

**Rethinking Indigenous Place:
Igorot Identity and Locality in the Philippines**

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Abstract

Spanish and American colonisers ascribed the identity ‘Igorot’ to the peoples of the northern Philippine mountains, positioning them in the ‘tribal slot’ (Li 2000, after Trouillot 1991), somewhere between ordinary Philippine peasants and ‘backward’ primitives. From this marginal position, contemporary Igorot communities have been comparatively successful in formalising their entitlements to land and resources in their dealings with the Philippine state. This success depends on a discourse tying indigenous or ‘tribal’ culture to particular places. Colonial and, now, local anthropology has been recruited to this process through the mapping of community boundaries. This has allowed groups to secure official status as ‘cultural communities’ and gain legal recognition of their ancestral domains.

Ironically, even as ancestral domains are recognised, the municipalities that hold such domains have ceased to be bounded containers for Igorot localities, if they ever were. Participation in global indigenous networks, circular migration, and ongoing relations with emigrants overseas blur the spatial, temporal, and social boundaries of Igorot communities. Transnational flows of people, information, and value are recruited to support the essentialised versions of indigenous identity necessary for negotiations with the state. Here, I show how the specific history of the Igorot ‘tribal slot’ enables communities to perform essentialised indigeneity and simultaneously enact highly translocal modes of cultural reproduction.¹

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Introduction

Discussion of globalisation usually emphasises flux, change and the dissolution of boundaries and borders. Anna Tsing (1999) asks us to think about the processes and experiences defining both the boundaries of regions and the compositions of ‘local’ communities, arguing there is now a plurality of globalisations that should be approached through micro-studies of scale-making – the production of ‘locals’ and ‘regions’ from a global field. Tsing urges us to abandon uncritical oppositions between global forces and local places and instead explore different local histories and meanings of globalisation. This article engages Tsing by describing how local forces make bounded but global places for indigenous Filipinos. In doing so, it shows how the scale-making exercises involved in the production of ‘local’ and ‘regional’ identities have emerged from global colonialisms. It presents case material drawn from ethnographic and historical research on the Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR), an administrative division that occupies the mountain spine of the archipelago’s most northern main island, Luzon. This region groups together five provinces, largely comprising traditional lands of groups designated as ‘tribes’ or ‘cultural communities’ by the Philippine government (see Figure 1 Map of Northern Philippine Provinces).

[INSERT MAP HERE]

Naming these indigenous groups as ‘tribal’ invokes imaginations of bounded, place-based lives, but many of these communities exhibit a high degree of what Appadurai (1995) calls translocality – a situation where the relations of power that produce locality as a structure of feeling are fundamentally imbricated in extra-local, often transnational relations. Such relations are typically created through ongoing interactions between locally-based and

circulating populations.² On the Cordillera, intimate connections with emigrants, circular migrants, local members of international religious orders, and local participation in global and national NGOs all recreate localities into ‘virtual’ villages – communities where a sense of place emerges just as much from on-going text message, telephone and e-mail contact with absent members as it does from regular face-to-face interactions among ‘locals’.

The many emigrants from the Cordillera region have been among the key actors in producing translocality. Emigrants around the world community have organized themselves into an Igorot Global Organization (IGO), an institution that now includes representatives from all the ethnic groups of the CAR under the regional ethnic identity ‘Igorot.’ The IGO sponsors a moderated internet forum, igorots@onelist.com, where people living on the CAR and around the world debate ‘local’ Cordillera issues. The IGO internet forum provides a centralised - if not necessarily always representative - window on emigrant experiences and connections to ‘home’. Working between data gathered as a member of this internet forum (1997- 2002), from interviews and participant observation in Cordillera communities in Ifugao, Mountain Province, and Baguio City (1992 – 2005), and from secondary sources, this paper unpacks the history and practice of Igorot identity as it relates to locality. The resulting analysis shows how particular local practices of globalisation can reinforce existing boundaries and generate new ones as people mobilize translocal economic and social networks to defend indigenous customs and resources against the State.

² In the cases discussed below, these populations are not distinct. Instead, they are members of the same community with significant numbers of individuals being both ‘locals’ - farmers and workers – and ‘circulating’ migrants over their life course.

Igorot - constituting the ‘tribal slot’

People on the Cordillera often live in a number of locations and speak several languages over a lifetime, creating a region through dynamic forms of sociality. Their locally-practiced identities can change with location and local politics. Much as Correy (this volume) shows for Indigenous Australia, individuals come to understand themselves and to act through a series of multiple, crosscutting relationships that change and shift across time and space, creating a non-Euclidean social space (Sullivan, this volume). Igorot identity - supposedly grounded in local places of the region – is actually contingent, context-based, and unstable. Of course, attempts to describe identity as a dynamic field may conflict with and could actually undermine the more concrete and strategic forms of identity that people called or calling themselves Igorots deploy in claiming land rights. However, as Correy demonstrates, any assertions of strategic identity must always include some attempt to describe local relationships. As in Australia, the categories of identity offered to indigenous peoples by colonial history, have taken on a performative quality. In the Philippines, Igorots have become ‘those people who must accept this name’ in order to occupy their traditional lands.

Igorot identity emerges from an historical ‘tribal slot’ (Li 2000: 6, after Trouillot 1991) – a simplified framing of identity that depends on particular (albeit contested) regimes of representation and contestation.³ The tribal slot is situated within particular forms of geographical and historical representation that create what Sider (this volume) calls ‘a structure of power’ that continually attempts to produce the very model of tribal society it imagines pre-exists its exercise. The Philippine case thus another history where, as Sider describes, the “walls came tumbling up”. However, the Philippines - unlike the United States or Australia - was never a settler society. The ancestors of people now called *the* Igorots were,

³ Much as Sider (this volume) argues for the emergence of *the* Cherokee and other tribes on the North American frontier.

in fact, just as indigenous to the archipelago as the ancestors of their ‘mainstream’ lowland Filipino neighbours. It is the specific history and development of the tribal slot that produced contemporary understandings of apparent ‘racial’ difference.

