



NewCAPP

Expanding and Diversifying the National System of Terrestrial Protected Areas in the Philippines Project
or New Conservation Areas in the Philippines Project

SACRED PORTAL. The marker to the Buhid's Faganon Furuhayo indigenous community conserved area. (Photo at right) Buhid Mangyans engage in one of the community mapping activities.



The ties that bind: The Buhid Mangyan People of Mindoro, their Sacred Lands and Medicine Mountain

Overview

The name behind Buhid Mangyan represents the dualistic identity of the group. Mangyan means “People” in their colloquial language. It is a collective term used for the eight (8) indigenous cultural communities residing in the island of Mindoro, while the word Buhid is derived from the Mangyan word “*Sambuhid*” which refers to an elevated parcel of land or mountainous area.

The Buhid Mangyan has their origins to Manggat and his wife Sayum-ay, who were believed to be the first inhabitants of their Ancestral Domain. According to the Buhid Mangyan myth, Manggat and Sayum-ay named all the trees, animals, lakes, rocks, and spirits found in their ancestral domain. They also believe that their ancestors are the first and only settlers of their lands. Hence, the term non-buhids or *luktanon* is used to denote this distinction.

The Buhid Mangyans are one of the few indigenous groups in the Philippines who continue to use their original syllabary. In 1997, the Buhid syllabary was declared as a National Cultural Treasure and was inscribed in the Memory of the Word Registers of UNESCO by 1998 (Fansler, 2011). Interestingly, the Buhid syllabary has its roots from the Kawi script of Java, Bali, and Sumatra. Apart from their script, the Buhid Mangyans also speaks a language which is Austronesian in origin (Ager, 2013).

Location

With a total land area of 99,133.5631 hectares, the ancestral domain of the Buhid Mangyan covers the hinterlands of the south central part of Mindoro Island. It also includes portions of Mounts Iglit and Baco National Park (MIBNP) which is also home to other Mangyan groups such as the Taobuid and Bangon (NewCAPP, 2012: 26). However, the Buhid Mangyan resides within the municipalities of Mansalay, Roxas, Bongabong, and Bansud in Oriental Mindoro and the municipalities of San Jose and Rizal in Occidental Mindoro.

A total of 14,252 Buhid Mangyans (including another Mangyan group, the Bangon) reside in their ancestral domain (NCIP SPTF Report, 2009).

The Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) of the Buhid Mangyan was awarded on 05 June 1998. Their application to convert their CADC into a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) has already been approved by the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) last 2009. However, at present, the CADT is yet to be awarded.

MIBNP was created last November 1970 through R.A. No. 6148. Found within the Municipalities of Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro, and Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro, this Protected Area covers 75,445 hectares of grassland and forestlands and has also been proclaimed as an ASEAN Natural Heritage Site (*NewCAPP, 2012: 26*).

MNBP is well-known for being the sanctuary of the *Nuang* or Tamaraw (*Bubalus mindorensis*), a species of dwarf buffalo endemic to Mindoro Island. Other forms of wildlife also inhabit the protected area such as the Philippine deer, wild pig, large Mindoro forest mouse, and birds endemic to Mindoro: the Mindoro Bleeding-heart, *Gallicolumba platenae*; Blackhooded Coucal, *Centropus steeri*; Mindoro Imperial Pigeon, *Ducula mindorensis*; Mindoro Scops-Owl, *Otus mindorensis*; and the Mindoro Hornbill, *Penelopides mindorensis*. (*NewCAPP, 2011; 2012*)

Value to Community and Ecosystem

The ancestral land plays a significant role in the life of the Buhid Mangyans. Other than a source of subsistence, the land represents the identity, culture, spirituality and legacy of the Buhid Mangyans. Accordingly, the ancestral land itself and its natural environment are well-maintained.

