RESEARCH ARTICLE

Lumad Image-making in *Baboy Halas* (2016) through Intercultural Filmmaking

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Abstract
This essay examines the processes involved in intercultural filmmaking, a mode of filmmaking practiced in the production of *Baboy Halas* (2016) directed by Bagane Fiola where the non-Indigenous filmmaker and the Indigenous community of Matigsalug collaborated in creating their screen images. It discusses how intercultural filmmaking allows the Lumad to enact cinematic agency in constructing their identities on screen. In addition to this, it outlines how this mode of production enables groups from different cultures to forge connections through filmmaking and cultivate ethical relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups. I draw from interview data with the filmmaker and an analysis of the film to demonstrate intercultural filmmaking as a production practice that allows the minoritized segments of the nation to take some control of their cinematic images. In this mode of production, there is acknowledgment and recognition of the Lumad's agency in creating their own images. In this light, intercultural filmmaking serves as a productive site to initiate a filmmaking practice that is non-colonizing. It also provides a platform for the Lumad to address the lack of diverse representation of the Indigenous in Filipino cinema and allow them to become visible in our cinematic culture.

Keywords: intercultural filmmaking, Filipino regional cinema, Lumad, Indigenous cinema

In this essay, I examine the production of *Baboy Halas* (Wailings in the Forest, 2016) directed by Bagane Fiola in collaboration with the Matigsalug Lumad in Mindanao. The term *Lumad*, which is a Cebuano term meaning "born from the earth," refers to 18 non-Islamized groups in Mindanao (Paredes, *A Mountain* 24). Fifteen of these groups adopted this term in their Cotabato Congress in June 1986 to distinguish themselves from the Moro and Christians in Mindanao (Ulindang). In this Congress, the Lumad discussed common issues concerning them, such as their ancestral lands and their self-determination, affirming Arnold Alamon's explanation that the term "always had political origins and implications" (10). Through the years, "Lumad" was adopted by Indigenous communities in Mindanao "as a way of asserting a shared identity or location" (Gatmaytan n.p.). It thus refers to a collective identity and "represents an emerging and developing political consciousness" as they tackle "structural discrimination" in the nation

(Alamon 10). The Lumad has been institutionally minoritized, first by the colonizers and, later, by successive Philippine governments. The nation-state branded them as "cultural minorities" in the Christian-dominated archipelago, a category often considered derogatory (Zapata 1334). Historically, the marginal presence of Indigenous communities in national life reveals their estranged position as outsiders within a national framework (Barclay 9).

This study looks at how intercultural filmmaking enables the production of an Indigenous-centered film by examining intercultural filmmaking in *Baboy Halas*. This film employed what I call the filmmaker-initiated collaboration, which involves a non-Indigenous director approaching an Indigenous community to collaborate on a film. In this case, Fiola reached out to the Matigsalug Lumad. Both collaborators live within Davao City, but they come from different sociocultural contexts, making the intercultural collaboration a meeting of two cultures existing within the same place.

One among the 18 Lumad groups in Mindanao, the Matigsalug of today have transformed their way of life from being nomadic hunter-gatherers to sedentary farmers living in permanent villages (Origane Films). 'Matigsalug' is a term which means "people of the Salug River," which is now called the Davao River (Origane Films). The group's oral tradition indicates that their original settlement was at the mouth of Salug River, which is now Davao City (Eslit 4). A subgroup of the Manobo ethnolinguistic group, the Matigsalug are originally coastal people who moved further up the Salug River and further inland when they experienced harassment in the lowland by "Muslims and others of Indonesian origin" (4). The Matigsalug in *Baboy Halas* live in their ancestral land in Sitio Maharlika in Baganihan, Marilog District in Davao City. Fiola describes Marilog as being a two-hour drive from Davao's city center (personal interview). It is an area 500 meters above sea level located along a mountain range ("Marilog District"). The Davao City government considers it its "vegetable basket," as it supplies the entire city with its fresh produce ("Marilog District").

Baboy Halas tells the story of Mampog, a Matigsalug hunter who struggles to catch a wild boar in the forest. Set in an undefined past, the film presents the Matigsalug's earlier way of life as told by the datu (tribal leaders) who worked with Fiola to develop the narrative.[1] Although Indigenous-authored films are present in Filipino cinema, I am focusing on the intercultural filmmaking practice in Mindanao to demonstrate a cinematic social practice privileging Indigenous perspectives through cross-cultural encounters. I want to emphasize that cinema can facilitate this, not only through films, which the Indigenous-authored works can achieve, but through the very process of intercultural collaboration in filmmaking. Practical considerations, such as the relative absence of Lumad-made films and the latter's limited exhibition, posed difficulties in pursuing this line of inquiry.

This essay discusses the processes involved in intercultural filmmaking in the context of regional cinema, particularly the roles performed by the Indigenous communities. 'Regional cinema' refers to films made in and about the regions outside the capital by filmmakers who are from or are based in the regions (Rapatan 82). These films are usually characterized through their narratives set outside Manila and the use of regional languages (82). As such, *Baboy Halas* can be considered part of regional cinema. The study examines how intercultural filmmaking in the region allows the Lumad to enact cinematic agency in constructing their identities on screen. In addition to this, it outlines how this mode of production enables groups from different cultures to forge connections through filmmaking and cultivate ethical relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups. I draw from interview data with the director and the analysis of the film to demonstrate intercultural filmmaking as a production practice that allows the minoritized segments of the nation to take control of their cinematic images. In this mode of production, there is acknowledgment and recognition of the Lumad's agency in creating their own images. In this light, intercultural filmmaking serves as a productive site to initiate a filmmaking practice that is non-colonizing. It also provides a platform for the Lumad to address the lack of diverse representation of the Indigenous in Filipino cinema and allow them to become visible in our cinematic culture.

