



Macario Lacbawan

REGIMES OF CONTENTION

*Resistance and the Governmentality
of Resources in Indigenous Philippines*

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und Ressourcenregime

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Regimes of Contention

Schwächediskurse und Ressourcenregime
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Macario Lacbawan

Regimes of Contention

Resistance and the Governmentality of Resources in
Indigenous Philippines

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Preface

By the time this work finds its way into readers' hands, the world it describes is almost like a foreign place. The end of my fieldwork was the start of Rodrigo Duterte's entry into Philippine politics. Suddenly, like an unstoppable juggernaut, he came forward turning things upside down, fusing his moral truth as a standard recipe for how to live one's life. Lifeless bodies started to pile on the streets and gutters of Manila's slums, and the temerity to put an alternative to his politics was easily curbed with bullets and clandestine figures in the night snatching people from their bed. Bodies became indistinguishable from filth, from the rats that crisscrossed the roads, and from the crowd of the poor that was fused and made into an entity not different from garbage ready to be disposed of without a second thought. It was as if death was not an abnormal entity that brought us constantly into a state of existential crisis and that living was the mark of exceptionality. But if we step back a little, even with a tiny shift in our orientation, what we find is a world that has not changed, a power that constantly grapples with questions of difference, of imposing order over alterity. Until now, I still have no idea what this work is about, what it wants to describe, and what kind of moral truth it tries to ground itself. Is it in power, in subjectivity, in resistance? In many ways, this is a description of alterity and the violence created to make it into a uniformity, into a violent singularity of life. Because the history of power as we come to know is a history of erasure and the erection of sameness. A uniform definition of relationship to the land. A standardized process on how to live one's existence. An uncomplicated connection to authority.

The conclusion of my fieldwork in the Philippines' Cordillera was marked by bewilderment. It was confusing enough that it could even upend this work's very argument, if there is any. I watched in awe as the village where CPLA was first conceived voted overwhelmingly in 2016 to support Duterte's running mate for vice-president, Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Until now, the 90% of the vote that was given to the son of the previous dictator who wanted to inundate the village is unfathomable. How can one forget so easily? How can the villagers thrust their approval to him while sitting on the

same humble public space where, more than three decades ago, their grandparents decided to engage in a talk with the government that ended in the cancellation of an infrastructural behemoth that would have buried their rice paddies if it were constructed without their opposition? The reader will not find explanations for any of these events in this work. But what is central to the following description is an account of a different kind of humanity and how the postcolonial state has violently suppressed this alterity to pursue development projects. A suppression that was anchored in molding a group of indigenous peoples into a population, into a subject of an authority, which suppressed rather than tolerated differences.

Michel Foucault (1991) has long noted the emergence of population as the new focus of a governmental rule that seeks to normalize life based on new ethics of growth, cultivation, and propagation. This is what indigeneity has come to experience in the 21st century, although in a different sense. Being indigenous now somehow morphs into a cold bureaucratic standard, far from being a remnant of its previous emancipatory politics that demands and engages. For the state, to be indigenous entails a set of regiments of care that pretends to be liberating but, in truth, contributes to an iron cage of unachievable expectations. We witness this expected care for indigenous communities around the world. Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro promised to open the Amazon to take care of the indigenous communities while allowing the conversion of the forest into a commodity that fueled economic growth and capital accumulation. Donald Trump endorsed the gas pipelines to pass through indigenous lands in South Dakota, and in Australia, sacred indigenous lands were decimated into ashes to open mines. All these were done to accentuate specific kinds of care, one in which being indigenous was seen as a liability that must be shed off like old wrinkled snakeskins. Care, in these instances, only appeared through an act of negation, a deduction of that which was considered unworthy so that existence in the form of capital accumulation can come into fruition.

These were not different from the old colonial discourse of the wretched native in need of intervention from a good colonizing Samaritan. Caring became an unbearable burden for the state, so much so that when it failed to materialize, the latter entered into psychological paralysis. But the paralysis emanated from an unfulfilled fantasy created by itself to justify its existence. Here, we witnessed something more cunning and emergent in how indigeneity is conceived nowadays. As the actual scale of devastation from climate change starts to manifest, there is a scramble for solutions in all conceivable

forms. We have the more damning neo-liberalization of care by devolving the responsibility for one's life to the individual. But an even more prescient step is the current unproblematic exaltation of indigenous peoples as the keeper of everything there is needed to survive in a world filled with destruction. Suddenly, the world now talks about the indigenous taking care of the forest or a steward of a fragile ecosystem. The scientific community is not immune to this fantasy, given how anthropologists celebrate the search for alternatives and for other indigenous ontologies that will show the capitalist world how to commune with nature. Being indigenous is seen as resilient lives under ruins, an existence that is always at the cusp of ruins but can devise modes of coping to deal with the precarity of an ever-destructive world (Chandler/Reid 2020). By looking into these mechanisms of resilient survivability, the modern world could be taught how to continue living in a world that is made precarious by environmental destruction. The indigenous communities have become the pinnacle of perfectly resilient but precarious life, a stark contrast to its assumed wretchedness in the colonial period.

What is the caveat? This abandons the indigenous peoples because it renders absent the painful realities inside indigenous lives, which are violent derivatives of the same colonial discourse of the noble indigenous subject. Indigenous communities teach the modern world about how to live, and there is nothing to say about indigenous peoples themselves. The latter became the epitome and assumed not to fail because it has to be perfect. In this ideal existence in a ruinous world, there are no serious engagements about indigenous communities' internal struggles for a minimum standard of a dignified life. There is a conspicuous awareness of the undignified situation of indigenous communities around the world, but it does not prefigure in this global fantasy about the resilient indigenous population. In effect, what appears on the horizon for indigenous communities is an ethics that essentially abandons them to perish without a trace. My goal for writing this book is to illuminate this ethics of abandonment, the kind of demands it produces, the lives it creates and renders absent or, at worst, disposable.

