

The Politics of Identity in Mindanao: Tripeople and Its Limitations

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A Nation is composed of solidarity made up from the feeling of sacrifice that one has made and sacrifices that one is disposed to make.

It presupposes a past. Yet it is summarized in the present by a tangible fact: consent and the clear desire to continue communal life.

The existence of a Nation is a daily plebiscite.

Ernest Renan, 1947

At last census count two years ago, the population of Mindanao stood at over 18 million, almost a quarter of the population of the Philippines. The census did not classify according to religion in Mindanao. In 1990 there were 2,720,223 Muslims (Moro), over 18 percent of the island's population, a percentage that has been in decline for over a century.¹ Estimates of the Lumad (non-Islamized indigenous people) population are even less precise, but the Lumads are believed to compose less than five percent of Mindanao's total population. While these figures are far from perfect, they illustrate a very basic observation: the population of the island is divided between Muslim, Christian and Lumad. This is the simplest meaning of the term tripeople, uncontested but not very enlightening.

The term tripeople only started to be used during the mid-80s.² While the description of the island's demographic as tripeople differentiated it from other descriptions of the island, such as the "Moro Province," the term tripeople is surely not merely ethnic *description*. It is also *proscription*, and has been widely adopted, particularly by the non-government organization (NGO) community, as an approach to a variety of activities from peace advocacy, cooperativism, education, to development work in general. A tripeople agenda has come to suggest what elsewhere might be called multiculturalism, an ethos that emphasizes the plurality of identity and suggests that tolerance must become the prerequisite of a healthy, working society. Tripeople is not only a description, but also a social movement or theory for public

policy, in which issues of social justice, equality and cultural appreciation are said to be given certain primacy.

Tripeople is often used by Church and Church-affiliated organizations to distinguish peace-related work from missionary responsibility. Thus, denoting tolerance, cultural sensitivity and respect, it might be contrasted to evangelism. Indeed, the interfaith conferences of the mid-1980s, organized by Church or Church-affiliated NGOs, were quick to adopt this terminology. That tradition continues today in the various interfaith dialogues conducted by the Bishop-Ulama Forum (the Interfaith Forum for Solidarity and Peace in the Diocese of Pagadian, for instance), and by lay organizations such as the Catholic Relief Services.³

Tripeople might be used to describe/proscribe a notion of interdependence between people in Mindanao, at once remarking the ethnic differences but at the same time asserting the dependence each group has upon the other. Interdependence is a different kind of policy framework than, for instance, Filipino nationalism which does not acknowledge the ethnic or religious tensions within its category of "Filipino." But what, we should ask, are the weaknesses of elevating identity-politics (and the politics of the tripeople) above these other structuring ideas of society, including class and state (and substate) relations? This, it must be emphasized, is not an attempt to refute the tripeople approach to development or peace building, but it is important that we know the limits of this term. Neither is this essay an attempt to provide a concrete definition of tripeople; it would probably be fairly irresponsible and meaningless to even prompt that debate. The meaning of this word will certainly not be given by discussion, nor even in that peculiar activity of "consensus building," but through social reform.

How is the Term Tripeople Used?

Tripeople has become a term of increasing political expedience. Electorates are increasingly composed of both Muslim and Christians. Most of the Christians appear to be aware of indigenous rights. Festivals with a tripeople theme are not uncommon. Beauty pageants that require participants to model indigenous outfits inculcate, in their own feeble manner, the need for greater awareness of indigenous and Moro culture.⁴ Many politicians are now willing to participate, or even fund tripeople initiatives.⁵ Research institutions affiliated with universities and NGOs regularly profess to be tripeople.⁶ As an indication of the breadth

of its use, we might also note that tripeople is now being used by a militant group, the Indigenous People's Federal Army, as the basis for the call for a federal system of government.⁷ Clearly, the term has become common parlance, not just for an NGO counterculture, but among scholars, politicians, and media.

