

# PEN AND PAPER, MIND AND HEART, HAND AND MIRROR: AN EXERCISE IN REFLEXIVITY

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## *Introduction*

The dissertation I wrote towards my master's degree entitled, *Contested Domains: Philippine National Law, Indigenous Peoples, and the Environment*, begins with a passage from chapter 13 of the de Bernieres novel, *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts*. Chapter 13 is about "The only way to turn a campesino into a gunman" :

"Campesinos do not become guerrillas for the same reasons as middle class intellectuals from towns. In the case of the latter, the theoretical conviction comes first, and is nourished by the long hours of involved conversation in cafes and student union refectories... (Campesinos) have no interest in ideas signified by long words, and rarely become guerrillas, because they accept things being the way they are..." (de Bernieres 1990: 98)

In the novel, de Bernieres then unfolds a story of two young brothers who avenge injustices inflicted upon them by corrupt encomendieros, then flee from home, and join a rebel faction, "becoming guerillas for the only reasons that campesinos ever become guerrillas: personal ones". (ibid: 105)

My intention at the time of writing was to point out a convergence between de Bernieres' fiction and the reality of the struggle of indigenous peoples to protect and assert their rights to land and life, leading to armed conflict. Ironically, I had inadvertently picked a paragraph that also described me. Namely: a young, middle-class intellectual who spent hours discussing theory and ethnography with colleagues over steaming cups of coffee or tea, with little or no experience on the things we discussed with such fervor. Indeed, I now wonder, had I been aware of the truth about myself that lay in this passage, would I have kept it in the beginning of my dissertation, or thrown it out?

As the principle of reflexivity would have it, such revelations on the identity of the anthropologist should be made explicit in the texts we write. It requires anthropologists to be aware of the ways in which our identities and positions color our observation and understanding of the lives we participate in during the period of fieldwork, and after fieldwork as well (Gardner 1999).

For some, reflexivity is now settled within the discipline as a 'comfortable convention' in the writing of ethnography (Whitaker 1996). However, its importance in anthropology came about through rather discomfiting critiques leveled at the discipline at various points of its history. Mainly, these critiques collapsed anthropology's claims to objectivity and neutrality under the charge that "the ethnographer's

own racial, national, political, financial, and professional position was inextricably at play in the process of recording and interpreting the field.” (ibid: 471) Further to this, the ethnographer’s identity and position, as perceived by the informants and host communities also affect the relationships that are formed. Making visible these previously invisible aspects of doing fieldwork and writing ethnography, allows for questions on the authority and privileged position and repercussions of anthropological study to be raised and addressed repeatedly, and in a myriad of ways.

Although I am as yet relatively inexperienced in the sphere of professional anthropology, thus far in my exploratory forays into the areas of environmental anthropology and political ecology I have found myself faced with such questions; questions which fill me with unease about anthropology and my participation in it. I will proceed from this point onwards by describing the circumstances of my ‘exploratory forays’, and I will raise the questions of which I speak along the way.

### *Pen and Paper*

It was a love for pen and paper that first brought me to anthropology. Here was a discipline that encompassed art, magic, ritual, community, organization, economy, technology, politics, science, and all the other things that I considered to be essential parts of human life. Anthropology would provide me with a framework through which to approach and understand these things, and as a self-professed idealist, I believed that understanding would help me contribute to the improvement of society. What’s more, anthropology would require me to write about my observations and analyses. And I loved writing. I never imagined that my being an anthropologist would lead me to question writing itself.

In the year 2000, I had the opportunity to write a dissertation for a master’s degree under the Department of Anthropology at the University of Kent at Canterbury. Since my return, many colleagues have expressed surprise that I have acquired a master’s degree, without going through the great anthropological *rite de passage* that is fieldwork. By anthropological convention, we write textual versions of realities we have previously immersed ourselves in. I was to write a text version before even experiencing the reality that it would depict.