Writing this work may seem like a purely individual effort that unfolds without any interruption from an author's thoughts and down to its finality as words. But to anyone who has gone through the challenge of flagellating themselves with the objective of producing something written is fooling himself for thinking so. This work, like any other attempt at describing the world, is not without the anchors and directions that I received from different people. I give my full credit to individuals who contributed to polishing

the arguments of this work. I extend my gratitude to our project leader, Susanne Schröter, and a former colleague, Gunnar Stange. Elsa Clave has likewise stirred the direction of this work by reminding me of my responsibility not only to theory but also to facts.

I also thank the various workshops and research groups that provided me the opportunities to present some of my key ideas. The 2016 International Summer School on the Commons at Nicosia in Cyprus, the 2017 International Summer School in Political Anthropology in Italy, and the innovative summer workshop on rurality at Telciu, Romania in 2016 lent their critical spaces as testing sites for my thoughts.

My heartfelt gratitude is also offered to the SFB 1095, especially to Miah Duong, who assisted me with the financial support for my fieldwork. I also thank Miryam Schellbach, Barbara Stüdemann, and Catharina Heppner, the staff of Campus Verlag who were extremely patient and understanding during the editorial process. To my Tuesday writing group (Faraha, Ali, Yuma, Hamza, Aziza, and Jean), my Offenbach comrades (Duc, Taeok, Daniela, Daniel, Hoang, and Bang), Donna Dulnuan, Venus de Peralta, Fatima Molina, Cristina Fagsao-Madco, Von Pangwi, Ivory Catama, Marianne Liagon, Job Manalang, Vida Cortez, Julie Milo, Carmi Caramto, Bryan Catama, Nelwyn Tejada, Ana San Jose, Werner Binder, Dominik Bartmanski, Nadya Jaworsky, Tusher Shohel, Prem Kumar Rajaram, Jean-Louis Fabiani, Dorit Geva, SaifUllah Nasar, Nikhil Mathew, Kristina Uzelac, and Ali Ijaz, I am giving you all my gratitude for the countless ideas that helped clarify my arguments. To the Coria-en family, who offered me their residence when I was conducting fieldwork in Sadanga, and to Rachanne Cadwising, Frances Calde, and Jessica Carino, who helped me wade through the bureaucratic intricacies of securing government data, thank you.

Above all else, I am deeply indebted to individuals who helped me piece this work into an argument with their personal stories. Much as I would want to name all of them, the security concern that such revelation entails might not work in their favor. Some research respondents who left this earthly existence are no longer here to verify if this work manages to capture the entirety of their story. With all humility, I hope this has done the proper job of documenting a struggle, from its inchoate form and to the current path it has chosen to take. To all of you, I extend my deepest gratitude. I dedicate this work to my parents, *Lakunday* and *Binaten*, and my siblings, *Alicop*, *Angin*, *Mimi*, and *Odama*. For *Macli-ing Dulag*.

1. Janus in the Mountains

1.1 Table of Parallel Contentions

April 24, 2017, Mt. Data Hotel, Northern Philippines: From a distance, I watched Ereneo¹ as he sat next to the current Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA) Chairman, Mario Antonio. He would slowly fold his arms if someone spoke and patiently straightened the helms of what looked like new black CPLA fatigues. It may be the novelty of the place that made him uncomfortable or the unusual chatter of journalists who were glued to Mario's speech. The venue was not foreign to any observers of Cordillera's history as this place witnessed the tipping point of CPLA's indigenist insurgency after its founder, Conrado Balweg, entered into an agreement on September 13, 1986, with then Philippine President, Corazon Aquino, to stop the hostilities between the government's force and his group. CPLA's "political contention"² at those moments was emblazoned by a call to arm to establish an autonomous Cordillera region after the previous authoritarian rule of Ferdinand Marcos tried to expropriate the Chico River and the tribal villages situated along its banks to construct four behemoths hydroelectric dam. The CPLA is unique because its "repertoire of contention"³ is culled from a blatant weaponization of tradition and a violent refusal to heed the solidarity

1 Names of places and people are changed to protect their identity. Otherwise, names of known public (e.g. Conrado Balweg) figures are retained.

2 Political contention is a term that I borrowed from Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow to refer to the making of claims by an individual or a group to another entity. It involves subjects who make claims, an object to whom the claim is directed, and the claim. The emphasis on contention as a form of action underscores the highly performative nature of claiming as it involves mostly series of actions done in specific space. A contention becomes political when a claim directly involves the government. It could take the form of street protest, picketing, boycott, and the more violent forms of claiming such as armed-resistance. For more discussion, refer to Tarrow/Tilly (2015), *Contentions Politics*.

3 Repertoire of contention refers to the agglomeration of tactics and tools used by an actor to make a claim. For example, the use of internet and open public demonstration by the

offered by the Philippines' equally restive militant left, the New Peoples' Army (NPA). Stripped to its basic political claim, the CPLA found the appropriation of Cordillera's resources as an injustice to what is posited as pre-state ownership of tribal communities to indigenous resources. Its call to arm, hence, was to repossess these domains using customary ways and under the presumption that being indigenous as a political subjectivity was sufficient for CPLA to launch an insurgency against Ferdinand Marcos' grip over indigenous resources.