‘Igorot’ is by scholars to identify virtually all peoples living on Luzon’s Cordillera Central (Scott 1974, 1994). The word entered the Spanish language during the colonisation of the northwestern coast of Luzon in the sixteenth century. Then, *Ygolot* referred to the peoples of the uncolonized uplands immediately beyond the Ilocos region (Afable 1995; Scott 1994). The name was one of several applied to upland groups that emerged from a process of colonial occupation begun when Ferdinand Magellan took possession of the archipelago for the Spanish Crown in 1521. As Spanish colonial troops and administrators increased their sphere of effective control across the islands, they encountered a wide variety of Malayo-Polynesian languages and variations on largely Malay models of social organization and cosmology.⁴ The Spanish called all native Filipinos *indios* – the same term they applied to natives in their American colonies. The salient feature of the archipelago’s *indio* populations was religious confession, rather than location or culture. While the *indios* of the northern and central islands were animists, those living on the southern island of Mindanao had converted to Islam several hundred years before Spanish colonization. These groups the Spanish called *moros* - meaning Moors – their term for the north-African Muslims who had earlier occupied much of the Iberian Peninsula. The Spanish endeavoured to convert the non-Muslim *indios* – known as *infieles* (infidels) - to Christianity. To this end, they supported those *indios* who were Christian converts in resisting the incursions of expanding Muslim or animist groups. When it came to documenting local distinctions among the *infiele* groups, the Spanish administration generally borrowed from the terms applied to them by Christian converts.

⁴ The popular summary of this diversity is now ‘7,000 islands and 700 languages.’

Across the archipelago, coastal and riverine groups were first to come ‘under the bells’ of the Spanish missions. While, at colonisation, coastal and riverine peoples were as ‘native’ and ‘tribal’ as the upland groups who would resist Spanish control for over three centuries (Scott 1994), distinctions soon appeared. Lowland religious conversion and intimacy with colonial administrators mean that, today, most Filipinos see only the peoples of the uplands such as *the Igorots* as ‘tribal’ or indigenous.

Whether applied by lowlanders or used as a self-identifier, Igorot signals a geographical displacement – a standing away from a place of origin, specified in most general terms. The word combines *i* – the prefix denoting ‘people of’ – with *golot*, a word for mountain or upland.⁵ People of the Ilocos lowlands used the term to describe uplanders coming down to trade. This history means that Igorot really only applies outside one’s home region. An explanation posted to the *igorots.com* mailing list by an Igorot currently residing in the United States makes this clear:

it doesn't mean much to say you are an igorot when you are still in the golod. It means something when you're somewhere else and the people name you based on where you came from. (The same is true in a situation like this: You are from Banaue. So while you are in Banaue, you are just another person. But when you go somewhere else, then the name i-Banaue gains meaning.) In short, the answer is ‘igorot’ when the question is, ‘*ay into nan nagapuum?*’ [where did you come from? Ilokano] Usually, the person who asks such a question is a non-*kailian* [village-mate]. (Posted to igorots@onelist.com by TF)

That people debate Igorot identity on an internet forum points to both its contested meaning and importance in their lives. Struggles for local autonomy on the Cordillera now depend on the popularly accepted meanings and histories of this identity.

⁵ *Golot* occurs throughout the Philippine islands and is variously rendered as *gulut*, *gurut*, and *golod*. ‘Gurut’ became the American English ‘gook’ during the Spanish-American war and was then used by American service men to describe Vietnamese during the Vietnam War seventy years later.

As illustrated in this quote, ethnic names are involved in making scale within the region. Locality-based identities - like *i-Banaue* - attach individuals to particular towns or *barangays* (villages), but can sometimes denote wider area-based groups, reflecting shared language and histories of migration (McKay 2005). These identities usually prevail at the municipal and provincial levels. The term ‘Igorot’, however, defines a broader, regional ‘ethnic group,’ composed of disparate sub-groups referred to by the English term ‘tribes.’ Such ‘tribes’ are usually identified by their administrative unit - often province or municipality - rather than self-appellation or language. For instance, in the province of Ifugao, an *i-Banaue* - a person from Banaue municipality - might be a speaker of *Tuwali* (central) Ifugao dialect or a speaker of *Adyangan* (*i-Adyang*) dialect. Within Ifugao province they would be identified as being of a *Tuwali* or *Adyangan* ‘tribe,’ often according to the name of the *barangay* (village) or town from which their mother’s or father’s family originates and in which they were raised.⁶ When visiting Baguio City, the regional urban centre of the Cordillera, they would likely call themselves ‘an Ifugao’ rather than ‘an Igorot.’ Scholars, however, would call them an Igorot of the Ifugao ‘tribe.’

Across the CAR, identification as Igorot is not always accepted. Peoples in the provinces of Ifugao, Kalinga, and Apayao generally reject Igorot identity. This rejection of Igorot identity reflects the particularities of colonial history. In 1620, the Spaniards declared war on the *Ygorotes* of what is now the province of Benguet in an attempt to take their gold mines (Scott 1974: 26). The Spanish clergy deliberated the morality of such a war, considering the “high improbability of God’s having hidden all that gold in the mountains for the exclusive use of a horde of naked savages” (Scott 1974: 26–30). In armed incursions into localities across the

⁶ If they are the product of an Adyangan-Tuwali marriage, their identity is usually that of the majority ethnic group in their particular home *barangay*. In practice, people activate such identities-by-descent selectively to enhance arguments for entitlement to land and resources (cf. Correy, this volume).