Its popular usage has altered, subtly, its initial meaning. This author could trace the origins of the word back to 1984, when it was adopted by the Mindanao InterFaith People's Conference (MIPC), an organization that has since been replaced by institutions such as the more formal Bishop-Ulama Forum. The MIPC was organized by a Church-affiliated NGO, and the term tripeople had a more religious connotation than it does today. Thus, while it once referred to Catholics, Muslims and Lumads, at present it tends to use the rubrics Settler (Filipinos whose ancestors were from the Visayas or Luzon, and who are largely either practicing or nominal Catholics), Moro (composed of 13 ethno-linguistic groups; who are, with few exceptions, either practicing or nominal Muslims), and Indigenous People or Lumad (composed of 18 ethno-linguistic groups in Mindanao; and on the whole are either animistic or practicing indigenous variants of Protestantism). There is a strong tendency among scholars and the NGO community to underplay the role of religion in the conflict in Mindanao, and the term today generally connotes ethnicity rather than religion. This being said, "Christian" is sometimes used as a synecdoche for Settler, and "Muslim" for Moro.

Scholars like Rudy Rodil have done a great deal to provide theoretical rigor to the notion of tripeople. In his fine examination of the peace talks between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and Government, Rodil writes of the "intimate interconnection of the fundamental interests among the three major segments of the entire Mindanao population, the Lumads, the Moros and the Christian settlers."⁸ This claim (the "interconnection" of the three people) provides telling criticisms of the way in which the "peace and development process" was pursued in Mindanao between the MNLF and the Government. Reiterating the importance of cultural tolerance and interdependence, Rodil writes,

In order to establish new relationships among the tripeople of Mindanao, we need to see each other in a new light, look more closely at what we have in common and learn to live with our diversity... We can only have peace if the peace of one is the peace of all, the Lumads, Muslims and Christian settlers, when the vision of one is the vision of all.⁹

Similarly, the Moro activist scholar Jamail Kamlian writes that the destinies of the tripeople are entwined, and that resolution of the conflict in Mindanao "is not a simple case of settling the issue of right to self-determination of the Bangsamoro people".¹⁰ All ethnic groups in Mindanao, he argues, are bounded by common territory and resources, and, on the whole, by a similar notion of god and humanity.

Numerous NGOs have been actively advocating the tripeople approach. In 1991, a regional network of NGOs and people's organizations (POs) called the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs Network (better known as MINCODE) formally adopted the framework of tripeople development. Through this encompassing framework, the coalition "believes that genuine and progressive development can only take place with the meaningful participation of Lumads (indigenous peoples), Moro and the settlers or the tripeople of Mindanao."¹¹ In terms of advocacy and research, the tripeople approach has emphasized "consultation, workshops and conferences" between Mindanao's ethnic groups, an approach that is distinguished from "full-blown research" or "scientific undertakings."

For the Mindanao Tripeople Caucus, which has been active for a relatively short time (since 2000), tripeople has been a fundamental guiding principle for its advocacy and community building activities. Discussing the relationship between the Maguindanaon, the Arumanen-Manobo and the settlers, two of the organization's coordinators, Mimi Arquiza and Lyndee Prieto write,

The relationships of the tripeople in Cotabato have been traditionally embedded on respect, mutual sharing and cooperation and solidarity. This permeates in the economic, political and socio-cultural aspects of their lives. Thus, the relationship especially among the Arumanun-Manuvu and the Maguindanaon is always referred to as 'brotherly' and 'sisterly'.¹²

Arquiza and Prieto also make the point that intermarriage between the Maguindanaon and Arumanen-Manobo was common, and the exchange of women was a way of maintaining good relations – an indigenous instance of interdependence.¹³ For the Caucus, the tripeople approach has always implied cultural sensitivity, consultation between Moro, Settler, and Indigenous peoples, and the urge to remedy economic and political injustice. These goals have been self-evident for most members of the Caucus prior to the organization's existence, indeed even before the invention of this term tripeople.