I myself was perplexed when I was advised not to do fieldwork for my dissertation. It was explained to me that firstly, as a foreign student, it was imperative I complete the requirements for a master’s degree within a year. Secondly, the few months I had to write my dissertation would not do justice to the amount of fieldwork required for the piece I wanted to write. Thirdly, under the British system, research-writing skills was one of the main thrusts of the M.A. program. Emphasis on fieldwork would come later, with a Ph.D. I was advised to write a dissertation based on secondary material as a means for preparing myself with background information on the issues

that interested me, thereby laying the foundation for work which I could pick up for doctorate research in the near future.

And so I proceeded to write from afar, in much the same manner as armchair anthropologists of old: I read Philippine national laws pertinent to the issue at hand, perused ethnographies and papers on the Igorots, the ethnic group that I opted to focus on, and I discussed ancestral domains with people who had a hand in the formulation and application of the concept. I did not go into the field, to see for myself the ongoing interaction between indigenous peoples, the environment, and national law.

The research question of the dissertation was, *What are the implications of the laws on ancestral domains for the relationships between the nation-state, indigenous peoples, and the environment?* My reading of Philippine national laws was informed mainly by ideas of environmental governance in political ecology, and on anthropological analyses of law, 'indigenous peoples', and concepts of the environment arising out of particular constructions at given historical junctures. I treated Philippine national law, specifically the Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA), "as a privileged site in which to view the emergence and consolidation of new conceptual categories" (Jerome 1998), examining in particular the concepts indigenous peoples, ancestral domains, and environment or natural resources. I concluded that the IPRA fills a legal gap that was previously glaringly empty.

It is an Act drafted and enacted through a collaboration of lawmakers, indigenous leaders and advocates seeking to address the interests of indigenous peoples in the Philippines. The right to ancestral domains for indigenous peoples reverses the legal fiction of the Regalian Doctrine, which has enabled the State to declare occupied land public, and to appropriate it as inalienable property. The concept of ancestral domain offers indigenous peoples a way of securing their place in their territories.

However, the security afforded by a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) is a fragile one, providing indigenous peoples with little power in the face of an arsenal of conflicting laws which can be invoked by different departments of the government to serve their own interests, or encroach upon ancestral domains in the name of national development through natural resource exploitation. Moreover, a CADC comes with its costs and parameters; indigenous peoples may find they have to align themselves with the frame that has been constructed for them in national law. Some indigenous peoples argue that applying for a CADC is tantamount to relinquishing the intrinsic value and legitimacy of their own practices, beliefs, and customary laws, and admitting that their identities and life-ways need the legitimization of a higher authority – the nation-state (Gatmaytan 1992, Dinteg 1998).

Although the IPRA recognizes the "total environment" of indigenous cultural communities, including "spiritual elements", the predominant concept of the environment in national law is still 'environment as resource and property' and not environment as dwelling (Ingold 2000); the latter being a closer approximation of what the environment may be for a people, as opposed to what it could be

to a State. This internal conflict of national law is shaping the way indigenous peoples relate to the environment, and not necessarily in the ways that it intends to. National law mandates indigenous peoples to help manage the biodiversity of the Philippine environment sustainably, to the perhaps unexpected effect that indigenous peoples are pitted against industrialization and its proponents. Industrialization and modernization then become a form of development aggression. Thus, while the IPRA provides for the rights of indigenous peoples to decide how the natural resources within their territories are developed, it also restricts that development by appointing indigenous peoples as protectors of the environment (by virtue of their tradition). In this instance, biodiversity serves “as the focus on an ecocentric story in which human beings find themselves forced to play an ambiguous or unaccustomed supporting role” (Slater 1996: 116). National law may be inadvertently encouraging indigenous peoples to view the environment as an external resource which can be owned, bought, sold, and exploited in ways which customary law may not have provided for previously.

In addition, indigenous peoples may feel that they have to express themselves and their relationships with the environment in terms that are recognized and valid in governmental discourse, in order to be understood and supported by government officials. This leads to a chain of misunderstanding that embodies the structuralist-functionalist folk model Benda-Beckmann (1993) implicates in the scapegoat/magic charm constructions of folk law and development. The result is government and non-government workers’ misconceptions, which in turn could lead them to formulate inappropriate policies or projects (Benda-Beckmann 1993, Wiber 1991).

