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Wolfram Dressler

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## Co-Opting Conservation: Migrant Resource Control and Access to National Park Management in the Philippine Uplands

Wolfram H. Dressler

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### ABSTRACT

The history of political and economic inequality in forest villages can shape how and why resource use conflicts arise during the evolution of national parks management. In the Philippine uplands, indigenous peoples and migrant settlers co-exist, compete over land and forest resources, and shape how managers preserve forests through national parks. This article examines how migrants have claimed lands and changed production and exchange relations among the indigenous Tagbanua to build on and benefit from otherwise coercive park management on Palawan Island, the Philippines. Migrant control over productive resources has influenced who, within each group, could sustain agriculture in the face of the state's dominant conservation narrative — valorizing migrant paddy rice and criminalizing Tagbanua swiddens. Upon settling, migrant farmers used new political and economic strengths to tap into provincial political networks in order to be hired at a national park. As a result, they were able to steer management to support paddy rice at the expense of swidden cultivation. While state conservation policy shapes how national parks impact upon local resource access and use, older political economic inequalities in forest villages build on such policies to influence how management affects the livelihoods of poor households.

### INTRODUCTION

The Philippine uplands are contested spaces. Colonial policies and ideologies carried over from Spanish and American rule (1521–1946) produced dichotomies that shaped who could access and use upland forests. Often perceived as marginal zones, the uplands were occupied by 'people classified as ethnic minorities to those groups that define national culture and imagination' — the Christian lowland majority (Vandergeest, 2003: 19).

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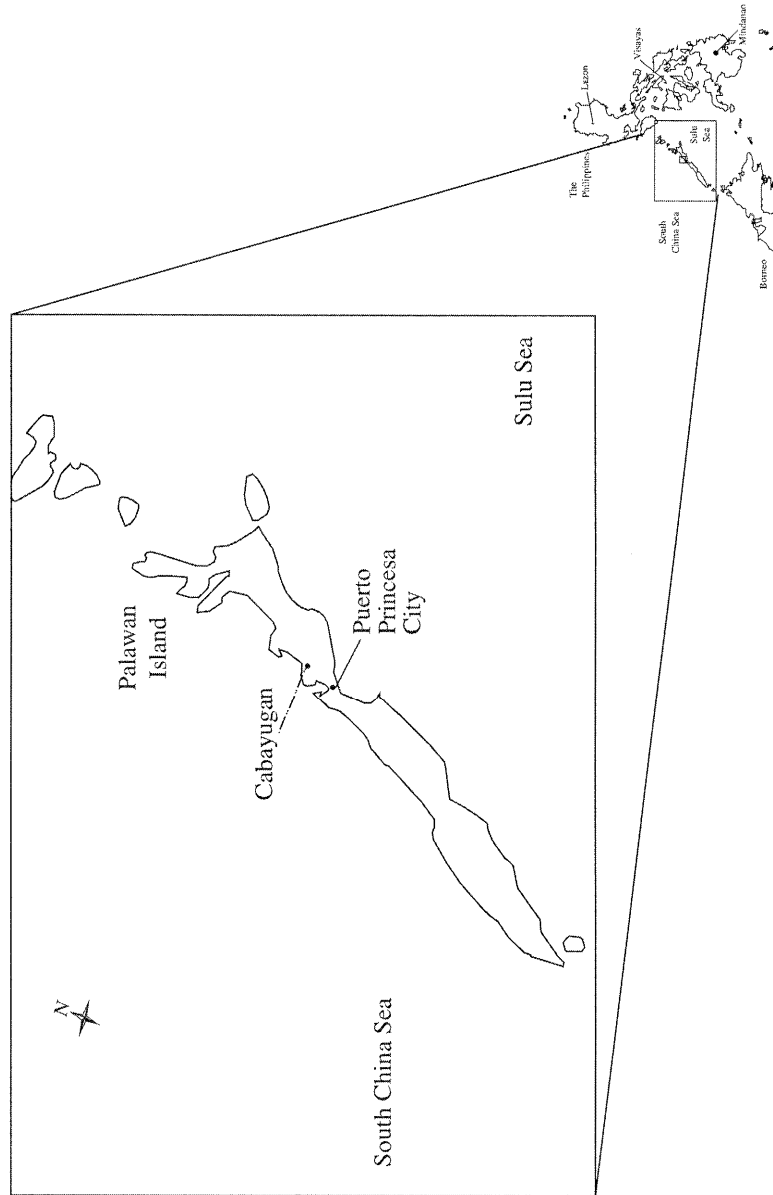
Colonial institutions simplified an otherwise complex society into 'uplander' and 'lowlander' peoples according to ethnic lines, agricultural practices and elevation. Land titles and legitimacy were reserved for Filipino lowlanders who cultivated 'productive' agriculture, while 'tribal' uplanders were illegitimate farmers who cultivated 'primitive' agriculture without title. State foresters found such divisions useful: by expanding territory up-land, they could protect forests from uplanders by legally framing occupied areas as valuable political economic domain (Peluso and Vandergeest, 2001: 762–3).

The Philippine state thus confined uplanders and defined their agriculture through ideology and physical boundaries; state officials expressed power through 'boundaries that could move, shape, or reorganize human beings at large scales' (Sack, 1983: 87). Boundaries formed and partitioned territory to assign value and meaning onto the uplands in order to regulate how residents could use forests there (Goldman, 2003). From the outset, colonial constructs of identity and resource uses in physical spaces took shape as 'political forests', perhaps the largest of which evolved as national parks (Peluso and Vandergeest, 2001: 762). Different state agencies at different levels maintained national parks by reinforcing exclusion, that is, communicating the physical existence and meaning of boundaries to upland residents. This was done coercively through zones that reasserted control over the values placed on forests inside national parks — a process that upheld, reproduced and projected state ideologies (Sack, 1983). The state's use of national parks as 'new' territory extended its reach to control resource access and use in the uplands.

Underlying park expansion, however, is the more tangible reality of how social relations of production and exchange unfold as lowlanders and uplanders compete over forest resources. In many cases, national parks expand state territory upland to protect resources as lowland migrants co-mingle and compete with indigenous peoples over forests on ancestral lands. While lowland migrants move upland due to displacement or in search of new resources, they dispossess and marginalize their indigenous 'hosts', as national parks overlap with older resource use conflicts (Cruz et al., 1992; Hirtz, 1998). Local disparities are often exacerbated as park management ensures a productive advantage for the migrant majority by denying the indigenous minority access to land and forest resources. Minority peoples negotiate similar situations throughout Southeast Asia (cf. Evrard and Goudineau, 2004; Li, 2002).

While many studies have explored migrant–indigenous relations (for example, Conelly, 1983; Eder, 1987; McDermott, 2000), particularly in terms of occupation and displacement, few offer a detailed genealogy of how each group's use of upland resources intersects to shape conservation. Even fewer studies have considered the inverse of this relationship. This article attempts to fill this void by examining how early park management — characterized by *coercive conservation* that excludes people — has shaped settlement patterns, resource production, and commodity exchanges between social groups on Palawan Island, the Philippines (Peluso, 1993) (see Figure 1). Migrants from over-populated, resource scarce islands have settled in the uplands of Palawan

Figure 1. Cabayugan, Palawan Island



Source: Dressler (2005).

and now compete with indigenous peoples over forest resources that national parks conserve (cf. Pelzer, 1948; Spencer, 1966). The socio-political dynamics between migrants and indigenous peoples adds a new layer of control that ties into and arises from coercive conservation.

