



## FOREWORD AND INSIGHTS

*(An NRCP-MAAP- PAEPI –AUSN Partnerships for research-based extension services thru a livelihood project in 2015 )*

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Having been with the **Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP)** Bataan for the past 17 years as its **Executive Dean** (1999-2002) and **Director of Research and Extension Services** (2000-2014) and now as its **External Relations Director** ( 2014 to date) and having been a part of the **Philippine Association of Extension Program Implementers** for more than fifteen years both as a **member** and one of the **officers** , I have been exposed to some of the Indigenous groups of the Philippines, called Aeta as they are beneficiaries in **MAAP Extension Services Programs**. As a regular member of the **National Research Council of the Philippines (NRCP)** , wherein we are encouraged to propose and conduct **research-based projects** that would make our studies objective and may be used as a basis for decision making, inspired me to interview and observe the community. I had collated primary and secondary data to further understand the community that we serve . I have learned that some of the IPs were displaced from their own ancestral land whereas some of them have been adopted by some NGOs to improve their quality of life. Some of them had become servants of Filipinos who were engrossed in the capitalist system hence some have been exploited by letting them work in agricultural fields with meager payment that was not commensurate to their hard work. It was in this context while some of their children have been forced to work.

**MAAP** is located in Mariveles Bataan in a location close to the Aeta community in **Mariveles, Morong and Bagac**. Part of **MAAP Extension services** is providing livelihood training and projects to the Aeta community and an opportunity by MAAP students to teach and play with the children. As member of the NRCP and upon learning in 2015 , that there is a budget for community outreach activities through a **livelihood project cum seminar**

**workshop in cooking various low cost but delicious and very nutritious meals or snacks**, hence I volunteered and coordinated with concerned agencies in Bataan like DEPED, municipalities, NCIP to recommend a beneficiary a community of Aetas to avail the NRCP funded activity. In August 2015, I did a site inspection and some of the areas would be a long walk and difficult to reach by the NRCP. One of the 3 aeta communities visited was the **Sitio Matanglao in Bagac Bataan** through the help of **Father Julius Descartin**, the parish priest of **St Francis Xavier chapel**, and an active supporter of the Aeta community We went to the community which is a long walk from the highway but can be reached by a vehicle and then finally met the Aeta community. I introduced myself as the Director of MAAP and a regular member of **NRCP** and **PAEPI** to the Aeta community. I was delighted to see a chapel and a multi purpose hall with a library for the children, The multipurpose hall is also used as a day care center. I informed them about **MAAP and PAEPI** and my interest in doing a research-based community extension services with **NRCP** to fund the project. I also noticed abundance of **plants and herbs** in their community and learned that they are also using them in treating minor sickness. Then I started taking notes of all the available plants they have and requested if I can take pictures. They also volunteered that in my next visit, they will share more. There was no hesitation in the community. Then we shared stories. I shared with them one of my blessings in having met **Prof Darryl Macer**, former **UNESCO regional adviser**, who became an **AUSN provost** and now AUSN President, thus provided me the opportunity to visit tribes in Arizona USA. I told them that I had sat down in AUSN lectures about Indigenous Knowledge Systems and traditional healing practices. All my exchange of talks with the community were not because of thesis or studies but for the preparation of livelihood projects to assist them so I may write a project proposal for submission to **NRCP**.

Never, have I thought that with **MAAP, PAEPI and NRCP** generosity in assisting the IPs for various funded projects, that I had been friends with the Aeta community. They had shared with me so many practices, thoughts and insights shared or experienced by them and their co-indigenous healers. In every visits, I have been served with rice cakes, sweet potatoes and bananas cooked the traditional way with coconut. I just thought of helping them without thinking that they are the ones who are helping me come up with a paper related to Indigenous Knowledge Systems and public health in due time. In my visits, I had documented

my interaction with them for the purpose of providing a funded outreach activity for their community

Thanks to the **NRCP livelihood project** which we are grateful for **MAAP** and **PAEPI** to be partners or collaborators. We enjoyed going to the AETA community, eating together, sharing stories and, most of all, exchanging different kinds of food. This experience had taught us how to **respect the Aetas**. Personally, I had the privilege of seeing most of their **medicinal and herbal plants** grown within their community as well as their healing practices and traditions. I knew that they possessed great knowledge and wisdom. When there was somebody who was sick in the community, they would consult the Aeta Elders on what should be done to heal such a sickness. I saw how effective their healing practices in such circumstances. They would explain to them what to do. Initially, I just observed.

