



# CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

*For the Defense of the Ancestral Domain and for Self Determination*

15 April 2013

## CPA Bares Cordillera Day 2013 Activities

The Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) is pleased to announce the celebration of Cordillera Day 2013 or the 29<sup>th</sup> Cordillera Day, which will take place from April 23 to 26 in all Cordillera provinces of Abra (Bucay-April 25), Apayao (Conner-April 23), Benguet (Itogon-April 25 to 26), Ifugao (Lagawe-April 24), Mountain Province (Bontoc-April 24), Kalinga (Tabuk-April 24) and Baguio City (April 24).

Like the decentralised celebrations last April 2012, we hope to gather 7,000 delegates in all the celebrations, from the grassroots communities, other Philippine regions and overseas.

This year's celebration is guided by the central theme "Assert our Right to Self Determination and the Politics of Change", in lieu of the May 2013 national and local elections where urgent issues of the Cordillera indigenous peoples like development aggression, militarization, human rights violations and the continuing economic crisis, must be given redress. These are the issues and challenges of the Cordillera Day 2013 celebrations, which also serves as venues for collective expression of Cordillera indigenous peoples' electoral agenda.

The celebrations include cultural presentations and messages of solidarity and community workshops on the above issues. We are expecting a total of at least 100 international and national delegates to participate in all the celebrations.

CPA has been organising Cordillera Day since 1985, the first celebration taking place in Sadanga, Mountain Province.

### **A Background on Cordillera Day**

It was in April 24, 1980 when soldiers belonging to the Philippine Army's 4th Infantry Division, under Lt. Leodegario Adalem, fired at two houses in the village of Bugnay, Tinglayan, Kalinga. The attack meant to kill two prominent leaders of the Kalinga and Bontok peoples who opposed the World Bank-funded Chico River Basin Hydroelectric Dam Project of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. These were Ama Macliing Dulag and Pedro Dungoc. Macliing Dulag, a respected *pangat* (tribal chieftain) of the Butbut tribe, died from multiple gunshots while Pedro Dungoc survived. Pedro Dungoc later joined the New Peoples Army (NPA) and died a red fighter. But his cowardly act of military terrorism did not cow the Bontoc and Kalinga peoples into submission for the construction of the dams. Instead, the Macliing assassination strengthened the determination of the Kalinga and Bontok tribes to further unite for the defense of their collective rights over their land and resources and against a common enemy – the Marcos dictatorship and the world-bank funded Chico dams. State fascism since the 1970s was a major factor in firming up the commitment of the Chico communities in the anti-Chico dam struggle. This later broadened into a mass movement of the Cordillera peoples and advocates into the struggle for the defense of ancestral land and for genuine regional autonomy. From 1981 to 1984, the commemoration of the death of Macliing Dulag was called Macliing Memorial. With the broadening of the Cordillera mass movement encompassing all the provinces of the Cordillera, the commemoration evolved as Cordillera Day in 1985 to symbolize the widening unity and solidarity among the different indigenous peoples of the Cordillera, and with advocate and support groups at the regional,

national and international levels. The first celebration of Cordillera Day was held in Sadanga, Mountain Province in 1985. It was in June 1984 that the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) was founded and took the lead in the celebration of Cordillera Day.

Since then, Cordillera Day was held all over the Cordillera region with particular focus per celebration, in consideration to burning regional issues, major national and international developments and urgent issues of the host community. Past celebrations gathered as many as 4,000 to 6,000 individuals. It has become the biggest annual political solidarity gathering of indigenous peoples in the Cordillera with friends and advocates. The general programme for the two-day celebration includes workshops on major issues affecting indigenous peoples, presentations on the regional and national situation and challenges; on experiences and lessons from struggles in defense of indigenous peoples rights and human rights and various cultural presentations presenting the issues of communities and sectors; including the tribute to Cordillera martyrs, inspiring speeches, and community exchanges and visits especially got the national and international delegates. As a venue for cultural exchange, the two-day celebration includes community dancing, playing of gongs and community chanting. The festive atmosphere of each celebration remains political but colorful and inspiring.

As a political solidarity event, several host communities were intimidated and harassed by the military, police and some government officials. But these circumstances did not discourage the communities to prepare and host Cordillera Day. Apart from the growing participation of international delegates to the Cordillera Day celebrations in the Cordillera homeland, the celebration of Cordillera Day has also expanded overseas, organized by Cordillera migrants together with international solidarity partners and advocates of Cordillera struggles and indigenous peoples' rights. For several years already, Cordillera Day has been celebrated in Hongkong, Belgium, Macau, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan and Canada.

More than just a gathering, Cordillera Day is a political statement on present realities by the militant Cordillera peoples' movement. It carries with it the historical advances of the mass movement for self determination and national democracy. It is the affirmation of principles and struggles for defense of the ancestral domain and for self determination and pursues what the Cordillera martyrs and heroes have fought for. The solidarity and camaraderie forged during celebrations serve to enhance the particularity of the Cordillera peoples struggle and to inspire others. At the same time, it strengthens the unity of the Cordillera peoples with other indigenous peoples and sectors across the region, and at the national and international levels. The struggle for the peoples' aspirations for social justice, genuine development and peace, freedom and democracy are still far from over. Macliing Dulag and all our martyrs and heroes did not die in vain. Cordillera Day and our continuing campaigns and struggles shall be raised to a higher ground until our aspirations become a reality. #

Reference:

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CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

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