

A Process Documentation Report

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE CO-CREATION WORKSHOP

Community Visits, Consultation and Validation, and Confirmation of the Cultural Materials
of the Tboli in Sitio Bedew, Lamdalag, Lake Sebu April 16-17, 2023

Documented by

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Klaudy: Community Visit, Consultation, and Ceremonial Turnover of the Tboli Cultural Materials
Sitio Bedew, Barangay Lamdalag, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato
April 16-17, 2023

Day 1 – April 16, 2023

In the morning, Marian Pastor Roces, Dr. Cristina Martinez-Juan, Jovi Juan, and Billie Riley arrived in General Santos for the 2-day series activity in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato. The team conducted community visitation, consultations, IKSP co-creation workshops, and turnover of the Tboli cultural materials from Ms. Billie Riley. The team was accompanied by Maribeth B. Farnazo.

The team took their breakfast and proceeded to Lake Sebu, South Cotabato to meet Benjie Manuel, a Tboli teacher at the School of Indigenous Knowledge and Traditions (SIKAT) which was already adopted by the Department of Education (DepEd). Approaching the town center of Lake Sebu, Ms. Riley was very emotional reminiscing her days in Lake Sebu, when she was with the Sta. Cruz Mission in the year 1978. The team stayed at Dolores Resort Hotel in Lake Sebu.



In the late afternoon, the team together with Benjie Manuel decided to visit the Tboli Community Museum to meet Datu Dominador Baay. The meeting of Riley and Datu Baay was full of mirth, remembering memories in Lake Sebu – people who have worked with the mission, the physical features of the community, and the friendship they have built with each other. Riley played also musical instruments together with Manuel.



Meeting and Briefing with Benjie Manuel

In the evening, a meeting and briefing with Benjie Manuel were facilitated by Marian Pastor Roces, Dr. Cristina Martinez-Juan, and Billie Riley regarding their proposed plans and projects, and the turnover of the cultural materials to the Tboli Community of Lake Sebu, South Cotabato.

Major Points of Discussion during the Meeting:

1) Developing Tboli modules

Roces said that Riley could make an important contribution to the learning center, especially in writing about the Tboli and the materials she collected, while Manuel will do the translations from Tboli to English considering his expertise and awareness of all of the nuances of their language.

With this plan, Manuel will take care of the core collections, while Roces, Dr. Juan, and together with other educators will develop modules for children. The center is not a museum and even not a weaving centre. Roces cited an example of the word *'tnalak'* which is not a noun, but

rather an intransitive verb. *Nalak* is a root word, and for the Tboli, *Nalak* means 'to assist, to do, to carry, to pass through, and to lead'.

Roces stated that Manuel is perfectly capable of doing the module because of his expertise and being also part of the public education system – the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) of the Department of Education and was very happy that Manuel expressed his support to the proposed project. The module will be used by the grade school children so that they will not lose their nuances as a Tboli tribe.

A module for tourists also will be developed which will serve as their guide in writing about the Tboli. The center will be epistemological for the visiting tourists to the community.

Manuel responded that he will invite his co-writers for the content development of the modules.

Roces informed everyone that Marlene Po has a publishing house that can help with the printing of the modules and children's books.

2) *Construction of Gono Tumutol (Learning Center and Storage Facility)*

Roces said that a few weeks ago she asked Manuel how much would it cost to build a little hut which will keep, secure, and store the collections.

Riley responded that her visit to Lake Sebu will involve her in supporting the establishment of community centers and that she felt that this plan will come out before her visit to Lake Sebu.

Roces happily shared that Marlene Po had already committed to funding a portion of the construction amounting to Php 100,000.00, a leftover fund from the Tboli SIKAT project. Riley responded that she will do some fundraising activity back home in England.

Manuel agreed that the labor of the construction will be part of the community's equity and he will do his fundraising activity as well.

3) *Turnover of the cultural materials to the Tboli community*

Manuel was tasked to prepare a simple program for the turnover of Riley's collections. He invited Maria Todi, Jenita Eko, Myrna Pula, Barbara, Yagman, the Barangay Captain, the IPS/tribal council, and his closest relatives and members of the community.

Day 2 – April 17, 2023

Klauy: Community Visit, Consultation, and Ceremonial Turnover of Tboli Cultural Materials

Early in the morning of April 17, 2023, the team left the hotel and met the women in Sitio Bedew, Barangay Lamdalag for the consultation and validation of the photographs of the Tboli cultural materials and turnover of Riley’s collection to the community.