Cordillera, including those without goldmines, the Spanish colonial efforts began to produce the kind of group they had – falsely – imagined. While the Spanish largely failed to subdue scattered local populations by force of arms, they did succeed in removing some people to lowland missions and haciendas - called *reducciones*⁷ - and starting short-lived missions in several upland localities. The more accessible populations of the foothills – now the provinces of Ifugao, Kalinga, and Apayao – experienced comparatively more intrusive, regular, and violent attempts to bring them under Spanish control as well as regular punitive raids for various ‘Igorot’ incursions into Spanish-controlled areas. Thus, though the Spanish were intent on finding the gold of the Kankaney and Ibaloi ‘Igorots’ on the heights, the populations of the foothills bore the brunt of colonial displacements.

In the Ifugao case, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw Spanish mission settlements spread across the plains of Central and Northern Luzon and began to penetrate the foothills. In response, people retreated to the heights. Here, they had to negotiate for access to limited water and arable land with previous waves of migrants. When the Spanish did succeed in bringing people down from the mountains to the *reducciones*, these people would often run away and return to the uplands as *remontados*.⁸ By the nineteenth century, many upland villages had exceeded the carrying capacity of their resource base. Ifugao groups were famous for fighting amongst themselves, and head-taking typically characterized these conflicts.⁹ ‘Tribal wars’ often erupted between villages over the allocation of valuable water resources for irrigated rice fields (see Prill-Brett 1986). Spanish colonialism had cut many of these localities off from their lowland relatives, trading partners and their longstanding markets. In the lowlands, they had sold or bartered deerskins, forest products, weaving, and baskets often

⁷ *Reduccion* is a cognate for the English term reduction. The word signified settlements made up of people who had been ‘brought down’ from the mountains.

⁸ *Remontado* identified ‘those who went back up’ or ‘re-mounted’.

⁹ Head-taking in warfare was a feature of most Malay-speaking groups in island Southeast Asia.

to Chinese traders, in return for essential commodities such as salt, cotton and iron pots and utensils. Perhaps most crucially colonialism cut these localities off from the very means of production on which their secure subsistence depended – land on which their populations could expand. Particularly for Ifugao groups from the foothills who fled their traditional lands in response to Spanish punitive raids, late Spanish era population movements continue to underpin contemporary regional politics (McKay 2005).

Of Igorots and Indians

Their ecclesiastical concerns lead the Spanish to record local populations within the same administrative unit as Christian converts and non-Christians (*infieles*), regardless of whether or not they shared a common language or way of life (Keesing 1962). When the Americans replaced Spain as the colonial power after the Spanish-American War of 1898, American administrators adopted the Spanish description of as ‘Igorots’ as ‘non-Christian’ and the boundaries the Spaniards had drawn between groups and then added their own idea of ‘tribes.’ Although there were by then some groups of Christian converts among them, the Spanish regime had never extended any sustained or effective form of colonial administration over the *Ygorotes*. This made Spanish information particularly inaccurate and led the American administration to confirm ‘tribes’ with little or no relation to local realities.

American administration of the Cordillera began in a largely peaceful manner, as compared to the brutal warfare that took place in the rest of the archipelago (Fry 1982; Jenista 1987). The Americans never engaged in pitched battles, but relied on displays of physical force combined with more subtle forms of symbolic violence. Under American administration, ‘Igorot’ came to denote identities drawn from geographies and histories of resistance to colonial *reduccion* and religious conversion, rather than reflecting languages, cultures, political organisation or

livelihoods strategies of peoples living on the Cordillera. This particular hybridization of religious confession and ‘tribe’ in the Philippine ‘tribal slot’ did have some benefits for Igorot communities. By borrowing the religious definitions of the Spanish, the Americans reiterated the idea that Igorots possessed a perfectibility realizable through religion and education. They established English-speaking state schools and allowed Protestant missionaries access to the Cordillera. Within two or three decades of American administration, administrators could represent *the* Igorots as an English-speaking people who were (at least nominally) Christian.¹⁰ This representation helped to insulate the Cordillera from the space of colonial economic calculation and prevented the development of a wide disparity between social classes. Instead of introducing large-scale industry and plantation agriculture, as they did elsewhere, the Americans developed a paternalistic attitude towards the picturesque ‘tribes’ of the Cordillera. When comparing themselves to lowland Filipinos and Native Americans, my Igorot respondents assessed that they were largely able to retain their lands and cultural practices, while, at the same time, acquiring economic and political advantages offered them by learning English and becoming Christian. But, while being represented as Christian has been largely helpful in pursuing autonomy, being represented as backward and primitive ‘tribes’ has not. ‘Tribe’ was a colonial category specifically intended to tie indigenous peoples to place. The category was developed under American law to distinguish settled Native Americans from roving bands of outlaws. ‘Tribe’ distinguished as legitimate indigenous groups who could demonstrate their attachment to a particular place and could provide identifiable community leaders (Francis, 1992).¹¹ In the Philippines, by mapping the natives through similar forms of ‘tribal’ organisation, administrators created new patterns for locality that required permanent

¹⁰ In some cases accepting Spanish categories as ‘tribal’ led to contradictions. One was the distinction between ‘Christian Gaddangs’ and ‘Pagan Gaddangs’ – the latter group had, by the middle of the American era, significant numbers of Christian converts (see Keesing 1962 and Scott 1994).