As part of the **American University of Sovereign Nations**, I became interested to study and note their practices, listening and taking part in the discussions about Indigenous Knowledge Systems and indigenous healers, their traditional practices and implications to public health. I tried to read and interview to gather data so I may understand and appreciate more about our native people in the Philippines. Having talked with some of the Aetas since **2002**, I started to appreciate more about the native people in the Philippines. I am amazed how a certain bark of a tree, dried leaves and bones of wild animals, upon boiling them and making a sick person drink the concoction would be well again. Indeed, there must be a scientific explanation or reason behind all these practices. When invited by **American University of Sovereign Nations (AUSN)** in 2014, [http://www.eubios.info/youth\\_peace\\_ambassadors\\_international/ypa9\\_-\\_arizona\\_usa](http://www.eubios.info/youth_peace_ambassadors_international/ypa9_-_arizona_usa). I had the pleasure and opportunity to visit, meet and link with the **Pima, Maricopa, Navajo and Apache tribes in Arizona USA** and also had visited **various museums and tribal communities**. This widened my perspective in life as I came to learn the abuses experienced by **native Americans** especially in terms of preserving their ancestral reservation areas which is similar to those experienced by **indigenous peoples (IPs) in the Philippines**. These may be argued as explicitly or tacitly racist. Aeta people are surely not unique in their experience. Thus it may be argued to be a modal category of experience when describing the effects of Western colonization on the Indigenous People. It is heartbreaking to read so much literature on Indigenous people, public health issues and the enormous reading materials provided by

**AUSN** on Indigenous Knowledge Systems as well as the academic discussions via skype and annual meeting forums. Seemingly, the same experiences had occurred across the globe, from Africa to Asia, South America and beyond, and even to date, many are seeking and working for peace and sustainability.

I also had the opportunity to be invited by **UNSOED in Purwokerto, Indonesia**, being an academic partner of **AUSN** in May 2015. Having the opportunity to visit the site of the **Asia Africa Summit in Bandung Indonesia**, [https://www.eubios.info/yahoo\\_site\\_admin/assets/docs/YPA10agendasmall.131180936.pdf](https://www.eubios.info/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/YPA10agendasmall.131180936.pdf) made me reflect on what had happened in the past. The experiences are always unique to the people experiencing them but they are scarcely "*unique*" when considered in their entirety. The Aeta in general, including their women healers, who participated in the round table discussion or talking circle serves as a case study in the interactive dynamics between oppression and liberation, inhumanity and irrepressible parts of humanity which resist this form of repression. It is opined that they are a classic case study in these processes regarding the dynamics of colonization and resistance. Our understanding of Aeta history commence from European scholarly records where beginning means not the beginning but rather the point of European intervention like Spain, for example.

The **Navajo**, the largest reservation-based Indian nation within the United States, both in land area and population, is just like the Philippines which was colonized by Spain. The **Navajos'** name for themselves is *Diné*, meaning "*the people*." The Spanish and Mexicans called them "*Apaches de Navajo*": "**Navajo**" is a modified Tewa word meaning "*planted fields*" and "*Apache*" is the Spanish version of the Zuñi word for "*enemies*." In 1969 the **Navajo Tribal Council** officially designated the nation the "**Navajo Nation**." In the early nineteenth century, **Navajos** lived in what is now New Mexico in an area that was under Spanish colonial rule. **Navajos** lived too far from the colonists, who were concentrated in the upper Rio Grande Valley, to be subjected to the disruption of their lives that the Pueblos suffered at the hands of the Spanish.

