

**The Performance of Indigenous Identity in the Igorot Diaspora  
in the United Kingdom**

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.



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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the contemporary construction of identity in the context of the diaspora of indigenous Igorot migrants from the Cordillera Region of Northern Philippines. It focuses on the activities of Igorot Organisation-UK, a regional association of migrant Igorots in the UK. It proposes a new understanding of the process of reconstitution of identity and community that takes account of the historical location and specificity of these migrants. It looks at the activities of the organisation as strategic performances through which the members consolidate a community in the UK as they manage the challenges and utilise the opportunities of their displacement. This approach which involves the detailed analysis of lived experiences of indigenous peoples in a diasporic context, emphasises difference, mobility and social complexity over that of fixity and primordialism. It therefore highlights the difference that indigenous people make to diasporic formation.

In examining the cultural celebrations, social events, publications and social media activities undertaken by the community, this thesis develops the concept of “reconstructive indigeneity” which it proposes to describe the restorative art and value of indigenous identity performance in diaspora. It argues that members of Igorot-UK deploy indigeneity as a resource that enables them to overcome anxieties brought by the consequences of historical dislocation in the Philippines and by international migration. The creative presentations of self, resourceful mobilisations of community and continuing homeland engagements made by Igorots in the UK provide for them a sense of purpose and a new sense of self. The study illustrates the extent to which the set of discursive frameworks on indigenous peoples need to be reconsidered in light of their contemporary participation in global flows of labour and transnational activities especially their full engagement in the advances of new communication technologies to reshape their identity.

**Keywords:** Indigenous People, Indigeneity, Igorot diaspora, Igorot migration, Igorot identity



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## PREFACE

Courtesy of a faculty development grant from the University of the Philippines where I have worked as instructor for ten years, I arrived in London in January 2014 to embark on my postgraduate studies at Goldsmiths. With my undergraduate degree in English Studies, my imagination of England has always been inhabited by “the best which has been thought and said”<sup>1</sup> about “this sceptred isle”<sup>2</sup>. Thus, I endured the seemingly interminable 13-hour direct flight from Manila to London with the comforting promise of William Wordsworth’s dancing host of golden daffodils and Jane Austen’s dashing Mr. Darcy. On landing at Heathrow, I cried, “Oh to be in England”<sup>3</sup>, using Robert Browning’s nostalgia for my excitement to see the landscape that has inspired the splendid body of literature which infused joy to my undergraduate years in Manila.

But I arrived at the height of winter; there were no daffodils and I was poorly prepared for the piercing assault of icy air into my eardrums. Having resided in Baguio City, the cool summer capital of the Philippines, my idea of cold was a fatal underestimation. My initial excitement with the opportunity to study in fair England was therefore dampened by the unexpected gloom of winter and the unforeseen sadness of separation from my academic routine and social life in the Philippines. Although I thought I was old enough to manage a solitary life in a foreign country, I found myself unable to eat, often up all night, crying, cursing the relentless cold seeping through gaps

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<sup>1</sup> Mathew Arnold’s definition of culture in his best known book “Culture and Anarchy” published in 1869.

<sup>2</sup> In Act 2, Scene 1 of William Shakespeare’s play King Richard II, John of Gaunt delivers this speech: “This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle, this earth of majesty, this seat of Mars, this Other Eden, demi-paradise, this fortress built by nature for herself against infection and the hand of war, this happy breed of men, this little world, this precious stone set in the silver sea, which serves it in the office of a wall or as a moat defensive to a house, against the envy of less happier lands, this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England”

<sup>3</sup> First line from the poem of Robert Browning “Home Thoughts from Abroad”

on the windowpane, hating the noise of other students and yearning for the warmth of familiar company.

It was with a hopeful desire to avert an impending despair that on one rainy April day, I made my way to a group meeting in a council flat at St. John's Wood in North London. I was invited by Manang<sup>4</sup> Elsie, a cheerful woman from my father's home province who I met several days before in Central London following a referral from our former parish priest. When I arrived at the flat, I was greeted by cheerful people who each inquired on my personal circumstances and possible relation to people they know. As I exchanged further conversations with my new friends from home, I felt that the ease of speaking in the vernacular, coupled with the sharing of warm, familiar food, was indeed very comforting.

That meeting was called to plan the first London version of Gotad<sup>5</sup>, a festival held in my father's home province to commemorate its founding anniversary. The members were excited to hold this event in order to simultaneously participate in the festivities back home. Notwithstanding this official agenda, the meeting often detoured to juicy talk and vociferous laughter prompted by Facebook posts of friends from home being browsed by the audience while the president made an effort to command centralised attention. To decide on the highlight of the event, the members recalled home practices and traditions, sometimes leading to personal sharing of how life was in the village back then. When there was a difficulty in remembering certain details, someone made a search

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<sup>4</sup> Honorific term for an older woman

<sup>5</sup> Gotad is a Tawali term which refers to traditional huge gatherings; it may also refer to a certain phase of prestige rites attended by friends and relatives of the host from different villages. In Ifugao, the indigenous concept of the Gotad has been adopted by the local government to name celebrations specific to the province or to the individual municipalities. Gotad Ad Ifugao held in Lagawe, for instance, is the label of the founding anniversary of the province and this Gotad has a line-up of activities including cultural performing arts and agro-trade fairs that aim to showcase the cultural heritage and tourism potential of the province. Gotad Ad Kiangon, on the other hand, is the version staged in this municipality which has similar activities but are tailored according to the specific features of the place.

in Google and read out the information provided by a site. After a lengthy discussion punctuated by further diversions on news and events in the province, the members agreed, in the end, that for this maiden event, the highlight would be the performance of an elaborate wedding ritual. Tasks and roles were assigned according to what seemed to be an established knowledge of each member's talents and skills. Before I parted with the group, the members asked for my phone number and they said they added me on Facebook. Back in the residence hall in the evening, I heated the food wrapped for me from the meeting and I approved the Facebook friend requests sent to me by those I met that day. From then on until a few days before the actual event, I attended more such meetings, hosted in various flats across London, which were devoted to further preparations and rehearsals for the occasion.

After hectic preparations, the first Gotad ad UK<sup>6</sup> (Gotad in the UK) was held at the Marian Hall, a catholic community centre in Kilburn. The hall was packed when I arrived and I was momentarily disoriented with the transition of atmosphere from a detached cosmopolitan London to a well-attended village assembly brimming with the rhythms and nuances of my native Kankanaey and other languages in the Cordillera. Everyone was eagerly talking to everyone and as I my new friends greeted me, I was introduced to other people. I was amused to note that upon learning my last name, the first inquiry from my interlocutors was always about my relation to a well-known politician in the Cordillera who really has no blood relations with me. The excited chattering had to be stopped for the programme to start. After the customary opening speeches by officers and special guests, the audience was ushered into the wedding scene

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<sup>6</sup> Following the Gotad tradition, Gotad Ad UK was conceived as a venue for Ifugaos residing or working in the UK to celebrate Ifugao culture and heritage in this adoptive country. The event is also meant not only to rekindle cultural ties among fellow Ifugaos but to promote mutual support and cooperation among Ifugaos in the UK as emphasized by the event theme: "United people towards a progressive future".

by ladies dressed in ethnic ensemble who danced towards the stage carrying woven winnowing baskets filled with unhusked rice and other ceremonial implements. Next came the gentlemen in their traditional G-strings and spears who performed an energetic dance that channelled strength and valour. After these opening scenes, a lady and a gentleman performed a courtship dance where initially, the lady evaded the attempts of the gentleman to be close to her. After several failed attempts, the gentleman finally won the lady's affection and this romantic interlude invited some shrieks of excitement in the crowd. From there on, the ladies from the opening scene served as a chorus whose songs narrated the succeeding events in the relationship of the couple while other members simultaneously portrayed the events being described in the sang narrative. It was portrayed that after the couple's courtship, their parents and relatives met to discuss the terms of the marriage and with all the agreements in place, the parties drank *baya*<sup>7</sup> in celebration of the anticipated nuptials. During the wedding ceremony that came after, the parties butchered animals for the wedding feast according to the chorus but in the portrayal of the scene, this was represented by a single pig being pierced in the heart. Many of the spectators were delighted with the pig character who wore a black cloth and a cut out pig head. It was tickled helplessly with the butcher's deliberate piercing. The fictive performance merged with the real world spectators who were served with *baya* and were invited to join in a community dance with the newlyweds. After the wedding celebration, the couple had a child adored by his kin who was bestowed with gifts and blessings. As a closing hymn, the chorus recounted lifeways in the home province and exhorted the people in attendance to live according to virtues passed by ancestors.

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<sup>7</sup> Traditional rice wine

After the performance, the audience were invited to traditional dinner menu which included *baya*, *pinikipikan*<sup>8</sup>, *dinengdeng*<sup>9</sup>, *lukto*<sup>10</sup> and *diket*<sup>11</sup>. After dinner, the programme progressed to community dancing which showcased the dance repertoire of the participants who can easily move with traditional gong beats then shift to the grooves of contemporary music. There was also a raffle draw which was done to raise funds for the organisation. I was assigned to sell as many tickets as I can to the excited crowd. The drawing of prizes was attended by many remarks for luck in one's own favour especially when the prize at hand looked huge and nice in fancy wrapping. When one person appeared to be having a monopoly on luck for the occasion, there were demands for fair play in drawing the prizes but all these were said in the spirit of cheerful camaraderie.

That occasion was the first among many other Igorot events that I would attend during the length of my studies in London. It was then that I met more members and officers of Igorot Organisation-UK, the regional organisation of UK migrants from the Cordillera Region of Northern Luzon. From that initial attendance, I felt the emotional uplift that such a gathering can bring. I also witnessed the tremendous amount of energy, time and resources invested by the members to constitute Igorot spaces of belonging and means of connection to the Cordillera. I was struck by the commitment of the members to maintain a sense of community by recreating practices based on tradition. The attempts of migrants to organise and create familiar spaces in a foreign land is not necessarily a new phenomenon; what interested me most, however, was the passion driving the collective efforts of these Igorot migrants to produce images and narratives about themselves in order

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<sup>8</sup> Chicken dish prepared by beating a live chicken with a stick prior to burning the feathers and boiling the sliced parts. The coagulated blood, burned feathers and skin provide the flavour of the dish. Ginger, dried pork and vegetables are added as well.

<sup>9</sup> Boiled vegetables

<sup>10</sup> Boiled sweet potatoes

<sup>11</sup> Sticky rice pudding

for other people to know not only who they are but who they *really* are. I considered that this desire to produce a discourse of enlightenment about Igorots as a people indicates their feeling that they are not properly understood. As I participated further in the events and activities of Igorot-UK, I therefore became interested in the relationship between these migrants' acts of self-representation and their experiences in this country. I wanted to look into their exploration of avenues and strategies to produce knowledge about themselves and their motivations for doing so. Because migrants usually leave their homes to pursue individual dreams abroad, the manner in which these Igorot migrants invest in the performance and perpetuation of a collective identity was also particularly interesting to me.

Studying Igorot migrants in the UK was not the topic I proposed when I applied for the PhD in Cultural Studies programme at Goldsmiths. My interest then was looking into the role of those employed overseas in mediating transformations occurring in my own village not only in terms of economic investments but also in terms of changes related to the notion of identity, home and belonging. Overseas employment has been greatly transforming the configuration of and relations in Igorot communities like my own but has yet to be given full attention in projects that my university has undertaken. In order to illustrate the salience of this issue, I go back to the farming community in the Cordillera where I grew up. There, the houses in my neighbourhood are now empty because my childhood friends have gone to Japan, Taiwan and South Korea to work and the remaining members of their families have moved to the capital town where they built new homes and run new businesses. My parents' own house is also empty because my widowed mother has similarly gone to the capital to take care of my brother's daughter left at nine months by her parents who went to work in Australia. I am not home much myself because I work in the city but I do go home for important occasions such as the traditional community



New Year's Day celebration. In these annual celebrations, those present often lament the dwindling attendance and the loss of village vitality. However, the contributions and gifts sent by those who are abroad reassure everyone that those who left have not forgotten home. In some years, those who have gone abroad came home in time for the celebration and they distributed gifts, paid the food and donated useful things for the community in addition to holding thanksgiving parties for their new properties. The sense of incompleteness in the community is therefore overtaken by a sense of recognition of the economic benefits of going abroad. In my community, as in other places in the Philippines, going abroad has become a desirable goal. It is perceived as the best way of relief from the economic limitations of the country so much so that certain behaviours have been reconfigured to attain this goal.

I have observed, for instance, that in my village, prayers made in certain rituals traditionally invoking the mediation of deities for safety and bountiful harvests now also notably include petitions for opportunities to go abroad. Single women speak of their preference for a spouse who has gone abroad or someone who has good chances of going abroad because of this person's perceived ability as an excellent provider. Similarly, single men are encouraged by their married peers to court women who came back from abroad because these (usually older) women have built houses and have other investments that are perceived to take the economic burden off from the male spouse. For their part, parents advise their children to consider taking up courses that can qualify them for overseas work citing the fortunes of neighbours whose children have gone abroad. My own mother sometimes intimated opportunities for work abroad mentioned to her by her friends and at one time or another I considered leaving my teaching job to go abroad, especially in the early 2000s when there was a huge demand for Filipinos to teach English in China in preparation for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Because many residents in my village have gone to Japan, I wanted to look specifically into that group of migrants, but my attention was later drawn to Igorot migrants in the UK as a logistical consequence of my opportunity to study in London. My enrolment in the Cultural Studies programme was endorsed by the University of the Philippines Baguio, my home unit, which is a constituent university of the University of the Philippines system located in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) of Northern Philippines. As recipient of this study grant, I am expected to render return service helping to develop curricular programmes, research directions and public service initiatives of UP Baguio especially in the Department of Language, Literature and the Arts where I teach.

Because my postgraduate training is enabled by my institutional affiliation, my choice of programme and research project are aligned with the overall thrust of my university but also with my own aspirations. As a regional campus of the Philippine's national university, UP Baguio embraces a diverse range of academic interests but its research programme is concentrated on what has been called Cordillera Studies. The production of this body of knowledge about the Cordillera Region in Northern Philippines and its peoples has been aimed at informing regional development planning and policy making in addition to encouraging academic exchange. UP Baguio established the Cordillera Studies Center (CSC) as its "interdisciplinary research institution" (Rovillos and Pamintuan 2014, 112) that now prioritises research in biodiversity and resource management, sustainability science, governance and public policy, local arts, languages, literatures, communication, material culture and climate change.

Many of the studies produced through the CSC take up matters related to the indigenous peoples of CAR collectively called Igorots. Works produced by senior scholars especially in the social sciences have been among the foremost sources cited in relation to Igorot culture, society and history. For their part, scholars in the humanities department

where I belong have collected, analysed and taught Cordillera arts, literature and languages. Many of the researches have contributed to pedagogical motivations; they produced insights into educational policies and the formulation of instructional materials. More recently, however, research in my department has ventured into what is now being categorised in conferences as Cordillera Cultural Studies. These projects have examined the representation of Igorots in colonial and mainstream Filipino discourses such as postcards, postage stamps, travel writings and fiction. Others have analysed the attempts of Igorots for self-representation in contemporary forms like popular songs and other media productions. I contributed to this body of work by studying the independent filmmaking practice of Igorot communities (Tindaan 2010) and the creative engagement of Cordillera residents in reconfiguring the corporate design and functions of shopping malls in the urban centre of Baguio City (Subido and Tindaan 2016).

The concept of a Cordillera Cultural Studies is yet untheorized, but the projects that my colleagues and I have produced and which are being read under this category have two inclinations. One is the empirical illustration of the construction of Igorot identity according to the perspectives and purposes of colonial and majority Filipino discourses. These projects argue that entrenched negative perceptions against Igorots are products of or derivations from these discourses. The second inclination is an account of the attempts of Igorots themselves producing their own self-representations. These projects point out the agency of Igorots in these endeavours but also the complications that arise from them such as the re-inscription of ideas about Igorots they aim to change.

For dealing with matters of identity and representation in media productions, especially in popular culture, our projects may be characterised as classical cultural studies inspired especially by works produced at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham in the 1970s. Indeed, my colleagues and I have

derived great inspiration from the academic careers of CCCS scholars, especially Stuart Hall. For me, as with others, Hall exemplified the kind of “organic intellectual” I can only aspire to be. Because of this aspiration, I nursed an ambitious desire to study at the CCCS, imagining that the opportunity to draw from the source, as it were, would magically bestow upon me the best knowledge and skills that would enable me to help develop our practice of Cordillera Cultural Studies at UP Baguio. Unfortunately, the CCCS was closed in 2002 before I could get a scholarship to study in the United Kingdom. When the opportunity of the scholarship finally came, I considered enrolment at the Centre for Cultural Studies (CCS) at Goldsmiths because of what I then perceived to be a promising programme that may resemble the vitality of training at the CCCS.

When I was two months into my programme, Stuart Hall died and there were conferences organised at Goldsmiths and other London universities to commemorate his life and assess his academic contributions. These conferences helped me to better understand the British circumstances that gave rise to Cultural Studies and its evolution from Birmingham including the different manner in which CCS deployed its programme. Following Hall’s death, what was then the New Academic Building at Goldsmiths was renamed Professor Stuart Hall Building. It houses the Department of Media and Communication that now hosts the PhD in Cultural Studies programme as a specific strand after the closure of the CCS in summer of 2017. These events have demonstrated to me the complex terrain negotiated by Cultural Studies as a “discipline” in the UK academy. Nevertheless, I have indulged in a notion of Hall’s encouraging presence on campus even if I was not lucky enough to have met him in person.

I like to think that among the encouragements I derived from Hall in the duration of my studies in Goldsmiths is the devoted engagement of academic work with the concerns of my people as he has done with his own. As an Igorot myself, I have appreciated

the opportunities of being able to participate in the production of knowledge that informs the exploration and understanding of issues related to my own community. This appreciation is rooted in my experiences as an Igorot student during my undergraduate years at the main UP campus in Manila where I dealt with the consequences of knowledge produced about Igorots as a people.

At that time, I thought of myself as a regular individual pursuing a dream to be educated like any other Filipino youth but I was made aware of how I was being perceived as a different person. Once my professor in a social science course made me stand in front of my class together with a lowlander classmate to point out that I have stocky legs as a consequence of growing up in the mountains. We were discussing how one's environment determines one's constitution and at that time I thought my professor's way of illustrating the point was useful but I felt uncomfortable at being compared and scrutinised in that way. For having been identified as an Igorot from the highlands, I became the object of queries from my classmates who asked questions like why I was not dressed in the real clothes of my people or am I a daughter of a chief from where I come from. I also received expressions of disbelief on my abilities such as how a professor was surprised with my aptitude for English while in fact I grew up in the mountains.

In addition to being treated differently by my classmates and professors, I also began to realise my difference from them. Once, in a writing course, there was a discussion about how childhood memories are supposedly the best points to start one's writing. My classmates talked about their memories watching TV shows like Sesame Street. I did not have much to contribute in that exchange because I did not grow up watching television. When I was growing up until the time I went to the capital town for secondary school, there was no electricity in my hometown despite the fact that it was just around 62 miles away from two hydro power plants generating electricity for the rest of the country. My

childhood memories are therefore about going to the farm with my parents and helping them to plant and harvest flowers and vegetables, setting fire to dry grass with my brothers in summer, gathering watercress in streams with my cousins and making little pots with my friends out of soil we moistened with our urine.

I later saw my difference through a Marxist perspective when I began to join student organisations whose motivations were to do something about the injustices and inequalities in the country. In joining the discussions and mobilisations of these organisations, I came to understand the idea of power relations based on classifications of people notably their economic condition but also their position as a cultural minority. In discussions about development projects being pursued by the national government notwithstanding the detrimental effects to indigenous communities, I recalled my childhood without electricity and thought about the numerous mining concessions in my home province that have produced so much gold and copper and yet the communities have remained underdeveloped. I got involved in student publications writing articles about the suffering of disenfranchised indigenous peoples that are rarely covered by mainstream newspapers. Though I would later doubt the approaches being done and the solutions being proposed by the organisations that I joined, it was from such involvements that I have fully appreciated the role of knowledge production in calling attention to and making sense of issues that affect the lived experiences of indigenous people.

I see this research as an expansion of the Cordillera Cultural Studies projects that my colleagues and I have so far produced at UP Baguio. I consider my research as an expansion of Cordillera Cultural Studies in a literal geographical sense of studying a location that is being made as an extension of the Cordillera but also in a conceptual level of examining how Igorot identity is being reconstructed by displaced Igorots who are negotiating the contingencies of their migration. A key issue that I raise in this project is

how displacement produces situations that give rise to new ways of thinking about Igorot identity. This question is relevant in the ongoing discussions being undertaken in my home unit about the institution of an Indigenous Studies Programme to widen UP Baguio's field of instruction and research. Based on initial discussions that have been held in relation to this plan, the case of Igorots as indigenous people will serve as a base of the programme but it will encompass the conditions of indigenous peoples in general. By exploring the role of Igorots in the UK in the representation and reshaping of Igorot identity, my research will inform these discussions by engaging in concerns relevant to indigenous identity such as: What constitutes indigeneity at a time when indigenous people who are traditionally defined as attached to ancestral lands move away from these lands? How do indigenous people transform and survive as they participate in contemporary global relations? How does displacement affect normalised discourses about indigenous people which give primacy to primordial attachments? Responses to these questions based on insights developed from my research will contribute to deliberations about framing the instruction and research practices of an indigenous studies programme. This project likewise extends perspectives on the study of diasporas and migrancy by focusing on issues relating to identity and community and their performance, reconstitution and reiteration with respect to new assemblages that provide mechanisms and affordances for this process such as communication technologies, publications, photography and practices that recreate the cultural dimensions of community through embodied performances.

Because my research takes up the constitution of identity, especially in relation to the lived experiences, cultural productions and mobilisations of a traditionally disenfranchised community whose members have migrated, it can be located in Cultural Studies, Indigenous Studies and Diaspora Studies. I draw conceptual tools from these

fields to understand the dynamics of community formation and processes of identity construction among migrant Igorots to illuminate how this case of diasporic indigenous people from the Philippines trouble or enrich concepts in these fields of study.



## INTRODUCTION

Filipinos are known for their widespread participation in international labour migration. Filipino labour has been described as a global brand that is recruited and deployed to supply the labour needs of the world. Filipino workers are now dispersed especially in countries in Asia, Europe, Middle East and North America. Each year in the last three years, over two million Filipinos left the country for overseas employment according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA 2017). This phenomenon is prompted by the labour export program of the Philippine state as a national development strategy (Tyner 2009). To acknowledge the massive contribution of overseas Filipinos to the economy, the Philippine government has officially recognized them as modern heroes of the country.

The migration of Filipinos for work overseas has been studied especially in relation to the structural forces that shape the relations and conditions of this economic measure (Tyner 2009; Gibson and Graham 2002; Espiritu 2002; Aguilar 2002; Choy 2003; Margold 2002, Guevarra 2010; Rodriguez 2010). Much of this literature points to the human cost of this otherwise lucrative economic strategy as suggested in the book title *Servants of Globalization* (Parrenas 2005). Studies also focus on specific sectors of Filipino migrants especially those who are considered to be most vulnerable. In this case, female domestic helpers figure prominently in the literature (Tadiar 2002; Bagley, Madrid and Bolitho 2002; Groves and Chang 2002; Pratt 2002, Constable 2007). Some of these studies attempt to inform the creation of government policies and mechanisms to ensure the welfare of these migrant workers who experience oppressive working conditions.

Other studies account for the social impact of labour migration in the Philippines such as the struggles of left-behind children and spouses (Parrenas 2005; Pingol 2001). More recent studies deal with how Filipino migrants are negotiating their way through various conditions overseas such as irregularity, long distance parenthood, personal transformations and alienation from family (Constable 2002; Mckay 2012; Madianou and Miller 2012; Mckay 2016). These studies point towards agency among Filipino migrants in managing the difficulties of their situations abroad and in making personal and social investments back home.

This research aims to contribute to this body of literature on Filipino migration by bringing in the aspect of cultural identity and difference in accounting for the ways in which Filipino migrants experience and respond to the circumstances they find themselves in. With a few exceptions such as Mckay's studies on Ifugao migrants in Hongkong (2012) and Kankanaey migrants in London (2016), most of the earlier studies treat Filipinos in a generic sense without much consideration of the varied historical and cultural contexts these migrants come from in the Philippines. They are analysed in their uniform status as workers whose conditions are regulated by the economic and political relationship forged between deploying and receiving states and affected by the trends of global relations. These earlier researches have produced valuable analysis on the phenomenon, but in this project, I aim to present a specific instance of migration experience among Filipinos by examining the case of Igorots who are indigenous people in the Cordillera Region of Northern Philippines. I illustrate how the distinct geographical, cultural and historical configurations of this group of Filipinos figure in their attempts to deal with the challenges and opportunities of their condition as migrants. Because of their distinction as indigenous people and status as a cultural minority in the Philippines, the experience of Igorot migrants cannot be adequately

discussed in approaches where Filipinos are taken as a homogeneous entity. I take up the particularities of this case to show that the political circumstances of migrants in their country of origin and the specific conditions of their movement to the country of destination give rise to new ways of constructing and performing identity. I argue that the engagement of these indigenous migrants in identity construction and performance enables them to work out the insecurities of their displacement and gain a new sense of self.

This study is focused on the activities of Igorot Organisation-UK, the regional association of Igorots dispersed across England, Scotland and Wales but whose membership is largely based in London. The activities of this organisation are well-planned and well-coordinated and as such they have a rhythm of regularity around which the community emerges. I recognise that not all Igorots in the UK are members of this organisation and that there are other Igorot organisations. However, I consider Igorot-UK to be the most established organisation because of the length of its existence, regularity of its events, extent of attendance to its events and breadth of its network with the Cordillera Region and other diasporic Igorot organisations such as those in the US and Europe. Igorot individuals in the UK who have not sought official membership to this organisation due to personal constraints are nevertheless supportive of its activities. In this way, Igorot-UK is recognised as the de facto organisation of Igorots in London and the UK in general.

### **Reconstructive indigeneity**

As an analytical frame of my investigation of the organisational practices of Igorots in the UK, I propose the concept of “reconstructive indigeneity”. In the medical sciences, the idea of reconstruction, such as in reconstructive surgery, refers to an

operation undertaken to recover bodily function and appearance following an injury on specific parts of the body. These reconstructive procedures enable an individual to perform tasks again just as it was before the damage. I use this sense of reconstruction in suggesting the term “reconstructive indigeneity” to refer to the creative construction and resourceful mobilisation of identity by displaced indigenous people, like the Igorots in London, to manage challenges caused by displacement. Reconstructive indigeneity emphasises the restorative value that displaced indigenous people can derive from their claim, affirmation and performance of an identity they characterise as indigenous. In this formulation, indigeneity becomes a resource for recuperation in displacement activated by will and induced by desire to survive. Indigeneity is therefore considered as a performative claim rather than an inherent value.

The idea of reconstructive indigeneity is informed by the work of scholars who have analysed the adaptive patterns that indigenous peoples have developed amidst the usually hostile conditions of contemporary time. In his work with the Ainu who are indigenous people of Japan, Mark Watson (2014) developed the concept “diasporic indigeneity” which he defines as “a range of adaptive, personal, collective, innovative and reactive measures that represent the extension and development of indigenous identities and patterns of sociality in non-local, predominantly urban areas” (32). Watson points out that Japanese political processes, including scholarship, have relegated the Ainu to the northern region of Hokkaido. This understanding of the Ainu, according to Watson, has therefore denied lives lived by Ainu people who sought to escape their emplacement by moving to urban places like Tokyo. Watson therefore uses “diasporic indigeneity” in illustrating how the Ainu have resisted their disenfranchisement by constructing and living their indigenous identity in the city.

Watson’s concept is closely related to “reconstructive indigeneity” with its attention to

the mobilisations of indigenous people in order to cope in a foreign environment. With reconstructive indigeneity, however, my concern has more to do with strategic presentation of self among displaced indigenous people as a mechanism for managing their challenges as migrants rather than or in addition to the extension of cultural patterns and practices in urban settings.

Reconstructive indigeneity is also inspired by ideas calling attention to lived experiences and the rise of new cultural processes and practices among indigenous peoples. These processes have been described as “indigenous modern” by scholars such as Stephen Muecke (2004). They point out that these new processes question the primordial connection between indigeneity and territory. Based on his work with Aboriginal communities in Australia, Muecke argues that:

at the very simplest, being modern means having a range of inventive responses to the contemporary world... In Australia, for Aborigines, it meant adaptation to a highly dangerous invader, for instance as laborers for the market-based industries. Survival has literally meant a lot of creative work...(2004, 158).

In pointing out indigenous responses and strategies to the onslaught of colonial society, Muecke echoes what Marshall Sahlins (2000) termed as “indigenization of modernity” to refer to the active engagement of indigenous peoples with the modern world order. He argues that indigenous peoples “are prepared to make useful compromises with the dominant culture, even to deploy its techniques and ideas in the course of distinguishing their own” (493). With this perspective, Sahlins insists that indigenous peoples are pragmatic communities and not passive receivers of acculturation from outside influences.

For his part, James Clifford (2013) proposed the concept of “indigenous articulations” which considers indigeneity in a manner similar to Muecke’s and Sahlins’ emphasis on strategic survival. Based on Stuart Hall’s theory of articulation which understands cultural formation as an ensemble of political coalitions rather than a given

and guaranteed fact, Clifford's concept of "indigenous articulations" approaches the processes in indigenous communities as pragmatic, contemporary forms of indigenous cultural politics. This notion rejects the assumption that "indigeneity is essentially about primordial, transhistorical attachments" and considers it reductive to treat indigenous peoples' cultural performances as "invented traditions" (54). The actions of indigenous peoples, Clifford says, should not therefore be evaluated against a scale of cultural authenticity but should be analysed according to the intentions of these people to cope and transform.

Other scholars, some especially influenced by Clifford's approach, have treated indigenous identity as an ongoing process of articulation. Teaiwa (2001), for example, has pointed out that identities of contemporary natives in Oceania are better conceived of as being continually articulated, disarticulated, and rearticulated, not only with militarism and tourism, but also "with other institutions, ideologies, cultural forces, and presences such as femininity, masculinity, Christianity, 'race,' the state, and capitalism" (2001, 7). Teaiwa argues that indigenous people in Oceania appropriate and transform these institutions, as they are appropriated and transformed by them. For his part, Diaz (1993) illustrates how Chamorros in Guam have sought to localise novel, powerful ideas and practices such as Christianity into indigenous ways of life. He showed the hybrid kinds of identities that get built from the cultural and historical confrontations of traditional and novel ideas. Similarly, Hereniko (1999) explains how native identities result from articulations of the traditional "rootedness" of Pacific Islanders with the global "routes" many indigenous people traverse today. He describes that islanders who are native to one Pacific island or island group have now lived for generations as a coherent community on neighbouring Pacific islands but most still think of themselves as natives of their earlier, ancestral place. Others have left their homelands early in their lives, or,

increasingly, were born on islands or even continents far away. Because such Islanders seldom return to their ancestral islands except for visits, they have little direct experience of the physical places on which their identities are based. In order to understand this complex situation, Hereniko recommends that identities should be recognised as continually shifting and repeatedly created through situationally specific negotiations across multiple group memberships.

Based on different but similarly complex situation of identity politics involving the indigenous Adivasis in Western India, Baviskar (2007) illustrates that the discourse of indigeneity circulating from the success of international coalitions helped empower the Adivasis in their fight against dam-induced displacement. However, certain sections of the Adivasi community would later participate in the deployment of indigeneity to support the claims of the politically dominant Hindu Right in order to gain belonging in the Indian nation. As a result, other religious minorities are disenfranchised with a prevalent politics of hate. Baviskar therefore points out that discourses of indigeneity are differently constructed and contested across the terrain of class, caste and citizenship. She echoes the emphasis of the Pacific scholars about the contingency of indigenous identity claims and the need for contextual understanding of its shifting character subject to indigenous peoples' necessities and their responses to the pressures they encounter in their contemporary situations.

In his analysis of how American Indians in the twenty first century challenged the stereotypical representations and conventional roles created for them by non-Native Americans, Deloria (2004) illustrates, like Baviskar, the forms of negotiations that indigenous peoples attempt in response to cultural and political situations that restrict their community. He points out that when American Indians appeared in places where non-Indians did not expect to find them such as on football fields, beauty parlours and

Cadillacs, these Native Americans invested meanings in these activities that contradicted America's understanding of modernity and race. On the other hand, Non-native Americans found these acts as excessive and proof of the inherent defect of Native Americans. Further illustrating the attempts of Native Americans to tackle mainstream conceptions, Deloria looked into the role of sports and Native American identity where he describes that Native Americans inhabited the expectations of non-Indians in order to participate in a non-Indian world that almost certainly would have excluded them otherwise. But the author explains that eventually age limitations on college athletes, the growing connection between sports and corporate culture, and a renewed indigenous movement toward autonomy pushed most native people out of collegiate and professional sports. In this work, Deloria therefore shows not only the historical construction of Indianness and by extension, the general historical construction of the identities of indigenous peoples, but also the possibilities and limits of indigenous peoples' efforts to reconfigure dominant attitudes and narratives.

The concept of "reconstructive indigeneity" which I propose in this project incorporates the pragmatism, contingency and processual quality of indigenous identity construction which are emphasised by the works of the foregoing scholars who have contributed significant insights on the conditions of indigenous people. But even if reconstructive indigeneity emphasises the pragmatic and transformative operations of identity making for survival, it also works within the constraints of historical moments just as Hall (1990) pointed out in his concept of articulation and which are elaborated by the scholars cited above who have deployed this concept in their own projects.

By employing reconstructive indigeneity, this research embarks on a situationally specific understanding of identity formation in the condition of Igorots as migrants in the United Kingdom. In investigating the organisational practices of Igorot-UK as



“reconstructive indigeneity”, I recognise that the membership is diverse in terms of age, class, immigration status and provincial origin in the home region and that there is an unequal degree of participation among members. I am not concerned with establishing an image of a coherent community that functions towards the accomplishment of unified goals. My interest is to examine the avenues explored and strategies carried out by this organisation to reconstitute a community, to maintain relations with the home region and to produce and circulate particular images and narratives about Igorots in the UK and the Igorot people in general. I point out that in their displacement, Igorots deploy their indigenous identity as a resource in managing their experiences of contradictory social mobility, precarious immigration status, diminished self-esteem, changed filial relations, entrenched prejudice and other challenges in displacement. I also discuss the creative self-representations produced by the community in various forms and illustrate that the motivation is a desire to challenge the stock of unflattering Igorot images and perceptions perpetuated by colonial and mainstream Filipino discourses. I demonstrate how this pursuit for a counter narrative gives these migrants a sense of purpose that enables them to relieve personal challenges and other anxieties of dislocation. On the other hand, I point out that this project of creating alternative narratives about Igorots is filled with contradictions and silences about the relations and situations of Igorot migrants in the United Kingdom. It is also entangled with the ambivalences of these Igorot migrants about their history and traditions as indigenous people. This critical exercise is necessary because it is built into the concept of reconstructive indigeneity. As in its use in medicine where reconstructive procedures are done for the recovery of bodily function and appearance, the notion of reconstructive indigeneity presents a determined act to cure an injured entity, but it is also aware of the possible setbacks in this operation. Because reconstructive indigeneity accounts for the mobilisation and motivations driving the

project of reconstruction, it accounts for attempts of empowerment, but it does so with a skepticism that steers it away from indulging in mere celebratory discourses.

### **Repositioned Understanding**

In reassessing his work on headhunting among the Ilongots of Northern Luzon in the Philippines, Renato Rosaldo (1993) explains that his understanding of this practice has changed over time with the “emotional force” of the death of his wife while they were on fieldwork in the Philippines. Rosaldo explains that his own loss enabled him to grasp the reason given to him by an Ilongot man for cutting off human heads more than a decade earlier which is that “rage, born in grief, impels him to kill his fellow human beings” (1993, 1). This Ilongot man, according to Rosaldo, “claims that he needs a place to carry his anger, and the act of severing and tossing away the victim’s head enables him to vent, and he hopes, throw away the anger of his bereavement” (1993, 1). Rosaldo admits that he did not understand this logic for a long time but with the loss of his wife he said he was “repositioned” to understand an Ilongot man’s anger in bereavement as the source of his desire to cut off human heads.

Unlike Rosaldo, I did not have an earlier encounter with the community I studied in this project. However, the phenomenon of overseas migration, as I narrated in the Preface, has had consequences on my personal and community life. I have also been aware of the various issues and events in relation to Filipino overseas employment because these concerns are regular items in national media in the Philippines. I can therefore say that I have had a prior understanding of the conditions of migration. In my move to London, however, this understanding was considerably enriched by my repositioning as myself a migrant. In studying the Igorot migrant community in the UK, my interpretation of the activities, actions, behaviours, choices and decisions among the

members of Igorot-UK has therefore been filtered through my own experiences of dislocation. My need to manage the challenges on my sanity during my solitary years in London gave me a window into the scale of challenges that these migrants have dealt with and continue to endure. My understanding was also deepened by the amount of details I discovered through the personal engagements I had with the community and its members. These details included personal challenges on mental health and on experiences of discrimination from lowland Filipinos which were familiar to me.

Although I can claim that my study of the Igorot community in the UK was informed by my becoming “one of them”, I do not claim that the results of my study represent the real story of this community. Even if my repositioning as a migrant allowed me to have a new perspective on experiences in this condition, this point of view is constrained by certain privileges. Unlike the members of this community who invested personal resources, some risking personal safety and reputation, to migrate and remain in the UK, my move to this country was enabled by state university funding. In the parlance of the Home Office, I had “recourse to public funds” from the Philippines. With the security of this privilege, I therefore navigated my stay in the UK without the burden of employment and the necessity to recoup financial investments. What can be said as a leisurely pursuit for a postgraduate degree, in which condition I conducted this research, did not give rise to the same amount of physical demands and emotional struggles that these migrants had to hurdle in order to make their migration as economically viable as they can for their families. My motivation in coming to the UK to advance my academic qualifications has also directed me to seek opportunities and engage in activities towards this end. Fulfilling my personal aspirations borne by my academic background, my navigation of “this sceptered isle” was likewise propelled not with the anxiety of a job seeker but with the cheerful disposition of a successful prospector who finally found the

locations of jewels she has read about. The configuration of my experiences is therefore significantly different from the general condition of Igorot migrant experiences in the UK.

Aware of the privileges of my position, the methodology of this project attempted to create opportunities for me to experience the “real” life of these migrants. Illuminating as these experiences were, my presence in those situations were still markedly privileged by the fact that I was there as participant observer, interested in being able to make a more nuanced understanding of migrant conditions and not as a worker earning to pay debts and support a family back home. The analysis of this research is therefore strengthened, like Rosaldo’s reassessment of his work, by the “emotional force” of my firsthand experience of Igorot migration but it is limited by the academic intentions and favourable circumstances that brought me to this country.

## PLAN OF CHAPTERS

This thesis will unfold in six chapters. **Chapter 1** accounts for the paradigms and power relations with which knowledge about indigenous people have been produced. The consequences of these traditions and practices are then illustrated in the case of Igorots in order to provide a historical background about the positioning of Igorots as indigenous people in the Philippines. The chapter is a chronicle of historical junctures that have shaped the identity of Igorots and their place in the Filipino nation. I illustrate the role of Spanish and American colonial policies in the discursive emplacement of the Igorots in the Philippine highlands, a location which effectively defined their status as primitive people and heightened the difference between Igorots and lowland Filipinos. This chapter emphasises that the identity of Igorots is not a natural fact but a product of discourses predicated on colonial interests and on the political climate of the subsequent Philippine nation-state. On the other hand, this chapter also illustrates how the Igorots have inhabited the identity created for them as a strategic value in negotiating for rights to their ancestral land and resources against the interests of the state. In relation to the changing social and political landscape in the Cordillera Region, this chapter also accounts for the debates among contemporary Igorots about their identity which provide a context for the identity construction project of migrant Igorots in the UK.

**Chapter 2** presents the theoretical framework that guided the conduct of the research. To strengthen the concept of “reconstructive indigeneity” as an analytical tool, this chapter explains the development of the concept “reconstructive indigeneity” from ideas which call attention to strategic cultural mechanisms that have been produced by indigenous peoples to adapt and transform. It clarifies how the interaction of the apparently oppositional concepts of diaspora and indigeneity, the first traditionally

concerned with dispersal, the other with attachment to territory, can be productively deployed to account for the ways in which migrant indigenous people utilise the opportunities and manage the challenges of their migration. This chapter also presents the concepts of performativity and imagination of community which call attention to constitutive practices that construct identity and produce spaces of belonging. The methodology section explains the double-ended approach of the study in accounting for indigenous migrant experience. This approach pertains to the understanding of migrant lives in relation to ties with home. The migrants' place of origin and place of destination are considered as parts of the same field of sociality rather than being treated as bounded and separate entities. The section therefore presents the conduct of ethnographic work both in London and in the Cordillera Region.

**Chapter 3** is concerned with the phenomenon of Igorot migration and mobilisation. The main aim of the chapter is to present the profile of Igorot migrants in the UK together with the mechanisms of their reconstructive group making project in this country and their means of reconstructing their home region in the Philippines. It includes brief accounts of the overall migration pattern of Filipinos in various countries in the world and in the UK in order to locate the specific circumstances of Igorot migration in the general migration history of Filipinos. The chapter also presents a more specific though preliminary account of Igorot migration flows especially in the United States of America (USA) and in European countries to contextualise the arrival of Igorots in the UK and their interaction with fellow Igorot migrants in these countries. In addition, the chapter shows the existence and mobilisation of an Igorot diaspora; in their dispersal, these Igorots created organisations, networks and means of cooperation for the common aim of continued cultural practice and assistance for the socio-cultural development of their home region in the Philippines. The identity and community

formation strategies of Igorots in the UK are therefore illustrated as specific instances of a larger diasporic Igorot practice.

**Chapter 4** investigates the operation of regular cultural festivals and social events held by Igorot-UK as constitutive practices in the production of an Igorot identity and the reconstitution of a community in displacement. I illustrate that in these events, improvised performances of remembered practices are presented as indigenous culture. I point out that these stylized performances, are not necessarily interested in the transmission of an “authentic” culture but in the incorporation of members in the operation of collective belonging. I describe how these performances become community rituals that are imbibed and embodied by members whose repeated and coordinated bodily movements create a common structure of experience that becomes the core of belonging. The latter part of this chapter extends the discussion of identity formation as constituted by souvenir programmes, a genre of publication produced by the community as a supplement to the performance of festivals. This section points out how the written and visual components of this publication also works to incorporate members into the group by becoming mobile aids in imagining the composition of the community together with the aspirations and values that hold this community together.