¹¹ Ironically, colonialism, particularly in the settler stage that swept across the American Great Plains, is itself inherent nomadic.

settlements and appointed leaders. On the Cordillera, this formulation depended on the notion that there was a discrete, bounded, culturally and socially distinct group - *the Igorots* (cf. Sider, this volume). In fact, the 'tribal' formulation suited the nucleated village structures of the wet-rice cultivating Kankaney and Ibaloi groups much better than it did the more flexible, non-nucleated villages of shifting cultivators in Ifugao, Kalinga, and Apayao.

Unlike the American frontier, the Cordillera was never settled; however, it did share a common cadre of colonial administrators. Paulet (1995) argues that the impetus for an administrative mapping of 'tribal' cultures onto place in the Philippines stemmed from the apparent 'disappearance' of North American Indian culture from the American Great Plains. Many of the early American administrators on the Cordillera had served on the Plains. Entries from their diaries suggest that guilt over the disastrous history of Indian-government relations led them to approach Igorots through their own nostalgic ideas of Native American 'tribal' cultures (Paulet 1995). Addressing the American public, these administrators described their dealings with Igorots as an opportunity for America to redeem itself after the Indian Wars. This history informed the application of the new scientific techniques of classification and ethnological study, which the administration intended would produce policies for the benign administration of the Philippines' tribes' affairs (Jenista 1987: 78). Colonial guilt and the opportunity to redeem America by treating the 'Indians' of the Philippines differently explains the importance administrators attached to displaying Igorots for public education. Igorot 'tribes' came to public attention in America through pictorial essays in the pages of *National Geographic* magazine.¹²

¹² Dean C. 'Non-Christian' Worcester – he picked up the nickname because of his advocacy for the Igorots - published pictorial articles based on his administrative experiences and American ethnological surveys in 1911, 1912, and 1913.

As with the Spanish conquest of the lowlands, American mappings of ethnicity and locality as ‘tribal’ inevitably favoured particular local centres, reflecting the knowledges and prejudices of elites who had better access to American administrators and scholars. The research of American-era anthropologists, administrators, and travellers not only influenced colonial policy, but also entered the Philippine national imaginary (Vergara, 1995). Colonialism in the Philippines was concentrated in particular nodes and travelled specific geographic and cultural pathways. As a result, American ethnological descriptions reworked pre-existing centre-periphery relations across the mountains. Colonial accounts presented the inaccessibility of Cordillera settlements as evidence of the ‘primitive’ status of their inhabitants, rather than a feature of the mountain landscape or a strategy of defence. People had selected sites for mountain settlements to hide runaways from the Spanish, repel punitive raids, and securing access to water for agriculture or gold for trade. American colonial administration then selected only some of them as centres of governance and worship. Rather than recognizing the arbitrary aspects of this history, many Filipinos speak of ‘far-flung’ *barangays* (villages) as if someone had hurled these communities into being, far from the road, rather than constructed a road that ran along particular conduits of power. Building roads across the spectacular local landscape was one of the American projects that created endless frustration on both sides over the contribution of local labour and its timing. Road construction also enabled administrators to partition the countryside and its populations into units of governance, constituting communities as bounded objects for surveillance, missionisation, and measurement. The new roads played a role in splitting localities into different municipalities and opened up economic niches for new settlements that then emerged along the thoroughfares. Becoming accessible by road was the first step in rendering a disorderly and irregular past into a ‘progressive’ and localized present.

Histories of representation

The second decade of American colonisation saw ethnological research bring modern, scientific classifications of natural history and human physique to the Philippines. Both were considered in relation to moral character, following the approach characteristic of anthropological research in this era. Ethnographers employed by the colonial administration then developed new ethnic taxonomies, based on the assumption that the ‘tribes’ of the Philippines possessed distinct and specific characters or ‘natures’ according to their locality.¹³ Igorots were hierarchised among other Filipinos as ‘physical types’ and displayed for metropolitan edification in magazines and fairs (Bean 1910; Benedict 1983; Rydell 1984).¹⁴ Administrators intended that these highly successful public displays would educate Americans about the diversity of their new colonial possessions and their responsibilities as citizens of a colonial power. At the St. Louis World’s Fair of 1904, one such display of Igorots became immensely popular with the American public.

Filipinos engaged in struggles for independence saw the popularity of Igorots in America as a threat to independence. They thought that Americans might generalise the image of the headhunting Igorot ‘savage’ to the population, undermining arguments that the Philippines was ready for self-government (Afable 1995: 16). Manila-based Filipino nationalists thus tried to distinguish the public image of ‘the Filipino’ from that of ‘the Igorot.’ Carlos Romulo, who served as Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs and later first President of the United Nations General Assembly, argued to the Filipino and American publics that the Igorots were a minority group and differed fundamentally in ‘racial character from the lowland Christians’ (Romulo 1943: 59). This remark incited ongoing debates on ‘race’ in the Philippines. On the

¹³ Bean (1910), for instance, assesses the Bontok Igorots as the most ‘primitive’ because, as wet-rice cultivators of in a low-lying river valley, they do not wear as much clothing as groups living on the heights.

¹⁴ The cover image of Marcus and Fisher (1986) features a photograph of an Igorot man from this era. Prill-Brett (1997, pers. comm.) identifies him as a man from central Bontoc, on the basis of the tattoo pattern on his torso and his woven rattan hat. The lack of decoration on the hat indicates that he is married.

Cordillera, the popular understanding is that Romulo argued ‘Igorots are not Filipinos’. His statement created huge resentments and, in the 1960s, militant Igorot students burned an effigy of Romulo in a protest held in Baguio City (Afable 1995). Such protests condensed and expressed Igorot frustrations over their exclusion from narratives of national history that emerged after Philippines achieved independence. When this did occur, in 1946, the prevalent racial taxonomies, ethnographic photos, and displays at fairs all tied Igorot subjects to specific visions of mountain villages and ‘traditional’ subsistence agriculture. Most of these representations ignored the evidence that mountain localities had been hugely transformed by Spanish and American reworkings of trade relations, missionisation, military forays, and the creation of administrative networks. Instead, they accepted without question the category of tribe that the Americans brought to the region and drew comparisons between Indians and Igorots.

