



About the Cover Image

The cover image is a beadwork quilt panel made by internally displaced indigenous peoples from Mindanao, the Southern Philippines, who are collectively known as Lumad in collaboration with activist-researchers, civil society groups, and concerned citizens. They evacuated to Manila from 2019 to 2021 due to ongoing militarization in their ancestral lands. The Lumad ‘bakwit’ (evacuees) and their supporters assert evacuation as a collaborative creative work, a form of creative political action and platform for expressing and advancing their political grievances and democratic actions. These include their demand for basic social services, resistance against the militarisation and paramilitarisation, environmental plunder and encroachment of extractive and expansive industries such as mining, large-scale monocrop plantations, and logging on their ancestral domains, and protests against human rights violations and impunity. The presence of Lumad ‘bakwits’ in the city is a visual political reminder for the state of its failure to address the basic needs and rights of indigenous peoples.

The beadwork illustrates the lived experience of Lumad ‘bakwits’ at the evacuation camp during the “highly militarized”¹ hard lockdown. Divided by a wall that separates the collective organising of the ‘bakwit’ and the daily surveillance of the state, the middle and upper parts of the panel highlight the everyday activities at the evacuation camp: community urban gardening for food and medical purposes, sanitation, rituals, spiritual, social, and interfaith gatherings, and makeshift schools and clinics. The lower part of the panel, outside the camp, shows the everyday surveillance and intelligence activities. The presence of armed police and military and/or civilian intelligence surrounds the camp. Suspected state accomplices like street flower vendors and eatery vendors are portrayed as surveillance informants, and vehicles of state authorities are stationed.

Beadwork is part of the culture and everyday life activities of the Lumad. It serves as customary clothing ornaments, bodily adornments, leisurely pastimes, and sources of livelihood and artistic expression. The transfiguration of beadwork into a political form is their creative act that pushes back against their shrinking democratic spaces. As several Lumad artisans have shared:

“Kung nahuman na ang bakwit ug dili nami makita ug madunggan, mao ang among kabilin... matan-aw sa tibuok kalibutan... ang amua kahimtan ug kasinatian....”

(When evacuation ends and we can no longer be seen and heard, these works will be left... so the whole world will see our conditions and experiences.)

The colourful yet fragile beadwork, meticulously crafted, represents their unwavering position in defending their life and land.

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¹ Olanday, Dan, and Jennifer Rigby. “Inside the world’s longest and strictest coronavirus. lockdown in the Philippines.” *Telegraph*, July 11, 2020. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/inside-worlds-longest-strictest-coronavirus-lockdown-philippines/>, accessed July 28, 2020.