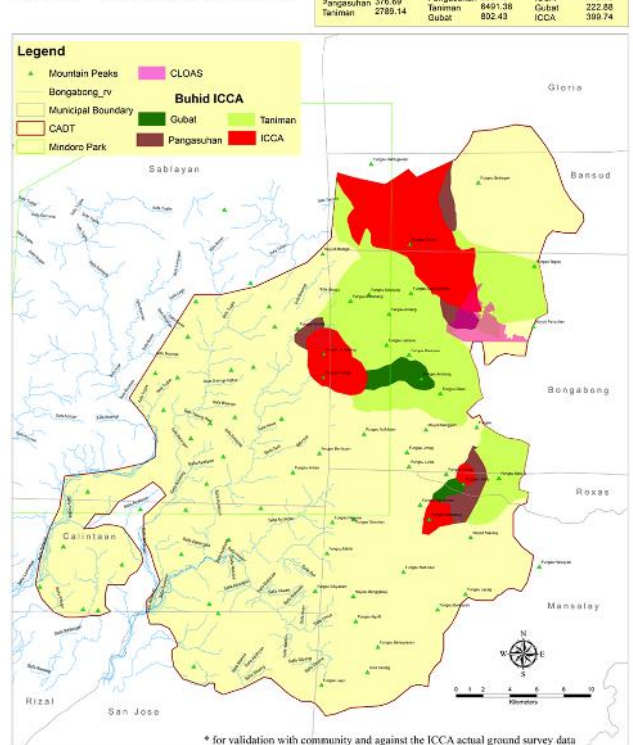
The Buhid Mangyan are known to be farmers. Swidden farming or *kaingin* has always been their main source of livelihood. This process entails slash-and-burn forest vegetation to concentrate soil nutrients into a carpet of ash and ensure that the forest-cover will be quickly replaced with cultivated plants and trees. While slash-and-burn is not widely advocated, this practice promotes, what anthropologist Clifford Geertz, recognizes as controlled jungle ecology (*Gibson, 1986: 34*). Like many indigenous groups, swidden farming has been perfected through enduring practice among Buhid Mangyans. This mastery paved way for its economical and environmental sustainability.

Among the Buhid Mangyans, *kaingin* is interlinked with other complementary livelihood activities such as animal husbandry, hunting, gathering, fishing, handicraft-making and farming services for non-Buhids (*Erni, 2000:8*). However, hunting is largely undertaken as a means to protect crops in swidden farms. Nevertheless, the game from hunting is usually shared with the community (*Gibson, 1986: 40, 44*). The gathering of non-timber forest products such as fruits, orchids, honey, bamboo, and rattan also provides a certain amount of income to Buhid Mangyan families (*Gibson, 1986: 52*). The livelihood opportunities derived from the land explains the attachment of the Buhid Mangyan to their land.

The Buhid Mangyans have many beliefs associated with swidden farming. For instance, when a farmer dreamt of catching a wild pig or a hawk catching a chick, during the early farming process, clearing of the whole intended swidden farmland should be postponed to avoid bad luck.

Furthermore, the Buhid Mangyans believe that spirits dwell in their ancestral domain. The following are the spirits known to the Buhid Mangyan:

BUHID - BANGON ICCA MAP

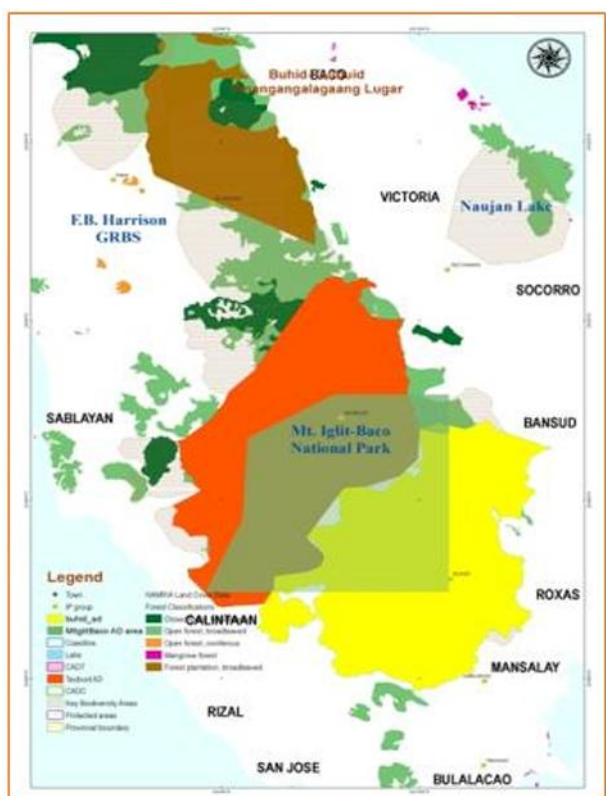


- **Labang** – Evil spirits which manifests in animal forms. The Buhid Mangyan believes that their bites are fatal. The bite becomes a channel where bad spirits can enter and bring sickness to a person or even death when the spirit is not driven away (*Lopez-Gonzaga, 1983: 115*).

- **Lahi** – Spirits which are potential allies and protectors against the Labang (*Lopez-Gonzaga, 1983: 115*). Some of the Lahi are called *Afo Daga*, *Afo Fungsu*, and *Afo Sapa*. *Afo* means 'owner,' 'master,' or 'source.' *Afo Daga* is the 'owners of the earth,' *Afo Fungsu* is the 'owners of mountain peaks' while *Afo Sapa* is the 'owners of rivers' (*Gibson, 1986: 173*). *Afo Daga* is known to be responsible for earthquakes, typhoons, and disease outbreaks. These taken as manifestations of *Afo Daga*'s wrath when men defy the moral code (*Lopez-Gonzaga, 1983: 116*). To appease *Afo Daga*, the Buhid Mangyans conduct the "*igluhodan*." The *igluhodan* is a ritual where pigs are slaughtered and prayers are offered to the spirit.

