



RE-ACTIVATING THE DANGEROUS MEMORY IN A LANDSCAPE EXEMPLIFIED BY LIVING DANGEROUSLY

Karl M. Gaspar

This paper is an attempt to answer the question: what lies behind the paucity of church workers' engagement in inculturation among baptized indigenous peoples, known as Lumads in Mindanao? The author using the descriptive-interpretive method and tapping into both anthropological and theological discourses – put together archival documents and records along with contemporary publications to be able to write this paper. One major lacuna is the lack of literature on concrete experiences of inculturation among the Lumads. The paper posits that one way out of this impasse is a collaborative effort that would bring together church people with training in philosophy, anthropology, theology, religious and cultural studies to reflect on the lessons that need to be articulated in this field and come up with approaches that are practical for those in the field.

Therefore, in discovering the revolutionary power of Jesus' parabolic language-events with a formal structure that has been largely buried beneath the ossified institutional dogma that was erected in the historical unfolding of the Christian Church, we can conclude that the radical paradoxes disclosed... can create new thought and re-configure out-dated forms of religious life by *re-activating the dangerous memory* of.. (the) first century Jewish sage and re-capture the authenticity of the gospel message with a language that has been almost completely lost in the historical development of Christianity.¹

¹ Cameron S. Freeman, "There's a Crack in Everything, That's How the Light Gets In – Žižek's Parallax View and the Perverse Core of Christianity," *International Journal of Žižek Studies*. See <http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/ilzs/article/view/52/152> (accessed on 5 July 2013). Freeman appropriates this thought from Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006), 45. Italics provided.



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Bongmal is a community of the B'laan, an Indigenous People of Mindanao or now commonly referred to as *Lumad*.² It lies at the very edge of the municipality of *Kiblawan*, which is located at the uplands of Davao del Sur traversing towards the adjacent town of Tampakan, part of South Cotabato. *Kiblawan* and *Tampakan* have figured prominently in both mass and social media in the past few years owing to the *Tampakan* Copper-Gold Mining project said to be “the largest undeveloped copper-gold resource in Asia Western-Pacific Region”.³

The figures cited in terms of this project are staggering. “With a capital investment of US \$5.9 billion, it...(is)... the largest foreign direct investment in the Philippines to date. Its ore reserve of 1.1 B tons is estimated to produce up to 160 million tons of gold and copper per annum over a period of 20 years”.⁴

Employing the divide-and-rule strategy, the mining company has successfully created a wedge among the B'laans. Reliving the *pangayaw* (tribal war) tradition of their ancestors – which earned them the tag of being “wild tribe”⁵ – one section of the B'laan *baganis* (warriors) are now waging an armed struggle to oppose the mining operations. Meanwhile both the AFP and NPA forces are also present in the area. Truly *Bongmal* is a place where the people are living dangerously, not just on the part of the B'laans who are the aboriginal inhabitants of this isolated territory but also migrant settlers who need to interface with them.

Bongmal is only one example of a *Lumad* community in Mindanao under fire because of the continuing development aggression undertaken by corporate bodies seduced by the idea of earning huge profits through the extraction of Mindanao uplands' rich material resources. In the post World War II era, it was mainly

² *Lumad* refers to the Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao; the word is part of the Cebuano-Bisaya vocabulary which can mean native or arising from the earth. It is the equivalent of *Katutubo* for areas where Tagalog is the main *lingua franca*.

³ See *Research Brief: Mining and Water Governance*. Published by the Ateneo Institute of Anthropology and Ateneo Tropics, Ateneo de Davao University, August 2013, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ See Fay-Cooper Cole, *The Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao*, Publ. 170. Anthro Series. Vol. 12 (2) (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1905).





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logging. There is still a bit of logging taking place today, but the wealth is to be made through mining, energy generation and the expansion of plantations.

Mindanao's uplands where most *Lumad* communities are still mainly residing (even as increasingly they are coming down to survive in the lowlands, especially their youth) continue to be highly contested as various forces are staking their claims over ancestral territories. After the logging operations penetrated many uplands in Davao, Agusan, Bukidnon, Lanao and Zamboanga, land-hungry peasants (migrant settlers from mainly the Visayas) moved in; in some cases acquiring vast tracks of land for a song. The years throughout martial rule consolidated the State's drive to convert ancestral lands for extractive industries.⁶ As the revolutionary movement waged a war against the State, guerrilla zones were established naturally in the isolated territories of the uplands.

The Catholic Church had been drawn to these contestations through the last forty years especially in the wake of the pastoral and missiological breakthroughs that resulted from the discussions and resolutions reaching consensus at the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference (MSPC).⁷ The Second Vatican Council gave birth to the MSPC. Genealogically rooted in the Vatican II – the latter finished in 1964; the former's conception began in 1970⁸ – the MSPC dealt with some of the more important discourses of Vatican II and appropriated these in terms of concrete pastoral programs contextualized within the specific realities of Mindanao-Sulu.

It was at the MSPC II that the conference began to be more concerned about the *Lumad* situation along with a greater concern to what was also happening with the Moro communities. At this time

⁶ See *Directory of TNCs in the Philippines* (Manila: Ibon Databank, Phils., 1988), "Characteristics of Foreign Investments in Mindanao," *Bantaaw Economic and Social Indicators of Mindanao*, Vol. 9, Nos. 11/12.

⁷ Warren Kinne, *The Splintered Staff: Structural Deadlock in the Mindanao Church* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1990) and Karl M. Gaspar CSsR, *Mystic Wanderers in the Land of Perpetual Departures* (Quezon City: ISA Publications, 2005).

⁸ It can therefore be surmised that the pastoral-missiological thrust of Vatican II got an earlier start in Mindanao than elsewhere in the Philippines. The whole of the Church in the Philippines only took seriously the Vatican II documents with PCP II which took place in 1991, or 20 years after the MSPC.



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owing to the Vatican II perspective, there was a growing consensus among those working among IPs, influenced by the missiological thrust of *Ad Gentes*, that proselytization was no longer to be considered the *raison d'être* for working among the *Lumad* although there were still instances where missionaries had no choice but to conduct baptisms among those interested to embrace Catholicism. There arose an interest in inculturation but this was still in its infancy stage and there was no strong interest to give it full attention.