Similarly experienced by **natives in the Philippines**, at times the **Navajos** were allied with the Spanish against other Indians, principally the Utes; other times the Spanish joined forces with the Utes and fought the **Navajos**. For the **Navajos**, the most important by-product of Spanish colonization in New Mexico was the introduction of horses and sheep; the smooth,

long- staple, non-oily wool of the Spanish churro sheep would prove ideal for weaving. When the United States claimed that it had acquired an interest in **Navajo** land by virtue of having won a war with Mexico in 1848, the **Navajos** were not particularly impressed. But when the U.S. Army arrived in force at the conclusion of the American Civil War, matters took a grim turn for the Navajo. In the army's scorched-earth campaign, led by Colonel Kit Carson, the **Navajo** homeland was devastated. Half of the **Navajos**, demoralized and starving, surrendered to the army and were marched 370 miles to the Bosque Redondo concentration camp on the Pecos River, where many of them died, 2,000 of them in one year alone from smallpox. After four years of imprisonment they were allowed to return to their homeland in 1868, now reduced to one-tenth its original size by treaty that same year. They began rebuilding their lives and their herds, virtually unnoticed in an area that most Americans considered worthless desert wasteland. **Modern Navajos** remain in their ancestral homelands in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, which I had the opportunity to have met and befriend. The contemporary government of the **Navajos** is the **Navajo Nation in Window Rock, Arizona**. The **Navajo Nation** comprises approximately 16 million acres, mostly in northeastern Arizona, but including portions of northwestern New Mexico and southeastern Utah. It is a land of vast spaces and only a few all-weather roads.

The **local unit of Navajo government** is called the **Chapter**. There are more than one hundred Chapter Houses throughout the nation, which serve as local administrative centers for geographical regions. Before the 1990 tribal elections, the tribal council system of government was reorganized into executive, legislative, and judicial branches. In 1990 **Navajos** elected a tribal president for the first time, rather than a tribal chairman. The tribal budget exceeds \$100 million annually, with much of the revenue coming from mineral leases. The **Navajo reservation** as created by treaty in 1868, encompassed only about ten percent of the ancestral Navajo homeland. The land base soon tripled in size, largely by the addition of large blocks of land by executive orders of presidents of the United States during the late nineteenth century, when Americans still considered most of the desert Southwest to be undesirable land. The Athapaskan language family is one of the most widely dispersed language families in North America. Traditional Navajo healers are called **Hataali, or "singers"**. Traditional **Navajo medical practice** treats the whole person, not just the illness, and is not conducted in isolation but in a ceremony that includes the patient's relatives. The

ceremony can last from three to nine days depending upon the illness being treated and the ceremony to be performed. Illness to the **Navajos** means that there is disharmony in the universe. Proper order is restored with sand paintings in a cleansing and healing ceremony. More about **Navajos** can be read at: <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Le-Pa/Navajos.html>

The Philippines is rich in culture and biodiversity but these are threatened to be lost due to “*modernization*”. Thank you to the **National Research Council of the Philippines for the livelihood project**. As member of the NRCP and with the beneficiary of the project , are the indigenous people from Bataan , had me documented the traditional knowledge and practices of the Aeta community represented by **Sitio Matalangao** in the multi-purpose hall used for training and seminars and day care centers for children ,and other amenities that are experienced by people living in small towns contrary to traditional communities. This is because of the support of **various NGOs, the St Francis Xavier Parish church, Korean missionaries**, as well as the support from the **Barangay Banawang Bagac Bataan**. The community has concrete houses, cemented roads, electricity, a small church municipality. They live side-by-side and almost have no notable physical difference at all. And little by little everyday, the traditions are replaced by the mainstream culture. Traditional healing has been equated to healing using herbal medicine. The only identified *arbularyo* (the person knowledgeable in curing illness caused by evil spirits). It is in this context that made me interested in conducting a study on the traditional and health practices of healers with an Aeta community in Bataan as an example. In doing so, all the knowledge, information and course works acquired from **AUSN** may be shared, utilized and created in a form of a new knowledge to better understand the healers particularly those from the Philippines. Its relevance to the academic discourse, the **MAAP extension services program** were based on the needs of the community wherein MAAP is located. The **PAEPI goal** of empowering the AETA community through education , training and livelihood projects had certainly contributed in improving their quality of life for a sustainable community in Bataan.