Following an ethnographic approach, this article explores the dialectical relations between state conservation interests, the local political economy and changes in national park management.<sup>1</sup> It shows how the co-evolution of early conservation ideology and local resource production and exchange has shaped the management outcomes at Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park, Palawan's flagship protected area. Oral histories from migrant farmers and the indigenous Tagbanua are used to reconstruct how settlement and trade relations shaped park management in the study site of Cabayugan, Palawan. The case study will describe how changing livelihoods strategies have tied into management efforts to deflect enforcement away from paddy rice (*basakan*) and toward swidden cultivation (*kaingin*).<sup>2</sup> Three questions frame how this sequence unfolded: (1) what broader political economic conditions drive state preferences for agriculture from different social groups? (2) how does the political economy of conservation affect migration and trade among settlers and indigenous peoples on Palawan? (3) how are the patterns of production and exchange between each social group affected by local-state linkages and shifts in national park management?

This article answers these questions by first describing how American and Philippine forestry laws and policy criminalized swidden through centralized and coercive parks management. It then introduces the case study area, and describes Tagbanua and migrant settlement periods. These sections trace how social and economic differences evolved between the two groups by contrasting social relations of production and exchange before, during and after their migration periods. The following section then examines how the history of settler migration enabled wealthier migrants to build on and use coercive conservation to support paddy rice by criminalizing the swiddens of Tagbanua and poorer migrants. The article concludes that managers must reconsider their perceptions and management of livelihoods if 'devolved' conservation is to reduce disparities among resource dependent peoples.

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1. Research was conducted from 2001 to 2004. Methods included a livelihood questionnaire (N = 157), key-informant interviews, and archival work at various institutions. Data were cross-validated. Pseudonyms are used throughout.
  2. Swidden involves a rotational cycle in which forest is cleared, burned and planted with dry rice, root crops and vegetables. After harvest, fields are often left fallow for several years to allow forest cover to regenerate. Swidden supports the subsistence, religion and cosmology of many indigenous peoples throughout Southeast Asia.

#### CLASSIFYING LANDS AND PEOPLE

The classification of lands and people in the Philippines is rooted in land law that spans the Spanish and American colonial periods. After Spanish conquest in 1565, the Crown imposed the Regalian Doctrine, which held that all lands not registered as private title were vested in the Crown as public domain (Gatmaytan, 1992; Lynch, 1982).<sup>3</sup> The Spanish used the Doctrine's principles to categorize and divide the nation into two social groups: Christians who, being closer to God, were the productive social class that occupied lowlands; and a 'tribal' minority who, because of avoiding proselytization, were considered 'primitive' uplanders (Constantino, 1978). The state's construction of ethnicity was according to socio-political, economic and religious positions, with Hispanicized and 'acculturated' Filipino farmers ranking closer to colonial rulers and above the tribal peoples, who were situated on the lowest rungs of society, beyond the state's reach (Eder, 2004). The state's distinction between people of different cultures was produced and reproduced according to who should reside in lowland and upland areas, as if to '[assign] quasi-ethnic regional identities' (ibid.: 641). Upland-lowland distinctions were based on how the colonial state represented the people living there. Agriculture, types of landholding and social positions were allocated accordingly: indigenes rarely acquired title whereas Hispanicized Filipino farmers did, despite also occupying the uplands. In this way, the Doctrine's legal principles were upheld by both colonial and post-colonial regimes to control uplanders' access to and use of forest resources.

The American colonial government applied these principles while zoning the public domain it had claimed in 1899 (Linn, 2000). By 1903, US Bureau of Forestry chief, Gifford Pinchot, had established forestry reserves in the Philippine uplands under the tenets of scientific forestry. He wrote that such forestry: 'treated the forest as a crop producer and not as a mine. When you dig the mineral out of mine, it is gone for good; when you take the timber out of a forest in a simple, common-sense way . . . you get results in the second crop' (Pinchot, 1903: 176). Pinchot pressed the Bureau of Forestry to 'advance the cause of [such] forestry' through maximum sustained yields in order to ensure that sufficient timber was available for national economic security (ibid.: 176). Despite the existence of 20 million ha of public forest, however, officials still perceived swidden as a threat to timber stands (ibid.: 41). Finding the Spaniard's 1889 'Definitive Forest Laws and Regulations' inadequate for protecting timber from swidden (*kaingin*), colonial policy makers drafted the 'Kaingin Law' of 1901 or Act no 274 (Scott, 1979:

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3. Indigenous notions of ownership (such as clearing and cultivation) were recognized by the Spaniard's *Laws of the Indies*. The Laws clarified that any land rights granted to 'loyal Spanish subjects was not to impair the rights and interests of the natives to their holdings' (Lynch, 1982: 274).

59–60). The law included stiffer fines and prison sentences, but did little to deter 'illegal' swidden cultivation.

The colonial regime clung tenaciously to defending upland forests from swidden cultivators through an agenda of resource territorialization. From 1903 to 1944, the policies regulating swidden also applied to forestry reserves being rezoned as national parks (Anderson, 1983). Initial endeavours to classify public lands as 'national parks' came in 1932 under the Act for the Establishment of National Parks. Upland areas could now be 'reserved and withdraw[n] from settlement, occupancy, or disposal [for their] panoramic, historical, scientific or aesthetic values' (National Parks Act No 3915, 1932: 2). This meant that farmers without private title prior to boundary delineation, including entire indigenous populations, could no longer legally occupy the uplands (Gatmaytan, 1992). American-style 'fences and fines' park management was now firmly entrenched in the Philippines.

Upon independence in 1946, managers tried eradicating swidden farming on 86,692 ha of public domain that was now designated as either forest reserve or national park. As the Philippine government was zoning national parks it secured further control over *kaingineros*<sup>4</sup> by drafting a Revised Kaingin Law in 1963 (Scott, 1979). Two years later, a 'Kaingin Council Meeting' and 'National Conference on the Kaingin Problem' suggested that swidden farmers be identified, managed and/or resettled. Additional enforcements were also recommended as 'the rate of forest destruction by *kaingineros* outpaced the number of forest guards available for forest protection' (Population Center Foundation, 1980: 11). While such policy rhetoric echoed earlier conservation discourse, claiming that swidden 'destroyed' state timber reserves and forest aesthetics, meetings concluded that illegal occupancy and expanding swidden involved more than enforcement. Containing swidden required new insights into the social and economic aspirations of upland farmers.

