12-MAG-1108-088 awarded in 2006. With a total of around 5,163.10 hectares for the CADT, Imamaling has designated 400 hectares within its boundaries as their protection area.

The Obo Monuvu in the barangay believe that Imamaling is a name that belonged to a woman who unfortunately disappeared while fishing by the river. The elders believe that the spirits took Imamaling away. The name then became a reference to the place where the woman got lost. Eventually, it stuck as the official name of the barangay.





## HISTORY AND MOVEMENTS

### Manobo

Prior to the recognition of Manobo as a barangay, logging concessionaires have already entered the area. However, parts of then Tico remained intact with just a small number of Obo Monuvu population. Commonly mentioned in interviews in the sitios as well as in the neighboring communities is the role that Rolando Pelonio, Sr. played in the development of Tico into the barangay that it is now.

Unlike the often state-driven territorialization that the literature focuses on in general, we must remember that the production of territories can come from several players and various spaces (Bassett and Gautier 2014). Indigenous peoples have for years been creating territories according to their traditional governance systems and practices. As we can see in the case of the Obo Monuvu in Manobo, there are various factors that affect their movements and eventual space-making.

Around the time of rapid concession, Datu Aman Lino fled to Sitio Mol'lossu in Tico to avoid a criminal case against him. There, he lived with his wife until such a time when a young Rolando Pelonio, Sr. arrived at their house unexpectedly. The young man had cuts and was covered in dirt with flies buzzing around him. Datu Aman Lino decided against killing the young man when he introduced himself as Rolando Pelonio who had no recollection whatsoever of what happened to him except that he is from Mt. Apo. When Datu Aman Lino and his wife began providing food and shelter to Rolando Pelonio, other Obo Monuvu from the surrounding areas heard the news of a young man from Mt. Apo and gathered together to live in what is now known as Manobo.

There is a certain reverence for Rolando Pelonio, Sr. of Mt. Apo as the Obo Monuvu believe he was sent by Manama to guide them. After being baptized and adopted not just by the couple but by the community of Obo Monuvu in Manobo, Rolando Pelonio then became a Datu who helped the people arrive at decisions that would benefit them. People believe he had a gift of prophecy and could tell the good and bad that would befall the community. From then on, they listened to Datu Rolando Pelonio, who later became Chairman of the Barangay.

Barangay Chairman Rolando Pelonio then designated residential and agricultural areas as well as places deemed to be sacred and expanses where people could continue their traditional hunting practices. It was during his term that the fourteen sitios of Manobo came to be and people settled. In the years that followed, people moved about the barangay due to cultural beliefs, barangay resolutions, insurgency conflicts, and capitalist institutions.

In one sitio called Pantaron, young people were previously not allowed to set foot in it. There was a belief that the place is sacred and can only be entered by middle aged people or the elderly. It was only in 2004 when the youth could transfer and live in the sitio. In 2005, the influx of youth and the settling of families remained especially when a change in the sitio leader occurred.

In Elib, its people had a 25-year abaca contract with an attorney which ended last 2015. People also evacuated from the area due to an unfortunate encounter with the military. It was back in 1974 when several soldiers decided it would be entertaining to aim their guns at IPs who were running away from the scene. One of the lumad residents of Elib was shot on his arm, which had to be amputated eventually.



Armed conflict encounters also occurred in another sitio, namely Kisimbit. There, the residents were caught in between insurgency and counter-insurgency operations by the New People's Army and the government forces respectively. Sitio Leader Manuel Serrano Bayoc, Sr. recalled that the encounters happened in 1987, 1989, 2014, and 2016. In each instance, people who lived in Sitio Kisimbit evacuated and stayed in the población. The latest armed conflict occurred in January 10, 2016 and since then most residents have not returned to the sitio until the time of interview in October 2017.

Sitio Dal'lag also faced a similar situation when back in 1977, a war ensued between the NPA and the Government. Since then, most residents in the area did not return to Dal'lag according to sub kapitan Omeles A. Agod. Insurgency conflicts in the sitio became common then since it was already at the boundary of Davao Region and Magpet, with Kol'lelan or Mt. Talomo just beside it.

Contrary to the experiences in Kisimbit and Dal'lag, it was in Mahitang that Barangay Chairman Rolando Pelonio, Sr. asked sitio leader Arsenio Sicao to relocate. That was back in 1971, just two years after the establishment of Manobo as a barangay. The decision to have people live in Mahitang was likely due to the absence of armed conflicts in the sitio. However, despite a relatively peaceful situation, only six households were set up in the sitio as most people established farmlands instead of residential plots of land.



## POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

### Manobo

Indigenous governance, no matter the form, already exists with or without any official recognition. Yet taking indigenous governance into consideration when furthering state governance could help reduce any conflicts that legal pluralism might present (Reilly 2006). Hence, the integration of mainstream and traditional systems of governance, regardless if it were deliberate or not, could benefit an indigenous community.