**Chapter 5** extends the exploration of practices that constitute Igorot identity and community in the UK by examining the activities of the organisation in social media. I analyse the posting of online invitations for cultural events, stylized photographs, personal elegies and interactions surrounding the intervention of Igorot-UK in the so-called Carrotman phenomenon<sup>12</sup> in the Philippines as signifying practices that produce

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<sup>12</sup> As will be explained in Chapter 5, this event refers to the instant fame of a young Igorot farmer in early 2016 because of his candid photographs posted on Facebook by lowland Filipino tourists. These photographs show him carrying a basket of carrots, thus, national media in the Philippines called him Carrotman.

narratives of social and cultural mobility among Igorots in the UK. In addition to pointing out that these visual productions become symbolic aesthetic means of reconnecting to home, I illustrate that these are attempts to create a new biography, a sense of empowered self among Igorot migrants which can work to manage certain insecurities such as the immobility and invisibility of irregular migrants. These images also respond to the negative stereotypes about Igorots produced in colonial discourse. I suggest that by producing narratives of Igorot mobility and success in migration, these images can work to confront the representation of Igorots being emplaced in far flung, primitive societies. It is in this manner of gaining agency that such attempts for self-representation might be described as reconstructive. On the other hand, I point out that the narratives of visibility and mobility produced in these images conceal various forms of despair among members which effectively undercut the narratives of empowerment in the images posted on social media.

**Chapter 6** concludes the study by reflecting on the transformation of indigenous identity and belonging with the mobility of indigenous people and their exploration of avenues to represent themselves especially with the affordances of digital media technologies. I discuss the implications of this transformation on the conception and understanding of indigenous people, indigenous communities and indigenous practices in relation to the planned Indigenous Studies Programme in my home unit.



## CHAPTER 1: THE MAKING OF IGOROTS AS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

The medical analogy with which I presented the idea of reconstructive indigeneity in the Introduction works within the assumption that there was a prior damage or injury that needs mending in order to ensure recuperation and survival. Pursuing this analogy, I present in this chapter the historical circumstances that caused injuries among the Igorots as a people and which shaped their identity and social position in the Philippines. In addition to providing the contextual background for my attempt to analyse the activities of Igorot-UK in succeeding chapters, this chapter also aims to illustrate why the idea of “reconstructive indigeneity” is vital in the sense of self and survival of contemporary migrant Igorots. This chapter includes a review of the intertwined mechanism of knowledge production and power relations in defining indigenous people as a social unit. It also aims to account for the historical circumstances that have resulted in various understandings of indigenous peoples’ situations and identities. It is important to look back at how the conditions of indigenous peoples have been understood or indeed produced in earlier traditions and practices to illustrate the consequences of these approaches in the contemporary identity formation and social position of indigenous peoples. I review the general inclination of historical knowledge production practices that came with relations of power and developments in international relations, but I focus on the consequences of these practices and developments on the formation of Igorot identity and the resulting position of Igorots as a cultural minority. This account is prompted by Brah’s (1996) argument that diasporic communities should be understood in terms of “historically contingent genealogies” by which she means that the trajectories of these communities should be historicized if one were to analyse their location across fields of social relations.

I begin the chapter with how the Cordillera Region in Northern Philippines came to be established as the domicile of formerly independent, culturally diverse people who would later be known under the common name Igorots. I illustrate the role of Spanish and American colonial knowledge production schemes and policies in constructing this region and in defining the identity of its people. I also describe how such colonial policies fractured relations between highland and lowland Filipinos. Subsequently, I discuss how the creation of this region and the definition of Igorots as its indigenous people had the effect of emplacing Igorots to this mountain region. I describe how this emplacement created negative associations on their character and level of cultural development which prompted their discrimination in Philippine society but also how this emplacement worked for contemporary Igorots to assert legal rights to ancestral domain and self-determination. Finally, I describe the resulting differences among Igorots themselves with regard to their identification as a consequence of the enduring effects of colonial narratives, the changing population profile of the Cordillera and the political developments in national and international relations.

### **The Cordillera Landscape and its People**

Perhaps the best introduction to the Cordillera Administrative Region of Northern Philippines is a song titled “Montanosa” (Spanish: mountain) by Lourdes Fangki, a famous Igorot singer whose musical repertoire includes what can be described as patriotic songs for the Cordillera Region. Although the song refers to the region as the old Mountain Province, a matter I will explain later, the persona in this song takes a non-Igorot addressee through the towns of the region identifying distinct products and features of these places including the supposed traits of residents. During Igorot-UK events in London, this song is always played by the organisation’s in house band. Though the song is addressed to

outsiders, most probably tourists looking for a place to visit in the Philippines, this song becomes a roll call when performed in London. When they hear their hometown mentioned in the song, members in the audience clap, shout or sing along. Sometimes there is teasing about the traits of residents in the towns as described in the song. For instance, a lady is often told she is becoming like the big potatoes her hometown is known to produce. This teasing aside, this song makes it clear that the Cordillera is *ili a kaigoratan* (the place of Igorots).

As the song enumerates, the Cordillera Administrative Region is composed of the provinces of Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga and Mountain Province including the cities of Baguio and Tabuk. The Cordillera is a row of great mountain ranges occupying half of Northern Luzon. Its rugged mountainous backbone has many peaks exceeding 2,000 meters in height. The estimated total land area of the region is 17,500 square kilometres (CPA 2006). As of 2015, the population of CAR is 1,722,006 according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. It is the smallest region in terms of population size among the sixteen other regions of the Philippines.

According to Follosco and Soler (2011), the Cordillera is one of two regions that contribute least to the national gross output, and is dependent mainly on an underdeveloped agriculture-based economy. More than half of the population are involved in agriculture, followed by the services and industry sectors. Despite its low income, the region hosts three large mining companies that produce one-fourth of the country's mining products. There is an uneven development across the provinces in the region. In 2009, the province of Benguet had one of the lowest incidences of poverty in the country at two percent compared to 23.2 percent for the province of Apayao (Follosco and Soler 2011). At the same time, 17 percent of its population are considered poor in contrast to the national average of 20.9 percent (National Statistical Coordination Board 2011). Conversely, the

region ranked third with the highest functional literacy rate in the country at 93.9 percent, higher than the national average of 89.8 percent (National Statistics Office 2010).



Figure 1. Map of the Cordillera Administrative Region from the National Statistical Coordination Board – CAR website  
[http://www.nscb.gov.ph/rucar/fnf\\_car.htm](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/rucar/fnf_car.htm)

Peoples in the Cordillera have traditionally lived in self-regulating villages where members practiced distinct cultural and linguistic patterns. These villages had their own social institutions, systems of belief, styles of dress and other attributes (Finin 2005; Fry 2006; Prill-Brett 2000; Rood 1989). The foremost identification for these people at that time was therefore their village connection. With the different living patterns across these villages, the people in the Cordillera did not have a notion of common belonging. The villagers feared or mistrusted others while some fought against those who interfered with their resources and affairs. In order to conduct trade with the lowlands, some villages forged peace pacts with other highland villages. However, an intra-highland social interaction was constrained by the general fear of the unknown in the highlands (Finin 2005). This social configuration in the highlands would later be changed irrevocably

because of external forces which proved too strong for the resistance of these formerly distinct and independent villages.

### **Colonialism and Indigenous People**

Knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented according to a systematic mode of discourse whose contrastive logic was determined by power relations. Edward Said (1978) refers to this process as Orientalism or the Western discourse about the Other which is supported by “institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles” (24). According to Said, this process has worked partly because of the constant interchange between the scholarly and the imaginative construction of ideas about the Orient. The scholarly construction, he argues, is supported by a corporate institution which “makes statements about it [the Orient], authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching about it, settling it, ruling over it” (25). Said points out that the production and circulation of knowledge about the Orient was the Western world’s “style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient” (25).

For her part, Tuhiwai-Smith (2002), asserts that the word research “is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (1). This is so, she says, because “scientific research” is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism. She goes on to narrate how, in the case of the Maori in New Zealand, researchers measured skulls of ancestors by filling them with millet seeds then equated the size of these skulls with their perceived lower level of intelligence. These judgements, Tuhiwai-Smith asserts, underpinned the colonisers’ justification of conquest. This racial classification was used for administrative and conceptual purposes. Writing on the experience of the Anishinaabeg (also known as Chippewa or Ojibwe), Vizenor (1984) explains how this

group was created. He points out that “the cultural and political histories of the Anishinaabeg were written in colonial language by those who invented the Indian, renamed the tribes, allotted the land, divided ancestries by geometric degrees of blood and categorized identities on federal reservations” (19). In this case in North America and which follows across colonial settlements in Australia and Africa, a vital part of the justification for the colonisation of indigenous peoples and their lands was the claim that indigenous peoples are individually, psychologically and collectively deficient in the various qualities that comprise what European and other colonists saw as civilisation (Samson and Gigoux 2017).

As in the aforementioned colonised countries, colonialism in the Philippines was administered with the production and circulation of knowledge about indigenous inhabitants to accomplish colonial ends. When the Spanish occupied the Philippines in 1521, military expeditions were sent to the Cordillera highlands in search of gold deposits. Highland villages put up successful resistance and in their fighting against the Spanish, the Igorots have taken the heads of their enemies. It is this “barbarism” that Spanish chroniclers emphasised in their accounts of the mountain people they failed to conquer (Finin 2005; Fry 2006; Prill-Brett 2000; Rood 1989). The Spanish Catholic orders, for their part, endeavoured to convert the pagan highlanders to Christianity as a colonising measure but without much success. With the failure of their cross and firepower, the Spanish waged a propaganda war against the highlanders through bureaucratic reports and missionary narratives that used the term “Igorot” to refer to these people in a manner that highlighted their supposed “barbarism” manifested in their refusal to accept the civilisation and salvation offered by the colonisers (Finin 2005; Fry 2006; Prill-Brett 2000). June Prill-Brett (1987) explains that the term Igorot is a possible derivation from the Ilocano (language spoken in the region west of the Cordillera) term

“gerret” meaning to cut off or slice. The highland people were known to have practiced headhunting as part of warfare rituals among warring villages (Finin 2005). Though the highland and lowland Filipinos in nearby regions had trade relations prior to colonisation, hispanised lowland Filipinos imbibed the meaning of Igorot according to the negative definition preached by their Spanish masters. A lowland-highland divide was therefore created and the unflattering image of the Igorots has been circulated and reinforced in various Spanish discourses (Finin 2005).

An instance of Spanish colonial discourse that disseminated an adverse image of Igorots was Spain’s participation in the practice of “ethnological expositions” that were popular in Europe from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century underpinned by the theory of cultural evolutionism. Officially set up as “educational displays” for curious Europeans, these human zoos emphasised the cultural difference between Europeans of Western civilisation and non-Europeans who were deemed to be practicing a lifestyle that is more primitive. In the process of analysing other cultures, many European scholars wrote reports, treatises and foundational anthropological texts claiming to have verified that non-Europeans existed in a prior state of human civilisation. These accounts insisted that there is an opposition between culture and nature. Indigenous societies were deemed closer to the animal world and this was underlined by the early ethnographic collections in which indigenous people were hosted and displayed in natural history museums alongside animals, plants and rocks. The display of these “primitive” people in world exhibitions served to reinforce the idea that these other people are not contemporaries with Europeans. Thus, as subjects of the Spanish crown, a group of Igorots were brought to Spain in 1887 and were exhibited in the Exposición de las Islas Filipinas in Madrid’s Zoological Garden. The venue of this exhibition emphasises that the Igorots as people were treated as part of the zoological package. According to Byrne (2007), there were

eight Igorots in this exhibition, three of who were “battle scarred and tattooed chiefs of Bontoc<sup>13</sup>” (29). They were made to build a model of their village which was called “Rancheria de los Igorotes”. In his book, *The Discovery of the Igorots*, Scott (1974) makes an account about the encounter of Jose Rizal, the national hero of the Philippines, with the news about Igorots being exhibited in the Exposición de las Islas Filipinas in 1887. Rizal, who was among the leaders of a movement seeking to demand Filipino representation in Spanish government at that time, was touring Europe and was infuriated with the news as expressed in the following excerpt of his letter to his friend Ferdinand Blumentritt which Scott quotes:

I have worked hard against this degradation of my fellow Filipinos that they should not be exhibited among the animals and plants! But I was helpless. One woman has just died of pneumonia ... and the newspaper *El Resumen* has made a smutty wisecrack about it! And *La Correspondencia de España* even says ‘The Filipino colony in Madrid is enjoying the most perfect health; up to the present, no more than two or three have fallen ill of colds and bronchitis.’ I need hardly comment on this. I would rather that they all got sick and died so they would suffer no more. Let the Philippines forget that her sons have been treated like this — to be exhibited and ridiculed (89).

In contrast to Rizal’s identification with these Igorots in Madrid, his compatriots in the movement felt embarrassed with their identification with Igorots. Byrne (2007) accounts that Antonio Luna, who later became a famous military leader in the Philippines, complained that “in the streets of Madrid, passing young ladies would turn around to stare and murmur audibly ‘Jesus, how horrible...an Igorot!’” (29). Though Rizal considered Igorots as Filipinos, his inclusive view was later overtaken by sentiments among lowland Filipinos that resemble Luna’s discomfort in being related to Igorots as will be discussed later.

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<sup>13</sup> Capital town of Mountain Province



## **American Colonisation and the Making of Igorot Identity**

When the Americans took over the Philippines in 1898, they wanted to succeed in pacifying the highland peoples in order to exploit the mineral deposits that remained under the control of local residents. Delighted with the temperate climate in the Cordillera, the Americans also wanted to develop an urban centre where they could travel and be relieved of the heat in the lowlands (Reed 1999).

Learning from the failures of the Spanish, the Americans approached the highlanders through “benevolent assimilation” instead of outright military invasion and overt religious conversion (Finin 2005, Reed 1999). The Americans therefore undertook a “scientific process” in understanding the people they meant to pacify. The colonial administration created the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes in 1901 and employed American academics for a systematic accounting of the practices, languages, traditions and many other aspects of these people’s lives (Finin 2005, Reed 1999). The name of this institution, however, reflects that the Americans adopted the Spanish system of classification based on religious conversion not on a common language or shared way of life (Keesing 1962; Mckay 2006).

The ethnological survey undertaken by the Bureau was based on the boundaries among the highland people that were drawn by the Spanish but the Americans added the idea of “tribes” in the classification. “Tribe as a category was developed under American law to distinguish Native Americans from roving bands of outlaws. Tribes distinguished as legitimate indigenous groups that could demonstrate attachment to a particular place and could provide an identifiable community leaders” (Mckay 2006, 296). Based on the result of this survey, the Americans embarked on a project of organising the highlands under one administrative province they called “Mountain Province” which was

composed of the sub-provinces of Benguet, Ifugao, Bontoc, Apayao and Kalinga (Finin 2005). These sub-provinces became the designated domains of identified tribes: Ibaloy, Kankanaeys, Ifugaos Bontocs and Kalingas. Except for Ibaloy and Kankanaeys who share territory in the sub-province of Benguet, the other tribes resemble the name of their sub-province. This geographical mapping followed the American understanding of “tribe” which required that a group of people, by then designated by the Americans as Igorots, should have a permanent settlement and appointed leaders (Mckay 2006, 296). Until the present, Igorots are known by these tribal labels and Igorots themselves have adopted these names to designate their affiliation.

Apart from creating a permanent settlement specific for Igorots, the colonial administration also embarked on educating them to facilitate their advancement from what they perceived as a backward and uncivilized condition. Public institutions such as the Trinidad Agricultural School in Benguet were opened for the exclusive education of Igorot children. Finin (2005) explains that by being educated together in these schools, these students have developed a common bonding hinged on the shared identification as Igorots. They therefore saw themselves not as members of separate, mutually suspicious villages but as a new generation of educated Igorots. The graduates of this school and other institutions established by Americans later became leaders of Mountain Province and they espoused the American idea of highland belonging to the highlands.

The Americans were likewise successful in exploiting the mineral deposits in the highlands through a discourse of local development promised to small-scale miners (Reed 1999). Mining companies employed Igorots who worked under American supervisors. Many of these supervisors were from Western states and they brought with them the popular culture and style of the American west. To encourage bonding among employees, these supervisors organised parties and dances where Igorots were exposed to

country music and line dancing. As a result, the Igorot employees began to acquire a western-American style of dress and soon the cowboy image and its attendant lifestyle became a metaphor for suggesting exceptional adaptability and strength in overcoming adverse circumstances (Finin 2005). For Igorots in the mines, these shared characteristics defined the constitution of being Igorot.

The deep inroad of American ways in the governance, education and popular culture of the Igorots has “flattened American colonial violence while forming another level of Igorot difference from lowland Filipinos” (Finin 2005, 174). Igorots in general have a fond regard for Americans despite the fact that the Americans gained in considerable degrees from the resources of the region to the expense of Igorots. The geographical and socio-cultural configuration of the Philippine highlands and the Igorots’ sense of self including their relations with other groups of Filipinos were therefore effectively altered by American colonial intervention.

### **Staging the Igorot in World Fairs**

While “ethnological studies” informed the effective governance and efficient extraction of resources from the Philippine Cordillera by the American colonisers, these studies were also produced and managed to serve as justification of conquest. Among the American colonial officials responsible for producing a significant amount of knowledge about Igorots and the Cordillera during the American Colonial period was Dean Conant Worcester who first served in the Philippine Commission and later as Secretary of the Interior. Worcester had first travelled to the region as an undergraduate zoology major in the 1880s on a scientific collecting mission for the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology. In 1893, Worcester was hired as a lecturer and curator in the University of Michigan Zoology Department and authored a number of scholarly and popular works on

the Philippines. When the Philippines came under U.S. control at the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898, Worcester was recognized as an American expert on the region (Finin 2005).

Worcester's fascination with the Philippines was coupled with his fascination and commitment to the relatively new technology of photography. During his time in the region, he and his employees in the Interior Department's Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes took thousands of photos. Worcester used many of his photographs in public lectures and popular articles supporting the colonial mission, and America's responsibilities to "civilise" the tribal peoples of the Philippines. Others sought to be scientific records, framed through 19th century racial classifications and evolutionary paradigms. Worcester's photographs of Pitapit in Figure 2 exemplifies the evolutionary frame by which he presented the civilising role of the US in the Philippines.



Figure 2. Original caption "The metamorphosis of a Bontoc Igorot. Two photographs of a Pit-a-pit, a Bontoc Igorot boy. The second was taken nine years after the first." From *The Philippines Past and Present* by Dean Conant Worcester (1914).

The photographs highlight the transformation of the unshod, scantily clad Igorot boy into a well-dressed man and this transformation is credited to American civilisation of indigenous Filipinos.

Worcester was also greatly involved in the exhibition of Igorots in the United States at the St. Louis Exposition in the state of Missouri in 1904. This exhibition was organised by the US government to commemorate the Louisiana Purchase.<sup>14</sup> In line with the colonial logic of exhibitions in Europe such as the Madrid exposition where an earlier group of Igorots were exhibited, the St. Louis exposition was conceived to showcase the progress of the US as a new industrial and colonial power. Thus, this exposition featured grand architecture, technological advances, imaginary travel and an array of novel entertainment. According to Bacdayan (2011), around a thousand Filipinos, including a group of Igorots, were brought to St. Louis and placed in a 47-acre site as living exhibits. Igorot men, women and children numbering around one hundred were made to recreate their indigenous living conditions and their part of the site was called the “Igorot Village”. These exhibits served as a convenient field of observation for scholars of the then developing discipline of ethnology whose premises were based on ideas of racial categorisation. These exhibits also intended to illustrate the civilising role that the US can play in the Philippines (Afable 2004).

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<sup>14</sup> The 1803 Louisiana Purchase was a land deal between the United States and France in which the US acquired approximately 827,000 square miles of land west of the Mississippi River which expanded US territory.



Figure 3 & 4. Promotional material for the St. Louis Fair featuring the Igorot Village. Image from “Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, 1904”. University of Delaware Library. <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/fairs/louis.htm> and Igorots on display at the St. Louis Exhibition. Image from US Library of Congress website. <https://www.loc.gov/>

At the St. Louis Exhibition, the Igorots drew massive attention due to their scanty dress, tattooed bodies and “barbaric rituals”. The “head hunting Igorots” who also eat dog meat as they were reported and advertised in American newspapers, offended the sensibilities of some segments of the American public who demanded for the proper clothing of the natives and the stop of their dog eating. On the other hand, lowland Filipinos who were in the US protested against the exhibition because they did not want to be identified with the Igorots on display. This public uproar fuelled further interest on the Igorots who thereby made high ticket sales in the exhibition (Vaughan 1996). In his article “Ogling Igorots: The Politics and Commerce of Exhibiting Cultural Otherness, 1898-1913” which accounts for the popularity of Igorots brought in exhibitions in the US in the indicated period, Vaughan (1996) asserts that Igorots generated much interest because they presented image traders with sensational material. Vaughan writes:

To have prevailed as the public’s favorite, the Igorots had to present something unique. Dog-eating certainly qualified, but it was the perceived overall authenticity of the Igorot Village that elevated the exhibit above the rest. Here, fairgoers decided, was ‘true’ savagery, with all the trimmings (1996, 226).



Figure 5. Advertisement for the Igorot Village. Image from *Nikimalika* or (*We, the Igorots, participated in America*): On display in San Francisco, 1905 by Abe Ignacio, FANHS member and guest scholar of the Filipino American Center, San Francisco Public Library. <http://filipinoamericancenter.blogspot.co.uk/2014/05/nakimalika-or-we-igorots-participated.html>

Because of the popularity of Igorots at St. Louis, American agents involved in organising the exhibition saw the commercial potential of staging Igorot shows. According to Afable (2004), Richard Scheneidewind who assisted in bringing the contingent of Igorots to St. Louis partnered with businessman Edmund Felder and both created the Filipino Exhibition Company through which they contracted Igorots from the Philippines to perform in exhibitions across the US. The exhibition of Igorots has therefore shifted from being a state organised event to a private commercial venture.

With Igorot shows being staged in different US cities and creating sensational news and advertising in American newspapers, Filipinos in the US resented the fact that they were being represented by a band of “barbaric” Igorots, thus, they protested against the negative impressions made by these exhibitions about them. These protests also questioned the US government’s real motives in allowing these exhibitions and its intentions in colonising the Philippines. Facing these mounting pressures, the US government put a stop to the exhibitions (Afable 2004).



Figure 6. Newspaper article about the protest of Filipinos in the US against the exhibition of Igorots. Image from “Filipinos in San Francisco a Century Ago” by Boying Pimentel <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/105108/filipinos-in-san-francisco-a-century-ago>

In the Philippines, lowland Filipinos assumed a similar, even more stringent attitude as a result of the narratives and images produced in these exhibitions. This response is best exemplified in the writing of Filipino statesman, Carlos Romulo, who wrote in his book *Mother America* :

These primitive black people are no more Filipino than the American Indian is representative of the United States citizen. They hold exactly the same position – they are our aborigines. This small percentage – not more than 100,000 of this tribe exist in our mountains – was in the Philippines long before the Malaysians...

The fact remains that the Igorot is not Filipino,...and it hurts our feeling to see him pictured in American newspapers under such captions as “Typical Filipino Tribesman”. We passed laws in the Philippine Legislature forbidding pictures under such captions to be taken out of the Philippines (1943, 53).

Despite the legislation announced by Romulo in his book, the pictures of Igorots in world exhibitions have endured in colonial archives and publications. The international



movement of an earlier generation of Igorots to participate in the trade of performance and image production undertaken by colonising western nations was a crucial event that shaped Igorot identity. The images and narratives about Igorots produced in these international exhibitions constituted a body of knowledge that was made to justify the marginalisation of Igorots in Filipino society as announced by the rejection of Romulo quoted above. With the proliferation of these narratives and images in colonial records and the Philippine educational system, their appropriation in mainstream Filipino popular culture and now their availability over the internet, the information frozen in their appearances and descriptions continue to haunt the sense of self of Igorots and the perceptions of other Filipinos on Igorot identity.

### **Igorot Displays in Europe**

From June 11 to October 12, 1912, “Shakespeare’s England Exhibition” was held at the Earl’s Court Exhibition Centre in London to commemorate three hundred years of William Shakespeare’s death. This event aimed to raise funds for the construction of a memorial theatre and creation of a professional Shakespeare performing company. Spearheaded by Mrs. Jennie Cornwallis-West,<sup>15</sup> the exhibition aimed to recreate the life and environment of England in the 1600s when Shakespeare was an active playwright. It included English period architecture, costume, and performances of Shakespeare’s plays as they would have been performed at that time. Traditional English sports competitions such as jousting were also held together with balls and masquerades attended by aristocrats and members of the royal family (O’Connor 1987).

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<sup>15</sup> Mother of former British Prime Minister and war hero, Winston Churchill. Mrs. Jeannie Jerome-Churchill became Mrs. Cornwallis-West by second marriage to military official George Cornwallis-West after her husband Lord Randolph Churchill died in 1895



Figure 7 & 8. Two postcards showing Igorots in the 1912 Shakespeare's England Exhibition at Earl's Court, London. Images courtesy of Clemens Radauer.

Despite its ambitious recreation of grand period architecture including Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and the English navy flagship *Revenge*,<sup>16</sup> the exhibition failed to draw the number of visitors projected to recoup its investment. To attract more patrons, the organisers decided to add a circus at Earl's Court though the inclusion of this amusement was not part of the original plan and theme of the exhibition. In this circus, a group of Igorots participated as contracted performers who were made to recreate their indigenous rituals and trades for the "education" and entertainment of audiences. These Igorots joined groups of other foreigners whose exotic physical features and practices served as curiosities for the viewing English public (O'Connor 1987).

<sup>16</sup> This ship was instrumental in the English victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588, thus, it became an icon of English maritime achievement.

Based on the findings of Afable (2004), this group of Igorot performers was part of the Filipino Exhibition Company put together by American businessmen Edmund Felder and Richard Scheneidewind that was in the circuit of exhibitions in the US. Under the private company they formed, they recruited Igorots in the Philippines and brought them to European cities. The business proved to be lucrative but Afable (2004) reports that the unfamiliarity of Felder and Scheneidewind with the European show business industry and their carelessness with money led to their bankruptcy and abandonment of the group while they were in Ghent in 1913.<sup>17</sup> Two members of this group wrote a letter to then US president Woodrow Wilson reporting their plight and in December of that year, the group was escorted by the US ambassador to Marseilles to catch a boat to Manila.



Figure 9. Postcard showing Igorot performers in the 1911 Magic City Exhibition in Paris. This group is the same contingent that participated in the 1912 Shakespeare's England Exhibition in London. Image courtesy of Clemens Radauer.

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<sup>17</sup> In 2011, when the City of Ghent commemorated the World Exposition held there in 1913 where this group of Igorots participated, a railway tunnel was named after Timicheg, a member of the group who died during the exposition. <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/685878/railway-tunnel-belgium-named-after-igorot>. Accessed November 7, 2017.

In her review of the Shakespeare's England Exhibition, Marion O'Connor (1987) quotes excerpts from two newspaper articles published in 1912 that remark on the presence of Igorots in the exhibition. These excerpts provide a window to the response of the English public to the Igorots in the event:

A most interesting feature in the Western Gardens is the Igorrote Village, inhabited by a number of barbarians from the mountainous districts of the Philippine Islands. These natives are to give exhibitions of war and peace dances to the music of the inevitable tom-tom, as well as of their more industrial pursuits, and the whole show affords an interesting insight into their life. The extreme scantiness of their attire, however, gives one cause to wonder how they will fare under the attentions of a typical London east wind! (*Stage*, 9 May 1912, 21)

An attraction to which all should repair is the village of Philippine islanders, wherein natives execute war dances, sing weird songs, and go through mimic combats with assegai and shield. The practice of the natives in carrying on their warfare is particularly interesting, and great is the evident pride of the scarred and tattooed warrior who has the distinction of having cut off most heads. The way in which the natives climb imitation coconut trees is astounding (*Era*, 18 May 1912, 15).

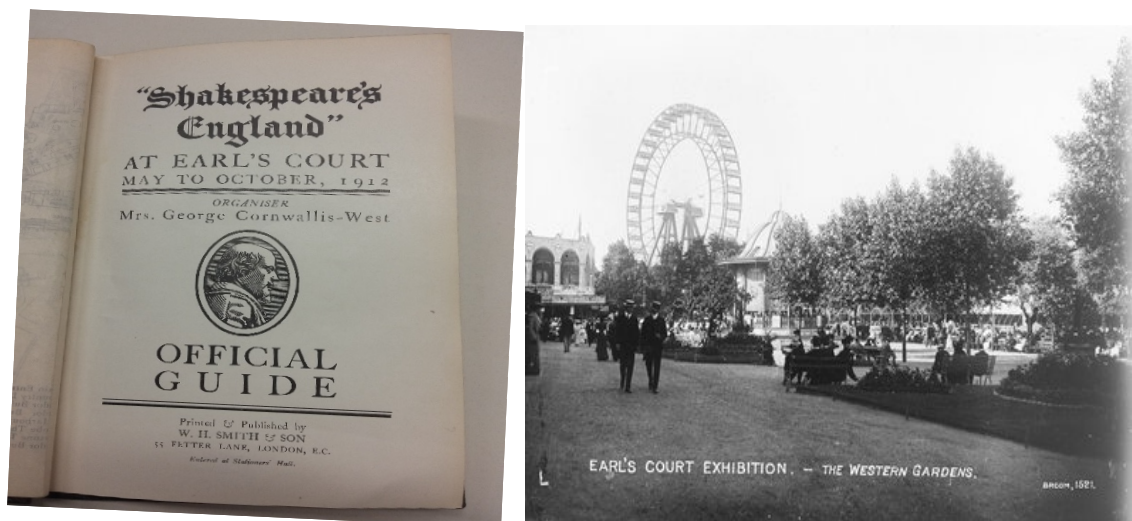


Figure 10 & 11. Official guide book and exhibition area of 1912 Shakespeare's England Exhibition. From the "Shakespeare's England" Official Guide published in 1912 by W.H. Smith & Son and from Press Association's photo library website <https://www.paimages.co.uk/collections/5922/?page=4>

These responses can be said to be typical of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when world exhibitions, scientifically justified as “ethnological expositions” were part of the Euro-American discourse of industrial and cultural leadership where western viewers derived such sense of astonished superiority. In the Philippines where Igorots are among many cultural minorities, majority Filipinos assumed a similar attitude as a result of the narratives and images produced in these exhibitions.

For contemporary Igorots, including those who migrated to the UK starting half a century after the stint of their ancestors in Earl’s Court, these images are perpetual presences that figure in their sense of self. In 2002, for instance, when Igorots in the UK hosted an international conference among mostly diasporic Igorots at the British Museum, the postcards on the Igorot Village in the 1912 Shakespeare’s England Exhibition were reprinted along with a picture of second generation Igorots in the UK in their ethnic attires posing by the London Eye. Between these pictures run the quote “firmly linked with the past...the roots to the future.” Clearly, the Igorots in the UK are attempting to construct their identity and understand their contemporary circumstances as migrants in the light of Igorot images from the past. I will pursue this discussion in Chapter 4.

### **Indigeneity as Social Movement**

According to Niezen (2005), the term “indigenous” was first used to describe a group of people in 1953 in the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) report “Indigenous Peoples: Living and Working Conditions of Aboriginal Populations in Independent Countries” (539). This report was part of an initiative led by ILO and supported by international organisations that sought to address the exploitation of Indians in the Andean highlands. According to Niezen, those who were referred to as

“indigenous peoples” have not “developed a self-referential ‘indigenous’ identity’ at that time” (Niezen 2005, 539). In 1982, the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) was formed and indigenous peoples from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, the Americas and Australasia participated to advance their rights and status. The mobilisation of indigenous peoples across the world was based on the discourse of rights. According to Tuhiwai-Smith (2012), this is anchored on their demands for redress of oppression and exploitation they have suffered under colonial rule and the subsequent nation-states that have been formed after independence. Protest actions over land rights, language and cultural rights, human rights, and civil rights took place across the globe. The indigenous peoples’ movement was encapsulated in the politics of “self-determination” but also included other dimensions such as revitalization of culture and tradition, rejection of Western institutions and ways of thinking and creation of strategic alliances with non-indigenous groups. In 2002, the demand of indigenous people for respect of their human rights was formally recognised with the creation of the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). In 2007, indigenous peoples’ movements gained a major breakthrough with the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The declaration “establishes a framework for minimum standards for the survival, dignity, well-being and rights of the world’s indigenous peoples” (UN 2007).

However, this declaration itself does not provide a definition of indigenous people. The most common reference by UN agencies is the “working definition” provided by Jose Martinez Cobo who was a Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. Cobo made a study on discrimination against indigenous populations from 1972 to 1986 (UN 2004). Cobo’s working definition states that:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems (UN 2004, 2).

Based on this working definition, indigeneity is a collective claim to a distinctive way of life developed in particular territories. It is also defined by a marginal position and a determination to survive. This will for survival is illustrated by the global scope of indigenous movements that created a worldwide coalition among indigenous peoples. According to the UN (2009), there are around 370 million people in 90 countries who identify themselves as indigenous. Although they belong to around 5,000 different groups, they may choose to claim membership to an international community of indigenous peoples. Working together under one broad category has allowed indigenous people to advance their agenda for political rights.

With the success of international movements of indigenous peoples to combat injustices committed on their populations, their attachment to territory gained political capital. Indigenous peoples invoked their ownership and occupation of their lands predating contemporary nation-states in order to demand for property rights and self-determination especially from the intrusion of state and corporate interests. Indigeneity has therefore become strongly associated with marginality and attachment to land (Niezen 2005).

### **Social movement in the Cordillera**

In an earlier section, I described how American colonial policy created a geographic and political grid that led to the formation of a shared Igorot consciousness

among peoples of the Philippine highlands. An important consequence of American administration is the understanding that the Mountain Province (now the Cordillera Region) is the territorial settlement and therefore property of the Igorot people. In this section, I discuss how this notion of ownership of place bolstered a call for regional autonomy as a response of Igorot communities to aggressive development planning of the national government. I describe how these political developments gave rise to the language that describe Igorots as “indigenous people” which is a status that strengthened the legal recognition of their rights to land and self-determination.

In September 21, 1972, then President, Ferdinand Marcos, declared Martial Law which resulted in the suspension of civil liberties among Filipinos. According to Finin (2005), Marcos justified this declaration as a measure to quell communist rebellions in the Philippines but many thought he planned this move to extend his presidency. While Martial Law was in force, Marcos initiated policies that altered the configuration of governance in the highlands. Among these policies is the declaration that all lands owned by cultural communities are recognised as ancestral lands but these may be alienated and disposed of under certain conditions (Galam 2008). The force of the qualifier in this policy materialized when Marcos approved a massive logging and pulp production enterprise in the province of Abra, a province adjacent to the provinces of Kalinga and Mountain Province. This project was operated by Cellophil Corporation which was headed by a relative of the president (Finin 2005). Though their livelihoods were threatened by the scale of this project, the residents did not oppose it.

Not long, however, another large scale government project was planned in the region. This was the construction of four hydroelectric dams along the Chico River which flows along the provinces of Kalinga and Mountain Province. Realizing the impact of these constructions to the their lands and ways of living, residents in these



provinces formed alliances with sympathizers to oppose the project (Finin 2005; Galam 2008; Rood 1989).

To manage the opposition, the government increased military presence in Kalinga and this led to the murder of Macli-ing Dulag, a village elder of the highest rank who strongly opposed the Chico Dam project (Finin 2005, Rood 1989). The killing of Dulag by officers of the Philippine Armed Forces made Igorot communities realise the necessity of a unified campaign against the policies of the government.

Because of strong opposition, the Chico Dam Project was suspended and this result affirmed the value of unity among Igorots. According to Finin (2005), a key result of the process in mobilizing support for the opposition of the Chico Dam Project was the mutual alliance made between largely unschooled traditional village leaders and Manila-educated young Igorots. The elders appreciated the organizing skills of the students; on the other hand, the students saw insights from the knowledge and wisdom of village elders. These educated Igorots therefore sought to bring village based institutions into the political processes of the area.

When the Marcos administration was becoming unpopular in the 1980s, educated Igorots who were identified with left-leaning and Anti-Marcos politics held several conferences and formed organisations to assert common heritage and history and more importantly, rights for self-development. The discourse in these meetings and groups were framed by the human rights of indigenous people as supported by the Philippine Constitution and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. These conferences led to the proposal of an autonomous region for the Philippine Cordillera based on the commonality in geography, history, traditions, and current situations of peoples in these provinces. An important feature of this proposal was the call for a system of self-governance based on “indigenous political structures” and the respect and consideration

of “custom law” in the formulation of policies. Finin (2005) argues that this call for Cordillera regional autonomy embeds the notion that “because the Cordillera had a much briefer period of colonial domination than most other areas of the nation and had retained many non-Hispanic customs and traditions, highland society was, from the perspective of nationalist political development, significantly more advanced or ahead of the lowlands” (261).

The language describing Igorots as “indigenous people” has therefore entered into the discourse of Igorot identity from the nationalist politics of those who are leading the movement for autonomy. The emphasis of this language on the retention of pre-colonial practices and structures among Igorots re-evaluates the prevailing view among lowland Filipinos that Igorots are uncivilized or possessing a backward culture.

The assertion of a “more truly Filipino” status of Igorots based on their resistance to Spanish colonialism is a political move that hinges on the general social movement of people categorized as indigenous for what has become termed as “self-determination”. The movement of indigenous people for self-empowerment is a response to their similar experiences of marginalisation and subjugation by colonisers or the dominant groups in a territory. In the case of the Igorots, this marginalisation was due to state conceptualisation of national development without regard for the impact of large scale projects on the local population.

In the Cordillera, the political movement of Igorots as indigenous people came with the ousting of President Marcos in 1986 and the assumption of the new President Corazon Aquino. A group called the Cordillera People’s Alliance vigorously campaigned for Cordillera regional autonomy. After a long series of negotiations, Aquino signed on April 15, 1987 Executive Order 220 creating the Cordillera Administrative Region which many believed as a short-term precursor to passage of the proposed organic act granting

full regional autonomy by congress and approval in a Cordillera-wide plebiscite. By October 1989, a draft organic act was awaiting the signature of president Aquino, but internal tensions among local politicians who wished to control appointments to new positions and distribution of funds allocated to the proposed autonomous region made many Cordillera residents sceptical about what real good autonomy would bring. As a result, the plebiscite for Cordillera autonomy conducted on in January 1990 was defeated throughout the Cordillera except in the Province of Ifugao. A subsequent Supreme Court decision ruled that Ifugao alone cannot constitute a Cordillera Autonomous Region and that the administrative region established by Executive Order 220 remained in effect (Finin 2005; Rood et al. 1988).

With the election of Fidel Ramos, the new president in 1992, there was a renewed call for Cordillera regional autonomy but the second plebiscite conducted in 1997 was similarly rejected because of confusion about the implications of autonomy, political considerations and fractious internal disputes among numerous Cordillera-based organisations. The negative vote by highlanders regarding the establishment of a Cordillera Autonomous Region did not reflect on highlanders' image of oneness as an ethnoregional grouping as much as it showed widespread dissatisfaction with the type of autonomy that was proposed. With the defeat of the two plebiscites, the Cordillera remains under a transitory Administrative region (Rood et al. 1988).

While regional autonomy for the Cordillera remains as an option for its people, the enactment of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) in 1997 was considered as an advance in the Igorots' struggle for self-determination. This law was enacted in the Philippines following the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. This law recognises the application of customary law in determining the ownership and development of ancestral domains. It also grants the right to indigenous peoples to

develop their own cultures, traditions and institutions (IPRA 1997). The definition of indigenous people in the IPRA resembles the terms used in the Cobo report especially in its emphasis on attachment to territory and distinct cultural patterns. However, the IPRA definition brings in the idea of resistance against dominant forces as a distinguishing feature of indigenous people. The resemblance in definitions of indigenous peoples in these legal instruments illustrates that the concept of indigeneity and its recognition as a political entity has arisen from related international movements under the framework of human rights. In pushing for these rights, international indigenous movements including those of the Igorots saw the significant political capital of territorial attachment especially in ownership and development of ancestral domains (Niezen 2003). Presently, the Igorots' struggle for full recognition of their rights on their ancestral domains continues through the changes of national governments and differences among Igorots themselves about their identity. In the years of its enforcement, IPRA has allowed indigenous communities in the Philippines to have their ancestral domains legally recognised by the state and it has provided a mechanism for indigenous peoples to participate in decisions about the development of these properties. However, the implementation of the provisions of this law has been subject to difficult political struggles between and among indigenous claimants, multinational corporations, state agencies and other interested parties. In this case, the progressive provisions of this law in favour of Igorots and other indigenous peoples in the Philippines are yet to be fully realised.

### **Igorot self-representations in popular culture**

While the struggle for the full enjoyment of legal rights among Igorots is being pursued by progressive groups and individuals in the Cordillera, other forms of asserting

self-determination are being attempted by Igorots in popular culture. These attempts show the exploration of contemporary technologies by various sectors in order to represent Igorot identity and discuss issues confronting the community. Among these works in popular culture is the production of local music for an Igorot audience. In the study of Fong (2012), he narrated that recordings of songs composed in the Cordillera vernacular languages mostly following a folk and country format began in the 1960s and these songs were part of Igorot entertainment alongside American country music. In the early 2000s, however, a new trend started to emerge in relation to this activity. Local musicians started to “adapt” vernacular lyrics to the melodies of American country songs; sometimes the lyrics are translations of the original but sometimes, the vernacular lyrics are entirely unrelated. These adaptations have been marketed as “Igorot Country” or more specifically “Ibaloy Country” or “Kankanaey Country” depending on the Cordillera language used. There is a thriving industry in the sale of these songs in CD forms and recently, the producers made music videos which star local performers. These songs have become popular among Igorot consumers who request for them to be played in country music bars and radio stations. In his study of the production, circulation and consumption of this music genre, Fong (2012) observed that the Igorots engage in what he describes as “abrogation” of American country songs which allow them agency in constructing their identity by telling their own stories in their own languages without regard to issues of copyright.

Saboy (2017) also studied the production of local music in the Cordillera province of Kalinga. In his work, he looked into the refunctioning of the epic *Ullalim* by contemporary Kalinga musicians and verbal artists and points out how this epic form, considered to be the best known representative of Kalinga oral tradition, incorporates new elements as it responds to the changing experiences, perspectives and values of the

Kalingas. His work illustrates the creative process by which Igorot communities engage in their traditions to make sense of their contemporary situations.

In addition to vernacular music, Igorots also embarked on film production starting in 1992 initially by the Vernacular Video Ministry, a religious organization that produced narrative films about Igorot families and individuals whose ethnic traditions and values are set against Christian beliefs, influence of outsiders, trappings and trends of modern living and desire for better living conditions. The films were produced using minimal resources, local community members as actors and spontaneous dialogues. In my study of these vernacular films in 2008, I pointed out that these vernacular films are aligned with the “esthetic of hunger” and “imperfect cinema” framework of filmmaking developed in South America and by being so, they have potential in contesting the images of Igorots in mainstream Filipino films. However, I illustrated that the counter-narrative potential of these films is undermined by content and techniques that reinforce prevailing cultural stereotypes.