Policy makers and development planners (and anthropologists, too) hold a teleological view of law as having the capacity to prescribe and effectively change behavior through incentives and sanctions, and yet implementation shows that policies and laws rarely produce the expected results. When the anticipated change in behavior does not take place, new laws are generated. Both national law and customary law are implicated in this process, either as hindrance to or solution towards progress – scapegoat or magic charm (ibid).

There are other ways in which the IPRA may undermine rather than support what little political power indigenous peoples have. For example, they may be compelled to present themselves as indigenous cultural communities fitting the definitions and assumptions inscribed in national law because this is the only way for them to gain access to the rights promised them by the State and international organizations (Ingold 2000). Furthermore, the requirement in IPRA and its Implementing Rules and Regulations for authentication of indigenous cultural communities, census taking of their members and mapping of their ancestral domains echoes what Benedict Anderson (1991) refers to as the “grammar” of the colonial enterprise.

Anderson discusses three institutions of power that embody this grammar: the census, the map, and the museum. The census and the

process of authentication serve “the fiction... that everyone has one – and only one – extremely clear place” (Anderson 1991: 166); under the IPRA, that place for indigenous cultural communities is the ancestral domain. In turn, the ancestral domain is delineated and legitimized through the drawing of boundaries on a map. However, as James Fairhead and Melissa Leach point out, “there are a plethora of ways of representing landscape history and dynamics” (1996:14). Furthermore, the boundaries identified and known to indigenous peoples may not coincide with the political and administrative boundaries mapped by the government. For example, traditional boundaries were not followed when provinces and municipalities were delineated and revised for administrative purposes by various governments through history. Some communities have found out in the process of mapping their territories that it is not clear whether they belong to one municipality or another.

Finally, the idea of the museum lies in the assumption that indigenous cultural communities are repositories of tradition. Naming tradition as one of the attributes of indigenous peoples overlooks the ways in which they have incorporated national law, for instance, with customary law. Legal pluralism is one of the way in which indigenous peoples “have dealt with, resisted, subverted or lived with (national policy)” (Fairhead and Leach 1996: 12). The IPRA could reduce the freedom with which indigenous peoples have protected their territories and chosen to transform their traditions and shape the ways in which they relate to their environments, or ‘develop’ or ‘protect’ them, as the government would have it.

The concept of ancestral domains is one of “a certain number of projects whose aim,” according to Foucault, “is to modify some constraints, to loosen, or even to break them, but none of these projects can, simply by its nature, assure that people will have liberty automatically, that it will be established by the project itself. The liberty of men is never assured by the institutions and laws that are intended to guarantee them. This is why almost all of these laws and institutions are quite capable of being turned around” (Foucault in Rabinow 1984: 245).

In a nutshell, the concept of ancestral domains in the IPRA constitutes a promise of self-governance and empowerment for indigenous peoples. Paradoxically, the Act which enshrines this empowerment is equally capable of taking indigenous peoples rights to self-determination and whittling the promise of self-governance down to a process of subjection and legitimization through the external entities imbued with authority by national law.

To be sure, that the IPRA has been brought into existence in the Philippines is a milestone in indigenous peoples’ quest for self-governance, empowerment, the right to their territories and the right to benefit from the natural resources within them. However, the conclusions I have drawn in this dissertation may stand together as a caveat to indigenous peoples, advocates, and policy-makers in the Philippines and in other nation-states against the ambiguity and two-fold aspects of law in general, and environmental governance in particular. Certainly the way that relationships between peoples and

environments are constructed in law will have repercussions in peoples' lives and in the way that justice, rights and power are distributed through the many levels of society. And yet, the ambiguity that is built into these laws, whether intended or not, leaves much room for interpretation. Whether the interpretations and implementations that arise out of this space bring about justice or genocide depends largely on the actions and vigilance of people, more than on the structure and intent of national law itself.