Alongside these newly racialized constructions of ethnic difference, Igorots also faced linguistic exclusion. Post-independence desire to create an authentic Filipino culture led the government to replace the colonizers’ language – English – with Filipino as the medium of instruction in State schools. In the early 1970s the government introduced Pilipino – effectively Tagalog, the language spoken in the Manila region – as the medium of instruction for primary and then secondary education. While English remained an official language of administration, it was only taught at the secondary and tertiary levels. In government, English/Tagalog bilingualism became the expected norm. This policy required Igorots to learn what for many was a fourth or fifth language in order to interact with the national government.¹⁵ This was part of government attempts to foster a unified and modern ‘national cultural identity,’ taking the national capital of Manila as its spatial centre. In response,

¹⁵ President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo recently issued a directive intended to make English the primary medium of instruction in all schools. The constitutionality of this move is now being debated.

assertions of a regional Igorot identity have countered this mono-ethnic version of Filipino nationalism. Igorots draw attention to the specific colonial history of the Cordillera in order to highlight contemporary engagements with globalised networks of sociality, migrant work, and new cosmopolitan forms of indigeneity developed through their professional, religious, and migrant connections to the United States. Proficiency in English is a source of pride for Igorots, as this quote from a Bontok Igorot living in Manila attests:

I studied the Tagalog Language hard. I was able to remove my own 'tonong probinsyano' or 'punto' or whatchamacallit. I learned that it was useless in a sense. Because I become just one of the 'people'. I lost one identity. So I gave up, and whenever I talk in Tagalog, I do it harshly, the way Bontocs talk. When the way I talk is noticed, I switch to a devil-may-care attitude, and converse in grammatically correct English Sentences. One thing I can tell you, I really loved every minute of it afterwards, since I know that the person I am conversing with can't really do what I am doing. (Posted to igorots@onelist.com by DD)

Igorots do not only struggle with accents, but with an identity-politics whose terms are largely set by representations in the Manila-based national media.

In the media, popular understandings of Igorots reference North American Indian tribes.

These representations reinforce the idea of the Philippines as settler society where incoming migrants had dispossessed original landowners. This fiction pervades current upland-lowland dealings and is attached, in specific ways, to ideas that Igorots belong in or to specific kinds of place – remote, unsophisticated, rustic, backward, or primitive. Media representations of the Philippines as 'modern' or 'global' often rely on oppositions between urban and indigenous cultures and the way in which indigenes must necessarily be 'out of place' in urban centre. Igorots found in the malls of Manila make the nightly news as a quaint anomaly. Even scholars imagine that real-world Igorots in Manila, in contemporary, non-ritual guise, are evidence of 'postmodernity' and the spread of global labour markets that draw other Filipinos much farther afield (Pertierra 1995:7).

When writing about the distant places of the Cordillera, metropolitan observers tend to talk of vanished civilisations and spectacular landscapes. For example, one Manila journalist writes:

Even today, in places like Sagada and Bontoc and Ifugao, and less known, remote places along the way that were already Igorot havens perhaps millennia ago...one senses the ancient presence of a vanished civilization. Peering at pictures of these mountain peoples taken by anthropologists at the turn of the 19th century, in vistas that rival in physical and natural beauty anything in America or Europe, one cannot but develop a pride and sympathy for the Igorot peoples that make our latent prejudice toward them puzzling, despicable and self-demeaning. (Bocobo, D. 1999)

While such descriptions maintain the Igorot as a foil to a metropolitan, developed 'us', contemporary mountain localities can come as quite a surprise to visitors.

For example, Sagada, in Mountain Province, is a remote place that became a key centre of colonial government and is now a popular tourist destination. An Episcopalian mission was sited here in the early 1900s (see Scott 1976 and 1988), recreating the locality as a centre of religion and education for the region. I-Sagada people now describe themselves as 'the true Igorots' and mobilise their English skills and an activist indigenous Episcopalian clergy to occupy leadership roles in pan-regional Igorot organizations, both in the Philippines and in the emigrant networks of the Igorot Global Organization. However, Sagadans have always had important non-Igorot connections. Scott (1988) demonstrated historical continuity between Igorot communities and pre-colonial societies across the Philippine archipelago. In his genealogical work in Sagada, he was able to trace connections of ten or more generations of kinship and trade links between Sagada Igorots and 'non-Igorots' in the Ilokano-speaking lowlands (Scott 1988). Arriving in Sagada, visitors expecting the 'ancient presence' described in media reports inevitably find English, Italian, German, and Spanish-speaking cosmopolitans among the 'natives.' Many Sagadans are impatient with nostalgia for a 'tribal'

past; they consider their observance of agricultural rituals and wedding feasts as key elements of a contemporary cosmopolitan indigenous culture with a global field. They would rather direct their energies to managing long-distance text message, phone and internet connections with kin, community and advisors elsewhere in their virtual village than deal with the queries of tourists looking for ‘unspoiled native people’ performing traditional dances in ‘native attire.’ Sagadans, would, I think, identify strongly with Sider’s Lumbee respondents and their attempts to redefine culture as a distinct set of practices that engage and manage a global present. The community is now so international that one of my friends - Conrad, manager of Sagada’s new satellite internet connection – joked with me, ‘the place of the Igorot... is everywhere.’