The team was welcomed by the smiles of the Tboli women who accommodated us with coffee and root crops. It was like eating sumptuous food, seeing those native and organic presents in the traditional food trays. The arrival was a little bit emotional for Riley but full of exciting talks and waves of laughter from and for everyone.

After the registration, the program formally opened with a Tboli prayer led by Datu Dodong Ulaw followed by performing a Tboli dance called Madal Tahaw. A chant and a courtship dance were also performed by the students from the community. To note, the performers touch the musical instruments before they performed to ask the spirits for consent and guidance.



Bae Maribeth B. Farnazo introduced the team, Marian Pastor Roces, Dr. Cristina Martinez-Juan, Jovi Juan, and Billie Riley.

Overview and Statement of the Purpose of Visit

Roces started his message with how she met Mr. Benjie Manuel through their common friend Marlene Po who funded the salary of Manuel when he was a Tboli SIKAT teacher for about ten (10) years.

For a fair and better understanding of the message of Roces, she requested the master of ceremonies Brandon Aban Budol to do the translations of her message from Tagalog to Tboli.



Roces expressed that they are so proud of Manuel's achievements as a teacher at SIKAT school.

- 1) Teaching and mentoring the grade school Tboli about their cultural heritage
- 2) Graduates from SIKAT school have been accepted into the secondary school of DepEd.

This means that teaching at the SIKAT school is also accepted by the public education system. To date, Manuel had been already teaching in a public school.

Roces said that when they (Dr. Juan) learned that Riley would like to come to the Philippines to return the Tboli materials handed over to her during her stay in Lake Sebu in 1978. A question came to their mind, to whom the materials will be given? who will take care of the materials?

Roces expressed love to her Tboli friends like Uyog (Maria Todi), Barbara, Yagman, Jenita, and Madia but she told Dr. Juan to let Mr. Manuel take care of the materials. Dr. Juan and Riley agreed to her suggestion.

Roces told the community members that another purpose of the visit is the construction of the Gono Tumutol, not a museum but a learning space for the children of the community, that will explain and tell what *Tnalak* means. Manuel shared the meaning of the word '*Tnalak*'. Roces further said that the learning space will be having classes only during free time, like weekends.

Roces added that the Gono Tumutol will be a learning space also to guide the tourists, particularly in writing about the Tboli.

Roces said that she asked Manuel how much it would cost to build a community center and Marlene Po expressed funding support for half of the construction. While she, Dr. Juan, and Riley will look for other possible donors to complete the construction.

Roces ended her message with a passage from the Tagalog culture that old people in Batangas said that houses, land, clothing, and jewellery are not owned by the people, rather, everyone is a steward or a caretaker of those materials for the next generation.

Highlights of the Statement of Purpose of the Visit

- Billie Riley's visit and her turnover of the Tboli cultural materials
- Construction of a Gono Tumutol, a learning space for the community
- Validation and Confirmation of Photographs of the Tboli Cultural Materials

1. Turnover of the Tboli Cultural Materials and Collections

In the year 1978, Billie Riley worked with the Sta. Cruz Mission in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato. She stayed in the community for more than two (2) years where she built a strong relationship and memories with the Tboli tribe.

During her stay in Lake Sebu, there were Tbolis who handed her abaca ikat-dyed textiles, accessories, hunting implements, and others and brought them to England in the United Kingdom. She also took many photos of the tribe in the community that reminds her memorable life living with the tribe. After 45 years, she went back to Lake Sebu to return all the materials that were given to her.

Riley started the turnover by speaking the tribe's morning greetings, *Hyu Lafus*. She emphasized the beautiful stories from each of the materials, stories from the community, and her stories as well that connect to everyone.

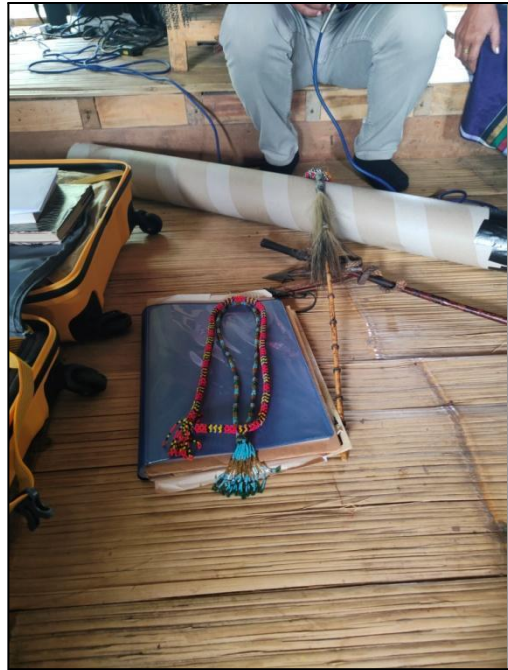
She asked the women if they can still remember *Ma'am Lil*, a 23-year-old who came to Lake Sebu, South Cotabato to work for the Sta. Cruz Mission. She further uttered, *Libon Bukay* is now 69 years old, and she promised that before reaching 70 years old, she will return all the materials handed to her and take them back home where they belong, after 45 years of keeping them.