Nevertheless, the use of the term tripeople by NGOs has come under some criticism, particularly from Bangsamoro scholars. Partly in response to these criticisms, the members of the Mindanao Tripeople Caucus decided to remove the label 'tripeople'. The group has since become the 'Mindanao People's Caucus'.¹⁴ Though the rubric of tripeople might have fallen out of vogue with this organization, the change of name in practice will neither alter its style of work, nor the basic presumption of interdependence between the people in Mindanao.¹⁵

The Limits of our Own Arguments

The notion of tripeople acknowledges interdependence, denoting both the shared vulnerability and common wealth of the three peoples of Mindanao. However, the pattern of cultural intercourse within Mindanao today also implies a degree of ethnic miscegenation and cultural integration. The island is, and has been for a long time, a melting pot of Islamic, Christian, Spanish, American and Southeast Asian influences. Hermetically sealing one community from the experience of another is no longer possible and may never have been. Therefore, we would do well to look at the categories that the notion tripeople employs, that is, Christian Settler, Moro and Lumad, and dispose of the notion that any of these categories is homogenous, inviolable, or without its own internecine conflicts.

As advocates or as scholars, we regularly find it most useful to speak in terms of Moro, Settler, and Lumad, yet these generalized notions of identity are not unitary, fixed or bounded. For discussion, let us now consider how the notion of *Bangsamoro* has been formed and used. I have chosen Bangsamoro because, of the three categories, it is perhaps the most coherent, and conclusions drawn from its discussion might be equally applicable to the notion of Settler or Lumad.

Scholars and peace advocates have tended to accept that the principal factors in the Islamic rebellion have been communal and religious. And there is reasonable evidence to support this near orthodoxy. As Patricio Abinales points out, the MNLF rebellion was interpreted through

the framework of historic ethno-religious conflict (Tan 1977; Gowing 1979; George 1980; Ahmed 1982, 4-10; Mercado 1984, 151-75). Events themselves reinforced this interpretation. The MNLF's success as a separatist movement hinged in its warning that the Marcos dictatorship was launching a vigorous, systematic effort to

destroy the Muslims as a community... The result was the mustering of a popular army almost overnight that fought the military on near-conventional terms.¹⁶

The notion of Muslim people was invoked against an enemy that had invented its own sense of nation and community. This is not to suggest that there existed no common heritage among the Bangsamoro. However, it is a suggestion that myths of origin and religion were used to locate common beliefs, habits and sympathies and thus conferred a dignity upon the "Moro struggle" which overlooked the many tensions that divided the Bangsamoro.

It is, perhaps, for this reason that four years after the eruption of the Bangsamoro conflict, the MNLF was in disarray, and the leadership had splintered over questions of personality and tribe – evident in the split between Hashim Salamat and Nur Misuari.¹⁷ Misuari was from the Tausug, a tribe predominant in Zamboanga, Sulu and Jolo, while Salamat was Magindanaon, a tribe predominant around Central Mindanao. These two Muslim communities, and the eleven other autochthonous Moro tribes in Mindanao, speak mutually unintelligible languages, and have their own unique cultural traditions and hierarchy.¹⁸ Some credence must be given to the argument that it was these characteristics, tribal or local, that prevailed over the broad civilization struggle of the Moro rebellion, ending it before it brought genuine self-determination to the Moros.

However, division did not occur along ethnic lines alone. The struggle also fragmented according to class. Certainly, the socialist ethic and revolutionary background of many of the rebellion's leaders was a threat to the system of Bangsamoro land ownership, which was still regarded by many Moro revolutionaries as essentially feudal.¹⁹ But equally, if not more so, the division lay between the populism, the fierce public oratory of the MNLF, and the traditional, quasi-religious authority of the Moro elite. Thus, some members of the "Moro elite" rejected outright the politic of the rebellion.

So though the notion of Bangsamoro denotes some kind of common struggle or common destiny (a notion which proved powerful in the early years of rebellion), it failed to reconcile the internal differences within its movement. Perhaps this was because it was the tribe and not the Moro struggle that was a more effective motivating symbol for Muslims living in Mindanao. Perhaps this is because the cultural framework of identity overlooked questions of high and low culture, or the dramatic inequality between class. There is no doubt that the Marcos regime pursued a policy of divide and rule over the Muslims, as it certainly often gave

support to those MNLF dissenters, but these wily tactics alone cannot account for the implosion of the MNLF. In any case, when the MNLF which had been synonymous with the "Moro struggle" fragmented, it was forced to the negotiating table with fewer bargaining chips. As one commentator describes it, "its relative inexperience at political arbitration kept it perennially outmaneuvered by the government."²⁰