Much as Lumbee identity and culture operate for Sider’s respondents, I have shown how Igorot ethnicity was constituted – and continues to work – as a negotiable signifier in changing articulations between concepts of geography and nation. For this reason, many Igorots see redefining Igorot identity as best left to the people so-called themselves: ‘We do not need other people, whether they are professional writers or historians, to define who we are. Only ourselves can define that word [Igorot]’. (Posted to igorots@onelist.com by L.)

Where and how one is or is not Igorot is contingent on the place of reception for that statement - that is, on the historical knowledge and understanding of one’s audience.

However, the histories of colonial displacement and representations of Igorot identity I have described create the terrain from which people called Igorot can claim land rights. The emergence of the virtual village is inflecting contemporary versions of Igorot identity and offering new strategies for dealing with conflicts over land and resources.

Resource politics and Ancestral Domain

Indigenous land claims seem to compel the description of boundaries and origins as if they were always and fundamentally material realities. Igorot history shows that no 'real' material locality pre-exists and somehow produces, uni-directionally, the performance of ethnicity. Instead, locality is constituted by the very expressions of localism - the 'tribes' that are said to be its results. On the Cordillera, both contemporary administrators and locals have inherited the knowledges produced through colonial images and taxonomies and these 'tribes' have become the currency of claims to land. In recent years, tribal identity and history have taken on a new importance as villages struggle to gain government recognition for their entitlements to land and resources through Ancestral Domain delineations.

Because representations of Igorots emphasise not geographical or historical distinctions but imagined cultural differences from the Filipino mainstream, most Filipinos see Igorots as backward (see Scott 1974 and 1994). Just as differentiating Igorots from lowlanders was central to the Spanish attempts to acquire their gold, it has similarly become the foundation of Filipino nationalist hopes for resource-based development in the mountains. Since independence, national development plans have repeatedly envisioned development in ways that empty the resource-rich Cordillera of Igorot populations. This discursive emptying gives weight to Sider's argument (this volume) that 'primitive accumulation' is not simply an historical condition for capitalism but a continuous requirement. In a study of government documents on upland resource development, Brown (1994:44) finds:

Government officials frequently link the use of upland areas with national interests. They perceive the uplands as essential for the Philippines to cope with indebtedness, reliance on imports and international financing, unemployment, and other attributes of economic stagnation, and unequal distribution of opportunities and resources.

Because the national patrimony of timber and minerals is too valuable to managed by ‘backward’ Igorot locals, many government ‘development’ projects on the Cordillera have relied on military intervention to facilitate resource extraction or access for lowland interests (Brown 1994:45).

In response to government claims to their resources, it seems easiest for Cordillera people to make their case in Manila offices as ‘tribes’, rather than confuse the situation further. Accepting tribal identities may well allow them to challenge stereotypes of Igorot ‘backwardness.’ Not only does being ‘tribal’ demonstrate familiarity with metropolitan national imaginaries and the workings of the bureaucracy, tribal identities also offer potential for strategic manipulation. Cordillera communities have responded to this situation in three ways. The first has been a re-invigoration of a proud ‘Igorot’ pan-regional identity combined with attempts to represent Igorots as cosmopolitan and progressive in the national media. The second strategy has been to support the communist New People’s Army insurgents against government forces in order to create additional pressure to resolve conflicts over access to natural resources. Thirdly, particular municipalities have mounted legal challenges to the government, relying on their own lawyers and historians to document the injustice of State laws that apply to the uplands. They have supplemented this with work by both local and foreign anthropologists describing traditional patterns of land occupancy, cultivation, resource extraction, and culture. Demarcation of boundaries between administrative units and individual fields has been as necessary part of this process and the documentation generated by this last approach has been used to gain recognition for customary property rights through formal certifications of Ancestral Domain.¹⁶

¹⁶ This process of rights recognition is similar in scope, intent, and consequences to those described by Bauman, Correy, and Sider (this volume).

Academic engagements in these struggles over land have now documented more than a century of customary tenure that the formal legal framework for land rights in the Cordillera has never acknowledged. The anthropologist June Prill-Brett, the leading expert in this field and a Bontok Igorot, summarises this history:

In the Treaty of Paris in 1898, the Spanish Crown ceded the Philippines to the U.S. The Philippine Bill of 1902 and succeeding Philippine Acts of the U.S. Congress decreed the transfer of all lands vested in the Spanish crown to the Philippine government and gave authority for various laws to be formulated to deal with public lands, and land registration, cadastral surveys, waters, and minerals. The U.S. colonial administration, ignorant of native land tenure systems, considered lands not covered by land registration or paper titles to fall under public land. Although land registration among the indigenous groups was encouraged under the American administration, the diverse native land tenure system did not all fit the introduced private ownership concept of land. Only a few, mostly the elites and schooled individuals took advantage of the land registration system (2002:4).

Prill-Brett's work has described the traditional corporate group tenurial practices of Bontok Igorots, while tracking the shifts of these agricultural systems towards cash-cropping and individual private property (Prill-Brett 1986). This has led her to review the role of the state in both agricultural development and the Ancestral Domain process itself (Prill-Brett 1994 and 2002). She sees that government approaches the law as offering the tools of 'private property' to help 'backward' locals enter the cash economy.¹⁷ However, she finds this tenurial reform has resulted in some of the indigenous communities' corporate property becoming legally defined as open access commons. In such situations, national resource policies based on the idea of open access to common pool resources are superimposed on local rules for managing corporate property. This imposition of national laws on top of local rules began during a period of population increase and the commercialisation of agriculture and forest resources.

¹⁷ Along lines similar to the current push for individual land tenure in Melanesia and indigenous Australia.

All these factors have contributed to a breakdown of traditional institutional arrangements for corporate property lands that have eventually lead to unsustainable management (Crisologo-Mendoza and Van de gaer 2001; Prill-Brett 2002).