Aside from music and filmmaking, Igorots have also engaged the internet in their attempts for self-representation. Weygan (2007) studied websites put up by mostly diasporic Igorot groups that use visuals, texts and sounds to recreate the actual physical space of the Cordillera. Weygan pointed out that the function of a traditional village community is carried over in the virtual community through the inclusion of venues for socialization such as the forums, chat and guest books. Weygan said despite distance and absence of actual physical contact, these Igorot members can sustain strong community relations online.

Longboan (2013) follows on the increasing online community trend among Igorots. In her study of an online emailing community composed of Igorots in the Philippines and those who are in various overseas destination, Longboan points out that

this online community allows the members to have a common site of socialization where Igorots around the world can collectively contemplate on their identity as Igorots. This online community also promotes civic work among diasporic Igorots for the welfare of the Cordillera. By analyzing the identity narratives of the members of this online community, Longboan argues that the interactions are governed by internal power relations dominated by educated elite based in the United States who police the representations of Igorot identity and discussions on Igorot culture produced in this community.

Representation and claim of Igorot identity has also been expressed in fashion. Pride in being Igorot has been manifested by the popularity of wearing T-shirts marked “Igorotak” (I am an Igorot) which were first sold in 2008 in Baguio City by a retail business owned by an Igorot family. According to the study of Cadiogan (2016) on this phenomenon, this fashionable assertion of wearing Igorotness came from the renewed desire of Igorot people today, particularly young, urban, middle class Igorots who have migrated out of their hometowns to identify themselves as originating from one location. Cadiogan argues that advances in clothing, information and communications technology have allowed enterprising Igorots to fulfil and extend this desire by designing a practical creation that is easily marketed through translocal social networks.

These T-shirts have also been popular among Igorots abroad who wear them in their places of destination. Igorot migrants in the UK are among these patrons and later Igorot-UK produced its own version of these T-shirts for special occasions with the personalised mark “Igorotak ed UK” (I am an Igorot in the UK). With this act of identity affirmation and with the choice to name their organisation with the term “Igorot” as identification, Igorots in the UK align themselves with those who continue to wear and embrace this identity.

## **Igorot debates on identity**

The complex history of how Igorot identity has been formed and defined illustrates the seriousness in which matters of identity affect the lives of contemporary Igorots. Being Igorot or claiming to be Igorot is a position that involves a constellation of discourses that have shaped the trajectory of this identity claim. Among Igorots themselves, the idea of who they are is a matter of deep emotional investment, profound disagreement, sometimes division and animosity. This section accounts for the debates among Igorots in relation to their identity. It illustrates the differences in their view of history and their place in the Filipino nation. This discussion informs my analysis in later chapters about the engagements of Igorots in the UK on the matter of Igorot identity and representation.

With the residue of negative meanings attached to the term “Igorot” from colonial discourses, some Igorots have refused to use this term as identification. Those who reject this term point out that it was ascribed to the people of the Cordillera from outsiders. They therefore prefer to identify themselves according to town or provincial identifications such as YSagada (from Sagada, a town in Mountain Province), YBenguet (from the province of Benguet) while others use their ethnolinguistic affiliation such as Ibaloy, Kankanaey or Ifugao. The continuing prejudice of lowland Filipinos against Igorots also discourage people in the Cordillera in adopting Igorot as a term of identification. This discrimination is illustrated by the conduct of a lowland Filipino actress opening her performance in Baguio City in 2009 by saying “Akala nyo Igorot ako? Hindi po ako Igorot, tao po ako” (You think I am an Igorot? I am not an Igorot, I am a human being). This statement illustrates the persistence of the colonial perspective discussed earlier that indigenous people are at the subhuman level of plants and animals. The most current indication of such attitudes from lowland Filipinos is the comment



made by a history professor of the University of the Philippines Diliman<sup>18</sup> saying that the Igorot race was improved with the intermarriage of local women with Caucasian missionaries. He made this comment to account for the instant popularity of a young Igorot farmer whose photos trended on Facebook in 2016. In Chapter 5, I discuss the involvement of Igorots in the UK in this event which has been called the Carrotman phenomenon.

To avoid entanglement with the negative baggage of the term Igorot, some residents in the Cordillera prefer to use the geographical identification “Cordilleran”. This term has been thought as a neutral term because it identifies people with their regional domicile without the unflattering connotations of the term Igorot. “Cordilleran” has also been thought as an inclusive identification because it includes not only the original inhabitants of the region but also the long-time residents who came from other places in the Philippines and those who are married to original residents. Furthermore, this term is considered to express a common bond based on residence in a single region which some cannot find in the term Igorot because it is thought not to have a unifying base across the heterogeneous and sometimes fractious relationships of different communities in the region. Still, others affirm an Igorot identity pointing out that there is nothing inherently negative about this identification and the purging of the stereotype attached to it lies in Igorots’ capacity to prove equal status with other Filipinos and in their efforts to educate their lowland compatriots about the history and life of Igorots.

The debate between the use of the term “Igorot” and “Cordilleran” became a popular concern in 2008 and 2009 in the midst of a national talent competition where two Igorot contestants made different choices about their identification. In 2008, Marky

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<sup>18</sup> The University of the Philippines Diliman located in Quezon City, Metro Manila is the main campus of the University of the Philippines System.

Cielo, who was leading in the competition, was widely criticized by lowlanders for his different look. Critics said he has darker skin and shorter nose especially compared to most contestants who are hybrids of lowland Filipino and foreigner parents. In his study of the online exchanges surrounding this matter, Fong (2009) observed that comments hurled against Marky indicate that his different look is equated to his inappropriateness in the show business industry thus illustrating the hold of lowland prejudice against Igorots well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Fong pointed out, however, that the dismissal of this Igorot contestant based on his appearance not on his abilities, prompted many Igorots to engage the lengthy, oftentimes nasty, comments on social media and rallied their fellow Igorots to support the Igorot contestant through texting and online voting which constituted a percentage in the criteria. Marky eventually won in the talent search backed by undeniable talent and a massive support from the Igorot community both in the Philippines and overseas. Many Igorots were proud with the breakthrough of Marky in the mainstream show business industry.

In 2009 when Paulo Avelino joined the same competition, some members of the Igorot community were skeptical whether he deserved the same all out support from Igorots. It was observed that in contrast to Marky's open acknowledgement of his Igorot identity during the competition, Paulo was hesitant to make a similar connection to Igorotness by referring to himself as a Cordilleran. Some Igorots said Paulo should not get the votes because he was ashamed of being Igorot but some said he deserved the support because he has Igorot blood despite his choice of identification. These discussions had no particular resolution but the exchanges illustrate the tensions in Igorots' ideas of belonging. Paulo lost in the competition and a few years later, Marky was found dead in his home in unclear circumstances. In recent years, Igorot contestants in national talent competitions have openly claimed their Igorot identity apparently

learning from the experiences of Paulo and Marky. Especially for those seeking to enter the mainstream show business industry, being Igorot has become a cultural capital. Thus, from an identity burdened with negative connotations of colonial discourse, Igorotness has now become a badge of pride and a strategic identification.

In this chapter, I have attempted to show the forces and processes that have influenced the creation and transformation of the Igorot identity. The Spanish colonisers used the term Igorot as a derogatory word to discredit highlanders who resisted their colonial intentions and the use of this term understood in this way survives in lowland Philippines today. During the American period, colonial policies on administration and knowledge management prompted the socialisation of previously distant and unfamiliar villagers in the highlands thus the term Igorot became a label for a vaguely defined regional consciousness that was occasioned by a shared experience of American style education and popular culture. In the post-independence period, political turns in the new Philippine nation made educated Igorots take on a dual identity as both Igorot intent on preserving their distinct culture but also simultaneously Filipino willing to assimilate in the ways of the lowland majority. For that generation, the term Igorot then had an ambiguous meaning as source of pride but also of encumbrance. In the turbulent years of Martial Law, Igorots formed alliances to combat government development projects that threatened their way of life and these alliances catalysed the move for regional autonomy. The Igorot identity at this time was projected as a legitimate basis for the grant of certain political rights especially the right for control of ancestral domain and right for self-determination. With the failure of two plebiscites for regional autonomy due to internal conflicts, the Cordillera region was placed under a transitory Administrative region and some Igorots, together with lowlanders who have resided in the region, have come to prefer the use of Cordilleran instead of Igorot to evade the still

pervasive prejudice against Igorots in contemporary time especially in mainstream media. Other Igorots, on the other hand, continue to use the term Igorot as a mark of distinct ethnic identity around which to rally against discrimination. These debates indicate the persistent contemplation among Igorots on their past and future as a people and I participate in this continuing discourse by looking into the life and community of Igorots who have chosen to move to the United Kingdom. In this research, I use the term Igorot because this is the identification that Igorots in the UK use to refer to themselves and it is the identity that they seek to reconstruct through various forms of mobilisation.

## **CHAPTER 2: STUDYING INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN DISPLACEMENT**

In order to illustrate the possible contribution that can be made by analysing the activities of migrant Igorots through the concept of reconstructive indigeneity, this chapter aims to review how the conditions of indigenous peoples have been studied especially in relation to their condition as migrants. My aim is not to rehearse criticisms and demolish earlier representations and analyses of indigenous life but to argue for the feasibility of reconstructive indigeneity as a concept that may be able to include in its understanding certain elements which have not been considered before including those which are novel situations faced by indigenous peoples such as the conditions and consequences of their contemporary migration to overseas destinations. Following this review, I present the methodology of this project calling attention to issues and concepts that guided my research decisions and conduct.

### **The Indigenous Paradigm and Indigenous peoples' migration**

As discussed in the earlier chapter, the emplacement of indigenous peoples in particular territories provided the fundamental principle in the international fight for indigenous rights but, this had the effect of creating a normative frame by which indigenous peoples are understood. Clifford (1993) explains that early academic endeavours in disciplines such as anthropology were implicated in the work that treated “primitive” societies as the negative end of a continuum of social progress. The conception of indigenous people as dwellers of remote places, Clifford says, can be attributed to a vast literature produced by classical anthropology where scholars travelled to faraway places and made their way to construct an understanding of societies they treated as bounded and isolated entities. This tradition of knowledge production,

according to Clifford gave rise to the idea that indigenous peoples are attached to primordial belongings such as ancestral land, kinship and spirituality. The attachment of indigenous peoples to specific, usually remote territories, has often been interpreted to be determining their lower state of cultural development.

The emphasis on indigenous peoples' ties with a specific territory disregards difference within indigenous societies in relation to place of residence. Although indigenous populations have been mobile in search for opportunities and are residing in places other than their ancestral domain, they have been thought to be all living in remote places far from civilization. The perceived remoteness of indigenous people leads to another trope which considers indigenous societies as "essentialist and primordial facts" making indigenous populations as "a distinctly other people" (Watson 2014, 7) especially in relation to majority populations of a nation-state. Another trope delineates to indigenous people a "mode of collective co-habitation and cultural belonging lived in and through a finite set of traditional ecological relationships with particular places"(Watson 2014, 7). These tropes have formed the dominant paradigm in the popular and even academic understanding of indigenous people. In the case of the Igorots, this paradigm is expressed in the propensity of Philippine mainstream popular culture to show sensationalized cultural settings in the Cordillera included to animate the tired genres of Philippine television and cinema. In the academe, this paradigm manifests in the general inclination of research in Cordillera academic institutions and government agencies on documentation of what are defined to be traditional culture or indigenous knowledge systems and practices. By attaching Igorots to territory and traditions, popular perception and knowledge production have therefore characterised them in terms of fixity and stasis. This understanding fails to take into account lived experiences of indigenous peoples in mobility.

With the dominant paradigm of understanding indigenous people as described above, the idea that urban environments and overseas destinations are becoming the locale of indigenous peoples comes as a revelation. The migration of indigenous peoples is a statistical trend described by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2004) as an indicator of future significant change in the demographics of the world's indigenous people. From Inuit in Montreal and Ottawa, Mayans and Zapotecs in Mexico City, Saami in Helsinki, Maasai in Dar es Salaam, Akha in Chiang Mai, Palestinian Bedouin in Southern Israel, Hawaiians in major cities on the continental US mainland to Hmong in cities around the world, the range of mobile indigenous situations is global (Watson 2014).

The lack of adequate social services and limited socio-economic opportunities in rural areas push indigenous populations to seek employments elsewhere. But the more prominent cause of migration among indigenous populations that has been pointed out in the literature of international social movements is their dispossession of lands by colonial settlers and powerful state and private entities. Others have been forcibly displaced because of civil wars, tribal conflicts and government regimes that are intolerant of ethnic diversity. Tripura (2014), for example, illustrates in his study of the Adivasi in Bangladesh, that the emergence of the post-colonial nation states of Pakistan and Bangladesh did not necessarily lead to the emancipation of these indigenous people. On the contrary, they were alienated further in terms of how the new nation states were defined: Pakistan as a country for Muslims and Bangladesh as a nation of Bengalis, both categories to which the Adivasi did not fit. At the same time, they also began to lose control over lands over which they had customary rights that were officially recognised in varying degrees during British colonial rule.

Because indigenous people have been traditionally marginalised and international social movements have wanted to change this condition, much of the existing literature on indigenous people focus on documenting cases of discrimination, dispossession and oppression experienced by various indigenous communities. These studies have informed discussions on the creation of national and international policies to install safeguards against adverse attitudes, discriminatory practices and crimes committed on indigenous populations. Many studies also emphasise the need for shifts in perspectives in the consideration of development planning or production of knowledge systems in indigenous territories. (Chenaut 2015; Kirch 2013; Dubi 2013, Ybanez & Garnett 2013; Oyarce, del Popolo & Pizarro 2006).

On the other hand, most information on the migration of indigenous people emerge as subsection in the study of major migration trends from countries in the global south. Often, there are no disaggregated data that accounts specifically for the migration patterns of indigenous populations. Research on the internal migration of indigenous communities to urban centres is for the most part found in the review of urban strategies to alleviate poverty. Another set of information comes from the analysis of international migratory flows to countries of destination. Studies into the migration of indigenous people to Canada, the United States and Western Europe, for example, are analysed from the point of view of receiving countries. The study of these migrations is mostly concerned with the regulation of immigration influxes from foreign communities (Yescas 2010). This situation indicates that despite the worldwide movement of indigenous peoples, their experiences have been considered as addendum to the “real issues” of global south and north relations, urban management and immigration regulation. By looking into the identity and community construction practices of Igorots in the UK including the creative signifying practices that they explore to manage their challenges in



migration, my research makes indigenous displacement a real issue that deserves specific attention. In this way, it is able to produce a nuanced understanding of indigenous peoples' displacement and the implication of this process in the formation of diasporas.

### **Diaspora theories in the study of indigenous peoples**

Analytical techniques from the field of diaspora studies are seldom thought about when considering the situation of indigenous peoples. In the case of the United States, Ward Churchill writes that “this appears to be due to an unstated presumption on the part of diaspora scholars that because the vast bulk of the native people of the United States remain inside the borders of the nation-state, no population dispersal comparable to that experienced by African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos...is at issue” (Churchill 1996, 191). Also despite its popularity across multiples disciplines, diaspora studies has come to be thought as an unmanageable field because of contentions in the meaning of diaspora as a term. Cohen (2008) explains that diaspora studies was originally concerned with dispersal following a traumatic event in the homeland. In this phase, the term diaspora was confined to the study of the Jewish experience of brutal suppression. This focus on victimhood was later extended to the experience of Africans who were forcibly brought to the Americas as labourers in plantations and to the Armenians who went through massacres and mass expulsions from the late nineteenth to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cohen points out that in this phase, the elements defining a diasporic group are dispersal from an original homeland and the salience of the homeland in the collective memory of forcibly dispersed people.

The definition of a diasporic group was later extended from the victim tradition to include other dispersals caused by difficult experiences similar to those of the classical

instances of victimhood. William Safran (1991) listed the main characteristics of diasporas. Although the features he mentioned resemble the elements of classical diasporas, he de-emphasized the notion of forcible dispersal to point instead to dispersal from an original “centre”. However, he called attention to a homeland orientation which refers to the continuing relations of the diasporic group to the ancestral home marked by their efforts for its maintenance or restoration. Safran also included the notion that diasporic groups consider a return to their homelands when conditions are favourable.

Cohen found that the list of Safran remains focused on the “victim tradition” and by being so, it does not include groups that disperse according to a combination of compelled and voluntary elements. This prompted him to propose diverse kinds of non-victim diasporas such as labour diaspora, trade diaspora, cultural diaspora, etc. He also pointed out that the victim tradition obscures the opportunities and enriching experiences that movement to a place far from the homeland can bring. He emphasized that a non-victim perspective on diasporic groups can account for their creative and productive lives in displacement. He likewise calls attention to the agency of diasporas who “mobilize a collective identity” not only in relation to a homeland but also with “co-ethnic members” in other countries. Cohen explains that this transnational solidarity is prompted by “bonds of language, religion, culture and a sense of common fate” (2008, 7).

Certain criticisms on the foundational blocks of diaspora as a concept were raised by some scholars. Among the comments brought up were around the idea of home, homeland or homeland orientation. Avtar Brah (1996), for example, criticized the idea of homeland because she sees it as dependent on a discourse of “fixed origins”. She therefore proposed the notion of a “homing desire which is not the same thing as a desire for a homeland” (180). In Brah’s formulation, home is not as a single specific place but an array of possible referents such as: place of origin, place of settlement, a local,

national or transnational place, an imagined virtual community or a matrix of known experiences and intimate social relations. Brah therefore associates homemaking as an active process that is inseparable from the desires, challenges and contingencies of a diasporic group rather than an entity oriented to a place left behind. The idea of homeland orientation, on the other hand, has also been understood not as actual return but a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the place of origin.

Prominent scholars working on this field such as Kachig Tololyan (2005) attempted to dialogue with the criticisms by acknowledging that global relations have indeed opened up possibilities for migrant communities and are eroding the links between a bounded place and a people but he insisted that the attachment to place remained important in understanding the concept. Similarly, Brubaker (2005) insisted that there are three core elements that remain widely understood to be constitutive of diaspora as a concept and these are: (1) dispersion (either traumatically or voluntarily and generally across state borders), (2) homeland orientation (whether to a real or imagined homeland) and (3) boundary maintenance (the processes whereby group solidarity is mobilized and retained). Brubaker likewise proposed that rather than speaking of “a diaspora or the diaspora as an entity, a bounded group, an ethnodemographic or ethnocultural fact, it may be more fruitful to speak of diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices”(13).

Martin Sokefield (2006) follows on Brubaker’s proposal that the formation of a diasporic group or a diasporic consciousness requires social mobilisation. In an effort to engage the criticism on homeland as an essentialist determinant of attachment, he points out that the ethnicity or nation of dispersed people does not automatically make them cohere into communities, thus migrants need to organize and affirm a collective identity in order to become a diaspora. He suggests that in order for diasporas to form, they need

“opportunity structures” such as accessible and advanced means of communication, “mobilizing practices” like associations and frames such as allusions to “roots” and “home” and the importance of memory in history which feed into the collective imagination of the group concerned.

In this discussion of the development of the concept of diaspora, it can be noted how diaspora scholars have refined the conceptualisation of diaspora to account for new phenomena in relation of population dispersal. Among the most useful adjustments have to do with the acknowledgement of the consequence of communication technologies in changing the ways in which displaced individuals conceive the idea of home and belonging. As I pointed out in relation to the intervention of Brah (1996), the conception of belonging to a home is now understood as not necessarily determined by being in place but of place. Home is now variedly conceived as intermittent returns to place of origin, as shared imagination in virtual communities or in common practices. This broad understanding of home enables an analysis of indigenous peoples’ desire for land without necessarily attaching them to it. Cohen’s adjustment in understanding the cause of dispersal from the classic form of victimhood to other causes such as transnational labour is also an advance in harnessing the usefulness of diaspora as a concept that can make sense of contemporary displacements. Igorot migrants can therefore be understood as a labour diaspora who experience both the insecurities and opportunities of their migration.

On the other hand, the intervention by Brubaker which emphasises the mobilisation of a migrant group as the defining characteristic of a diaspora points to the performativity of identity and belonging rather a given fact. In pointing out that the nationality or ethnicity of individuals do not automatically make them become a coherent group, Sokefeld likewise calls attention to an empirical investigation of the mobilising activities of migrants. This approach does not presuppose groupness or belonging, for as

Sokefeld points out, some migrants may prefer to be assimilated in the host community. In the case of Igorot migrants, this conceptualization does not suppose that Igorots as indigenous people have a primordial identity that they carry with them when they move. Sokefeld says, such identity and belonging need to be activated collectively. In the same way, his notions of “opportunity structures”, what makes mobilization possible, and “frames”, how are claims of identity being made, are pathways for understanding the forms of cultural productions and practices that Igorot migrants create and the circumstances that bring about such kinds of productions and practices.

For this project, I therefore define diaspora as a collective mobilisation of migrants who are propelled by circumstances and enabled by opportunities to constitute a community under which they create distinct practices that distinguish them from other communities. An important facet of this belonging is a shared desire and imagination of home and belonging. Understood in this way, it can provide an opportunity to illustrate how the notion of indigenous mobility as diaspora differs from more conventional analyses that focused on the conditions of prototypical diasporas.

By emphasising a process, that of “reconstruction”, the concept of “reconstructive indigeneity” enfolds the concepts of diaspora which call attention to a processual mode of identity and community making. Instead of being limited by the perceived incompatibility of indigeneity and diaspora, these terms being considered as opposites, I make use of the conceptual contributions from diaspora studies, that of collective mobilisation, enabling structures, and a transformed idea of home and homeland orientation, among others, to enrich my understanding of how displaced indigenous peoples are able to cope and transform. I show that these indigenous migrants’ continued engagement with their indigenous culture maintains a continuum of sociality between their home region and their place of destination and their residence away from their home

region strengthens rather than weakens their connection to this place even if they do not reside in it. This dynamic interaction between the two places breaks down the older sense of belonging in a place as actual residence. I also illustrate that through communication technologies and advances of digital photography, the Igorot migrants are able to produce creative means of reshaping stereotypical notions of Igorot identity and express alternative understandings of themselves as contemporary indigenous people. Their engagement in this project of counter self-representation provides them with a moral uplift that works to alleviate the distresses of separation, irregularity, changed filial relations and contradictory social mobility that they experience in migration. On the other hand, I point out that their visibility through these self-representations conceal individual insecurities, fractious internal relations and ambivalent sense of self. These details that illustrate the specific conditions and mobilisations of a group of indigenous people in diaspora enrich the understanding of diasporic life and diasporic group formation.

### **Identity and Performativity**

In researches about cultural traditions of Igorots as indigenous people, there is a tacit assumption that these traditions are expressions of values that define Igorotness as an identity. Documentations of indigenous dances, for instance, call attention to the symbolisms of body movements that are described to convey the spiritual core of an Igorot community. In this context, a discourse of cultural authenticity arises. Cultural dance performances that are deemed to have been taken out and mixed with modern steps or to have gone through a process of modern choreography are dismissed as inauthentic culture. This assessment is based on the understanding of indigeneity, thus Igorot identity, as a matter predetermined by values attached to territory.

In her theory of performativity, Judith Butler challenges the idea of identity as an intrinsic value. Discussing identity in the context of gender formation, Butler argues that identity is a ritualised socially constructed norm that individuals perform. In being a man or woman, an individual performs the socially sanctioned form of masculinity or femininity and the performance is constantly replayed. Gender is therefore not the manifestation of an internal essence but the product of repetitive performance. Butler writes “gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (1990, 25).

Butler’s understanding of the performativity of identity is derived from theories exploring the ways that social reality is not a given but is continually created as an illusion through language and all manners of symbolic social signs. She has drawn from Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality which outlines the different ways that humans have “develop[ed] knowledge about themselves” (1997a, 224). Foucault underscores the need to “analyse these so-called sciences<sup>19</sup> as very specific ‘truth games’” (1997a, 224) that use particular techniques to help human beings understand themselves. There are four types of technologies according to Foucault:

(1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault 1997a, 225)

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<sup>19</sup> The specific areas mentioned are economics, biology, psychiatry and medicine (Foucault 1997a).

Foucault explains that the combination of these technologies is referred to as “governmentality”. Though he explains that the term “government” as used between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, referred not solely to politics but also to the general administrative functions of the state, he defines the term more generally as “the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed” or “the conduct of conduct” (Foucault 2001, 341). Mitchell Dean explains that broadly, governmentality involves directing and regulating human conduct, that of others and of our own. Dean argues that the study of governmentality is not concerned with how people in positions of power rule, but rather in analysing “regimes of practices, the assemblage of techniques and tactics, and the production of knowledge and rules” (2010, 28). By drawing from the ideas of Foucault discussed above, Butler was able to develop her theory of performativity which calls attention to the regulated status of social behaviour and the constitutive practices that produce identity.

Butler has also drawn from performative theories of language particularly from John Searle’s speech act theory where she based her idea of citationality. This concept means that performative acts derive their binding power “through the invocation of conventions” (Butler 1993, 225). Butler explains “it is about the reiteration of norms which precede, constrain and exceed the performer” (1993, 234). The performance of identity then, she says, is not merely about routine or reiterations of “replicas of the same” (1993, 226). On the contrary, the performative act works because “it draws on and covers the constitutive conventions which through repetitions effectively produce what appears as eternally fixed and reproducible” (Fortier 2000, 5).



Butler's theory of performativity has been employed to account for the constitutive practices in identity formation beyond gender and the linguistic realm. Anne Marie Fortier (2000), for example, used Butler's concepts in her study of Italian immigrants in London. Fortier explored the ways in which self-identification and belonging in this community is imagined and sustained through various forms of representations such as written renditions of Italian immigration and immigrant lives, political discourses of Italian identity and the daily life of two London-based church-cum social clubs. Fortier points out that the production of common histories, creation of habitual places and performance of shared experiences in this community nurture the idea of common belonging. She illustrates that the repetitive quality of these communal acts has produced an "imaginary effect of an internal ethnic essence" (2000, 6). Apart from calling attention to the assembled status of Italian diasporic belonging in London, Fortier shows that belonging operates through the embodiment of culture.

Longboan (2013) also explored the performativity of identity by investigating the self-authored online identity narratives of indigenous people from the Cordillera region in the Philippines in an email forum called Bibaknets. Though her approach derives more directly from Foucault's concept of governmentality than Butler's notion of gender performance, her work illustrates the discursive formation of belonging. She developed the concept of "technologies of indigeneity" to describe the formal and informal tactics, programmes and strategies employed by indigenous people to pursue their goal of self-determination. In her analysis of the forum members' discussions and debates focusing on shared identities, shared resources and support, collective action, and shared rituals and regulations, she points out that these collective identity narratives express a sense of belonging to the Cordillera region and to Bibaknets but identification with these two

places imply observing internal relations of rule. Longboan illustrates that Bibaknets members govern their own conduct on issues relating to Cordilleran identity. She adds that their narratives indicate the conflict between some members' personal identities and their collective identity as part of a forum and the Cordillera region. And as the forum members are becoming increasingly diasporic, many of them need to move between multiple geographic, political, and cultural arenas that require them to balance their diverse interests.

The studies by Fortier (2000) and Longboan (2013) have informed my discussion of the collective mobilizations and representational practices of Igorots in London. In particular, Fortier's discussion of the rituals of the Italian immigrants in London inspired my analysis of similar activities and signifying practices done by Igorot-UK. On the other hand, Longboan's examination of identity narratives online pointed me towards looking at the efforts of Igorot-UK members to employ social media in its programme of self-representation. I reiterate the findings of these studies in relation to the creative construction of communal spaces and the conscription of bodies in group identity formation but in this work, I develop the notion of "reconstructive indigeneity" which I use to describe the revisionist politics that motivate the self-representational practices of Igorot migrants in London. With this concept, I point out that these migrants not only attempt to reconstitute a community through the reproduction of practices configured as tradition but also to engage in the contest of image and knowledge production in the Philippines which has worked to determine their marginal position in the nation-state.

### **Imagining communities**

The idea that communities are imagined was proposed by Benedict Anderson (1991) in his contemplation of the rise of the nation as a political unit. He argues that

“the nation is an imagined political community because people believe they share a common origin and history” (1991, 3) even without ever meeting one another. Pushing his argument further, he writes that: “In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact [and perhaps even these] are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined...” (1991, 6). Anderson therefore proceeded to analyse the means through which nations, as communities, have been imagined by the agents that gave rise to them.

Anderson’s insight on the role of imagination in community formation is expanded by Arjun Appadurai (1996) who points out that in today’s global cultural processes, “the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work and a form of negotiation between sites of agency and globally defined fields of possibility” (31). Although, like Anderson, Appadurai calls attention to the centrality of imagination in the constitutive processes that give rise to social formations, the latter points out the salience of imagination in the new global order characterized by advanced communication technologies and mobility of populations. Appadurai then speaks of “imagined worlds” to extend Anderson’s “imagined communities” to refer to “multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the world” (1996, 33). He calls attention to possibilities opened by the creation of these worlds by pointing out that imagination of these worlds or living in them provides an opportunity to “contest or sometimes even subvert the imagined worlds of the official mind and the entrepreneurial mentality that surround them” (1993, 33).

I invoke the constitutive power of imagination as described by Anderson and Appadurai in my investigation of the community formation of Igorots in London. I look into how the rituals, embodied practices, publications and social media visual productions of Igorot-UK construct an “Igorot community in the UK” and what

narratives these practices produce about the community. I point out that cultural commemorations in the Cordillera extended by the organisation in London produce a narrative of continuity and belonging to a single region and this holds the London community together despite certain internal differences. Such continuity is imagined in remembered pasts performed in improvised rituals. The performance of these rituals also provide opportunities for restoration of migrant selves injured by challenges in migration. I illustrate further that the publications imagine the community in filial terms with visual and textual materials presenting images of family success and togetherness. And finally, I discuss how the aesthetic productions in social media conceive the community as an agent of Igorot social mobility and advocate of Igorot self-empowerment. Although these narratives are undercut by struggles they conceal, they have worked to sustain a community spirit.

## **Methodology**

In their assessment of the role of anthropology in knowledge production on human societies, Marcus and Fischer (1999) point out the changes in the traditions, practices and understandings of this academic discipline because of the transformations brought by a “crisis of representation in the human sciences” (7) which they describe to be arising from “uncertainty about adequate means of describing social reality” (8). They explain that this uncertainty comes from the failure of conventional paradigms in accounting for social conditions that are undergoing profound transitions. Among the traditional paradigms identified by these scholars to be “in crisis” is the invocation of “grand theory styles” or “totalizing frameworks” (9) in explaining meaning and relations of social life.

In line with Marcus and Fischer's critique of totalizing paradigms with which earlier knowledge and analysis of societies were produced, Clifford (1997) points out that a traditional view in anthropology conceived indigenous people as primitive societies locked in bounded and isolated places. The attachment of indigenous people to specific, usually remote territories, has often been interpreted to be determining their lower state of cultural development. This perspective was challenged by Clifford when he pointed out that indigenous people have not always been homebound. He illustrates this in the figure of Squanto, a native American, who Clifford describes to have assisted the English pilgrims arriving in Plymouth Bay in 1620. Clifford accounts that Squanto spoke English and at that time of encounter with the pilgrims, he was just back from England. By using this image of a well-travelled native American, Clifford points out the error of assumptions about the emplacement of indigenous people. He therefore proposed that in thinking about indigeneity, focus should not only be about dwelling but also in travelling.

This understanding of indigeneity is important as indigenous people, like the Igorots, are increasingly moving to seek opportunities in other places. But even if Clifford (1997) brought in the idea of travel in the conception of indigeneity, he acknowledged that indigenous people do have a firm attachment to a desire for land. There is therefore a tension between spatial attachment and displacement in the reckoning of indigeneity but as Clifford points out, many indigenous people who migrate maintain connections to their land even if they do not physically live in it. Because of this continuing relationship to land, indigenous people who moved elsewhere must therefore be understood in relation to this unbroken connection to their place of origin. It is for this reason that my research engaged in a double-ended study of migration, what McKay (2012) explains as an understanding of migrants' lives abroad through their ties to

home.

This approach to the study of migration has been employed by scholars to produce a comprehensive understanding of migrants' lives and relations. Katy Gardner (1995), for example, analysed the experiences of Bangladeshi migrants to the UK in the light of their connections to their home villages. Gardner explains the usefulness of this approach by citing a metaphor for diasporic culture. She says "rather than presenting the two ends of the loom as separate and oppositional, understanding origins and destinations as the same basic world provides us with greater insights" (6). In her study of migrants from Dominican Republic to the United States, Peggy Levitt (2001) characterised her double-ended approach through another metaphor, that of migrants "keeping feet in both worlds" (21). Levitt considers that the migrants do not move between two bounded and separate worlds; instead, they engage with both and transform relations in these places they inhabit.

My attempt at a double-ended study of Igorot migration to the UK was carried out through ethnographic work both in London and in the Cordillera Region. Ethnography has the central endeavour of writing about a way of life and to achieve this aim, it emphasises an intense and long-standing first hand participation in a research setting to fully understand why and how agents behave the way they do (Brewer 2000). Because of this emphasis on a comprehensive understanding, ethnography is well-suited for the project of adequately accounting for the relationalities of a diasporic community. My ethnographic work for this research began in late 2014 until early 2017. Most of this time was spent in London but from January to June of 2015, I was on off-campus research work in the Cordillera to investigate the relations and interactions of Igorot migrants in the UK to their home region. I first discuss the conduct of my fieldwork in London then present my data gathering activities in the Cordillera.

## **Constructing the field in London**

In classical works of anthropology where scholars studied “primitive” indigenous societies, accounts usually begin with the identification of the place of study, the arduous journey the researcher had to go through to reach the destination and the difficult process of adapting to the unfamiliar community lifestyle. In those researches, the location of the study is clearly defined to be the usually isolated place where the scholar travels to and lives in for some time. In the case of studying contemporary migrant indigenous people, the process of identifying, travelling to and finding their community in a clearly bounded place is not as straightforward.

As I will present in detail in Chapter 3, Igorots in London are dispersed in various places across the city according to places of employment and other related considerations for living arrangements. In effect, there is no clearly demarcated Igorot community that can be apprehended by finding it in a specific location. This situation is what Amit (2000) pointed out as the field composed of “episodic, occasional, partial and ephemeral social links” (14). This applies to diasporic communities who meet on occasion and rely heavily on advances of technology for communication. This situation poses particular challenges for ethnographic fieldwork. In order to address this concern, Amit suggests that ethnographers may have to be “purposively create the occasions for contacts” (15). This means that researchers need to move across different settings as a means to comprehend the field of the research. This approach emphasises that the field is not somewhere “awaiting discovery” (6) but it needs to be “laboriously constructed” (6) by identifying connections and relationships that compose it.

To construct the field in London, I moved across different settings, connections and relationships. My entry to this field was a web of cultural and social events held in various venues in London and in other parts of the UK. The main cultural events planned

by Igorot-UK are London versions of cultural festivals held annually in the five provinces of the Cordillera Region to celebrate the founding anniversary of each province. These festivals held in the UK use the names of the ones held in the home provinces and are scheduled simultaneously with the home festivals. In addition to these festivals, Igorot-UK holds a cultural celebration every September to commemorate its own founding anniversary. The social events includes dinner dance parties, sports and dance competitions, costume parties, religious events and group travels within the UK. Organised with collective effort and resources, these occasions assemble the Igorot population dispersed across London. It is therefore through the performance of these collective activities that an Igorot community can be observed. In addition to my attendance to the events organised by Igorot-UK, I also attended cultural festivals and other gatherings organised by other Filipinos and Philippine government agencies in the UK where Igorot-UK members participated. In these events I was able to observe the interaction of Igorots not only amongst themselves but also with other migrant Filipinos in the UK.

In my attendance to the cultural and social events of Igorot-UK, I had the role of a participant-as-observer according to the typology of fieldworker roles described by Brewer (2000). This role means that I was researching the field while I was fully participating in it. My participant observation began from an observer role and increasingly moved towards more involved participation as I became more integrated in the group. The knowledge I gathered from my initial observer role informed how I negotiated my way through existing relations in the community.

My access to these events was enabled by my membership to Igorot-UK. I joined the organisation after I attended my first Igorot event in London in April 2014. I was invited to this event by a contact referred to me by a family friend. In that occasion, I was



introduced to members and officers as a new arrival and was invited to join the organisation. Soon, I accomplished membership forms and paid a membership fee of ten pounds. From then on, I attended Igorot-UK events regularly helping out in small routine tasks such as putting up decorations, cutting out raffle tickets, ushering guests, serving food and cleaning the venue after each event. Later, I was assigned to help in more specific tasks where my background as a teacher was considered to be useful. For instance, I was often placed in the committee that prepares souvenir programmes, a publication produced by the organisation as remembrance of the annual cultural events. I discuss this genre of publication as a signifying practice in Chapter 4. As part of this committee, I was assigned to help produce content for these publications by writing articles about my experience of the cultural events as a new arrival. I was also often assigned to help take down minutes of meetings especially in the absence of the secretary. By being in these roles, I was able to see the amount of human labour invested in organising these events and the manner in which members with specific knowledge, abilities or sheer willingness, take up the various tasks necessary for running these events. I was also able to observe the attitudes and relationships of members through their interactions in the process of organising these events. My participant observation has therefore allowed me not only to construct the field of my research in London by being present in interconnected events held in various settings but also by observing relations that underlie the operation of the community.

In addition to my participation in the various events held by Igorot-UK, I also had the opportunity to be a participant observer in the actual employments of some members of the community. I have been able to forge close friendships with these members who were willing to accommodate my request for bringing me along in their places of work. Among the places of work I was able to go to were family homes, individual flats and

corporate offices in London where my friends worked as either part time or full time domestic workers, cleaners or child carers. I was introduced as a friend to employers who did not object nor show signs of displeasure with my presence. During these occasions, my friends explained their tasks to me and I helped them with these tasks. While we worked, we talked about various topics such as family joys and troubles, rewards and frustrations in the workplace, love stories, other people's behaviours, employers' idiosyncrasies, experiences in the UK and a host of other subjects. After work, I was sometimes invited by my friends to stay over in their flats where they usually prepared meals and shared more stories. In some instances when my friends were not well to go to work or had to go home to the Philippines for urgent matters, I was endorsed to their employers to cover their tasks for the duration of their absence. In those instances, I was paid by the employers for the hours I worked. These opportunities have allowed me to directly experience the work routine of my friends, their challenges in these work places and their relationships with their employers. With the constant conversations I had with my friends during these occasions, I also acquired specific knowledge and skills which I have not had the opportunity or need to learn before. In the same way, I was able to have conversations with employers and know their thoughts in relation to the Philippines, their Filipino employees and Filipinos in general. The monetary benefit which I gained from the work I covered for my friends has allowed me to indulge in interests which were not part of the expenses under my scholarship grant; coupled with the opportunity to enrich my research observation, this monetary gain may be considered as another layer of the privilege I had as a funded postgraduate student.

## **Conducting Interviews in London**

As part of my participant-observation, I also conducted interviews with officers and members of Igorot-UK. Interviews, according to Dempsey (2010), are part of an ongoing process in which each interview contributes something more to the emerging understanding of a given social milieu. The interview is an ethnographic strategy that permits identification of the associations of sites, places and contexts which are significant in migrants' lives.

My first interviews were with ten key informants who are former and current officers of the organisation in order to get a sense of the overall functioning and history of the organisation. Most of these informants are among the pioneer Igorot migrants in London. Later I interviewed 35 members who have varied employments, immigration status and age. I chose these participants based on their active participation and involvement in community affairs. I approached all these interviewees in person and sought their permission as participants in the research. I conducted unstructured interviews because it allowed for more natural conversations. The members I interviewed and I began our relations through conversations and I wanted to continue the flow of these conversations. Unstructured interviews, according to Brewer (2000), can minimize the "interviewer effect" or the possible consequence of the interviewer's personality and demeanour on the responses of the interviewee. This is because of the lowering of anxiety level among interviewees created by the ease of natural conversation. The conduct of my unstructured interviews benefited from prior relationships I have established with the participants. These relationships developed from regular encounters in the events that I have attended and from degrees of connections we discovered through the length of our conversations such as common people we knew and common experiences we had in places we inhabited in the Cordillera.

Although my interviews were unstructured, I had in mind certain topics which I brought into the conversation in opportune intervals. These topics had to do with the participants' means of arrival to the UK, motivations for migrating, initial experiences, challenges, connections to families left in the Philippines, participation in group activities, ideas about Igorots overseas and other related topics. Rather than a fixed set of questions, I used these themes as guides in my conversations with my interviewees and instead of imposing a structure on the flow of their narrative, I followed the ordering led by the participants including departures from these topics. I conducted interviews mostly in the homes of the participants, which was their preferred setting. I had a passive role in these interviews especially in the initial stages, because often, the participants volunteered a lot of information. When I was in their homes, the participants made available to me personal records, collected files and photographs that illustrated the stories and topics they related to me. These interviews were extended in a number of different times and settings such as during community gatherings, in train or bus rides to or from events or group travels, over meals or drinks shared in restaurants and cafes, over lunches after Sunday church service and correspondence through email and Facebook. The individual interviews with these participants were supplemented by habitual group exchanges over meals in homes, over meals after church service or group meetings in various domestic or rented venues and in different events. In these habitual occasions, the main participants talked with their peers about their experiences in London, their lives back home or their experiences at work as a way of socializing. In these exchanges, where those present prompted, corrected or expanded memories, I was able to note nuances on certain information shared by the main interviewees. In this way, I was able to compare, validate and qualify the accounts of the main interviewees.

## **Data Gathering in the Cordillera**

During my 6-month off-campus field work in the Cordillera in 2015, I attended the cultural festivals held in the provinces of the Cordillera Region versions of which are being performed by Igorot migrants in London. I took notes of the affinities and differences in the home and UK instalments of these cultural events in order to understand the investment of the Igorot migrants in performing these events in London. During these festivals, I attended events which were specifically organised for Igorot migrants. Among these are “Balikbayan Nights” (Returnees’ Nights) which are programmes prepared by the provincial government. These events provide the opportunity for migrants to reunite with their friends and to indulge in local delicacies and entertainment prepared for them. These programmes also become occasions for incumbent officials to inform these visiting migrants of possible ways they can support local development. In addition to the Balikbayan Nights, migrants are also invited to participate in trade and cultural exhibitions during the festivals. I visited booths set up by Igorot migrants in different countries including the UK. In these booths, these migrants displayed photographs of their cultural activities in the UK together with the Union Jack, posters of tourist destinations and icons of the UK such as the Routemaster and other factual information about their host country.

In addition to my attendance to cultural festivals, I also visited the homes and interviewed family members of Igorot migrants I met in London. During these interactions, I had the opportunity to learn about the relationship of family members with those who are abroad and the material investments that the migrants have been able to make with their overseas employment. For instance, I visited lodging houses and leisure resorts owned by Igorots in London. I also learned about the supporting roles of family members in the conduct of Igorot activities in London such as the purchase and shipment

of attires and other materials for the performance of cultural festivals. In the duration of my off-campus field work, I also attended incidental events such as wakes and funeral of relatives of those I met in London. In these occasions, I was also able to interact with family members and hear stories about the apparent consequences of the London migrants' separation from their families. In addition, I also had the chance to know the sentiments of neighbours and other relations regarding the absence of these migrants during important events such as the passing of family members.