By 1972, the government had delineated thirty-five national parks totalling 121,586 ha. Few parks, however, had enabling legislation and infrastructure (Anderson, 1983). In 1975, Marcos's Presidential Decree 705 (Republic of the Philippines, 1975) regulated swidden through national parks by reclassifying the management and use of public forests. National parks became a distinct category of forest reserve from which 'occupants' could be evicted (NRMCA and MNR, 1983: 9). The Forest Occupancy Management Programme, for example, implemented the anti-swidden policies of Presidential Decree 705 by moving 'squatters' to 'other areas designated for resettlement and relocation purposes' (Scott, 1979: 44). Failing this, the programme set out to 'manage occupancy' or 'settlement' through permanent agriculture and land leases such as paddy rice farming

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4. The term *kaingineros* is used in a pejorative sense to describe swidden cultivators.

on fixed plots. Managers offered *de facto* tenure to *kainginero* families in order to appease their distaste for punitive measures and desire for secure tenure, and to convert them into sedentary agriculturalists. So-called 'qualified forest occupants' could only remain on unclassified public lands on the condition they permanently reforest and/or intercrop their fields (Population Center Foundation, 1980: 45). Various other 'social forestry' policies now offered twenty-five year leases to farmland under the expectation that swidden would eventually be 'phased out' (Gatmaytan, 1992).

The Philippine Constitution of 1987 and land use laws further incorporated the Doctrine's principle by classifying all land over an 18 per cent slope as public domain. State agencies had full control over upland forests, and those inhabiting them were still defined as squatters (Gatmaytan, 1992). Below a slope of 18 per cent, the state prioritized the release of lands from the public domain as 'alienable and disposable' to allow individuals to apply for private title and/or hold usufruct plots. Lowlanders occupying such lands could apply for private title to the plots, and upon securing ownership, could defend their title and agriculture against park management. New land laws and geography thus sustained an upland-lowland divide according to the state's political and economic preferences.

#### **PALAWAN AND THE CABAYUGAN CASE STUDY**

How, then, did state interventions affect the ability of migrants and indigenous peoples to access and use resources and how did their livelihood strategies affect conservation on Palawan? This section focuses on two social groups living near Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park to illustrate how broader political economic conditions affected the interplay between livelihood changes and shifts in national park management. The case is unique for several reasons. First, the park is one of few in the Philippines experiencing sustained and rigorous enforcement. It is not just another 'paper park'. Since the 1970s, the national park has been the subject of infrastructure and management plans that steered enforcement according to social hierarchies and land use ideals. Second, the park represents a flagship protected area as it conserves large tracts of forest on Palawan, the last 'ecological frontier' in the Philippines. Various groups now stake a claim over resources in the national park: conservationists try to preserve forests, indigenous peoples claim ancestral rights to upland areas, and, increasingly, migrants seek political and economic opportunities.

The contiguous tracts of 'primary' rainforest and the high levels of endemism for which Palawan is famous are protected by Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park (Diamond and Gilpin, 1983; Ma Dulid, 1998). The park protects one of the largest and most diverse blocks of forests on the island: lowland dipterocarp and molave forests connect with dense karst and montane forests at higher elevations (Ganapin Jr.,



1992).<sup>5</sup> Lowland forests were cleared by indigenous Tagbanua and by migrants for swidden, paddy rice cultivation and tree crops, while portions of the molave forest (such as *Pterocarpus indicus*) were felled by illegal loggers (Eder and Fernandez, 1996, Kummer, 1992). Clearings and burns created an anthropogenic mosaic of differently aged forests and species, making foresters' claims of conserving old growth somewhat dubious: the forests were far from pristine.

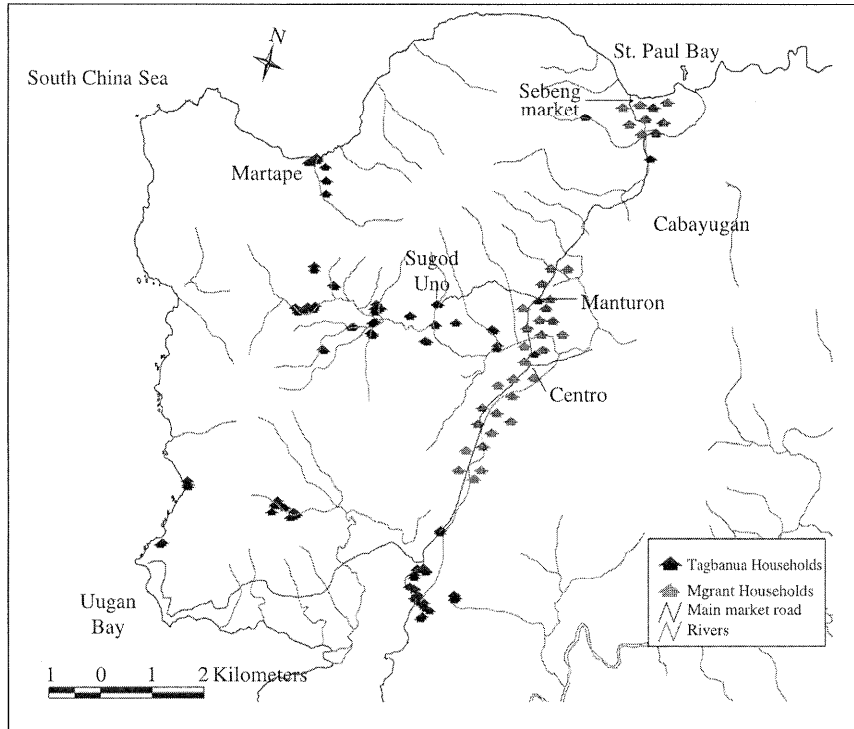
Indigenous to Palawan, Tagbanua are swidden cultivators who engage in a mixed economy (Fox, 1954; McDermott, 2000; Warner, 1979). Numbering over 500 in Cabayugan, they are Catholic and animist, are similar to lowland Filipinos, but are educated to comparatively low levels.<sup>6</sup> Tagbanua cultivate swidden to produce upland rice, root crops, vegetables and sometimes tree crops. Swidden harvests, however, are insufficient to meet year-round subsistence and familial needs, forcing farmers to seek cash or payment in kind. Cash income comes from wage labour, timber harvesting and collecting non-timber forest products,<sup>7</sup> particularly rattan and honey (cf. McDermott, 2000).<sup>8</sup> Swidden farming and forest extraction occurs on ancestral lands that now flank the national park.

Cabayugan includes Sugod Uno, Cabayugan Centro and Manturon. Although Cabayugan's population is heterogeneous, with intermarriage and in-migration increasing rapidly, settlement patterns and resource uses are still differentiated along ethnic lines and elevation. In 2001, most migrant households occupied and cultivated paddy rice in the flat central valley of Manturon (fifty-three households) and Cabayugan Centro (thirty-one households); see Figure 2. Using modern farm implements such as hand tractors, farmers have raised productivity from one to three croppings per year and produce a rice surplus annually. Surplus rice is transported from Manturon to Puerto Princesa City, the provincial capital, for sale in larger markets. Fewer and mostly poorer migrant households (twenty-nine) were located in Sugod Uno. In contrast, all Tagbanua households (forty-four households) occupy the undulating uplands of Sugod Uno (literally *Upland I*) where steep slopes and clay soils make even swidden farming difficult. Tagbanua access to flat lands and productive resources remains limited due to migrants claiming low-lying areas for paddy rice.