At this point, I briefly discuss my subject positioning as a non-Indigenous researcher. I am aware that my Christian background and being from outside Mindanao carries a history of prejudiced views and limited knowledge about the Lumad. In this light, I recognize the need for a culturally sensitive analysis of Indigenous representations in films and their production. As such, I strive to perform an Indigenous-

centered analysis by foregrounding the Lumad agency in filmmaking. What this means is adopting a methodology that veers away from the use of solely textual analysis in analyzing Indigenous representations in films. Instead, I adopt what Davinia Thornley calls "collaborative methodology," or the use of several methods to ground the study of films with the historical, cultural, and sociopolitical contexts surrounding their production and reception (11). Thornley explains that such methodologies require substantial groundwork to investigate the contextual factors of a creative work that "honor community involvement and/or ownership" (16). For this study, I conducted semi-structured interviews and textual analysis, and employed theories on cross- and intercultural filmmaking. I sought the consent of Fiola for an interview and conducted it in March 2020 through online conferencing given the imposed lockdown. Combining textual and interview data, I deemphasize a critical reading which, as Lucia Nagib notes, establishes a hierarchy ascribing a "superior position" for the critic (qtd. in Pitts 57). Instead, I rely on extratextual data to arrive at an analysis which puts Indigenous agency at the fore in cinematic image-making. I recognize, however, that the interview data I collected are filtered through the lens of the non-Indigenous filmmaker. In this light, I make a conscious effort to emphasize the agency of the Lumad in intercultural filmmaking in my analysis.

In what follows, I discuss the underrepresentation—and, at times, misrepresentations—of the Lumad in Filipino cinema. As this section shows, the long-time lack of Indigenous-centered representations worked to naturalize their marginal position in the nation. I then present the emergence of Lumad representation in regional cinema and discuss intercultural filmmaking as one way in which their representations are produced. Afterwards, I analyze the intercultural filmmaking practices in *Baboy Halas* and the articulation of connection to the Lumad's cultural history in the film.

The Lumad in Filipino Cinema

Filipino cinema suffers from a relative scarcity of films about Mindanao's Indigenous groups. Among the well-known films include *Zamboanga* (Eduardo de Castro, 1937) about a seafaring tribe in Mindanao, and *Badjao* (Lamberto Avellana, 1957), a love story between a man belonging to the pagan Badjao group and the chief's daughter from the Muslim Tausug group. Analyzing the representation of ethnic difference in *Badjao*, Aileen Toohey remarks that the film "successfully commercialized the idea and expression of ethnic conflict between Tausug and Badjao" that was prevalent at the time the film was made (282).

For a long time after *Badjao*, Filipino cinema did not pay serious attention to presenting the complexity of issues relating to the Lumad; however, the rise of regional filmmaking in the 2000s offered an opportunity for filmmakers to do so. The freedom from commercial constraints that characterizes these independent films enables the directors to explore less popular themes in their work, such as those relating to the minoritized groups in the nation. It facilitated the creation of diverse representations of Indigenous Filipinos. Arguably, an Indigenous cinema in the Philippines is re-emerging, and regional filmmaking is a crucial site for its development. This is not to say, however, that regional cinema subsumes this emerging Indigenous cinema in the country. Rather, the presence of these Indigenous-centered cinemas within regional filmmaking demonstrates regional cinema as an alternative space for articulating a range of issues relating to the minoritized groups, including cultural change and survival, ancestral land rights, marginalization, and state violence.

Regional films about Indigenous communities can be divided into those made by Indigenous filmmakers and those made by non-Indigenous filmmakers. As mentioned earlier, Lumad-made films are virtually absent from Filipino cinema. The most prolific Indigenous filmmakers are perhaps those from Cordillera.[2] Jason Paul Telles notes that as early as 1985, filmmakers from Cordillera produced short documentary films ("Local Film" 102).[3] In the 1990s, filmmakers from Cordillera made films for catechism purposes (Tindaan 81). Ruth Tindaan examines several of these films, arguing that they counter the trope of "infantilization" and "animalization" of the Igorot in mainstream films (93). However, because these films highlight Christian-centered narratives, "most of the films dwell on the rejection of native religion" (104). As such, they reinforce the view of backwardness associated with native religion (104). In more recent years, digital filmmaking in Cordillera has diversified in terms of themes. Josephine Kapuno's *Kanana Kanu* (And so it was Said, 2012), produced by the Film

Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP), narrates an Igorot woman's son visiting his mother's home village in Kalinga, where the director comes from. Another example is Lester Valle's documentary *Walang Rape sa Bontok* (Bontok, Rapeless 2014), which investigates the absence of rape as a concept in Bontok culture.[4] Lastly, Cordillera filmmaker Nestor Daguines directed the self-funded feature *Buso/Busol: The Last Head Hunter* (2012) and an animated series of short films, called *Lampitok* (2014–2019). Set in the 1970s when the Igorot supposedly still practiced head hunting, *Buso/Busol* presents a story of a father and daughter divided by their different views about head hunting. This film resonates the earlier themes of catechism films in the 1990s, placing native practices and Catholic teachings at opposite ends.