For further information, I likewise interviewed the local partners of Igorot-UK in its assistance programmes such as government agency employees who supervise the distribution of educational and medical aids from Igorot-UK and state university personnel who administer the scholarship programmes supported by the organisation. Through these interviews, I was able to note the coordination of work between Igorots in London and their partners in the Cordillera to support local development.

### **Observing the community online**

Because Igorot-UK maintains a group Facebook account which the members use extensively in organising the logistics of their events and in general interaction among themselves and with a vast network of contacts from the Philippines and other countries, I considered this medium as a significant site of interaction that needed to be accounted for. I therefore included in my method an online ethnography or what Kozinets (2003) calls “netnography”, which is a method based in online fieldwork. It uses computer-mediated communications as a source of data to arrive at an ethnographic understanding and representation of a cultural or communal phenomenon. In discussing netnography as a method, Kozinets outlined the context of computer-mediated fieldwork and came up with four critical differences between computer-mediated social interactions and face to

face interactions. I discuss these differences at length because they illuminate the features which make the online field a valuable and accessible source of information which enrich data I gathered offline.

The first difference pointed out by Kozinets is alteration which pertains to the manner in which networked computing radically transformed people's ideas about who they could communicate with, when, how and how often and even why. This subjective understanding is significant because it presents the participants with a more artificial form of communication, more opportunities to engage in strategic control over information and self-representation than face-to-face exchanges. The second difference discussed by Kozinets is anonymity where he says that computer mediated interactions can be considered to provide new opportunities for liberating behaviours not as easily afforded by face-to-face interactions. This anonymity provides online participants with a new sense of identity flexibility. Online social life provides many more opportunities for identity experimentation. With anonymity, Kozinets argues that online expressions of identity can, in some ways, be more revelatory of consumers' "true" or hidden selves and intentions than an observation of everyday life.

The third difference is accessibility which pertains to the participatory and egalitarian nature of the internet which means that information should be free. The internet provides boundless opportunities not only to broadcast one's own private information, but also to publicly engage in the private information of others. The fourth difference is archiving which means that communication on the internet is easily observable, recorded and copied.

The features discussed above all point towards the idea that an online platform enables a conscious and democratized identity performance. In this sense, online interactions can be considered not simply as supplements of offline communications and

actions but very much part of the ensemble of group identity performances. I refer to the Facebook group account and the associated personal accounts of members as the Igorot community online to clarify that my interest is to study the elaboration of activities of a particular community in an online platform. I am not interested in investigating an online community whose existence, composition and activities are indeed based online.

My access to the Igorot-UK Facebook group account was enabled by my membership. After I became a member of Igorot-UK, I sent a friend request to the Facebook group account of the organisation. I was accepted by the administrator who I found out later were either the president, secretary and public relations officer. When I became a friend of this account, I constantly observed activities and noted the members who were active online. I looked through existing photo albums and posts and archived certain materials which were of interest to me. I downloaded the photos and took screen shots of posts made on the Facebook account. Except for occasional clicking on likes for some group pictures where I appeared, I was more an observer rather than an active participant in the Facebook account. In addition to being a friend of the group account, I also became a friend of the personal accounts of many members who either sent friend requests to me or to whom I sent friend requests to following prior offline encounters. The group account of the organisation and individual accounts of members are mostly linked, therefore information from the group account is easily dispersed in personal accounts or vice versa. In this way, common activity and information flowed visibly across these accounts.

Some scholars caution against the risks of moving back and forth into offline and online fields because of the differences that characterize each mode. Hine (2000), for instance, is sceptical about online ethnography because she finds online platforms as disembodied, partial and inauthentic. Unlike Hine, however, I treat the offline and online



fields as a continuum utilized by migrant Igorots in their identity construction project therefore both need to be adequately accounted for if a comprehensive understanding of this group were to be produced.

### **On Being Insider/Outsider**

I informed the organisation about my project through a letter to the president in 2014. In this letter, I discussed the aims of my project and asked for the permission and support of the organisation. My project was taken up in a Igorot-UK general meeting and I received an expression of support from the officers and members. I was also introduced in churches and social events I attended as a student-researcher working on a project about Igorots in London. On these occasions, I talked about my research and reiterated my request for the support of the community with the caveat that the result of my project is my own interpretation of information I gather and that my opinions might cause the members some discomfort. The members told me they found no problem with this and that, in fact, they liked that an outsider was doing the research because an outsider position was perceived to enable objectivity. With this response, I realized that despite my attempts to incorporate myself into the community, I was still considered as an outsider. In the context of this response, however, I understood “outsider” to mean a member who has some degree of detachment because she is newly arrived and is likely to leave. The members therefore seemed to have considered me as an objective party because I was perceived not to have aligned myself to certain ways of thinking about the organization, its officers and its members because I have not lived through events and relations that have shaped the community. Also, I will not likely be present to directly experience whatever consequences this project will have after members read the result.

I considered this trust in my position as an objective party as an encouragement but it also made me aware of the weight of my responsibilities. This position made me attempt to relegate myself to the background, not standing out as a distinct member of Igorot-UK and especially not a researcher who is doing something for the benefit of the community. In order to be so, I downplayed my academic qualifications and I did not express strong opinions about the conduct of the community. I took the tasks assigned to me without expressing any preferences. These decisions were my attempts to stand aside, not to stir the field with my arrival and personality. Although my attempt to be an ordinary member was constrained by the members' awareness of my privileges as a government funded student who therefore did not need to work, I considered my voluntary blending into the community as a pathway to objective observation.

The matter of being an outsider or insider in the conduct of research is taken up by Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) in relation to indigenous researchers working in their own communities. In her proposal for decolonising research methodologies, Tuhiwai-Smith encourages the conduct of research by indigenous people themselves but she points out that being an insider does not guarantee a more receptive response among research participants because there are various ways of being an outsider in one's own community. Being a Maori scholar in New Zealand, Tuhiwai-Smith illustrates that her position as an academic and the economic privileges afforded by this position make members of her community treat her differently. She describes that when she visited their homes, her research participants cleaned up and received her as an esteemed guest. This formal reception, she says, disallowed her to look into the participants' personal space and intimate relationships.

I experienced a similar situation with that of Tuhiwai-Smith in the conduct of my research. Although I was welcomed in the community and in the homes of members, I

sometimes felt excluded in the exchanges of members who, for instance, had codes for specific people or incidents which I cannot access. When these members shifted into their secret language during the course of ongoing conversations, I understood this to mean they did not want me to know about particular information. Some members also talked to me with a degree of formality expressed in the way they called me “madame” or “maam” which is how teachers are addressed by students in the Philippines. Although I discouraged them from calling me thus, some continued to do so and this formal address was often accompanied by these members’ observation of my privileges as a funded postgraduate student. I was often told “imbag ka pay” (you are better off) after members know that unlike some who came to the UK with a student visa, I came here to really study and not to work. I have often felt that these members’ knowledge and observations of my difference has constrained the quality of exchanges between us. My perceived advantages relegated me as someone who is not their kind, therefore not safe to talk to. Although my belonging to the group has enabled me, in other circumstances, to make intimate observations about Igorot migrant life, I was still considered by some as an outsider who did not encourage their trust for self-revelation.

### **Research Ethics**

As McKay (2016) notes in her study of caregivers in London who come from a certain province in the Cordillera Region of the Philippines, the relations among these indigenous people is governed by the ethics of *Inayan*. McKay does not use “Igorots” as identification of her research participants, using instead a specific grouping called Kankanaey, but these migrants belong to the collective identification as Igorots. As an ethical concept, *Inayan* is similar to the idea of Karma but *Inayan* emphasises the connection of a person’s fate to her/his obligations to others. For instance, one should not

abandon her/his obligation to care for elderly parents because this may lead to possible though yet unknown misfortune. In the same way, an Igorot researcher who works in her community should not do any harm to the community because doing so will lead to personal ruin especially if she benefited from her research. I think the members of the Igorot community where I conducted this research assumed that my conduct as Igorot was governed by Inayan and it is for this reason that they were not very particular about scrutinizing the purpose of my study or “the ethics” of my research conduct. I was not asked about how I was going to treat information or how I would protect participants’ identity. In my interviews, I told the participants that should I ask any question they did not feel comfortable to answer, they should not be obliged to do so but oftentimes, I was told a lot more information than what I enquired about. In this case, I believe that the obligation of deciding which information to include and exclude was expected of me based on my notion of Inayan. I have often felt that the full confidence with which the members told their stories to me rested on the assumption that I am a responsible member bound by obligations of care for my community. In writing the results of this research, my commitment has been to the rigorous examination of data but in cases of sensitive information which I think will cause adverse consequences to any member of the community, I gave more weight to the protection of my co-members’ welfare, not necessarily because I believe this will cause my misfortune but because of my gratefulness for their trust which I wish to keep. In order to protect the identity of members, I use pseudonyms when narrating specific life stories and some examples I cite are composites of several people’s narratives so that no one can be easily singled out.

As the concept of Inayan dictates that one should know which action one should and should not take in relation to the consequence for others, I found my position as a single woman to be a constraint in interviewing male members of the community.

Although there is no explicit prohibition about this, it is expected, as a matter of propriety, that a single woman does not speak with a married man alone, for example. In this case, I interviewed couples together. This set up may have constrained the quality of responses, for instance, in the manner in which the women's voices became dominant following the dynamics of couple relations. Because approaching women members and interviewing them posed lesser propriety concerns, the data I gathered may be unbalanced in terms of gender representation because majority of my participants are women. This imbalance, however, may in fact represent the actual disproportion in gender distribution among members of the community.

## **Conclusion**

Studies on indigenous people have been, for the most part, undertaken with the assumption that they are emplaced in specific territories. As a result, these studies have not accounted for the movement of indigenous peoples in various places and the transformation of their lives in these attempts to seek better opportunities. Other studies have focused on documenting the condition of indigenous people as a marginalized sector in support of international social movements that sought to alleviate their impoverished conditions due to historical oppression from colonists and majority populations.

To contribute to the existing body of literature, I proposed to utilise concepts from diaspora studies in the formulation of “reconstructive indigeneity” because of the enabling directions which these concepts allow in the study of indigenous people in migration. I pointed out that these concepts such as the reconfigured understanding of homeland orientation based on practices and relations rather than on dwelling have been debated and gradually reconfigured in light of contemporary developments. I also

discussed the understanding of diasporic formation as a group project, accomplished through various means of convergence and cooperation instead of a given fact which naturally predispose migrants' cohesion. These concepts therefore facilitate an analysis that responds to current conditions faced by indigenous people most especially their international migration. With these useful concepts, I treat diaspora as complement rather than opposite of the concept of indigeneity. By invoking both these schools of thought which are usually treated as incompatible binaries, I aim to account for the contemporary lives of diasporic indigenous people. I consider what insights can be gained from the conditions and actions of these diasporic indigenous people in terms of identity formation, indigenous peoples' transformation and identity politics in general.

The methodology of this project therefore reflects my attempt to produce a comprehensive, self-reflexive and responsible account of the history, lived experiences and aesthetic productions of the Igorot community in the UK. My ethnographic research is informed by self-awareness of my privileged position as funded researcher and even if I have tried to understand the behaviours of the community in light of my long term participation in its activities, my interpretation is inevitably coloured by my profession and my difference as a transient member; my interpretations, including errors and failures in understanding, are entirely my own responsibility.

### CHAPTER 3: RECONSTRUCTIVE MOBILISATION IN DIASPORA

In my conversations with Igorot-UK members about their experiences with other Filipinos in London, a recurrent story I heard was about other Filipinos' impression that Igorots are "taga bundok". Manang Susan was asked by a lowland Filipino colleague how she adjusted to life in London with the remark "eh taga bundok ka pa naman" (especially because you are from the mountain). With this remark, the colleague implies that Manang Susan has lesser aptitude to cope with life in a cosmopolitan city because of her place of origin. Similarly, Manang Ana narrated that when her lowlander colleague found out she is Igorot, the colleague said "taga bundok ka pala pero di bale di naman halata, hinding hindi halata" (So you are from the mountain but it doesn't matter, anyway it doesn't show, it really doesn't show). In this incident, the colleague implies that Manang Ana is hiding her true identity and is doing it well. The colleague's statement implies further that she condones what she perceives as Manang Ana's act of hiding because apparently, she finds something wrong in Manang Ana's true identity. The perceptions about Igorots in these incidents echo the descriptions of the London newspapers in 1912 about Igorots in the Shakespeare's England Exhibition, that Igorots are "barbarians from the mountainous district of the Philippine islands".

Incidents described above illustrate that in the perception of lowland Filipinos who are in the UK, Igorots are emplaced in the mountains and are associated with certain "mountain traits" perceived to determine their character even in their move to another country. Such perceptions are informed by what was discussed in Chapter 2 as the "indigenous paradigm" which thinks of indigenous people as an utterly different breed, unfit for the conditions and sophistications of contemporary life. The same perception also fails to consider that indigenous peoples, including the Igorots, are mobile

populations like any other social group moving to search for livelihood and to undertake other purposes. In a mobile contemporary world, Igorots are still perceived as a static group of people bound to the mountains of the Philippine Cordillera. When I presented part of this project in an international conference at the University of Sydney, a lowland Filipino participant approached me at the end of the session to say “may mga Igorot pala sa London, of all places” (so there are Igorots in London, of all places). Like the lowlander colleagues in both stories I narrated above, the surprise of this lowland Filipino academic at finding out that there are Igorots in London indicate her belief that Igorots are or should be in some other place, and not certainly in a cosmopolitan city like London.

The attitudes of majority Filipinos which perpetuate the historic rejections for Igorots prompt the determination of Igorots to organise and strengthen their community as a means of self-defence, among other purposes, such as survival in the places where they chose to move. Following the discourse of recuperation as directed by the concept of reconstructive indigeneity, the intention of this chapter is to illustrate how migrant Igorots mobilise to collectively accomplish what for them are means of recovering from the entrenched prejudice of other Filipinos and more importantly, from the emotional challenges of absence from their place of birth, separation from people they love and the difficult conditions of living and employment overseas. As I clarified in Chapter 2, I understand diaspora as a mobilisation of a dispersed people who aim to collectively constitute and maintain a community by utilising resources available to them. I aim to show how Igorot-UK as an organisation exercises reconstructive indigeneity in its structure, internal operations and transnational activities.

Because the migration and mobilisation of Igorots in London is contextualised by the general migration pattern of Filipinos worldwide and specifically in the UK, I include



brief accounts of these phenomena. Similarly, I include an account of the earlier mobility of Igorots including the worldwide coalition of Igorot organisations across various overseas destinations. I present an account of the circumstances of Igorot migration to various international destinations and point out the process of how these dispersed Igorots have organised themselves as an international movement with the goal of addressing the common concerns of preserving and transmitting their culture, dealing with the legacy of colonial history and assisting in the welfare and development of the Cordillera. By describing the particular conditions of Igorot migration, I aim to show the importance of a specific discussion of this phenomenon because these details cannot be adequately addressed in a discussion of Filipino migration in general. But because there is no specific literature on the migration of Igorots, the account in this chapter is preliminary and is focused on Igorot migration to the United States and Europe, these being the location of the closest contacts of Igorot-UK. My aim is not to make an exhaustive account about the migration of Igorots worldwide but to exemplify that there is an international cooperation and interaction among Igorots dispersed in various countries motivated by a common purpose.

Following the account on the general Igorot diaspora, I focus on the history and mobilisation of Igorots in the UK. I discuss the members' routes of arrival, employments, domicile and their formation of Igorot-UK. I discuss how the conception of the organisation, the involvements it has with the homeland and the internal schemes developed and practiced by members are able to provide reconstructive possibilities for members who experience particular challenges in their migration.

## **Filipino labour migration**

As I described in the Preface, migration is increasingly becoming a feature of Igorot communities in the Cordillera Region like my own village. With economic and cultural capital they acquire in their places of destination, Igorot migrants are at the helm of transformations in their communities. McKay (2010) points out some of these transformations in a study she conducted with domestic workers in Hongkong who come from the Cordillera province of Ifugao. According to McKay, these migrants are changing the landscape of their villages with the investments their families are able to secure with their remittances. The improved economic status of these migrants' families made visible by their new properties and the pleasant experiences they had abroad gleaned from photographs they send home influence the desires of villagers who begin to imagine and actually embark on futures in migration. This trend, according to McKay gives rise to villagers who become "Global Filipinos" who may come from or are living in remote villages but are linked to global flows of people, goods and ideas through the activities of circular migrants.

The migration of Igorots overseas is, of course, part of the general migration pattern of Filipinos. Aguilar (2002) explains that contract labour migration among Filipinos can be traced back to the late nineteenth century when the Philippines was under Spanish rule. At that time, Filipino men were employed as crew members of seafaring vessels that travelled around the world and as divers in the pearl-shell industry of tropical Australia. With the advent of US colonialism in the Philippines in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Filipino workers were systematically recruited to work in the sugarcane plantations of Hawaii and in the US navy. Others were employed as workers in farms along the West Coast of the US mainland and in the canneries of Alaska. In the 1960s, Filipinos migrated to the US in great numbers for family reunification and for meeting

the labour needs of the US economy. Many of those who left for the US during this period were health professionals, mostly female nurses, who filled labour shortages in US hospitals (Choy 2003).

In the 1970s, a new kind of Filipino migrant came about due to state-sponsored labour export programme developed under the Marcos<sup>20</sup> administration as a national development strategy. Through newly set up agencies, the government recruited and deployed Filipino Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs) to supply the labour demands primarily of the oil-producing states of the Middle East such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates. According to Tyner (2009), the Middle East accounted for over 80 percent of all deployed Filipino workers in the mid 1980s. However, this labour migration pattern changed in the 1990s when Asia surpassed the Middle East as the main destination of Filipino OCWs. Among the top Asian destinations of Filipino OCWs during this period were Hongkong, Taiwan and Singapore.

Tyner continues to account that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Middle East recaptured the biggest number of Filipino OCWs. This dominance has continued and the number of workers deployed has increased. Equally important, however, has been the increased presence of Filipino workers in non-Middle Eastern and non-Asian destinations. In recent years, both European (e.g. Italy and UK) and North American countries (e.g. US and Canada) have increased in importance as sites of Filipino migrant workers.

The Commission of Filipinos Overseas estimates that as of 2013, there are 10,238,614 Filipinos overseas. Out of this number, 4,869,766 (48%) are permanent residents in their countries of destination, 4,207,018 (41%) are temporary and 1,161,830 (11%) are irregular. On the other hand, statistics from the Philippine Overseas

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<sup>20</sup> Ferdinand Marcos was the 10<sup>th</sup> president of the Republic of the Philippines. He declared Martial Law in September 21, 1972 which allowed him absolute law-making powers. Among policies he pursued was the promotion of an “export-led industrialization”. Key to this economic strategy was the “discursive marketing of an internationally attractive labor force” (Tyner 2009, 50).

Employment Administration shows that in the year 2016, there were 2,112,331 Filipino workers deployed in various countries around the world. According to data published by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (Central Bank of the Philippines), cash remittance from Filipinos living and working abroad for 2016 was 26.9 billion US dollars.

The significant contribution of OCWs, now called Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), to the Philippine economy has been symbolically recognized with the government declaration of OFWs as “Bagong Bayani” (New Heroes). Several other symbolic recognitions for OFWs were also created by Presidential proclamations such as the declaration of December as “OFW month”. The government also established services and diplomatic relations in countries of destinations that are meant to protect the welfare of overseas workers. Every now and then, however, news about OFWs being abused by foreign employers remind Filipinos of the perils of overseas work and the failure of the state to ensure the safety of its citizens. Despite these tragic news, the number of Filipinos departing for overseas employments has not diminished.

### **Filipinos in the UK**

Many believe that the history of Filipino migration to the UK started in England when the Filipino national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, arrived in London in May 1888. Rizal travelled to London to improve his English language skills, find scholarly sources on Philippine history and culture and participate in the reform movement against Spain from a safe location. At that time, Spanish authorities in the Philippines and in Spain were infuriated by his first novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, which criticises Spanish tyranny in the Philippines.

Rizal stayed in a house owned by the Beckett family at 37 Chalcot Crescent, Primrose Hill. During his stay in London, Rizal copied and annotated *Sucesos de las*

*Islas Filipinas*, a rare book about the Philippines written by Spanish historian, Antonio de Morga, which was available at the British Museum. He also wrote articles published in a reformist newspaper set up in Madrid by his compatriots. Rizal moved to Paris in March 1889 to avoid romantic entanglement with the eldest daughter of his landlord.

Because of his stature in Philippine history, Rizal's stint in London is well-documented and well-known but his arrival is not necessarily the beginning of Filipino migration to the UK according to Gene Alcantara, a Filipino broadcast journalist who migrated to London and is now an immigration consultant. I interviewed Alcantara in his office where he discussed his research works for TV segments he produced for The Filipino Channel about Filipinos in Europe. In his account, he argues that migrant Filipinos to the UK first arrived and lived in Liverpool even before Dr. Rizal arrived in this port city aboard the vessel "City of Rome" from New York on May 24, 1888. According to Alcantara, the Port of Liverpool is famous for being the historical gateway to the UK from 1699 until 1833 because of its strategic role in the slave trade across the Atlantic. It was also at the pulse of worldwide travel because it was where ships bringing passengers from America would disembark and travellers bound for America would join their seafaring vessels. Alcantara narrates that the first Filipinos who came to England were staff of cargo and mail-bearing ships from the British colonies and they entered through Liverpool.

According to data he found from the census of England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Alcantara describes that the early Filipino migrants lived close to each other in the streets surrounding the Liverpool docks. Two streets here in particular, Upper Frederick Street and Greetham Street, became the first centre of the Filipino community and it was even referred to as "Little Manilla". A particular boarding house on 19 Greetham Street was managed by a landlord called Eustaquio de la Cruz, a 45 year old man from Cebu, who

lived in this house with his wife, Mary J. de la Cruz and their seven children. Alcantara accounts that twenty four people were shown to be boarding with the family whose professions were considered as “Sailors”. In the adjacent street, Upper Frederick Street, a whole row of boarding houses was apparently occupied by a number of Filipinos. They could easily be identified as being natives of the Philippines because they would proudly indicate their place of birth as “Manilla” which was how the Philippine capital was spelt in England in the past.

In 2015, Alcantara followed the story of Filipinos who lived in Liverpool and found out that the boarding houses no longer existed. Instead neat one-story bungalows have replaced the rows of houses and there is a sprawling primary school covering the whole area. There were no more remainders of any of the past Filipino inhabitants. But Alcantara later found that there are in fact various members of the de la Cruz family who still resided in Upper Frederick Street. He met some members of the family whom he described to be speaking with the heavy accent of Liverpudlians and having the appearance of Caucasians but whose faces bear Filipino features. He adds that in the local cemetery, a large gravestone lists the generations of de la Cruzes who are buried there.

Although he is yet to establish clear connections, Alcantara surmises that the migrant Filipinos who first arrived in Liverpool moved to London. He found in the census registration district of Stepney Green a record of a 31-year old Mariana Cruz, born in Manilla around 1830. She was a lodger in 1861 at the Civil Parish of Shadwell. In his accounts of his stay in London, Dr. Rizal wrote about meeting with the Filipino community in East London and Alcantara thinks it is possible that Ms. Cruz may have been among those who met the future national hero.

Filipinos started moving to the UK in bigger numbers from the 1970s mainly due to the labour export programme of the Philippine government. Aside from this, many Filipinos were pushed to go abroad to escape from poverty and the curtailment of civil liberties during the Marcos regime. In 2013, the Philippines Commission on Filipinos Overseas reported that there were 218,126 Filipinos in the UK. Among these, there were 161,710 permanent residents, 31,416 temporary migrants and 25,000 irregular migrants. On the other hand, UK Home Office data on foreign born UK residents listed the Philippines as the tenth largest source of migrants from outside the European Economic Area for 2012-2013. The Home Office reported there were 106,000 Filipinos recorded in the UK in that year. Of this number, 54,000 (43 percent) had migrated primarily for economic reasons, 6,000 (5 percent) for study, 30,000 (24 percent) for family reunification and 26,000 (21 percent) as dependents (Mckay 2016).

Filipinos in the UK work in a variety of sectors ranging from aviation, domestic service, education, engineering, healthcare, hospitality and information technology. Among temporary migrants are students, some of who are scholars selected for postgraduate programmes in British universities. The Filipino community is best known for the contribution it makes to the healthcare sector. Filipino nurses are consistently recognised for their high standards of professionalism. Most nurses are serving in the National Health Service while others work in the independent health care sector mostly private nursing homes. Though Filipinos in the UK are dispersed in the three member countries, with concentrations in the bigger cities such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, Cardiff, Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and Brighton, many are working and residing in the Greater London area.

There are over a hundred Filipino associations or charities registered with the Philippine Embassy. These organisations cater to various connections and interests such

as provincial or regional affiliations, culture and arts promotion, skills development, religious practice and sectoral welfare. The biggest gathering of Filipinos in the UK happens in the “Barrio Fiesta sa London” (Barrio Fiesta in London), a two-day arts and culture event held annually in July near Hampton Court. This event is derived from Fiestas (festivals) in the Philippines traditionally held to celebrate feasts of catholic patron saints. In recent years, smaller Barrio Fiestas have been held in other places in the UK; thus, the celebration of a Barrio Fiesta has become an indicator of the presence of a substantial Filipino community in a particular area. Although Filipinos in the UK would gather in the Barrio Fiestas or other similar events, UK Filipino network remains to be broadly regional. Congregations, households and friendship groups are based on regional belonging. But because lowland Filipinos are mostly Catholics and they belong to the Philippine cultural mainstream, they have more instances of convergence. Igorots in the UK who are mostly protestants and who practice non-hispanised cultural practices are different thus, even if they have lowland colleagues, friends or acquaintances, they have a specific community.

### **Bound for the USA**

After the world exhibitions in Spain and in the United States where Igorots have participated as described in the earlier chapter, the migration of Igorots was largely towards the US. According to Bacdayan (2011), Filipino migration to the US began two years after the conclusion of the St. Louis Fair. A minimal number of Igorots were part of what he called streams that brought Filipinos to the US. One of these is the student stream called the *pensionados* or students sponsored by the American government. Bacdayan noted that the first Igorot students in the US had solid achievements and had distinguished careers as professionals and public servants on their return to the



Philippines. Another stream was the military, particularly service in the US Navy. Other streams include agriculture and domestic work.

Following these earlier streams, Bacdayan describes that the majority of Igorot migrants to the US are post-1965 arrivals. Here he refers to the implementation of the Hart–Celler Act of 1965 which changed US immigration policy from previously giving preference to immigration from Northern and Western Europe and restricting immigration from Asia, Africa, Eastern and Southern Europe. The amendment of immigration rules was brought by foreign and domestic pressures that regarded the former system as a discriminatory scheme. Following the implementation of the new policy, the US created a preference system not based on place of birth but on specialized skills. Choy (2003) accounts for the mass migration of Filipino nurses to the US in her book *Empire of Care*. Although Choy argues against the idea that the relaxed immigration policy is the main motivation for the migration of Filipino nurses to the US and she does not specifically trace the participation of Igorots in this stream, she nevertheless documents health care as a major pathway taken amongst post-1965 Filipino migrants to the US. The emphasis of the new immigration law on specialised skills as qualification for migration meant that post-1965 Filipino migrants to the US is characterised by a professional profile.

Igorot migrants to the US have played an important role in the consolidation of a worldwide coalition of Igorot migrants because they organised themselves and later initiated the biennial Igorot International Consultation (IIC), a platform for gathering Igorots “to consult on issues, interests and concerns that are generally common to Igorots” (IGO 2011, 5). The first IIC was held in West Covina, California in 1995 as a project of BIBAK Inc. Los Angeles, which is an organisation of Igorots in that area. The IIC then evolved as a “collective milieu for Igorots worldwide to celebrate their unique

culture and heritage and to move forward their cause in the international stage” (Callagan 2011, 5). There have been eleven IICs held in the US, Philippines, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and Austria. In these Igorot consultations, the participants discussed various topics related to Igorot identity, preservation and transmission of Igorot culture, revitalization of Igorot cultural arts, opportunities and challenges of Igorot migration, Igorot colonial history, Igorot achievements, issues in the Cordillera and initiatives for the welfare and development of the Cordillera Region.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> IIC held in the Philippines in April 2000, the participants approved a resolution setting up the Igorot International Organization (IGO). The mission of this non-profit and non-sectarian organization is “to preserve for future generations the diverse heritage of the Igorot people and proactively promote their upliftment, advancement and interests and those of related people” (IGO 2011, 5). The grand plan of IGO is to create three continental networks of Igorot organisations in North America, Europe and Asia which will each have a consultation to take up specific concerns. All of these networks will then meet in the IICs to discuss general concerns. The IGO has set up formal structures such as the IGO Scholarship Program which supports the university education of qualified beneficiaries in the Cordillera. It supports various schemes of emergency assistance and development support to the region. It also publishes a magazine called “The Igorot” which contains various articles related to Igorots and the Cordillera in general.

Igorot-UK is connected to this international network of Igorots through the membership of some of its members to IGO and their attendance to the IICs. Although not all members of Igorot-UK are members of IGO and not all have attended the IICs, Igorot-UK as an organisation is supportive of the initiatives of this international network. In 2002, Igorot-UK hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> IIC in London parts of which were held at the British

Museum. In this conference, the participating Igorots from across the globe discussed issues and concerns affecting diasporic Igorots such as the apparent loss of Igorot values and practices among younger generations and the possible means of averting this situation. The participants also learned indigenous cultural arts such as weaving, woodcarving, ritual dancing and rice wine making from knowledge holders who came over from the Philippines. The documentary accounts on the organisation of this event in London facilitated by Igorot-UK, illuminate the communal work among members that made this event possible.

### **Bound for Europe**

After the participation of Igorots in the exposition in Madrid in 1887 and in London in 1912 as described in Chapter 2, Igorot migration to European countries was part of the general Filipino movement through the service sectors especially in domestic work. Based on 2013 statistics from the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, there are 866,187 Filipinos in Europe. The highest number is concentrated in Italy with 218,126. In her book *Servants of Globalization*, Rhacel Parrenas (2015) describes Filipino migration and domestic work based on field work in Los Angeles and Rome. In relation to migrants to Rome, she explained that this destination is preferred by Filipino migrants because of their connection to the Catholic Church. Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion in the Philippines accounting for around 80% of the population. Though it is difficult to ascertain the number of Igorots from the number of Filipinos in Italy, the existence of Igorot organisations based in several places in Italy indicate that there is a good number enabling these organisations to be formed. Based on information I gathered from contacts of Igorot-UK members, the Igorot organisations in Italy are: Cordillerans in Rome, ULNOS di Mountain Province Rome, Italy, United Igorot Association of

Napoli, Cordillera Migrant Workers Association of Milan and Como, Cordillerans in Italy of Bologna and Modena and Dap-ayan di IMontanyosa of Northern Italy.

According to Alcantara (2017), many Filipino migrants to Europe are in domestic work though there was an influx of nurses in Germany and professionals working in the Offices of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. There is an Igorot organisation called BIBAK-Switzerland which indicates Igorot presence in that area. Other Igorot organisations in European countries are: BIBAK-Barcelona, BIBAK-Ireland, BIBAK-Marbella, BIBAAK-Madrid, BIMAAK-Sweden, Cordillera Community in Belgium, Igorot Cooperative in Athens, Greece, Igorot Austria, MABIKA's Foundation (The Netherlands), and Igorot Frankfurt.

In 2002, members of these Igorot organisations gathered in Ghent, Belgium in an “Assembly of Cordillera People in Europe” to discuss the theme “Strengthening the Cordillera Community in Europe and Fostering Solidarity with the Cordillera Peoples’ Aspiration for Land, Life and Self-Determination” (ICBE 2011). In 2003, participants met again in Vienna, Austria where they decided to set up a network of Cordillera organisations and individuals in Europe. They agreed to call this network Igorot Cordillera BIMAAK Europe (ICBE). The objective of ICBE is to conduct biennial consultative gatherings “aimed at preserving the Igorot Cordillera cultural heritage and passing it on to the next generation” (ICBE 2011). These consultations have come to be known as “ICBE Consultations” held in alternate years with IGO’s IIC. There have been eight ICBE Consultations held in various European countries one of which was in the UK in 2011 hosted in London by Igorot-UK.

The establishment of ICBE and its consultations is consistent with the plan of IGO to create continental networks. ICBE is a “loose network” which means that it has no hierarchical structure. A host committee is constituted to plan the consultations which

usually consists of a plenary session and workshops on an agreed theme, cultural night, liturgical celebration and a historical-cum-cultural tour. These consultations tackle similar topics with that of the IIC but with specific concerns in Europe. But unlike the IIC, the ICBE consultations evolved to have a provincial focus. This means that in one consultation, the participants take up concerns related to a specific province such as its history, cultural arts, traditions and practices to enable a better understanding of the provinces that constitute the Cordillera. ICBE has also initiated projects for the Cordillera such as setting up a scholarship fund to support Igorot students' studies in Cordillera state universities, making donations to the IGO scholarship programme, publication of researches by Igorot scholars who presented their works in the ICBE Consultations and initiating outreach programmes in the Cordillera (ICBE 2011).

This preliminary account of Igorot migration to the US and Europe illustrates the spread of Igorots in these two continents. It also shows that Igorots are well-organised with a strong motivation of keeping their culture and assisting in the welfare and development of the region where they came from. This account also shows the active participation of Igorot-UK in the affairs and agenda of a united Igorot coalition.

Though I highlight the unity and mobilisation of international Igorot organisations, I do not obscure the fact that despite their common goals, these organisations and networks have multiple, heterogeneous compositions. The diversity of this coalition can be exemplified by the choice of names of the organisations. The most popular choice is BIBAK, an acronym for Benguet, Ifugao, Bontoc, Apayao and Kalinga, the five sub-provinces that constituted the old Mountain Province organised by American administrators. This acronym was first used by an organisation of Igorot professionals in Baguio City in 1950 to lobby for the appointment of an Igorot in local government. Since then, BIBAK has been widely used by Igorot organisations in the Philippines and abroad

so that it has come to denote “Igorotness”. Names such as BIBAK Los Angeles, BIBAK-Switzerland, BIBAK-Ireland, BIBAK-Barcelona and BIBAK-Marbella illustrate the spread by which this identification has been considered as representative of Igorotness.

Other Igorot organisations, however, prefer to use the acronym BIMAAK (Benguet, Ifugao, Mountain Province, Abra, Apayao and Kalinga) which reflects the reorganisation of the region into the provinces that currently constitute it as a Cordillera Administrative Region following its proclamation as such in 1987. The important change in this reorganisation is the inclusion of the province of Abra to the region. This province was earlier part of the neighbouring lowland region of Ilocos Sur. The acronym BIMAAK is also a corrective to BIBAK because the former makes a parallel relation among the provinces. The middle B in BIBAK refers to Bontoc which is the capital town of Mountain Province. By using the name of the capital town instead of the province, BIBAK as an acronym makes an unparallel relationship among its components.

On the other hand, some organisations such as Cordillera Community of Belgium and Cordillerans in Rome indicate the preference for the geographical identification. Some use provincial identification such as ULNOS di Mountain Province in Rome. Other organisations use Igorot in their names such as Igorot Organisation-UK and Igorot Austria. The differences in the choice of identifications of these organisations illustrate the range of contestations on Igorot identity that I discussed in Chapter 1.

### **Igorots in the UK**

The exact number of Filipinos in the UK is difficult to ascertain because there are no available figures. However, estimates are provided by some institutions. The Commission on Filipinos Overseas estimates that as of December 2013, there are 218,126 Filipinos in the UK. Of this number, 161,710 are permanent residents, 31,416

are temporary and 25,000 are irregular. On the other hand, the UK Home Office reported there are 106,000 Filipinos recorded in the UK in 2012-13. This number accounts for 54,000 (43%) who migrated primarily for economic reasons, 6,000 (5%) for study, 30,000 (24%) for family reunification and 26,000 (21%) as dependents. It can be deduced from these figures that the Filipino community in the UK has high rates of labour force participation and high numbers of temporary migrants. The number of Igorots from the figures above cannot be known because the data does not provide a disaggregated information about regional origin in the Philippines.

As a component of the larger Filipino migrant population in the UK, the Igorot community is a small, closely-knit group where members usually describe relations in filial terms such that the group is considered as an extended family rather than a mere aggregate of individuals coming from the same region in the Philippines. My informants narrated that the first group of Igorot migrants in London arrived in the early 1970s in three routes: health service training, Au Pair system and domestic work. Those who came as student-nurses entered into a scheme of study that integrated paid practical training in specialist hospitals such as Claybury in Woodford Bridge. The UK National Health Service (NHS) was in a period of expansion at that time but there was a shortfall of staff so the workforce was recruited overseas. After earning qualifications, these trainees were employed in hospitals mostly in Northeast London such as Whipps Cross Hospital in Waltham Forest. The Au Pair system, on the other hand, was a 6-month arrangement where a family hosted a foreign individual as a temporary member of the family who helped in some domestic tasks. Some of those who came through this route later studied and moved to nursing and were employed in hospitals such as Moorfields Hospital in City Road and St. George's Hospital in Tooting. Those who came as domestic workers were employed around the same places though some were employed by British royalty in

their West London homes. This group numbering around twenty was composed of young single ladies mostly from Mountain Province. Some of them started undergraduate studies in Philippine universities while a few were already graduates. Towards the mid 1970s, a second group arrived through similar routes with the assistance of the first arrivals. Like other migrant Filipinos elsewhere, these migrants ventured to London to seek more profitable employments and better opportunities. Being young and single, some of them considered their travel to London with a sense of adventure. They sought London because of the prestige attached to it as a cultural and financial capital. Also, England was not a popular destination of migrating Filipinos at that time so the thought of travelling to yet uncharted territory added thrill to the adventure.

Most of the first Igorot arrivals in London have resided in the borough of Waltham Forest in North East London because most of them were employed around this area. They first rented and eventually bought properties in proximate streets around the Episcopalian Parish of Saint Barnabas and Saint James the Greater in Walthamstow. They chose to reside around one another to feel close and to extend mutual help as expressed by the invitation “*Aykayo ta mansasagugong tako*” (Come here so we can all gather around) which a member recalled to have said to her friends at that time. Some who initially lived in other parts of London thus moved to this area in order to be with their peers.

When the first arrivals were able to gain qualifications and stable employments, they went back to the Philippines and married the boyfriends they left. Thus, beginning from the late 1970s to the late 1980s, the husbands of these ladies moved to London to join their wives and raise a family. These husbands are professionals who left their jobs and other career prospects in the Philippines in order to be with their families. Although some of these husbands were able to practice their profession in their move to London,



some had to take up employments subordinate to their qualifications. The profile of the early Igorot community in London is therefore composed of young families with the parents assisting one another in raising their children. The manner in which the members of this community cared collectively for their children was described by one member by saying “our children practically grew up in the same bathtub”.



Figure 12 & 13. Map of London and the borough of Waltham Forest in the north east of London has a high concentration of Igorot residents. From <http://lambethandsouthwarkmind.org.uk/map-of-london-boroughs/>.

Being mostly Episcopalians, these pioneer Igorot migrants were glad to find St. Barnabas Parish as a welcoming place to worship. Saint Barnabas has been an important

point of contact and interaction for these pioneer migrants who sought to establish relationships with other members of the congregation some of who are also migrants from various places. Enabled by the service rendered and relations established by pioneer migrants in this parish, St. Barnabas has recently formalised a companion relationship with the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Philippines which administers to the places where most of this generation of Igorots come from. With this formal relationship, the Episcopal Church of the Philippines sends an exchange clergyman to St. Barnabas who stays for a specific period as honorary assistant priest providing pastoral care especially to Igorot parishioners.

By this time, members of the first arrivals in London have mostly retired from long years of service in the National Health Service or private employers. Most of them have become British citizens with a few who applied for dual citizenship. Some of them have put up successful business ventures in London and in the Philippines.



Figure 14 & 15. The Parish of St. Barnabas and St. James the Greater in Walthamstow and its signboard which includes contact information for enquiries about Igorot-UK activities .

From the early 1990s, a group of Igorots, most of them married middle-aged women, arrived in London via Middle Eastern countries where they worked as domestic helpers. They were brought along by their employers who came to London for holidays. Some of these women became irregular migrants for some time because they escaped from their employers whom they claim to have misunderstood, overworked or maltreated them. They sought shelter from self-help groups of Filipino domestic workers in the UK and other non-governmental organisations that worked with them to campaign for change in the immigration status of domestic helpers under such circumstances. With the success of these campaigns occasioned by the sympathy of the ruling Labour Party at that time, these women found regular employments and worked out UK residency. Some worked long term with British employers who, in some cases, helped them to get leaves to remain or citizenship in the UK.

Another group of Igorots with similar background came to London via Hong Kong. With the UK turnover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, British nationals who returned to the UK brought with them their Igorot domestic helpers whom they supported in getting work permits and later British citizenship. By obtaining British citizenship, these domestic helpers are able to accompany their mobile upper class employers in their travels to different countries. Some of those who came through this route stayed with their employers for a long time while some moved to other manners of employment such as multiple part time care and domestic work.

In the early 2000s, a younger batch of Igorots arrived in bigger numbers through student visas. McKay (2016) explains that during this time, tertiary education institutions in the UK offered study schemes for foreign students as a way of augmenting their reduced government funding. These institutions developed new training courses that offered UK-recognized care work qualifications through twenty hours per week of paid

work and twenty hours of practical learning. According to McKay, such programs offered a workaround for the regulations introduced by the UK government in 2003 restricting care work and nursing as routes to permanent residency for all non-European Economic Area nationals. With these programs, migrants holding student visas could engage in care work but now while studying. Those who applied for these programs considered the opportunity to qualify for post-study employment and eventual settlement in the UK.

Other members of the Igorot community entered the UK from the early 2000s as skilled workers notably as nurses, mechanics and electricians who were recruited to fill shortage of staff in these areas. Many in this batch are married before moving to London so that later when their situation became more stable, they brought their families to join them in London. Compared to the pioneer families, the children in these families were not born in London and have had some years of socialization in the Philippines before their migration.

Another route of entry to the UK in this period was through tourism. Some of those who initially arrived as tourists found opportunities for employment and went through the process of converting their immigration status from temporary visit to a work visa. On the other hand, some of them overstayed their tourist visa and have since remained as irregular migrants. The scheme of employment for this irregular group is usually through a referral system based on the networks of their friends or family members who were already in the UK. Those who make up this segment of the Igorot community usually do cash in hand multiple part time jobs such as domiciliary care, elderly or child care and cleaning but some are employed full time as stay-in domestic helpers. In an effort to curb the number of irregular migrants, the UK government enforced a new regulation in 2016 stipulating that employers who hire undocumented workers shall be fined 3,000 pounds per person in addition to the arrest and prosecution

of the employee. Despite this new policy, many irregular Igorot migrants are retained by their British employers or continue to be hired to do part time work. In her study with Igorot care workers in London, McKay (2016) describes the complicity of British employers with irregular Igorot migrants as “subversive citizenship” because these British nationals refuse to participate in the policing functions of the state. According to McKay, these citizens believe that these migrants should be given rights and eventual residence in the UK based on their substantive contributions to the country.