While identity and economic status are clearly not fixed, migrant and Tagbanua socio-political structures, cultures and economic positions do differ considerably. Such differences are rooted in each group's migration

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5. Penetrating the main karst mountains is the (7 km long) navigable underground river.
  6. Based on a 157 household questionnaire conducted during the summer of 2002.
  7. Tagbanua have traded non-timber forest products with merchants from China and the Muslim south for centuries (Hutterer, 1977).
  8. Rattans are climbing palms (mostly *Calamus spp.*) from which cane products are derived. Honey, wild pig, avifauna, wild fruits and orchids are also sold for cash, as well as collected for subsistence, medicinal, and ceremonial purposes (McDermott, 1994, 2000).

Figure 2. General Settlements and Households by Ethnicity (2001)



Source: Dressler (2005).

history, settlement patterns and livelihood strategies and, when taken together, shape how and why park management has affected their livelihoods so differently. The following case illustrates how one group's control over the local political economy by-passed the interests of others by controlling resources, expanding production, and co-opting park management in Cabayugan.

### Tagbanua and Migrants: The Social Relations of Resource Access and Use

#### *Tagbanua Migrations*

Tagbanua emigrated from south-central communities due to disease, the encroachment of the 'Moros' [*sic*], and new livelihood pursuits (interviews, Basaya family, summer 2002). Leaving larger villages near the coast, small-nucleated villages formed upland. In time, Tagbanua moved to Buenavista (the former name for the Cabayugan area) via a series of

shorter, rural-to-rural migrations from Aborlan and Napsaan; Tagbanua epics describe the arrival of two heroic brothers, Dego and Coris, who left Aborlan fighting Muslim bandits. They settled in Buenavista and Madahon (present day Cabayugan) in the 1800s. Thereafter, 'preliterate and marginal' subgroups from Apurawan traveled to Marufinas, just 10 km from Cabayugan proper, in 1910 (Fox, 1954: 129). Travel from Aborlan to Napsaan to Cabayugan was indirect, as families made swiddens, 'settled', and moved on to fertile lands in Cabayugan. Livestock, swidden plots and rice seeds were maintained and exchanged through next-of-kin and/or friends, since few had predictable access to farm inputs. As new households formed, social networks grew and supported swidden on the flat, fertile lands near the underground river and karst, central features of the national park. Villages had sparse populations and there were few roads leading to larger markets. Few other people lived in the Cabayugan area (cf. Eder, 1987; McDermott, 2000).

#### *Tagbanua Social Relations and Livelihood Support in Cabayugan, 1920–45*

Tagbanua relied on social relations to access and use forest resources before, during and after settlement. Kin-based social relations granted them access to resources and support that flowed from households through, for example, harvesting opportunities and reciprocal labour exchanges for swidden (Eder, 1987: 193; McDermott, 2000). Tagbanua first ensured resource access for their immediate and bilateral family, rather than to 'outsiders', by sustaining land uses and tenurial systems based on household production and group membership (Fox, 1954). Specifically, intra-family relations dictated norms for sharing harvests and the division of usufruct land among offspring and next-of-kin, while inter-family relations and custom shaped the use of communal lands.

On usufruct plots, access was defined by one's relations to the immediate family. First, usufruct plots were passed on bilaterally from parents to offspring of either sex. Matrilocal custom also stated that, if a daughter married a man from elsewhere, the husband settled the lands of his wife's family. In this way, the extended family retained lands as new individuals were brought into the bilateral family (Fox, 1954).<sup>9</sup> Second, members of the extended family could harvest the immediate family's swiddens with few access qualifications. During crop failures, for example, the extended family and/or persons of the same ethnicity were rarely denied the chance to plant in a swidden (Warner, 1979). Harvesting opportunities were limited to the right to plant and harvest non-permanent crops, since these did not represent a claim to the land. Conversely, perennial crops represented a claim

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9. Lands were not exchanged outside of the bilateral family.

since they were permanent and 'held' land. Crop varieties and labour expenditures thus represented a claim to land that attenuated over time (McDermott, 2000). Third, reciprocal labour exchanges involved family members taking turns assisting each other to clear and cultivate their swiddens. Farmers who assisted in tending a swidden expected assistance from the owner at a later date, reciprocity which speeded up work and distributed rice harvests. Requests for assistance were seldom denied (cf. Warner, 1979; McDermott, 2000).

On common lands, Tagbanua shared hunting areas, bodies of water and uncultivated forests. Generally, only individuals of the same ethnicity could access and use the commons, while 'outsiders' were often excluded (Warner, 1979). However, qualifying for access to resources was not absolute; rules, norms and identities were fluid. Defending usufruct plots and communal lands became more difficult upon the arrival of migrants in the 1950s.

#### *Two Waves of Migrants: Altering Social Relations from the 1950s*

When compared to other Philippine islands, Palawan of the 1950s was a relatively peaceful and undeveloped forest frontier (Kerkvliet, 1977). The first wave of settlers came to Palawan to escape an exhausted resource base, land shortages and civil unrest in their home provinces; others migrated due to state incentives.<sup>10</sup> Migrant pioneers were Christian; they typically traveled on their own initiative, and followed indirect routes before settling in Cabayugan. Using money earned elsewhere, many settled in peri-urban sites, such as Santa Lourdes and Sicsican, with few farm implements and no support from next-of-kin. They worked in a variety of jobs, including fishing, bricklaying and teaching. In time, however, those living in Sicsican and Santa Lourdes established political ties with prominent migrants living near Cabayugan.

The first migrant to arrive in the Cabayugan area, in 1951, was Pedros Alvarado, a retired military official. His military background and wealth were the key to political networks that supported his appointment as Barangay Captain, displacing the first and last Tagbanua to hold this post. As Captain, Alvarado persuaded the families in Sicsican and Santa Lourdes to transfer to Cabayugan Centro by offering them land and farm implements. They quickly saw the advantages of claiming the flat, fertile lands of the central valley for paddy rice farming; few considered that Tagbanua had already claimed these lands. Forests were cleared in a 'free-for-all' manner; the more farmers cleared, the more they could claim.

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10. Based on author's questionnaire (N = 157), Cabayugan, summer 2002. For an overview of the resettlement process to Palawan, and particularly resettlements related to NARRA (the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration project) in 1954, see Lopez (1987).

Although the 'official' release of lands was pending, farmers staked their claim by maintaining clearings and cultivating flat fields for swidden and then paddy rice. As one migrant elder explained:

That is why I came here, because we heard that Palawan still had vast uncultivated lands. We were two who ventured here, my brother and I. It was true. When we arrived here, the part of the forest you clean, it's yours — nobody can get it. The Barangay Captain here before is already old now, he is Mr Pedros Alvarado. He told us, 'you can make your *kaingin* (swidden), if it's already clean, that will be yours'. It was true. (Interview, Eduardo Castillo, Cabayugan Centro, summer 2002)

The second wave of migrants to settle consisted of the relatives of pioneer migrants. They left Luzon between 1960 and 1968 to settle among family in Sicsican and Cabayugan who informed them (by letter or word-of-mouth) that Palawan had abundant lands and fishing grounds to exploit. Relatives supported new arrivals by offering them small loans and/or lands to share-crop or cultivate. Farmers banded together to petition Alvarado for the release of 378 ha of public domain (as 'alienable and disposable') in Cabayugan Centro.<sup>11</sup> New farmers relied on social and political networks, often based on family names and personal relations (such as gratitude, *utang ng loob*), to cultivate their lands and secure farm assets. Harnessing such networks allowed them to access land and capital in order to support agricultural productivity. Frequent reinvestments of political authority and wealth into local institutions further shaped who could access and use forest resources, land and productive capital.

