The Mamanwa

In line with Davao's Kadayawan Festival celebration, I wish to share this short details about the lives of our indigenous brothers and sisters or the Lumads in one area in Mindanao.

The Mamanwa is a Negrito tribe often grouped together with the Lumad. They believe in a collection of spirits, which are governed by the supreme deity Magbabaya. The tribe produce excellent winnowing baskets, rattan hammocks, and other household containers. If the Manobos are considered as the first Cantilan gnos, the Mamanwas could also lay claim to the same title. The big difference, however, between the two cultural minorities is that the Mamanwas are lesser in number and more scattered and nomadic than the Manobos. The Mamanwas are a different breed of people in their looks and physical features compared to the lowlanders and the upland living Manobos. Presently, there are still few Mamanwas who, on fiesta days, roam Cantilan streets and its barangays. In modern Cantilan, they are a vanishing tribe who could be traced only in the deep and distant mountains like the Mandajas who inter-marry with the Manobos.

Unlike the Manobos, the Mamanwas did not adopt the lowlanders’ way of living even if they were already Christianized. They had been rooted for centuries in the indigenous culture which is very difficult to understand. The speak their own dialect which noticeably has some phonetic similarities with that of Cantilan’s lowlanders. Unlike the Manobos and Mandayas, they do not go to schools to learn either Pilipino or English. Some old Mamanwas of today tell of their ancestors’ early habitats along river mouths, seashores, islets and islands. They cannot, however, pinpoint particular areas as their permanent settlements for they did not have any. They transfer from place to place and travel as far as their minds could imagine and their feet could carry them. The transfers usually happen in case of deaths for it was the old customs to pack up and leave the place when death occurs even if their plants are ready for harvest. (from wikipedia.com)

*** I wish we could do more to help the indigenous people in our community even in our own little ways. Malipayong Kadayawan Festival sa Dabaw!:)