Though the term Bangsamoro might be fallible, it is certainly not dead. If anything, a Magindanaon, a Tausug, or a Maranao's notion of being a member of a broader Moro struggle has been revitalized, though not by the Moro leadership and certainly not from the jail room that houses Nur Misuari. Rather Bangsamoro has been revitalized by an administration that has found it in its interest to talk the talk of "war on terror," with all its Manichaeian divisions of good and evil and wild suspicion of political Islam. Although it began its term in office calling for "all-out peace," the peace agreements have been slow in coming, fairly insubstantial, and the process itself hampered by procedural irregularities, interference by the military, and fairly unreasonable provocations, such as the proposed establishment of a battalion headquarters in Camp Abubakar.

Thus, it is not necessary to conclude that because the notion of Bangsamoro political elite is prone to fragmentation or that it has been employed by a colonial regime, it is somehow false. Theoretically, it is perhaps a mistake to see identity in terms of meaning at all. It is much better to understand an identity such as Bangsamoro (or indeed Lumad or Settler) as a structure of power. Therefore, rather than conceive of Bangsamoro as the deterministic embodiment of historic, linguistic, cultural, geographic and racial conditions, it might be interpreted as the embodiment of interests and expectations within the society, interests that are not concrete, but alterable – as indeed culture has been – through the experience of migration, industrialization, and commerce.

This notion of identity is perhaps less tangible than supposing some collective soul- some *Volksgeist* (national genius) of the "Bisaya" migrant, Bangsamoro or Lumad- but it is more progressive and pluralistic. To quote Renan again, "A Nation presupposes a past. Yet it is summarized in the present by a tangible fact: consent and the clear desire to continue communal life. The existence of a Nation is a daily plebiscite." And it is this democratic, selfdefining model of identity that is more likely to survive the inevitable process of cultural integration and ethnic miscegenation of the tripeople, which has become one characteristic of their interdependence.

Perhaps, this is another layer of the notion tripeople. When it speaks of identity, it does so in reference to interests and expectations of the three peoples. It does not simply imply a grudging acquiescence among people whose "collective soul" has made them unknowable or implacably foreign to the other two groups, but of some form of reconciliation between their separate and culturally peculiar interests. These interests need not be static or unchanging, but reflect the changing threats and prospects for development in Mindanao. Tripeople should not be the division of Mindanao into three independent civilizational forces contending for power or reconciling after the costs of conflict appear to have become too great. However, we must concede that this is one possible reality. As advocates and scholars, it is perhaps this shortsighted self-interest that we must guard against in Mindanao.

Obviously, tripeople is a simplified map of reality. One could be more specific about identities within, and divide according to tribe, or further into clan, family, or finally into individuals. However, these divisions, down to the individual, will not necessarily provide a comprehensible framework for understanding Mindanao. Investigated from the level of individual, family, and tribe, the image of Mindanao will likely be one of undifferentiated anarchy, in which cause and consequence have no pattern, only relentless disorder. So we should not be coy about using generalizations – they are a necessity of description – but we should recognize the potential for floppy terms like tripeople to be used inappropriately and to disguise the actual biases between ethnic groups.

Indeed, the very success of the term tripeople has, as stated in this paper, made its use politically expedient, and it is now employed by some who either misunderstand or do not care for its fundamental proscription – that interdependence requires equitable political representation, social and economic justice. This need not necessarily be a reason to abandon the term, though it might be a good reason to make it politically radical.

Afterword

I wrote this paper in August 2002. In the four months that have elapsed since then, the word tripeople has been expunged from the lingo of some Davao NGOs.

The lifecycle of a word is usually measured in centuries. Tripeople was all but stillborn. The first major sign of sickness occurred at the General Assembly of the Mindanao Tripeople's Caucus (MTC), a peace summit held in Davao City in September 2002. During the discussion of

the "tripeople concept," a forum in which this very paper was submitted, the delegates moved to abandon the term. To be fair then, this essay "The Politics of Identity in Mindanao: tripeople and its limitations" has become a minority report.