Development programs continue to undermine local forms of tenure. Government-sponsored commercial activities such as agribusiness, logging, and infrastructure programs and projects intensify the demand for local resources and encroach into the ancestral lands of indigenous communities, displacing some and threatening to dislocate others (Prill-Brett 2002). State agents are unable to conceive of ways of managing local resources that acknowledge both the local 'tribal' customary law for resources and the transition to cash crops and that also make space for government-sponsored projects. The inability of the bureaucracy to grasp the nuances of local practice has lead observers to conclude titling land as individual private property is 'necessary' for economic development, rather than recognising that state agents do not have adequate knowledge of customary practices in the localities they govern (Brown 1994). In this context, the government offers a Certification of Ancestral Domain at the municipal level to enable recognition of customary tenure. However, Ancestral Domain does not necessarily entail recognition of the **entire** set of customary tenure practices by **all** agents of the State active in a locality.

Sagada, for example, experienced an attempt at 'national development' in the 1980s when the government attempted to award forest land – actually the pine plantations of the town's corporate groups - to Cellophil corporation, which planned to harvest the timber for pulp (Voss 1983). Sagadans found themselves represented as 'backward' and lacking the kind of culture necessary to best manage such a resource, even though they had planted the trees in question themselves. Even formal recognition of Ancestral Domain in the 1990s could not

guarantee customary tenure over forest land. In 1997, a local military detachment decided to enforce the Department of Forestry's regulations prohibiting logging and seized timber cut from pine plantations managed by corporate groups. Shortly after the timber was seized, the army placed a sign advertising 'pine furnitures' (*sic*) for sale in front of their camp along the Bontoc-Sagada road. Such assertions of control over Igorot resources by agents of the State acting against the law exemplifies Sider's concept of impunity (Sider, this volume). Sadly, such situations are quite familiar to most Cordillerans.

Because, as the Sagada example indicates, corporate group and restricted-access community lands are particularly difficult for the bureaucracy to understand or encompass, people have been motivated to seek individual title to land. Such title appears to guarantee people legal control, in terms legible to all agents of the state, over the land they cultivate. In pursuit of this end, people have used national tenurial instruments to extinguish the customary rights of other community and corporate group members. People have activated these new forms of land title by declaring land for taxation under an individual's name, and such tax declarations have paved the way for the emergence of new local elites in the post-independence era (Prill-Brett 2002)¹⁸. This means that, on the Cordillera, the kinds of class processes discussed by Sider are not so much a feature of the colonial frontier, *per se*, as they are a result of much more recent initiatives, including those aimed at agricultural development.

Not only national laws but global markets have encouraged people to reject customary tenure for individual private property. Recent attempts to develop the CAR through agricultural intensification have seen a transition from subsistence to cash crops, one that often requires a substantial input of capital (Prill-Brett 2002). Because of their crops are capital-intensive,

¹⁸ The tenurial instrument shows that the 'legal' owner is recognized by the national legal system, since the individual had performed the legal requirements and paid the taxes.

farmers want their investments protected by national laws. This is particularly when their capital is sourced through the virtual village and represents gifts or investments made by migrant kin (McKay 2003). Increasingly, people use the monetary, social, and cultural capital generated by migrants to formalise boundaries between individual land holdings and the Ancestral Domain areas of municipalities. In translocalised villages, overseas connections increasingly serve as justification to rearrange customary tenure relations. Such rearrangements are in the interest of so-called 'progressive' households who want to sell or mortgage land in order to plan their own eventual moves 'abroad.' Migrants are also interested in individual titles because these will enable them to sell any lands they may inherit and avoid complicated negotiations with their kin. For these groups, the process of individual title gives security of tenure with clear boundaries.

The ways people are mobilizing translocal networks as they adapt to or resist state governance are particularly innovative and interesting. Across the Cordillera, people counter or support these changes in land tenure with lessons drawn from both fourth world indigenous networking and emigrant experiences elsewhere. Because of their 'similarities' to indigenous North Americans and ties with emigrant kin in the States, Igorots are able to develop insights into, and strategies for managing, their local situation based on visits to North American First Nations and other indigenous communities. There are two important groups of translocal actors involved in this kind of circulation. The first is a cohort of Igorot NGO workers who have traveled abroad to report back on the experiences of other indigenous communities globally. Their activities place Igorots within a fourth world solidarity movement. Some of their NGOs encourage people to engage with the formalisation of tenure through individual titling alongside formal Ancestral Domain designations while others argue for improved local

autonomy.¹⁹ The second set of recommendations is directed at local resource development and interactions with the state. These come from emigrant community members who return home on fact-finding missions in order to galvanise the overseas Igorot community into raising funds to campaign against government projects.²⁰ Comparative global networking can thus convince people that it is just as necessary for Igorots to engage as individuals with the State as it is for them to assert their ‘tribal’ identities through Ancestral Domain claims.

With new forms of global connectedness becoming more immediate through technology, Igorot peoples able to engage the State through translocal knowledges and resources. Communities increasingly rely on the virtual village to conceptualize how their versions of borders and boundaries can be brought into relation with the government policies and development opportunities. Igorot *kailians* (village mates) now mediate local relationships over land and resources by consulting emigrant kin. This might be as simple as emailing relatives in the US in order to resolving dispute with neighbours over field boundaries and irrigation water shares. Or it may become as complex as organizing an international campaign against government plans to dam rivers or grant mining concessions.

Conclusion – Jumping scales

While Igorot identity emerged from the apparently local forces of upland/lowland conflict, I have shown here how this identity was actually produced through much more global connections. The contours of the Igorot tribal slot owe much more to Spanish religiosity and American notions of Indians than to any differences between Igorots and lowlanders themselves. Similarly, the contemporary forces shaping Cordillera localities, such as the

¹⁹ See also Hilhorst, 2003.