One of the “sectors”⁹ heavily hit by the repression and oppression of the dictatorship was the *Lumad*, mainly because of what the Presidential Assistant for the National Minorities (PANAMIN) was engaged in creating havoc in the uplands. This led to the consolidation of the program for the Tribal Filipinos (TF) among progressive Protestant and Catholic church workers. While a minority held on to their traditional responses (conversion, catechetics and developmental projects), increasingly TF pastoral workers were more engaged in conscientization and organizing of the *Lumads* to resist State aggression.

At the national level, the Episcopal Commission on Tribal Filipinos (ECTF) – which was dominated by progressive religious, diocesan clergy and lay workers influenced by liberation theology¹⁰ – took on a liberation-oriented thrust. The strongest contingent every time the ECTF had their conferences was the one from Mindanao, owing to the MSPC’s collaborative efforts that was consolidating as well as networking.

As martial rule raged, the direction of the ministry among the *Lumads* was influenced by the national democratic agenda. The theology underpinning their pastoral engagement was that of liberation theology which privileged the historical Jesus and His *dangerous memory*. This would have a consequence in terms of a lesser interest in pursuing inculturation among baptized *Lumads*. It was

⁹ ‘Sector’ was a term that was used to refer to various poor, deprived and oppressed groups, e.g., peasants, workers, urban poor, indigenous people and the like.

¹⁰ There was an attempt to localize the liberation theology through the theology of struggle. See *Religion and Society: Towards a Theology of Struggle, Book I*. Sr. Rosario Battung, RGS, Liberato C. Bautista, Ma. Sophia Lizares-Bodegon, Alice G. Guillero (eds.) (Manila: Forum for Interdisciplinary Endeavours and Studies (FIDES).





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only towards the end of the millennium that a greater concern in this field arose.

This paper is an attempt to answer the question: what lies behind the paucity of church workers' engagement in inculturation among baptized *Lumads*. The author – using the descriptive-interpretive method tapping into both anthropological and theological discourses – put together archival documents and records along with contemporary publications to be able to write this paper. The literature is actually immense in terms of some areas covered by this study but limited in terms of actual concrete experiences.

THE COLONIAL EPOCH

There is no dearth of history books that one can read to find out how the Spanish missionaries dealt with the indigenous peoples they encountered in the early years of the first wave of Hispanic evangelization since the late 16th century.¹¹ Rafael's seminal work provides an excellent analysis into how this evangelization took place within the conquest-conversion-translation framework.¹²

Traditional was the manner of the evangelization efforts. This method involved mass baptisms which meant there was limited instruction. One could surmise that this was the only model available at that time owing to the realities of mission work. There is no question that the Spanish colonization was tied up with the medieval Church's evangelization project. It is a shame that the theology of the middle ages led to the friars' fundamentalist orientation which made them demonize our ancestors' belief system, leading them to

¹¹ See Horacio dela Costa SJ, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961); Nicolas Cushner, *The Isles of the West: Early Spanish Voyages to the Philippines, 1521-1564* (Quezon City: ADMU Press, 1966); John L. Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565-1700* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959); John S.J. Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 1979) and Gerald H. Anderson (ed.) *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969).

¹² Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism, Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988).



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conclusion that God was not pleased with native rituals, and the diversities in faith and cultures should be quashed to the privileged Hispanic Catholicism and culture, where God was believed to be only present in what they brought from Rome via Spain. Thus, redemption through God's mercy only came through this Church¹³ and that the natives have to be baptized into the church because they were considered sinful.

On the 30th of July 1860, Queen Isabel II issued an organic decree which established a “politico-military government for Mindanao and its adjacent islands... Mindanao was divided into six districts: Zamboanga, north Mindanao, east Mindanao, Davao, central Mindanao, and Basilan.”¹⁴ Expelled in 1768, the Jesuits were again allowed to return to the Philippines in 1859 and were assigned to Mindanao because “there was imminent danger that Mindanao would become lost to other foreign powers or to Moro expansion.”¹⁵ Realizing that the Muslims could not be easily convinced to become Christians, the Spaniards concentrated their evangelization work among “animists” with “a far easier acceptance”¹⁶ of Christian baptism and encouraged Christian migrants from the Visayas to settle in Mindanao.

As the Muslims continued “their passive or active resistance to Spanish intrusion, a resistance with 250 years of history behind it”, the Spanish initial strategies consisted of “military presence, establishment, encircling, penetration, isolation and neutralization.”¹⁷ Diplomatic attempts were made by either party with the missionaries playing intermediary roles; however, when these failed direct military confrontations followed with the Spaniards eventually taking control owing to superior armaments. Among the indigenous peoples, e.g., those in Agusan, there were a few instances of rebellion against the colonizers owing to “too abrupt and rather forced reduction strategy”.¹⁸

¹³ This was justified in the phrase – *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the Church there is no salvation) that goes all the way back to the 3rd century.

¹⁴ Peter Schreurs MSC, *Mission to Mindanao 1859-1900*, Volume I (Cebu City: University of San Carlos Publications, 1994), 19. See also Hayase, 37.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xix.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, xvi.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*



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The eruption of the Philippine National Revolution with the *Katipunan* uprising in 1896 and the subsequent signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1898 drastically changed the face of colonization in Mindanao. As the colonial power shifted from Spain to the U.S.A., the Americans set up the needed governmental apparatus to administer Mindanao. The Philippine Commission was to administer all regular provinces in Christianized regions, whereas the Moro Province would be governed by the U.S. Army with an autonomous authority and the Special Government Provinces would administer non-Christian tribe people.¹⁹

An important element that characterized the American colonial occupation in Mindanao came from the passage of a series of Public Land Laws in 1903, 1919 and 1929 which was designed to foster homesteading. This scheme encouraged the migration of landless peasants from Visayas and Luzon to acquire land they could till as well as diffuse the unrest among the peasantry elsewhere without dealing with the structural issue of landlordism. In 1903, peasants could apply for 16 hectares which was increased to 24 hectares in 1919. Corporations, however, could easily apply for a land grant of 1,024 hectares and a growing number did.²⁰

As waves of migration from the Visayas reached the coastland areas of Mindanao just before and after the World War II (WWII), the resulting demographic shift led to increasing migrant settlers' population relative to the Moro and *Lumad* communities. In many places, after vast tracts of forests were logged over, the migrants took over to cultivate the land beyond the coasts. In the wake of communist China's expulsion of foreign missionaries, a number found their way to Mindanao. As personnel were limited, they concentrated among the expanding communities of Christian

¹⁹ Casino 1992, 1. See also Eric S. Casino, "Three Modes of Governance for Mindanao, 1900-1920," *Tambara* 28 (2011), 1.