As described earlier, many of the more established Igorot migrants reside in Walthamstow. Some of the more recent arrivals usually stayed with relations in Walthamstow but they later moved closer to their places of work away from Northeast London. Some, on the other hand, have resided straight away in other London locations depending on their employments. The domicile of Igorots in London has therefore become more geographically dispersed although Walthamstow remains to be a place of concentration. Places like Finchley, Harrow, High Barnet, Golder’s Green, Kilburn, Tooting, Plaistow and Chelsea are among the locations of Igorot members. Despite this dispersion, it is often the case that friends, relatives or town mates reside in a cluster of common areas thus maintaining small packets of Igorot communities across London. Because of this pattern, the domicile of a group can identify their place of origin in the Cordillera. For instance, when members say “Ayna dagijay taga Tooting?” (Where are the Tooting residents?), they refer to the Ibaloy speaking members from Benguet while when they say “Pakibaga yu man ijay Walthamstow” (Please relay it to the Walthamstow residents), they mean the Kankanaey speaking members from Mountain Province. The clustering of members can therefore be said as imitating the provincial, municipal or village living patterns in the Cordillera.

Despite the heterogeneous composition of the community due to their different places of origin in the Cordillera Region and the routes that brought the members to this country, the community is united by a sense of belonging to one region and to one common identity as Igorots. Though the place of origin in the region and circumstances of members' arrival rarely matter in their acceptance to the community, these differences nevertheless have certain consequences in internal group dynamics which I discuss in succeeding sections.

### **Igorots Organise in London**

Most Igorot migrants in London share the common experience of membership to Igorot Organisation-UK under which various activities for the community and well-being of Igorots in the UK are planned and coordinated. Igorot-UK is the so-called “mother organisation” of four self-regulating organisations based on the provinces that make up the Cordillera Administrative Region. These are: Benguet Organisation-UK, Ifugao Organisation-UK, Mountain Province Federation-UK and United Kalinga-Apayao Network. As mother organisation, Igorot-UK functions as the central governing body which performs several administrative functions. First, it coordinates the activities of the member organisations (called subgroups) to avoid conflicts in schedule; second, it provides guidance and support in the administration of the subgroups; third, it acts as initial point of contact for information dissemination and coordination of action in times of emergencies; fourth, it functions as custodian of a centralised pool of resources that can be accessed by the subgroups and fifth, it administers a dance troupe composed of volunteer performers as a representative of the Igorot community to various social functions. Officers of Igorot-UK are elected every two years. In the earlier years, elections were scheduled in autumn but in 2011, this schedule was moved to spring

(Nabus 2015; Khensay 2015).

Membership to one of the subgroups makes automatic membership to Igorot-UK. Based on their parentage, domicile or affiliation, many individuals have multiple memberships to the subgroups. This overlapping membership and the concept that everyone is united under the mother organisation are supposed to make the subgroup divisions permeable and temporary partitions made only to facilitate the administration of concerns specific to a province. However, these divisions sometimes give rise to certain internal conflicts among Igorot-UK members which I discuss in later. Aside from the provincial subgroups, there are also smaller organisations based on municipal or village origins. These are formed to address more specific interests and concerns but the members align their activities with and support the regional organisation. An example of these smaller units are Buguias Organisation-UK, a town-based association of those who are from this municipality of the province of Benguet and Bauko Organisation-UK which is a group of residents from this town in Mountain Province.

Igorot-UK was founded in 1995 by twenty two pioneer Igorot migrants in London. Prior to the formation of Igorot-UK, there was an existing group called BIBAK-UK composed of mostly irregular women Igorot migrants who incorporated cultural practices in their efforts to collectively manage their precarious situation at that time. The original BIBAK-UK members later agreed with other Igorot migrants to form an Igorot organisation that would accommodate all interested Igorots regardless of immigration status (Khensay 2015; Nabus 2015; Bugnosen 2016). The change of name from BIBAK-UK to Igorot-UK was made to emphasise the community's identification and pride in their indigenous identity. In her recollection of the founding of Igorot-UK, former president Conchita Pooten (2017) said she argued for the use of Igorot instead of BIBAK because the former term readily identifies the group to be composed of indigenous

people of the Cordillera. “Apay nga BIBAK paylaeng ket Igorot tayo garud” (Why should we use BIBAK while we know ourselves to be Igorot), she recalled to have said in the meeting where this matter was discussed. She also said that the use of this term will enable the organisation to uplift the image of Igorots who are perceived negatively by other Filipinos in London. Pooten related the experience of her daughter who had a lowland Filipino school friend whose grandmother thought the daughter should not be trusted because she is an Igorot.



Figure 16. Logo of Igorot-UK, its subgroups and sister organisation together with advertisements of the cultural festivals organised by the group. From Igorot UK Charity Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/IgorotUK1995/photos/rpp.1006227139408116/1006239072740256/?type=3&theater>

Igorot-UK recognises two “sister organisations” namely: Timpuyog ti Tirad Pass and Sagunto Association UK. These are so-called sister organisations because the members who come from neighbouring provinces of the Cordillera Region trace ancestry to the Cordillera. Though they do not call themselves Igorots, the members of these



organisations share certain cultural patterns with Igorots thus they have close association with Igorot-UK. These sister organisations have consistently attended the activities of Igorot-UK and vice versa.

Igorot-UK was created “to provide mutual support to members, to foster camaraderie in the community and to preserve and promote Igorot culture, tradition and values” (IUK 2015, 2). To achieve these goals, members plan a calendar of activities which constitute the social life of the community. Among the regular activities in the Igorot-UK calendar are UK versions of cultural commemorations held in each of the four home provinces to celebrate the founding anniversary of each province. The commemorations in the home provinces include a lineup of socio-cultural and commercial events spread over a month while the UK versions are held in one evening with a cultural programme. These cultural festivals are: Adivay London of the Benguet Organisation, Gotad ad UK of the Ifugao Organisation, Lang-ay Festival by the Mountain Province Organisation and Ullalim Festival by the Kalinga-Apayao Network. commemorations are held in the same period as the ones being held in the home provinces.

In addition to these provincial festivals, Igorot-UK celebrates its own founding anniversary in the second week of September by holding a Grand Canao. A canao is a traditional ritual in the Cordillera marked by community gathering and sacrifice of animals held for various purposes such as thanksgiving. All the subgroups contribute resources for this celebration which is attended by Igorots in the UK and guests from the Philippines and other countries.

The Igorot-UK calendar is also filled with so-called “trademark” social event of every subgroup at a particular time of the year. For instance, Benguet Organisation calls for a country line dancing competition every spring, Ifugao Organisation holds a costume

party in autumn and Mountain Province Federation holds an indigenous choral contest in winter. Other social events such as sporting contests, group travels and different forms of recreation are planned around the more fixed events in the year. All planned events are coordinated to avoid overlaps in schedule.

The plan of activities is disseminated at the beginning of each year through what Madianou and Miller (2012) calls polymedia which describes the availability of multiple communication technologies at the disposal of migrants. Members use text or phone calls and emails but the major communication channel is Facebook. Igorot-UK and the subgroups have group accounts that are linked to personal accounts of members, contacts in the Cordillera, Igorots in the Philippines and other overseas destinations and other Igorot organisations. These accounts are usually administered by the secretary and public relations officer of the organisations. The wide dissemination of invitations and information about activities encourage members to make prior schedule arrangements. Upon the announcement of the activities early the year, the members contact their co-workers or friends to swap their work shifts or to request them to cover the job they will miss. The sense of anticipation in how the members have come to plan their personal activities around these events indicates that their attendance is not merely a social obligation but a personal intention. Their investment in time and money for their attendance shows that these events are very important to them. When I asked why they attend these events, the members say, the organisation is their home; *isu ti lumag-anan ti rikna* (it is where my feelings become light), *isu ti ayan ti bonding* (it is where bonding is). These expressions are rather terse and the members offer no further explanations. The image of lightness in feeling, however, clearly illustrates the release from burden like Atlas being relieved from the weight of the world. The image of bonding likewise intimates closeness, togetherness, embrace and warmth which are antidotes to isolation.

Despite their lack of elaboration, these responses are clearly different ways of describing the restorative value of the organisation that is Igorot-UK.

### **Extending Mutual Help**

The restorative aim of Igorot-UK does not only manifest in its attempts to maintain cordial relations among the members of its family but also in its efforts to alleviate the practical and emotional challenges of these members. Thus, in addition to organising socio-cultural events that enable the members to congregate, Igorot-UK also assists its members in times of medical emergencies, death and other difficulties. The organisation offers financial aid by raising funds through certain projects or by coordinating voluntary donations from Igorot-UK members. Among the fundraising projects done were “concerts for a cause”, organised group travels, food, drinks and clothes sales, raffle draws and “bingo nights”. Some subgroups allocate amounts from their funds gathered from membership fees for assistance to their members when difficulties come. Aside from providing financial aid, Igorot-UK also undertakes logistical work on behalf of families of members who meet accidents or crime. In 2016, for example, an Igorot lady was found dead with a non-Igorot man in Manchester. There were speculations that it was a case of murder-suicide but there was a difficulty in gaining information from the authorities. In this instance, Igorot-UK officers travelled to Manchester to inquire with authorities and they served as liaison officers between the authorities and the lady’s family and friends in the UK and in the Philippines. They also enquired with Philippine agencies in the UK for possible assistance in the funeral arrangements and repatriation of the body to the Philippines (Nabus 2016).

Certain subgroups likewise created schemes of mutual help in anticipation of difficulties among members. An example of these schemes is called the “Mortuary

Group” or “Death Aid” where participating members contribute a pre-determined amount when a death happens in the immediate family of a certain member. The amount generated from this scheme comes in addition to the voluntary donations given by other members who are not participating in this scheme. The guaranteed amount collected from the contribution of members enables immediate financial help for the bereaved member and her/his family in making arrangements for a trip home for the wake, managing funeral expenses and supporting surviving family members (BOUK 2015). Another scheme related to subsidy for death related concerns is a centralised fund out of contributions and fundraising activities of the organisation. This fund is the source of money for immediate expenses in case a member dies in the UK. This scheme was created out of earlier experiences with deaths of members who had no family members in the UK to provide the immediate financial requirements for the proper care of the dead person. The logistics and administration of this scheme is overseen by volunteer members especially those who have relevant education or training in financial accounting and management.

Another similar financial help arrangement in the subgroups of Igorot-UK is called “For Good Group” where participating members also contribute a specific amount, usually twenty pounds each, to be given to a member who is going home “for good” either as a result of voluntary decision or of unfortunate circumstances such as sudden termination from a job, serious illness, family problems or arrest and deportation in the case of irregular members. This scheme aims to enable a homebound member to have, in the least, a certain amount of money to make her/his journey home or to manage her/his transition into home life in the Philippines (BOUK 2015). This scheme is particularly helpful to arrested irregular members who are not able to gather their money and belongings in the turmoil of their arrest. Whilst these members are in detention, the

organisation sees to the collection of the For Good Fund and means are made to bring this to the person before the journey home or it is deposited to her/his account in the Philippines.

Other schemes are organised by Igorot-UK members in smaller circle of peers or a group with members selected based on trust. A usual sort of savings scheme adopted in these groups is called *paluwagan* (an idiom referring to untightening one's belt to describe one's ease when in more relaxed financial circumstances) where members take turns in collecting the sum of uniform contributions made by all the participants over an agreed period of time. This arrangement enables the members to engage in what they call forced savings and oftentimes, it allows them to prepare for an anticipated family expense where a big amount is necessary or to purchase in bulk the required materials for a house being built in the Philippines or to indulge themselves in some relaxation. Over coffee and meals, some members were excited to mention to me that it was their turn to collect the *paluwagan* and I was sometimes asked if I were free to go with them for a weekend trip.

All these schemes in the organisation to support the welfare of the members come in addition to many other forms of assistance that community members offer to one another such as referrals for work, offers for accommodation, loaning cash, sharing food, sharing remedies for all sorts of health problems or domestic accidents, making and taking long calls to listen and help sort out family concerns, carrying remittances and bringing parcels for or from home... All these mutual forms of assistance among Igorot-UK members are predicated on the idea that they belong together as Igorots. This deeply-felt identification prompts them to help carry each other's burdens, thus, they feel what was earlier described by a member as a lightness in their being.

## **Investing in the Homeland**

Diaspora scholars such as Safran, Cohen, Brubaker and Brah, among others, whose scholarly contributions were discussed in Chapter 2, point out that among the fundamental elements that make a diasporic group is homeland orientation. This means that members retain an attachment and continuing interest in the affairs of a “homeland” despite their separation and absence from this place. In the case of Igorots in the UK, this homeland orientation is manifested by the efforts of members to contribute in the welfare and development of the Cordillera Region. In this section, I discuss the investments of Igorot-UK members in the economic and social development of the Cordillera which I consider as double instances of reconstructive indigeneity, first in the sense that these activities literally contribute to the economic welfare of the region and second in the sense that these activities allow UK Igorots themselves to derive an uplifting sensation for having initiated and delivered actions which are beneficial for their homeland. Such invigorating fulfilment, I argue comes with the recognition that their homeland is in a state of lack but which they can relieve with the skills, opportunities and resources they are able to access in their current place of residence.

In addition to their capacities as providers for their own families, including extended kin left in the Cordillera, members of Igorot-UK have made their own financial investments in their places of origin in the region. During my fieldwork in the Philippines, I visited some of these investments most of which are businesses in the recreation and tourism industry. In the parlance of the Department of Tourism in the Philippines, the Cordillera Region has “robust tourism products” which have always been popular with both local and international tourists but these products are not fully optimized due to the inadequacy of tourism infrastructure in the region. The investments

made by UK Igorots in resorts and lodging houses help address the tourism infrastructure problem pointed out by the tourism agency.

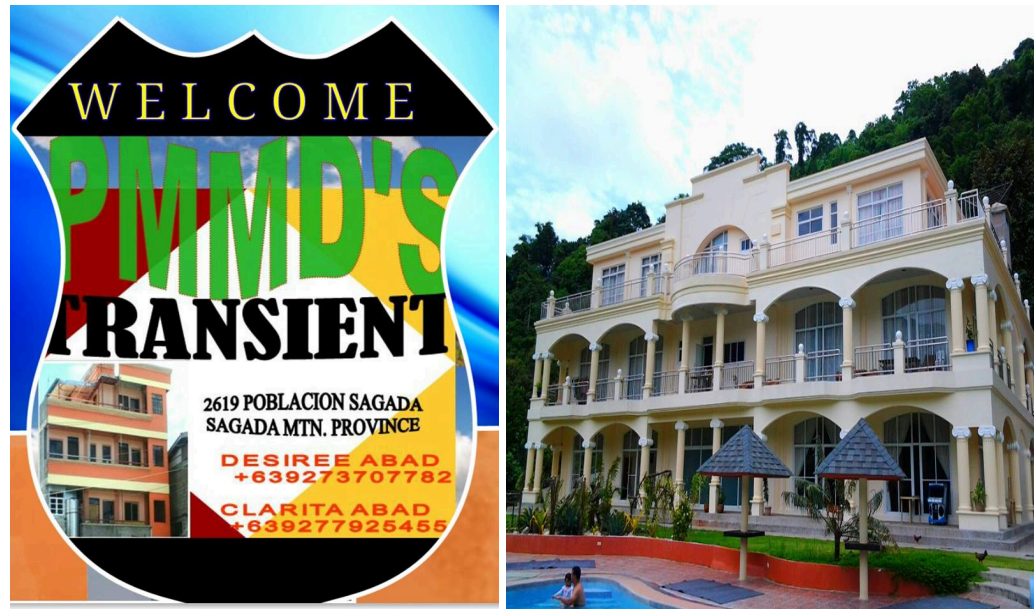


Figure 17 & 18. Investments in the Cordillera made by Igorot-UK members support the tourism industry. Images courtesy of Megan Abad and Conchita Pooten.

Apart from the financial investments made by Igorot-UK members which have stimulated economic activity in their respective areas in the region, the organisation itself, through its subgroups, has made contributions for the social welfare of their *kailian*<sup>21</sup>. Hard-earned money is donated to support the education and medical needs of indigent residents in respective provinces. These donations are channelled through the subgroups and are received and managed by local partners who are usually staff members of government agencies concerned with social welfare and development. Some of these donations are short term such as contributions made for the immediate relief of

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<sup>21</sup> This literally means fellow residents in the same place but often, this referent implies a strong emotional bond

victims of natural disasters, one time or occasional delivery of medical and educational supplies or sponsorship in specific socio-cultural events. Other donations are for more sustained projects like the pooling of sufficient funds for the fees of a certain number of students earning four-year university degrees or for the prolonged medical expenses of beneficiaries with complicated illness.

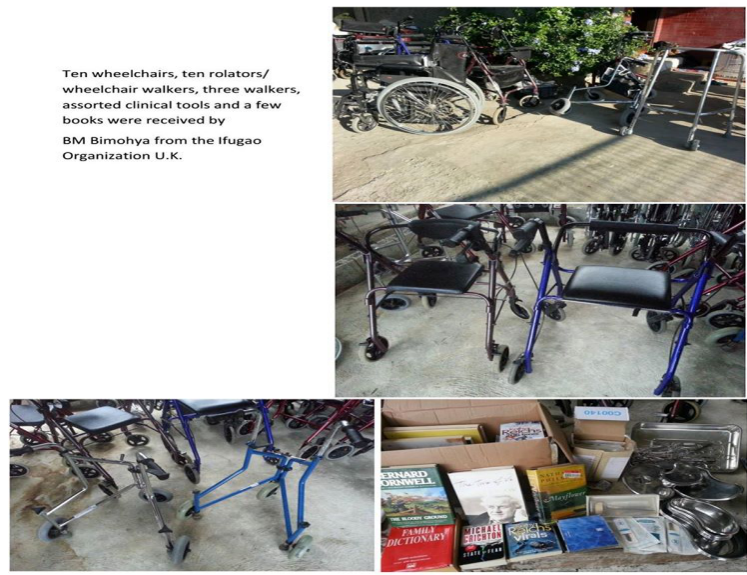


Figure 19. Documentation of donations from the Ifugao Organisation-UK. Photo by Fely Hampuy.

In their study of migrant organisations in Spain, Laura Morales and Laia Jorba (2010) describe that migrant organisations that have greater access to technological capital are more likely to engage in transnational activities. With the enabling facilities of social media and other communication technologies which are available and readily accessible in the UK, members of Igorot-UK are informed, almost in real time, about news and events in the Cordillera therefore they are able to respond immediately to situations where they can extend assistance. In February 2015, for instance, Igorot-UK members were devastated with the death of thirteen Igorot members of the Philippine National Police Special Action Force. These police officers were ambushed, some of



them decapitated, by a terrorist group in Southern Philippines. The grief of the community was exacerbated by some reports that the operation where these police officers were involved was not properly planned and managed by the officers of the armed forces. There was an international outrage among Igorots because of what was generally perceived as irresponsibility on the part of the military leadership which led to the brutal deaths of Igorot policemen who are members of an elite group in the police force. To extend condolences and help support the surviving families of these policemen, the international network of Igorots mobilised to gather monetary donations. For their part, Igorot-UK members organised this donation drive with the subgroups collecting either by hand or by bank transfers and the funds were then centralised and sent to coordinating partners in the Philippines. Some members, especially those who have relations to the deceased, offered various forms of memorials on Facebook to recognise the law enforcers' contribution to the country.

Apart from their material contributions for the welfare of their communities, Igorot-UK also maintains relations to home by connecting to the channels of local governance in the Cordillera. They do this by inviting government officials as guests of honour to their cultural events in London. The attendance of these guests creates an opportunity for the government official and migrant community to inform one another about events, situations, initiatives and possible partnerships. Through these engagements, the Igorot community in the UK manifest their sentiment and belief that despite their residence in another country, they can still participate and are subject to the governing powers of their respective places in the Cordillera. These local government officials, on the other hand, recognise the contributions of the migrant community and they, in turn, invest on maintaining relationships with these Igorots abroad. An official from the province of Benguet in one of the Adivays held by the Benguet Organisation-

UK recognised and emphasised the belonging of migrant Igorots to the province by saying that Igorot migrants from Benguet who are in the UK constitutes the 14<sup>th</sup> municipality of the province.<sup>22</sup>

Other local officials likewise make both symbolic and actual recognition of the migrant community as a potential partner in local development. In June 2015, while I was on fieldwork in the Philippines, I attended the Gotad ad Ifugao festival held in the capital town of Lagawe in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary of the province. Among the activities in the week long celebration was a “Balikbayan Night” organised by the provincial government especially to host migrant Igorots who were home for the festival. The balikbayans (returnees) were served with native delicacies and there was a lot of singing, dancing and reminiscing, but I felt that the real purpose of the event was for the attendees to listen to the speech of the provincial governor which presented his development plans for the province. In this lengthy speech, which threatened to kill the festive mood of the party, the governor identified the areas where migrants from his province can invest. He was also emphatic in his appeal for the attendees to bring home the best ideas from abroad. This mutual exchange of recognitions and support between Igorot-UK members and the officials of their original places create for the migrant community a sense of their continued belonging to their homeland despite their absence. This reassurance of their belonging fills the emptiness they feel caused by living in a place where they have no prior personal connections. The members often expressed this longing for home with the cliché “there’s no place like home”; cliché nevertheless, this nostalgic expression indicates that these migrants continue to think and feel that they have an unbroken relation to their homeland.

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<sup>22</sup> Benguet province has 13 municipalities namely: Atok, Bakun, Bokod, Buguias, Itogon, Kabayan, Kapangan, Kibungan, La Trinidad, Mankayan, Sablan, Tuba, Tublay

## **Supporting Local Livelihoods**

In addition to the personal investments made by Igorot migrants in their own communities, they also support the livelihood of entrepreneurs in the Cordillera with their regular patronage of local products. Because Igorot-UK holds several cultural events every year, there is demand from its members for ethnic attires which they order in bulk from local suppliers in the Cordillera. This demand from UK Igorots strengthens the viability of these local businesses. Among the two regular suppliers of ethnic attires for UK Igorots are Easter Weaving and Kabayan Weaving Arts and Crafts, based in the city of Baguio and the province of Benguet, respectively. Easter Weaving started as a classroom-based activity for Igorot girls who studied at the Easter School, an educational institution founded by Episcopalian missionaries. Overseen by lady missionaries, these weaving classes were meant to preserve the traditional art of weaving which the students brought with them from their hometowns. With the native designs and intricate handwork, the weaved products from these weaving classes were marketed as high quality souvenir items from the Cordillera. From its beginnings as an activity integrated into the curriculum of Easter School, Easter Weaving has now become one of the entrepreneurial ventures of this institution. It has also expanded its product line to include native handicrafts and local food delicacies. Igorot-UK contact with Easter Weaving is facilitated by webs of connections with Easter School where a number of members earned their secondary and undergraduate degrees. It is also facilitated by relationships with current employees who are either relatives, friends or townmates of UK Igorots.

Compared to Easter Weaving, Kabayan Weaving is a more recent business venture based in the town of Kabayan. It is privately owned by Maxencia Pili, a local resident, and it employs mostly women weavers based in the community. This creative local industry serves as an alternative livelihood for women. Kabayan Weaving takes advantage of the

influx of tourists because this town hosts the Mt. Pulag National Park, a forest reservation which includes Mt. Pulag, the second highest mountain in the Philippines. Kabayan is also known for its caves with mummified human remains. A number of Igorot-UK members especially those who are from the province of Benguet either themselves come from Kabayan or have relations in this town. With these connections, they consider their patronage of this enterprise as both gesture of support and expression of pride for their home town. Like other members who transact with Easter Weaving, those who do with Kabayan Weaving activate their connections with these local businesses in order to facilitate the bulk purchase of products and sometimes to negotiate specific product requirements and schemes of exchange.

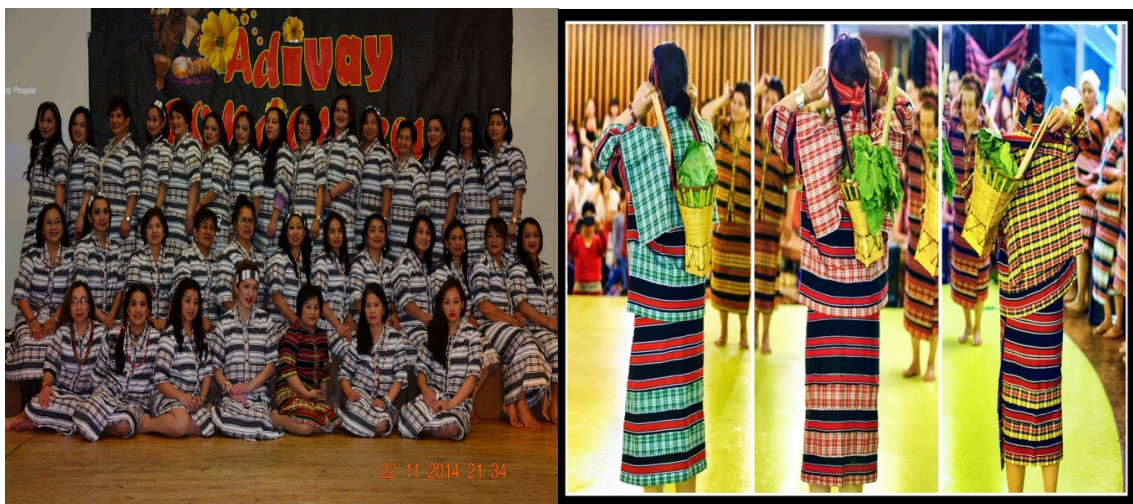


Figure 20 & 21. Ethnic attires ordered from local suppliers in the Cordillera. Photos by Marleen Abad and Karl Reyes.

In 2014, for example, the Benguet Organisation-UK (BOUK), wanted a different attire for the group for its Adivay celebration that year. This change in group wardrobe was decided in order to create a novel element in that year's installment of the festival. The attire chosen for that year was the less popular (at least in the UK in the earlier years

of this event) *bandala*, the black and white version of the native *devit*<sup>23</sup> and *kubal*<sup>24</sup>. Because of the bulk purchase of these attires and the connection of the group members as *kailian*, the organization was able to negotiate a purposive discount scheme. Instead of getting a lesser bill for the purchase, BOUK arranged that the supposed monetary discount be converted into the making of ethnic attires to be donated for the members of a local cultural performing group. BOUK wanted to support this group which they consider to be doing important work in the transmission and preservation of their cultural arts.

The transnational demand of the material culture with which Igorots in the UK are able to perform their identity illustrates what can be said as their act of long distance patriotism interested in sustaining local business enterprises in the Cordillera. The transactions in this process also shows the cooperation of both the migrant and local parties based on a common belonging as Igorots. In addition, the transnational movement of material culture from the Cordillera to the UK, with all the physical, emotional and financial investments attendant to this process, both literally and symbolically illustrate the unbroken connection between the home and the place of destination. These transactions not only bring and extend the home to the host country but also enable the migrants to wear home and care for the home despite geographical separation. In this way, these long distance transactions continue to solidify the link of the migrant community to their place of origin.

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<sup>23</sup> Wrap around skirt and blouse for women

<sup>24</sup> Loincloth and headscarf for men

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I illustrated the migration history of Igorots specifically in the US and Europe and the means of international mobilisation among Igorot organisations in these destinations. I showed the relationship of Igorot-UK to this larger coalition of Igorot migrant organisations. Following the core elements that are understood to be foundational of a diasporic group which I discussed in Chapter 2, this chapter indicates that there is a vibrant Igorot diaspora. In terms of dispersion, the major reason for Igorot migration is transnational labour including early 20<sup>th</sup> century participations in colonial government and commercial exhibitions. Following Cohen's typology, Igorot dispersion is a labour diaspora motivated by a combination of voluntarist and compelled forces. In terms of homeland orientation, I have demonstrated that dispersed Igorots have organised themselves into associations in their places of destination and these organisations are networked in an international coalition to achieve common goals, notably the preservation and transmission of a common culture and the development of their place of origin. These mobilisations show these migrants' sense of a shared responsibility for their home region. In terms of boundary maintenance, I described that they delineate this boundary by a claim to a distinctive indigenous culture and identity shaped by the specific historical contingencies of the region and its people. The activities of Igorot-UK show that indigeneity is a salient element for forging and sustaining social relations that link migrants' places of origin and settlement. In the same way, the functions and activities of Igorot-UK as an organisation make it into an agent of welfare for both its members and its homeland. For Igorot migrants then, reconstructive indigeneity operates in a double layer: that of community uplift and support in the place of destination and that of community development and welfare in the place of origin.

Furthermore, this chapter presents evidences which help reconfigure what was discussed earlier as the indigenous paradigm which emplaced indigenous people in usually remote regions of the world and determined their attributes as necessarily other than the majority people in their nations. The case of Igorots in the UK illustrates the dynamic participation of these indigenous people in the contemporary exchange of financial, material and emotional investments for the wellbeing of both those who left and those who were left behind. The mutual flow of cultural values between the homeland and the adoptive home have sustained the bond of Igorots wherever they are. Migration has therefore strengthened rather than dissolved the connection of migrants to their home. With UK Igorots drawing from practices, relations and values in their homeland for organising a community, for navigating their daily lives and for supporting their home region, actual domicile in the homeland ceases as the determinant of belonging. Although they have moved away from the mountains of the Cordillera, these migrant Igorots continue to define themselves in terms of this homeland.

## **CHAPTER 4: CORPOREAL AND VISUAL RECONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY**

As I have described in Chapter 3, Igorots in London are dispersed in various places across the city according to places of employment and other related considerations for living arrangements. In effect, there is no evident Igorot community that can be apprehended by finding it in a specific location. Instead, the community can only be observed with the gathering of members for group activities held regularly in habitual places. Organised with collective effort and resources, these occasions assemble the Igorot population dispersed across London. It is therefore through the performance of these collective activities that the community emerges. In line with the assertions of Sokefeld (2006) and Brubaker (2005) who both argued that the investigation of diasporic group formation should not be assumed based on a prior and shared ethnicity among migrants but on the active mobilisation of members to produce a community, I investigate in this chapter the operation of the regular collective events conducted by Igorot-UK as sites of Igorot identity construction. I examine the constitution and conduct of these activities in order to understand how they create and convey identity narratives about the migrant Igorot community and the Igorot people in general. I point out how these identity narratives are made to stabilize a distinct community where members can derive a sense of belonging and maintain connection to their homeland. I also illustrate the ways by which these migrant Igorots creatively deploy an indigenous identity as a restorative resource that enables them to recover from entrenched prejudice, diminished self-esteem, contradictory social mobility, transformed marital relations, precarious immigration status and other challenges in displacement. On the other hand, I examine the ambivalences that are presented by the conduct of these events with regard to the members' understanding of their contemporary diasporic selves, their relationship to their



fellow members and their history and traditions as indigenous people.

The chapter is comprised of two parts. The first three sections take up the cultural festivals and social events that are held by the organisation in regular annual schedule. This part also includes the participation of Igorot-UK in festivals organised by the general Filipino community in London. The second part comes in three sections and focuses on the contents of the souvenir programme, a genre of publication produced by the organisation. Although this publication is a supplement of the conduct of festivals, I discuss the genre separately because it has features that present specific insights into community relations and aspirations.

### **Extending Cultural Commemorations**

Back in the Philippines, each of the six provinces that make up the Cordillera Administrative Region celebrates its founding anniversary by holding a cultural festival. Mountain Province holds its *Lang-ay* Festival in April, Ifugao its *Gotad ad Ifugao* in June, Kalinga its *Ullalim* Festival in August and Benguet its *Adivay* Festival in November. Overseen by the local provincial governments, these commemorative festivals include various socio-cultural and economic activities spread over a period of up to one month. Among the common activities held during these festivals are cultural parades, agricultural and trade fairs, cultural arts performances, indigenous skills competitions, provincial information drives and beauty pageants.

Although these festivals are held ostensibly to celebrate the founding anniversaries of the provinces, they are, for the most part, strategies to boost local tourism through destination branding. This concept means that a tourist destination markets itself using a particular theme that represents the attractions and products available in that region. This strategy is consistent with the Philippine Department of

Tourism's key goal of developing unique products and destinations across the country. It is for this reason that some critics dismiss these festivals as commodification of culture. On the other hand, the organisers and supporters argue that these festivals are not purely touristic ventures because they have become the contemporary forms of communal celebration and means of cultural preservation and transmission.

Members of Igorot-UK extend these cultural commemorations in London by holding abridged versions which are synchronised with the ones done in the respective provinces. In doing so, the members indicate that they view these festivals in the perspective of the advocates rather than the critics. By bringing over the cultural celebrations in their home region to their place of destination, members of Igorot-UK extend the celebrations and claim belonging to home despite their absence and separation. Constrained by their inability to make actual journeys back to join in the celebrations, they recreate the festivals in the UK as locations for performing home. Such desire to simultaneously participate in the celebrations at home corresponds to Brah's (1996) concept of "homing desire" where she points out that those in the diaspora desire for the idea of home which does not necessarily mean the actual return to the place of origin. In holding their festivals in the UK, the Igorot migrants express this homing desire fulfilled through the recreation of spaces that simulate the experience of communal celebration in the home region.

Unlike the month-long festivals in the Cordillera, however, the UK versions consist of only one evening of cultural programme held on a weekend. These events usually start with dinner which includes a menu of Cordillera delicacies. Over dinner, entertainment is given by musicians in the community often including the in-house Igorot-UK band called Mountain Music Band (MMB) performing mostly Cordillera folk songs and American country music. The programme proper commences with the opening

of rice wine jar and invocation presided by an elder followed by the singing of the national anthems of the Philippines and the United Kingdom and the provincial hymn of the celebrating province. The greater part of the programme is devoted to performances of the cultural arts of the province. Songs, dances and enactments of indigenous rituals are interspersed with speeches of guests and officers. Other subgroups, the sister organisations, the Igorot-UK Dance Troupe and some other guests also render intermission numbers. There is a raffle draw towards the end and the programme culminates with community dancing along with indigenous gong beats. The same sequence is followed each year only with certain variations on the performances the members decide to present and the guests who are invited.

The conspicuous regularity and repetitiveness of these celebrations imbue them with the qualities of ritual defined by Connerton (1989) as “rule-governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance” (44). By becoming annual rituals of the organisation, the performance of these festivals provides a structure of stability that holds the community together year after year. In recreating the festivals in the home region, Igorot-UK sets up a ritual that connects the members to home but which also serves the purposes of its own community. Compared to the array of activities in the festivals in the home provinces, for instance, these London versions are not primarily motivated by tourism even though guests from outside are invited to attend. They are therefore more intimate gatherings inspired by members’ desire to congregate with their fellow Igorots with whom they collectively recall and perform their memories of home. Halbwachs (1992) characterises this act of remembering among social groups as “collective frameworks of memory” (38). He argues that memory of the past is not a combination of individual recollections but is reconstructed collectively according to the

perspective shared by members of a group in the light of their present circumstances. For Igorots in the UK who confront a double minority status, first in the Filipino migrant population and second in the larger British society, the collective remembrance and performance of indigenous rituals, such as the wedding ritual I described in the Preface, becomes an anchoring that helps to mitigate the insecurities of not belonging. This claim for a space of belonging is made through the reconstruction of a distinct way of life shaped by indigenous practices distinct from the hispanized mainstream Filipino culture and the western configurations of British society.

The enactment of particular Igorot rituals in the programme, for instance, is an attempt to bring to mind spiritual practices based on indigenous cosmology. However, there are certain challenges in these performances because the rituals require the sacrifice of specific animals and the offering of specified objects in order for the ritual to achieve its desired effect. In the performances of these rituals, the members make considerable efforts to be faithful to the actual performances by sending for or bringing over the requisite materials such as native jars, handwoven cloths, heirloom coins, winnowing baskets, unhusked rice and other personal effects some of which have been used in the actual performance of these rituals back home.



Figure 22 & 23. Rituals are performed with actual and improvised objects. Photos by Marleen Abad.

In London, however, it is not possible for the group to butcher animals in public. Despite this limitation, the members persist in their attempt for faithfulness by creating likenesses of animals out of craft materials and to complete the effect, they play recordings that simulate animal sounds on the appropriate moment during the performance. This resourcefulness seems to be motivated by the members' strong desire to ensure that the ritual performance becomes a sincere attempt to abide by the remembered requirements of tradition.

Although the improvised reconstructions of such rituals show the members' efforts to actualize their remembrance of how these rituals were originally performed, the improvisations distract the audience from a serious summoning of the spiritual intent of the ritual. These improvisations sometimes invite animated commentaries and laughter from the audience that make the moment seem like a comic interval. Members of the audience also rush to take photographs of the make believe implements in the ritual performance and this commotion reduces the ritual into a spectacle that everyone wishes to capture but not necessarily pay attention to. With their spiritual function trivialized in this manner, the rituals performed in the festivals do not appear to serve the spiritual purpose they are described to do. But despite this apparent failure in attaining the supposed function of these traditional rituals as performed in the home villages, these improvised rituals in London materially manifest the members' attempt at collective remembering of a past around which they can secure a common belonging. These migrants deploy their memories of indigenous rituals they witnessed and practiced back in their home villages to perform a likeness which they can use as a warrant for their gathering.

It is interesting, however, that the performance of these rituals is presented as integral part of Igorot identity and yet they are subsequently described as matters of the

past. These members therefore appear to simultaneously own and reject these practices. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> instalment of *Gotad ad UK* by the Ifugao Organisation-UK, for example, the members performed a ritual called *Bultung* described as a mechanism for the settlement of land boundary disputes. In this performance, a man moved the boundary marker to extend his property thus causing a quarrel with his neighbour. To settle this boundary dispute, the neighbours are made to engage in a *bultung* which is a wrestling match within the parameters of the disputed boundary. The extent of land where the winner is able to displace his opponent from the boundary becomes the new boundary. After the *bultong*, the competitors agree on the results and animals are sacrificed for a community gathering to seal the agreement and to cleanse the ill feelings brought about by the quarrel. After the performance of this ritual in the programme, the master of ceremony commented at how expensive it was in the past to settle a disagreement because of the need to sacrifice animals. He pointed out that living is much less expensive now that the Ifugao people have become Christians. With these remarks, this member (who was the main character in the performance) distances himself from the very ritual his group performed as the highlight of that year's *Gotad ad UK*.

The contradiction in the attitude of this member illustrates a general ambivalence of migrant Igorots about the culture on which they claim to hinge a distinct identity. The example above shows that one reason for this ambivalence is religious conversion. By becoming Christians, Igorots have given up their pagan ways which, according to Christian discourse, were irrational. In the comment of the member above, this irrationality is manifested in the economic challenge posed by the sacrifice of animals in rituals. It should be asked then why in their migration, Christianized Igorots perform a pagan ritual they renounced as a mark of an indigenous culture they claim to possess. I suggest that the answer to this question can be partly gleaned from the description of

Igorot-UK as an organisation that has provided Igorot migrants' need for a "cultural fix away from home." This description refers to the community's desire and need for a unifying principle, and this unifying value they cannot find in Christian practices because Christianity as a universal creed, especially as practiced in the sombre rituals of London churches, cannot provide a specific anchoring, a "cultural fix" close enough to home to be useful and true. Christianity likewise identifies Igorots with mainstream Filipino culture therefore it signals the loss of a distinct way of life. Thus, even if migrant Igorots as Christians have abandoned the practice of these pagan rituals, they return to them for a sense of grounding. This incorporation of pagan rituals is especially made acceptable by the fact that some Christian Igorots practice a syncretic kind of Christianity where indigenous elements are merged into Christian practice.

In addition to religious conversion, another reason that causes ambivalence among Igorot migrants towards the culture they perform is a certain sense of shame over things "in the past." This can be observed in the *Ullalim* Festival of the United Kalinga Apayao Network in 2014 where the group presented a programme of dances they called "Dances of the Kalinga Warriors". In the overview given by a member about the programme, she had to recount the history of warring tribes and the practice of head taking in their province in the old days as a context of the dances. In her speech, she was careful to disassociate the present Kalinga people from the old days because, she said, "we are educated now" and head hunting was "just culture". She went on to explain that head hunting has died out long time ago and the dances are merely remembrances of those extinct practices.

In this member's act of distancing herself and members of her group from a history of tribal war and head hunting, she desires to announce the transformation of the Kalinga people as educated modern people as manifested by their movement from the

mountains of their province to the cosmopolitan space of London. Like the question posed earlier, why then do these modern migrant Igorots perform and claim these dances that were part of a “savage history” as marker of a distinct culture that unites them in migration?

Du Bois explored this split in self-consciousness through his concept of “double consciousness” developed in his 1903 publication *The Souls of Black Folk*. According to Du Bois, double consciousness describes the individual sensation of feeling as though one’s identity is divided into several parts, making it difficult or impossible to have one unified identity. Du Bois spoke of this within the context of race relations in the United States. He asserted that since Black Americans have lived in a society that has historically repressed and devalued them, it has become difficult for them to unify their black identity with their American identity. Double consciousness forces Black people to not only view themselves from their own unique perspective, but to also view themselves as they might be perceived by the outside White world. As a result, Black people can suffer from a damaged self-image shaped by the perceptions and treatment of White people. According to Du Bois, the prejudices of White Americans elicit self-questioning and self-disparagement among Black people and their lives become shaped by stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream culture.

In his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (2008) also takes up the idea of self-fragmentation by speaking about the consequences of French colonisation on its African subjects such as himself. According to Fanon, colonised subjects are forced to internalize themselves as “other” because the “Negro” is deemed to epitomize everything that the colonizing French are not. The colonisers are civilised, rational, intelligent while the “Negro” remains “other” to all these qualities against which colonising peoples derive their sense of superiority and normality. *Black Skin, White Masks* depicts those colonised



by French imperialism doomed to hold a traumatic belief in their own inferiority. One response to such trauma is to strive to escape it by embracing the “civilised” ideals of the French “motherland”. But Fanon says, no matter how hard the colonised “Negro” try to accept the education, values and language of France, they are never accepted on equal terms.

As formerly colonised people and as a minority group in the Philippines who suffered a history of discrimination, Igorots, like Black Americans and French colonised Africans, also go through a double consciousness and a traumatic belief in their own inferiority. In the case of the Kalinga represented by the actions of the lady described above, they cannot reconcile their present self as modern educated Igorots with their history because they accept the colonial perception that the practice of head hunting by their ancestors is an indication of savagery. They fail to consider that this label was ascribed to Igorots by Spanish colonisers who failed to defeat Igorot resistance. A further fracture in their self-concept is illustrated by their desire as migrants to have a distinct identity in a cosmopolitan city and this desire leads them back to the same culture they reject. In order to manage this conflict, they attempt to divorce and therefore sanitize their current performance of the dances of the Igorot warriors in London from the context of warfare in the past. These dances are therefore choreographed as impressive aesthetic spectacles fascinating enough to encourage among members an affective identification and among the audience an affirming gesture. In the midst of the performance, the “savage history” of these dances is forgotten. The group therefore succeeds in presenting themselves as modern educated Igorots by a process of selective remembering.