All of this I formulated from a distance and I felt it was the best I could muster, being away from the things I wrote about. Interestingly, one of my examiners accusingly referred to it as a "purely academic exercise", when this was in fact what I'd set out to do, given that there was to be no fieldwork undertaken for this paper. It was also pointed out that my conclusion on the actions of people being the final determinant of liberty, actually contradicted the power that I attributed to law in my introduction. The examiner remarked that he 'suspected' I was an idealist from the beginning, and that he was proven right upon reading my conclusion.

The feedback I received on the dissertation was incisive and heuristic, all together helpful in showing me the strengths and weaknesses of my work. And while I agreed that it was mainly an academic exercise, no more no less, the comments left niggling questions behind. When the examiner said that he 'suspected' I was an idealist, it was as though it was unacceptable for my own personal convictions to shine through in anthropology. On the other hand, I felt I was not capable of writing without personal conviction, without my heart in it. I asked myself, Does anthropology require us to erase our personal convictions from the text? If I am an idealistic individual, does it then mean that I do not have what it takes to write 'objective' anthropological texts, or does it mean that I would have to erase the slightest hint of my own emotions and leanings from my texts? Or give up on ethnography and write fiction instead? And this is how anthropology brought me to question the craft of writing as a form of self-expression. Suddenly writing, anthropologically, at least, was transformed into self-suppression. While I appreciate that anthropological writing is disciplined writing, I cannot help wondering where our emotions must lie, if not in the pages of our ethnographies, our most highly valued product? Must anthropological texts be all mind, and no heart?

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to spend a short period of time among the Tagbanuas of Coron Island, in the Calamianes, Northern Palawan. The story of the Tagbanuas is by now a famous case, often cited in discussions on ancestral domains, environmental conservation, marine resources, sustainable living, and indigenous peoples' rights. In 1998 they were awarded their Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC), which recognized their rights to over 22,000 hectares of land and sea. At the time of my stay with them, they had been told that they would be awarded their title shortly. They are still waiting. The case was exceptional for the Tagbanuas are the

first indigenous peoples in the Philippines to be given a CADC that includes the sea.

### *Mind and Heart*

During the time I was there with them, a few things from my dissertation leaped out at me from the pages I wrote. I saw some of the things I commented upon on paper, at work in the actions of people around me. In some instances there was reassuring concurrence between reality as it unfolded, and my text-version of it. My point on different government agencies invoking different laws and powers to contradict the IPRA and serve their own interests was confirmed. One instance was the filing of local congressmen to have the area covered by the CADC significantly reduced, just shortly after it was awarded. The Tagbanuas lamented, "It was government that gave us our CADC, and now it is government that is up against our CADC."

On the other hand, there were also glaring gaps between what I had assumed and what was actually taking place. For example, I had hastily labeled the map as part of a grammar of colonialism. However, in the hands of the Tagbanua community and the Philippine Association for Inter-cultural Development (PAFID), the NGO<sup>1</sup> that assisted them in mapping their domain, the map had become quite something else. Creating maps, especially one large three-dimensional map based on a topographic one, was an empowering experience for the community. It enabled them to add on another way of knowing their domain to their already intimate knowledge and experience of Coron island and the sea surrounding it. In my dissertation, I wrote a somewhat harsh critique of the IPRA not realizing that for some people, IPRA was the dividing line between a way of life and its death. I criticized IPRA's shortcomings, even as indigenous peoples celebrated its promise. And after meeting with several people and sharing in a miniscule part of their lives, I can no longer re-read my dissertation without a tinge of embarrassment.

Other portions of my dissertation, when contrasted with the reality it purported to discuss, posed not gaps, nor bridges, but questions on the role of the anthropologist in issues of authority and authenticity, feelings, and the research enterprise itself. I only touched on these things briefly in my dissertation, but they also made the heaviest impression on me during my brief spell of fieldwork among the Tagbanua.