Regional films about the Lumad have been authored mostly by non-Indigenous directors. This reflects the uneven access to the means of film production between the two groups. Scholars have noted that since film and media companies are concentrated in the capital, Indigenous groups cannot easily access the institutional and technological means to create their own images (Longboan 5; Soriano 34). Many of these works authored by non-Indigenous are what Marcia Langton calls "fictionalization" of Indigenous cultural narratives (40). While these works make an important intervention in Indigenous representation, she explains that these fictional works are constructions of indigeneity drawn from non-Indigenous perspectives which are always "an act of creative authority" (40). In Filipino regional cinema, many of the non-Indigenous-made films about Mindanao's Lumad carry a political tone, reflecting the fraught historical relation of the Lumad with the nation-state and even with the Moro and Christian settlers in Mindanao.[5] For instance, Arnel Mardoquio's *Hunghong sa Yuta* (Earth's Whisper, 2008) and *Crossfire* (2011) deal with the impact of war in Mindanao on the Indigenous population and their struggle to maintain control over their ancestral land. His experimental work, *Riddles of my Homecoming* (2013), tackles the issue of local warlords who usurp land from the Lumad. Another example is *Tu Pug Imatuy* (The Right to Kill, Arnel Barbarona, 2017), which Mardoquio also wrote. Based on a true account of a Manobo woman, *Tu Pug Imatuy* depicts the inhumane treatment of government military against a Lumad couple who they used as guides to track communist rebels. The film amplifies the military abuse against the Lumad and raises awareness about it inside and outside the country.[6] The Lumad's entanglement with the government's communist counterinsurgency war resonates as well in what is perhaps the earliest regional film about the Lumad, *Huling Balyan ng Buhi o Ang Sinalirap nga Asoy nila* (The Last Priestess of Buhi or The Woven Stories of the Other, Sherad Sanchez, 2006). The film contains intersecting narratives about a *balyan* (shaman) of a fictitious tribe, communist rebels, government military stationed in the balyan's village, and two children searching for their mother in the forest. Some films on cultural minorities present political issues rooted in history. *Malan* (Benjamin Garcia, 2012), which is set in the 1970s, weaves in the resistance of the B'laan tribe against state military agents during martial law with a depiction of their Indigenous practices, specifically in resolving inter-tribal conflict. A long sequence in the film shows the reconciliation of two tribes and their united action in resisting the soldiers trespassing on their ancestral land. Significant in the development of a re-emerging Indigenous cinema in the country, these regional films frame the Lumad identity in relation to sociopolitical forces impinging on their sovereignty.

Intercultural Filmmaking

In addition to Indigenous- and non-Indigenous-made films, another way that regional cinema produces new cinematic identities for Mindanao's Indigenous groups is through intercultural filmmaking, where there is a close collaboration between an Indigenous group and a non-Indigenous director. Other scholars use the term "cross-cultural" to describe film collaborations between Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous filmmakers in settler countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States (Columpar; Davis; Thornley). In this essay, however, I use the term "intercultural" to describe the collaborative filmmaking process between creators coming from different cultural backgrounds. In this process, two cultures come in contact and work through the inherent power inequalities that characterize such collaboration (Thornley 3). Laura Marks supposes that "intercultural" may tend to elide power relations between cultures and that the term could imply political neutrality (6–7). She argues, however, that intercultural "avoids the problem of positing dominant culture as the invisible

ground against which cultural minorities appear in relief" (7). This notion acknowledges the coevality of cultures in contact, suggesting a more open and dynamic relationship between cultures (7). To be sure, power relations in intercultural filmmaking exist, but, as Marks suggests, "the site of power is always sliding" (7). In other words, no one group has the monopoly of power in intercultural filmmaking. It must be noted, however, that in practice, it is not always easy to ensure that no one group will dominate due to the intercultural dynamics, including differences in class and place of origin. Nonetheless, the intercultural provides the Indigenous group an opportunity to gain a position of power in creating their filmic representations.

It is due to this possibility of coevality of cultures in intercultural that I prefer to use this concept to refer to the collaborative mode of filmmaking between non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities in Mindanao. While the majority/minority binary persists in a non-settler state like the Philippines, Mindanao attempts to subvert it through its notion of "tri-people." Through this idea, Mindanao demonstrates intercultural in practice. "Tri-people" refers to Mindanao's inhabitants, who are composed of the Lumad, Moro, and Christian settlers. As a concept, it attempts to destabilize the binary categories of majority/minority and recognizes the coexistence of different cultures. While "tri-people" acknowledges cultural differences, it does not overlook the struggles of the Moro and Lumad against the historical hegemony of the Christian majority in the region. Oona Paredes argues that the tri-people ethos forces the Moro, Lumad, and settlers "to take the difficult step of acknowledging each other as legitimate stakeholders and recognize a shared fate in Mindanao" ("Indigenous" 167). This acknowledgment clearly illustrates the concept of intercultural applied here.

Intercultural filmmaking mediates transformations of both Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous directors by providing a space for them to actively participate in the filmmaking process. Marks explains that intercultural

> indicates a context that cannot be confined to a single culture. It also suggests movement between one culture and another, thus implying diachrony and the possibility of transformation. ''Intercultural'' means that a work is not the property of any single culture but mediates in at least two directions. (6)

In this respect, the movement and mediation in intercultural filmmaking can be considered acts of bridging cultures together.

In the analysis below, I focus on examining how intercultural filmmaking in *Baboy Halas* provides a space for Indigenous people to enact their cinematic agency in creating their own images on screen. In his study of Indigenous agency in the Amazon, Gary Van Valen broadly describes agency as "any attempt to renegotiate power relations" and proposes that it is relational since "people operate within a web of social relationships" (2). In this respect, any form of agency exists within the intersubjective space of an interaction or engagement. Apter, building on Ahearn and Duranti, conceptualizes agency as powerful "in its capacity to make a difference as effective action" (6). In the case of the Matigsalug Lumad engaged in intercultural filmmaking, cinema is one of the sites where they can make a difference and where they can negotiate power.

In addition to this, I discuss how intercultural filmmaking allows transformations in cultural understanding. In her study of collaboration in *First Australians* (Rachel Perkins, 2008), Therese Davis states that cross-cultural film collaboration "can be conceived as the activity of working through differences" (n.p.). She draws from Langton's discussion of cross-cultural film collaborations as "actual dialogues" constituting an "intersubjective exchange" that can lead to "some satisfactory way of comprehending the other" (qtd. in "Indigenising" n.p.).

In analyzing these two aspects—Indigenous cinematic agency and cultural understanding—I pay critical attention to the dynamics of intercultural collaboration as not all works favor the Indigenous groups. Hendrik Huijser and Brooke Collins-Gearing note that collaborations can serve as colonizing tools, but that they can also be non-colonizing (3). As such, they recognize the potential of such collaborations as a productive engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous. To do so requires respect and "a relationship of trust and reciprocity" (5). Huijser and Collins-Gearing explain that "respect and reciprocity in this context means a space for representation *on one's own terms*" (emphasis in the original, 5). In this regard, the Indigenous can perform self-determined agency in such collaboration. The authors argue that with respect and reciprocity, collaborations can serve as spaces "where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous

can define, critique and engage with each other" (5).

