

The Origins of the Toponym “Kidapawan”: A Re-evaluation

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines extant proposed etymologies of the toponym “Kidapawan,” the capital and only city of the province of North Cotabato. Kidapawan, a former town, and historically an Obo Monuvu domain, has seen an influx of migrants from Luzon and Visayas since its establishment as a municipal district under the American colonial government in 1914. Today, it enjoys the linguistic diversity typical of the SOCCSKSARGEN Region. Herein presented are the proposed etymologies, compiled

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from recorded versions with additional ones sourced from one unpublished research work and from tribal informants. These additions either provide novel etymologies, or serve to substantiate the extant recorded etymologies with sources. Of the 13 proposed etymologies, six are about springs, three are about weddings, three are about highlands, two are names, and three are directional and imply the act of going. All but two claim to be sourced from the Obo Monuvu language, with the other two attributed to Maguindanaon. Most intriguing is the Maguindanaon etymology proposed by a Monuvu source. One etymology's background presents the fascinating possibility that Kidapawan as a political entity may have been invented rather than emerging organically. This paper concludes with a recommendation to revisit the history of Kidapawan.

KEYWORDS

Kidapawan, toponym etymology, tribal toponyms, Obo Monuvutoponymy, local government historiography

INTRODUCTION

Kidapawan City is the provincial capital, and to date the only city, of the Cotabato Province (otherwise known as North Cotabato). It is part of the province's second congressional district, and is one of five component cities of the SOCCSKSARGEN Region (Region 12).

With a population of 140,195 as of 2015 according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Kidapawan is the third most populous unit of the province (after Pikit and Midsayap), and the sixth most populous town in Region 12. It has a population density of 390 people per square meter, above the average in the province.

To the city's east is Mount Apo, the tallest peak in the country. Kidapawan is one of the seven local government units that share Mount Apo, and its history, cultures, and industries are all intimately intertwined with the mountain.

Kidapawan's territory has been greatly reduced over the decades. The original area of Kidapawan when it was created a municipality in 1947 extended from the Pulangi river in Kabacan to the west, the Matanao river bordering Davao to the east, Bukidnon province to the north, and Buluan to the south. By 1954 it was described as "bigger than the province of Antique," (Municipal Council Minutes, 19 June 1954) and "as big as Cavite and Rizal provinces" (Municipal Council Minutes, 18 December 1954).

This vast area was partitioned bit by bit, with the municipality of M'lang separating in 1951, Makilala in 1954, Matalam in 1961, Magpet in 1963, and President Roxas in 1967. Following further partitions from these breakaway towns, Kidapawan's historical territory is presently composed of nine towns in the province: Kidapawan itself, M'lang, Makilala, parts of Matalam, Magpet, President Roxas, Tulunan (which was formed from the territory taken from M'lang in 1961), Antipas

(whose territory is taken from Matalam in 1980), and Arakan (with territory taken from Magpet in 1991).

Its place in Region 12, the Philippines' most linguistically diverse region, and in North Cotabato, the second most linguistically diverse province in the country, gives Kidapawan an equally rich linguistic population, with Cebuano spoken as a *lingua franca* by a community that includes Tagalogs, Ilonggos, Ilocanos, and Aklanon.

Kidapawan's City Planning and Development Office, however, puts the tribal population of Kidapawan at 15,258, with 12,823 of that belonging to the Obo Monuvu tribe. It is a consensus among the different Lumad, Moro, and settler sources in the city that Kidapawan was originally an Obo Monuvu domain prior to the colonization by the Americans.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF KIDAPAWAN

There is little record, both documentary and oral, of what Kidapawan looked like prior to the coming of the colonizers. Current tribal sources are vague, often contradictory, and lacking in detail.¹

Precolonial history for Kidapawan is longer than that of the rest of the Philippines, as by all accounts, the Spanish never established a substantial presence in what is today the Cotabato province. The Spanish foothold only extended as far as Pikit (where they built a fort) and Cotabato City (where they established a short-lived colony, Tamontaka), and the upland tribes further north and east

of the Ligawasan Marsh remained free from colonial rule until the Americans came.² As will be seen later in Datu Basinon Ebboy's account, the tribal memory of Spanish presence in Kidapawan only ever involved recollections of proximity.

All tribal and Moro sources indicate that the area that eventually became Kidapawan is the ancestral domain of the Obo Monuvu, although the Greater Kidapawan Area (including the municipalities that were formerly its components) had a diverse tribal composition. According to Datu Camilo Icdang, the Obo Monuvu occupied what is today Kidapawan City and Magpet, the Arumanen Monuvu held Upper Roxas and Matalam, with Lower Roxas and Arakan belonging to the Tinananen Monuvu (arguably a sub-tribe of the Obo). Makilala was Tagabawa while M'lang and Tulunan were B'laan domains with a Maguindanaon presence. Although remaining essentially independent, these domains would historically fall under the greater sphere of influence of the Maguindanaon sultanates. The nearest Maguindanaon settlements were Baguinged in what is today Pikit and Pagalungan, and Malasila in what is today Tulunan and Buluan.³

Two independent tribal sources—Datu Basinon Ebboy of Meohao and Abad Ladday of Indangan—indicated that the political entity that is Kidapawan was a colonial creation which owed its origins to either Datu Ingkal or his son Datu Siawan Ingkal (Abad Ladday identified the datu in question as "Siawan the father of Ingkal," but contemporary documents recorded Siawan Ingkal as saying that his father is named Ingkal, making it the other way around).