#### *The Growth of Commodity Relations in the 1960s and 1970s*

During the late 1960s, commodity relations and new interventions sharpened social and economic differentiation within and between households in each social group.<sup>12</sup> Increasingly, state support of migrant paddy farming and the farmers' socio-political assertiveness enabled them to control private title, wage labour and trade relations. Migrant land holdings and paddy rice were no longer just cleared and cultivated through reciprocal labour exchanges. Having once taught migrants how to hunt and farm

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11. The lands were officially released under LC Map No 2598, Project 1-T, certified in July 1966.
  12. According to Bernstein (1979), commoditization arises from the 'penetration' of new capital and market relations, and serves as the catalyst for processes that lead to differentiation. This process arises during the commercial exchange of goods where something that had a 'use value' acquires an 'exchange value' (McDermott, 2000). Differentiation refers to the 'process of change in the ways in which different groups in rural society . . . gain access to the products of their own or others' labour, based on their differential control over production resources and often . . . on increasing inequalities in access to land' (White, 1989: 20).

swiddens, Tagbanua now produced goods for migrant-owned markets and tended their paddy fields.

The multiple processes leading up to differentiation unfolded gradually — despite the activities of foresters and surveyors that exacerbated local disparities. Upon settling, both Tagbanua and migrant livelihoods involved low capital, income-yielding activities such as rattan and swidden harvesting. Few investments were required to harvest rattan, making it an easily attainable, though modest source of cash income. Rattan sales often supported household incomes when rice yields were insufficient. While both migrant and Tagbanua cultivated swiddens, most migrants considered swidden as an initial livelihood coping strategy. Many abandoned their swidden fields after overcoming the ‘establishment costs’ of paddy farming (Connelly, 1983).

Migrant farmers continued to expand paddy rice by carving up flat sections of the forest commons. They often acquired lands in exchange for sundries or small amounts of cash; at other times they grabbed lands directly while share-cropping with Tagbanua. One strategy involved migrants planting tree crops to ‘hold’ and convert lands into paddy fields. Sustaining such claims involved hiring Tagbanua to uproot trees for deeper and wider ploughing in order to enhance rice yields. After cultivating lands, migrants could pay land taxes and receive a ‘tax certificate’ as a *de facto* claim of ownership.<sup>13</sup> Provincial foresters saw few problems with such landholdings because they supported ‘permanent’ settlement and paddy rice cultivation — further evidence of migrants aligning with state agencies. Such policies, however, only reinforced the uplander–lowlander dichotomy.

By this time, migrant social networks and ownership regulated access to and use of productive resources among Tagbanua and poorer migrant households. For example, two prominent migrants — Alvarado and Constantino — regulated the flow and form of farm capital. Alvarado was known to breed, distribute and sell *carabao* (water buffalo), while Constantino was expert in welding ploughs. In each case, next-of-kin were the first to receive capital in order to cultivate paddy fields and diversify their livelihoods. The more flat lands and farm implements migrants retained, the harder it became for Tagbanua to access productive resources and reinvest in their livelihoods; few Tagbanua could pursue paddy rice farming in the 1960s. Although they learnt some techniques while working on migrant fields, not many indigenous households could sustain their paddy fields. Cultural differences aside, they lacked the expertise, had insufficient savings, experienced difficulty accessing farm implements, and farmed hummocky fields in narrow sub-valleys. Compared to the lowlands, the undulating uplands had nutrient-poor clay soils which made proper

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13. Tax assessment certificates denote *use* rather than legal title to the land.

irrigation difficult, if not impossible. As a result, most Tagbanua had difficulty completing the swidden-to-paddy rice transition.

The late 1970s saw an increase in migrant households, paddy rice fields and primary resource extraction. Provincial surveyors released public lands adjacent to Cabayugan Centro for settlement; the area was soon filled, zoned for private title, and named Manturon. Migrants held the vast majority of land as paddy fields in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As Table 1 shows, Tagbanua only held 2 ha of paddy fields in this period, while migrants held 27.5 ha, and much more cleared land. Such differences in landholdings increased further as migrants secured control over productive lands and paddy fields in newly formed villages.

As migrant paddy fields expanded, a mining and logging company drew Tagbanua into heavy labour. As logging began, most *Agathis philippinensis* — the tree from which Tagbanua harvested almaciga resin — were felled at lower elevations. Once felled, Tagbanua could no longer tap and sell the resin to concessionaires. Thus, the threats to farmer livelihood security grew as access to swidden and incomes from extractive activities declined. Concurrent with these processes, migrants continued to build on local political institutions that supported their livelihoods and the new conservation estates in Cabayugan.

### **Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park and the Advent of Coercive Conservation**

When the Philippine state gained independence, it upheld the American concept of 'national parks' as territories that removed people from forests. Forestry officials soon targeted the karst landscape of the underground

*Table 1. Tagbanua and Migrant Landholdings Accumulated 1950–2001  
(based on Farmers' Estimates)*

	1950–70	1971–90	1991–2000	Total Land Holdings 2001
<b>Tagbanua (n = 44)</b>				
Home Lot	0.48	0.9	0.7	3.07
Swidden Fields	12.25	21	8.2	74.25
Paddy Fields	2	3.25	1	11.75
Tree Crops	5.5	7.5	4.3	32
Total	20.23	32.65	14.2	<b>121.07 ha</b>
<b>Migrants (n = 111)</b>				
Home Lot	2.16	6.19	2.9	13
Swidden Fields	23	42.1	14.75	191
Paddy Fields	27.5	24	17.5	149
Tree Crops	12.5	20.92	10.8	68
Total	65.16	93.21	45.95	<b>421 ha</b>

*Note:* Table 1 includes land *cleared* between 1950 and 2001 (calendar year). Different land holdings represent an *aggregate* of household holdings by ethnicity for the specified period.  
*Source:* Author's questionnaire, summer 2002.

river and surrounding forests as a national park, restricting local access to forest resources in Cabayugan. In the late 1940s, provincial officials spearheaded a draft proclamation that led to the creation of Puerto Princesa (then St Paul's) Subterranean River National Park. In 1949, Alfredo M. Abueg, Governor of Palawan, recommended to the President of the Philippines that the area be proclaimed a national park.<sup>14</sup> Officials at the Bureau of Forestry supported this request by first drafting Presidential Decree No 835 in the 1960s, and eventually promulgating the Decree in 1971 under Act No 3915 (Republic of the Philippines, 1971). The park claimed 3,901 ha of ancestral lands from the Tagbanua and allowed foresters to control the 'scientific, panoramic and aesthetic' value of the central karst landscape. Foresters fulfilled this remit by enforcing a 'people-free' landscape.