- **Falad** – Souls of the dead
- Other spirits - Spirits that live in the springs in the deep forest are called '*Malawan*.' The '*Taw Gubat*' are jungle men who also lives deep in the forest. Those who live in mountain peaks are known as '*Bulaw*' or 'shooting stars' because they fly from one peak to another and lights it's way with a torch made from human bone (*Gibson, 1986: 136-137*).

There are also parts of the ancestral domain which the Buhid Mangyans consider sacred. The sanctity of these areas explains the inherited responsibility among the Buhid Mangyans to protect and preserve these areas. Among the sacred areas, the *Fungsu Abat* (Mountain House) is believed to be the highest mountain that did not sink during the time of deluge.



(To the left) The Buhid-Bangon ICCA map in Oriental Mindoro. (At right) A map showing the delineation of Mts. Iglit-Baco National Park as part of the Taobuid ancestral domain (in orange) primarily at the Occidental Mindoro side and the Buhid ancestral domain (in yellow) at the Oriental Mindoro side.

Based on these beliefs, they have designated different zones for these areas:

- *Faganon Furuway* is the Buhid term for ICCA and considered as strict protection area and sacred grounds while for Bangon, they called it *Famhaganon Furowan Gubatan*.

- *Fangayayagan* or *Fanligayan* is the area for hunting. There are no other activities allowed in the area except hunting of wild animals like deer and wild boar. Agricultural activities such as farming and planting are not allowed except if the plants to be planted shall serve as food for these wild animals.

- *Fananagaban* or *Pansakahan* is the area for *kaingin* and other agricultural activities. These areas are mostly near the settlement areas for accessibility and far from the ICCA to avoid effects or impacts of opening up of areas (*kaingin*) and tilling the soil. The fallow period is strictly observed to maintain the productivity of the area. In most cases, the fallow period ranges from 2-3 years depending on the crops planted. Other restrictions are also observed like when seedlings of hardwood species emerge in the area, it can no longer be cultivated.

- *Fambalayan* or *Pamayanan* is the settlement and community areas.

Conditions and Threats

Another sacred area is the Binagaw River where a rock called *Bato Bulang* can be found. A Buhid Mangyan legend states that the rock used to be a man named Bulang. He was washed away from the mountain to the river during a torrential rain where his foot got stuck underwater. This eventually became a rock which became known as *Bato Bulang*. The Buhid Mangyan believes that the rock serves as a stopper to a hole beneath the river which, once removed can submerge and destroy the whole area.

Some trees are also deemed to be sacred such as the oldest Balete tree which should never be logged. Burial sites and ritual areas are also considered sacred and are given utmost care and respect.

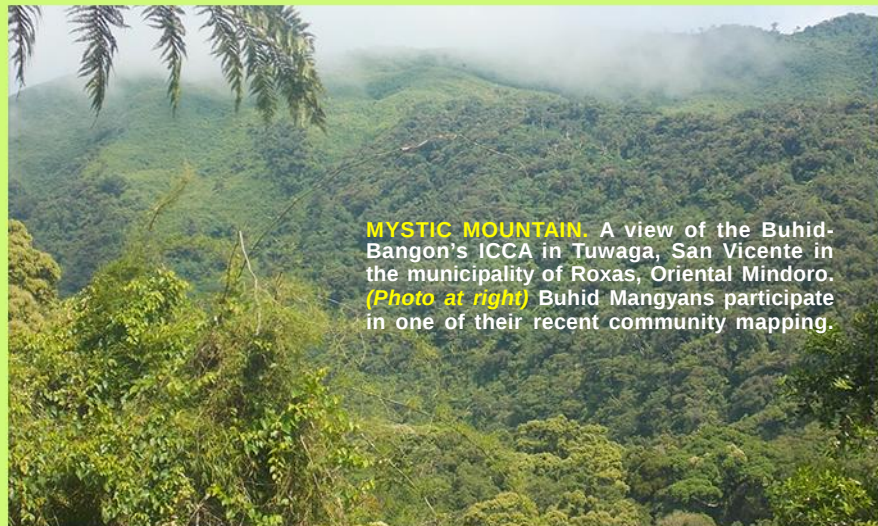
The natural environment is the Buhid Mangyan's source of sustenance and world view. Its value to the Buhid Mangyan cannot be overstated. As one of the Buhid Mangyan elders, Lagay Daguman, even mentioned "*Dyan na nabubuhay ang mga buhid: pagtanim, hanapbuhay, paggawa ng bahay. Diyan nabuhay, diyan din mamatay*" (That is where we live and survive: farming, livelihood, and the building of homes. That's where we live and that's also where we'll die). Another elder stated "*Ang kalikasan at kagubatan doon kami kumukuha ng gamot. Doon nagmumula ng hayop na nagbibigay babala sa aming mga katutubo lalo kapag maglalakbay sa malayong lugar. Ang mga hayop sa gubat pinoprotektahan at pinapangalagaan. Nakakatulong sila [sa amin]* (Medicines are sourced from nature, from the forests. Animals also thrive there which give us warning when we travel to distant places. Therefore, these are protected and conserved. They are important to us for their contribution).