So who killed it? And was there just cause?

We might look first at the three main speakers on the subject at this conference, and then at the response of the leaders of the peasant communities.

Former Commissioner of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Datu "Migketay" Victorino L. Saway believed that many groups had attempted in vain to resolve the term tripeople. He argued that previous discussions on the topic had been "too shallow," and that they did not represent a "consensus."

He argued that the term tripeople is troubled because even within individual groups such as the 'Lumad' (a term used by some groups of Indigenous People in Mindanao), there was not a common position on the peace process. And if there was no firm Lumad position, there would certainly be no consensus on the notion of tripeople either. This, he claimed, was a consequence of Mindanao's colonial heritage.

I think he makes a valid point. Certainly, these individual categories are fragmented. And the suggestion of consensus, made by the very use of the word tripeople, is of course the word's unwarranted conceit. Indeed, in its *descriptive* function, the term tripeople is a generalization, and at times, a little optimistic.

Prof. Michael Mastura discussed the notion of tripeople, by dividing the word in two, looking first at the idea of "people" and then of "tri-."

He traced the evolution of the term "indigenous people" from the International Labor Organization (ILO) to the United Nations (UN). The UN, he noted, has written a draft paper on the rights of "indigenous people." Significantly, this draft is not just an enumeration of rights of individuals, but of "people" and their rights over resources and territory.

He argued that the Indigenous People's Right Act (IPRA) is a Filipino nationalist's document, discussing indigenous rights as merely the rights of the minority. But this is inappropriate given the history of international relations between the Bangsamoro people and former colonial powers. The Bangsamoro people had signed treaties with Holland, Spain, and later the United States long before the emergence of an independent Filipino nation. Thus the IPRA is rejected by the Bangsamoro people.

He argued further that "tri-" was an inappropriate qualification of "people" because even among the Moros there were mestizo Arabs and mestizo Chinese. Thus Mindanao was pluralistic long before the Christian settlers came. Even the Lumads are plural. However, he was highly critical of the term Lumad, describing it as "a concoction of one conference." He concluded, "We cannot accept tripeople because it is not true that there are only three."

Mastura's position is very close to that of the MILF, an organization that he has, on occasion, represented. Certainly, the MILF rejects the notion of Lumad, as it rejects the notion of tripeople. For this group, there is only one category for the indigenous people of Mindanao, whether Islamic or not, and that is Bangsamoro.

The third speaker, Dolly Corro of MINCODE, discussed the notion of tripeople from the perspective of development work in conflict affected areas, and within the framework of "dialogue" which is often established between these groups.

She admitted that the concept of tripeople was something new, but argued that "a common understanding of the present situation in Mindanao will help address deeply rooted biases and prejudices between the Moro, Lumad and migrant settlers." While Settlers, Moro and Indigenous people in Mindanao have different worldviews, they share a common aspiration for peace, economic security, self-determination and cultural integrity.

Corro outlined in detail MINCODE's tripeople framework for development. However, in the four months since this paper was written that framework (written in 1991), was abandoned.

Discussion of "Tripeople" by the Moro, Settler and Indigenous Peasant Leaders

While discussing the acceptability of the term tripeople, the delegates of the Peace Summit divided into groups based upon their identity, that is, whether they were Moro, Indigenous or Settler. What follows is a record of the major points raised by each group. Even within one group, there are sometimes contradictions. There was great ambivalence about the use of the term tripeople.

Some of the points are descriptive, some interpretive, some questions and some recommendations. The text in italics is my own addition.

Settlers

- "The word tripeople will always exist because of history, and history should enlighten us to determine our future." *A suggestion perhaps that there is something within the history of the island that is best told by using the term tripeople. Certainly, this is a comment that Prof. Mastura would contend.*
- Mindanao is a shared territory, and nobody can claim it. It belongs to the three groups. *If not equally, then symbolically.*
- To give up the term tripeople is to lose a part of our identity, and "identity is dignity."
- [*But*] inherent in the term Settler, is the suggestion that we displaced somebody, or that we displaced a people. In this sense, it has a dubious meaning that does not always reflect history.
- Reject the notion that Settlers could ever be considered Bangsamoro, and Settlers feel that this might be a Muslim trick.
- Will the term 'Mindanaon'
 - (a) Erase the concepts of Moro, Settler and Indigenous People?
 - (b) Erode the distinct character of each group?
 - (c) Include groups like Chinese businessmen who are often oppressive?