²⁰ See B. R. Rodil, *The Minoritization of the Indigenous Communities of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago* (Davao City: AFRIM Publications, 1994), Rene E. Ofreneo, *Capitalism in Philippine Agriculture* (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1980) and Ronalk K. Edgerton, "Frontier Society on the Bukidnon Plateau, 1870-1941," *Philippine Social History*, Alfred W. McCoy and Ed C. de Jesus (eds.) (Quezon City: ADMU Press, 1982).



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migrant-settlers as parishes were established and parochial schools set up.²¹

Before WW II and towards the 1960s, American Protestant missionaries decided to penetrate the uplands to proselytize among the *Lumad* communities, as they saw that most of the lowland communities were constituted by Catholic migrants. They had subdivided the area in the manner of Catholic missionaries. It was only in the 1960s when there were increasing diocesan priests who could take over pastoral work among the lowland migrants, that a few religious groups began to penetrate the *Lumad* territories, initially for proselytization purposes.²²

The impoverishment and powerlessness of the *Lumad* triggered deep sympathy on the part of these religious missionaries. Thus, most of them went beyond conversion and catechetics; they came up with literacy classes, health and other developmental projects. Accessing funding from their central offices, private NGOs and whatever little could be mobilized from State agencies, they set up projects for the benefit of the *Lumad*. Slowly, they also began to look into the land issue affecting the *Lumad* vis-à-vis their dislocations from their ancestral domain. These were efforts that were isolated from one another for decades. It was the consolidation of the MSPC's concern for the *Lumads* that brought greater collaboration among them.

MARTIAL RULE AND THE MINDANAO-SULU CHURCH'S CONCERN FOR THE *LUMADS*

As martial rule brought about more incursions into the uplands and abuses committed by PANAMIN personnel and the military who subjected the *Lumad* to various forms of harassment and intimidation, the church people immersed from among them expressed the need to consolidate their ranks. The Mindanao-Sulu

²¹ Karl M. Gaspar, CSsR. *The History of the Davao Association of Colleges and Schools (DACs) 1963-2013*, unpublished document commissioned by DACS, 2013.

²² They included the Jesuits, Columbans, the Maryknoll, the Passionists, PME, MSC, SVD, OMI and later the PIME, and women congregations such as the FMM, MSM, RSM, RGS, PM, OND, SPC, FMA, RNDM, MCJ, CCV, MA and others.





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Secretariat of Social Action (MISSA), in collaboration with the Mindanao Development Center (MDC) facilitated the first Mindanao Regional Conference on Cultural Communities (MRCCC) in February 1974.²³ This Conference aimed “to give a voice to the more than one-and-a-half-million minorities of Mindanao... a voice of anguish, frustration and fear; a voice crying out, almost without hope, appealing to the Christian communities of Mindanao.”²⁴

Nine months later at the MSPC II, “after listening to the reports given by some delegates about the oppression of the IPs, the conference decided to consider the apostolate with cultural communities as one of its priorities... (with) a call to encourage dioceses to set up programs for these communities and for an increase in church personnel present in the lives of the IPs.”²⁵ With Vatican II’s exhortation, there would have been some interests in pursuing inculturation. But it was not meant to be because “the declaration of martial law in 1971 pushed the apostolate in a direction that was somewhat different to the one it had been following until then...; the thrust of church work among IPs moved in the direction of helping them to preserve their dignity, rights, tradition and culture as tribal peoples.”²⁶

Going back to Vatican II, the seeds of inculturation were planted at this Council and could have pushed missionaries working among *Lumads* to undertake a shift in terms of both content and process of mission work. The *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy) stated that:

Even in the liturgy the Church does not wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not involve the faith or the good of the whole community... Anything in these people’s way of life which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error she studies with sympathy, and, if possible, preserves intact. (No. 37).

²³ Karl M. Gaspar CSsR, “The Mindanao Lumad Social Movement,” *Mindanao Focus* Vol. 15, No. 1, Series of 1997,

²⁴ From the proceedings of this conference which was held in February, 1973 at the Sta. Cruz Mission in Lake Sebu, mimeographed.

²⁵ Gaspar 1997, 18.

²⁶ Bishop Francisco Claver SJ. “The Tribal Apostolate of the Philippine Church,” *Tribal Forum*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (September-October 1995), 10.



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Two documents of Vatican II – *Ad Gentes* (On the Mission Activity of the Church) and *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World) - contributed to this theology of inculturation:

The church must be present to (various) groups... In order to bear witness to Christ... they should establish relationships of respect and love with those men... They should be familiar with their national and religious traditions and uncover with gladness and respect those seeds of the Word which lie hidden among them... (*AG*, # 11).

There are many ties between the message of salvation and human culture. For God, revealing Himself to His people to the extent of a full manifestation of Himself in His Incarnate Son, has spoken according to the culture proper to each epoch... Likewise the Church, living in various circumstances in the course of time, has used the discoveries of different cultures so that in her preaching she might spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, that she might examine it and more deeply understand it, that she might give it better expression in liturgical celebration and in the varied life of the community of the faithful. (*GS*, # 58)

The fact of the matter was that these exhortations were not provided too much attention because the context of evangelization among the *Lumad* in Mindanao had shifted owing to the realities of martial rule in the 1970s. In 1976, following the MRCCC and the MSPC II, an ecumenical collaborative effort between the Catholics and Protestants arose as they sought to join forces in responding to the needs of the Moro and *Lumad* communities.

The Mindanao-Sulu Conference on Justice and Development (MSCJD) was set up in 1976 by the MSPC and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines' (NCCP) Program Aimed at Christians' Education About Muslims (PACEM). Its first major effort was the "identification and training of tribal leaders and providing them opportunities to develop leadership skills...(while) bringing tribal groups together so that, through the leaders, they would be able to establish linkages among them at the regional level".²⁷

²⁷ Gaspar 1997, 19.