In their invitations for their festivals, the Igorot community claims its cultural performances as “authentic Igorot culture” thereby claiming that they have carried with them from the Cordillera a core of original, carefully preserved culture wholly brought

over to the UK. As has been described above, however, their performances are improvised according to the contingencies of their current situation. Therefore, what they perform are sets of collectively remembered practices which through repeated performative acts produce the imaginary effect of what Fortier calls an “internal ethnic essence” (2000, 5) transmitted through stylized acts of transfer to younger members of the community. The regularity of certain parts in the programmes such as *oggayam* (traditional chanted prayer) and *tukab di gusi* (opening of rice wine jar) as routine opening sequences in every event, for example, provides a structure of experience for these young members as they absorb the practice of their community. The festivals are therefore not simply forms of long distance participation to the cultural commemorations in the home region but are means of consolidating an Igorot community in the UK through a claim for a distinct identity.

### **Embodying Igorot identity in Diaspora**

In addition to the performance of festivals to commemorate the founding anniversary of home provinces as discussed in the earlier section, Igorot-UK also holds a cultural event to commemorate its own founding as an organisation. This anniversary celebration is called the Grand Canao which is held every second Saturday of September. Its name is derived from the traditional ritual in the Cordillera which is held for various reasons such as thanksgiving. The subgroups contribute to this celebration by taking on specific tasks and performing a cultural number that represents their province. As a coming together of all the provincial subgroups of Igorot-UK, the Grand Canao is the biggest event of the year. Compared to the commemorative festivals for the provinces, the Grand Canao as an event directly serves an internal purpose. It is the community’s attempt to pronounce and legitimize the history of Igorot-UK and by extension the

presence and unity of Igorots in the UK. The convergence of the provincial subgroups to both work and celebrate in this event manifests this unity among the members.

As Igorot-UK officers would describe it, the Grand Canao is a showcase of Igorot culture and this is so because the provincial groupings perform distinct practices which are then all taken collectively as components of a unified Igorot identity. The subgroups vary their presentations each year by digging into their provincial cultural traditions and planning a creative rendering of these in the annual programme but they always wear their distinct ethnic attires and include their distinguishing gong beats and dance steps in their performances. In this way, the Grand Canao becomes an occasion where Igorotness takes a corporeal manifestation.



Figure 24 & 25. Performances in the Grand Canao. Photos by Karl Reyes.

The demand of this celebration to express and define identity through the body creates among Igorot-UK members a feeling of necessity for bodily discipline. Many of the members I interviewee remarked that in coming to the UK they have felt they needed to learn the skills of their culture, something which they said they took for granted when they were back home. They said they felt inadequate when they joined in the celebrations

because they cannot follow the steps properly or join in the performances. One interviewee said that in the UK she felt she needed to become “more Igorot” than before. These members have therefore initiated a project of self-learning to be able to participate as proper members of the Igorot community. A measure of this project is the adjustment of their bodily behaviours in order to respond to the demands of cultural performance. For example, women have taken up traditional roles of men in the performance of certain rituals because there are more women than men in the community. Although the playing of musical instruments is a traditional male domain, some women have also intentionally learned to play the *gangsa* (gongs), *solibao* (percussion instrument) and *takik* (metal instrument) so that their performances can push through even with the shortage or absence of male members.

In addition to learning the required cultural skills, members have also pointed out the sudden need to own and wear Igorot attires which they did not find all too necessary before. They have therefore invested in the purchase of various attires in order to have choices for the performances they need to do for the annual Grand Canao. Being dressed in traditional attire is especially poignant for men who need to wear G-strings which involves the exposure of the body. As this is so, the wearing of G-strings has become considered to be an indication of genuine embrace for being Igorot. It also becomes a certain measure of masculinity, thus male members of the Igorot population in London who are reluctant to wear G-strings in these festivals or those who feel the need to wear a garment beneath the loincloth are teased for being inadequate Igorot men. On the other hand, the male children of members married to British nationals who wear G-strings without question are praised for being true Igorots despite their mixed ancestry. In this case, the traditionally reserved Igorot men are suddenly thrust into bodily display and

as they are also expected to dance, play musical instruments and act out characters, they face the demand of having to be ultimate performers.

The investment of the body in the performance of Igorot culture as illustrated in the above examples of behaviours that members needed to assume shows that being Igorot is not an innate character but a contingent belonging. It operates in bodily discipline that enables identification with a community that coheres through the repetition of the same ensemble of actions. In his study of bodily practices as means of transmitting and sustaining memories of the past, Paul Connerton (1989) asserts that “bodies keep the past in their continuing ability to perform certain skilled actions” (72). In making their bodies learn and perform the skills of dancing, playing instruments and wearing attires, Igorot members have therefore acquired a set of habitual bodily skills that re-enact aspects of Igorotness remembered from the past. The project of embodying these skills is not only motivated by the willingness to participate in Grand Canao performances and belonging to the community but to make one’s body become the sedimentation of Igorot knowledge that will keep the community together. This kind of understanding of the role of one’s body in advancing the unity of the group and helping to achieve its purposes may explain why Igorot members willingly take up the project of self-learning as personal vocation. This involvement gives them a sense of confidence derived from becoming keepers and performers of cultural knowledge.

Such sense of worth is valuable for Igorot migrants who go through what Rhacel Parrenas (2015) calls “contradictory social mobility” in which she describes the frustrations of educated Filipino migrants, some coming from middle class backgrounds, who suddenly find themselves in menial occupations abroad. Parrenas says this is a contradictory position because these migrants feel demoted due to the humble nature of their jobs even if they earn considerably more in these employments compared to the

more prestigious but low-paying jobs they had in the Philippines. Indeed, some of the most active participants in the performances of Igorot-UK are well-educated professionals who used to be employed in esteemed positions but are now working as carers, domestic helpers, porters and drivers. This is the story of Manang Lucia, one among the most active members of Igorot-UK who served various offices of the regional organisation and a subgroup. She had a professional job and she comes from a middle class family but she now works as a regular carer for a long time employer after earlier multiple part time jobs as cleaner, baby sitter, waitress and hotel staff. Among the many stories she told me about her experiences in London, the most vivid image of her diminished self-esteem that I remember is her story about the first time she cleaned a comfort room. She was facedown brushing the toilet bowl, she said, then without notice, tears filled her eyes, and with tightening chest, she looked at her face reflected in the sparkling porcelain and she asked herself why she was there cleaning the remnants of other people's excrement while most of her life she had servants at home who made her life convenient. But she said she thought about her daughter she is sending to medical school and her ailing husband who needs regular medical care so she wiped her face after a moment and got up to continue with her cleaning.

For members like Manang Lucia who have experienced the desolation of having to do with menial jobs in their move to the UK, the embodiment and performance of Igorot culture becomes a means for reclaiming their self-esteem. The lowliness of their current occupations and the tiredness of their bodies from such physically and emotionally challenging jobs are compensated by the authority of their bodies in possessing and performing cultural knowledge and skills. Added to this, they also receive commendations from their network of family and friends for keeping their Igorot identity and for performing their culture in the UK. For these Igorot migrants who have and are

experiencing the injury of diminished self-esteem, their bodily performance of their indigenous culture is their redeeming grace.

I also considered that in addition to working out a contradictory social mobility, some members find value in performing Igorotness in managing other personal challenges. Having attended the Grand Canaos held in London for three years, I had the opportunity to follow the transformation of some members from being reluctant participants to capable performers who invited great interest from viewers. In particular, two of these are men who are known in the community to be henpecked husbands. Their emasculated status is a matter that their co-members discuss with both amusement and sympathy. According to stories and opinions of members I have been able to talk to, the situation of these husbands is related to the fact that they came to the UK as dependents of their wives. In this case, these men are said to feel they needed to abide by their wives whose prior knowledge and connections enabled them to find jobs on their move to London. It was also related to me that these men are uneasy with the newfound confidence of their wives in asserting personal liberties such as in manners of dress, language use, rights to socialize and other such assertions that claim greater independence. In her study with a community of Filipina domestic workers in Hongkong, Constable (2007) discussed similar transformations of women for having stayed a long time in this cosmopolitan environment. Constable pointed out that these transformations have caused strains in the marital relations of married women with husbands back in the Philippines who have retained patriarchal values. It appears that like those husbands who have remained in the home country, these two henpecked husbands were not quite prepared to handle the transformed versions of the women they married. Though gender relation in the Cordillera has an egalitarian treatment of the sexes therefore women can inherit properties and participate in family decision-making, there is still a certain

inclination to confer prominence to men by virtue of their position as carriers of the family name and to expect modest behaviour from women who must keep the family. It appears that the men in this case are having some difficulty in dealing with their wives' exercise of freedom encouraged by the social norms in this country. In one event I noted these two men, half-drunk, playing guitars and gleefully singing a popular folk song of heartbreak: "*Annay, Annay, ti pusok nasakit, naut-ut la unay*" (Ouch, Ouch, my heart is aching, it is so painful). Having known their stories, I heard their sadness in the song made even more evident with their attempt to infuse delight in the singing of an obviously sad song.

Having seen these men in their low moments and seeing them in the Grand Canaos, I was inclined to think that their participation in cultural performances has given them opportunity to reclaim a sense of manhood. In their performances, they command attention and interest in their bodily movements and skill. Donning their G-strings, they delight the audience by adding their personal flares in their dance performances. In more recent events, they have also diversified their performances by incorporating comic acts and outlandish accessories. In these events, they are photographed and filmed and these documentations are uploaded in social media where soon, their friends and family and even strangers, express approval, admiration and encouragement. They have therefore become local celebrities and by being so, their known emasculation appears to be released with their newfound confidence. I think it is in this way that they have come to feel the value of embodying their Igorot identity. This reworking of insecurity through bodily performance of culture illustrates the reconstructive value of embodied indigeneity. It also shows that Igorotness, as an affirmed indigenous identity is not a pre-existing essence but a conscious act made, in this case, to enable migrant bodies to cope with the challenges of changed relations in their new environment.



Despite incorporating its members to a community where they can belong, the inclination of the Grand Canao for performances from its provincial subgroups sometimes leads to a feeling of competition instead of collective celebration. The groups can become obsessed with presenting the best performance or topping the province that made what they think as the best performance in the past year. On the other hand, members of a subgroup sometimes take a losing attitude and not care about the quality of its performance. In this case, the aim of Igorot-UK to foster a unified Igorot identity out of the diverse provincial cultures of the region fails to materialize. The coalition of all the Cordillera peoples in one collective identity is sometimes abandoned in favour of provincial loyalties. I elaborate on this matter in the next section where I take up an event that reveals the fractious relations in the organisation.

### **On Keeping the Igorot Family**

In 2015, it was decided by Igorot-UK that instead of holding the traditional Grand Canao to celebrate the 19<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary of the organisation, it will hold the Miss Igorot UK beauty pageant to raise funds for the projects of the provincial organisations. Though fund raising was the primary motivation for this event, the organisers conceived the pageant as a showcase for Igorot culture in order to retain a sense of the usual cultural programme. The event followed the typical pageant format of candidates being judged according to scores garnered in different categories of attires, but the conduct of the pageant was infused with certain nuances of Igorot practice such as the inclusion of native attires and production numbers. The winner was also judged according to how she was perceived to embody the core values of being Igorot.

The conclusion of the beauty pageant was unfortunately wrought with ill feelings and open expressions of protest because of an error in the announcement of places among

the candidates. After an initial announcement of places by the host followed by awarding of respective prizes to the named contestants, a member of the tabulators approached the host on stage and after a brief discussion, the tabulator announced that there was a mistake in reading the order of places. According to the tabulator, the host read out the places in reverse order thus the contestant in 4th place was in fact the winner. Amidst an uproar in the audience, the places were changed and the contestants standing apart forced little smiles for the obligatory photographs. Instead of the usual cheerful and interminable chattering at the end of every Igorot-UK event, there was a rage of displeasure on the faces of the attendees who rushed to leave.

The day after the event, an open letter to the officials of Igorot-UK was posted by a member on the Facebook group account of the organisation. This letter began to express disappointment with the mistake during the pageant which caused hurt feelings among those who have supported their candidates but it proceeded to point out what the letter writer thought to be inconsistencies in the conduct of the pageant apparently to cast doubt on the final results of the competition. Exchanges of members that ensued under this posted letter echoed the criticisms expressed in the letter adding that the decisions of the judges seemed partial towards the winning candidate who garnered most of the special awards; some intimated that prior arrangements must have been made by certain officials to favour this specific candidate.



Figure 26. Invitation to the Ms. Igorot UK pageant posted on Igorot-UK Facebook group account.

In the following days, exchanges degenerated into personal attacks against the features and attires of the winner, against certain officials, judges and other people involved in the organisation of the event. Some members made reason with angry commenters and advised everyone to accept the result of the competition but certain individuals persisted in hurling bad language against those who commented on their posts. Icy remarks about the result of the pageant and the people suspected to have a hand in it seeped through exchanges on group and individual Facebook accounts of Igorot members in the UK even on posts or topics that are unrelated to the event.

To discuss the issues raised in the letter and in the online comments, the President of Igorot-UK posted a call for a meeting of officials, members and other interested parties. Most of those who made comments online were present in the meeting except for the person who posted the open letter. I attended the meeting and observed the effort to have an amicable atmosphere such as how the meeting was set to start with a prayer invoking God's grace for calmness and reason and seeking guidance for keeping the group as a united family. With the president moderating, the issues were addressed through methodical review of events and clarifications from concerned individuals.

Emotions flared from certain individuals who resented the personal attacks in the comments but there was a general advice for those involved to offer apologies. A lady apologised by saying “I was emotional but I am still your sister”. Her statement indicates that she considered her co-members as part of a reasonable family whose members can and should forgive her. The concerns raised in the letter were generally settled and the meeting moved towards a discussion of ways to avoid such misunderstandings in the future.

The fighting due to the results of the beauty pageant might be seen as a petty quarrel normally associated with so-called subjective competitions. The exchanges about the competition results, however, revealed deep-seated mistrust among the residents of the different provinces that make up the Cordillera region. The suspicion that the President of Igorot-UK invited specific judges he influenced to give advantage to the candidate from his province is indicative of such mistrust. The comment that special awards should have been distributed to all the candidates instead of being mostly given to one suggests a certain resentment over a perceived undeserved dominance of one candidate and by extension, the province she represents.

This situation is similar to what Longboan (2013) found in her study of an Igorot online forum where she observed that the construction of the Igorot members’ identity narratives is not confined to their marginalisation by colonisers and the nation-state but also by the unequal power relations among themselves. Longboan attributed this power relation to class with successful professional Igorot migrants in the United States having the dominant voice in the forum. In the case of Igorots in the UK, this power relation is determined by a politics based on provincial division.

As the aftermath of the beauty pageant exemplifies, Igorots in the UK appear to have deep emotional identification with their individual provinces, thus, they viewed the

result of the pageant as an affront to their own provincial affiliation instead of simply the normal course of a competition. Igorots in the UK still strongly associate themselves with provincial loyalties; they are foremost iBenguet (from Benguet), iMountain Province (from Mountain Province), iKalinga (from Kalinga) and iIfugao (from Ifugao) despite their claims to unity and belonging to one Igorot community. This instance confirms what Lisa Lowe (2003) described as heterogeneous and multiple composition of migrant groups due to differences existing within. As can be revealed by the eruption of animosity among the members of the Igorot community over what seems to be a trivial cause, the community is not a fully cohesive and homogeneous group because internal distinctions remain to both assault and give shape to the relations inside the community.

Exacerbating the quarrel over the result of the pageant was another discussion over the implications of two photographs taken during the event and posted on Facebook. These photographs were captioned with claims about the definition and belonging of people from two provinces in the Cordillera region.



Figure 27. This Facebook post indicates different opinions in the naming and membership of the Igorot community. Reposted on Igorot-UK Facebook page by Marleen Abad, September 2015.

The image in Figure 27 identifies the people in the lower photo who come from Mountain Province as the Igorots while the people in the upper photo who come from Ifugao are praised and told that Ifugao is the original name of people from the Cordillera not Igorot. The exchanges in this thread indicate differences in defining who the Igorots are. The disagreements seem to come from the idea that the term Igorot only pertains to the people of Mountain Province, the home province of the group of Igorots who were part of the American and European exhibitions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Those who come from other provinces in the Cordillera region seem to desire separation from the Igorot image of “savagery” that resulted from the circumstances of those exhibitions. They claim that this image was generalised among all inhabitants of the region and yet it was supposedly specific only to the people of Mountain Province. This claim seems to be a similar case with the lowland Filipinos not wanting to be identified with the “savage” Igorots of Northern Philippines. Other participants in the discussion pointed out that the term Igorot was imposed by colonisers as a generic name for the inhabitants of the region therefore, these participants suggest that people in the Cordillera better be known according to their own original self-identifications. They agree with the person who made the post in saying that Ifugao is indeed an original name of a certain group of people in the Cordillera but they clarify that there are also other original names of other groups therefore Ifugao cannot be claimed as the one original name for all.

These difficulties in consolidating a united regional identity harks back to the fact that the idea of a pan-regional identity for the people of this region was a creation to serve colonial purposes not a natural event. I discussed in Chapter 1 that when the Americans took over the Philippines from the defeated Spanish empire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, they were determined to succeed in exploiting the mineral resources in the highlands which the Spaniards failed to take from the resilient Igorots. The colonial

administration in the Philippines therefore embarked on making special administrative policies for the Igorots among which was the reorganisation of regional geographies so that the non-Christian natives be lumped into one administrative grid that can be managed more easily. By way of the public educational system, transported American popular culture, military tactics and direct governance, the Americans have succeeded in pacifying the people of the Cordillera and they have come to embrace Igorotness as a collective identity. The exchanges of Igorots both about the results of the beauty pageant and the posted photograph indicate, however, that this identification forged under colonial control reveals the violence by which it came to being as manifested in the force of contestations among those who were made to take it on. In his analysis of the consequences of colonialism on the psyche of colonized people, Frantz Fanon has illuminated the manner in which colonialism has not only obscured but twisted the history of colonised people and in the case of the Igorots, the coercive consequence of their colonisation is etched in their very name as a people which remains to be a deeply divisive element even in their collective flight to a new land where they aim to create new lives.

Though problems in this identification remain unresolved and are causing strained relations among Igorots in the UK, the community makes an effort to work through these differences by invoking the trope of kinship. Members who attempt to pacify their peers in such disagreements emphasise the relatedness of peoples in the region by virtue of shared patterns of life and common experience of American colonialism which created generic features for Igorot people. To put forward this idea of one Igorot family, the Igorot community in the UK pursues a synecdochal character of Igorot identity. Igorot culture or Igorotness has to be a two-way idea: it is a collective identity that encompasses the features of cultures from the different provinces and a

common identity that can be represented by either of the provincial cultures in the region. This formulation follows in the order of family relations where one family can be defined by the collective virtues (or vices) of its members while it can also be known by the attributes of a single member. The leaders of the community therefore encourage the practice of a versatile Igorotness that embodies knowledge and performance of the different cultures in the Cordillera instead of being limited to one's own provincial culture. An Igorot in the UK should not only be iBenguet but also iMountain Province, iKalinga and ifugao and has the cultural knowledge and skills to show for it. This versatility is hoped to make the members become flexible in representing Igorot culture and open-minded enough to avoid a narrow provincial perspective. The same versatility is also believed to blend well with the cosmopolitan character of multicultural cities like London.

As families go, there are still difficulties inside the community that need to be managed but most of the Igorots in London are inclined to focus on the ties that bind the community despite unresolved differences. This emphasis on reconciliation and openness promotes healing, recuperation and recovery - all of which point to a curative principle upon which the organisation wishes to define and maintain Igorotness in the UK.

### **Asserting an Alternative Story**

In addition to holding their own festivals, the members of Igorot-UK also attend cultural events organised by other Filipino and Non-Filipino groups in the UK. In 2015, Igorot-UK participated in the Asia Summer Festival held in Hounslow where groups participating were allocated space in the venue to make an informational display about their group in addition to being asked to perform a “cultural number” in scheduled programmes during the festival. For this participation, Igorot-UK constructed a replica of



the Banaue Rice Terraces as centre piece of four marquees decorated with selected material culture from the four provinces of the region. The Banaue Rice Terraces is a famous tourist destination in the Cordillera proclaimed as UNESCO World Heritage Site for being an impressive feat of engineering. The terraces were carved into an extensive expanse of the Ifugao mountains and the construction demonstrates ingenious irrigation and erosion control systems still in use today. The entire presentation of Igorot-UK was called the “Igorot Village”, a name which was used in labelling the Igorot contingent in exhibitions in the US and Europe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century such as the Shakespeare’s England Exhibition in 1912 described in Chapter 2. In using the same name, the community expressed a direct engagement in this history of displaying Igorots. This section therefore looks at how the self-presentation of the Igorot community in an event organised by another Filipino group attempts to respond to the images produced and circulated by early 20<sup>th</sup> century colonial exhibitions which contributed in creating adverse stereotypes about the Igorot people.

During interviews and even in casual conversations, members of the Igorot community in London talked about experiences of discrimination from other Filipinos as a described in earlier stories. A common thread of these experiences is the way other Filipinos have a particular conception on how Igorots look; these lowland Filipinos expressed surprise that the Igorots they meet in London do not look like they should. “*Bakit tuwid ang buhok mo?*” (Why is your hair straight?). “*Bakit maputi ka?*” (Why do you have fair skin?). These questions asked by other Filipinos indicate the set of expectations they have in relation to the constitution of Igorots as a people. Other experiences speak of various forms of both subtle and outright belittlement from other Filipino co-workers.

In looking at the Igorot Village in the Asia Summer Festival in 2015, I consider the choices made by the Igorot community in its presentation as conscious decisions made to try and reconfigure negative stereotypes about Igorots that have been the cause of prejudiced attitudes. In choosing the iconic Banaue Rice Terraces as the central image of its display, the Igorot community emphasises a great achievement of its ancestors and by doing so, they attempt to dispel the representation of Igorots in colonial propaganda as culturally backward compared to hispanized (therefore civilized) Filipinos. In addition to the replica of the Banaue Rice Terraces, members from the individual provinces decided on the materials that they thought best exemplify their place and culture and all these were put together as collective markers of Igorot identity. As elaboration of the actual presentation during the event, Igorot-UK posted pictures on its Facebook group account showing male and female members wearing the different provincial attires and holding musical instruments or other native implements. These pictures reinforce the theme of the marquees which is to display the different material culture of the people that constitute the Igorot community. The displays in the marquees and the pictures on the Facebook account call attention to indigenous crafts especially textiles that exhibit distinct colours, patterns and designs representing indigenous cosmology and social order. The labels work to exemplify the diverse but united composition of the Igorot community.



Figure 28 & 29. The Banaue Rice Terraces as centerpiece of the Igorot-UK display in the 2015 Asia Summer Festival and markers of Igorot identity presented in their marquee. Photos by Grace Nabus.



Figure 30 & 31. Photos posted on Igo-UK Facebook account as elaboration of the group's marquee presentation at the 2014 Barrio Fiesta in London.

The result of these choices in the display reinforce the synecdochal character of Igorot identity being projected by the community as discussed in the earlier section. The display indicates that Igorot identity is a collective constituted by the cultures of the people who reside in the Cordillera Region but the collective can likewise be represented

by a single chosen entity from among the member provinces such as the image of the Banaue Rice Terraces. This flexibility in their treatment of the collective identity allows the community to highlight the finest facets of its culture such as the fact that it has retained indigenous arts and material culture. By asserting that Igorots are indigenous inhabitants of the Philippines having their own culture which was not erased by colonisation, the community seeks to legitimise a claim for cultural authenticity especially when seen against the backdrop of visibly hispanised (or westernized) cultural performances of other Filipino groups in the festival. The pronouncement of statesman Carlos Romulo in his book that Igorots are not Filipinos is therefore questioned and the UK Igorots assert that, in fact, they are more truly Filipino for retaining an indigenous way of life.

The success of Igorots in getting this revisionist intervention across to the Filipino attendees of the festival can be indicated by the loads of appreciative remarks expressed to the group by organisers and viewers together with the many invitations the group received for further participation in other events. In assessing the impact of Igorot-UK's participation in festivals such as the Asia Summer Festival, a former president of the organisation said these participations have helped to dispel the prejudicial connotations historically attached to the name Igorot and have facilitated harmonious relations with other Filipinos in the UK. While these are encouraging results, a nagging question remains whether the appreciations and invitations are due to genuine revision of thoughts about Igorots or due to the added interest their performances can bring to festivals. Igorot-UK performances always draw a significant amount of attention just as the Igorot performers in the earlier exhibitions had. But the elements found sensational by early 20<sup>th</sup> century viewers like dog eating is not a feature of these contemporary performances. What then makes these performances so appealing to contemporary

viewers? I suggest it is the curiosity, perhaps fetish, for the almost naked male body. The interest in Igorot performance or Igorot culture has apparently shifted from its “overall authenticity” or “true savagery” into its possibility to fulfill subliminal desires. It is particularly telling, for instance, how non-Igorot women seeing Igorot performances remark on the Igorot male anatomy such as how Igorot men are actually fairer in skin colour compared to lowland Filipino men, how they have well-formed muscles and what might be revealed should their loincloth come undone. In Chapter 5, I discuss a similar fixation on the Igorot male body in a craze in 2016 over a young Igorot farmer whose pictures were taken and posted by lowland Filipino ladies on Facebook. In being this object of animated consumption, the success of Igorot performances in truly refiguring the negative stereotypes about Igorots is not certain. As they have been in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century exhibitions, Igorots seem to remain the object of interest for outsiders by being the curious other.

Notwithstanding the uncertainty in determining the success of the community to reformulate conceptions about Igorots through performances in festivals, the Igorot members themselves are confident with their purpose and for them, the approving response of their audiences is a form of empowerment. This view is expressed in an article titled “The Igorot-UK Dance Troupe: A Labour of Love, Faith, Sacrifice and Triumph” published in the souvenir programme for the 20<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary of Igorot-UK. This article describes the amount of time and work put into performances in order to ensure that Igorot culture survives in the dispersion of Igorots and in their participation in a modern world. The article says that despite the pressure of rehearsals and the loss of income for missing paid work, the performers are rewarded with “the thrilled look and happy faces that greet people after each performance” and these are considered “proof enough that the preservation and promotion of culture is worth all the

sacrifice.” The article further describes the seriousness in which future performances are prepared through observations of audience reactions. “The troupe celebrates the positive comments, learn from the negatives and persevere more to eliminate misconceptions about the Igorots”. The apparent fixation in the delivery of an excellent performance as indicated by this statement might be understood as self-indulgence, a need for constant affirmation which might be so but the sense of purpose behind the effort for excellence downplays self-interest for a greater goal. The article describes “members of the audience would often come to ask more about our culture...it is the dance troupe’s aim to answer such questions and it is every Igorot’s responsibility to explain aspects of our culture.” This statement indicates that the excellent performances are considered as starting points for conversations where Igorots can inform their audiences about themselves and their culture. This intention to encourage a closer encounter and exchange among Igorots and other Filipino and non-Filipino viewers could be the emancipatory potential of these performances.

In addition to instructive conversations with other Filipinos which are hoped to be inspired by Igorot performances, Igorot-UK members also consider their participation as an opportunity to dispel stereotypes about Igorots by virtue of their individual self-presentation and demeanour. This relates to my earlier discussion about how Igorot-UK members make it a vocation to embody the facets of their culture. In this case, however, the intention is to participate in the revisionist discourse being pursued by the organisation. I illustrate this point with the story of Manang Martha, a member of Igorot-UK Dance Troupe whose dancing and singing skills command attention during performances. In London, as back home, she said lowland Filipinos have many misperceptions especially for Igorot women so she invests in her physical fitness, her appearance, and her wardrobe in order to deliver an impressive performance and she

thinks that in this way, she makes other Filipinos in the audience see that Igorot women are beautiful and talented too.

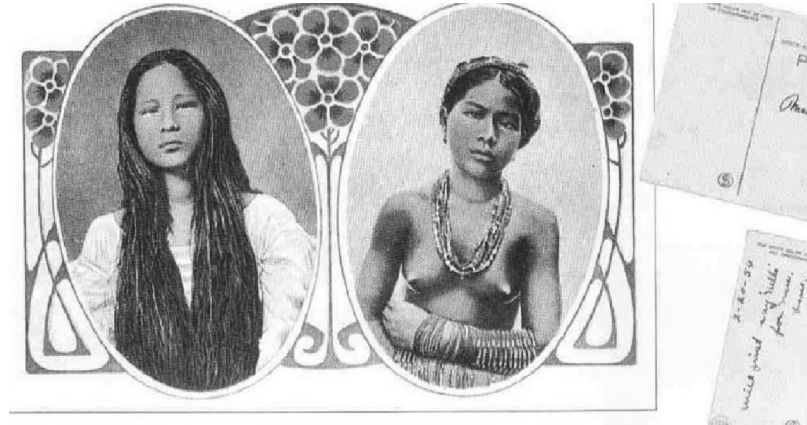


Figure 32. A colonial postcard captioned highlights the difference of Igorot women. Image from the paper of Torres 2006 on Igorot Representation in Cordillera Picture Postcards.

Manang Martha's purposeful self-making responds to prejudices that can be traced to colonial narratives that set Igorot women apart from lowland women. In her study of postcards circulated from the Philippines during the American colonial period, Torres (2006), points out that a usual lay out of these postcards makes a comparison between lowland and highland women where the latter is rendered to be the negative value. Torres illustrates this with the example presented in Figure 32 where the attributes of the two women are compared in two separate oblong frames. Torres points out that the configuration of these frames as separate because they do not intersect is significant. These frames work to call attention to the contrasts between the two images – the lowland woman's modesty versus the highland woman's nakedness, the lowland woman's propriety versus the highland woman's vulgarity. These contrasts are directed by the caption "Typical Manila Girl and her Uncivilized Sister". Because of such binaries with which lowland women and Igorot women have been presented, Igorot women, like Manang Martha, suffer the debilitating consequences of having been imaged as the

negative contrast of lowland women. Manang Martha and her fellow women members of Igorot-UK, therefore see that in migration, they can become channels for changing narratives about their people. By engaging in cultural performance, they accomplish two levels of reconstruction, that of dislodging colonial stereotypes and that of finding a new sense of worth.

### **Performing Igorotness in American Popular Culture**

Aside from holding their own festivals and performing in festivals organised by other Filipinos, Igorots in the UK also have a regular calendar of social events planned around the fixed schedule of festivals in the year. The group travels, sporting events, literary arts competitions and other forms of recreation provide opportunities for members to reconnect with old friends and establish new relationships. These events also serve practical purposes such finding work and accommodation through recommendations from peers, selling products or tickets for different causes, lending or collecting payments of personal loans, gathering contributions for various activities, sharing news from home and announcing personal milestones. In this section, I am interested in two of the most anticipated social events in the Igorot-UK calendar: the line dancing competition organised by Benguet Organisation-UK and Folk Night sponsored by Igorot-UK.

For the line dancing competition, a call is posted on Facebook indicating the mechanics of the contest and the criteria for determining the winner. Competing groups for this event are usually formed according to geographical location in London as indicated by group names such as Hammersmith Spurs, Colindale Bagets and Awesomestow (group from Walthamstow). The Folk Night, on the other hand, features the concert of Mountain Music Band, a country music group composed of Igorot-UK



members. The atmosphere of this concert is organised to resemble the ambience of country music bars in Baguio City often referred to as “Folk House” or “Folk Housan” (where folks gather) by Igorot patrons. Going to the Folk House is a common form of socialization and recreation for many Igorots in the Cordillera.

Clearly, these social events revolve around the performance of West American popular culture. The invitations made for these events, for instance, are filled with recognisable icons of the American Wild West such as the saddle and boots, the Stetson hat and other trappings of the cowboy rustic lifestyle. These invitations go with the assumption that these images make sense among Igorots in the UK being invited to these events. In this section, I explore how West American popular culture is being performed by the Igorot community in London as part of community building. I illustrate that the conduct of these events work to re-ground the community by creating a semblance of “being at home”.



Figure 33 & 34. Invitation to Benguet Organization UK’s Line Dancing Event considered to be its “trademark” event in the Igorot community in the UK. From Benguet Organisation-UK Facebook Page.

Line dancing and country music are of course American influences that became entrenched in Igorot culture and lifestyle as a consequence of the direct administrative approach of the US on the Cordillera Region on its take over of the Philippines from Spain in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Reed (1999) accounts that with the mild weather in the highlands, the Americans invested in developing a “colonial hill station” in Benguet Province they called Baguio City for the relief of colonial officials and convalescing soldiers from the heat of the lowlands. The huge spending in the development of Baguio City was also justified by the opportunities to exploit the rich gold deposits in the surrounding towns of Benguet. In Figure 33, the use of the tunnel image together with the cowboy icons for an invitation related to line dancing rehearses the corporate strategy of the American mining companies in managing their Igorot employees. Finin (2005) relates that in the Benguet mines, American personnel (coming mostly from Arizona, Texas and California) brought elements of the material culture and imagery of the American West which they shared with their Igorot workers. Also, in order to achieve productivity, American administrators in the mines encouraged camaraderie among Igorot employees by organizing social events that featured American popular culture which included line dancing. The enjoyment of line dancing came with a repertoire of country music and the particular attire of the rugged cowboy in his jeans and boots. American businessmen saw the potential in the Igorots’ acquisition of the cowboy lifestyle and they set up country music bars in Baguio City for the entertainment of American miners and their Igorot employees. To go with the demand, some businessmen opened shops to supply the requirements of a cowboy attire and some built movie houses in the city that featured a stream of westerns from Hollywood. With the surrounding hegemony of the American west flooding into the Cordillera, country music, cowboy

fashion, line dancing and the entire composition of the cowboy lifestyle became incorporated as marker of Igorot identity.

In their move to the UK, Igorots have clearly retained the American influence in their culture despite being in a country that seem to sneer at things American. Like the Igorot employees of the mines, they also invest in the acquisition of the trappings of this cowboy image as illustrated in the way they purchase cowboy boots from established boot makers in Baguio City. And these boots along with the ensemble of cowboy wear are donned especially during the Line Dancing Competition and Folk Night events.

For some time now, the Line Dancing Competition and Folk Night have been held at the Marian Community Centre in Kilburn. In planning these events, the regularity of this venue is always considered not only due to the practical benefits of established relations with the leasers, but also with the ease by which members can arrive because of familiarity with the route. The constant use of this hall as venue for these events has infused the place with layers of common memories that accumulate every passing year. This otherwise strange venue and location has therefore become an Igorot place in London as evidenced by the way members refer to it as “*ijay dati*” (the usual place). Though Igorots occupy this place by virtue of a business transaction with those who own it, they speak of it with affection like places they know well. In instances when these events had to be held elsewhere due to unforeseen circumstances, members complained about their difficulty in finding the different venue saying “*apay gamin nga haan nga ijay dati*” (why was it not held at the usual place) or “*maymayat gamin nu ijay dati*” (better if it was held at the usual place). By expressing their preference over “the usual place”, Igorot members reveal not only their geographical wiring to this venue but also their affective investment in it as a place of connection. For them, this venue has become their Folk House in London.

By making a Folk House in their place of migration, the Igorot community is able to create a semblance of being home. Being in this place transports them to the common experience of enjoying country music played by Igorot bands while drinking and dancing with friends. Some also recall romantic memories because it was in the Folk House where they met their future spouse. Because many country songs relate images of a rustic countryside, Igorots recall and long for the rugged routes in Cordillera as exemplified in the way everyone sings along with the band in impassioned voices to John Denver's "Take me home, Country Roads". This manner in which Igorots constructed and inhabited this London Folk House to be home illustrates Massey's (1994) argument in relation to the concept of home. According to Massey, home is not about a simple physical or geographical location but an experiential construct constituted by the meanings, practices and memories that are inscribed in a certain place. For the Igorots in London, the Marian Community Centre in Kilburn where they hold their Folk Night and Line Dancing, has become a home because it conjures both memories of past Folk Housing years in Baguio and memories of Folk House events in their years of stay in London.

In the earlier section where I discussed the participation of Igorots in London in festivals organised by other groups in the UK, I pointed out that the group emphasised the idea of an "authentic indigenous culture" as a rallying point in dispelling negative stereotypes about Igorots. They emphasised in these performances how Igorots have retained a distinct way of life because of resistance to Spanish colonisation. Such pride in their ancestor's courage includes a double critique – that of the Spanish colonial propaganda and the mainstream Filipino discourse that has perpetuated this colonial perspective. The embrace of American influences as part of Igorotness, however, obscures a similar kind of criticism on the consequences of American colonisation in the

Cordillera. With these repeated performances, American influences become naturalised as part of Igorot identity and this naturalisation perpetuates the uncritical stance of many Igorots on the violence of American colonisation in the Cordillera. Similarly, the admission of American influences as part of Igorot identity contradicts the idea that Igorot culture is indigenous and authentic.

This rejection of one coloniser and embrace of the other is a conflicting quality among Igorots that may be explained by the configuration of the colonial enterprise in the Philippines. Finin (2003) argues that the Americans had a more successful pacification strategy in the Cordillera Region. Compared to the Spanish who made oppressive expeditions to the region to convert the Igorots to Christianity and exploit their mineral resources, the Americans used a subtle tactic by employing academics to learn local lifeways and the knowledge generated from “scientific studies” informed approaches for local governance in the region. As the Americans learned, for example, that wealthy Igorots gained and maintained influence by holding lavish *Canao* for thanksgiving, the colonial officials held similar lavish celebrations to endear themselves to the local population (Jenista 1987). The Americans also established public education where a younger generation of Igorots were schooled in the American way of life. As a consequence, Igorots have come to form a fond regard for Americans.

With the flattening of the violence of American colonisation in the Cordillera because of such affection for the American way of life, there is a lack of critique among Igorots about the consequences of American colonisation in the Cordillera such as environmental catastrophe brought about by years of industrial mining and the continuing poverty in those places where so much gold was mined. The fact that a number of Igorots from those mining communities came to the UK to look for greener pastures indicate the reality of this problem. It seems ironic that migrant Igorots are

consolidating their displaced community with the same amusements employed by American businessmen to encourage the efficient extraction of wealth in their home region. This may be a sad realization, but on the other hand, it can also be said that the migrant Igorots in the UK may not be helplessly trapped in the clever tactics of American colonial design, because unlike the American businessmen who were preoccupied with turning fast profit, these migrants are now singing country songs and they are line dancing to remember and unite in order to keep themselves well enough to work and fulfil their personal aspirations for upward social mobility as well as help relieve the economic challenges of the Cordillera. These migrant Igorots' deployment of American popular culture, which, at another time, was used by their colonisers to carry out their extractive intentions, shows a resourceful management of current challenges. In their displacement, these migrants have utilised the markings of colonial legacy to reconstruct an Igorot space of belonging.

Although these regular activities prove to be important nodes in the constitution and maintenance of Igorot community in the UK, they sometimes also become sites of disconnection (Mckay 2016). This disconnection is manifested by the manners in which these places are occupied or navigated by the members of the community. In these events, some people never share tables or some stay with the same group of people every time. Sometimes, some people first peer by the door before making an advance into or retreat from the venue. In my interviews and in my attendance to house lunches and other occasions, I came to know that these acts of spatial distancing are due to breakdowns in personal relationships usually caused by breaches of trust or failures in obligations. Among the foremost reason for some members' detachment, for example, is the failure of mutual care or reciprocation. Some older members talked about what they perceived as ungratefulness of younger members whom they claimed to have generously

assisted, for instance in offering accommodation and lending financial help. On the other hand, some younger members talked about how older, more established members, took advantage of their unsteady situation when they were newly arrived like having them rent their substandard but expensive lodging properties.

The separation among members is also the result of internal politics based on layers of differences. One of these is a tension between regular and irregular members whose different migration status colour their attitudes towards each other including the conduct of community affairs. While some irregular migrants have spent a great deal of time and effort for the success of community events, some have found such commitment as an encumbrance to the economic purpose of their precarious migration. Though they said they appreciate and need the warmth in these events, their awareness that they can be caught and deported any time make them prioritize earning. Some regular members find this focus on oneself as unbecoming because they believe that all members of the Igorot community are bound by an ethic of communal care. This displeasure is on top of regular members' unspoken embarrassment with irregular members who they perceive to be giving a bad name to their community. Some regular members resent the fact that many younger members are "T and T" (acronym for the Filipino "Tago ng Tago" "always hiding") who overstayed their original visas as students or tourists. These older members are jealous of protecting the respectability they say they earned as hardworking professionals.

The tension between regular and irregular members is inscribed in the formal functioning of their organisations. Elected officers are usually regular migrants and matters relating to irregular members are not formally considered in the planning of activities. Regular members help their irregular members in times of need but they are reluctant to involve the organisation in formal political engagements with issues of

irregularity. Some irregular members who have become politicized found such reluctance as a reactionary attitude towards the material realities of Igorot migration and life back home.

Another layer of separation among Igorot members is their inclination to congregate during these events according to provincial groupings even if instances of mixing happens. The routine placement of bodies according to this provincial division makes the absence of a certain provincial group noticeable. In post-event assessments, members of the host organisation usually interpret such absence as withdrawal of support. This scrutiny of absence sometimes leads to counter withdrawal of support which debilitates the aim for Igorot solidarity. Despite these contradictory effects happening simultaneously during the same events, the members seem adamant in focusing on the strengths of their community instead of being discouraged by its differences. They continue to hold these regular events and devote time and energy to maintain these Igorot usual places of belonging.

### **Imagining the Community in Print**

After having discussed Igorot-UK's performance of festivals and social events, I now turn to an examination of a genre of publication produced by the organization in tandem with the performance of festivals. Souvenir programmes produced by the Igorot community in London correspond to the annual cultural festivals they hold to celebrate the founding anniversary of their respective provinces in the Cordillera and the founding anniversary of Igorot-UK itself. Although the souvenir programmes are part of the cultural festivals, I consider them separately as a mode of expression functioning in distinct ways from the actual performance of the cultural events which I discussed in the earlier sections.



As its name implies, the “souvenir programme” is a genre of publication that is produced as remembrance of an event. It is meant to capture in visuals and texts the range of actions and interactions that unfolded during the event. It also records the processes that led to the successful conduct of the celebration. For instance, it contains the list of officers and working committees, a photo essay of the preparations made and an account of the challenges met during the preparations. For containing these details, the souvenir programme becomes a concrete manifestation of collective action. It shows the segments of a unit working together for a particular end. By having the souvenir programme, members are able to collectively visualize and keep a record of their cooperation.