The governance structure at the sitio level is patterned after the barangay council. As knowledge of the national and local laws are passed down to the sitio from the barangay, the sitios have what the people call as "sub kapitan" for a leader and they also have a sitio council of local leaders and elders. However, probably more apparent on the

sitio level is the level of integration of the mainstream governance with the traditional system or pobiyan woy gontangan where a mediation of conflicts occurs through the guidance of a leader or a datu or boi.

Yet, not all sitios in Manobo have a resident datu or boi. Manuel Serrano Bayoc, Sr. is the recognized leader in Sitio Kisimbit. He was born in Uwas, Magpet in 1975 and transferred to Brgy. Manobo where his wife is a resident of Sitio Kisimbit. He is the sub captain of the sitio, is on his third term as leader, and will still run during the next elections. According to sitio leader Manuel Serrano Bayoc, Sr., there is no datu or boi yet in their local community. Sitio leader Manuel Serrano Bayoc, Sr. is the leader, since he can speak with either the military or NPA whenever an armed conflict ensues in the area.

The sitio leader, together with his secretary and councilors are tasked to handle conflicts at the sitio level. They are the ones who conduct husay. The conflicts they can handle include land issues and conflicts between married couples. When it comes to land conflicts, they often settle those that concern boundaries. The process involves separately speaking with each of the concerned parties before having a dialogue with both. According to Manuel Bayoc, Sr., the process is part of their traditional system and customary laws, which they incorporated into their barangay governance down to the sitio level.



After the traditional means of assessing the conflict, they will enforce a penalty of P1,000.00 for the individual who went over the boundary. For married couples that decide to dissolve their marriage, the party at fault will receive a P30,000.00 penalty and will no longer have any property share.

Sub Captain Julita Lumatag Amban was born in Ilyan, Magpet but was raised in Sitio Pantaron where her father is from. Her father was not officially recognized as a datu but had functions like

one. People approached her father for solutions to their problems. Eventually, younger generations followed the advice and practices of elders like the father of Sitio leader Julita Amban.

The datu and boi can facilitate a husay or aregla, which serves as a conflict mediation between affronted parties. And when the situation calls for it, the boi or datu will pay the penalty when the penalized cannot afford it. The act of paying the penalty symbolizes that *tampod to' saa* is done or the *kasamok* or conflict has been cut. The leaders will speak with the offending party to keep him from repeating his offense.

People regard today's datu as reliable when it comes to finding solutions to problems and mediating conflicts. Sitio leader Julita Amban's father was not a datu. However, people relied on him when it comes to addressing their problems. Traditionally, people would choose their leader based on the person's capacity to lead and create plans that will benefit the community. That is the case for Sitio leader Amban who was able to establish



a Baptist church in their sitio without the need for people to shell out money. As a leader, she also becomes a decisionmaker for matters concerning the use of, access to, and ownership of land. According to Amban, the people will decide on who they will recognize as a datu or boi in the area.

However, not all sitios have cases of people choosing their leaders. Others have leaders who were endorsed by then Brgy. Chairman Rolando Pelonio, Sr. Sub Captain Binbenido Buwulan ran for Elib sitio leader back in 1996. He was elected by the people after he was endorsed by the father of current Magpet Brgy. Captain Roldan Pelonio.

The same is true for Sub Captain Arsenio Ugot Sicao who was born in Indangan, Kidapawan. He has relatives in Davao and Barangay Manobisa. Sub Captain Sicao grew up in Tamayong and transferred to Manobo after meeting his wife Adoring Imba. Two years after the establishment of Manobo as a barangay, Rolando Pelonio, Sr. assigned Mahitang as the place of residency of Arsenio Sicao. Sitio leader Arsenio Sicao also received the task of assigning up to two hectares of land for every resident or household.



## LIVELIHOOD

To a certain level, indigenous peoples and other stakeholders saw the landscapes of ancestral domains in terms of commodities, treating elements of an ecosystem as extractable and almost fit to be a currency (Cronon 1983). Trade by the Obo Monuvu of Magpet is alive through buy and sell transactions for cash crops. Labor is also a contributing factor to the economy, which in the general sense is perceived to have demands that oppose the needs of any environment to survive (Gibson-Graham and Miller 2015).