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During these conferences, there were occasions to have liturgical celebrations as well as biblical and theological reflections which helped to nurture their praxis as these deepened their commitment to serve the *Lumad* whom they considered the least of their brothers and sisters. The ensuing efforts were towards “condemning the immoral system by which the minorities were dispossessed of their lands whether by loggers, miners, plantation owners, settlers or ranchers; and that because the Church recognized the prior rights of these people to the lands of Mindanao, it should demand that the IPs’ basic rights to their native land be recognized and that effective legal machinery be created to protect them”.²⁸

Driven with a need to be more sensitive to the IP’s perspective of life and struggle so as not to impose their own ideas, they expressed the need for an orientation to IP Ministry (henceforth – IPM). The MSCJD responded to this need by organizing a World View Seminar in December 1977. The main resource persons were trained anthropologists in the Mindanao-Sulu church, primarily Bishop Claver and Fr. Sean MacDonagh, SSC. However, the outcome of this seminar did not encourage the churchworkers to pursue the discourse of inculturation in terms of their work among the baptized *Lumads*. Instead it reinforced the thrust of a liberation-oriented apostolate.²⁹

The thrust was influenced by the over-all political orientation of the church workers who mostly had embraced the national democratic agenda. The theology underpinning their pastoral engagement was that of liberation theology which privileged the historical Jesus and His *dangerous memory*. Both at the ECTF and Mindanao network of TF workers organized their programs around this over-arching theological frame. This was shared with the other church people working among the poor, deprived and oppressed sectors of society. There was an effort to articulate a liberation theology contextualized in the Philippines or more popularly known as theology of struggle.³⁰

²⁸ Ibid., 19-20.

²⁹ Ibid., 22. See also Proceedings of the Seminar on the World View of the Cultural Communities held in Davao City, November 28 – December 3, 1977. Mimeographed.

³⁰ Its analysis of society was the structural analysis model that arose out of the FERES Seminar held in Baguio City in 1976, a joint effort of the FABC’s



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As its influence spread across the progressive section of the Philippine Church, those in IP work were swept into its orbit. Consequently, their desire to be anchored in a greater understanding of and sensitivity to the cultures of the *Lumad* (which could have pushed the discourse on inculturation) was pushed aside in favour of a deeper engagement to align the Lumads' struggle with that of the Filipino masses.

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE INCULTURATION DISCOURSE AND HOW IT CAUGHT UP WITH IPM

Meanwhile, in other parts of the Church throughout the world where inculturation discourse was given considerable attention, there were new developments in the articulation of this discourse. In 1974, the First Assembly of the Federation of Asian Episcopal Conferences advocated an indigenous and inculturated Church. At the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1974-75), the term came up in a number of texts, reinforced in 1978 by the Superior General's exhortation.³¹

In 1975, Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi* promoted the inculturation discourse with these words: "The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times. Therefore every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture, or more correctly of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel." (# 20). In 2003, Pope John Paul II issued *Redemptoris Missio* which has this text: "Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples,

Office for Human Development, the National Secretariat of Social Action, the Institute of Social Order, the Asian Social Institute and various religious congregations.

³¹ Leo Amafil, "Inculturation: Its Etymology and Problems," *Studies in Liturgy* 73 (1992), 170-188. Fr. Arrupe's take on inculturation: The incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation) but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remarking it so as to bring about a "new creation." Ibid., 177.





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together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within. (# 52).

Earlier in 1992, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines stated that “(w)ithout in any way changing the Gospel’s substance, the Church needs to present it in such a way that people will be able to appreciate its true meaning and be in a position to accept or reject it, or, having accepted it, may be able to assimilate it more fully into their lives.” (# 203) Through this process, the Gospel will affect and upset that culture’s “criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation.” (# 207)

Between 1975 to 2003, enormous changes would be taking place in Philippine society that would impact the Church, consequently leading to shifts in church workers’ theological orientation thereby influencing their praxis. Caught in a “structural deadlock”, most of the bishops decided to pull out of the MSPC Board that oversaw the operations of its Secretariat.³² By dissociating themselves from those they saw as “having an agenda contrary to the bishops’ stance” in 1985, the progressive stance of the whole MSPC structure collapsed. The bishops abandoned having an MSPC conference once every three years for another twenty years; it was only in the late 1990s that they resumed the convening of an MSP Conference. On the other hand, the progressive elements - religious, diocesan clergy, lay pastoral workers and their Protestant allies – established another conference to carry on their progressive agenda, namely the Mindanao-Sulu Interfaith Conference (MIPC).

This anti-dictatorship movement went on high gear in the wake of the assassination of Ninoy Aquino in 1983 culminating in EDSA 1. The unified stance of church workers in Mindanao-Sulu dissipated and became a thing of the past. One segment decided to welcome and collaborate with the administration of President Corazon Aquino; those who were reluctantly opened to aligning with the national democratic orientation in the early 1980s abandoned this stance and began to distance themselves from the militant groups.

³² See Kinne 1990 and Gaspar 2005.



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A minority persisted with this radical option and sustained their resistance against the State, which gained a momentum when Mrs. Aquino declared a “total war against the insurgents” in 1987. The internal contradictions within the militant section of the Church were heightened with a series of events that led to the split between the Re-affirmists (RAs) and the Rejectionists (RJs).

This was certainly true among those in the IPM and the issue that divided their ranks was how to deal with the consequences of the 1987 Constitutional Convention which came up with a third category on viewing land, namely, that of ancestral domain/ancestral land.³³ Before 1987, there were only two views, namely public and private land. The rise of the legal discourse on ancestral domain/land and the need to come up with legislation to be passed in Congress became the wedge that divided the ranks of church people in *Lumad* ministry.³⁴ A corollary development was when the DENR issued Administrative Order No. 2 (DAO-2) series of 1993.³⁵ Those who adhered to or were influenced by the RA orientation decided not to be engaged in the work considering it a palliative response to the cry of the *Lumads* to have full control over their homeland.³⁶ On the other hand, the RJs and the un-affiliated joined forces to engage the government in the implementation of the DAO-2 as well as work towards the passage of a law granting titles.

The network under the ECTF which changed its name to Episcopal Commission of Indigenous People (ECIP) decided to align with the latter and joined a multi-agency task force to assist *LUMAD* communities applying for CADTs as well as lobby for the passage of a bill filed in Congress. There would be further

³³ This would have radical consequences to the *Lumad* social movement which up to 1986 still was cohesively behind the national democratic orientation as led by *LUMAD*-Mindanao, the Mindanao sectoral organization for the IPs. See Gaspar 2011, 76-187.

³⁴ For a thorough discussion on this development, see Gaspar 2011, 103-152.

³⁵ As it would take a few years to get a law passed in Congress, the DENR Secretary, Atty. Fulgencio Factoran decided to issue the DAO-2 which provided for the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) to IP communities able to prove their having occupied their ancestral territory since time immemorial.

³⁶ For a discussion on how the RAs dealt with the ensuing IPRA Law, see Antonio J. Montalvan II, “IPRA and Its NDF critique: Cultural Indeterminism and Simulacral Moments,” in *MINDAyanan*, Capitol University (2004). 44-51.