²⁰ For example, igorots@onelist.com was used to garner overseas support for communities in Benguet resisting the construction of the Casecnan dam.

struggle for Ancestral Domain or the desire for individual land tenure can be seen as local instantiations of global histories and relations. Even the boundaries that delimit barangays and municipalities or individual plots of land may emerge from global interactions. In this context, the processes of making regional and local boundaries and the compositions of apparently local villages are now the products of an Igorot globalism situated within specific colonial histories.

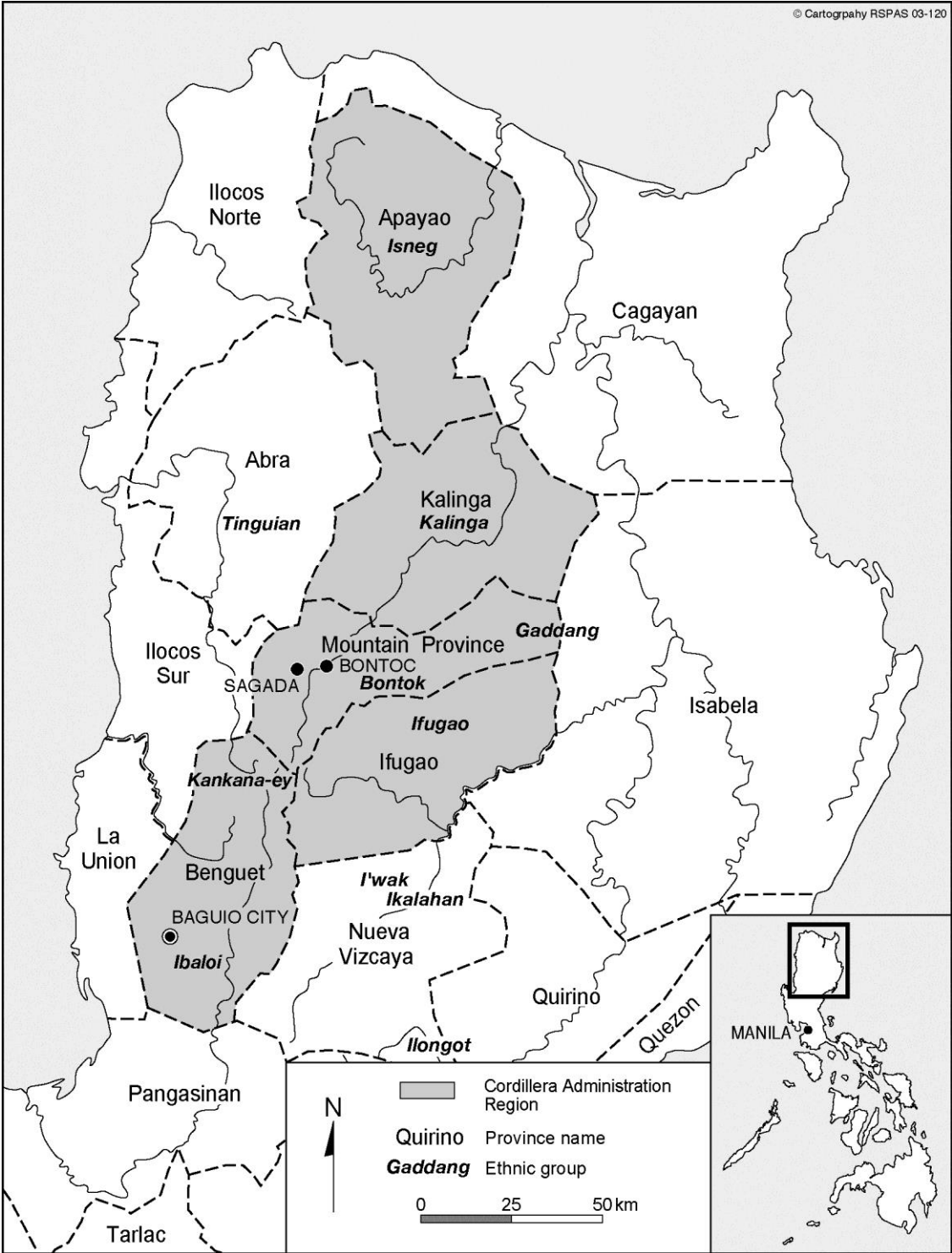
The new global perspectives emerging from Igorot translocality may indeed be capable of displacing ethnic differences that many Filipinos have seen as self-evident. One of my non-Igorot friends who had seen video coverage of the Second International Igorot Consultation (Washington D.C. July, 1997) on television wrote to me:

What struck me was the realization that an Igorot in the States wouldn't appear any different from any Ilocano, Tagalog, or Visayan who is likewise in the same area...I guess the differences [between these Filipino ethnic groups] are more pronounced here but out there the similarities become apparent.

His comment suggests Igorot practices of situated globalism are an effective way of to de-naturalize received notions of ethnic distinction and shift the frames in which Igorots are represented. This kind of representational shift may do more to help Cordillera communities gain purchase in local and regional struggles than armed resistance.

The contemporary Igorot practices of place-making I have outlined are neither local nor global; instead, they jump back and forth from one scale to another. By 'jumping scale,' Igorots are able to strategically subvert their positioning in the contemporary version of the 'tribal slot,' and this mobility offers them new ways of thinking of themselves as indigenes in place. This is how the (seemingly) local forces of ethnic difference have made bounded but global places for indigenous Filipinos.

Figure 1: Map of Northern Philippines Provinces



Source: de Villa et al. 1988: 20

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