According to both sources, Kidapawan was named by Datu Siawan, suggesting that the political entity of Kidapawan did not exist coherently prior to his rule and was created from the independent but interrelated tribal domains that are the precursors of what are today Kidapawan's barrios. Abad Ladday spoke of "Kidapawan being moved from Manongol to its present location," indicating that to the Monuvu the word "Kidapawan" referred not to a specific administrative territory but, speculatively, to what Oliver William Wolters (1982) called a mandala, a political entity that was defined in terms of its center and population rather than its borders and territory, an "office, instead of place" as Abad Ladday put it. Kidapawan, according to this view, did not originally exist, but was created as a political entity by the tribal leadership out of their extant domains to form a unit under the American colonial administration. This point is related to one tribal etymology of Kidapawan's name which will be discussed later.

The mandala analogy is strengthened by a narrative of early colonial American presence by Salomay Iyong in the IBASMADC tribal history. Apo Salomay recounted how Ingkal (whom history calls "Ingkoo, son of Ugok") was "the ruling datu of the plains of Kidapawan," and how when he was given an appointment by the Americans, he called a meeting of tribal leaders, including those from the highlands of the Ilomavis-Balabag area. The move implied that the settlements of these tribal leaders were, in fact, essentially independent from one another (in the Ilomavis-Balabag area, the descendants of the semi-legendary tribal ruler Apao were the most powerful leaders, and at the time of Ingkal's meeting, it was Apao's son Andot who ruled the

highlands), and that the colonial presence allowed Ingkal to place these independent settlements under his mandala and his leadership as well.

The map of Mindanao in the 1913 report of the Governor of the Moro Province⁴ did not contain the name Kidapawan (indicating that the Americans took time reaching so far inland). Instead, the areas that became Kidapawan were divided into what seemed like three or four different entities. To the north where Kidapawan, Magpet, President Roxas, Antipas, and Arakan are presently situated, there were references to "Datu Inkal" and "Datu Unot,"⁵ while to what is today the municipality of Matalam and presumably Kidapawan's border barangays with it, there was "Ward No. 8, Datu Matalam." To the south, where the southern half of Kidapawan, Makilala, M'lang, and Tulunan are located, there was instead "Ward F, Bilanes Tribe."⁶ This lends credence to the versions of Basinon Ebbo and Abad Ladday that, rather than existing organically as a conception of tribal space, Kidapawan was essentially created as an entity under the colonial government, first by Datu Ingkal, then by his son Datu Siawan, from the territories of the different tribal chieftainships that fell under their mandala.

In the minutes of the Municipal Council Session of 15 March 1951, in fact, Datu Siawan Ingkal was quoted as explaining briefly the administrative history of the town: he claimed his father, Datu Ingkal, was "assigned as 'capitan' by a Col. Stevens and as such he continued his control and jurisdiction over the datus west of the Matanao river" in 1908. It is yet to be ascertained who this Col. Stevens

was and what the nature of this appointment had been. It cannot also be determined if the “appointment” involved the creation of a tribal ward under the Moro Province.

The Americans reorganized Mindanao again in 1914 with Act 2408, creating the Department of Mindanao and Sulu and dividing the Moro Province into seven provinces, one of them being Cotabato. In the municipal council session of 15 March 1951 where Siawan Ingkal was quoted, he put the establishment of Kidapawan as a municipal district under Cotabato province in 1914 (Records that provide a more specific date for Kidapawan’s establishment as a municipal district are yet to be obtained).

Both Lino Madrid (1952) and Pedro Sandoval (1957) described the first large-scale influx of settlers from Luzon and Visayas in 1936, when the Davao-Cotabato road was opened, although settlers arrived as early as 1914 to provide basic services. Kidapawan continued existing as a municipal district until the Second World War, when, the Philippine Executive Commission under the Japanese occupation government released Executive Order 43 of 1942, which defined the organization, jurisdiction, powers, and duties of municipal governments and officials. Section 2 of this EO abolished all extant municipal districts, and either elevated them to the status of municipality by merging them with one another or annexed them with the nearest extant municipality. All records indicate that when the war broke out, the Cotabato province had only three extant municipalities, Dulawan, Midsayap, and Cotabato. The rest of the province was composed of municipal districts. It is unknown whether Kidapawan was

elevated to a municipality, or was merged with a nearby municipality, but indications are that it had been elevated to a municipality, as references to Siawan Ingal and other prominent wartime personalities mean that Kidapawan had its own leaders who were designated as "mayors," and not "district presidents."

