

# **‘Panggayaw’ for Lumad self-determination and autonomy for other Indigenous Communities**

Local Autonomous Network

November 10, 2015

There is quite a number of cultures existing and continuously practiced by different indigenous communities in the islands. It is estimated that there is 110 languages in the archipelago and the concept of “*Manggayaw*” or “*Panggayaw*” is commonplace. The said word is being used by indigenous communities in different areas in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. It corresponds with attacking from the waters or land on specific targets considered to be “*enemies*”.

*Manggayaw* or *Panggayaw* could be due to various reasons such as revenge, protection, raiding for marriage or pillaging for its own sake and slave trading in certain places.

Barbaric could be the first thing which comes to minds. Others consider it an uncivilized act based on how we were raised and brought up by our society. This could only be the case if the institutions like the government, market, school or church shaped our consciousness the way it did.

Therefore it is so much better to be familiar with this part of our culture which our ancestors are proud and considered to be positive in regards to marriage, blood pact, trade and even warfare. It is an imperative for many Lumads in the archipelago to engage in *Panggayaw* or “*Panggagamot*.” These practices are imbedded in our belief system which resonates also with marriage, planting, hunting, exchange and ritual offerings to indigenous spirits.

According to the colonizers (republican government, communists and the church) these practices which emanated from our ancestors are backward and needed to be replaced. Such practices like tattooing, ornamentation of the body, acting according to indigenous beliefs and spirituality which were later on demonized by western Christians. Based on numerous records in history, many “*Babaylan*” and violence against communities who resisted domination. In essence, there is no perfect culture or society and if we would surmise the old ways are the best. Compared with the so-called development which destroys nature, kills communities, controls resources by some families and corporations, and which perpetuates poverty and hunger.

It could also be assumed that *panggayaw* is a norm, accepted by members of the society which our ancestors belong to, they might not consider it evil or detrimental. It is one of the practices which the foreign colonizers tried to remove because it is a direct threat to their interests.

Within the context of the Battle of Mactan in Cebu, the Lapu-Lapu led *panggayaw* was successful in protecting their sovereignty and maintained its autonomy. Since the Visayas, for the most part, accepted the Spanish authorities and the Church's supremacy in Mindanao's indigenous communities, *panggayaw* was regularly practiced. In Northern Luzon, *panggayaw* was also the tactical choice for the indigenous peoples to keep the colonizers at bay. At present, some Lumads in Mindanao are still engaged in *panggayaw*, armed with improvised weapons, indigenous tools to protect themselves from armed groups.

*Panggayaw* is still appropriate and timely practice which is very much part of our everyday lives which could be appropriated in contemporary ways. This is one of the parts of our culture which is considered to be violent but is necessary based on its context and situation. The question to be asked, is there a more violent way of livelihood than extractive industries? What could be more violent than marginalization and obliteration of indigenous culture? Is there something more bloody and more violent than the poverty and hunger caused by war?

*Panggayaw* is one of our practices which could be a response to violence brought upon us by corporations, armed groups, some institutions aimed at oppression, profiteering, control of indigenous communities in the islands.

Let's go, let's *manggayaw* to protect what is left of our indigenous cultures. Let's *manggayaw* to redeem our indigenous selves from the institution of market, government, church and corporations.

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