Colonial conservation ideals of a people-free landscape were still entrenched in the Bureau of Forestry and bolstered the authority of managers to eradicate swidden and support paddy rice cultivation. While migrants cleared 'alienable and disposable' lands in the late 1960s, upland forests were zoned and subject to vigorous enforcement. Ignoring the expanding paddy fields, foresters used state regulations to curb swidden farming among indigenes and poorer migrants. Since foresters and wealthier migrants were from the Christian majority and 'appreciated' the value of fixed paddy rice, few disputes arose as migrants claimed land for paddy rice farming. Migrant property claims and binding state laws converged as part of a 'locally recognized political order' (Lund and Wardell, forthcoming).

#### *Promoting Paddy Rice and Criminalizing Swidden Cultivation through Coercive Conservation*

Park managers began to 'officially' criminalize swidden and valorize paddy rice from 1971 onwards. Provincial foresters began by mapping the park core zone to demarcate its boundary with brush cuttings and signs around the central karst in Cabayugan. Survey errors meant that park boundaries actually overlapped with rice paddies and swiddens, rather than flanking the karst as was intended. Ambiguous zoning kept resource users unsure of where and what they could harvest on their lands. Nevertheless, foresters soon informed migrants and Tagbanua that the national park would engulf their paddy and swidden fields.

Migrants were clearly more vocal than Tagbanua in opposing the park boundaries. Although park boundaries overlapped with migrant paddy fields, farmers continued to clear forest for swidden and paddy rice by the central karst. Farmers with lands in the contested area argued that foresters

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14. 'Letter to the President of the Philippines regarding a Proposal for the Proclamation of St. Paul Subterranean River National Park. Dated: March 22, 1963.'



had no legal right to interfere with their application for title since the lands were released as alienable and disposable. A few prominent migrant families followed this lead by applying political pressure, and eventually claimed title on large paddy fields in Manturon (between 5 and 14 ha per family), as being occupied and cultivated since 11 July 1966 (as per License Number 2598 in 1966, see footnote 11). Migrants thus acquired their landholdings in the same way that landlords did in their home provinces (cf. Hirtz, 1998).

The failure of most migrant farmers to obtain private title did not prevent their access to land and forest resources. Rather, the lack of closure over land titles granted migrants new political space in which to negotiate with surveyors and managers over their pending claims. Most were savvy enough to maneuver politically when dealing with provincial surveyors and a wide range of land use policies. Cultivation continued despite the lack of title and absence of trees in paddy fields. Such rule bending was accepted because paddy rice production sustained local incomes and generated revenue for the state through taxation and rice sales to the National Food Authority. In 1978, for example, the Regional Director of Forestry tried to resolve the boundary dispute by 'zoning around' the farmers' plots to maintain the 'economic contribution' of paddy rice cultivation. Boundaries were now reinterpreted to allow migrants to retain lands inside the park when used for 'agricultural purposes'; accommodating the economic needs of the farmers became a 'practical' matter.<sup>15</sup> The purported benefits of migrant farms offset the need to resettle them for the purpose of conserving 'old growth' forests. No such allowances were made for Tagbanua, however.

Swidden cultivation by Tagbanua and poorer migrants was subject to punitive management that was aided further by ambiguous park zoning. Foresters used their political authority to enforce regulations subjectively, targeting swidden in forests they considered to be 'old growth'. Tagbanua elders complained that all enforcement focused on eradicating swidden where this overlapped with the boundaries of old growth forest. In order to ascertain where they could cultivate swidden, most had to distinguish between first and secondary growth forest. The forest guards enforced jail terms to punish any farmer caught cultivating swidden in the wrong place. Although foresters had permitted some migrants to cut 'secondary growth' for conversion to paddy rice, few allowances were made for cultivating swidden in similar forests. Tagbanua and those poor migrant farmers who remained title-less by working swidden on public lands bore the brunt of this enforcement strategy.

Post-colonial forest management had followed colonial conservation ideals and only those high in the local social order were exempt from the rules and regulations of earlier management periods. Forestry officials tried

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15. 'Memorandum to the Director of Forestry, Bureau of Forest Development, Dated: March 15, 1978.'

hard to outlaw swidden among Tagbanua, considering it primitive and unproductive. The opposite was true for migrants who could expand paddy farms, as this was considered modern and productive. Tagbanua farmers' first encounters with park regulators added new layers of restrictions over the displacement, dispossession and servitude that migrants had introduced.

*Institutionalizing Punitive Park Management in the late 1970s*

The late 1970s gave rise to a more defined and rigorous management approach. The Bureau of Forest Development institutionalized new management procedures and a staffing structure that enabled regular monitoring and enforcement. Bureau staff began by recruiting early migrant settlers as new forest rangers in Cabayugan Centro and Manturon, while senior positions went to politically prominent migrants. Damar Diadores fits this description: he was part of the local elite and part of the management bureaucracy. While Diadores was busy clearing swidden fields along the park boundary he was also employed as a forester whose management jurisdiction stretched from Bahilié to St Vicente. Upon completing his duties, he was appointed by the District Director of Forestry, Ponce de Leon, as the 'Official Officer in Charge' at the national park. From 1979 until 1991, Diadores and his head Game Warden adopted a militaristic enforcement strategy by claiming to adhere to international standards for park management — strict ecosystem conservation (IUCN, 1971).<sup>16</sup>

From 1979 onwards, this policy guided management priorities and the development of an Action Plan to strengthen enforcement at the national park.<sup>17</sup> Additional migrants were recruited to serve as volunteer rangers to carry out the Plan's first objective — 'Parks and wildlife protection for patrolling and confiscating forest products and disseminating laws and regulations for the park'. As many as eighteen park rangers formed an enforcement network grounded in kin ties and/or political connections. Not only did this network criminalize Tagbanua swidden farming but it also excluded them from participating in park management on grounds of ethnicity: Tagbanua were hired only as labourers.

The dynamics of migrant political relations made it difficult for Tagbanua to resist the force of these strict rules and regulations. The ability of migrants to control park infrastructure grew out of their wealth and

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16. The Philippine Conservation Strategy of 1985 (FAO), the Debt-for-Nature Swap in 1988 (WWF-US), and the Integrated Protected Areas Strategy in 1991 (World Bank) all influenced the national park's management.

17. 'An Action Plan for the Saint Paul [ . . . ] National Park for 1979. R-4-6. Allotment. Created by OIC, Parks, Range, and Wildlife Unit. Date: November, 1979.' Puerto Princesa City, summer 2002.

allegiance with those who, by doubling as park rangers, held political power through links with the state. Prominent migrant farmers were political allies of park managers and could influence management outcomes, such as continuing rice production. Farmers who liaised with managers and supported their political preferences were hired at the national park. As elsewhere in the Philippines, personal relations dominated patron-client relations and farmers acquired power through family ties and political networks (Rood, 1998). Local politics and management were intertwined.