After the war, Kidapawan reverted to a municipal district, but on 18 August 1947 it was created again into a municipality under the Third Philippine Republic, with territory added to it from the nearby municipal district of Buluan. It was elevated to a municipality by virtue of Executive Order 82 of 1947, and remained a municipality for the next 50 years. It became the capital of North Cotabato during that period, until it was proclaimed as a chartered city on 12 February 1998 by virtue of Republic Act No. 8500 of 1998.

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE WORD "KIDAPAWAN"

The oldest account that mentions Kidapawan is the Ulahingan, the epic of the Arumanen Monuvu of Libungan, North Cotabato, which dates from the precolonial times but was transcribed in 1977 by Elena Maquiso. In Maquiso's recording of the epic, the origins of the Monuvu are traced to the migration of the timuay Tabunaway and his people after the Moros (represented by Sharif Kabungsuwan and Rajah Baguinda) came in the 15th century. Those who went down the Pulangi River were called the Divavaanen, some of whom branched off and became the "Kidapawanen."⁷ Although precolonial in origin, the Ulahingan's mention of

Kidapawan may be much more recent than the epic itself, as works of oral tradition like epics undergo change over the years.

An interesting term that may be a reference to Kidapawan is “Tigdapaya.” It is a sub-tribe of the Bagobo in Fay-Cooper Cole’s seminal 1913 ethnography of the tribes of Davao, living in what he describes as seven settlements “south and south-west of Mount Apo, to the west of Digos.” Excluding Bansalan, which Cole mentions as a settlement of the main tribe (what anthropologists today call the Tagabawa), this location will today be Makilala, Tulunan, and portions of M’lang and Kidapawan, areas that were historically all part of Kidapawan and are, according to local tribal sources, the space of the Obo Monuvu (the identity of these seven settlements, however, are a mystery). Every time he alludes to the Tigdapaya, Cole mentions them with the Obo, but in some cases he refers to “the Obo or the Tigdapaya,” while in others “the Obo and the Tigdapaya,” causing confusion as to whether these tribes are synonymous. Cole (writing as if from firsthand knowledge) makes no mention of where he obtained this information, and no other contemporary or near contemporary document ever uses the term. No tribe today uses the term to refer to themselves.

The oldest extant document (as of this writing) that mentions the word “Kidapawan” is the 1915 report of the Philippine Commission to the U.S. Secretary of War. In the report, Kidapawan is mentioned as one of eleven places in the newly organized Province of Cotabato where the colonial Department of Mindanao and Sulu was able to

establish medical dispensaries. There are no explanations as to the administrative nature of Kidapawan at this point, but as the aforementioned quote by Datu Siawan Ingkal in 1951 indicates, Kidapawan had been organized as a municipal district by 1914 (although it would only be mentioned as such in Act 2711 or the Revised Administrative Code of 1917). There is no mention of the word “Kidapawan” in any Philippine Commission report—or in any document for that matter—prior to the 1915 report.

RECORDED ETYMOLOGIES OF KIDAPAWAN’S NAME

John Everett-Heath⁸ cautions against taking folk etymologies of toponyms seriously. Nevertheless, the proposed origins of place-names not only reveal something about the conceptions of the locals of their place, but also offer clues to the history of the place embedded in the stories. Such is the case with the version of Basinon Ebboy which will be discussed later.

There are six extant etymologies to the toponym “Kidapawan” which have been recorded at different times by the local government of the city and distributed for official usage. One of these six etymologies is almost identical to that recorded (and properly attributed to) by Eleosida (1961).

MADRID’S “KIDA PAWAN” ETYMOLOGY

The oldest of the local government’s etymologies is in Madrid (1952). Madrid claims that Kidapawan is derived

from “kida,” which he contends is the Monuvu word for “to live near,” and “pawan,” meaning “spring in the highland,” making “kida pawan” mean “to live near a spring in the highland.” Madrid did not cite his source for this etymology, but his marriage to a Tagabawa⁹ suggests he may have drawn this etymology from the tribal proximity. Madrid’s etymology was cited by most government documents until 1981, particularly in the annual foundation anniversary souvenir programs, which contained a brief history of Kidapawan. Madrid’s version was mentioned for the last time in the 1984 souvenir program before it was forgotten.

THE “LEGEND OF KIDAPAWAN” MIMEOGRAPH DOCUMENT’S ETYMOLOGIES

There are, however, four recorded versions that are nearly contemporary in writing to Madrid’s etymology but which differ in substance from Madrid’s. These four are in the mimeograph, “Legend of Kidapawan,” which has been available at the Kidapawan City Library for a very long time. The document presents what it claims are three “legends” explaining the origins of the name of Kidapawan.

The first legend attributes the origin of the name of Kidapawan to a spring that rises near a small hill somewhere in Barrio Tagbak, which today is part of the municipality of Magpet. The spring was allegedly the place where the Monuvu gathered to barter and meet other traders. The document does not explain how the name of Kidapawan was derived from the spring.