### *There's Research... and then There's Research*

I went to Coron as part of a team of researchers working under a doctorate candidate from the Joint Center for Urban Development at Oxford Brookes University. We were there to assist in the gathering of data for a doctoral dissertation entitled *Philippine Cultural Heritage and the Vernacular Built Form in Development: Coming to Terms with Cultural Diversity in a Nation-State*.<sup>2</sup> As research coordinator and assistant, I was asked to contact the Tagbanuas since I had visited them once before when I tagged along with the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism during a shoot for its recently completed documentary on indigenous

peoples, Katutubo. When I approached Rodolfo Aguilar, chairman of the Tagbanua Foundation of Coron Island, for the research, he asked me to submit a proposal explaining the objectives and the procedures of the research, which he would then present to the community, particularly the *mamepet*, the elders. If it were entirely up to him, he explained, there would be no problem. But he was not the community and the final decision had to be theirs.

Shortly after I sent a short paper on the research, Chairman, as everybody calls him including his wife, invited me to go to Coron ahead of the research team, to introduce the research there myself. I did so and with the help of Chairman, barangay officials, and some NGO-workers in the area, I visited different households and spoke about the research. Interestingly, I got mixed reactions ranging from “Oh research? No problem, we’re used to that,” to “Research again? We’re sick and tired of research. We give and give to research but we get nothing in return.”

The Tagbanuas voiced a criticism of the benefits of research as being unilateral. They knew that researchers came, asked questions, and then left, never to be seen nor heard from again. Maybe some of them came back, but often it was only to do more research, or to ask more questions, with the exception of a few who came back to share or validate research results. At any rate, it was accepted that we would be coming and the research would take place. I am not sure whether they truly wanted us to come, or were simply resigned to the research since my being there made it look like a done deal.

My companions followed and we were able to capture 30 semi-structured interviews on video. Our respondents were for the most part generous of their time and knowledge, but not a few of them took the opportunity to voice their disillusion with research, and their hopes that this time in our case, we could really help them. “Help” ranged from addressing the issue of lack of schools and teachers for Tagbanua children, to simply heightening people’s awareness of their plight through information dissemination. We were careful to correct any misconceptions on the kind of ‘help’ we were capable of giving.

Once there we realized our presence in Coron was timely. We were able to witness certain events unfolding which may have fallen out of the sphere of cultural heritage as defined by the research proponent, but which nevertheless impinged upon cultural heritage and had serious implications for the future management of the Coron Island CADC. At the time of our arrival, a controversy was boiling over on the Kayangan Lake in Coron Island.

Kayangan is one of seven breathtakingly beautiful lakes on the island. It has been awarded the Cleanest and Greenest Lake in the Philippines twice.<sup>3</sup> Because of its accessibility from Coron town, on Busuanga island, the lake is the main attraction and star feature of local tour operators’ packages. To the Tagbanuas, the lakes or *awuyuk* on the island are sacred and to be treated with respect. In the past it was common for people who wished to go to the *awuyuk* to approach an elder to be blessed and prayed over beforehand. This is



not practiced much in the present. However, the Tagbanuas point out that they still treat the *awuyuk* with a great deal of respect and care because these are the watering grounds of the *balinsasayaw*, the swifts whose nests they gather and sell for the famed Chinese bird's nest soup.

The Tagbanuas had set up an office in town, as part of a visitor management program. Through this office they intended to collect an environmental tax, or permit fees from tour operators and individual tourists who went to visit the lake.<sup>4</sup> They also imposed a limit to the number of people that could visit Kayangan Lake to 40 a day<sup>5</sup>, to ensure that the ecosystem would not be overburdened with swimmers covered in insect repellent and suntan lotion.

Tour operators were furious to learn that not only did they now have to pay the Tagbanuas to visit Kayangan Lake but they also had to cut down drastically on the number of guests they could take in a day. The largest count of visitors to the lake was 500+ heads a day during the Holy Week of 2001. The tour operators refused to cooperate with the Tagbanuas without intercession from the local government.