Baboy Halas as a Filmmaker-initiated Intercultural Film

In this section, I discuss the production of *Baboy Halas* as a filmmaker-initiated intercultural film. I analyze the processes involved in the various stages of its production as well as the resulting Indigenous narrative and images in the film. I demonstrate how the film has allowed the Matigsalug to connect to their cultural history. I likewise outline the ways that intercultural filmmaking has reconfigured the traditional directorial authority and engendered a sense of deeper cultural understanding on the part of the non-Indigenous filmmaker.

Baboy Halas was an entry at the 2016 QCinema International Film Festival. Initially, it was a project Fiola began in order to try his hand at making a feature film. Eventually, however, the project metamorphosed into something more than practicing his filmmaking skills. According to Fiola, the film was conceived while he was working on an experimental documentary film in early 2016 (Origane Films). He submitted a script to QCinema based on a fable he heard from a former Moro rebel about their male ancestor falling in love "with a beautiful nymph, which only his eyes can see" (Origane Films, n.p.). For others looking, however, this nymph only appeared as a pig (Origane Films). This detail appears in the film, when the main character Mampog brings home a white pig after days of hunting in the forest. However, Fiola's initial idea for the film was not about the Matigsalug. He originally planned to make a film about the Lumad, but he did not want to specify which Indigenous group was featured (personal interview).[7] The idea to focus on the Matigsalug only came when he scouted for location in Marilog and met Datu Dagsil, the Matigsalug village chief in Maharlika. He told the datu what the film was about, and the latter showed interest. Datu Dagsil suggested the forest his family owns as setting and a relative of his to play the role of the hunter. Since he only had a treatment in mind at this point, Fiola changed his film's focus. He admits, however, that *Baboy Halas* was heavily "inspired by that wonderful fable" told by the former Moro rebel (Origane Films).

Baboy Halas contains two narrative threads set in an undefined past that highlight Matigsalug's lifeworld. The main plot centers on the story of Mampog, a skilled Matigsalug hunter, who is suddenly finding it hard to catch a wild boar in the forest where they live. In Matigsalug society, the hunters hold an important role since they ensure the group has food (Fiola, personal interview). Despite the datu's help in appeasing the forest spirits, Mampog is still unable to find a wild boar. One day, a *diwata* (spirit) visits him in his dream. In the Matigsalug community, the appearance of a diwata in a dream means that the forest spirits favor his hunting (Fiola, personal interview). Mampog sets out to hunt and arrives at an unfamiliar part of the forest. Still without a catch, he spends a night in a cave. In the morning, after a long search, he finds a white pig and brings it home. Despite needing meat, Mampog does not slaughter the pig. Instead, he ties it under their tree house and guards it. Mampog is smitten by what he sees as a diwata, but others (including the audience) only see a white pig. When the pig gets lost, Mampog searches for it in the forest. Near the waterfalls, he encounters human-like creatures with long white hair and dressed in all white. They make a wailing sound like a pig being slaughtered. Worried about their husband, one of his wives tracks him down in the forest. She arrives at the waterfalls, but Mampog is not in sight. She can only see a wild boar.

The film's subplot revolves around the death of Du, who "steals" another man's wife from another tribe. Together with other tribal warriors, the wife's husband attacks Du in his home. In a duel, the husband stabs Du, and the latter dies. In a lengthy scene shot continuously, the two tribes meet to settle Du's death. This sequence dramatizes the husay, or the Lumad's system of conflict settlement. Including this in the narrative counters the representation of Indigenous people as "savage" and "unruly" (Tindaan 81). Instead, the film emphasizes the existence of the Lumad justice system, which structures the intra- and inter-tribal relations and aims to restore peaceful and harmonious tribal relationships. Moreover, the husay subplot demonstrates what Paredes explains as the datu's leadership and prowess in adjudicating and peacemaking (*A Mountain* 29).

In this sequence, the static camera frames the two negotiating parties in a long shot. In the background, we see a group of young men slaughtering a boar given by Du's father as an offering. Before the actual settlement, Datu Dagsil of Du and Mampog's tribe asks his wives to distribute food and tobacco to everyone. The two datu talk about other things, like

tobacco plants drying up because of the hot weather, before settling compensation for Du's death. Slowly, the camera dollies in to get closer to the two datu discussing the settlement. After performing a prayer ritual, Datu Dagsil asks Datu Bukaykay to give Du's father five horses. However, Datu Bukaykay had only four horses. He asks his counterpart if he would accept instead two brass gongs as replacement for the fifth horse. Datu Dagsil agrees. To seal the agreement, Datu Dagsil performs another prayer ritual. Here the camera moves closer to frame the two leaders in medium close up. Datu Dagsil invites Datu Bukaykay to stand up and "step on it and wish it would never return again." One of the men explains the ritual will "seal this restored relationship between tribes." Datu Dagsil prays to Manama to inform their god that they have made peace and to ask for help to "keep [it] for eternity."

With its focus on depicting the Matigsalug's way of life, *Baboy Halas* veers away from directly engaging with the current sociopolitical reality of the Lumad. Critic Emerald Flaviano noticed the absence of the Lumad's political struggles in the film. She notes in her review that *Baboy Halas* has constructed an "imagined isolation" of the Matigsalug tribe (n.p.). This portrayal gains "special significance" in the context of Lumad killings and harassment reported in mid- and late 2015.[8] For Flaviano, it belies "the systematic and concerted efforts of the state and mining capital to terrorize communities for their ancestral lands" (n.p.). She suggests that it might be Fiola's way of not defining the Matigsalug, or the Lumad in general, by their subjection to these forces. Local viewers in Davao also recognized this change in Lumad representation. *Sunstar Davao* ran an editorial which praises the film for presenting a different Lumad narrative, one which shows their intimate relationship with the forest "without exploiting the strife of the Indigenous peoples" ("Editorial" n.p.). Patrick Campos confers to this view, adding that the film "offers a perspective on nature and social processes in heterochronic time" (n.p.). Foreign critics at Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema likewise appreciate the film "for its aesthetically challenging cinematic exploration of the tribulations of the not-so-familiar Indigenous people" (Origane Films, n.p.). In this respect, the film expands the cinematic representations of the Lumad that aid in broadening the understanding of this ethnic category.