Indigenous People

- Indigenous People recognise that they are a divided community, because:
 - (a) Indigenous culture degraded through religion, education, legal institutions, economic opportunities, defense and territorial sovereignty.
 - (b) Many indigenous leaders have become the enemy of their own people and communities.

Thus, before the participation of the Indigenous People in the tripeople arena can become effective, they need to resolve the internal conflicts instituted by the colonial instruments.

However the Indigenous group added that:

- Tripeople could be a concept with which to eradicate the manipulative, oppressive and suppressive colonial system.
- Tripeople could be used to safeguard a collective effort towards peace, and against the colonial structure which is built to protect its own economic and political interests.

Moro

- Desire unity with other people in Mindanao, but believe the tripeople concept is divisive.
- Require a “just term” that would help describe at once our individual identity and the island’s pluralism.
- Require a term that might eradicate the fear, apprehension, and suspicion between people of different religions and cultures.
- The term tripeople is problematic because Moro refers to Muslims and Settler refers to Christians. How can we identify indigenous people and settlers who adopted Islam?
- Indigenous and Muslim people have a shared ancestry, and Settlers are also people “of the island.” The island may have many religions, but there is only one people. Thus, promoting the term tripeople could promote conflict.
- Mindanao is a just and useful term, because it:
 - (a) does not raise the question of identity, whether Moro, Settler or Lumad. Thus, it does not discriminate, and it does not suggest bias.
 - (b) eliminates psychological barriers between people that can cause conflict.

MINCODE Abandons the Term

MINCODE abandoned the term tripeople in favor of Mindanao. In his article on the change of term Rick Flores wrote:

The tripeople framework has evolved from an instrument of dialogue with historical substance towards promoting awareness of a Mindanao identity and political consciousness.²¹

The reasons for this were manifold. He noted the final position of the Mindanao People’s Caucus, as well as the antipathy that several Muslim scholars had toward the word. However, he also argued that the change in name might also reflect a new political impetus among MINCODE’s major member-networks that are

now pushing for federalism as an alternative political solution aimed not only at resolving the conflict but also at the overall socio-economic development of Mindanao. If tripeople is the socio-cultural expression of Mindanao as a distinct people from the rest of the country, federalism is its political expression. In fact, it is in this light that Mincode’s advocacy for [a] bigger share of Mindanao in the national budget is cast. It is not merely to address aggregate discrepancies in the budget allocation that marginalizes

social sector allocations but, more evidently, to argue that Mindanao could be better off if it controls its own resources and socio-economic destiny.²²

Mindanao was not a complete abandonment of the tripeople prescription for, according to Reyes, “...the very foundations of the ‘Mindanao’ are the Lumad, Moro and settler-communities. ‘Mindanao’ consciousness has been built on this premise and will continue to be so.”²³

Conclusion

The word tripeople was born in a conference (at the interfaith dialogues in the mid-1980s), and it was first abandoned at a conference (in 2002).

Who killed it? Well, certainly it was not the Settler groups. There was not a strong resistance to it from Indigenous groups either, even if they had their doubts about its use. The opposition to it really came from the Moro who preferred to use either the word Bangsamoro or simply *people*. Tripeople was not a term that could survive without the support of Settler, Moro and Indigenous people.

In another sense, perhaps it died because it was no longer novel. Being used so often, it no longer has that utopian edge to it that NGO workers find so attractive.

Should we mourn? Probably not. It was a nonce term to begin with. It was used to express a few vague inclinations for crosscultural peace, and then was discarded in exchange for another term (Mindanao) which has the novelty of vernacular, and is construed by some to suggest some form of colonial resistance. However, the distinction between Mindanao and tripeople is fairly minor. Certainly, the fundamental inclinations of the NGOs that use these terms have not changed in any substantial way. Nothing in the way politics in Mindanao is analyzed has changed, either for the better or for the worse, since the term was abandoned.