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consequences involving the Lumads at the grassroots. While some who are deep into the NPA guerilla zones sustained their close collaboration with the CPP-NPA, there were communities who asserted an autonomous stance as they sought to establish peace zones. Meanwhile, owing to various pressures, a number of *Lumad* leaders decided to take the side of the military who provided them with arms.

Meanwhile, development aggression into the uplands persisted from 1986 until the present. These plus the continued presence of the NPAs resulted in continuing militarization of the countryside. With the MSPC's disappearing act in the Church landscape through this period as well as the inability of the MIPC to fill in the gap, it was left to the Indigenous Peoples' Apostolate (IPA) in Mindanao linked to the ECIP to find ways of forging collaborative efforts to deal with the issues affecting the *Lumads* as the year 2000 was fast approaching.³⁷

Most of the self-reflexive church workers in IP ministry throughout the country facing the external and internal realities of the *Lumad* landscape at the end of 20th century and the beginning of the 21st would have realized that they were definitely at a Gramscian crossroad; a radically different *Lumad* situation was still to evolve but, in the interregnum greater challenges have to be faced. The State's reformist agenda impacting the IPs from Aquino to Ramos to Estrada provided some space for State engagement following the Habermasian communicative model.³⁸ Still, the State's right hand didn't know what its left hand was doing; it passing the RA 8371 or the Indigenous People's Rights Act but passed RA 7942 or the Philippine Mining Act.

While liberation theology continued to influence the IPA's network, the sharp militant edge of this theology dissipated. New theological

³⁷ While the MSPC structure through its Secretariat ceased operations after the bishops' dissociation from the latter in 1985, the regional groups were sustained. Thus, the Diocesan Social Action Centers still met with MISSSA group linked to NASSA; the IPA was linked to ECIP, etc. While MISSSA continued to have its Mindanao-based office until the late 1990s, it ceased operations in the 2000s. The TFA was based where its Bishop Chair resided until it also ceased to operate.

³⁸ See Gaspar 2011, how the Habermasian framework operated in the Arakan among the Manobo and civil society agencies.



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articulations began to appear which was coming out of the Irish Columbans articulated by Fr. Brendan Lovett and Fr. Sean McDonagh.³⁹ Lovett critiqued liberation theology for its “anthropocentric bias” and pointed the “failure of the Marxist tradition to pay real attention to the sciences of physics, geology, etc., led to its furthering a doctrinaire version of the ‘conquest of nature ideology’”.⁴⁰ He proposed that there was a need to have “an enlargement of insight which will enable us to see that the victimization of peoples by privileged social groups goes hand in hand with a destructive relatedness to all life... (motivated by)... a passionate commitment to LIFE in all its manifestations”.⁴¹ Appropriating Lonergan (“the intelligibility proper to the truth of developing doctrine is the intelligibility immanent in historical process”⁴²), Lovett posits that “if theology fails to measure up to human enquiry’s unrestricted demand for intelligibility, then it becomes a matter not of knowledge but of ideology and to be teaching such a theology is to be promoting alienation, whether from an extrinsicist or an immanentist set of commitments.”⁴³

McDonagh posits that there had been a lacuna in terms of the inadequacy of mainline Christian churches to respond to the challenge of being a “positive force working for the integral development and survival of Tribal peoples”, given the limited ecumenical cooperation to “respect and preserve in every way the culture of the people and not to present the Gospel in a way that will destroy their cultural matrix”.⁴⁴ For him, the dominant perspective was still the imposition of “foreign symbols and values in the name of a universality that was quite destructive of indigenous cultures”.⁴⁵ His

³⁹ Sean McDonagh and Vincent Busch, *Our Future, A Mirage* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1986). There have been other theological articulations especially in the Latin American Local churches where the discursive field is a lot more dynamic not just in specific countries but at the continental level facilitated through EATWOT.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 3-4.

⁴¹ Ibid., 4.

⁴² Bernard J. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972) cited in Ibid., 6.

⁴³ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 37.





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call was for the Church to be “very careful not to set up one cultural expression of Faith... as normative for all other expressions of Faith; (o)therwise, there will not be the freedom and encouragement for the gospel to put down deep roots in different cultures”.⁴⁶

THE RETURN OF THE INCULTURATION DISCOURSE

One can sense a new wind blowing as those in the circle of the ECIP continued to meet regularly. A landmark for this network was its National Convention in 1992 when it reviewed its Mission Statement while evaluating all the programs at the national and regional levels. Some important aspects of this mission statement include:

We affirm the God-given dignity of TF and their cultures... Our work of evangelization is a witness of life and humble service; we, together with in a dialogue of life and faith, discover the abiding presence of God leading to Christ’s good news of total human liberation... (which) imposes on us a continuing process of a) analysing each other’s cultures more fully and b) appreciating our mutually enriching cultures, and *identity* of self-determining partners... We, therefore pledge ourselves in the building of inter-dependent yet self-determining communities.⁴⁷

Note that the word “identity” has now appeared in an official document of the ECIP-IPA. Consequently, there were recommendations that arose at this Convention that would now be considered as a move towards inculturation. Despite encouraging a shift in its thrust, there was still no advancement in fleshing out inculturation among IP Catholic communities. If one views the proceedings of the 19th ECIP-IPA National Convention, one can see there was very little progress in terms of the implementation of the 13th recommendation in the area of inculturated evangelization.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁷ CBCP-ECIP. 13th ECIP-IPA National Convention Proceedings. Convention held at the Vicariate’s Pastoral Center, Puerto Princesa, Palawan, July 26-29, 1992, 4.



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Consequently, the priority concerns approved by the Convention were still: respect and recognition of IP rights to their ancestral domain, IPRA implementation, food security and sustainability, development aggression, education and protection of the cultural heritage.

It was only at the 28th National Convention in 2010, that inculturation was again emphasized as can be gleaned from the Statement that was issued:

Integral Evangelization calls us as a church to a humble examination of conscience and towards a healing of historical wounds by asking pardon for sins committed against the indigenous peoples... As we continue to preach Jesus who embraced vulnerability to walk towards the resurrection and who lived with the powerless and poor, we ask forgiveness for moments when we entered indigenous communities from a position of power, indifferent to their struggles and pains ... (and) when we taught Christianity as a religion robed with colonial cultural superiority, instead of sharing it as a religion that calls for a relationship with God and a way of life.