The Lumad's Culture on Screen

*Baboy Hala*s, a film which the Matigsalug community made, expanded the avenues through which this Lumad group can express their Indigenous culture. What remains of this group's earlier way of life can be found in their cultural and artistic expressions, such as music, dance, poetry, epics, and spiritual expressions (Origane Films). As many younger Matigsalug migrate to the city to look for work, the Matigsalug elders would like to ensure that their culture and traditions are passed on to the younger generation (Lumawag n.p.). *Baboy Halas* allows them to do that and the young Matigsalug (and the non-Indigenous audience) to gain Indigenous cultural knowledge. In this respect, the film creates what Faye Ginsburg calls "screen memories," which refer to Indigenous uses of screen media "to recuperate their own collective stories and histories" (40). She explains that these collective memories "have been erased in the national narratives of the dominant culture and are in danger of being forgotten within local worlds as well" (40). As such, the film made through intercultural filmmaking serves to revive not only memories but cultural history as well.

In creating screen memories, *Baboy Halas* blends narrative elements with ethnographic details of Matigsalug's cultural practices. These ethnographic details relating to hunting, living in the forest, and tribal rituals, for instance, provide an invigorating link to Matigsalug's past. The narrative, meanwhile, allows for symbolic meanings to reflect on the relation between their past and present. In her analysis of early films on Native Americans, Joanne Hearne suggests the potential for "Indigenous repurposing" of narratives that connect ethnographic details, such as in Edward Curtis' *In the Land of the Head Hunters* (1914) (308). While Curtis' film follows the colonial trope of the "vanishing Indian," Hearne points out the "possibility of recuperation" in projects that bring "the presence of the oppressed into the realm of the reproducible image" (308). She explains that the narrative in this regard "appropriates the power of signification" that the present Indigenous communities can employ to connect with their past. In the case of *Baboy Halas,* narrativizing the Matigsalug's earlier way of life links this group to its past, present, and future generations.

The use of Matigsalug language in the entire film, moreover, further connects the Matigsalug to their cultural history. Indigenous language links the

community to their precolonial heritage, and it is one of the limited arenas where the Indigenous can express their identity and create a sense of self and culture (Scott 10). According to Fiola, during a discussion with the Matigsalug community about the film, some of them identified the use of Matigsalug language as the most important aspect in the film because "wala pa sila nakita na Matigsalug na film" (they haven't seen a film using Matigsalug language). The use of this Indigenous language suggests this Lumad group as its primary audience. Fiola confirmed this, stating that "gusto ko maging conscious ako na mga Matigsalug yung mga naging audience. Sila yung primary talaga na main audience (I want to be conscious that the Matigsalug are the film's main audience)" (personal interview). Moreover, for the datu, the film they were making was for the Matigsalug audience, particularly the younger generation who need to know about their earlier way of life (Fiola, personal interview).

Meanwhile, the non-Lumad audience must rely on the English subtitles. Many times, however, the English translation loses much of the cultural nuance, according to Fiola (personal interview). This is not only due to English being a foreign language to the Matigsalug, but because the words had to undergo several translations during the process—from Matigsalug to Binisaya, then Binisaya to English. Fiola confesses they could not accurately translate the poetic and lyrical nature of the Matigsalug language into English. As such, some English words used were chosen to aid the understanding of non-Matigsalug audience. For example, the film uses "wife" to refer to Mampog's wives, though the Matigsalug do not call their life companion "asawa" or spouse. These compromises on language were made in order to reach a wider audience for the film. Nevertheless, the decision to use the Matigsalug language in the entire film revives the unique cultural identity of the group in their film representation.

Containing ethnographic details shot in observational style by a non-Lumad director, *Baboy Halas* appears to operate like an ethnographic film, which tends to objectify Indigenous people on screen and support their "pervasive racialization" in cinema (Rony 5–8).[9] The film's exhibition to non-Lumad audiences, particularly at Western international film festivals, might reinforce the racialized view of the Indigenous as "Other."[10] But unlike ethnographic films which rob the Indigenous of their historical agency and psychological complexity (Columpar 4), *Baboy Halas* articulates Lumad agency in both the filmic representation and the film's creation. Incorporating contextual knowledge about the film's intercultural collaborative production in the analysis discussed below illuminates the Matigsalug's agency in creating their representation. The active involvement of the Matigsalug in the film's production highlights the enactment of their Lumad agency. As such, *Baboy Halas* reconfigures the production of an Indigenous-centered film.

Lumad Agency in Intercultural Filmmaking

Baboy Halas demonstrates the relational nature of cinematic agency in intercultural filmmaking where the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous create intersubjective spaces for collaboration in creating Indigenous images. In this film, these spaces were created all throughout the production stages, paving the way for the Lumad to take control of creating their screen memories. Even though Fiola is credited as the writer and director, the Matigsalug had a high level of control on the narrative, representational details and, to some extent, aesthetics. The Matigsalug datu, for instance, played a deciding role in developing the film's narrative. Fiola constantly sought their feedback on the plot, which he was writing while immersing himself in the community for two months. He would write it every day as he learned new information and ask the datu what they thought the following day during the daily walk they took together. An important input from the Matigsalug was a major change in the subplot about the pangayaw, or the tribal war. Fiola narrates that in his original script, the pangayaw is caused by someone cutting trees on another person's land in the forest. The datu told him, however, that pangayaw is complex, and it is waged only after the community deems it necessary. "Sa kanilang practice talaga, maraming dadaanan pa yan before mo gagawin yung pangayaw. Kakausapin mo pa yung datu…Kapag sasabihin ng datu na sige gawin mo na yung gusto mo kasi malaki talaga ang kasalanan n'ya, hindi na kayang mapag-usapan…bibigyan ka na ng blessing na mag-pangayaw ka na dun…(In their practice, there are many steps before you start a pangayaw. You need to speak with the datu…If the datu gives you permission to wage pangayaw when the other party commits a big sin or when the parties cannot reach

an agreement, he will give you a blessing to wage a pangayaw)" (Fiola, personal interview). Fiola added that the datu explained that pangayaw can be waged after several offences were committed, like trespassing, cutting trees, and stealing animals and other things. "Ang pinakanagagalit daw sila is pag yung asawa kinuha (The thing that angers them the most is when someone steals their wife)," said Fiola, just as shown in the film. The datu suggested to include this detail, so Fiola revised his earlier script. What this shows is that although Fiola controlled the writing of the film narrative, the content was very much influenced by the input of the Matigsalug datu.