The local government initially requested that the Tagbanuas stop operations until the Sangguniang Bayan had studied the matter fully. The Tagbanuas refused to stop operations reasoning that it was very difficult to begin and stopping, even momentarily, would be tantamount to giving up. Members of the local government unit, including the municipal mayor, pleaded ignorance on the IPRA and so did the tour operators. They claimed that they were refusing to cooperate because they did not know that IPRA gave the Tagbanuas the rights to assert themselves in such a manner.

In response to this claim, the Tagbanuas and PAFID organized an orientation on the IPRA. The orientation was endorsed by Ambassador Howard Dee of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Indigenous Peoples' Affairs (OPAIPA). It was facilitated by members of various NGOs, and a newly appointed commissioner from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. The tour operators and local government officials were invited, and so was our research team. The Tagbanuas said they wanted us to be there to witness and record the event. An attendance sheet was passed around the town sports coliseum where the event was held. In a moment of whimsy I signed "anthropologist" under my "position". Apparently this was special enough to merit mention when one of the facilitators ran down a generalized list of who were present at the orientation. Namely, the Tagbanuas, other katutubos, only one Sangguniang Bayan member, the mayor, other municipal government officials, the tour operators, members of national press, NGO workers, and one anthropologist.

### *Authority and Authenticity*

I felt that our immediate purpose there was to give moral support to the Tagbanua community, and this was a very partisan way of looking at the whole event. However, it was not clear to me whether the Tagbanuas actually attributed any value to my being an anthropologist

and now I wonder why the facilitator considered it worthwhile mentioning there was an anthropologist in the audience. For what purposes, and to whom, did my presence as an anthropologist count? What quality, if any, did my “position” lend to the whole affair? I was not called upon to make any comments or contribute but my presence was made known – not *my* presence per se, but the presence of *an anthropologist*. What does the presence of anthropologists stand for, in the view of non-anthropologists in such negotiations and contestations of rights as this event encapsulated?

The data we collect and the ethnographies we generate are listed in the IPRA as one of the proofs that indigenous peoples may submit to the NCIP accompanying their ancestral domain claim. Some one once jokingly remarked that this may lead to every indigenous community wanting its own resident anthropologist. This ties in with complex questions on matters of authority and authenticity; a point I raised in my dissertation. I was pleased then to find some confluence between my paper and what was happening on the ground, but for the present I am more concerned with questions of ethics and responsibility. What are the implications of the studies we conduct now that they are sanctioned in law, in the IPRA, as proof of a people’s ‘authentic’ indigenoussness? What kind of responsibility does this confer on us? Is it any different from the responsibility and ethic we purport to carry as professional social scientists?

While this authority may give us a measure of power to support or refute indigenous claims, depending on where we stand and how we go about it, to other sectors or individuals, this power does not matter at all. For some, the final word is still the government’s and no one else’s. At the IPRA orientation in Coron town, one of the leaders of the tour operators took the microphone and asked whether the orientation was endorsed by the President herself, and whether the people giving the orientation were assigned by Howard Dee himself, and whether they were there in their capacity as staff for the OPAIPA, or was it merely a NGO organized event? When the reply came that the Tagbanuas and PAFID organized it with support from OPAIPA, but not with the President’s endorsement, the tour operator said that he could not afford to spend the rest of his day there and he and the other tour operators left, saying they knew the IPRA forwards and backwards and didn’t need an orientation, what they wanted was mediation and a decision by government on the Kayangan Lake issue.

*Where does the heart go in the field?*

This ongoing conflict between the Tagbanuas and the tour operators fuelled many unsavory and painful confrontations which I witnessed. In one instance a fuming tour operator walked into the Tagbanua office and demanded an explanation of the fees. The exchange between her and Chairman ran along these lines:

Tour operator: *Aanbin nyo ba ang pera?* (What are you going to do with the money?)

Chairman: *Poprotektaban namin ang lugar naming mga Tagbanua.*  
(We will protect our place.)