With gratitude for the contributions of the IPs to the integrity of creation, with contrite hearts and with the hope of healing towards solidarity, we as sons and daughters of the Church commit ourselves to: a humble disposition of dialogue that witnesses Jesus incarnate in the cultures and lives of the IPs; *inculturation*, where we are moved by the Spirit that seeks to make the Catholic community a home of all cultures and peoples; and open ourselves to a deeper solidarity with IPs through the realization of dialogue and intercultural encounter of each other's spiritualities.⁴⁸

Two years later, the AMRSMP echoed the same sentiments in their statement:

As AMRSMP, ... we are challenged to pursue the mission to all, including the IPs, and be evangelized by them. We are called to listen to what the IP feel as sacred in their

⁴⁸ CBCP-ECIP. 28th ECIP-IPA National Convention Statement. From 28th ECIP-IPA Convention held at the Holy Family Retreat House, Nivel Hills, Lahug, Cebu City, September 6-9, 2010.





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hearts. We need to learn their languages, and at times, speak against transgressors on their behalf. We must reflect with them and offer healing when needed. We must mediate the continuing conversation of faith and culture that leads to conversion. We must be able to recognize the sacred in the customs of the IPs, the local church, and allow indigenous communities to seek ways of creatively integrating themselves in the Church's rites, catechism, spiritualities, theological reflection and pastoral methods. We must do this, precisely because we are bearers of a Gospel that preaches inclusiveness and not imposition, respect and reverence and not ridicule, humility and not superiority... This is inculturation at the core.⁴⁹

Taking off from this vision, they committed themselves to taking seriously the inculturation discourse with these proposals: come up with new ways of doing mission, produce missionaries who are always sensitive to local cultures and encourage the development of local expressions of indigenous theology and spirituality, through academic papers, art, music and other forms of media. They promised to help provide resources for inculturation purposes through further new expressions in the local languages and cultures, along with modules for anthropological sensitivity training and cultural literacy.⁵⁰ However, they also reiterated the need to sustain efforts on the intensification of works for the environment and integrity of creation and justice and peace in solidarity with the IPs.

Sadly, fifty-one years after Vatican II, we have done very little in the fleshing out of inculturation, even in areas where the potential for inculturated liturgy is immense. Very few church people are willing to push beyond the boundaries. What are the reasons behind this? One reality is that by and large, the Philippine Church remains conservative as could be clearly seen in our liturgical celebrations. This was manifested in the manner that they seem to have misunderstood the workings of culture. Earlier, they adhered to the classical notion of a culture that was elitist, then later from the

⁴⁹ AMRSMP, "Seeking the Sacred: Inculturation by Listening to the Indigenous Peoples". Convention Statement of the AMRSP National Convention, Teng-ab Retreat House, Bontoc, Lagawe, Mountain Province, July 2-6, 2012.

⁵⁰ Ibid.



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perspective of functionalism. Later this perspective became fundamentalist. For all the attempts of a few church people to promote active lay participation and encourage liturgical reforms, the majority would rather keep the *status quo*.

There has also been the reality in terms of the lack of dynamic, forward-looking and creative Liturgical Centers that would be willing to struggle with the institutional church in terms of experimentations despite the Magisterium's repeated calls to set up such Centers. The few that exist have very limited resources and capital (economic, social and symbolic). The CBCP commission has served more as a watchdog rather than bringing together laypeople from various disciplines (theology, anthropology, the arts and culture fields, etc.) to pursue experimentations. One factor behind the Church's gaze aimed at those interested in experimentation in inculturation is the residue of the institutional Church's fear that such efforts of inculturation could lead towards *pantheism* ("the divine is synonymous with the universe") rather than *panentheism* ("the divine interpenetrates every part of nature and timelessly extends beyond it").⁵¹

And yet in the last two decades, the literature on inculturation has expanded so that today the main problem confronted by any student doing a paper on this topic is not the dearth of materials; instead, it is to choose from among a mountain-high collection. However, as one does a cursory review of the secondary literature one is confronted with a great majority of them "talking" about inculturation and very few dealing with the "walking" or explicit manifestations of it in the life of the church.

It is utterly frustrating to know that there has been very little institutional support on the part of official Church agencies which should have taken the lead in pushing for research and experimentation vis-à-vis inculturation. Compared to a number of countries in Africa and Latin America, there has been less initiatives in Asia, including the Philippines. This is so disappointing considering that the anthropological literature on various IP cultures in the country have become quite immense and all that the Church should do is tap on the existing literature.⁵²

⁵¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panentheism>, (accessed 25 September 2013).

⁵² Among the best are the following: *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art, Vol. 1 and 2* (Manila:CCP, 1997); Damiana Eugenio (ed). *Philippine Folk Literature: The*



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I posit that one way out of this *impasse* is a collaborative effort that would bring together church people with training in philosophy, anthropology, theology, religious and cultural studies to reflect on the lessons that need to be articulated in this field and come up with approaches that are practical for those in the field.⁵³

Those who are in the frontiers of possible contextualized liturgy among the *Lumad* have had *their* own experimentations with the support of their local Ordinary. But there are so few diocesan and religious missionaries immersed among the *Lumad*; in fact this number has decreased since the 1970s - 80s. Meanwhile, the *Lumad* statistics has gone up. As of the latest figures issued by the NCIP, the 2010 IP population in Mindanao totalled 7,165,432, making up 24% of the total population of Mindanao which stood at 21,968,174.⁵⁴

Among those who are in this field of ministry: only few are interested in seriously pursuing the inculturation field, partly because they lack training and know-how (both in anthropology and liturgical studies) and partly because the work is already quite voluminous; if they did, there is hardly any documentation that can be shared with others to popularize this movement.

One more reason why, possibly, little inculturation has been taking place among baptized IP communities is that compared to the 1970s-1990s when there was a liberation theology that provided the theological legitimization of the praxis, no clear-cut theology of

myths (Quezon City: UP Press, 1993), Nicole Revel (ed.), *Literature of Voice Epics in the Philippines* (Quezon City: ADMU Press, 2005); Herminia Meñez Coben, *Verbal arts in Philippine Indigenous Communities: Poetics, Society, and History* (Quezon City: ADMU Press, 2009), Leny Mendoza Stobel, *Babaylan, Filipinos and the Call of the Indigenous* (Davao City: Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publication Office, 2010), Shinzo Hayase, *Mindanao Ethnohistory Beyond Nations, Maguindanao, Sangir, and Bago Societies in East Maritime Southeast Asia* (Quezon City: ADMU Press, 2007), Herminia Meñez, *Explorations in Philippine Folklore* (Quezon City: ADMU Press, 1996), Stuart A. Schlegel, *Wisdom from a Redemptorist, The Spiritual Journey of an Anthropologist* (Quezon City, ADMU Press, 1999), and Manolete Mora, *Myth, Mimesis and Magic in the Music of the T'boli, Philippines* (Quezon City: ADMU Press, 2005).