The second legend, in fact, presents two etymologies. The first of these two etymologies mentions a primeval couple named Kida and Pawan, but the document does not say anything more about them. The second etymology, only tangentially related to the first, contends that Kidapawan was a name simply "improvised" by Christians from the Monuvu word "lapawan," which means "wedding ceremony." According to the document, it was Monuvu belief that any wedding held in Kidapawan would be auspicious for the couple being married. The "lopawan" was actually one of the three forms of traditional Monuvu wedding (the ceremony will be discussed later in a related account).

The third legend is the most fanciful and most well developed among the document's legends, and cites "Kidapawan" as the name of a datu. In this legend, two ruling datus, Datu Mamalu and Datu Tambunawan, were in Kabacan¹⁰ attending a festival held in honor of Sharif Kabunsuan. According to the legend, the two *panditas*, or Muslim priests, presiding over the festivities "promulgated laws and decrees which offended" the two datus. Mamalu and Tambunawan left the gathering with their families and fled southeast until they reached an uninhabited place. Upon settling in this new area, Mamalu's wife gave birth to a son, whom the couple named Datu Kidapawan. Kidapawan, the legend claims, means "go up yonder and stay." Datu Kidapawan is then explained as an ancestor of Datu Siawan Ingkal, who served as municipal district president of Kidapawan, and is commonly considered as Kidapawan's first mayor.

On top of these versions, the mimeograph is also regarded as the oldest document to claim that the word “Kidapawan” is originally “tidapawan” which was simply misheard, although it does not link this to any of the etymologies it presents. Like Madrid’s 1952 etymology, the document’s four etymologies do not cite their sources, and their provenance cannot be traced any further. Some claims in the supposed legends are erroneous—Kidapawan was never a “district” of Pikit, which only became a municipality in 1949, and not in the 18th century as the document alleges. Most sources put Sharif Kabunsuan’s arrival in Mindanao in the 15th century to the 16th century, a full two centuries after this legend’s assertion. The names of Mamalu and Tabunaway are recurring names in Monuvu folklore, although this is one of only two extant records of this version of the legend, and one of only two instances that Tabunaway’s name is recorded as “Tambunawan.”¹¹

Unlike Madrid’s etymology, no other document cites the first three etymologies.

ELEOSIDA’S “DATU KIDAPAWAN” ETYMOLOGY

The legend of Mamalu and Tambunawan, however, appears in near identical form in Gabriela Eleosida’s 1961 ethnological survey of the Monuvu of Kidapawan. Eleosida provides a source for the legend, Datu Kone Ikdang in 1959. It differs from the “Legend of Kidapawan” mimeograph in several ways: Eleosida’s version of the story makes Tambunawan, and not Mamalu (which Eleosida spells as “Mamalo”), the father of Datu Kidapawan; Eleosida phrases the translated meaning of the name Kidapawan as “stay

and go further above"; whereas the mimeograph document identifies "Kabacan" as "then a sitio of Kidapawan," in Eleosida's version it is simply referred to as "Kabakan" (but locates it north of Kidapawan, still putting it at modern-day President Roxas); while the mimeograph identifies the "Muslim Festival" as being held "in honor of Sharif Kabunsuwan," Eleosida names the "Muslim Festival" itself "Sarip Kabungsuwan;" and whereas the mimeograph is not specific, Eleosida's version chronicles in detail the lineage of Siawan Ingkal from Tambunawan. Eleosida's husband, Felipe, served as municipal secretary during the years the "Legend of Kidapawan" mimeograph was estimatedly written, so it is speculated he had at least some involvement in its writing. It is worth noting that the present Datu Icdang, Camilo (Kone's nephew), supports the etymology of Datu Basinon Ebboy, which will be discussed later. He is unaware that any previous Datu Icdang had advocated this etymology.

ROBLES' "TIDA PAWAN" ETYMOLOGY

A much later, although undated, etymology, and today the most cited etymology for Kidapawan's name, first appeared (or at least is known to have first appeared as of this writing) in Melerio Robles' "Sketch of Kidapawan" (part of a Directory of Municipalities of Cotabato Province). The earliest dated document to cite this etymology is the souvenir program for the Kidapawan foundation anniversary of 1981.¹² According to this version, "Kidapawan" comes from the supposedly Monuvu phrase "tida pawan," which is said to mean "highland spring." More specifically, "tida" is said to mean "spring" and "pawan," "highland" (thus

“tida pawan” literally means “spring in the highland”). Like most previous versions, this etymology does not present its sources.

This version is used by the local government in most promotional materials today. All but one of the souvenir programs after 1981 with a history portion cite it, and all leaflets and flyers printed by the local government contain it. In Bergonia (2004) and in the *Kidapawan City Socioeconomic Profile* published by the City Planning and Development Office, this etymology is presented as fact.

THE SETTLERS' URGE TO INVENT FOLKLORE

The highland spring etymologies of Madrid (the “kida pawan” version) and the Robles and 1981 souvenir program (or “tida pawan”) version, ironically the most cited, are problematic because they do not, in fact, make sense in the Obo Monuvu language. This indicates that the etymologies are most likely invented, without properly consulting the tribal culture from which the etymologies supposedly originate.