Tour operator: *Bakit? Mga Tagbanua ba talaga kayo? Kaya nyo ba? Kaya nyo bang patigilin ang mga bungbung at sodium?* (Why? Are you really Tagbanuas? Can you do it? Can you stop the illegal dynamite and cyanide fishing?)

Chairman: *Kaya kung magtutulungan tayo, kung may partnership tayo.* (We can if we help each other, if we had a partnership.)

Tour operator: *Kami, makikipagpartner sa inyo? I don't think so!* (Us, have a partnership with you? I don't think so!) *Sige, isarado nyo nalang ang Kayangan!* (Go ahead, just close Kayangan Lake)

Chairman: *Sarado lang kami sa sarado mag-isip.* (We are only closed to those with closed minds)

Throughout this exchange the woman spoke at the top of her voice and would not address Chairman with even a shred of respect. My heart was pounding and it was all I could do to keep from interfering because I felt it was not my place and already Chairman was handling it very well. I was filled with anger, frustration, and pain. I wanted to lash out at something, someone, but I did not have a legitimate target and if there was anyone there who could have lashed out, it was the Tagbanuas who witnessed their leader being treated with disrespect and who heard their very identity being questioned. They held back with admirable self-restraint but the declarations of anger were vehement after she left. Chairman remained calm all throughout, though I do not doubt that this and similar encounters exhausted him.

I did not know where to put the feelings that arose in me each time I witnessed such unequal, volatile exchanges. There were many, and the Tagbanuas had many stories to tell about previous, similar confrontations and taunts. Prejudice in Coron runs deep. This kind of prejudice has no place in anthropology, and yet when we are faced with it in the field, what do we do? Where do we put the feelings that arise in response to prejudice against the people we study? Conversely, what do we do when the people we study are themselves prejudiced?

When we enter the field, we are not only entering a different space and a different way of life, we are also entering a field of emotions – our own and those of the people whose lives we enter. Many of these emotions can be visceral and have profound effects on the worldview of both the researcher and the researched. Yet when we write ethnographies, where do the emotions go?

H. Arlo Nimmo writes, and I quote, that “Probably every anthropologist who has ever conducted field research thinks that he or she has a novel, or at least a short story, among the experiences encountered in the field. We swap these stories with one another at professional meetings, include them in our cocktail party repertoire, or share them with our students. But ironically, most of them never reach

the articles and monographs we publish – ironic because they are often among the most significant experiences of our lives... When I at last tried my hand at fiction, I was finally able to speak from my reservoir of experiences and to delve into the missing dimensions of my years in the field.” (Nimmo 1994: viii-ix).

It is ironic indeed, that it is through fiction that the deep ‘truths’ about how we feel come out of the woodwork. Nimmo states that “the tradition of anthropological writing did not allow the expression of those other things...” (ibid). Now ‘those other things’ are invading the pages of anthropology. It is becoming clear that the anthropological mind cannot tick without a pulse.

### *Hand and Mirror*

Similarly, if we were to deny the connection between heart, mind, and hand, the anthropological hand (for we do like to think that we have a hand in the scheme of things) would be paralyzed. Here I take the hand to represent our other actions, apart from wielding pen and paper. Our discipline makes claims to being useful and relevant, having an effect on the world outside the walls of academe. And yet we keep these walls standing, and we keep them high, only to step through the heavy gates from time to time as advocates with something to present or re-present, or something to contribute to policy-making. These two appear to be our favorite claims.

In a brief survey of the literature on anthropologists’ advocacy and involvement in political ecology, there appears to be a division of anthropologists – and this is to be simplistic about it – into three general groupings. First there are those who sound a call for anthropological involvement but do not directly state the nature of their own engagement (Milton 1996, Croll and Parkin 1992). Then there are those who are deeply engaged in participative development and similar endeavors, and who write about the issues, practicalities and methodologies of their involvement (Pottier 1993, Grillo and Stirrat 1997, Gardner and Lewis 1996, Alejo 2000). Lastly, there are those who acknowledge engagement, but only up to a certain degree, in as far as the writing of ethnographies, the dissemination of accurate information, and the (re-)presentation of diverse views and social realities are a form of advocacy (Brosius 1999, Rowlands in Wade 1996).