⁵³ See Karl M. Gaspar, CSsR, "LUMADNONG KASAULOGAN (Indigenous Celebration): Bridging the Domains of a Creative Deity and our Imaginative Ancestry". Paper presented at the St. Vincent School of Theology, 11 May 2013.

⁵⁴ Data supplied by the NCIP Regional Office, Davao City. This figure is smaller than the 2007 projected Census by the NSO which stood at 8,860,236.



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inculturation has arisen to provide the same inspiration. Among those in the ECIP-IPA network, there has been little input provided in this particular field.

THE CHALLENGES FACING THOSE IN IPM

My proposition is that there is a need to interface inculturation with the persistence of the emancipatory project of liberation theology. First, I rely on the works of those in the West, namely Slavoj Žižek, M. J. Mejido, Thomas Lynch and Nelson Maldonado-Torres to guide me in this part of the paper.⁵⁵ Then I will deal with those of in Africa and Asia, namely, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Justin S. Ukpong and Aloysius Pieris.

In his essay, Lynch posits that the marriage between Marxism and theology in the 1950s gave birth to liberation theology in a continent where the “colonial rule began to collapse in the early 19th century” creating an institutional crises for the Latin American Church which until then was “identified with the wealthy and foreign rule” and which was able to maintain itself “through its influence on conservative members of the political and social elite”.⁵⁶

It was at the Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) in 1968 that marked “the apex of liberation theology, though it would never come to be the dominant form of Catholicism in Latin America” but its adherents became “an influential minority, both in the ecclesial hierarchy and in the political conflicts that dotted the region”.⁵⁷ Ten years later in the Puebla conference, “the peak of liberation theology’s ecclesial and political influence had passed”; (since

⁵⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003) and *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006); M.J. Mejido, “Beyond the Post-Modern Condition, or the Turn Toward Psychoanalysis,” in I. Petrella (ed.), *Latin American Theology: The Next Generation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “Liberation Theology and the Search for the Lost Paradigm”, in I. Petrella (ed.) *Latin American Theology: The Next Generation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005) and Thomas Lynch, “Religion and Revolution: Slavoj Žižek’s Challenge to Liberation Theology,” *International Journal of Žižek Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4.

⁵⁶ Lynch, 1.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2.



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Puebla, liberation theology has taken the form of what might be called identity theologies”.⁵⁸

A shift took place as liberation theology – which was conceived of as a universal theology that could be employed within the context of the whole continent – gave way to newer forms of liberation theology privileging specific contexts (e.g. queer, feminist, and indigenous liberation theologies). Thus “the earlier ... liberation theology focused on political economy; the newer forms... are focused on cultural identity”.⁵⁹

Mejido observes that liberation theology faced an *impasse* owing to internal and external tensions even as he distinguished this theology to that which is traditional. The latter, according to Mejido, can be categorized as a historical-hermeneutic science because they “have established theological knowledge through the interpretation of the meaning of transcendence” while he considers the former as a critically-oriented science since liberation theology was “never satisfied with the interpretation of the meaning of transcendence grasped through the restricted categories of praxis...(as it) establishes a theological knowledge that is interested in the making of transcendence”.⁶⁰

There had been a confusion of liberation theology’s role as a critically oriented science, according to Mejido, resulting in the frequent accusation of vulgar materialism as well as that of being charged with complicity in totalitarianism. Its presuppositions did not help to maintain its role as the first theology to move beyond the historical-hermeneutic sciences, arguing that this internal problem is composed of a dialectic between epistemological and empirical issues and underlying liberation theology’s core which is built on the relationship between theory and praxis.⁶¹

He further claims that liberation theology shifted more to an exclusively cultural critical role and thus becoming rooted in identity politics, the dialectical tension between *poiesis* and *praxis* disintegrated into a dualism leading to the growing neglect of the material-

⁵⁸ Ibid., 2-3.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁰ Mejido 2005, cited in Ibid., 6.

⁶¹ Ibid., 7.



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economic in favour of giving weight to the symbolic-cultural elements of oppression. For Mejido, there was a need to see once again the necessity of the fusion between the symbolic-cultural with the material-economic. He also insists that “the turn to the particular is achieved in and through a postmodern conception of culture grounded in language that annihilates the category of social labor that, as the universal, is what socio-historically mediates the particulars”.⁶²

It is therefore imperative for liberation theology to recuperate its original potency by rejecting the hermeneutic-historical model and recover its place in the critical oriented science; this is possible if liberation theology is not diluted into “the interpretation of popular knowledge, culture and religion as liberative”.⁶³ This is where he looks to Žižek’s theorizing – which “decries the relegation of Marx’s insights to the realm of cultural studies” - which does not turn to particularity but which recovers the meta-narrative of liberation. It also carries the warning that “the culture war is the displacement of a class war”.⁶⁴ Žižek, however, considers religion as one of the fields of struggle and a site of resistance, even as he gives primacy to the creative subject who can manipulate discourse even while s/he is shaped by it. For him, the real political conflict is between an ordered structure of society and those without a place in it.

In looking into the relationship between the universal struggle of liberation and the transformative activity of particular geographical or cultural communities, Žižek posits that the “truth of these struggles is not found in their particularity”; that these are “particular manifestations of a universal struggle for liberation”. Žižek acknowledges that the particularity is acknowledged in its universalism as these are specific sites of a universal struggle. For him, “Truth is always the Truth of a specific situation”; as “repressed specific sites... give opportunity to the potential burgeoning of universal subjectivity”.⁶⁵ He gives the example of the particularity of the struggle of African Americans as this relates to the universal struggle of the oppressed people. Thus, his view that the importance of the primary of the radical emancipatory project embedded in liberation

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁴ Žižek 2009, cited in Ibid.

⁶⁵ Žižek 2000, cited in Lynch, 6.



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theology should also be present in those theologies grounded in the particular.