What was highly peculiar in the said encounter was the presence of key CPLA figures who fought hard against the state in the 1980s but are currently functioning as state officials. Antonio himself used to be a mayor, while another CPLA faction leader is the present vice-governor of one province in the Cordillera. Three other CPLA officers in attendance function in their specific capacity as a member of the Philippine Congress, governor, and mayor. The lone female CPLA officer in the group used to sit in the provincial legislative council for almost a decade after the Peace Agreement in 1986. In addition, a significant number of CPLA rebels occupy lower-ranking government positions. These CPLA rebels significantly blur the boundary between state and non-state as they straddle between these two spheres.

As Mario finished his speech, Ereneo tried to survey the audience in the same way as he guarded Mt. Tadiangan⁴ with other CPLA members. Before attending this event, I visited his group in 2016 as they occupied Mt. Tadiangan, a mountain located in the region's southern portion. At that time, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP)⁵ has recognized Mt. Tadiangan as the ancestral land of a prominent clan. The American co-

Zapatista Movement has marked the group's repertoire of tools to make a claim to the Mexican government. Sit-ins, boycotts, and strike have all been the hallmark of the repertoire of tactics that students employed during the heyday of the Student's Movement in the 1960s. For more discussions, refer to the different works of Charles Tilly on contentions politics: Tilly (2006), *Regimes and Repertoires*; Tilly (2008), *Contentious Performances*.

4 The mountain's name has been changed to avoid the possibility of identifying the location of my research interlocutors.

5 NCIP is a quasi-judicial government entity established after the promulgation of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) in 1997. It issues land instrument to indigenous communities in the form of a Certificate of Ancestral Land Title (CALT) or a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT).

lonial government first expropriated the mountain as a site for cattle production before finally converting it into a scientific research facility for animal husbandry in 1940.

Ereneo found me in the audience, and he summoned me to the door. We went to the far end of the building, and he introduced me to Mr. Antonio. That was not my first encounter with the CPLA Chairman, as I saw him once with his humpbacked personal assistant when they attended a meeting of the Cordillera Knights of the Old Code (CKOK). After the land title over Mt. Tadiangan was awarded in 2009, the CPLA received 40 hectares of the entire mountain as a reward for helping the clan to secure their property. Apparently, *ala* modern Robin Hood, the CPLA helped indigenous claimants formalized their rights to indigenous resources and then redistributed them to tribal communities. Sans its quirky name, however, CKOK is an organization formed by CPLA to oversee Mt. Tadiangan as it opened the land to every indigenous person who needed an available plot for housing. Its link with CPLA must be kept a secret given the former's public image as a notorious rebel group, although it remains as CPLA's conduit to articulate its shifting political claim concerning indigenous resources.

It appears that their political project has lost its luster if we juxtapose their previous attempt at calling for armed resistance against the state with how they secured indigenous resources and redistributed them to communities as constitutive of a new repertoire of contention. On another note, while CPLA exists as a violent non-state entity, it still operates within the state's spheres when it helps indigenous individuals formalize their land titles from the government. What accounts for this shifting political contention concerning indigenous land and resources? What does this shifting political contention tell us about the relationship of indigenous resources to indigenous subjectivity and the state as an institution of power?

1.2 Resource turn

Since the 1990s, there has been a burst of academic interest in the political economy of large-scale conflicts. Several works, for example, focused on the financial aspect of rebellion, the function of illicit economies in war, and the role of neoliberal state restructuring as precursors to mass conflict. A corollary to this emerging trend is an explicit shift emanating from political

geography and political ecology that examine the paradoxical link of abundant resources to the frequency of mass conflict.⁶ To capture this perplexing relationship, the phrase *resource curse* became a conceptual buzzword to describe how civil wars and ethnic conflicts are the results of different actors competing over the distribution and allocation of abundant resources. Contrary to the widely held belief that an abundant resource aids economic growth by providing, among others, vital employment to citizens and revenues to the state, a vast reserve of minerals and natural resources could open a channel for non-state groups to consolidate into a violent militant actor. Resource-rich countries then have to grapple constantly with the possibility of open violence from non-state actors who want to delegitimize the state's control of crucial sources of minerals and natural goods. In this way, the propinquity of civil war among resource-rich countries is attributed to violent non-state actors who can muster local support with revenues earned from selling minerals or of local rebel movements who see state-sponsored enclosures over national parks and forest reserves as developmental aggression. While these conflicts may take an ideological garb later, the endurance of violent non-state groups may be credited to their strategic access to vital resources as financial support to their movement or as a political slogan to draw favorable sympathy from communities affected by state-sponsored development projects. An example can be taken from the Taliban's control of the illegal opium trade to fund its operation and the capture by ISIS forces of significant oil fields in Syria as a vital source of financial support to launch their war for an Islamic Caliphate.⁷

The recent turn to resources, however, has so far produced relatively little research that goes beyond a simple documentation of how the abundance of resources has given impetus for violent non-state groups to consolidate into an insurgent movement. The representative works on resource curse often stopped at establishing the institutional or structural contexts that set the stage for the birth of insurgency, but never produced a "thick description" (Geertz 1973: 3) of how resources exactly result in mass conflict

6 Representative texts include Le Billon (2001), *The Political Ecology of War*; Collier/Hoeffler (2004), *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*; Berdal/David Malone (2000), *Greed and Grievance*; Ballentine/Sherman (2003), *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict*; Weinstein (2007), *Inside Rebellion*.