Lumad agency is also illustrated in ensuring the accuracy of details depicting Matigsalug practices. In this regard, the datu closely supervised the film's shooting. In particular, they guided the staging of the husay sequence. Originally, Fiola wrote the sequence with only the two datu settling the matter. The tribal leaders insisted, however, on having more people in the scene, since the whole community is involved in an actual husay. They instructed Fiola where people should be positioned, who should serve the food, and what items should be served. In addition to this, the actors provided their own costumes, and the datu performed rituals in an actual husay.[11] Another example of ensuring accuracy in the film is the datu's suggestion for Mampog to have two wives, since it is the usual practice among Matigsalug men. Fiola states that in Matigsalug culture, men and women living together treat each other more as companions than as romantic partners. They live together to help each other survive. In addition to this, the datu informed Fiola that the first wife is the one who decides if a man needs another wife. She also chooses her husband's second wife, and the two women treat each other as siblings. This investment in details works overall to relive the Lumad's cultural memories.

One of the key roles of the Matigsalug in the film is their performance, which serves as another space for them to enact their cinematic agency. *Baboy Halas* employs an all-Lumad cast, one of the few—if not the only—Filipino film to do so. Even though Fiola initially had a casting call among professional actors in Mindanao, he later decided to cast Matigsalug actors. He explains that if professional actors act alongside the Lumad cast, the artifice of their performance would be obvious. He says their bodily movements would differ from those of the Lumad, who confidently move in the forest. The lowland actors, who are not used to such an environment, meanwhile, would take time learning how to move as skillfully and confidently as the Lumad. This is true, as the performances of the Lumad actors, especially Mampog, highlight their bodies' agility as they navigate the forest to look for food. Mampog, his wives, and Meyang, his daughter, are seen roaming the forest barefoot gathering food. Another example is when Mampog makes a torch out of dried sap and leaves collected by his wife. The shot, lasting for almost eight minutes without cuts, showcases Mampog's skill and the Indigenous knowledge in using available resources for his needs. Since Fiola and the Matigsalug only had a limited time to make the film due to the festival deadline, Fiola decided to only cast Matigsalug actors. This decision enabled him to showcase the Lumad's assured movements, giving a sense of authority and confidence in their actions.

The realistic performances of the Matigsalug actors help to establish a sense of realism that, in turn, strengthens the film's indexical link to the Lumad's past. In fact, the casting was based on the actual roles of actors in their community (Fiola, personal interview). For instance, Omeles Laglagan, who played Mampog, is a skilled hunter in real life, having learned it from his grandfather who was the tribe's great hunter. As well, the datu in the film are the actual tribal leaders. As such, the casting provides authenticity in presenting various community roles in Matigsalug society.

In addition to this, the actors' performance was mainly their own interpretation of the scenes. One critic writes that the acting in *Baboy Halas* is "indifferent" and reads it as a component of Fiola's ethics in filming the Lumad (Flaviano). Indeed, Fiola chose a non-dramatic approach to tell the narrative and a naturalistic performance style for the actors. He relates that he did not give the actors dialogues to memorize, only instructions to mention certain words to help tie in the narrative (personal interview). In this regard, the performance became an opportunity for the Matigsalug to create their own identity on screen.

Aside from content, the Lumad enact agency by influencing the film's aesthetics. Critics applaud Fiola for his masterful visual rendition of the sparse narrative (Cruz; Flaviano; Rosas), but crucial to his aesthetic maneuvers was meeting the Matigsalug's requirements for filming in certain scenes, such as prayer rituals and the husay. The director notes that the Matigsalug asked him to shoot scenes containing rituals only once

and without cuts. He says that the Matigsalug datu were performing actual sacred rituals as he filmed, so they were not willing to restage them. Although this requirement posed a challenge for the crew to prepare and set up the one-shot scenes, Fiola complied. In this light, the agency enacted is acknowledged by the director, illustrating Apter's notion of agency as relational (qtd. in van Valen 2). Two prominent scenes shot this way are the husay scene discussed above and the cave scene. In the latter example, Mampog was doing an actual ritual summoning the fire spirit. Lasting for ten minutes, the scene shows in real time Mampog talking to the fire spirit while making a fire using stones and twigs he found inside the cave. Other scenes include the ritual conducted when Mampog offers gifts to the forest spirits as instructed by Datu Dagsil. Fiola mentions that the datu was not performing but was actually praying to the forest spirits. These examples illustrate Fiola's belief that cinema can be manipulated to accommodate the Lumad's cultural requirements. Moreover, they demonstrate the Lumad's role in shaping the film's "look"—how sacred aspects of their culture are represented. Fiola calls this the "Indigenous cinematic language" (personal interview). Fiola explains: "[It is] [s]omething na nasa Indigenous lang s'ya mangyayari, pero gawin mo s'yang cinematic para mas maintindihan nila…For example, yung mga sound or mga elements dun na nakikita ng Indigenous, makaka-relate sila (It's something that only the Indigenous know and experience, but make it cinematic and they will see it in a different light. For example, the sound or other elements within the Indigenous experience, they can relate with that)."