In addition to creating a record of an event, the production of souvenir programmes serves a practical function of raising funds to cover expenses for an event. Members of the community are encouraged to buy space in the souvenir programme priced according to specific dimensions for placing personalised greetings. Members are also encouraged to invite their contacts to place their own greetings in this publication. In this task of getting people to sponsor the event through the souvenir programme, the members activate their connections through various means of communication. The call for buying souvenir space is posted on Facebook, tagged across the networks of friends and family members, placed as personal message on Messenger or mentioned in conversations, text messages and phone calls. When the souvenir programme gets printed, members are able to see the concrete result of their logistical efforts to get sponsors.

Like the performance of cultural festivals, the production of souvenir programmes is a practice in the Philippines, thus, it can be said that the Igorot community brought over this practice with them too. By recreating this act of

remembrance done back home, the Igorot community reinforces the status of this genre as a form of remembering. In producing their own souvenir programmes in London, the Igorot migrants keep a record of the events they hold as a community, but at the same time, they also remember that this kind of remembering is done back home. The production of these publications therefore triggers a process of double remembering which makes this genre a highly sentimental means of connection.

The ubiquity of electronic media as means of communication seems to render the printed medium as an obsolete form of social interaction. However, Igorots in London utilise this medium as both affective and effective means of collective imagination. In the following sections, I explore how this genre of publication functions to construct and project the image of the Igorot community in the UK and how it promotes the formation of deep attachments among members. I look into the components of the publication and suggest how these parts contribute in the overall formulation of narratives about the Igorot community and also how they function for certain purposes for individual members. I consider how these printed materials become instances in the creation of what Anderson (1983) calls an imagined community. I ask the question: what kind of community is being imagined? In exploring this question, I use the insights of Anderson's analysis of the formation of national identity in which he points out the role of print capitalism not only in providing a common form of communication across a diverse collective but also in establishing "deep attachments" among members who may never see one another all the time.

### **Dap-ay in the UK**

Although I have attempted to make an account of the history of Igorot-UK based on my interviews with its leaders, I explore in this section the historical accounts about

Igorot-UK written mostly by former officers which appear in souvenir programmes of the organisation. I describe how these narratives project the organisation and how the authors imagine its function and relevance. I begin with an account written by Edmund Bugnosen, a former president about the developments of Igorot-UK by way of a message to the members on the 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the organisation in 2005. In this account, he calls Igorot-UK as “our *dap-ay* in the United Kingdom”. The word *dap-ay* is used to refer to an open meeting place made of stone slabs where a bonfire is usually set at its centre. This is a place for the performance of rituals and socialization in Cordillera villages. *Dap-ay* also refers to the group of elders who, in pre-colonial times, served as the governing body in the community. As a socio-political unit, the *dap-ay* gathered to settle disputes, resolve conflicts and issue laws or customary conducts for the community. It was the *dap-ay* that served as primary teacher of good citizenship prior to the arrival of Christian missionaries who “educated” the Igorots.

By being named as the *dap-ay* of the UK, Igorot-UK is conceived as an incarnation of the indigenous institution of learning, socialization and discipline in the home region. Since customary laws and institutions in the Cordillera such as the *dap-ay* are no longer operative with the advent of modern state governance and conversion to Christianity, this conception of Igorot-UK as a *dap-ay* involves the revival and transfer of an indigenous institution in imagining the practices of Igorot migrants in London. By making this connection between Igorot-UK and the home region, this account claims the continuity of the organisation not only with the territory and its people but with its indigenous way of life. This anchoring on cultural roots secures the identity of Igorot-UK as a faithful descendant and it authorizes the organisation in its discharge of functions as a centre of learning and socialisation. When the account describes that it was through the cultural programmes and social activities of Igorot-UK that many of the members

rediscovered their culture and “British-bred children have learned how to play the *gangsa* (gong) and perform the corresponding dances”, it affirms that the organisation has been true to its function as a *dap-ay* in the UK.

Although this account emphasises the function of Igorot-UK as an institution seeing to the continuity of Cordillera tradition and values, it also calls attention to the interactions and collaborations of this institution to the wider British public and other Filipino organisations which “has led to a better understanding and appreciation of the Igorot by some of our fellow Filipinos.” This statement hints at the entrenched prejudice of lowland Filipinos against Igorots. By claiming that Igorot-UK made this change in relations possible, the account asserts the relevance of the organisation in resolving old differences from the home country. With this account, Igorots in London are therefore portrayed as having a specific cultural identity they are keen to keep though they identify to being Filipino. They are projected to have a mastery of this culture and this knowledge they use to educate other people. As described in an article written by Christian Bugnosen, a second generation member, Igorots in London are expected to become “the complete renaissance package, being Igorot musicians, Igorot dancers, or even Igorot historians”. This remark attests to the process by which Igorots in London are imagined to be excellent embodiments of Igorot culture not only for sustaining this culture but also for enlightening other people about Igorots in general. The community is bound by this common purpose and the individual members are considered as contributors to the fulfilment of this collective goal. The members therefore become acutely aware that their individual actions are implicated in this aim of the community. For functioning in this collective manner, the Igorot community in London retains the communal character of Cordillera society and this feature gives it another layer of continuity with the home region. In the succeeding chapters, I point out further instances of this project of self-

fashioning among Igorots in London as a means of affirming community and achieving a common goal.

If the earlier account imagined Igorot-UK as an institution that ensures the acquisition of indigenous culture and values, the account by Linda Khensay, another former president, focuses on the beginnings of Igorot-UK as announced by the title “In the Beginning: A Historical Account of the First Years of the Igorot UK”. This account was published for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Igorot-UK. This history begins by describing that prior to the formation of Igorot-UK, there was an existing group called “BIBAK-UK” which held similar activities as the ones being held by Igorot-UK. BIBAK-UK, the account says, had close links with a self-help group for domestic workers in the UK and a non-governmental organisation which were “instrumental in campaigning for and eventually changing the status of domestic helpers in a way that recognizes their rights and benefits and also turning constraints into opportunities.” The account then proceeds to describe that “whilst members of BIBAK-UK struggled to cope with campaigning for their immigration status and rights, it was deemed necessary to form an Igorot organisation that would accommodate all interested Igorots regardless of their immigration status.” The account continues to explain the formation of Igorot-UK on September 17, 1995 with twenty two founding members who elected the first set of officers on the same day. These founding members together with the first set of officers are named. The rest of the account explains the properties, logistics of elections and activities of the organisation.

That this account belabours the beginnings of the organisation in the form of BIBAK-UK hints an insistence that this part of the history of the organisation should be not be forgotten. It can be deduced from the account above that the organisation began as a group of irregular domestic helpers who had to negotiate precarious situations. This

detail suggests that the organisation came about because of a real need for mutual support among those who were going through similar challenges. This account implies that the founding of this organisation was not, in the first instance, necessarily motivated by the preservation and promotion of Igorot culture. Instead, the performance of Igorot culture was a means for these irregular members to manage their difficulties together. This indicates that from the start, the organisation of Igorot-UK was an exercise of reconstructive indigeneity.

The indirect and vague manner of this writing appears to suggest a hesitation to directly state certain details and this hesitation indicates that there are some tensions in the community. This tension appears to be due to differences in immigration status of members which was a main concern in the formation of what is to become Igorot-UK. Following the account, the transition from BIBAK-UK to Igorot-UK was aimed at making the group inclusive but the passive construction in the sentence “...it was deemed necessary to form an Igorot organisation that would accommodate all interested Igorots regardless of their immigration status” does not clarify who exactly made the decision nor does it clarify if the then existing organisation, BIBAK-UK, did not accept other Igorots with different immigration status as members. One might wonder why other Igorots with different immigration status did not simply join BIBAK-UK.

Compared to the earlier account which looks into the role of Igorot-UK as hub of cultural learning, connection to home and common instructive purpose, this account provides a window into the apparently uneasy beginning of the organisation. Although its overall tone affirms Igorot-UK’s role in uniting the Igorot community, the account describes a tension between regular and irregular members with the latter having been apparently sidelined with the formation of Igorot-UK. This account indicates that despite the imagination of the community as a unified collective motivated by a common

purpose, its composition is not smooth and uniform and its history has been punctuated by certain differences that shaped the dynamics inside the community. However, even if this account points out such differences, it also flattens these differences by emphasising the need for unity to enable the harmonious functioning of the organisation. With this emphasis on unity, this account reiterates the imagination of the Igorot community as a family, a collective where contribution to the purposes of the group takes precedence over individual feelings. This purposeful unity for collective welfare shows the attempt of the organisation to draw from the collectivist worldview of indigenous people, such as that which is expressed by the philosophy of Ubuntu in Africa, “I am because we are”. For the Igorots, this philosophy is expressed linguistically by terms referring to co-members as “gagait” (fellows), “kakadwa” (companions), “kakailian” (fellows from one’s own place) and pronouns such as “datako” (we) and “datayo” (we). With this collectivist perspective, many of the members who feel isolated because of their separation from their families in the Philippines feel that the organisation is their rescue. As mentioned earlier, members describe the organisation as a recuperative space, *isu ti lumag-anan ti rikna* (it is where my feelings become light), as a locus of connection, *isu ti ayan ti bonding* (it is where bonding is) and place of intimacy, *ta adiak man-es-esa* (so I don’t feel alone).

### **Projecting Group Image in Personal Ads**

In this section, I take up the practice among Igorot-UK members of placing personal ads in the souvenir programmes. These ads are meant to convey congratulatory messages from members to the provincial organisations or to Igorot-UK itself for holding the commemorative festivals. But instead of simply sending in what can be described as routine obligatory messages, these ads usually come in very personal forms. These ads

include family studio portraits, family pictures in various milestones or occasions, family pictures in travels abroad or in hometowns, whole page sequences of family pictures of an extended family and a collage of photos of family members in various stages of their lives. In more recent souvenir programs, some ads show family pictures where members who are not in the UK are inserted into the group photo of those who are here. Other ads assemble the pictures of family members who are in different countries to show a semblance of being all together in one picture. Many photographs commonly feature the family members in native attires. Superimposed on these various forms of family pictures are greetings and statements of support to the organisations usually said in the vernacular. Some members who have businesses place advertisements of their trade but these also include family pictures of the owners.

In looking at these personal ads, one can immediately notice the emphasis on families. Even in the few cases of individuals placing ads, some of the solo pictures are superimposed with the name of the person with the addition of “and family”. The practice of displaying one’s family seems to be derived from the custom in the Philippines where families display in their living rooms the indicators of family success such as the university graduation portraits of their children, their diplomas, certificates, medals and other photos of travel or different milestones of family members. This manner of affirming family success is a fairly recent phenomenon in the Cordillera Region where the traditional indicators of respectability were the ownership of land and the offering of elaborate prestige rituals. The “victory walls” in the living rooms now seem to shift the image of family distinction with the trappings of educational achievement and afforded leisure; apparently, these are the hallmarks of “modern Igorots” who are no longer tied to agricultural labour and no longer adhering to pagan practices.



By paying spaces in the souvenir programmes, Igorots in London transform the “victory walls” back home into smaller but mobile images which can be viewed by a much larger audience who need not visit their homes. Their personal ads make their presence known and in turn, they come to know the presence of other families. The collection of these family ads in the souvenir programme therefore allows the members to know the composition of their community. These images aid them in imagining their connection to these people they may not or not always meet.

Because the souvenir programmes can be sent elsewhere, viewers of these images are not only peers in the UK but also family and friends in the home region and other places. These images therefore also add to other people’s knowledge about the composition of the Igorot community in London. By carrying evidences of happiness and success among Igorot families, these ads confirm the positive outcome of these families’ migration to the UK. For featuring families in their ethnic attires, these ads also project that these Igorot families stay connected to their indigenous culture thereby indicating their loyalty to home despite their choice to leave. This quality of rootedness or knowing how to look back is a virtue that is often emphasised among Igorots. School children are often taught that a person who does not know how to look back will not arrive at her/his destination. Furthermore, the manner in which these personal ads symbolically assemble family members together in one space especially those families whose other members remain in the home region or spread in various international locations indicate the members’ desire for such family gathering and the souvenir programme provides an opportunity for this togetherness. This reunion of families in the personal ads is made possible by computer software for the manipulation of digital images. With the enabling facility of this technical application, separate images of family members who are in different places are assembled in one picture to show a semblance of these members

being all together in one place. These assemblages made with clear longing for family closeness and reunification, creatively defy spatial and temporal separation. These visual forms of family togetherness provide the Igorot migrants with a material that fulfils their longing to be close with the people they love. These assembled pictures therefore serve as visible encouragements for migrants who become emotionally reduced by their isolation.



Figure 35. Families are assembled in personal ads



Figure 36. Personal ads show members in their ethnic attire and travels

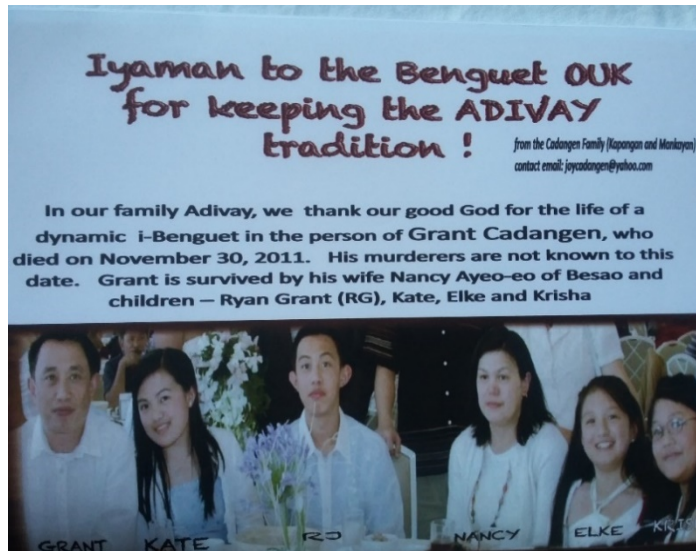


Figure 37. A family personalizes its greetings with its bereavement.

Although the usual tone of personal ads is celebratory, there are certain instances when more sombre ads are published in the souvenir programmes. The ad of a family in Figure 37 for instance thanks and congratulates the organisation for the event but it offers a window to the grief and anger of the family for the tragic circumstances of a family member's death. The combined expression of gratitude, grief, and anger is an awkward if not inappropriate form of greeting. This instance, however, shows the heightened level in which this family sees the relevance of the organisation in keeping the tradition of community and gathering which especially resonates in its experience of grief. The family personalizes the virtue of the event in making sense of its loss and in remembering their deceased family member. Despite the awkwardness of this greeting format, its message is consistent with those of the other ads because it also emphasises the primacy of maintaining family relations albeit expressed in less triumphant circumstances.

The merging of private and public domains in the space of the personal ads and the mixing of different formats such as advertising, obituary, life story, and collage

exemplify what Blunt and Dowling (2006) call the “porous” manner in which diasporas recreate their communities. By “porosity”, Blunt and Dowling refers to the open and interconnected network of emotions, social relationships and private and public worlds which constitute diasporic belonging. But with the dominance of family images in these personal ads, the idea that the community is itself a family is reinforced. The community is imagined not as a mere aggregate of people who come from a common origin but as an extended network of relations. The concept of the Igorot community being a big family is affirmed by the organizational structure of Igorot-UK which is referred to as the “mother organisation”. The visual rendering of this structure follows a genealogical structure in which the logo of Igorot-UK as parent spans the logo of the four subgroups arranged under it. This visual representation of a family is also affirmed by the way members refer to each other as *kabsat* (sibling) and their use of honorifics such as *manong* (older brother), *manang* (older sister) and *ading* (younger sister or brother) in conversations.

The image of the family as a signifier of community relations is a feature that is found in several other ethnic groups. For example, Fortier (2000) describes “Italian familism” in her research on Italians in London. She notes that in this group, the family is the basis of a wider system of social relations and the trope of kinship is deployed in the formation of an Italian culture. Compared to this “Italian familism”, however, the deployment of the family as an image of the Igorot community in London is a much more inclusive concept. If the Italians studied by Fortier exhibited a family system characterised by a high degree of formalism about the obligations and social control between kin, the Igorot sense of family has more to do with obligations based on interconnection of destinies. When I asked my interviewees why keeping family relations is important for Igorots, they attribute this to the ethic of *inayan* which I described in Chapter 2 as the idea that an individual’s fate is connected to her or his obligations to

others. Family members therefore have a deep level of care for each other and for others because the violation of this value is believed to cause misfortune. Such care extends to sharing of blessings because monopoly of fortunes is thought to lead to eventual loss of these fortunes. This emphasis on sharing is encapsulated in the popular Cordillera adage “*adi takun bukudan di gawis*” (let us not monopolize blessings). The linking of domestic affairs with the public affirmation of community can make sense in this belief system. By displaying their fortunes in their personal ads, Igorots in the UK symbolically share these blessings to their peers and relations as they simultaneously affirm their belonging to their community.

By encouraging the practice of domestic display, however, the placement of personal ads can somehow appear to foster a practice of exhibitionism. The abundance of family pictures in the souvenir programme which show various degrees of choreography may be seen as self-indulgence. These souvenir programmes can sometimes appear like society pages of newspapers, portions of fashion magazines or parts of personal scrap books. Nevertheless, I find the visibility of members in these publications to be revealing of their personal aspirations as well as their personal difficulties which they hope to handle. Through personal interviews and stories exchanged in occasions I have regularly attended, I learned the personal circumstances of some people whose ads appear in these souvenir programmes. Knowing the life stories of these members made me think of these ads as their means of relieving personal distress. For instance, a number of these members have regrets over their absence to perform obligations to family members especially elderly parents they cannot bring to the UK or who refuse to come. In their family pictures in the personal ads, these members insert the pictures of their kin left in the home region whom they cannot care for. I read this act as a figurative expression of care for these family members who are far away.

For irregular members, I consider their personal ads in this publication as their means of being regular; instead of hiding, they participate in the community practice of making themselves known and visible so that their irregularity will not be suspected. Their personal ads make them appear to have the same trappings of success just like their peers. In this case, other members of the community and their extended family members and friends in the home region who may not know about their real immigration status in the UK will not doubt their success. Being part of the general group visibility also gives them a sense of confidence that their irregularity is not necessarily a hindrance in being part of the community.

Though there is a variety of possible purposes these ads accomplish for the individual members, it is the configuration of the ads to express the members' belonging to a single family that is emphasised. The primacy of the idea of belonging to a family, that is Igorot-UK, becomes the emblem of their migration experience. In these personal ads, the community is imagined and made to appear as a single harmonious unit. From this apparently unified whole, the members are able to derive virtues that allow them to cope with the different personal challenges they face.

### **Incorporating Members and Creating Inspirations**

In addition to personal ads placed by members, the souvenir programmes also include short articles about the history and culture of the particular province holding the festival or the Igorot people in general. These articles feature musical instruments and dances, Igorot textiles, specific rituals, history of a province, famous tourist spots in the Cordillera and profiles of famous Igorots. These articles are written by members of the committee tasked to prepare the souvenir programme. According to members of such committees I interviewed, these articles are included to add substance to the otherwise

routine content of this publication. This intention to reproduce and disseminate knowledge about Igorots and their way of life through the souvenir programme is a feature I study in this section. I investigate the performative act being accomplished by the choice of articles included in the publication.

I was first interested in the articles that describe cultural dances and musical instruments which come complete with illustrations and instructions for proper performance. The pedagogical aim of these articles is consistent with the project of producing Igorot members who are the “complete renaissance package” for possessing knowledge and skills in Igorot cultural arts. These articles ensure that the members know the symbolisms and meanings attached to the dance steps and gong beats in addition to their learning of the specific skills involved in the performance. This effort indicates the community’s desire to ground younger members on the significance of these arts in the indigenous worldview and functioning of Igorot societies. According to the older members of the community, this is necessary for second generation Igorots born in the UK who did not experience the ritual functions of these arts in the home region.

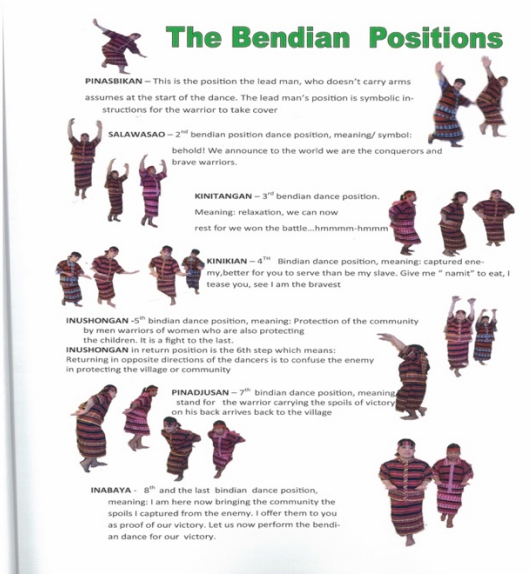


Figure 38. Instructional material for the Bendian dance



The elders point out that the younger members must understand the meanings and spiritual connection behind the bodily movements so that the skills they learn and execute do not simply become mechanical bodily functions.

The younger members of the community I interviewed appreciate the efforts of their elders in schooling them in the facets of their indigenous culture. They have been active participants in the activities of Igorot Youth, a specific subset of Igorot-UK organised for the younger members. Through this group, the young members have been incorporated into Igorot cultural practice. But even if these UK-born younger members have seriously taken this vocation of learning about their Igorot ancestry, they have expressed certain apprehensions about the expectations of their elders. This sentiment is expressed by an article written by the son of a pioneer couple in another souvenir programme. In this article, he writes the following referring to second generation Igorots: “they have to deal with a culture that was their birth-rite something in essence part of their nature, but something that is also alien and at times intangible. This birth-rite expects a lot from them...They are seen to be the future and they are obviously apprehensive and even scared that maybe they might not deliver”.

The apprehension of younger generation Igorots about their inability to fulfill expectations may be further exacerbated by the apparent aim in these publications to produce excellent Igorot members as further emphasised with the inclusion of profiles of accomplished Igorot personalities who serve as exemplars. Among those who were featured in the souvenir programme as accomplished Igorots is Dr. Hillary “Pitapit” Clapp, the first Igorot medical doctor who later became governor of the old Mountain Province (now the Cordillera Region). I presented Dr. Clapp’s photograph in Chapter 2 as an example of the racial discourse of the American colonial government in the



Philippines led by the Secretary of Interior, Dean Worcester. According to the original account of Worcester, Dr. Clapp, then known as Pitapit, was a clever boy from Bontoc, the capital of Mountain Province, who was adopted by Rev. Walter Clayton Clapp, the first Episcopalian missionary in the area. It was Rev. Clapp who gave Pitapit his Christian name and who sent him to Baguio City and Canada to be educated (Scott 1976).

Dr. Clapp's photographs is a widely circulated image. Currently, copies of the same photographs are circulated on the internet. Photography scholar, John Berger, (1980) points out that photographs freeze time and when divorced from their context, their interpretation is open to the perspectives of viewers. In the case of the photographs of Dr. Clapp, the interpretation is directed by the caption which clearly calls attention to the transformation of the subject from a lower form of cultural development. This image therefore becomes a basis for the continuing stereotype against Igorots.

With the role of this set of photographs in the proliferation of the idea that Igorots were backward people who needed American benevolence, the reproduction of these photos in the souvenir programme is quite interesting because it seems to endorse the colonial narrative put forward by Worcester. The idea that Igorots were uncivilised before American colonialism contradicts the embrace and pride of UK Igorots on their indigenous culture. In exchanges with members about the story and photographs of Dr. Clapp appearing in the souvenir programme, I intimated this apparent contradiction. The inclination of the responses, however, was to point out that the story of Dr. Clapp is not so much about Igorots being uncivilised before the coming of Americans. Instead, his transformation attests to what an Igorot can become when given ample opportunities. His academic success and committed service to his own people are also pointed out as great virtues that should be emulated by younger Igorots.

The reproduction of Dr. Clapp's story and photographs in the souvenir programme therefore seems to have been conceived as a way of circulating an exemplar rather than an embarrassment. The colonial intent of the original photographs is disregarded and the photographs are repurposed to support the community's project of forming excellent Igorot members. This appropriation of a colonial text to reinforce the identity project of the community may be seen in the light of Homi Bhabha's (1984) conception of mimicry by which he asserts that colonised people who resist the colonial image necessarily achieves that position within the framework of the system they oppose. To resist the way in which Dr. Clapp's image was used by American colonisers to justify their conquest of the Philippines, the Igorots in the UK deploy the same image but placed in the context of creating internal inspiration. This attempt to purge the colonial intent of the photographs, however, fails to engage in the original proposition that Igorots owe their advancement to American colonisation. The focus on Dr. Clapp's academic achievement and successful medical and political career obscures a discussion on the role of such images in consolidating the American colonial enterprise and the wider motivations of Americans in "educating" and renaming Igorots such as the boy Pitapit renamed Hillary Clapp.

The foregoing discussions illustrating how these printed materials have come to shape the imagination of Igorots about their community affirm the observation of Arjun Appadurai (2008) that the world we live in today is characterised by the role of imagination in social life. Appadurai argues that imagination has become a social practice. He writes:

No longer mere fantasy, no longer simple escape, no longer elite pastime, and no longer mere contemplation, the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work and a form of negotiation between sites of agency and globally defined fields of possibility (Appadurai 2008, 30)

For the Igorots in London who have moved to seek new lives, the production of these printed materials provides a common form of consolidating their displaced community. The interactions in these materials enable them to produce shared narratives that establish and sustain common attachments and allow them to recuperate from various personal challenges in their displacement.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have illustrated how the performance of UK versions of cultural festivals in the Cordillera have enabled Igorot-UK members to simultaneously participate in the commemorations happening in the home despite their spatial and temporal displacement. I have also shown that the performance of these festivals allows for collective remembering among members which lead to the creation of spaces for belonging. Similarly, the cultural performance of the organisation to celebrate its own founding anniversary incorporates members into the bodily discipline that defines Igorot identity. This embodiment of belonging is pursued by some members as a means of regaining lost self-esteem from the contradictory consequences of their migration. In other social events, Igorot-UK constitutes a flexible kind of Igorot identity, one that can be both represented by a specific provincial culture and by a composite of the diverse cultures that make up the region in order to settle bitter differences among members of the subgroups. Igorot-UK presents this image of Igorot identity in its participation in events organised by the larger Filipino community but with the added emphasis on revising the negative Igorot images produced by colonial and mainstream Filipino discourses. In these occasions, Igorot-UK endeavours to highlight the indigenous roots of Igorotness owing to the Igorot people's resistance to Spanish colonisation.

I have also discussed the genre of publication that is produced by Igorot-UK as supplement of the performance of festivals. I described that more than just keepsakes, the souvenir programmes published for the cultural events help reconstitute a community by aiding the members to imagine the composition of its community and by promoting common virtues such as close family ties. But more importantly, the publication announces and affirms the positive outcomes of the members' choice to migrate. The souvenir programme becomes a mobile archive carrying evidences of success among Igorot families in the UK. The material form of this medium enables the safekeeping of memories.

By putting together and circulating these happy family images, the souvenir programme conveys the idea that the group is a bigger scale of belonging that has similar values and vision just like a successful migrant family. The interactions in these materials enable the members to produce and share narratives that establish and sustain common attachments despite differences that arise from a heterogeneous membership. With these materials, the community is also able to imagine its continuing relationship with the home region. These activities of Igorot-UK illustrate that Igorot identity is not a pre-given quality naturally acquired by birth or domicile in the Cordillera but something that is claimed through performance. This configuration of Igorot identity as an adaptable and purposive belonging may be likened to Ong's (1993) concept of "flexible citizenship" which she developed based on the conditions of overseas Chinese. Ong uses this concept to describe the strategies of these Chinese migrants to "negotiate, circumvent or take advantage of Orientalist images that inform citizenship requirements and transnational capitalism" (747). Ong characterises the actions of overseas Chinese to be both complicit to and subversive of citizenship policies and regulations. Like the Chinese in Ong's study, Igorots in the UK also make certain manoeuvres in order to

manage the conditions they find themselves in overseas including: the consequences of colonial representations which have created both internal and external divisions regarding Igorot self-image, the necessity to manage state surveillance on immigration status, the emotional challenges of separation, the transformed dynamics of relationships as a result of changed social environment and the differences among members due to their various routes of arrival in the UK and places of origin in the Cordillera.

The necessity for Igorot migrants to deal with the conditions and challenges of their move to the UK has given rise to a creative art of self-presentation. These migrants have invested in crafting and circulating Igorot selves imbued with what they believe as virtues of indigenous ways. These projected selves have been employed to serve as counter narrative to prevailing beliefs. Fashioning themselves as embodiments and transmitters of indigenous culture, these migrants have also gained a renewed sense of self. They have therefore effectively utilised indigeneity as a resource for their personal and group survival.

## CHAPTER 5 – E-GOROTS ON FACEBOOK: REFIGURING IDENTITY IN DIASPORA

In the early 2000s, a telecommunications company in the Philippines published an advertisement that feature three elderly men wearing traditional Igorot G-string and headdress. They are seated around a bonfire gleefully checking their individual mobile phones. On the upper right side of the picture, there is a thought bubble that says “Now we can be E-gorots”. The clever play on the prefix of Igorot to E-gorot announces the entry of this group of indigenous people into the world of contemporary online communication. Although some Igorots thought that the advertisement invokes a Social Darwinist perspective and some disliked the idea that their identity is being tied to consumption, the ingenuity of this advertisement is that, it heralds the subsequent transformations in the identity formation of Igorots with a simple substitution of initial vowels.

As if to fulfil the prophesy of the initial vowel change, Igorots have indeed increasingly utilised online communication to assert and redefine their identity. This has been the case for indigenous peoples in general. By exploring the facilities of this medium, they have become more visible in text and images and they have been able to call attention to issues that confront their communities. Among the most significant uses they put electronic media for have been to resist exploitative deals and policies, to demand for better living conditions, and to represent themselves on their own terms. These objectives illustrate their determination to survive and alleviate their marginal status. Although indigenous peoples are said to have limited technological capabilities, the accessibility of the internet has allowed them to “talk back” to sources of power that have participated in their marginalisation (Longboan 2013, 82). According to Niezen

(2009), the lack of editorial censorship in the internet facilitates new expressions of indigeneity.

Indigenous peoples' engagements with the internet have been studied in relation to various themes. Among these are: revitalisation of culture (Lee 2006; Niezen 2009); exposure of abuses by states or transnational corporations (Belausteguigoitia 2006; Landzelius 2006a; Russell 2001); protests against forms of discrimination (Fong 2006; Longboan 2009); interactions among diasporic indigenous communities (Forte 2006; Lee 2006; Longboan 2011); and self-promotion of indigenous civil society groups (Soriano 2011). These studies illustrate that indigenous peoples have engaged with the internet in uneven and diverse ways as indicated by the variety of content and platforms they have used such as organisational websites, personal blogs, chat rooms and email forums. These varied engagements indicate the different social, political and economic positions that are faced by indigenous peoples. It is clear, however, that they are using the internet in creative ways in order to respond to these socio-political situations.

This chapter contributes to existing studies by looking into the engagements of Igorots with social media as their means of responding to the socio-political consequences of their position as indigenous people of the Philippines migrating to the United Kingdom. This chapter is aligned with work done in relation to interactions among diasporic indigenous communities which illustrate how online platforms have been used by these communities to maintain relationships or recreate a sense of community across vast distances. I take up these similar themes but my discussion is inflected with the particular conditions of identity politics in the Philippines and the specific circumstances of Igorot migration to the UK. This discussion also illustrates how the social media activities of this group of indigenous people are integrated into the overall execution of an identity project they pursue in diaspora. By analysing the social

media platform as a component of the general counter politics being attempted by this group of diasporic Igorots, this chapter goes beyond the tendency of many studies of indigenous online platforms that treat the online activities of indigenous people in isolation thus unable to account for the connection of these activities in the target indigenous group's general vision of itself and its strategy to accomplish its project for self-determination.

### **Facebook as empowerment of Indigenous People**

Social media is transforming the way indigenous peoples interact and connect with each other. Wilson et al. describe social media as a “new frontier” where indigenous peoples are busy interacting and networking. These scholars argue that indigenous peoples are engaging in a “cultural and political reterritorialisation of social media spaces” (2017, 1) by representing indigenous peoples and promoting indigenous movements across the globe. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), the dynamic architecture of social networks shape the ways people interact and portray themselves online. This architecture enables users to articulate public identity and present their relationships in new ways. By using this platform then, indigenous peoples are enabled to engage in creative productions as a strategy of sustaining social interactions. In this way, they can produce alternative narratives and images about themselves.

The social media platform of choice by the Igorot community in the UK is Facebook. In her study with Kankanaey caregivers in London, McKay (2016) examines their Facebook interactions and she describes that “Filipino Facebook is a visual space. Filipinos have been among the early adopters of mobile phones, digital cameras, camera phones and phones with video capacity. These technologies have become much more accessible in the last decade, largely because of migration and remittances” (51). The



ubiquity of Facebook as a platform for indigenous migrant interaction is of course not unique to Igorots but this platform has been harnessed by this group to work in tandem with other strategies to reconstitute their community and pursue their identity project. Facebook has been utilized by the community to amplify the possibilities of cultural production and counter self-representation.

Indigenous peoples have been quick to deploy Facebook as a platform especially for resistance movements against policies and development proposals they find detrimental to their communities. Indigenous peoples are using Facebook to gather a global audience of allies who can strengthen their call for social justice. In Australia, for example, a movement led by Aboriginal activists against the forced closure of Aboriginal communities gained prominence by the hashtag #SOSBlakAustralia (Wilson et al 2017). In Hawaii, Indigenous Hawaiians have engaged in a protracted protest against the redevelopment of a major telescope on top of the dormant volcano Mauna Kea, which is considered a significant sacred site. Photos of the protests were shared by high profile celebrities drawing global attention to the campaign (Kamelamela 2016). In Canada, the movement “Idle No More” has used Facebook to highlight issues facing First Nations, Metis and Inuit people. The movement began following the Harper government passing Bill C-45, which sought to divest First Nations sovereign command of lands and waterways (Wilson et al. 2017).

Indigenous peoples have also used Facebook as a platform for the preservation, circulation and transmission of indigenous knowledge systems. O’Carroll (2013) describes “the virtual marae” (a communal meeting ground) which refers to Māori Facebook groups created to maintain kinship relationships and to advocate for maintaining language and other cultural practices among Maori communities around the world. Botengan et al. (2017) studied Facebook groups of Igorot migrants in various

destinations and described that these Facebook groups are made as repositories of various systems of indigenous knowledge such as cultural arts, traditions and history. The authors argue that these contents in the Facebook groups sustain the identity and connection of these migrant Igorots especially those who were not born in the Philippines. In this study, I also consider how the Igorots in the UK have utilised Facebook as an empowering mechanism for reshaping their identity as a community.

In the first part of this chapter, I illustrate the manner in which Igorot-UK uses its Facebook group account in managing the logistics of its organisation. With a selection of captured posts from the timeline of the account, this part provides an overview of how Facebook is being utilized by Igorot-UK as a major organising mechanism. This overview aims to situate the self-representational practices that will be taken up in the latter sections in the overall functions to which the Igorot-UK Facebook group account is put to use.

The latter sections discuss the practices of Igorot-UK on Facebook which are more specifically related to the production of group self-representations. These practices generate particular narratives about the Igorot community in the UK. I engage in a reading of these mostly visual materials I gathered to make sense of the meanings they produce. But instead of considering these visual materials to be creating meanings in themselves, I read them through the context of their production and the intent of communication for which they have been employed. This reading is enabled by social semiotics developed by Hodge and Kress (1998) and Van Leeuwen (2005) who are the main scholars in this field. Social semiotics is an analytical practice that is devoted to exploring meaning production which involves people creating certain forms as an attempt to communicate an idea. It is interested in finding out “what kinds of meanings could be potentially made by what particular resources” (Rose 2012, 138). It considers

meaning to be made out of a wide range of modes and the production and interpretation of meaning is shaped by a number of social conventions. Social semiotics therefore focuses on the complex process of communication by exploring specific examples of the “design of meaning” that is, “when humans in specific situations make particular kinds of meaning in the context of communicative acts” (Rose 2012, 138).

By engaging in social semiotic reading, I am able to make sense of the choices and combinations of elements made by Igorot-UK in its visual productions on Facebook. Because social semiotics emphasizes the social contexts of production and interpretation of meaning, I am also able to investigate the circumstances that prompt the manner in which these visual productions are expressed together with the meanings constructed by these particular choices of forms of expression.

Social semiotics practitioners emphasize reflexivity in the practice of reading images because they believe that far from a transparent reading, their own interpretation is just as prejudiced as any other reading. Bal and Bryson argue that since all knowledge depends on the workings of signs, all knowledge is vulnerable to “semiological reinterpretation” (in Rose 2012, 107). I exercise the same self-awareness in relation to my specific position as reader of these materials. My reading is constrained by my position as a researcher attempting to build certain arguments about this organisation in addition to my insider and outsider status in the community.

### **Organising through Facebook**

Janice: Inya oras meeting nu Dominggo? (What time is the meeting on Sunday?)

Emma: Han ko ammo (I don't know)

Janice: Kitam man jay Facebook mo, lowbatak ya (Can you check your Facebook, my phone has run out of battery)

The conversation above illustrates the usefulness and oftentimes reliance on Facebook among Igorot-UK members with regard to information about activities of the community. Facebook is the main communication platform of the organisation in managing the logistics of the organisation. The Igorot-UK group Facebook account is a public account that includes in its friends list most of the members of the organisation, the group accounts of the four provincial subgroups, group accounts of Igorot organisations in the US, continental Europe and other destinations, some officials and employees of local governments in the Cordillera and other Igorot individuals in the Philippines and other overseas destinations usually people who have relations in the UK. Other Filipinos who had prior offline encounters with Igorot-UK, its officers or members are admitted as friends too. Although this account is specified as an Igorot-UK group account, it is not exclusive to the organisation and there is no clear criteria for acceptance of friends. The account is administered by the president, vice president and secretary of the organisation but the other officers are also informed about the access details.

As seen in Figure 39, notices of meetings are posted on the Igorot-UK account way ahead of schedule. In Figure 40, the schedule of activities are listed with a reminder to members to mark their calendars. The announcement is tagged to the personal accounts of members to ensure the circulation of information. It can be noted that this particular post was done in the last week of September with the purpose of reminding members about the scheduled events in the following two months. The truncation of this list from the complete list of events planned for the year shows the attempt to focus attention on the approaching events. Igorot-UK officers are aware that members need to make prior arrangements at work in order for them to attend the scheduled events, thus, there is a constant reminder for members to “MARK [their] CALENDAR!!!”



Figure 39 & 40. Announcements of Igorot-UK activities.

Happy weekend everyone!

To all interested especially the youth group:

Interested to learn how to beat and dance with the gongs properly? Mr **Mark Watan** will be conducting gangsa workshop today at 10:00 at the Pooten's Place, Grove Road, Walthamstow. Be there and learn the technique!



Figure 41 & 42. Announcement of ongoing events

In addition to making announcements of meetings and scheduled events, posts in the Facebook account also call attention to specific initiatives and projects as shown in Figure 41 and 42. These posts ensure that members are informed about the ongoing activities of the organisation in order to encourage their participation. These information alerts enable the organisation to notify its members despite their dispersal in different places. The absence of a permanent physical space for the organisation to congregate is worked through this centralised manner of information dissemination. The Facebook account is used by the organisation to circulate information not only about its own activities but also about other matters that are relevant to the members. Among these information are job openings which may interest some members as illustrated in Figure 43 and 44. These posts are made by both officers approached specifically for the purpose of recruiting workers from the organisation or by members who happen to be informed about certain job opportunities usually through their own employment connections. In addition to posting job openings, officers and members also post other information related to the welfare of members. Among these information are matters on immigration policies and changes in these policies which may affect the members. As can be noted in the posts in Figures 45 and 46, there have been efforts in the organisation to help its irregular members by educating them about their rights and by helping them anticipate and manage difficult situations such as possible arrest and detention. Although irregular members are accepted into the organisation and are generally not treated differently, some of them hesitate to openly acknowledge their immigration status. The regular members attempt to create a supportive environment for these members through initiatives they announce on the Facebook group account.

Re: Job hunters near Slough

CASUAL GROUNDS CREW RECRUITMENT

BaseballSoftballUK is recruiting casual grounds staff for Farnham Park Baseball and Softball Complex

Are you a hard-working person who likes working outside and getting your hands dirty? BSUK is looking for casual staff to work on the baseball and softball grounds at Farnham Park South... [Continue reading](#)



Received this message from:

Jonathan Ybanez  
Operations Manager at Wisearch Solutions UK Limited and Managing Consultant - Drake Nanny & Housekeeping Division at Drake International UK

Conversation started Friday

Jonathan Ybanez

11/6, 5:55pm

Jonathan Ybanez

Hi Mr. Balagtey,

I am Jonathan Ybanez of Drake International Nannies and Housekeepers.

We are currently looking for nannies and housekeepers for our various clients in London.

You might know some members of Igorot-UK who are looking for a job. We offer referral fee for each referred candidate who will be successfully placed.

Figure 43 & 44. Announcements on job opportunities.

These efforts have been intensified following a series of arrests among irregular Igorot-UK members in late 2017 as a result of more aggressive measures of the UK Home Office to deport irregular migrants. Although Igorot-UK as an organisation in itself steers clear of openly participating in coalitions working towards the welfare of irregular migrants, its members provide information, advice and encouragement for their irregular co-members as seen in these posts.

Useful resource. Also happy to lead private workshops on this for Igo UK.



Good evening, this is a reminder, this is a reminder to the UK members. Be guided, we have a lot of matatakbuhan. But before everything, you first need to help yourself... you need to participate in seminars and training how you can protect yourself if you arrive such opportunities (raids) don't hardened the head and listen In the expert... they don't have any fees for you... you also learn how to fight yourself and right you are not afraid of anyone who is facing you... because you know that you have right away You are paper... lessons all are happening now with us.. Don't let us wait for the appetit of those who have a good mood that helps us... (Father Saxby / sister Florence.... it's not It is too late to be in the English language for the individual. Let's listen because for us all these... good night...

Figure 45 & 46. Concerned members offer help to irregular members.

Helping members in need is among the foremost concern of the organisation. In addition to assisting irregular members, the organisation also works to support those who face difficult situations in the UK such as death, accidents or crime. Figure 47 which relates to the passing of a member in unclear circumstances, shows that in these situations, the Facebook account is used to mobilise the community towards gathering collective aid for the party concerned. The welfare of members is looked after by the organisation not only in terms of providing support for vulnerable members but also by boosting the morale of the community through notices of achievements among members. This can be seen in the post in Figure 48 which announces the receipt of an award by an Igorot-UK member who works in the NHS.



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Peace and love be with you!

It is with deep regret to inform you of the untimely death of FLORENCE WAGTINGAN LAGASCA. The departed who is originally from Bontoc, Mt. Province arrived here in the UK years ago to seek greener pasture. Unfortunately her lifeless body was found in the afternoon of October 8 at her rented flat in Birmingham, England a few days after she was reported missing to the police.