In his over-all reading of Zizek, Lynch makes this evaluation:

In the course of analysing existent receptions of Zizek, (there are) three points at which Zizek intervenes on issues with liberation theology. First, liberation theology must not submit to the blackmail of liberal-democratic capitalism... Liberation theology's role is ...to deploy a critical theology in the name of egalitarian justice. Second, liberation theology must revisit the relation of material-economic conditions and cultural politics. Third, but inextricable from the second point, it must operate as a universal struggle manifested in particular situations. The task of speaking to the oppression of specific communities must be part of the broader liberation of the proletarian subject.⁶⁶

Oduyoye posits that it is the inculturation process that will make possible for African culture to be transformed by Christ. Based on her reflection on John 1:14, she refers to the Incarnation as the "unique theological factor that Christianity introduced into Africa".⁶⁷ She claims that their inculturation discourse cannot ignore their primal religions, especially if they were to ask if the God of their redemption is the same God of their creation.⁶⁸ She echoes the belief that traditional religions belong to the sphere of God's saving acts among us and that the theologizing in this field could interface with liberation theology.

For Ukpong, African theology involves the Africanization of Christianity.⁶⁹ Positing that "Christianity, to some extent, still remains an alien institution in Africa ... (as) it has not *seriously* involved the indigenous culture in its forms of expression and so is not truly indigenous" It is no wonder that in English-speaking Africa,

⁶⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Oduyoye appropriates the thoughts of E. G. Idowu in *Towards an Indigenous Church* (1956), 17. There is no data on the name and address of the publisher.

⁶⁹ Justin S. Ukpong, "African Inculturation Theology," *Voices from the Third World*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (December 1986).



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Christianity and African traditional religion were two systems that were closed to one another.⁷⁰ He further pointed out that Africa's evangelization did not seriously take into consideration the traditional religion and the people's basic mental disposition. It is in this context that "contemporary African theologians are seeking a new way of achieving an effective breakthrough in the communication of the Christian message to Africans – the way of serious indigenization, the way of integrating Christianity with the indigenous thought system".⁷¹

To have an integrity in his theological practice vis-à-vis inculturation, the African theologians must be "fully involved and this implies involvement in Christianity and in African culture, meaning they have to be informed by and formed in African culture."⁷² They are tasked to help Africans live out Christianity authentically within their cultural milieu; as Christianity is presented in a way congenial to the Africans' view of reality.

Along this line, Pieris makes a declaration. "Any liberation theology begins to be formulated only when a given Christian community begins to be drawn into the local peoples' struggle for *full humanity* and through that struggle begins to sink its roots in the lives and cultures of these people most of whom, in our continent, happen to be non-Christians. This is why we insist that inculturation and liberation, rightly understood, are two names of the same process!"⁷³ He further elucidates this position:

The Asian reality is an interplay of *Religiousness and Poverty*. Both elements have to take in their inter-relationship. Hence liberation of the Poor, their psycho-spiritual and socio-political emancipation from that which keeps them poor, is one essential concern in an Asian theology. Therefore, the indigenization of the Asian church can never take place if only one sector of the reality i.e., only the metacosmic religiosity is taken seriously.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁷¹ Ibid., 21.

⁷² Ibid., 23.

⁷³ Aloysius Pieris, S.J. "A Theology of Liberation in Asian Churches", *Voices from the Third World*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (December 1986), 53.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 55.



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Pierres provides a model as to how inculturation and liberation could interface with each other in Asia. This involves giving up on inculturation theologies mainly concerned with the philosophical speculations of non-Christian religious texts; instead, the thrust should be towards “theological communities of Christian and non-Christians who form basic human communities with the poor, sharing the common patrimony of a religiosity that their poverty generates”; they will then “interpret their sacred Texts in the light of their ‘religious’ aspiration for freedom.”⁷⁵

In the Philippines, there have been various attempts at interfacing the theological discourses of inculturation and liberation. One area has been in terms of dealing with popular religion or folk religiosity.⁷⁶ One looks forward to a Filipino theologian who would engage the texts of Reynaldo Ileto’s *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines 1840-1910* and come up with a theological reading which highlights the manner that the Pasyon narrative appropriated by poor peasants was inculturated in a context of a revolutionary agenda. This project will most certainly bring the narrative of a martyred historical Jesus and its dangerous memory into the very heart of whatever gets textualized.

Meanwhile, the other major challenge is to encourage theologians with an extensive experience of immersion among the *Lumad* communities to also be engaged in a parallel project which could empower church workers in the IP ministry to be engaged in inculturation that brings about emancipation of the *Lumad*.

One could foresee radical consequences if this project will come to pass. It could bring forth one scenario that Zizek envisioned: “It is possible today to redeem this core of Christianity only in the gesture of abandoning the shell of its institutional organization (and, even more so, of its specific religious experience). The gap here is irreducible; either one drops the religious form or one maintains the form, but loses the essence. That is the ultimate heroic gesture that

⁷⁵ Ibid., 70.

⁷⁶ For example: Fr. Ino Cueto, CSsR, “DEBO(MI)SYON: Celebrating the Spirit in/of Baclaran”; Albert E. Alejo, “Popular Spirituality as Cultural Energy,” in *Context and Expression of Filipino Spirituality, Lecture Series 3 on Spirituality* (Quezon City: ISA Publications, 2004); and Archie Ligo, “Liberation Themes in Philippine Popular Religiosity – A Case Study”, *Voices from the Third World*, Vol. XVI, No. 2.



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awaits Christianity; in order to save its treasure, it has to sacrifice itself – like Christ, who had to die so that Christianity could emerge.”⁷⁷ (Zizek 2003, 171)

EPILOGUE

Deep into the night when I stayed in the house of Pilo and his wife in *Bongmal* in the company of his brother Daguel, his mother Dia and a few neighbours, Pilo enthusiastically shared about his last visit to the parish convent in *Kiblawan*. Pilo was there to attend a parish meeting. The parish priest and a few lay leaders asked Pilo if the members of their *sitio* had thought about building a chapel in Bongmal. They had, but given the precarious situation in their village, the work has not begun. Everyone in that small circle then animatedly expressed their wish that the troubles would cease so they can plan in building a little chapel.

Pilo asked me who would be a good patron saint for their chapel. I was going to immediately suggest St. Francis of Assisi, considering the chaotic realities of *Bongmal* both in terms of the peace situation and the ecological crisis. Instead I suggested that they go back to the history of their tribe and recall an ancestor who they would choose to be their patron saint. They were amused with my suggestion. They didn't think I was serious. But, of course, I was.

Carlito M. Gaspar, CSsR
Redemptorist Center for Social and Ecological
Concerns/Alphonsian Lay
Formation Institute (Cebu Province)
Cebu City
Email: karlgaspar@gmail.com

⁷⁷ Zizek 2003, 171.