What Madrid and Robles (or whoever Robles' source was) did is not unusual in Mindanao, although the Kidapawan's case may be the most typical. Mindanao settlers have a long history of displacing indigenous folklore and superimposing it with their own inventions, a major example of what novelist Rogelio Braga termed as “settlerjacking.” This is no truer than in toponymic etymologies. In the Davao region alone, Tiu (2005) recorded two instances of invented etymologies: the “daba-

daba” etymology invented by the Cebuanos to explain the origins of the name Davao, and the legendary *baganis* (or in another version, a local ruler and his daughter) named Pantu and Kan, from whom “Pantukan” supposedly takes its name. Studies to detail them are still to be cited, but North Cotabato too is abundant with such invented etymologies (the most notable of which is the etymology of the Ligawasan Marsh, which is often spelled “Liguasan.” The name of the place is supposedly derived from the Hiligaynon term for “open space,” an etymology which Maguindanaons rightly dispute).

Studies in toponymic etymologies such as the present study, therefore, not only reflect precolonial history in Mindanao, but also end up revealing how Mindanao settlers have, in their cultural emptiness, often historically sought to invent their own folklore with the trappings of tribal or Moro origins, invariably displacing authentic tribal and Moro culture in the process.

TRIBAL ETYMOLOGIES OF “KIDAPAWAN”

In addition to the six recorded etymologies already mentioned, there are four more from tribal sources (two indirectly from settler sources), with some of them serving to provide possible sources to the aforementioned and previously recorded etymologies.

The Obo word for “spring” bearing most similarity to “Kidapawan” is “tiddopawan,” which literally means “place where water flows over,” implying a spring. Broken down morphologically, the word is formed with the root “lopaw”

(changed morphophonemically to “dopaw”) meaning “to flow over,” prefixed with the verb particle “tid-” and suffixed with the locational particle “-an,” “tid-dopaw-an.”

This is precisely the etymology which Retchor Umpan records from the tradition passed down to him by the late tribal elder Salomay Iyong, a known custodian of the tribe’s history. The name refers in particular to a specific spring. Umpan wrote to this author: “An unusual natural phenomenon took place somewhere in Barangay Paco where a strong gush of subterranean water sprouted immensely and flowed over a huge rock. This natural wonder had become a natural landmark in this place. Whenever people would ask someone for direction or whereabouts, they would usually say, ‘Diyon to id tiddopowan’ (To the place where strong gush of water that flowed over the rock took place).” It must be noted that Paco lies in the lowlands of Kidapawan, discrediting the “highland spring” etymology first mentioned by Robles.

This, however, is not the only tribal explanation as to the possible spring-related origins of Kidapawan’s name. Datu Basinon Ebboy, tribal chieftain in Meohao, claims the name is rooted in “tigdapawan,” which he says translates to “spring.” Datu Basinon also has an explanation to the naming of Kidapawan that bears some resemblance to the first legend in the undated mimeograph in the Kidapawan library. Kidapawan, he says, is named after a spring (a “tigdapawan”) in Magpet, not in Tagbak but in Tuwing (now Barangay Uwas, Magpet). His version attributes the city’s name directly to Datu Siawan Ingal, whom Basinon contends named the city after the spring. According to

Basinon, the Obo of Kidapawan fled north to what is today Magpet when the Spanish landed in Davao (he could not specify which of the many landings and from where in the Davao region, but speculatively, this is the battle of Davao in 1848). The displaced Moros from Davao escaped toward the direction of Cotabato and passed by Kidapawan where Datu Ingkal (father of Siawan) welcomed them to stay. In gratitude for the hospitality, the Moros warned Ingkal and his people of the Spanish, and the Monuvu subsequently heeded the warning and fled north. There, Ingkal's son Siawan was born in a house with the aforementioned spring. When the Monuvu returned to their original place and were subsequently incorporated into American colonial administration, Basinon claims that Siawan was appointed mayor and was asked what to identify the territory he was to oversee. Recalling the spring in the house where he was born, Siawan named the place "Tigdapawan," which the Americans and the Christians subsequently misheard as "Kidapawan."

No documentary evidence supports Datu Basinon's claims, but the extant documents contemporary to the time also do not contradict him.

On 4 June 2018, Datu Camilo Icdang, in his capacity as deputy mayor for indigenous peoples, went to Uwas to verify the spring. He was told by the tribal peoples in the area that the spring was, in fact, in Tagbak, a few kilometres away (tying up Basinon's version with the Tagbak version). According to Datu Icdang, the locals recounted that the Tagbak spring fell under the domain of the Manumba family, and in order to obtain permission from them to use

the spring's name for the municipal district, Datu Siawan Ingkal had to pay restitution in the form of gongs and horses.

Providing a source for the “lapawan” etymology in the mimeograph document, the customary tribal law practitioner Bo’i Jenifer Pia Sibug Las cites her great-aunt Apo Meding Ligue Mampo of Mua-an, a late Monuvu elder, in presenting another etymology, one which resembles the second legend in the undated mimeograph. According to Apo Meding, Kidapawan was once called “linapawan” (marrying place) by the Monuvu. It was thus called because what is now known as Kidapawan was the place where the Monuvu from the surrounding areas would come to mingle and meet prospective spouses, and where they would subsequently get married.