Notes

¹Current population counts are inconsistent and often give improbable figures. Rudy B. R. Rodil discusses the problem in B. R. Rodil, “Numbers can hurt. Also wrong numbers. And no numbers.” 30 April 2002, MindaNews, at <http://www.mindanews.com/2002/05/1st/vws-rodil.html>

²The Mindanao InterFaith People's Conference in 1984.

³Catholic Relief Services, for instance, is currently conducting interfaith dialogue in association with the Pikit Parish, an area that was heavily affected by the conflict in 2000.

⁴For instance, the *Hiyas ng kadayawan* beauty pageant in Davao. One cannot help wonder though, what Nur Misuari might say if he were to watch a Chinese-Filipino in tribal costume smile broadly and announce that she represents the Tausugs.

⁵For one, Cotabato Governor Emmanuel Piñol has provided some support to the Mindanao Tripeople's Caucus despite his fairly public distrust of the MILF.

⁶For instance, the Ateneo de Davao affiliate *Mindanawon*, the NGO *Alternative Forum for Research in Mindanao* (or AFRIM, as it is better known), and CO *Multiversity* whose current research in Sultan Kudarat is for the purposes of tripeople "community-building"

⁷The militant group argues for a Tripeople government in the form of three federal states: one for the Lumad, one for the Bangsamoro, and one for the Christian. The group was allegedly behind a series of bomb scares in Metro Manila and Mindanao. See Charlie Señase (July 9, 2002). "Federal army meets press, insists on three federal states." Philippine Daily Inquirer.

⁸B.R. Rodil. *Kalinaw Mindanao: The story of the GRP-MNLF peace process, 1975-1996*, Preface.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰J.A. Kamlian. "Understanding the tripeople community of Mindanao for sustainable peace and development" in *Bangsamoro society and culture: a book of readings on peace and development in Southern Philippines*. Iligan Center for Peace Education and Research. 1999, 81-86 .

¹¹R. M. Teves, *The Mindanao tripeoples socio-cultural development framework: Forward*, see <http://www.mincode.org/tripeople.htm>

¹²M. Arquiza and Prieto, L., *Tripeople community-based ways of peacemaking in Cotabato: initial findings*. Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), 2002.

¹³The role of women in the peace process is increasingly problematic for many indigenous cultures. As one Arumanen-Manobo leader put it, while their women might envision themselves as negotiators or mediators, in their own culture they are viewed by men primarily as commodities to be traded or exchanged with other tribes to ensure peaceful relations between groups.

¹⁴Among those most sharply critical of the term is the MILF-affiliated lawyer and ex-congressman Michael Mastura, who presented his criticisms of the term at a political summit of grassroots leaders hosted by the Mindanao Tripeople Caucus in September 2002. The name was changed to Mindanao People's Caucus after a series of consultations with Bangsamoro, Indigenous and Settler grassroots leaders at the same conference in which Mastura spoke.

¹⁵Although the MTC gave up the term tripeople, the Caucus is still willfully comprised of the three people and includes a tripeople approach to peace building in its objectives. *Unpublished internal documents*.

¹⁶Patricio N. Abinales. . *Making Mindanao: Cotabato and Davao in the formation of the Philippine nation-state*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press. 2002, 2

¹⁷An interesting, journalistic discussion of these early divisions may be found in Marites Danguilan Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria. (2000). *Under the crescent moon: rebellion in Mindanao*. Quezon City: Ateneo Centre for Social Policy and Public Affairs.

¹⁸The phrase 'mutually unintelligible' might be qualified by the observation that there is a common etymological root to some words.

¹⁹See for instance, Samuel K. Tan. (1977). *The Filipino Muslim armed struggle, 1900-1972*, pp. 118-122.

²⁰Patricio N. Abinales. 2000, 3.

²¹See, "Mindanawon" instead of 'tri-people' by Rick R. Flores. *Mindanews: Mindaviews*, 10 December 2002. Note also, that 'Mindanawon' is the vernacular spelling of Mindanaon.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

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