

A wise man (datu) and a brave man (bagani)

—The characteristics of datuship and a local
community among the Bukidnon—

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This paper deals with the characteristics of datuship and a local community among the Bukidnon, an ethnic group residing in north-central Mindanao, the Philippines.

A datu is a man who maintains the peace and order in a local community with his wisdom given by a special spirit called *tumanod*. Full knowledge of their tradition and customary law, and ability to give people security and correct judgement are factors requested to become a datu. His function emerges explicitly when people come into feud or conflict. The arbitration, or *paghusay* is arranged by a datu to settle disputes among people. However, his position lacks any actual political power or judicial authority. The datu, whose words are authorized by the spiritual world or supernatural beings, acts as a mediator to reach mutual agreement.

A bagani is a man who is thought to be possessed by a *talagbusao*, one of the vicious spirits. Because of this spirit he becomes brave and has the strength to kill enemies. He is in charge of the defense on the local community against probable attacks from outside. However, he is also believed to be quite dangerous to local residents whenever he gets furious.

The character of a bagani is ambivalent, because he protects people from outsiders and at the same time creates disorder in the local com-

munity. Therefore, a datu, a representation of wisdom, has to control a bagani. This relationship is symbolized in the *talagbusao* ritual.

A local community cannot be active or persist without something dangerous controlled by some kind of a symbolic order. Both a datu and a bagani as well as a hunter, a blacksmith or a poisonuser perform their roles, inevitable to make a local community continue to exist. It can be concluded that a datu is not on the top of the hierarchical class system but the center of the integration of a locality.