The Lopawan, derived from “lapow” (to go over), is actually one of the three forms of Monuvu tribal marriage recorded by Tano Bayawan in 2005, and is the most extravagant. It is “the most expensive among the wedding ceremonies,” writes Bayawan, “because it is possible that the father and the mother of the girl will request valued items that were not given at the marriages of the other daughters.” Bayawan described the Lopawan ritual as follows: first the man attempts to enter the house of the woman’s family but is ritually blocked by a strip of rattan on which clothes are hung, and he has to “overcome” this barrier by offering a horse to cut the rattan and paying for the clothes hung on it. When he enters, a child will be seen hugging the main beam of the house or the stairs, and the groom has to pay a gong to the bride’s family in

order to be admitted to enter. Inside the house, there is a burning torch that the groom has to extinguish with his *saakoy* (headdress) which he will then give in exchange for the torch. There are also two dishes of rice and cooked chicken called “Sovakan,” one large and one small, and the bride’s family will have to pay a horse for the large Sovakan. When the ceremony begins, the presiding datu will press a handful of cooked rice together, and he will have the bride and the groom feed each other. The ceremony concludes with the *Kodpayas*, the traditional giving of advice to the newlyweds by the tribal elders and the parents.

The idea that Kidapawan was a tribal matrimonial hub is supported by Datu Camilo Icdang who claims couples would seek Datu Siawan Ingkal, who was a popular choice for presiding datu over tribal weddings.

A historical fact that lends further compelling credence to the marriage etymology is that many of the tribal families in Kidapawan are partly descended from patriarchs from elsewhere. This is the case with such families as the Pinantaos and the Cayogs of Sudapin who, in a workshop to determine tribal genealogies organized on 12 July 2018 by the city government, traced their origins to Matigsalogs and Atas who married local Obo women. The many tribal families with male ancestors coming from other places suggests that Kidapawan saw a particularly high number of matrilocal marriages, reinforcing the image that the place was a matrimonial hub.

Sometime during his term as Representative of North Cotabato’s Second Legislative District (from 2007 to

2010), Bernardo F. Piñol, Jr. convened a gathering of tribal leaders to determine the origins of Kidapawan's name. The event was left unrecorded (Piñol wrote an account of it in Cebuano and posted it on his official website, which has since been taken down). No copy of this account could be retrieved and information on the occasion could only be obtained through direct correspondence with the politician. Unfortunately, Piñol could not specify the exact date or provide a complete list of names of the tribal leaders who attended (Datu Manuel Asicam and Datu Lamberto Delfin were the only names he could recall). However, the location of the gathering was in the house of Siawan Ingkal in Barangay Manongol, and Siawan's descendants were also present. During the gathering, Piñol recounted that the tribal leaders gave a phrase in Monuvu, "tida pawan tuay salirok," as the origin of Kidapawan's name. The phrase translates to "let us go uphill to the *salirok*" (a spring with a hollowed bamboo inserted into it to create an improvised spout). According to Piñol, the leaders explained this was a common expression among tribal leaders of old when they were referring to the *salirok* which flowed in Siawan's house. The spring was reputedly a source of good drinking water, and the leaders chose Siawan's house as venue for meetings because of it. Piñol mentioned that the property where the spring flowed was sold by Siawan's descendants, and that the spring no longer exists.

This is not the only etymology which this writer obtained with some difficulty from a settler politician. Poet and former municipal secretary Rita Gadi, daughter of mayors Gil and Emma Gadi, quoted the late tribal source

Ambayon (Ambrosio) Mundog with another etymology to Kidapawan’s name. According to Ambayon, Kidapawan was derived from a Monuvu word or phrase (Rita Gadi could not recall) which translates to “the meeting of rivers.” These rivers, Gadi specified, were the many small streams and creeks that flowed down from Mt. Apo. As the etymology was not broken down in translation, it cannot be ascertained how accurate the etymology is vis-à-vis the Monuvu language. The etymology is little known in Kidapawan, although Gadi alluded to it in her published poetry.

MAGUINDANAON ETYMOLOGIES

While the vast majority of proposed etymologies to Kidapawan’s name are, perhaps unsurprisingly, attributed to the Obo Monuvu, two versions present a Maguindanaon origin instead. As evidence and testament as well to how the Obo can be scientifically objective enough to acknowledge an etymology to their domain’s name from the language of another tribe, both etymologies remarkably came from tribal sources, with one directly providing it.

The first, relayed to me by the Monuvu writer, translator, and musician Melchor Bayawan, is attributed to Pikit municipal councilor Benjar Ali Modale, and is the only exonymic etymology obtained. Modale, Bayawan claimed, gave the Maguindanaon word “kinabpawang,” meaning “place one has arrived at” (in Tagalog, “napuntahan”) as the etymology of Kidapawan’s name. This writer made repeated attempts but was not able to contact Modale, and

Bayawan could not give any further details. Therefore, it is unknown where the councilor got this etymology, how the word was proposed to become a toponym, or in what context Modale presented it.