7 Recent examples could be gleaned from Taliban's conspicuous control over opium trade in Afghanistan to fund their insurgency (Peters 2009) or the virtual enclosure of ISIS over oil production fields in Syria as an important source of money to finance the Islamic movement (Coutroubis/Kiourtsoglou 2015).

or the mobilization of violent groups. These works are less inept at describing how these structural preconditions compel group or individual acts of violence. The non-institutional and symbolic layers of contention, subjectivity, and what Michael Herzfeld calls “intimate knowledge” (Herzfeld 2005: 369), where one can empirically draw how actors understand and link collective contention to a threat over resources, have gone unnoticed. Scholars of conflict studies, according to Aspinal (2009), have put more emphasis on the pragmatic goal of providing solutions through state policy by shortsightedly identifying the specific institutional and structural mechanisms that engender mass conflict. Expectedly, this trend produces a very crude conclusion that understands conflict only as an involuntary reaction to the resource curse.

Like Max Weber’s switchman metaphor, a limitless resource is considered to have automatically ignited previous cases of mass conflict. This one-way account of the relationship between abundant resources and conflict does not provide the causal path along which groups and individuals read and interpret the impact of large-scale government activities on their resources. Instead, it produces an argument that easily frames state policies and practices as automatic precursors of violence. What transpires between the promulgation of these policies over resources and the consolidation of mass conflict is treated like a black box, an unknown corner where a commonsensical explanation displaces a more thorough description of how the two are entangled in a more complex social process. To trace this relationship and to bear open such a black box is to recognize the negotiations and “articulations” (Laclau/Mouffe 2001: 26) that intervene between resources and violence and emphasize how these negotiations emerge as an attempt by actors to understand those processes that could debilitate their existence. Articulation does not simply refer to words and exchange of ideas among affected communities but catches peoples’ agency to create meaning and codify how state practices become a threat to resources. For example, by borrowing from the latest theoretical interventions within the fields of social movements, Van Leeuwen and Van Der Haar (2016) have succinctly utilized the concepts of framing and alliance to capture how Mexico’s entry into NAFTA and the subsequent state enclosures on resources in the Chiapas Region created the space for the production of claims about indigenous resources under threat. Eventually, this claim has been transposed into a political agenda for EZLN’s protracted encounter with the Mexican government by framing the state’s involvement with liberal policies as a potential

source of risk to their ancestral land. A focus on the articulatory processes of framing and deployment of claims gives us the exact trail to describe how a violent non-state group engages dialectically with the institutional and legal mechanisms that transformed resources as sites of state enclosure and development norms. Before a non-state group launches an armed struggle against a regime, it has to build first a coherent argument, a veritable discourse, and a convincing claim assembled out of the social and cultural pool of meaning and aimed at making explicit the causal link between state enclosures over pieces of land and forest as enclosures over *their* resources. The emphasis, then, is on creating a discourse of ownership and how the disavowal and recognition of this ownership compel militant actions.

The turn to resource has so far focused on conflict situations but does not extend to post-conflict situations. A thorough description of the continuity of an insurgent movement after a peace agreement remains a gray zone. What could be the fate of a violent movement born out of the perceived threat over resources if the government starts to change its repressive policies and practices over resources? While there is an obvious de-escalation program designed for former combatants, an analysis of the changes in how the state relates to resources could yield an interesting picture of the condition of violent non-state groups after a war. More specifically, the subtler dimensions of contention and claim-making, as we have hinted above, might still linger or be reshaped according to the newer patterns of resource relationship.

On the other hand, if deradicalization fails or if an integration program does not satisfy demands, a rebel group could still re-establish its units into several factions and continue to launch an attack against the government. It may assume another identity as a private militia protecting vital natural resources in a parasitic relationship with local communities and individuals. Likewise, rebels could join the state as elected officials who still adhere to the movement and blur the line between state and non-state actors. Still, these are plain conjectures because there is a dearth of literature that traces the possible trajectories of violent non-state groups in a post-conflict environment with a new mode of relating to resources. Certainly, a rebel group's actions after a peace agreement under a new government regime with different rules and practices on resources will yield newer forms of contention and claims about resources. What form these contentions and claims assume open for a fertile ground for new discussions and analysis.

Given these two broad considerations, this book provides an alternative account of the entanglement of resources with violent non-state contention and the fluidity of such a group within a conflict and a post-conflict environment. This entanglement, however, does not transpire within a vacuum. It is historically contingent and produced in contexts where different forces such as the institutionalized sources of power like the state exude influence over how non-state groups frame resources and deploy violence. More specifically, the state's overwhelming ability to define subjects through the techniques and pieces of knowledge utilized to govern over resources has a direct relationship to the contour of political claims and method of collective contention. How these subjects, techniques, and knowledge in governance produce dispossession are the starting points to understand the subsequent deployment of violence against the state. I call this ability to produce dispossession tentatively as a defining feature of a *resource regime* or the assembly of processes and practices involved in defining the constitution of resources and the specific population that is entitled to, or barred from, their use. Very broadly, this study aims to analyze how a violent non-state group develops and assumes a fluidity within a shifting resource regime and how the relationship between resource regime and the violent non-state group could be traced empirically in the latter's mobilization of political claims and subjectivities over the nature of resources, during and after conflicts.