The Matigsalug's contribution extends to the logistical aspects of making the film, demonstrating their close involvement in ensuring the completion of the film they co-created with Fiola. The director relates that the village chief arranged everything for the shoot, including obtaining consent from the communist guerrillas in the area. Fiola recognizes the datu's crucial role in ensuring the film crew's safety during the whole process. He states that the Matigsalug men and women flattened tracks in the forest to make it easier to transport filming equipment. They also guided the crew in navigating dangerous parts of the forest (Fiola, personal interview).

The Matigsalug also perform their cinematic agency in terms of reception through their engagement with the audience during the film's Davao premiere at the Mindanao Film Festival in in 2016.[12] In the post-screening discussion, the Matigsalug answered questions from the audience at length, consulting with their datu every time a question was thrown at them. Thornley notes that Indigenous films demand an extra effort of understanding among non-Indigenous audiences (44–45). In her own analysis of Indigenous films, she cites Melnyk's "sense of gentle confusion" to describe the slight disorientation non-Inuit viewers often express watching Isuma films (44). This is perhaps comparable to the unfamiliarity of the non-Lumad audience with the cultural specificities of Matigsalug life seen in *Baboy Halas*. However, this "sense of gentle confusion" precisely opens the stage for intercultural dialogue to take place. The post-screening discussion in *Baboy Halas*, for instance, serves as an opportunity to elevate the audience's engagement, not only with the text but also with the Lumad. In this regard, the film serves as an entry point for cultural interaction.

For Fiola and the Matigsalug, the cultural interaction initiated during the production continued beyond this period. Three years after its release, Fiola returned to Marilog with the film to fulfil his commitment of bringing it back to the Matigsalug community. Hearne notes that the act of repatriating a film to the Indigenous community generates productive energies, among them turning "visual representation of storytelling as a social practice" (326). Indeed, the film's homecoming in Maharlika enabled the Matigsalug to collectively watch and discuss the film. Fiola narrates how the community arranged for the screening, borrowing a generator set to power the projector and sound equipment.[13] Unfortunately, the generator set did not work during the community screening, and Fiola had to show the film in his laptop. However, the film was not shown completely since the laptop's battery ran out of power. Fiola says he and the community proceeded instead to discuss the film. Not only do Indigenous groups lack access to screen production technologies but also to screening technologies. Despite this trouble, however, the director considers it a remarkable experience to bring the film back to the Matigsalug community. In the next section, I further discuss intercultural filmmaking as a zone which enables cultural engagement at the point of production.

Cultural Learning in Intercultural Filmmaking

The filmmaker-initiated mode of intercultural filmmaking, as illustrated by the case of *Baboy Halas*, is characterized by an exchange of cultural learning, a reconfiguration of traditional directorial authority, and the cultivation of an ethical relation. As a non-Indigenous person, Fiola worked to deepen his understanding of the Matigsalug lifeworld. He immersed himself in the community, and he was in constant dialogue with the datu. His two-month immersion facilitated his acceptance into the community as a filmmaker, earning their trust. Proof of this acceptance was his appointment as a datu in his own right. The Matigsalug datu recognized him as the leader of the film production. Fiola explains this appointment was necessary so that the Matigsalug community would recognize his authority and follow his lead.

Moreover, his time spent with the community further cultivated his respect of the Lumad, deepening his knowledge about their culture. Because of this experience, some of his cultural assumptions about the Lumad were corrected by the datu themselves. One example is his initial idea that Matigsalug women wore nothing to cover their chests, and he planned to depict them as such. The datu rejected his idea and explained they did not have any memory of earlier Matigsalug women not wearing anything. After a long discussion with the Matigsalug datu, Fiola decided to abandon his costuming plan.

What this instance demonstrates is a director relinquishing total control in the film and accepting the Lumad's authority in decisions about their representation. In this regard, intercultural filmmaking challenges the director's traditional authority in the overall decision-making in the film. Virginia Pitts calls this a "dispersed authorship" in which decision-making about Indigenous portrayal in films is shared by all collaborators (57). This practice entails a series of negotiations, contestations, and compromise, as illustrated in the example above. What results from this is a "non-exploitative dialogic exchange" that can produce a film which adheres to Indigenous cultural expression (60).

In *Baboy Halas*, Fiola relinquished some control over the film and shared decision-making with the Matigsalug datu. This is similar in other Indigenous-centered films made in collaboration with non-Indigenous directors. For instance, Nancy Wright discusses how the production of *Ten Canoes* was governed by "a process distributing decision making among Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaborators" (para. 1). She notes that such a "collective process" was implemented in various stages of the production. In Fiola's case, he had to negotiate his creative authority as director as he accommodated the inputs of Matigsalug datu. In this instance, the Lumad maintains authority over their images, even though they are not the ones holding the camera. For his part, Fiola sees his directorial role not in the conventional sense of having control in all aspects of the film, but as a leader who, like a datu, is responsible for making decisions for the group. As demonstrated in the earlier discussions, however, these decisions were always a result of his consultations with the datu. For him, his role as a director was to ensure that he could incorporate the cultural details from the Matigsalug in a cinematic way.

The experience of intercultural filmmaking developed a sense of cultural responsibility on Fiola's part. Fiola sees himself not only as a director but "as a responsible person *sa isang kultura* [as someone responsible for a particular culture]." He realized his responsibility got bigger since he was not only in charge of the production but also of all the people involved in the production, including the Matigsalug. Being appointed a datu by the Matigsalug may have played a role in developing this sense of cultural responsibility. Fiola states that he was careful in considering the Matigsalug's sensibility, which is why he strived to get the details accurate. Fiola's attempt to engender an ethical practice in intercultural filmmaking bears significance in the Philippine context, where no comprehensive protocols relating to filming with Indigenous people are in place.[14]

Moreover, Fiola's intercultural collaboration has reconfigured his own filmmaking practices. Fiola relates that *Baboy Halas* differs from his earlier projects in terms of the time he spent on all production stages. He recalls spending a lot of time in dialogue with the datu and then explaining everything to his crew. Although he notes that the process was time-consuming and difficult, he understands that those steps were necessary to make the Matigsalug trust him and his crew. Huijser and Collins-Gearing point out that a "non-colonising collaborative process" is characterized precisely as "time-consuming, difficult

and exhausting processes" (3). They explain that the long process develops practices that, in turn, transforms the epistemologies underlying a film production (3). The longer time spent during the production enabled Fiola to unlearn conventional ways of filmmaking and develop new practices that reoriented his cinematic view. He states that during the process, he had decided that the film was to be about and for the Matigsalug, not to compete and win awards at the festival (personal interview). He had also come to accept the Lumad's authority in the film, recognizing that conventional filmmaking practices where the director takes sole authorship and control do not apply to intercultural filmmaking.