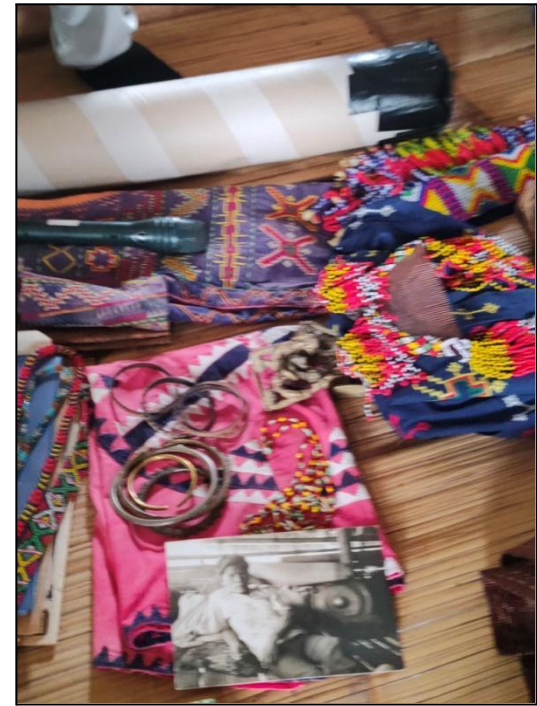
She shared that she found the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Mapping Philippine Culture and eventually met Dr. Juan and asked for help with how she will take back the materials to the tribe. When she learned that Dr. Juan will come to the Philippines, she immediately decided to go with her.

She also keeps sharing stories about each of the materials. She shared the saddest story about an old man in the mountain who insisted to give her the spear for the reason that no more trees in the mountain and no more animals to hunt.

Riley expressed her gratitude to Dr. Juan and all the Tboli in Lake Sebu. Myrna Pula and Benjie Manuel also expressed their heartfelt thanks to Riley. Below are some of the photos taken during the turnover:







2. Construction of a Gono Tmutol, a Learning Center/Hub of the community

Marian Pastor Roces informed the members of the community that they plan to construct a Gono Tumutol, a center that will serve as a learning space or a hub, and will house the Tboli materials.

As to the artifacts, the majority of the members of the community agreed with Roces that Manuel will be the core caretaker and will manage the collections from Riley.

Concerning the construction of the Gono Tumutol, major points and agreements have been raised and everyone expressed their support for the project.

Highlights of the discussion:

- One (1) Gono Tumutol will be constructed at Manuel's family parcel of land near the existing weaving center
- Marlene Po commits to fund half of the construction amounting to Php 100,000 from the leftover fund of Tboli SIKAT
- Dr. Cristina Martinez-Juan, Billie Riley, and Marian Pastor Roces will facilitate the external fund outsourcing to fully complete the construction
- Labor of the construction is community equity
- Gono Tmutol will serve as a storage facility for the artifacts and a learning space for Tboli children and tourists
- Benjie Manual will take the lead in the content development of the modules together with his Tboli co-writers

3. Validation and Confirmation of the Photographs of the Tboli Cultural Materials

Dr. Cristina Martinez-Juan is from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London, England who spearheaded the Mapping Philippine Material Culture project, a website that shows photographs of the cultural materials stored and kept at the museum outside of the Philippines. They took photos of all the materials and put them on a website database.

Dr. Juan look into the website and found photographs of the Tboli cultural materials and she printed them. This is the same process she did in the previous workshops with the Blaans communities. For Tboli, the photographs will be complementary materials to the collections of Riley.

Dr. Juan added that Mr. Craig Diamond also contributed photos from his collections in San Francisco and Santa Barbara, California. Other photographs are taken also from the field museum in Chicago.

Dr. Juan further said that the photographs will be displayed in the weaving and learning center to be part of their resource materials.