The empirical template that I pursue in this investigation is the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA) in the Cordillera Region of Northern Philippines. This group has survived different government regimes that have subjected indigenous resources to varying development norms. Initially, CPLA has mobilized alongside a political claim that presupposes the existence of pre-state indigenous resources in the Cordillera. This claim, as I will discuss throughout this book, became the social yardstick from which the group framed the deployment of mass violence against the state. After the Peace Agreement in 1986 and the failure of initial integration programs, the group has engaged in a clandestine protection junket as private militias. By drawing from the experiences of CPLA, my ultimate objective is to describe empirically how a state-sponsored resource expropriation compels violence by emphasizing how a rebel group and indigenous communities understand state policies and practices on resources and how such understanding manifest in the tension from the resultant subjectivities and counter-politics constructed by CPLA. This can be accomplished by mapping out how CPLA mobilizes and invents claims about the indigenous character of resources

and how such claims change as CPLA transforms into a private militia within the context of post-conflict Cordillera. Tracing CPLA's trajectory presents a compelling illustration of how resource enclosures do not automatically result in bloodshed but first mediated by claims and contentions that aim to establish that rebellion or revolution is (or is not) the only solution to state-sponsored resource expropriations. Conversely, these claims that bridge resources and mass conflict do not appear and ooze out naturally from the heads of rebels but are taken from the local cultural pool of meaning and deployed against dominant state policies and practices that facilitated resource enclosures.

1.3 Insurgent Zomia

For much of its modern history, the Cordillera highland in the Philippines has been the bailiwick of an intense refusal to any external centralized authority (Scott 1982). The Spanish regime, for instance, has not been able to put the region under its fold even after the colonial government has commissioned three expeditions to explore the mineral resources of the colony's northern frontier. While the Americans have managed to establish their presence in the Cordillera, the influence of Manila's colonial authority did not fully materialize as the region was made into another social laboratory where America's social Darwinist policy towards Native American Indians was transported into the Philippines (Finin 2005). The Cordillera, in the American colonial imagination, represented the pristine condition of man before modernity. Thus, it needed to be separated from the larger colonial project that was violently unfolding in the lowlands by treating the region as a huge reservation where the natives are kept isolated and allowed to continue their existence in the state of nature. The semi-exclusion from colonial state-making has engendered a hybrid political landscape where the state's administrative grids are superimposed upon various villages using racial and ethnic categories based on colonial epistemologies. The administrative units, however, only stopped at establishing political offices and never prohibited the community from following their political system. What evolved out of America's Darwinist policy in the Philippine colony are two forms of social relations in the sphere of politics. One is rooting itself from the introduced

administrative units by the modern colonial state, which has gained permanent ground among Christianized lowland communities, and the other emanating from an autochthonous village-level political organization that cuts across kinship and local religion. Since America's colonial experiment, the two have existed in a complicated relationship, at times complementary, at other times, antagonistic to each other.

Such a complicated relationship with the regulatory and disciplinary attempts of state-making has also characterized the region's political life from the 1970s until the end of the 20th century. This period coincided with Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorial rule, where he strategically married his governing ethos with liberal policies and opened opportunities for the government to reassert its role in the management of Cordillera's key resources. Massive investments from multinational companies have given the state both the financial and legal impetuses to plan the construction of hydroelectric dams in the Cordillera, while Marcos' cronies enjoyed logging concession rights over a vast expanse of the region's communal land. Consequently, two streams of subaltern politics have sprung from the locals' engagement against the planned construction of four mega-dams along the Chico River. On one side, village-level mobilizations have seen the participation of civil society groups that have discursively framed the projects as a violation of human rights (Doyo 2014). On another side, the more radical reaction stems from the expansion of the New Peoples' Army (NPA), the famous military wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). From the onset, this Marxist-inspired revolutionary group has ideologically framed the state's expropriation of Cordillera's resources alongside Marxist typologies, rendering the deep involvement of indigenist politics silent and buried under the appeal of classism.

Besides NPA, another group dominated the landscape of non-statehood in Northern Philippines. In 1986, the NPA's Lumbaya Force, a company of rebels from the region, decided to separate from the movement and formed the Cordillera Peoples' Liberation Army (CPLA). Drawing from the language of an expanding indigenist politics, CPLA claimed that a communist ideology did not mirror the condition of tribal groups and that revolution will not materialize given the absence of class conflict in indigenous communities. Given the perceived dissonance between NPA's agenda and the specificity of tribal societies, CPLA transitioned into a movement that unambiguously categorized tribal groups outside Marxist parlance but with distinct claims to pre-state indigenous subjectivity (Agbayani 1987). Since the

split, CPLA moved beyond an overt emphasis on class into embracing an ideology hinged on the exclusive rights of indigenous peoples to their resources.

However, the decision to move away from Marxism required from the group a rigorous ideological construction to differentiate itself from NPA and to appeal to the momentous shift in Philippine politics when Martial Law abruptly ended in the same year that CPLA formally seceded from the communist movement. After the fall of Marcos' dictatorship, the then newly minted administration of Corazon Aquino quickly entered into a peace deal with CPLA in 1987, an agreement that resulted in a post-conflict situation where the latter's identity transformed alongside the tectonic change in the state's policy towards indigenous communities.⁸ While the previous authoritarian government considered all resources found within indigenous communities as the exclusive property of the Philippine state, Corazon Aquino's administration enacted policies that slowly recognized the existence of indigenous peoples' claim to their property. These changes characterized a post-conflict climate. They altered CPLA's biography as a violent non-state actor that has to confront a new legal regime, which recognizes indigenous rights to resources. The historical timeline below presents the key historical junctures in the emergence of CPLA as a political movement.

1965	The government started to plan the construction of four mega-dams in the Chico River
1968	Amado Guerrero, also known as Jose Maria-Sison, formed the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).
1969	CPP's military wing, New Peoples' Army (NPA), was organized.
1971	Expansion of NPA to the Cordillera region.
1972	The government awarded a logging concession over 100 000 hectares of communal lands in Abra province to the Cellophil Resource Company owned by Hermenio T. Disini, a Marcos crony.