The Buhid Mangyans are faced with several challenges. First, the prevalence of illegal logging and charcoal production which is practiced by both Buhid Mangyans and non-Buhid. While it serves as a source of livelihood to some families, illegal logging, and charcoal production causes deforestation and land erosions. Moreover, these activities resulted to the contraction of several communities and biodiversity degradation. The former is especially caused by land erosions when settlements are endangered or, worse, destroyed.

Second, the influx of loggers and migrant settlers in the Buhid Mangyan ancestral domain. The issuance of the Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) allowed non-Buhids to gain ownership to several lands within the Buhid Mangyan territory. This led to the desecration of sacred places and enthusiasm over cash crop productions. The introduction of cash crop production resulted to the over-exploitation of the *kaingin* farming which rendered the land unsustainable (Gibson, 1986: 181-182).

Of the species known to be dwelling in the MIBNP, several are threatened. The Tamaraw, Black-hooded Coucal, and Mindoro Bleeding-heart are in critical category, the Mindoro hornbill is endangered while the Mindoro Imperial Pigeon, Philippine Duck *Anas luzonica*, and Scarlet-collared Flowerpecker are vulnerable (NewCAPP 2012: 26). This decline in the biodiversity can be traced to the habitat destruction caused by firewood gathering, uncontrolled farmland burning, and hunting by trophy hunters from outside the park among others (Haribon, 2001).

Fishing with the aid of poison and electricity is also practiced by some which is unsustainable as this practice causes the death of not only the adult fishes but also the young fishes. The implication of this is that the young fishes would not have the chance grow and reproduce and this can lead to shortage of fish catch in the future. In addition to that, these fishing practices, especially the use of poison, pose hazards to health and the environment.



MYSTIC MOUNTAIN. A view of the Buhid-Bangon's ICCA in Tuwaga, San Vicente in the municipality of Roxas, Oriental Mindoro. (Photo at right) Buhid Mangyans participate in one of their recent community mapping.



Governance Structure and Mechanism

The Buhid Mangyan used to have an indigenous political structure headed by a *Guranton*, also known as *Tanungan*. The *Guranton/Tanungan* are leaders for each big river (*Safa Dahol*). The river defines a cluster composed of a number of associated communities where each community is headed by a leader called *Tahinan*. Presently, only the *tahinan* exists in the form of sitio leaders. To this end, leadership is based on election. These leaders are responsible for the management of their ancestral domain.

In 2007, the Buhid Mangyan started formulating their Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP) called *Gano Banwanan Gis Hafufuwan*. The ADSDPP is a development plan pushed by the National Commission on Indigenous People to ensure the protection, promotion, and recognition of the rights of the indigenous peoples. It contains their goals and objectives, policies and strategies for the sustainable management and development of their ancestral domain and the resources within it. The guidelines for its formulation are listed in the NCIP Administrative Order No. 1, Series of 2004 (NCIP, 2004).

For the Buhid Mangyan, their ADSDPP serves as a guide towards achieving sustainable management over their ancestral domain.

Part of their ADSDPP is their environmental goal, "*Mapanumbalik ang kalbong lupain, mapalago ang kagubatan at magkaroon ng sariwang hangin na nalalanghap* (to regain fertile lands, to ensure the abundance of the forests, and to breathe clean and fresh air)." They aim to combat deforestation and forest degradation. Moreover, the Buhid Mangyans aims to promote effective natural resource management through implementing the policies of the Buhid Mangyan as stated in the ADSDPP. However, the current ADSDPP do not have land use zoning which is an important part in developing or enforcing policies and their traditional governance. The ICCA shall serve as the governing documents for the identification of the whereabouts of these important and sacred areas in their ADSDPP. Every stakeholder in their ancestral domain must be familiar with these policies to avoid penalties and sanctions.

Responsible for the implementation of the ADSDPP are the two (2) Indigenous Political Organizations (IPO) representing the Buhid Mangyans. The recognized IPO of Buhid Mangyan in Oriental Mindoro is Sadik Habanan Buhid, a non-stock, non-profit organization registered in 1982, while the recognized IPO of the Buhid Mangyan in Occidental Mindoro is the Habanan Buhid which was established in April 1988.

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