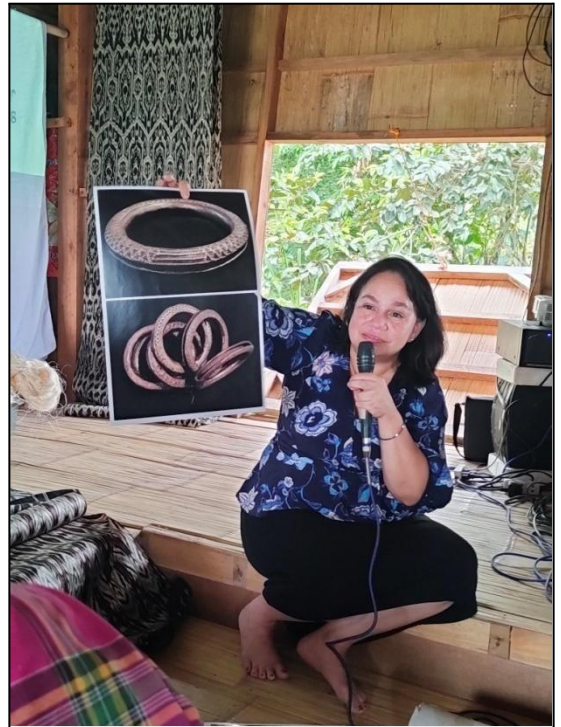
Farnazo suggested that since the cultural masters have the expertise of identifying which materials are for the Blaans and the Tboli, they will organize the photographs according to the tribe. The majority of the photographs are Tboli and two (2) are Blaans.

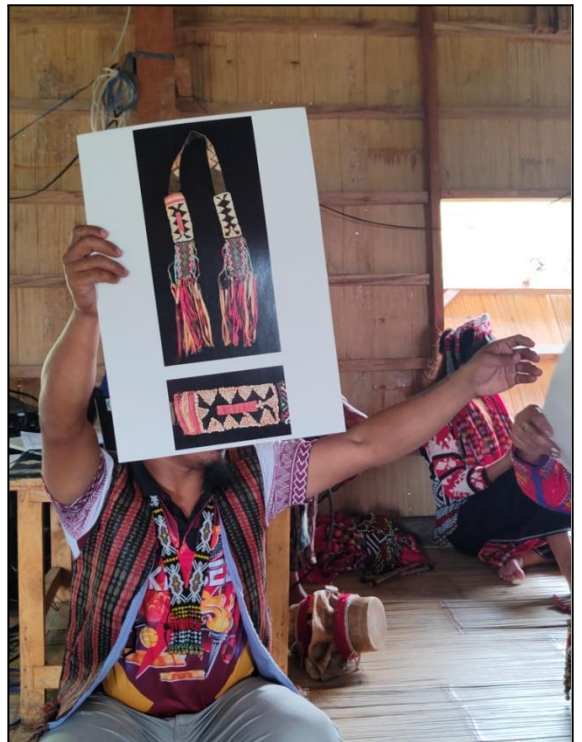
There were six (6) frames provided by Dr. Juan and she suggested that the women will have to choose photos to have it framed and displayed at the Gono Tumutol.

A ceremonial turnover of the photographs followed.

Below are the photos taken during the validation and confirmation of the photographs.









Ceremonial Turnover of the Cultural Materials and Photographs to the Tboli Community



The activity ended with a series of photo ops and serving with a very tasty lunch. The team left Sitio Bedew, Lamdalag at 1:00 p.m. and had a quick visit with the School of Living Traditions (SLT) of Maria Todi.



Meeting with Boi Maria Todi

Boi Maria Todi was the first volunteer teacher of the Tboli SIKAT. She left the SIKAT and revived her Tboli School of Living Traditions in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato. With this meeting, Boi Todi encouraged cultural workers that funding is not the primary requirement of running an SLT, but rather its the passion and heart of reviving, protecting, and preserving the cultural heritage of a tribe. She said that she replicated the SLT from Bukidnon and made it her inspiration to establish the pioneering SLT in South Cotabato.

She also shared that her SLT was only supported by individuals who did a cultural immersion and later were inspired by the aspirations of the Tboli tribe in safeguarding its cultural heritage. She got sponsors of food for the kids, received donated musical instruments, and materials for beadworks and accessories. They also enhanced the skills of the beadworkers, particularly the children, and made it sustainable through cultural enterprise development.

Another from the Tboli SLT, Boi Todi was the founder of the Helobong Performing Arts from South Cotabato.



