

# Coexistence and the fluctuation of boundaries: the everyday relations of two ethnic groups in the rural Philippines

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Place of fieldwork: Republic of the Philippines

Name: Natsuko Shiraishi

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## ● Research background

Under the rapid changes of the global economy, numerous people from “developing” countries are going to work in “developed” economies, and in doing so they are making a substantial impact on diverse social structures. In addition, this movement creates new encounters across the world, and leads to changes in the identities and perspectives of the people and societies involved (Miyanaga 2000).

The Philippines is the largest *immigrant worker country* in southeast Asia, and the amount of money from immigrant workers accounts for 10% of its nominal GDP. On the other hand, looking to the past, the country’s IRRI (the International Rice Research Institute) had a key role in the “green revolution,” and there is substantial research in the country which focuses on social structure and the importance of the survival and development of the rural areas (Hayami 2000, Umehara 1994). Therefore, it should be possible to predict the influence of globalization on rural development, and by focusing on the rapidly changing current situation in rural areas in the Philippines we may find human perseverance and strength in the face of adverse conditions.

## ● Research purpose and aims



Figure 1. A Mangyan woman

To address the substantial questions noted above, the researcher has focused on the everyday interactions between two social groups: the Tagalog (lowlanders) and the Mangyan (highlanders) in a rural area of the Philippines. They consider themselves as having different ethnic identities, and there is a history of conflict between them over the issue of land occupation (Helbling and Scult 2004). However there is also everyday interaction between the groups to obtain “survival resources.” What is the basis of the relationships between these two groups? This study explores this question by looking in particular at the key ideas of coexistence and the fluctuation of boundaries.

## ● Results and achievements by fieldwork

The researcher pursued the following three strategies in the program to address the above question: 1) improvement of language skills to enable long term research; 2) create a communication network with researchers

in the capital area of the Philippines; and 3) make a pre-research visit to a rural village in the Philippines in preparation for long term research the following year.

For the first task, the researcher undertook 2 hours of one-to-one lessons every weekday in Manila. By the end of this course, she had finished nearly all of the grammatical points in the intermediate level text book.

For the second strategy, the researcher made use mainly of the Third World Study Center in the University of the Philippines and its library. Attendance at several seminars held by the TWSC were very helpful in inspiring the researcher to think more about the main research questions from the wider viewpoint of Philippines study. In addition, the researcher was able to make a connection with a professor who had conducted research on community development aid in the village of a different Mangyan tribe.

With regard to the third strategy, the researcher stayed in the research village. There it was possible to observe the involvement of a number of households gleaning a field of the lowlanders. The numbers involved seemed more than the previous time the researcher had stayed in the village, last May. It appears from this observation that there are substantial seasonal differences in the interactions between these two social groups, because the climate has a marked effect on the agriculture of the Mangyan people in the mountains.

Additionally, the researcher was able to obtain materials relating to the certification of land domains in the mountains. This was from the NGO that supports the community for the acquisition of their ancestral domain.



*Figure 1. With the staff of the school*



*Figure 2. With the Director of TWSC*



*Figure 3. A Mangyan woman planting a banana tree*



*Figure 4. A Mangyan woman preparing Taro for sale*

### ● **Implications and the impact on future research**

The applicant will continue on this topic in the coming year. However, to achieve good results from this research, we will need to develop a broader perspective for the research and continue in the language study on a self-learning basis.



*Figure 5. Fruit harvesting*



*Figure 6. A child helping his father on a farm*

- **References**

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