Conclusion

What the case of *Baboy Halas* demonstrates is that intercultural filmmaking, even when it is initiated by a non-Lumad filmmaker, allows a space for the Lumad to take control of creating their film images. This mode of production fosters a sense of cultural responsibility on the part of the filmmaker. As such, the filmmaker develops a set of practices which allow the Lumad to participate in the filmmaking process. It involves negotiating directorial control and complying with Indigenous cultural requirements. Intercultural filmmaking in this film proved to be Lumad-centered, as all decisions relied significantly on the Matigsalug datu. In addition to this, the attempt to apply what Fiola calls the 'Indigenous cinematic language' demonstrates how the Lumad influenced the overall aesthetics of the film that can potentially challenge the Othering gaze of the non-Indigenous audiences.

The essay has demonstrated, moreover, that the filmmaker-initiated mode of intercultural filmmaking discussed here provides a platform for the Matigsalug Lumad to address the lack of diverse representations of the Indigenous in Filipino cinema and allow them to become visible in cinematic culture. In this light, intercultural filmmaking presents a productive site to initiate a filmmaking practice that is non-colonizing. Huijser and Collins-Gearing note that such endeavors, despite being "discomforting, tense, challenging and full of conflict," have the potential to be productive engagements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous (5). Agency, in this instance, is produced in the very space where collaboration occurs. As shown in this essay's discussion, agency in Indigenous image-making is relational—the Indigenous and non-Indigenous worked together to redefine film practices to ensure Indigenous-centered films have the potential to be productive engagements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous (5).

Through intercultural filmmaking, regional films like *Baboy Halas* become a social practice that bridges the multiplicity of cultures. The discussion has shown that this mode of production enables cultural groups to forge connections through jointly making a film and cultivating cultural understanding and ethical relations. It has also fostered ethical practices among non-Indigenous directors to ensure a successful collaboration with Indigenous communities. These practices involve a sense of cultural sensitivity and responsibility in representing Indigenous groups. In this process, the director's traditional authority over the film is reconfigured into one that is more enabling and facilitative. *Baboy Halas* shows that cinema can be a powerful medium where the minoritized and discriminated groups can reclaim control over their images on screen.

Endnotes

[1] A *datu* is a "semi-hereditary male authority figure" in Indigenous communities (Paredes, *A Mountain* 28). A datu may or may not come from a line of datu. Anyone who has displayed leadership and natural ability to settle intra- and intertribal conflicts, undergone appropriate rites of passage and attained education can become datu (28). Another key consideration in appointing someone as datu is the "approval and recognition of other established datu" (29).

[2] The Indigenous people in Cordillera are also known as the Igorot, which means "people from the mountains." The term carries a negative meaning as it was used by Spanish colonizers and other lowland Filipinos in a derogatory way. The Cordillera Administrative Region includes the provinces of Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, and Mountain Province.

[3] These films are *Legacy of Filemon* (Amelia Rogel-Rara, 1985), *Apong Diano* (Cooper Resabal, 1985), and *Camote Miners* (Arthur Tibaldo, 1985) (103), which all portrayed the lives of Cordillera people (Telles "Local Film" 103). These films were outputs of the Cinema Direct Workshop held at the University of the Philippines College Baguio in 1984, and they won top prizes at the Fifth Manila Short-Film Festival in 1985 (103).

[4] "Bontok" refers to an Igorot tribe living in Bontoc Province in northern Philippines.

[5] For a discussion of the Lumad-Moro relation, see Oona Paredes's "Indigenous vs. Native: Negotiating the Place of Lumads in the Bangsamoro Homeland."

[6] *Tu Pug Imatuy* premiered in Manila at the 2017 Sinag Maynila Film Festival. It had several screenings overseas, including at the Tokyo International Film Festival in 2017.

[7] See also the essay "Baboy Halas: Wailing in Mindanao" by Fiola published in 2021 where he discussed his experience of making the film with the Matigsalug.

[8] For a comprehensive reporting of state violence on Lumad, see Arnold Alamon's *Wars of Extinction: Discrimination and the Lumad Struggle in Mindanao*, Jose Monfred Sy's "Teaching 'Pangiyak Ki!': The Lumad School as a Struggle for Land, Life, and Liberation" and "Hulagway ng Yutang Kabilin sa mga Mapa mula sa Lumad Bakwit Iskul: Isang Panimulang Pag-aaral."

[9] In fact, the film's own website labels it "ethnographic" (11). However, the inclusion of fictional elements makes this film not entirely one.

[10] Aside from its screening at the Rotterdam International Film Festival, *Baboy Hala*s was also screened at 66th Internationales Filmfestival Mannheim-Heidelberg in Germany, where it received the Special Newcomer Award in 2017.

[11] According to the datu, the pangayaw does not happen in current times anymore. Intertribal conflicts are settled in the barangay (village administration) (Fiola, personal interview).

[12] Fiola says two vans transported the Matigsalug community from Maharlika to the city center. According to him, while a few Matigsalug had experienced watching a movie in a cinema before, for many it was the first time they had entered a cinema and watched a film. More importantly, it was their first time seeing the Matigsalug on screen (personal interview).

[13] Before this occurred, however, Fiola had to raise money through crowdfunding to purchase screening equipment that he gave to the community. Those who live in the forested area of Maharlika do not have electricity and have no access to television and other media at that time.

[14] Currently, filmmakers who wish to film with Indigenous people must apply for Free and Prior Informed Consent through the National Commission for Indigenous People.

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