⁸The 1987 Peace Accord between CPLA and the Philippine government is undergirded by the former's demand for the granting of full regional autonomy to the Cordillera and the integration of CPLA members into the country's military force. In 2011, a closure agreement between CPLA leaders and the government has created deep fissure within the group.

1979	Fr. Conrado Balweg, Fr. Braulio Ordonez, Mario Antonio, joined the NPA and headed its Lumbaya Company with mostly Igorot rebels as members.
1986	EDSA Revolution.
1986	Secession of CPLA from NPA.
1987	1987 Peace Agreement between Corazon Aquino and Balweg. The agreement created three bodies, namely the Cordillera Regional Assembly (CRA), Cordillera Executive Board (CEB), and Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA), to oversee the creation of an autonomous region through a plebiscite.
1990	First Plebiscite. Only one of the six provinces voted yes to support the Cordillera autonomy.
2000	Second Plebiscite. Only one of the six provinces voted yes in favor of Cordillera autonomy.
2000	CEB and CRA vacated their office after the Philippine Congress decided to allocate a measly amount of Php 1.00 as their budget.
2000	NPA assassinated Conrado Balweg. CPLA got divided into two factions headed by Mario Antonio and Gabriel Guzman.
2011	Gabriel Guzman's group entered into a closure agreement with then President Benigno Aquino.

Figure 1: Critical Junctures in the history of the Cordillera Peoples' Liberation Army (CPLA)

1.4 Rebel priests in the popular imagination

Like any other Filipino child who was born after the success of the 1986 EDSA Revolution that led to the demise of Marcos' dictatorship, my initial encounter with CPLA was mediated by popular culture and mass media. I was an elementary pupil when a film about CPLA's founder Fr. Conrado Balweg was released for commercial viewing.⁹ At that time, the prevailing

⁹ The film, *Balweg: The Rebel Priest*, was released for public viewing in 1990s.

image of CPLA was a rebel group operating in the mountains of Northern Philippines. Such an image profoundly shaped my childhood. Regular role-playing games with friends would include emulating rebels battling the forces of leather-wearing antagonists who were, in our childhood imaginary, the state's security police. Fast forward to the middle of 2015, when I was preparing this book as a research associate of a collaborative research group in Frankfurt. My objective as an affiliated researcher was to explore the kinds of relationship between the concepts of *Resource Regimes* and *Weakness*, along with the theoretical tools of our subproject on *Non-statehood* (Ame-lung/Leppin/Muller 2018). These three concepts may not sound novel at all because any classic work on the growth of violent non-state actors will point to state weakness in provisioning public resources to constituents as the independent variable that catapults the birth of militias and rebel groups. Like the subject of this research, affected communities do not frame the state's continuous appropriation of indigenous resources as a fulfillment of the state's mandate to its citizen, but a brazen act of predatory behavior that only benefits few individuals or selected regions in the country. However, as I will illustrate in this book, the growth of violent non-state actors does not simply involve a linear reaction to how the state appropriates resources. It is a complex social process involving the strategic abduction of a state function, the construction of different populations and subjects, and the often contradictory reinterpretations of ideologies and indigenous culture as groups mount a resistance against the application of state power. As I progress in the discussion, it will become apparent that the strict division between state and violent non-state groups is best understood not as two separate worlds but entities that are entangled in a complex relationship of parasitism and conviviality.

There seems to be a virtual absence of CPLA in the academic literature written in the last two decades besides Conrado Balweg's biographical film and the intermittent descriptions from scholarly works on the Cordillera's experience of Martial Law.¹⁰ To date, there are only two monographs written about the group, both of which failed to provide an extensive account of the entanglement of resources, state rule, and the growth of what may be considered as one of the earliest subaltern indigenous movements in the

10 See Finin (2005) for a discussion on the rise of student movement in the Cordillera during the Martial Law and Inguanzo/Wright (2016) for a broader picture of indigenous movements in the Philippines. A comparative article by Bertrand (2011) gives another account of how indigeneity has figured prominently in the Cordillera in the 1980s.

postcolony. CPLA has already sprung to life decades before the appearance of the much popular indigenist insurgency in Latin America, the Zapatista Movement of Mexico. An illuminating article by Nestor Castro (1994) about the intersection of the communist movement and the tribal cultural structures provided an intimate analysis into the formation of the New People's Army (NPA) in the Cordillera, and from which the founders of CPLA – Conrado Balweg, Mario Antonio and Braulio Ordonez – were initially affiliated as NPA rebels until the split in 1986. Castro's monograph traces how the communist movement introduced the insurgency into the region by bringing closer to the communities the tenets of Marxism using examples from existing tribal relations. The other work written by Lydia Casambre (2010) engages in a hermeneutic mapping of the competing discourses from various political actors, including CPLA, which dominated the debates on the proposed regional autonomy for Cordillera. Both works, although representative of the two diverging frameworks of political economy and political hermeneutics, have provided the initial descriptions of CPLA's communist past and the nature of its contention.