In this sense, all anthropologists are advocates, whether we like it or not. Constant reference is made to the “valuable insights” of anthropologists, but what is done with the valuable insights? Even if my dissertation was right about some things, what good is it to the Tagbanuas in their struggle? To LGU officials in their efforts to understand? What use is it if it remains in libraries and within the academic circles in which we walk and talk? What exactly is the value of insight, or how does this value translate from a text-version of reality into something which has a positive effect on the world into which it affords a view?

“Policy’ is the easy and obvious answer. Shankland (2001: 2) observes that “anthropologists are convinced that they have something special to offer to policy-makers, to business, and to politicians.... Anthropologists are asserting that they have something to share... When asked what, precisely, that ‘something’ might be, anthropologists increasingly appear to proclaim that it is their interpretation, a view, a vision of cultural plurality that is in some way unique...”.

However, Shankland points out that ideas, interpretations, and visions spread quickly and sharply and cannot be monopolized by nor bound to a discipline. Our possible contribution to the world, he says is not in some anthropology-specific world view, but rather, in our fieldwork: “in the meticulously gathered, highly specialised, often empirically surprising or new, micro-ethnography of communities that have been misrepresented, misunderstood, or simply inadequately researched,” which comes out of a “much more individual ethic.”

Alejo invites us, not just to dream but to try our hand at “a kind of fieldwork practice that would not try to tame people into informants just to prove, improve, or disprove a theory, or fill a gap in academic narratives; one that would not aim simply at constructing or deconstructing a discourse; one that does not reserve flexibility and reflexivity only for future textualization of experience; one that would not be trapped within the demands of mutual disciplining and self-disciplining of researcher and researched, but would co-create new spaces from which new practices of freedom could emerge” (2000: 266).

Before today our discipline has been called a mirror for man. Now, let anthropology be a mirror for anthropologists as well. This is not a call to navel-gazing, but by paying attention to the mirror, we may find that our pens, papers, hearts, and minds, and not just the mirror, are in need of some dusting and polishing.

### *Endnotes*

- 1 The participation and presence of NGOs in fieldsites formerly monopolized by anthropologists is another interesting issue, but one which is out of the scope of the present paper.
- 2 The premise of the research was that the problem with the majority, if not all of the nation’s development projects is that they only pay lip service to cultural heritage and cultural diversity, if at all. Aiming to reverse this somehow, the researcher wanted to gather data on cultural heritage from two communities as different from each other as possible: namely, Sadanga, Mt. Province, and Coron, Palawan. From this data, she hopes to come up with a different plan, which would build *with* cultural heritage, rather than bury it under rubble. Of course, this plan would have to be approved by the communities as accurate, as depicting their own ideas of ‘development’ or change for the better, and as fitting their own future aspirations. Seen in this light the success of the plan, and the dissertation ultimately rests on the communities’ approval, rather than on the panel of examiners alone. The doctorate candidate intends to return to the communities in January 2003 to make an initial presentation.
- 3 Both times, the award was reaped by the local government, which had entered the lake in the competition.
- 4 It was widely said in Coron town that the fees would only be spent on alcohol

consumption, a bad habit the Tagbanuas were falsely accused of having. According to the visitor management program, the fees would go towards the expenses of maintaining pump boats to patrol the ancestral domain, supporting the watchmen, and maintaining the office. The Tagbanuas hope to eventually raise enough funds to begin a scholarship program for deserving Tagbanua youth.

- 5 This number has been contested on all sides. The Tagbanuas finally pinpointed that they needed to have a scientific research conducted in the lake to determine once and for all what its actual carrying capacity was. This is an interesting case of a community specifying the type of research they would welcome according to their perceived needs. Conservation International has since offered to fund this research.

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