Nevertheless, this writer talked directly (if only briefly) to the source of the other Maguindanaon etymology. The Monuvu Datu Boy Ayog, the indigenous peoples' mandatory representative to the barangay council of Sibawan, presented the word "nakapawan," which he said is a Maguindanaon ("minuslim") question that translates to "where are you going?" The toponym arose, Datu Ayog argued, from the fact that Kidapawan was a precolonial trading hub where different tribes exchanged goods with the Maguindanaon. The question, as in many Philippine languages, was a greeting, and it soon became the name of the place. Datu Ayog attributed this etymology to his ancestors.

The existence of possible Maguindanaon etymologies is fascinating. It not only demonstrates the nature of Kidapawan (or at least its plains) as a multiethnic space, but also highlights the understated importance of Maguindanaon influence in Kidapawan's precolonial history. This is an aspect most local historical accounts often ignore for the sake of tribal-centric orthodoxy.

The different etymologies are listed as follows. The first six are the extant documented etymologies, while the succeeding seven were gathered when the present study was conducted.

ETYMOLOGY	SOURCE LANGUAGE	TRANSLATION/ EXPLANATION	SOURCE(S)
1. <i>Kidapawan</i>	Obo Monuvu (faulty)	“to live near” + “a spring in the highland”	Madrid (1952)
2. (no original presented)	-	A spring in Tagbak, Magpet	“Legend of Kidapawan” mimeograph
3. <i>Kida</i> and <i>Pawan</i>	-	A Primeval couple	“Legend of Kidapawan” mimeograph
4. <i>Lapawan</i>	Obo Monuvu	“Wedding ceremony”	“Legend of Kidapawan” mimeograph
5. (<i>Datu</i>) <i>Kidapawan</i>	Obo Monuvu	A name, meaning “to go yonder and stay” or “stay and go further above”	“Legend of Kidapawan” mimeograph Eleosida (1961)
6. <i>Tida pawan</i>	Obo Monuvu (faulty)	“spring” + “highland”	Robles, 1981 Souvenir Program
7. <i>Tiddopawan</i>	Obo Monuvu	“spring,” literally “to flow over something” (referring to a spring in Barangay Paco)	Salomay Iyong (as quoted by Retchor Umpan)

ETYMOLOGY	SOURCE LANGUAGE	TRANSLATION/ EXPLANATION	SOURCE(S)
8. <i>Tigdapawan</i>	Obo Monuvu	“spring” (in reference to a spring in Tagbak, Magpet)	Datu Basinon Ebboy
9. <i>Linapawan</i>	Obo Monuvu	“Marrying place”	Meding Ligue Mampo (as quoted by Jenifer Pia Sibug Las)
10. <i>Tida pawan tuay salirok</i>	Obo Monuvu	“let us go uphill to the spring spout,” referring to a spring in the property of Datu Siawan Ingkal in Barangay Manongol	As quoted by Bernardo Piñol, Jr., 2018
11. (not provided)	Obo Monuvu	“The meeting or rivers”	Ambayon Mundog (as quoted by Rita Gadi)
12. <i>Nakapawan</i>	Maguindanaon	“Where are you going?”	Datu Boy Ayog
13. <i>Kinabpawang</i>	Maguindanaon	“place arrived at”	Pikit Councilor Benjar Ali Modale

Three of the four etymologies presented in the mimeograph document have been independently sourced. Additionally, the Robles version may be corrected with the Salomay Iyong version. Only the mimeograph document's Primordial Couple version and Madrid's Kida Pawan version remain unsourced.

CONCLUSIONS

Of the 13 proposed etymologies presented, six are about springs, three are about weddings, three are about highlands, two are names, and three are directional and imply the act of going.

Four of the spring-related etymologies present different individual springs as the town's namesake: a spring in Tagbak, Magpet (as proposed by both the mimeograph document and by Datu Basinon Ebboy) which was a center of precolonial commerce; a now-long-gone spring in Barangay Paco (as proposed by Apo Salomay Iyong), which served as a local landmark; and a no longer existing spring in the property of Datu Siawan Ingkal in Barangay Manongol (as proposed by the gathering of tribal elders which former Congressman Bernardo Piñol, Jr. organized). All but two of the etymologies claim to be sourced from the Obo Monuvu language, with the other two being attributed to Maguindanaon. Most intriguing is Datu Boy Ayog's etymology, which is a Maguindanaon etymology proposed by a Monuvu source. All extant documentary etymologies claim to be sourced from Obo Monuvu, but because most of them do not cite their tribal sources, it is difficult to ascertain their authenticity.

Both endonymic (from the Monuvu) and exonymic (from the Maguindanaon) etymologies were obtained but the latter's possible source had not been exhausted. More proposed etymologies need to be gathered from the Maguindanaon, and none are gathered from other adjacent tribes (the Tagabawa to the west, the Matigsalug to the north, the Livunganen tribes to the east, and the B'laan to the south, as well from other Obo sub-tribes in the Greater Kidapawan Area like the Tinananen in Arakan and the Obo in Magpet).