On the contrary, the failure to catch academic attention appears to have worked the opposite if we glean into public discourses as extensive browsing of reports from regional papers since the 1970s yields an endless list of articles written about the CPLA. These documents, however, paint a strikingly different image of CPLA as a violent private army that operates a protection racket involving powerful families and public officials. Apparently, at the heights of its often-violent confrontation with other actors at the latter half of the 1980s, CPLA mobilized vigorously under a tribalist-socialist form of contentious politics by marrying, like other indigenous movements with Marxist influence,¹¹ ideas of tribal sociality with a predominantly socialist stance. Devoid of such classic Marxist subject-positions as class, the CPLA created a new political subjectivity by gleaning into elements of tribal culture and projecting them as inchoate traces of a long-standing fraternal commune to veer away from NPA. To mount a political critique against a developmental authoritarian state, which was then asserting its eminent rights over tribal domains, the group engaged in forging an alternative interpretation within

11 Refer to Shah (2010) and Jaoul/Shah (2016) for a discussion on the intersection of Maoist thoughts and the Adivasi and Dalit movement in India. Works done on the Zapatista movement like Poggiali (2005) and Womack (1999) have also documented the initial links between the larger Marxist-inspired movements in Latin American and the group's indigenist ideology.

which the supposed ownership of the government over indigenous resources was subverted and re-inscribed as an act of domination. Akin to Benedict Anderson's concept of "unbound serialities" (Anderson 1998: 29), CPLA mapped out a different form of politics at the intersection of an authoritarian state and the contextual realities of tribal communities by culturalizing political engagement through the creation of an imaginary primordial identity. In this way, CPLA represented a different subaltern politics when its founders took into their helm an articulation of political contention under the purview of communist ideology and the ontologies of communities that were otherwise considered non-participant and naïve spectators as the Philippine government expropriated resources to achieve development goals.

At present, however, such a highly politicized engagement seems to have been sidestepped. After the end of Marcos' dictatorship, the group began to engage in protection service by providing security to local elites and families with existing claims over indigenous resources. Somehow, CPLA acted quickly to fill in the security and financial vacuum from inefficient government service by acting as a security force to landowners or as mediators in conflicts over indigenous lands and domains. From an indigenous rebel movement guided by distinct politics, CPLA transformed itself within a post-conflict environment into violence entrepreneurs selling protection services to communities and families. Has the formation of an alternative indigenist politics subdued by CPLA's engagement with protection service? What accounts for such transformation?

1.5 Rebel with uneven legs

Upon arrival in Baguio City¹² in October 2015, I tried to establish contacts with the CPLA by visiting its office, a building that used to house the now-defunct Cordillera Executive Board (CEB) and Cordillera Regional Assembly (CRA). These offices were formed to oversee the transition of the Cordillera into an autonomous region by Cory Aquino's administration after

¹² Baguio City is a chartered town located in Northern Philippines. Owing to its climate and location in the Cordillera Highlands, Baguio has served as a colonial hill station during the American period and the seat of the colonial government in the summer months of April and May.

signing the 1986 Peace Agreement with Conrado Balweg at Mt. Hotel in Mt. Province. It is a three-story building located behind the regional office of the Philippines' Social Security Service (SSS) and next to a major university, which played a significant role during the heights of student movements against Marcos' dictatorial rule. I waited and asked the people around the vicinity for contacts. Rosa, a woman who owned a restaurant in front of the building, said she knew one. Rosa asked me to wait in her restaurant while requesting her daughter to send an SMS to that person. While waiting, Rosa asked why I am interested in CPLA. Rosa then started to share intimate details about CPLA. She said she benefited from the presence of CPLA because they provided security to her business. Rosa relayed one incidence when all her gas tanks were stolen when the CPLA left their office. She claimed that while CPLA has good intentions, bad leaders who were only after the financial benefits stymied the group. This time, Rosa did not mention the *Ilokano*¹³ word for money but gesticulate by forming a coin between her thumb and forefinger. She wanted regional autonomy, but the absence of good leaders cannot provide a way forward for CPLA. She then continued to claim that educated people must take over and provide a new leadership to the movement. I take this short conversation as a hint to a complicated relationship that wove Rosa's business interest with CPLA's presence in a building complex full of government offices. Instead of seeking protection from the state, she chose to find solace in the authority that CPLA possessed to secure her business interest.

The person arrived. And he looked as if he was limping because his right leg is longer than the left one. He was donned with CPLA's iconic black fatigue and combat boots. He extended his hand for a handshake as I introduced myself. I started asking questions, but Rosa was interested in joining the conversation because she even moved her chair closer to us. He lowered his voice when Rosa sat next to me, and I took this as a hint of his discomfort about her presence. We decided to transfer to a secluded place located inside Burnham Park. Over a cup of coffee, Mr. Pedro Laniog¹⁴ narrated what could be a familiar story of former combatants who joined and later on severed their ties with the movement. Pedro joined the CPLA when he

13 Ilokano is a lingua franca spoken in Northern Philippines. Besides the different languages in the region, Ilokano, together with Tagalog, is the main medium for business and inter-ethnic communication.

14 I have decided to use a different name of my interlocutors for security purposes. The real name is used if the respondent has given his permission and if his security is not at stake.

was 17 as support personnel carrying food and medicine to combat soldiers. The minimum requirement is one's membership to any of the Cordillera indigenous communities, which are collectively known as Igorot. I wanted to describe how identity figured in the recruitment of CPLA, so I inquired if there were members of CPLA who were not Igorots. There were few, he said, but they were *kakadwa* (comrades) who sympathized with the group.