Under Diadores, volunteer migrant rangers were trained and deputized to officially replace forestry officers and park guards. Migrant rangers could now legally confiscate forest products and control swidden around the national park, which further bolstered their political authority and economic position (Glass and Glass, 1978). Taking orders from de Leon and Diadores, the new rangers began to 'advertise' park boundaries to those still living by the coastal karst. Communicating boundaries involved erecting 'boundary signs' and monitoring 'critical boundaries' on a monthly basis (*ibid.*). Patrols began and illegal harvesting activities were registered and reported to de Leon and Diadores. After receiving such reports, de Leon wrote a memo to a local forestry officer, emphasizing with urgency that illegal deforestation might compromise the integrity of the park's boundaries. In January 1979, he wrote:<sup>18</sup>

Reports reached this Office that destruction of a portion of St Paul Subterranean River National Park still continues. Please advise all concerned to stop immediately any further destruction until there is a ruling from higher authorities on this case. We are requesting legal assistance on the matter. Warn them of the possible consequences of their forest destruction if they continue in spite of your advice. Illegal destruction of forestland has a minimum of two years imprisonment and . . . other penalties.

One incident illustrates how the local Officer in Charge used similar conservation rhetoric and authority to justify the displacement of a Tagbanua elder in order to claim land. During a monthly patrol, a ranger was told to investigate a Tagbanua elder, Gilberto Pamentel, with whom de Leon had made an agreement that allowed him to cultivate, but not expand his swidden in the park. After seeing smoke billow from the canopy, the ranger sought out its origin and reported that Pamentel had expanded swidden near the park's underground river. Since the agreement was breached, the ranger was instructed to visit Pamentel again, in order to recommend on Pamentel's 'displacement, location, remuneration agreements' (Glass and Glass, 1978). This did not, however, lead to Pamentel's eviction. The officer's information suggested that the new Officer in Charge, Damar

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18. 'A Memorandum from District Forester Ponce de Leon to Forester Amboam, Subject on the Destruction of St Paul Subterranean River National Park. Office of the District Forester, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Bureau of Forest Development. January 17, 1978'.

Diadores, had paid Pamentel 'to clear all land between his current clearing and the river', an area that overlapped with the park boundary (ibid.). After paying Pamentel to clear forest for swidden, Diadores claimed the land, and then employed him for field maintenance. Diadores soon dismissed Pamentel and then secured private title over the lands; Pamentel then moved inland to Marufinas (north of the underground river). Diadores' motives were clear: he could easily acquire valuable ancestral lands *within* the park core zone. Few obstacles stood in his way, since most indigenes held no private title and were unaware of the park boundaries.

After hearing about the incident, provincial officials informed all forestry officers to adhere to monitoring procedures inside and outside the park boundaries. Enforcement grew stricter as monitoring continued. Manong Abrea, a Tagbanua elder, lamented Diadores' enforcement style:

When it came time that there were restrictions to us, that was the time the crisis came to us. That's what I know until today. Until now, even the land that we have to plant on, we cannot broaden/extend it because it's restricted, but even then nobody lived there except for us. But for the wealthy [migrants] there are no park problems. (Interview, Manong Abrea, summer 2002)

His position encapsulates how employment at the national park now supported the interests of elite migrant farmers in clearing lands, cultivating paddy rice, and generating wealth. With the power to confiscate and apprehend, migrant rangers used their political appointments to influence the use and management of forest resources and property around the national park. Certain local elites working for the park used their position to sustain paddy rice cultivation on fields located within the park. Provincial officials allowed farmers continued use of these fields, tolerating those violating rules of access. Given the farmers' political influence, few officials considered such cultivation improper; holding onto their lands, most blamed the faulty survey for the fields falling inside the park. By owning large stretches of productive paddy rice and employing Tagbanua as labourers, migrants could shape the production and exchange of rice and non-timber forest products. The few households with such power used their political influence and control to adjust and augment restrictions imposed by park authorities. Tagbanua had few opportunities to resist such enforcement as their access to forest resources gradually diminished. Management thus built on colonial ideologies and land use policies in a way that reinforced social and economic differentiation in Cabayugan, only to further marginalize the Tagbanua.

#### *Modernizing Park Enforcement: The Rise of NGO and Community-based Interventions*

After the 1986 Revolution ousted Marcos, the number and diversity of non-governmental organizations proliferated in the Philippines and on Palawan (Eder and Fernandez, 1996; Vitug, 2000). Environmental NGOs moved to

conserve the island's rain forests as indigenous rights organizations 'mobilized' indigenous peoples in the uplands. In 1988, a nationwide environmental campaign secured a US\$ 2 million Debt-for-Nature Swap involving the Haribon Foundation, the WWF-US and the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) (WWF, 1991).<sup>19</sup> Funds were allocated to improve the infrastructure and enforcement capabilities at the national park under the condition that management preserve forests that support 'major faunal regions' and 'environmental outreach programs' (WWF, 1991: 10). The park now had a well-financed environmental programme and sufficient funds for the construction of four ranger stations. The ranger stations were built using timber confiscated from 'illegally' cleared swidden and were located at four strategic entry and exit points used by rattan and almaciga collectors. Rangers received training and were outfitted with 'pump-boats' (motor-driven outrigger canoes) and hand radio-sets for patrolling the park boundaries. With new park infrastructure, the DENR arbitrarily expanded the park from 3,901 to 5,753 ha in 1988.<sup>20</sup> While Tagbanua offered little resistance to such encroachment, migrant farmers stopped the demarcation crew in its tracks as it approached their rice paddies (McDermott, 2000). The park now employed fifty people, the majority of whom had migrated to Cabayugan in the 1950s.

Coercive enforcement continued into the 1980s. Diadores described in a report how 'constant foot patrol surveys . . . [and] apprehension' led to an entanglement over competing rights of access to rattan groves flanking the national park. In late 1988, when a Tagbanua named Brillantes expanded his rattan harvests, Diadores and his rangers warned him repeatedly to stop collecting, stressing that 'Brillantes knew the boundary' and knew not to 'encroach on the boundary'.<sup>21</sup> Brillantes, however, continued to cross the park boundary, gathered the rattan poles, and sold them to buyers in Puerto Princesa City. Learning about his intentions, Diadores' team moved to intercept Brillantes.

Brillantes considered himself as the rightful owner of the rattan, regardless of where it had been collected. During one interview, he argued the rattan was harvested legally, well beyond the park boundary. Given his position, it came as no surprise that, after being released by the rangers, he promptly returned to reclaim his prize from beneath the ranger station. His

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19. Following the 1986 People Power Revolution, the Ministry of Natural Resources, which contained the Bureau of Forest Development, was reorganized into the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The DENR's parallel agencies including the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau and the Forest Management Bureau.
  20. Although, to date, there is no official map or proclamation that delineates the national park's expanded core zone.
  21. 'NRCO-SPSRNP, Parks and Wildlife Office (1988) *Accomplishment Report*, Puerto Princesa City.'

action led to a chase, with assistance from the Philippine National Police, confiscation of the rattan, and a court case for Brillantes. For the first time, a local non-governmental organization called the Indigenous Peoples Apostolate (IPA) intervened on behalf of those facing criminal charges, setting an precedent for NGOs supporting indigenous rights and livelihoods. Father Arnesto Lagarada, a Tagbanua priest and the head of the IPA, confronted Diadores over the charges. Lagarada and Diadores met to discuss the matter in terms of 'subsistence security' versus the 'rule of law,' respectively. Diadores rejected Lagarada's proposal to drop the charges.