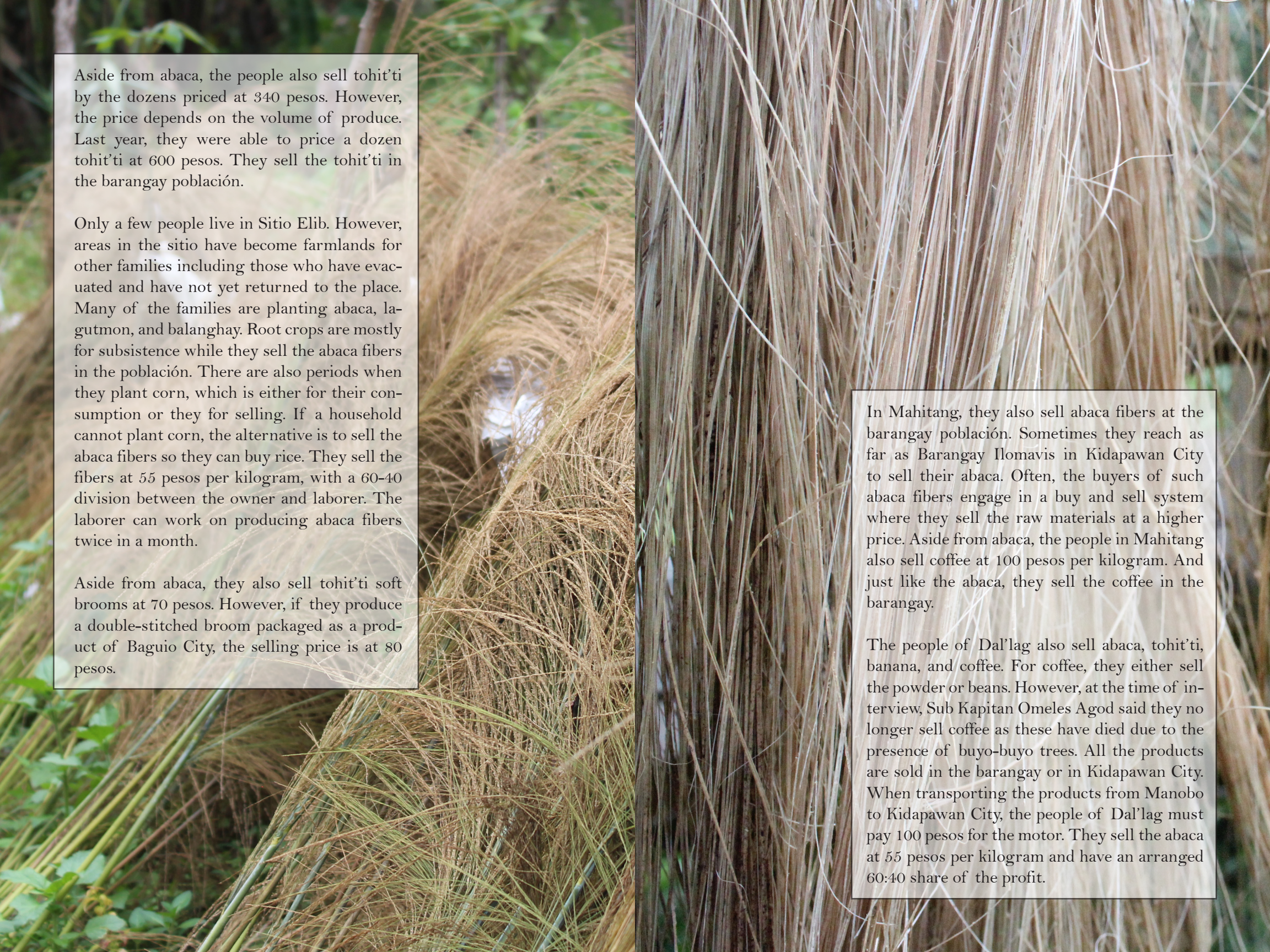
In Manobo, most products are tohit'ti, banana, abaca, bukag, and vegetables. Working the land can often call for a lusong or the Filipino concept of bayanihan where members of the community help each other and work towards a common goal. However, a call for lusong could also mean that the owner of the land or the crops to be harvested will provide lugar suhol – payment for hiring other community members for agricultural labor.

In Kisimbit, people who have tilled the lands in groups of ten have received P100 per day while working on Sundays and Mondays. The practice is originally Visayan and was only adapted by the Obo Monuvu community.



Traditionally, the elders and ancestors who lived in Sitio Pantaron would manually mill their corns for consumption. They would not sell their corns even though their harvests were more than enough for their households. Today, the people of Pantaron transport their corn for milling in Poblacion, Magpet. The person who transported the produce will receive 4 gantang or roughly a half sack of corn. The milled corn is still for consumption.

The people of Pantaron also engage in laborious work, manually stripping abaca fibers. The owner of abaca gets 40% of profit for selling the fibers while the laborer gets 60%. The per kilogram price of abaca is at 50 pesos. They sell the abaca fibers in Marbol and oftentimes the laborer also acts as the seller of the product. Should they have more products than what one seller can carry, they also hire other transporters of the abaca at 6 pesos per kilogram. If the owner of the abaca decides to provide food for the laborers, the division of profit changes to 50-50. Sitio leader Amban can produce 98kg of fiber.