During the first face of violent mobilization against the construction of Chico Dam and the awarding of logging concessions over a communal forest to Celophill Resource Company (CRC), the future leaders of CPLA decided to join an alliance with NPA. By doing so, they managed to gain access to the vast networks and resources of the communist guerrilla movement. Conrado Balweg headed the Lumbaya Company of NPA's Northern Luzon Command. This guerilla unit was composed entirely of Igorot rebels from the Cordillera except for the inclusion of the priest, Braulio Ordonez, who was an Ilokano from the lowland province of La Union but a fellow SVD priest of Fr. Balweg. This unit operated mainly in the tri-boundaries of Mt. Province, Abra, and Kalinga. After Ferdinand Marcos halted the proposed construction of the Chico Dam in the 1980s, the Lumbaya Company severed its ties and decided to separate from NPA due to ideological reasons. Communist ideas did not fit well with Cordillera society, Pedro claimed. He explained that the secession had created a division of labor between the two as CPLA pursued the goal of securing autonomy for the Cordillera highlands (*ngato*) while NPA devoted itself to lowland communities (*patag*). This, according to him, was a strategic division between CPLA and NPA in terms of recruiting potential members. If an aspiring member is an Ilokano (*tagababa*), he has to join the NPA while CPLA will recruit an Igorot. The recruitment of new members, according to Mr. Laniog, only ran along ethnic lines, although kin affiliation could serve as a network to get new members. When the Peace Agreement was signed in 1986 between Conrado Balweg and Corazon Aquino, he left CPLA and worked as a security guard for Lepanto Mines. He continued to recruit new members from his colleagues while working at the mines. At first, people were willing to join but, later on, their interest dwindled after they were informed that membership to CPLA did not translate to one's access to guns and money. He clarified that the reward will not come immediately but will only materialize when the fight for autonomy is realized. He opined that CPLA is a form of sacrifice to achieve a goal that will not happen overnight.

I asked his views about the prospects of regional autonomy for the Cordillera and the failure of the two previous plebiscites. Pedro thought that the failure resulted from an uncoordinated effort of the Regional Development Council (RDC)¹⁵ and local politicians. In his own words, “If there are unclear issues and questions, they immediately silenced them off. Thus, there are no clear responses if there are questions”. He blamed the unclear position of local politicians and the absence of CPLA in the Regional Development Council. Pedro lamented that in previous efforts to draft a resolution for autonomy, CPLA was not even mentioned as the original entity that initiated the demand for regional autonomy. There was also no mention of the original objectives of putting the regional government under the model of *bodong*¹⁶ as stipulated in the *Manabo Pagta*¹⁷. Without the *bodong*, an autonomous Cordillera is not genuine, as it does not possess the *ugali* (traditions) that the ancestors utilized in settling peace between warring villages.

In the second hour of our conversation, I asked Pedro about the status of the CPLA. This time, he became much more open and started to laugh and looked at me when I asked questions. He complained about how other people simply formed a group and claimed to represent the CPLA by signing the closure agreement with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP).¹⁸ This group, headed by Gabriel Guzman, Arsenio Humiding, and Marcelina Bahatan, received money from the government, but they did not represent CPLA, Pedro clarified.

Towards the end of our conversation, he started to divulge sensitive information about the group. I was thrilled to hear him reveal things without

15 When the second plebiscite did not get the majority vote in 1998, the responsibility to initiate another round for regional autonomy has been transferred to the Regional Development Council (RDC). The move has virtually made the participation of CPLA, CEB, and CRA in any talk on regional autonomy impossible.

16 The *bodong* is an inter-village peace pact system used by selected communities in the Cordillera to settle land and boundary disputes between warring villages (Bacdayan 1967). A discussion is given in Chapter 3.

17 In 1986, after the secession of CPLA from NPA, a huge gathering was convened in Manabo, Abra to draft what will become the blueprint of CPLA’s movement. The *Manabo Pagta* serves as a declaration and a constitution of CPLA. It formed the basis for CPLA’s demand to the Philippine state during the peace negotiation.

18 In 2011, a closure agreement between CPLA leaders and the government has created deep fissure within the group. Such an agreement only takes into force when the demand for regional autonomy as stipulated in the first Peace Agreement in 1987 is fulfilled. Other CPLA leaders still claim that the Cordillera is not yet autonomous and the integration is never realized.

me asking. He commenced with the failure of the court system to deal with problems by people – i.e., land issues and conflict. In state courts, cases pile up, and decisions were made only when the child of a lawyer finally became a lawyer himself. If the bid for regional autonomy is successful, there will be more space for the *lallakay* (elders) to deal with the problem by following the time-tested conflict settlement practice. To illustrate his point, Pedro provided an example where unsettled problems could be meted out swiftly by following, for instance, the boiling water method. If talks fail, the elders will boil water in a big pot and drop a stone. To settle the problem, the involved parties must recover the stone from the pot using their own hands. Whoever gets the worst burn is the culprit!

Pedro described another method that his group practices to resolve disputes. Sometimes, people approach CPLA to help settle problems on land boundaries. He gave an example of a recent case that they helped to adjudicate in which the person involved wanted his neighbor to honor a land boundary. He was quite unclear with how they solved the conflict, but he sounded proud when the other party agreed to honor what was stipulated in the land title. Here, the supposed illegality of their acts was rendered appropriate because of the presence of an official document issued by the government. I asked what form of compensation they received. The payment can be through money or a portion of the disputed land. CPLA members can then accumulate land by helping land claimants.

1.6 Problematizing resources, contention, and rebellion

This extended description of my initial conversation with a CPLA member is not an ordinary biography of one particular rebel but an apposite hint into the movement's social life. To use Clifford Geertz's phrase, it is a "note in a bottle" (Geertz 1973: 9) from somewhere else, a piece of empirical evidence and not a simple thought experiment of the anthropologist. It is a mirror image of how one former combatant's life is entangled and severed from a group that has struggled to cope with the failure of integration in a post-conflict environment. For one, Pedro's vignette elucidates how members of the CPLA utilized the name of the group as an alternative mechanism to settle disputes over resources. Although this could be interpreted as an illustrative case of how the traditional method of settling disputes adjudicates