The rise in NGO interventions supposedly marked the end of coercive park management in Cabayugan and unilateral decision making by parastatal on Palawan. NGO coalitions formed over several years and, by connecting to the 'upper level', offered new management rhetoric: integrating livelihood concerns with conservation priorities. The DENR, the World Bank and local NGOs now worked to implement an integrated protected areas strategy that amounted to a regional network of parks with buffer zones. With a 'rejuvenated' civil society, activists and government planners used 'people-oriented' policies to integrate livelihood concerns into national park planning across the Philippines (World Bank, 1994, WWF, 1991).

This combination of factors, and growing resistance to coercive conservation, led to changes in management personnel and the advent of community-based conservation at the national park. Several Tagbanua petitioned to have Diadores replaced by a new park manager named Arturo Baltazar and new migrant staff from Cabayugan. Working together, they monitored project development in accordance with a 'shared' mandate of ecosystem conservation and livelihood support. Baltazar tried to rebuild local support by returning confiscated forest products and by offering households livelihood projects in so-called 'multiple use' buffer zones. With NGO assistance, he designed livelihood projects for Tagbanua that focused on livestock dispersal and basket weaving (see McDermott, 2000). While adopting such low-capital projects was feasible, most families lacked the necessary resources and expertise to sustain livestock.

Given the area's political economic history, the use of community-based conservation to change how park officials managed paddy rice and swidden inevitably had mixed results. In the 1990s, various laws formalized community-based conservation and ensured Tagbanua preferential rights to access forest resources on lands claimed as ancestral domain (see, for example, DENR, 1993, 1998). Laws advocating devolved conservation included the Strategic Environmental Plan of Palawan and the National Integrated Protected Areas Act of 1992, while the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act demarcated domain claims (*de facto*) and title (*de jure*) after 1997. These laws led to more 'inclusive' management and projects that supported 'traditional' livelihoods in the new Cabayugan ancestral domain claim.

Declared a World Heritage Site in 1999, the national park's buffer zone was then expanded from 3,901 to 22,202 ha to overlap with the uplands and the domain claim.

In the uplands, the ancestral domain claim was soon reinterpreted as a traditional use buffer zone in which projects 'maintained' indigenous livelihoods but did not reduce livelihood vulnerability. Projects supported by NGOs and park managers catered to low capital pursuits, such as swidden cultivation, which have failed to diversify and strengthen Tagbanua livelihoods. Such projects rarely reintroduced indigenes to paddy farming because they did not fit the image of successful, modern farmers (other factors such as the availability of farm implements and flat, fertile lands were disregarded). As if to keep livelihoods traditional, NGOs and managers now co-opted and romanticized notions of indigeneity in order to support 'community-based' conservation.

In the lowlands, migrant farmers began to organize themselves around livelihood projects that supported the expansion of paddy rice in so-called multiple use buffer zones. Inside such zones, Peoples' Organizations and associations provided farmers with credit in order to purchase lands and modern farm implements — both costly and beyond the reach of Tagbanua. The revenue generated from expanded rice production was reinvested in household production and education, which, in turn, led to future employment opportunities at the national park. As a result, migrant farmers continue to use the national park's infrastructure and management platform to control resource access and use.

Recent programmes from the Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation (COMPACT) project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have sustained this trend. Various projects have strengthened pre-existing Vendors' Associations and Farmers' Co-operatives to enable migrants to expand rice production with new machines, market outlets and medium-scale investments. In contrast, Tagbanua are confined to programmes that support swidden farming using traditional methods in the uplands. While somewhat laudable, the project has yet to offer Tagbanua new avenues through which to diversify and improve their livelihoods. Most still rely on migrants for cash. By building on older dichotomies of people and agriculture, community-based conservation thus begins to parallel the colonial ideals of coercive conservation.

## CONCLUSION

This article has shown how state land use policies and coercive conservation have co-evolved to marginalize or even criminalize swidden agriculture, a process rooted in colonial ideals of 'productive people' and 'modern agriculture'. Filipino farmers were often aligned with state interests and had

relatively unfettered access to the lowlands, which they titled and cultivated as 'productive' paddy rice. 'Tribal' upland minorities were subjugated by the state and cultivated 'unproductive' swiddens on usufruct plots. As the American administration built on Spanish land law to control upland resources, foresters gave birth to new political territories such as national parks — boundaries that upheld colonial abstractions of people and agriculture. State managers used stereotypes to confine uplanders and define their farming practices through boundaries. A dialectical relationship formed whereby national parks expanded upland and supported the production of dominant social groups who, in turn, stood to benefit from colonial conservation.

The Philippine government followed similar political and economic ideals in order to facilitate forest conservation on Palawan. The infrastructure and institutions that supported colonial conservation, infused with social and economic bias, grew to shape how agriculture, trade and park management unfolded in Cabayugan. Migrant settlers had few difficulties cultivating flat lands as swidden and then paddy fields, while income from rice sales flowed into state coffers (Ocampo, 1996).

Paddy farmers invested further in productive resources and the political opportunities that enabled them to steer park management away from paddy rice and toward swidden cultivation. The results were clear: the state's own doctrine of criminalizing swidden grew locally in order to protect 'old growth' forest. Ironically, while migrants expanded paddies as permanent clear cuts, Tagbanua faced boundary enforcement that aimed to eradicate swidden in regenerated forests. Historical antecedents that constructed social, political and economic hierarchies through unequal production, exchange and unilateral management thus drove how state conservation agendas unfolded locally.

The importance of swidden to the subsistence base, culture and symbolism of uplanders was neglected in favour of resource profits and territorial control. Early on, coercive conservation at the national park dealt less with conservation than with maintaining control over people and the forests they occupied. Farmers closest to the state merged with government institutions locally in order to participate in and benefit from the state's agenda of protecting valuable resources. Building on the state's tolerance of paddy farming, they could uphold the virtues of paddy rice as 'non-destructive' agriculture that supposedly supported their forest management campaign. Migrant paddy farmers qualified as 'good' farmers, protecting the state's economic interests at the local level. Indigenes and poorer migrants were 'bad' farmers; they offered burnt, scarred landscapes that violated state economic interests (cf. Neumann, 2000). That the government still considers swidden cultivation a threat reflects its own ignorance and serves to justify the 'expropriation . . . of rural lands [and the] extension of external control into the territories of swidden agriculturalists' (Dove, 1983: 95).



The recent shift to community-based conservation has yet to redress the negative impacts arising from coercive conservation — a management paradigm that persists on Palawan. Park managers fail to consider how they might work with, rather than against, upland farmers in Palawan. Managing swidden so that it remains productive and sustainable would facilitate cultural continuity and potentially re-open opportunities to secure access to productive resources, such as flat, titled lands. Should devolved conservation deny indigenous residents access to productive capital for more lucrative agriculture, differentiation between migrants and Tagbanua is likely to be exacerbated. Underlying conditions of inequality must be explicitly recognized and incorporated into devolved conservation so that programmes move beyond assumptions and empower marginalized households.

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**Wolfram H. Dressler** is a Lecturer in Social Anthropology and Natural Resources Management in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, University of Queensland, St Lucia, Qld 4072, Australia (e-mail: wolfram.dressler@mail.mcgill.ca). His research focuses on indigenous peoples' rights, rural livelihoods, and the political economy of conservation. Research areas include the Philippines, South Africa and Canada's far north.

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