All but three of the etymologies involve an alteration of the original root word; in the case of the spring etymologies, an alteration of the initial "t" into "k," and in the case of the two wedding etymologies, an alteration from "l" to "k" and "n" to "d." The earliest extant documents containing the word "Kidapawan" mention it in its present form, and the proposed original roots do not appear in any archival documents in a context pertaining to the city. The closest historical reference anywhere near the Kidapawan area that uses a term similar to any of the proposed etymologies is Faye Cooper-Cole's reference to a Bagobo sub-tribe living in the Kidapawan area named "Tigdapaya," although the relationship of this alleged tribe to the place and its name remains unclear. Assumably, if etymologies that proposed a mishearing are true, the alteration from the original form to "Kidapawan" was not recorded. All these etymologies that postulate an altered original attribute the alteration to mishearing by the settlers or the colonial authorities.

Datu Basinon Ebbo's etymology (independently confirmed by Abad Ladday) proves to be the most historically

relevant. It indicates that the name “Kidapawan” may not have emerged naturally, but was created deliberately by Datu Ingkal (one of the two in Kidapawan history) to name the polity he formed out of the independent chieftainships that fell under his influence. This suggests a seamless transition from a precolonial mandala-style realm to the creation of a colonial administrative territory. More studies are required to learn the effects of the American colonial policy of instituting tribal wards on the preservation and alteration of precolonial mandalas.

Of the extant documentary sources, the undated mimeograph with the four etymologies presents the most intriguing possibilities. There are alternative versions to two of these four etymologies, but the legend of the couple Kida and Pawan remains unsourced (although as of this writing, a possible source is being pursued as a lead). The case of Datu Basinon’s “tigdapawan” version, in particular, proved to be identical to the spring in the Tagbak version of the mimeograph following Datu Camilo Icdang’s visit to Uwas in June 2018. The legend of Datu Kidapawan was at first initially unattributed, but the discovery of Eleosida’s 1961 study, which showed a similar story, attributes it to Datu Cone Icdang in 1959. This legend in particular is intriguing as it adds to the body of known versions of the Tabunaway-Mamalu legend, the only version where one of the brothers’ names is spelled “Tambunawan.” The versions of the legend as they appear in Kidapawan need to be recorded to add to the compendium of extant versions.

As the Robles (or the “tida pawan”) version of Kidapawan’s etymology is the most cited in spite of its

problematic nature vis-à-vis the Obo Monuvu language, there is a need for the city government and the local educational institutions to rewrite extant material to reflect a more authentic and more varied etymology of the city's name.

NOTES

- 1 A member of the tribe, Retchor Umpan, has expressed interest in writing a comprehensive history of the tribe, building on the IBASMADC history (that he also helped write), which only covered the tribe in the Ilomavis and Balabag area. This researcher awaits Mr. Umpan's output before the former writes his full account of Kidapawan's precolonial history; what is presented here is only based on the data this researcher has gathered.
- 2 The long and turbulent history of failed Spanish attempts to wrestle control over the area between the Pulangi River and Mt. Apo from the Buayan and Maguindanao sultanates are well documented in the works of historians like Najib Seleebby, Cesar Majul, and Reynaldo Iletto.
- 3 The proximity of Baguinged and Malasila, as well as Macario Tiu's work linking the Moro royal houses in Davao to Dulawan, indicate that the Greater Kidapawan Area in particular fell under the sphere of influence of the Sultanate of Buayan. This sultanate was never subdued by the Spaniards, and even the Americans had difficulty subduing its last Sultan, Anwaruddin Utto.
- 4 John Pershing. *Annual Report of the Governor of the Moro Province 1913* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), 101.
- 5 Author has yet to determine who this Datu Unot was.
- 6 This is consistent with Datu Camilo Icdang's situating of Tulunan as a B'laan area.

- 7 This origin of the Monuvu in Kidapawan is disputed by Datu Camilo Icdang during an interview on 7 November 2017.
- 8 As quoted in Thu-Huong Ha, “Nearly every country on earth is named after one of four things,” *Quartz*, 15 October 2017, <https://qz.com/1070266/the-name-of-a-country-can-only-really-mean-one-of-four-things/>
- 9 As claimed by his nephew, Bonifacio Madrid during an interview in 2019.
- 10 The text describes Kabacan as “then a sitio of Kidapawan.” In fact, there were historically two places in North Cotabato called Kabacan: the present day Municipality of Kabacan which was first a tribal ward of the American Moro Province in 1906 and later a municipal district, and the present-day poblacion of the municipality of President Roxas. It was the latter that was once part of Kidapawan, but it is the former that has a more substantial Moro history and today has a sizeable Moro population.
- 11 For a catalogue of the different versions of the Mamalu-Tabunaway legend, see B. R. Rodil, *A Story of Mindanao and Sulu in Question and Answer*. Davao City: Mincode, 2003. Rodil’s compendium can be further added along with versions from the Monuvu of Kidapawan.
- 12 Confusingly, Madrid’s 1952 etymology was cited in the 1984 souvenir program, but thereafter, it is the Robles etymology which is cited.

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