Aside from abaca, the people also sell tohit'ti by the dozens priced at 340 pesos. However, the price depends on the volume of produce. Last year, they were able to price a dozen tohit'ti at 600 pesos. They sell the tohit'ti in the barangay población.

Only a few people live in Sitio Elib. However, areas in the sitio have become farmlands for other families including those who have evacuated and have not yet returned to the place. Many of the families are planting abaca, lagutmon, and balanghay. Root crops are mostly for subsistence while they sell the abaca fibers in the población. There are also periods when they plant corn, which is either for their consumption or they for selling. If a household cannot plant corn, the alternative is to sell the abaca fibers so they can buy rice. They sell the fibers at 55 pesos per kilogram, with a 60-40 division between the owner and laborer. The laborer can work on producing abaca fibers twice in a month.

Aside from abaca, they also sell tohit'ti soft brooms at 70 pesos. However, if they produce a double-stitched broom packaged as a product of Baguio City, the selling price is at 80 pesos.

In Mahitang, they also sell abaca fibers at the barangay población. Sometimes they reach as far as Barangay Ilomavis in Kidapawan City to sell their abaca. Often, the buyers of such abaca fibers engage in a buy and sell system where they sell the raw materials at a higher price. Aside from abaca, the people in Mahitang also sell coffee at 100 pesos per kilogram. And just like the abaca, they sell the coffee in the barangay.

The people of Dal'lag also sell abaca, tohit'ti, banana, and coffee. For coffee, they either sell the powder or beans. However, at the time of interview, Sub Kapitan Omeles Agod said they no longer sell coffee as these have died due to the presence of buyo-buyo trees. All the products are sold in the barangay or in Kidapawan City. When transporting the products from Manobo to Kidapawan City, the people of Dal'lag must pay 100 pesos for the motor. They sell the abaca at 55 pesos per kilogram and have an arranged 60:40 share of the profit.



## LAND ACCESS, USE, AND OWNERSHIP

When a person decides to relocate to Sitio Kisimbit, he or she will be under observation of the leader for around six (6) months. The sitio leaders and elders will also consult each other and interview the migrant – regardless if he or she is an IP or non-IP. The sitio leaders will then decide whether the migrant can stay or not. The standard size of the land that an IP migrant can own, use, and access is two hectares. The same goes for a non-IP migrant, except that they cannot own the land.

There are no private titles in the area. To officially recognize their land tenure, barangay officials will issue a certification to be signed by the NCIP. The implementation began after the formulation of the ADSDPP. The certification process was put in place so people cannot easily sell or grab lands. Currently no land is being rented in the sitio. Should that happen, Sitio Leader Bayoc said the parties involved will have to go through the ADMA. There are also no CLOA areas in the sitio. Any changes in land tenure shall be overseen by the ADMA.

The leaders will decide who can use and own land as well as who can access the resources in the area. When someone new to the place arrives, s/he can suggest a place, but the leader will decide if the land is available.

However, as practiced in Sitio Pantaron, the elders have taken the role in deciding how the land is distributed and used by the residents. Through the certification released by the barangay, the holder would serve as an owner of the parcel of land that follows indigenous ownership and is recognized by the mainstream governance.

At the time of interview, an Ilokano resides in the sitio and co-owns a land with a certificate awarded to his wife. Only an IP can receive a certificate of ownership in the barangay.

When the landholder decides to no longer till the land, he or she can return the certificate of ownership to the Ancestral Domain Management Association (ADMA) so another person can work on the land.

Previously, they have practiced land rental and mortgage. However, upon the implementation of IPRA law that prohibits such, there is no recorded case of renting out or mortgaging lands in the sitio.

The Obo Monuvu of Sitio Elib can access, use, and own two (2) hectares of land each. Sitio leader Buwulan said the guidelines are according to the written law. The law also prohibits the landholders from selling their lands. Aside from that, IPs are the only people who can legally own parcels of the ancestral domain. Non-IPs will have to marry into an IP family to be allowed to use an ancestral land.

According to sitio leader Buwulan, the certification follows a patriarchal process. The husband will have his name on the land ownership certification. Only in cases when the husband is a non-IP will the name of the wife appear on the certificate.

As explained by Mahitang sitio leader Arsenio Ugot Sicao and Dal'lag leader Omeles Agod, people can expand their 2 hectare land only when they are able to fully cultivate the area.





## NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

From Essay on Natural Resource Conflicts and Governance

Natural resource governance involves interaction and decision-making regarding the resource use. The process is complicated because of the involvement of diverse stakeholders who are dependent on the resource in different capacities. Decision making in such a situation becomes very challenging, as it requires developing a solution that is equally acceptable by all... due to the involvement of diverse values of all the stakeholders partaking in the decision-making process makes resource governance even more complicated. The values of these individuals are influenced by religion, culture, faith, political view and scientific temper.