At this difficult time, may we appeal for your voluntary financial support to ease the burden of the unexpected cost of funeral services and the repatriation of the body to the Philippines. Your financial help will be very much appreciated.

Please send your donation to:



Figure 47 & 48. The members are informed about death and achievement in the community.

The manner in which the Facebook account is used by the organisation to encourage the community with the achievement of its own members is extended to the accomplishments of Igorot people in general seen in the examples in Figure 49. Members who encounter news of such accomplishments make an effort to repost these information on the Igorot-UK Facebook account. These members include captions that clearly indicate not only their delight with the news but their feeling of inclusion in the achievement. By being shared to the entire community, these pieces of good news inspire a general feeling of success as indicated by the series of celebratory messages placed by members under these posts. The degree of the affirmative consequence of these achievements to some members is expressed by their claims of personal connection to the individuals in the news.



Figure 49. News of Igorot achievements are posted on the account.

Apart from posts about the achievements of other Igorots, the Facebook account is also made to host a variety of information about the home region like those shown in Figure 50 & 51. These posts keep the members up to date about the affairs in the different provinces of the Cordillera. Thus, despite their absence from home, Igorot-UK members are informed about these events and are able to react and interact with those who are at home through the posting of comments.

As I described in Chapter 3, Igorot-UK maintains a gift relation with its home region and the Facebook account is instrumental in organising assistance to the Cordillera. In Figure 52, a solicitation for donations for the rebuilding of a burnt children's home is posted on the account. In addition to expressions of sympathy for the victims, Igorot-UK members discussed under this post the logistics of collecting and remitting monetary aid to the affected institution in the province of Benguet.

Here's a good news for the Sagadianians. 😊





Sagada-Manila bus route opens this April |  
Sagada News  
news.sagada.org

BENDIAN DANCE!  
Benguet our own! Adivay in Wangal La  
Trinidad!  
Courtesy of Phil.Star – with **Ada Daiwey**.



Figure 50 & 51. Members are informed about current events in the Cordillera

 **Mountain ProvinceFed-Uk**  ...  
29 Jan 2016 · 🌐

29 January 2016

Dear friends,

May peace, mercy and blessings be upon you.

On January 26, 2016, the building that house the Bethesda Ministries International and the Bethesda Children's Home in Tuding, Itogon, Benguet was burned to ashes. The fire apparently ignited when a foam mattress caught fire from the welding sparks. No one was hurt but all the children and staff were unable to save their belongings. They lost everything in the fire! The building which is a house and school to more than 160 children and staff needs urgent rebuilding, and the children, mostly orphans needs clothing and basic needs.

In this light, we are once again appealing for your generosity. With your help we can give them back a warm place to stay and help rebuild the landmark an amazing place to live.

 **Juliet Manarin**

To all kaigorotan in UK, just to inform all whoever friends and relatives of sister Virgie and Rose Ay-en who doesn't know yet that their elder sister Esther living in Dubai passed away yesterday, whoever want to send their **CONDOLENCES** to the whole family, it will comfort them and lessen their grief ... Thank you...

9 hours ago · Like · 🍷 2 · Reply

Figure 52 & 53. Donations are solicited for a burnt children's home and for a bereaved family.

In addition to helping out distressed people back in the Cordillera, Igorot-UK members also endeavour to extend aid to other Igorots who are overseas especially, though not exclusively, those who have relations in the UK. This assistance is usually extended



in events of death as indicated by the post in Figure 53. In the Cordillera, monetary contributions are given to bereaved families as form of sympathy and this is carried over by diasporic Igorots. This post indicates the transnational nature in which grief and sympathy are being viewed by members of the organisation. Although the deceased is based in Dubai, her death is treated as a concern for Igorots in the UK because of her connection to two sisters in London who are part of the organisation.

As solicitations for people in need or in mourning are discussed on Facebook, so are the details of events organised by the network of diasporic Igorots. In Figure 54, information is posted for the Igorot International Consultation to be held in August 2018. Details for attendees are covered here including information for securing a visa. Igorot-UK members have been attending this event where diasporic Igorots gather to discuss various issues related to the Cordillera and the diasporic Igorot community. Along with such formal networking mechanisms, the connection of diasporic Igorot organisations in different destinations is also manifested in the way the Igorot-UK Facebook account is used by members to share the activities of other Igorot diasporic groups such as those who are in Canada as seen in the post in Figure 55.

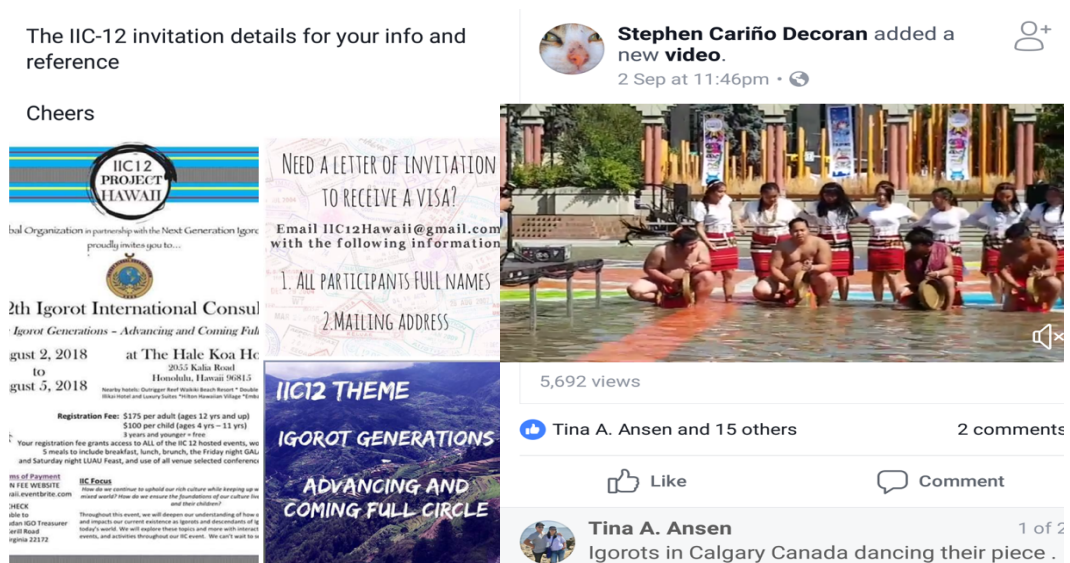


Figure 54 & 55. Information on activities of diasporic Igorots

The foregoing description of the activities undertaken by members on the Igorot-UK Facebook account illustrates that this platform is a convenient and efficient means of managing the logistics of organisation. It enables the centralised and simultaneous dissemination of information to members not only for organisational purposes but also for extending care and support to members and fellow Igorots in the home region. Facebook enables the community to accomplish these goals because its architecture allows the strengthening of ties. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social network sites like Facebook enable users who had no prior relations to meet, but often the meetings in these sites are not among strangers but among those who have “latent ties” (2007,1). Facebook users are primarily communicating with people who are already part of their extended social network. In this way, the Igorot-UK Facebook account allows the consolidation of existing relations and makes these relations visible. This platform therefore becomes a visual manifestation of the organisation and as such, it presents the opportunity for reading into the aspirations of the community and the means being pursued to achieve these.

Also, the manner in which the facilities of this platform allows for communication that cuts across various times and locations creates a semblance of simultaneity among a dispersed network of Facebook friends. In facilitating a constant and sustained exchange between and among the Igorot-UK members, contacts in the home region and other Igorot destinations in the world, Facebook becomes an ideal site for creating and maintaining a common space of belonging. In looking at the Igorot-UK account, I therefore consider the Facebook practices of the Igorot migrants in London not only as actions meant to share information but as exercises that form and express the

community's view of itself, its relation to its home region and its role in the entire Igorot community.

In Chapter 4, I discussed how the Igorot community in London constructs its identity through the regular instalment of its festivals, social events and publication. I pointed out that the central strategies in this identity project are the performance of remembered past through bodily practices and corporeal fashioning motivated by the desire to manage the insecurities of displacement, maintain harmonious group relations and reconfigure the negative conception of Igorot identity. In this chapter, I extend this discussion of identity construction by looking into the self-representational practices of the community on Facebook.

### **Mobility and Connection in Online Invitations**

As I described earlier, Igorot-UK utilises Facebook to manage its organisational concerns. This is true not only in disseminating information for routine activities but especially so in making arrangements for major events such as its cultural festivals. The different schedules of work and various places of residence of members make it difficult for them to have frequent face to face meetings so they use their Facebook group account's timeline to exchange ideas or they create dedicated chatrooms to go through the tasks and other concerns related to an event.

When details of an event are finalised, Facebook is also used as the main platform for posting invitations. For this purpose, online invitations for the event are created and posted on the Igorot-UK group account. These online invitations are then shared or tagged to the provincial group accounts and individual accounts of members. The members, in turn, tag or share these invitations to the accounts of their own network of friends. These invitations include the basic information about the event such as date,

time, venue and contact details but instead of simply containing these necessary information for attendees, these online invitations feature creative compositions which express particular meanings. They are therefore, in themselves, a form of visual genre created not only for the utility of inviting participants to an event but also for the opportunity of relaying certain ideas. In this section, I describe the composition of these online invitations to point out how they formulate and express Igorot-UK's projection of its relationship with the home region and its role in the performance of Igorot identity. I also account for the interactions that these online invitations inspired to describe the participation of viewers in the constitution of meanings in these images.



Figure 56. Cordillera modes of transport arrive in London bringing participants to the Grand Canao.

The invitations I discuss in this section were posted on Facebook for the 2016 Grand Canao organised by Igorot-UK to celebrate its 21<sup>st</sup> founding anniversary. These invitations feature two sets of images: one set shows local modes of transportation in the Cordillera plying the streets of London as seen in Figure 56 while the other set shows the modes of transportation in London travelling to different places in the Cordillera as seen in Figure 57. The location of these London vehicles in the region can be identified because they are placed against the background of landmarks in the region such as the Benguet Provincial Capitol and the Banaue Rice Terraces.

In the context of these images being invitations to the Grand Canao in London, the arrival of the Cordillera modes of transport in London indicates that Igorots from various home towns in the Cordillera have arrived to take part in this event. The hometown origins of these attendees are indicated by the mode of transport identified with specific routes in the region. On the other hand, the presence of London transport vehicles in various places in the Cordillera indicates that these were sent to these places to fetch participants to Igorot-UK's Grand Canao in London. In these images, Igorot-UK is projected to be creating an occasion for the convergence of migrant Igorots in the UK and those who are in the home region. More importantly, these images indicate that Igorot-UK is facilitating the movement and arrival of their *kailians* from the Cordillera to London.





Figure 57. London transport vehicles arrive in the Cordillera

As indicated by the exchange of comments under these invitations, commenters who are in the Cordillera applauded the idea that the Igorots in the UK are holding a Canao, a traditional gathering held for various purposes like thanksgiving. These commenters commended Igorot-UK members for continuing to practice Igorot culture in their host country. They thanked the organisation for sending “their sundo” (fetching vehicles) and they said they will get on those vehicles to attend the event in London. In fact, after the first few invitations were posted, there was a demand from people in various hometowns in the Cordillera that they be provided a ride too. The invitation committee of Igorot-UK responded to this call by creating and posting more personalised invitations showing the London routemaster or black cab bound to the hometowns of those who asked to be fetched.



Figure 58. More invitations were posted following requests for ride from the home region.

On the other hand, the comments of Igorot-UK members under these invitations indicated general welcome for the arrival of their *kailians* to London in their very own transport. These members expressed their gratitude and affection for these *kailians* who came all the way from the home region to join in the celebration. These comments indicate the members' desire for reunification with people they know and love. This prospect of reunion resonated with irregular members who have not gone home for a long time. As one commenter said “*salamat Apo ta way katuytuya*” (Thank you Lord, we have company to interact with). Similarly, commenters who are based in other overseas

destinations commend Igorot-UK for holding the cultural event and for enabling contingents from the home region to attend. In all these exchanges of delight and commendations, the comments expressed a general tone of amusement which signalled that the participants recognised the incongruity of elements in these images; the modes of transportation in the two sets of invitations are certainly out of place. The amusement by which the consumers received these images indicated their willingness to indulge in the narrative that is created by these images. They participated in the operation of the fictive world produced by these invitations where Igorots can freely arrive as themselves in London and that they can be fetched by London transport from their hometowns. This complicity between the creators and consumers of these images indicate their mutual desire to construct this world of possibility depicted in these invitations.

Given that these invitations were intended for a cultural event and not for tourism, the use of transportation images is a significant choice. As images of transportation signify origin, travel, movement and arrival, it is apparent that mobility is an important consideration in the design of these invitations. The modes of transport in the Cordillera plying the streets of London disrupts the landscape but the distinction of these vehicles from their surroundings highlight their presence and they appear to move through the streets without trouble. With the UK's strict imposition of travel safety regulations, it can even be said that there is a subversive quality in the way the Igorots from Lubuagan arrive in an overloaded jeepney as seen in Figure 56. In the set of invitations where Igorots arrive in London riding on Cordillera modes of transport, there seems to be an expressed desire to come to London in one's own terms, to navigate the terrain in one's own familiar means and in this way become distinct instead of disappearing into the general, anonymous mass of people taking the red bus and the black cab.

The visibility and ease by which the Cordillera vehicles travel through the streets of London suggests confidence among the Igorots in navigating the terrain of the destination. Perhaps this confidence comes from local ingenuity and resourcefulness as embodied by the history of their modes of transport. The jeepney, for example, came about when enterprising local men converted American military trucks discarded after World War II for personal and later public transport. Dangwa Tranco (the first bus featured in Figure 56) developed from this idea and with innovations from its Igorot founder, Bado Dangwa, this bus line transformed the far-flung areas of the Cordillera Region by connecting them to the urban centres. This image of confidence in arriving at a new place confronts the usual condition of the newly-arrived as lost, confused or disoriented, needing information or guidance and feeling the need to adapt with the foreign surroundings.

As indicated by comments welcoming the newly-arrived *kailians* and congratulating them for having made what is imagined as an exhausting journey, the narrative of Igorots' confident arrival in London was consumed as a celebration of Igorot virtues that enabled the travellers to arrive at the destination. Though there was a general expression of amusement with the vernacular tacking of these new arrivals of the London landscape, none of the commentators openly questioned, rejected or ridiculed the narrative of unhampered movement being set up in these invitations and this complicity indicates a general desire of the community to hold this narrative together.

This collaborative fictioning disregards the larger structural conditions that regulate and constrain the arrival of Igorot migrants in the UK and indeed, it glosses over the fact that the arrival of Igorots in the UK has not been as easy and as self-determined as these invitations portray. It can be noted, for instance, that some Igorots arrived in the UK in a circular rather than straightforward manner, as some of them were employed in

Hong Kong, Taiwan and in Middle Eastern countries before being brought over to the UK by employers on holiday. Some escaped from abusive employers and sought shelter from charity organizations that helped them find jobs, secure accommodation and regularize their status. Some did arrive as tourists but overstayed their visa for employment. For these irregular members, their fear of sudden arrest or being betrayed to the authorities by their peers has constrained their freedom of movement.

Igorots in the UK know these conditions, thus the unrestricted movement presented in the invitations does not necessarily mean unawareness of the real restrictions in mobility. The desire for movement in one's own terms as expressed in the invitations is itself an indication of awareness that Igorots' travel and arrival in the UK is controlled and fraught with pain. With such awareness then, these invitations may be seen as indulging in a fiction of utopian possibility where Igorots can cross halfway through the world in their jeepneys and buses and navigate London independently. Notwithstanding their utopian projections, these invitations quietly raise questions about unequal forces that do not make it possible for such unhampered mobility to happen. In a supposedly borderless world made accessible by the technologies of travel, these invitations ask why it is not quite possible for Igorots to come to London in this self-determined fashion. The Igorot community in London and their fellow Igorots in the home region therefore collaborate in the creation and affirmation of a narrative of unhampered movement through the online invitations because in this online platform, such aspiration is possible. These images in the transnational space of Facebook become the collective and material expressions of desire for mobility which will enable them to converge and reconnect through a cultural performance in London.

The traditional order of things in relation to cultural performance especially in relation to the performance of rituals such as the Canao is for Igorots to go back to the

home region for this purpose. In fact, among the reasons why Igorots in the UK plan a journey home is for them to attend the performance of rituals with their family. In these invitations, however, this order is reversed with the movement of those from the home region to attend a Canao in an overseas destination. This reversal in the flow of movement among Igorots in relation to the place of ritual performance intimates that the value of ritual is viewed not to be necessarily attached to the primacy of the home region. An Igorot ritual can now be performed in a far-away place and be considered as an act of loyalty to Igorotness and the Igorot people. By de-emphasising the primacy of the place of origin in the value of ritual performance, these invitations view indigeneity not being defined by domicile in the ancestral land.

By creating and circulating these invitations on Facebook to ensure widespread information, Igorot-UK appears to desire the simulation of certain aspects in the conduct of these cultural rituals as if to compensate for the spatial displacement of this Canao in London. In the villages of the Cordillera, invitations for Canaos are circulated widely; in earlier times, it was done by appointed messengers who walked distances to deliver the invitation. Igorot-UK employs Facebook for this purpose now, but because these invitations are easily accessible with a click across vast distances, more than the distance all the village messengers could have covered in their life time, there seems to be an effort to offset the labour of the diligent village messengers by investing aesthetic appeal on these instant invitations. Although the cultural practice of Canao in London is geographically removed from the village and the relatives and town mates at home cannot attend, the online invitations bridge this displacement by symbolically transporting attendees from the home region and in effect negating the spatial divide between the UK and the Cordillera.

The other set of invitations, those that show the London modes of transport bound to the Cordillera hometowns, expresses another form of desire, that of utilising the celebrated convenience and efficiency of the London public transport system to fetch family, friends and town mates to join in the celebration in London. By extension, this idea of sending the icons of transportation technology, and in effect, embodiments of advancement, to the hometowns can also be read as a desire to deliver such progress to the home region. McKay (2012) argues that Filipino migrants have a shared feeling of connection through lack; she explains that by seeing their home places as incomplete or insufficient, these migrants develop a vision of these places' potential and possibility. In Chapter 3, I described the contributions of Igorots in the UK in the welfare and development of their home region which express in material form this desire for bringing improvement to the home region apparent in these invitations.

Although Igorots in the UK are not the only ones holding cultural events in their adoptive country, their well-organised and sustained efforts to project their cultural events on Facebook make them visible in the network of diasporic Igorots. Their creation and posting, reposting, sharing and tagging of online invitations for their cultural events like the Grand Canao help create this visibility. These online invitations inspired an international interaction between and among Igorot-UK members and other Igorots who are based in the home region and in various destinations. As I have pointed out, these invitations became the occasion for the collaboration of Igorot-UK with other viewing Igorots in the production of a narrative that presented Igorots empowered by unhampered mobility. Although this optimistic narrative could only last for as long the invitations were up on Facebook, the interaction and collaboration among Igorots based in various parts of the world that the online invitations inspired created a positive link among these indigenous migrants. By initiating these interactions, Igorot-UK was able to demonstrate

its active interest not only in consolidating its own community through the conduct of cultural events but also in encouraging the continued connection of diasporic Igorots with their home region. In these online invitations and the interactions that transpired, Igorot-UK has presented the Igorots in the UK as advocates of Igorot identity who consider their indigenous culture as a source of confidence in navigating their diasporic lives in London.

### **Creating Visibility in Styled Photographs**

The annual social schedule of Igorots in the UK is filled with cultural events of their own or of other Filipino organisations, but they also sometimes organise group travels to different parts of the UK. In the last three years, there were travels to Bournemouth, Dover, Eastbourne, Edinburgh, Isle of Wight, Cotswolds, Norwich and Yorkshire, among others. Invitations for these travels were posted on Facebook giving details on travel dates, itinerary, costs, pick up and drop off points. Most of those who joined were Igorot-UK members but some brought along their other Filipino or British friends or spouses.

I joined some of these travels and noted a peculiar practice among Igorot travellers. In their group travels around the UK, they brought their ethnic attires and changed in these wear when they arrived in their destination for purposes of taking photographs in important landmarks. In some instances, they brought with them additional cultural artefacts to complement the attire and, for photographs, they enacted widely circulated images of Igorots like an Igorot warrior wielding a spear or an Igorot lady carrying a woven traditional basket. In other instances, they brought pieces of handwoven Igorot textile and displayed these like a banner in their group pictures. These photographs were subsequently posted on Facebook and they generated threads of



conversations. To display cultural textiles or to be dressed in ethnic attires is not unusual for diasporic groups but the motivations of this act among the Igorots in the UK is an interesting feature which I explore in this section.

Wearing ethnic attires is among the foremost means of affirming group identification. However, it is also true that wearing ethnic attires may not necessarily always serve this purpose because in certain instances, outsiders dress in ethnic attires of the places they visit in order to have a sense of authentic experience. The tourism industry in any destination has capitalized on this desire for cultural immersion and in the Cordillera Region, Igorot attires are made available for rent in many of the tourist areas. Having pictures taken in these attires is part of lowland Filipinos' itinerary in their visit to the highlands. This is a more recent development from the earlier but still continuing practice of having photos taken with Igorot elders dressed in ethnic attires who stay in tourist destinations to be photographed with a fee.

In looking at the photographs of Igorots in the UK wearing their ethnic attires in their travels around the UK, it seems unavoidable for a relation to be made between such act and the tourism practice in the Cordillera described above. To unpack this relation, it is useful to point out the difference in circumstances between the two events. In the photos of lowland Filipino tourists, they are outsiders seeking a genuine experience of the Igorot culture. In the photos of the Igorots in the UK, they are outsiders travelling around the UK wearing their own attires. As tourists, the Igorots in the UK, following the tourism pattern, should be wearing the attires of the places they visit but they do not do so. In effect, it seems they are trying to do something else and this, I suggest, is an attempt on their part to make an imprint on the spatial composition of their adoptive country. Their captured presence in their ethnic attires in the places they visited in the



Figure 59 & 60. Igorot-UK members have their photographs taken in their ethnic attires in Edinburgh. Photos by Marleen Abad posted on Benguet Organization-UK Facebook Page.



61 & 62 Other Igorot-UK members wear their ethnic attires for photographs by Stonehenge and with the wax figures of the royal family at Madame Tussaud's in London. Photos courtesy of Ajet Tudlong and Grace Nabus.

UK becomes their announcement that they have made it there and not as anonymous tourists but as visible Igorots. The same goes for the group pictures where they display ethnic cloths as banner, an act which imitates the practice of expressing conquest by

unfurling symbols of identification such as national flags planted on conquered mountains.

These photos are posted on the travellers' Facebook accounts and the commenters approve of their gesture bringing Igorots to places and of their proud affirmation of their culture. In pursuing, documenting and circulating their self-styled spatial conquest in the UK, the Igorot members enjoy a sense of pride confirmed by the approval of their peers. The comments indicate a sense of collective triumph where the adventures of Igorots in the UK are received by their network of Facebook friends as also their own. This feeling of inclusion is supported by the interactive facilities of social media where pictures can be viewed and commented on instantly. As one commenter said "*Kaman kami metlang nakipasayar en dakayo*" (We feel like we have gone on the trip with you).

In addition to creating an inclusive space where they and their families and friends can symbolically travel together, these photographs also appear to desire a remaking of the commodified version of Igorot visibility in photographs of and photographs with paid Igorot elders taken and circulated by lowland tourists visiting the Cordillera. Together with television news reports, soap opera and movies showing derisive images of Igorots, such touristic photographs have been the cause of embarrassment among many Igorots because they have become the basis of nasty remarks about Igorot people. In contrast to the compilation of discriminatory images of Igorots in mainstream media, these travel pictures posted on Facebook show the Igorot not as a peddled commodity or a laughingstock but as a mobile, empowered agent.

The accomplishment of this sense of empowerment is enabled by the resources of the digital image and social network. The digital image allows these migrants a chance to reinvent themselves the way they would like others to see them. The success of these migrants in producing particular images of themselves thus depends on their ability to

anticipate how the intended audience will interpret their photographs. As these Igorot migrants anticipate that their photographs will be posted on their Facebook accounts and be viewed by a network of friends, they plan and carry out the story that will be told about their travels. It is notable that in these photographs, the story being told is not only about personal success and mobility but also about the triumph of a particular group of people identified by the attire they are wearing. The story being told is therefore a collective Igorot success story. This conception of Igorot selves as representative or as representing the entire Igorot people is consistent with the project of purposive self-fashioning discussed in Chapter 3.

Visibility and agency, however, are not quite guaranteed in this seemingly empowering act of spatial conquest. The idea of visibility and empowerment, for example, is a complex issue for irregular members who appear visible in these photographs but remain invisible, as it were, because of their undocumented status. On the other hand, their visibility through these photographs can be a means of avoiding suspicion. By being visible, they appear to be regular members of the community doing the regular activities. By presenting themselves through the styled photographs, they can also reflect a kind of sophistication through the features of the photographic context which suggest their encounter with the history and culture of British society. The show of sophistication can cover their feelings of insecurity. Visibility afforded by these photographs is also devious even for the regular members of the community because these photographs emphasise being seen rather than being heard. Speaking with those who have posted such photographs, I learned that stories of isolation, homesickness, guilt for absence from childrearing, agony over an unfaithful spouse and tiredness from routine work are concealed by the veneer of adventures and spatial conquests created by their happy photographs online.

In addition to taking pictures in their native attires or holding a native cloth for a banner in their travels, another interesting and more elaborate act among Igorot members in their travels is the portrayal of familiar Igorot images and I analyse them separately because of the different issues they present. I take as example the photo in Figure 63 which shows a couple in a lavender farm where the man in ethnic G-string stands between rows of lavender and faces the viewer as he wields a spear on his right hand; the woman, also dressed in ethnic attire, carries a woven basket on her right hand and she stands on the next gap with her back turned from the viewer; she extends her free hand to touch the flowers.



Figure 63. A couple re-enacting familiar Igorot images in their photo in a lavender field in Banstead. Photo posted by Grace Nabus on her Facebook Page. Photo also appears on her husband, Archibald's Facebook Page.

In order to make sense of this picture, it is necessary to go back to American colonial discourse on the Philippines which gave rise to these images of the Igorot man and woman. Vital to the creation of these images is the involvement of American colonial official, Dean Worcester introduced in Chapter 1. It can be recalled that when the Americans took over the Philippines, the first step undertaken by the colonial government was to make an inventory of its new colony. The person appointed for this



task was Worcester who was a zoology professor at the University of Michigan.

Worcester undertook his mission by taking and labelling many photographs of the people of the Philippines consistent with the methods of his discipline in classifying specimen.

Among these photos were ones of topless Igorot women carrying woven baskets filled with farm produce and Igorot men in their loincloths wielding a spear.

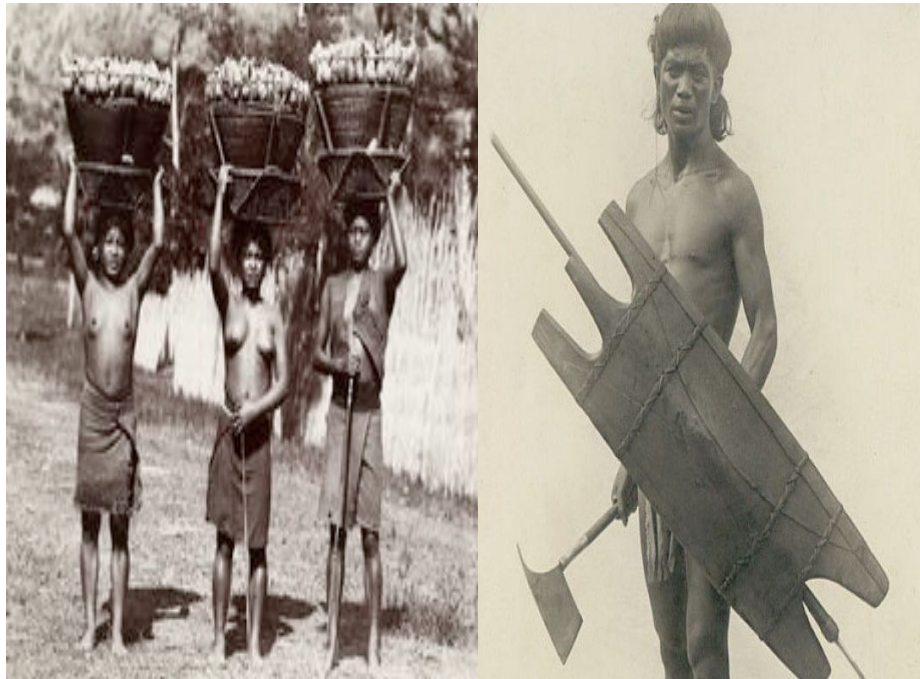


Figure 64 & 65. Photos of Igorots taken by American colonial officials in the early 1900s primarily under the administration of Dean Worcester, then director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes. Photos made available at [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com).

Circulating these images formed part of the US colonial discourse of “Benevolent Assimilation” which presented its colonization of the Philippines as a civilizing mission especially in the Cordillera Region where the Americans saw non-Christian Igorots, devoid of the “civilization” of Spaniards, as excellent case for show of success. With recommendations from Worcester, who by then was being recognized as an expert on the Philippine Islands, a contingent of Igorots were sent to the St. Louis Fair in 1904, among them the man in Figure 66 who was depicted as “Igorot Warrior” in souvenir postcards

from the Fair. With the circulation of these images, the idea of Igorots as fierce, barbaric, uncivilized people was instilled among westerners and other Filipinos.

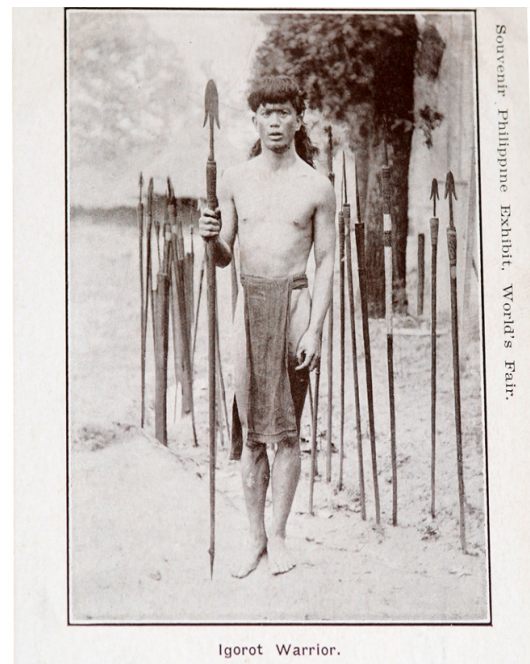


Figure 66. Postcard depicting an “Igorot warrior” in the 1904 St. Louis Fair. Image from <http://www.collect-sell.com/product/igorot-warrior-postcard/>

Assisting in the further circulation of these images was the recreation of the Worcester photos by other people for other purposes such as the two examples in Figure 67 and 68 which show studio shots of lowlander Filipinas in the 1940s donning the ethnic attire of an Igorot lady with her woven basket and posed against a background showing the famous horse-shoe curve of the Benguet Road built by Americans to access its established colonial hill station of Baguio City and to transport gold and copper mined in the Cordillera Region. This photography service was offered by an enterprising Japanese family that migrated to the Cordillera. Indulging in this early version of glamour photography became part of lowland lady tourists’ itinerary on their travel to Baguio City.



Figure 67 & 68. Circa 1940s studio shots of lowland Filipinas in Igorot attire. Photos made available at [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)



Figure 69 & 70. Postcard promoting the Benguet Festival Dance and Igorot ladies performing a dance in the 2014 Grand Cañao. Photo from <http://bonbon2010pearloftheorientsea.blogspot.co.uk> and Karl Reyes.

The Worcester image of the Igorota was further used in the tourism industry of the Philippines to promote the natural beauties of the Cordillera as shown by the postcard in



Figure 69 which, in fact, misplaces the Benguet ladies and the Benguet Festival Dance against the background of the Banaue Rice Terraces in the province of Ifugao. For their part, the Igorot community in the UK continues to perform this image of the Igorot woman in their cultural events as seen, for example, in Figure 70 which shows Benguet ladies performing a dance in the 2014 Grand Cañao. The warrior image of the Igorot man, on the other hand, has been used by the mainstream entertainment industry as sensational material to market TV shows and movies as in Figure 71 where the movie “Ifugao” produced in Manila in 1968 by an award-winning Filipino director featured the exploits of a fierce Igorot warrior.



Figure 71. The film *Ifugao* released in 1968 features a fierce Ifugao warrior. Image made available at <http://andrewleavold.blogspot.co.uk/2008/02/cirio-h-santiago-filmography-1955-1969.html>

Recently, however, the Igorot warrior image was used by a documentary produced by CNN Philippines to describe the heroism of 13 Igorot members of the Philippine National Police Special Action Force who died in early 2015 in a controversial mission directed by the government to deal with a terrorist group operating in Southern Philippines.



Figure 72. CNN Philippines calls the fallen Igorot policemen “Igorot Warriors” in its documentary with the same title aired in March 2015. Screenshot of video clip on CNN Philippines.

The recreations of the Worcester photographs and the changes in attributes and meanings that have come with these recreations indicate an amelioration of meaning on the part of the Igorot warrior image in which the formerly negative attribute of the Igorot man as fierce, uncivilized, lawless warrior shifts into an image of brave, patriotic, specially trained law enforcement officers. The image of the Igorot woman, on the other hand, has seen a covering up of her breasts in later recreations of the original Worcester photo. This covering up seems to get attention away from a sexually charged image towards an attribute that implies the woman’s hardworking qualities as indicated by her carrying on her head a basket filled with vegetables and with her smiles, she seems to be quite happy about her labour. Compared to the drastic change in the meaning of the image and term “Igorot warrior”, however, the image of the Igorota has remained largely the same.

It seems that the image of the couple in a lavender farm follows this kind of gendered discourse but also expresses a particular kind of change in meaning. The man faces the viewer and is poised to throw his spear as the Igorot warriors in old photographs do. His action expresses an aggressiveness consistent with the image of a

fierce warrior, but the unnatural manner in which he raises his other hand in the moment of throwing a spear, calls attention to the rehearsed quality of his movement. The sense of aggression created by his act of throwing a spear is also minimized by the fact that he is in a flower field not in a hunting ground or a tribal war. In fact, his aggressive act appears uncalled for in a place of serene beauty.

On the other hand, the woman's act of turning her back from the viewer and extending her hand to touch the flowers expresses her interest in the scenery. She carries a woven basket but this is empty and she carries it casually on her side suggesting her relaxed disposition. With the manner she is admiring the flowers, it looks like she is going to gather some and put them in her basket. This image shows the Igorota as a woman of leisure; she has the appearance of enjoyment as those ladies who indulged in the glamour photography of the 1940s, who also had empty baskets. But unlike the ladies in the glamour studio who were photographed only with backdrops of tourist destinations in the Cordillera, the lady in the current photo has actually gone to the place where her photo was taken, thus, she has gone further. If the photo of the couple were to be taken as saying something about the Igorot migrants in the UK, it seems to be saying the Igorota has gone beyond being a happy, hardworking woman of the fields; she has now been able to go to places and is having a great time. The Igorot man, on the other hand, has retained the qualities of fierceness and strength attributed to the old Igorot warriors despite his move to a different place. His appearance as a misplaced entity in the photo, however, creates an ambiguous message. His presence in a feminized space renders his aggressiveness as an absurd quality and this placement does not provide a context in which his figure can have the kind of positive attributes given to the slain police officers. In effect, he seems to be a misplaced character and instead, what gets noticed in his appearance is not his warrior like qualities but his exposed body. His raised hands and

extended leg together with the fact that he faces the viewer enables maximum chance for looking. As I suggested in Chapter 3, the Igorot man in the UK is becoming the object of interest not for his perceived savagery as produced by colonial discourse but for his potential desirability.

This strategy, like the photography on spatial conquests discussed above, may be seen as another attempt at gaining visibility which seems to be motivated by a desire by members of the community to inform other people about how they, as Igorots in the UK, have gone beyond the “barbaric” images of their ancestors frozen in colonial photographs. Celia Lury (1998) describes this aspect of photographs as “prosthetic biography” which means that people manipulate their images as a way of attaching a new history to the self. However, this kind of visibility, as with the earlier set of photographs, fails to account for varied situations in the community such as the distinction between Igorot women who can indulge in leisure and those who do not have this same luxury. This issue of class interrogates the empowered Igorot woman discourse not so much because women who are employed in low-paid and low status jobs cannot afford to travel and have fun but because it fails to acknowledge the profound difference in the navigation of lived experience in the UK as result of different positioning.

The difference in the experience of Igorot women in London is illustrated by the stories of Auntie Paulina and Auntie Nora. The former arrived in London as a student nurse and after she finished her studies, she had regular employments in East London hospitals. With confidence and opportunity she gained from her experience and connection with the health service, she opened her own private care home which she was able to expand in succeeding years. She and her husband then ventured into an international forwarding business which primarily served Igorot customers. This business gained favour amongst Igorot clients who felt confident with the service provided by one

of their own. With the success of this forwarding business, Auntie Paulina was able to build a resort in the Philippines which has become well-patronised too. With the comfort of wealth from successful businesses, Auntie Paulina has been active in the international network of diasporic Igorots travelling and attending conferences and getting involved in various assistance projects for the Cordillera. She is now retired from the health service and is involved in civic projects in her hometown in the Philippines. She travels back and forth from the Philippines to the UK to visit her family and check on her businesses which are now administered by her children.

On the other hand, Auntie Nora arrived in London as a domestic helper of a Middle Eastern family that travelled to London for holiday. Auntie Nora left her employer because of certain misunderstandings which put her in a bad situation. As a run-away, Auntie Nora sought the help of a non-government organisation which provided her shelter and where she met other women in a similar situation. She endeavoured to keep her self-esteem by getting involved in various skills trainings and cultural activities. Soon, she formed an informal support group among her fellow irregular Filipino migrants most of who were from the Cordillera. The members of Auntie Nora's group supported campaigns for regularizing the status of migrants such as themselves. With a concession from the UK government, Auntie Nora and her friends were able to gain a regular status. Auntie Nora found employment as a domestic worker, baby sitter, carer and cleaner with various families and these jobs have enabled her to support two children in the Philippines, one of whom she lost due to illness. Approaching retirement, Auntie Nora now works as a cashier in a supermarket in Southwest London.

The life stories of Auntie Paulina and Auntie Nora illustrate the disparity in which moving and living in London is experienced by Igorot migrants. These two women and the line of other women in the community who fall under their distinct situations hold

different levels of power to exercise agency given their abilities and challenges. As Massey (1994) points out in relation to different social groups, people have a differentiated mobility because some are more in charge of it than others. Between Auntie Paulina and Auntie Nora, the former surely has a better command of social mobility. Although both can and do join the group travels of Igorot-UK and post happy photographs of themselves in the same trip, these photographs posted on Facebook do not speak of the differences in their life journeys.

Apart from the idea of visibility that promotes an empowered image, the other form of visibility based on an individual's desirability encourages a celebrity discourse which distracts attention on collective welfare which is among the foremost agenda the organisation wishes to uphold. Some members expressed the opinion that Igorot-UK as an organisation engages only in the celebration of culture and in presenting a glossy image of the community in the UK. These members are disappointed that as an organisation, Igorot-UK does not directly get involved in political action to help organisations campaign for irregular members despite some attempts for collaboration made by charity and church organisations in the UK. These tensions in the community are indeed not visible in the Facebook photographs and this situation calls attention to the partiality of stories told on this site. The visibility of Igorots in London through styled photographs connect the projection of self to the recreation of negative impressions about Igorots but the visibility of the community created in this practice is filled with contradicting results. The Igorot image is somehow freed from its encumbrance in negative stereotypes through possibilities of agency but the new images produced conceal the variety and complexity of situations faced by the members in migration.

## **Bridging Distance in Visible Loss**

Another Facebook practice among members of Igorot-UK is the posting of memorials for deceased family members. Such posts are made on the death anniversaries of the deceased as a way of remembering them. Although these posts are usually made on the members' personal accounts, these posts are tagged or shared on the group account as a way of informing other members of the occasion. Members of Igorot-UK have prior relations as relatives, friends, schoolmates, townmates and other such connections and because of these prior relations, personal matters like remembrance of the passing of a family member are considered to be of interest to other members.

These posts are usually composed of a photograph of the deceased family member and a text dedication expressing the account owner's longing for the deceased person, admiration for her/his qualities, gratitude for her/his contributions and request for protection of the living family members. In some cases, these posts are composed as prayers for the deceased or as direct address to them expressing affection and wishing them well in their current place perceived as a happier realm of existence. These posts do express deep personal feeling, but because the persons addressed here will not be able to read the message and the senders know this, these posts are of course "rhetorical". To say that they are "rhetorical" however, does not mean the dismissal of their value. For the Igorots in the UK, these posts create a network of sympathy, a support group with members demonstrating consolation by expressing their own fond remembrances of the deceased person, by drawing parallel experiences with their own deceased family members or by conveying similar hopes for peace and well-being of the deceased and the living. The manner in which these posts are tagged or shared to family members, friends and relatives across different places make these posts as spaces of collective remembering. As Halbwachs (1992) pointed out, memories are constructed in how a

group of people sharing a common bond recall these memories together according to their present situations. This process of collective recalling leads to spontaneous reunions among long lost relatives and friends of the deceased including those formerly unknown to the person who made the post. In these affective reunions, relations are affirmed, networks are extended and new relationships are forged on account of loss made visible.

Among Igorots, family members who passed are still very much part of the lives of surviving relations. This is manifest in the performance of rituals that invoke the protection or intercession of the dead for the welfare of the living and sometimes rituals are held to appease the spirit of the dead who are believed to have been offended because their wishes have not been properly fulfilled. With the conversion of many Igorots to Christianity, less of these rituals are held as their practice is discouraged in the new faith. The belief in the intervention of the spirits of the dead, however, remains and these posts manifest the maintenance of this connection with deceased relatives. In memorializing dead relatives often with a direct address to the deceased in the native language, these posts also trace personal history; by doing so, they become exercises of return to one's roots in the home. By indicating the length of years that passed since the death of the person being remembered (as seen in Figures 73 & 74 ) and the affirmation that the passing of time is immaterial in the affection of those who live, these posts attempt to bridge spatial and temporal disconnection.





Figure 73 & 74. Examples of elegies for deceased family members posted online

These posts likewise exhibit that those who have made them possess the virtue of maintaining family ties and its related values of thoughtfulness and loyalty. Because keeping the family is an integral part of Igorot culture as discussed in Chapter 3, those who are remembering their dead are seen as keeping their obligations to their kin and that makes them remain like the loyal Igorots they were socialised to be. These posts therefore affirm that despite their absence, Igorots in London remain connected to their kin and home by remembering their loss.

### Promoting <sup>25</sup>the Face that Launched a Thousand Clicks

A constant motif in the identity project of Igorots in London is the idea of self-fashioning to achieve a collective purpose. On Facebook, this strategy is carried out by

<sup>25</sup> I adopted this title from a 2016 Facebook post written by Grace Nabus which gives an account of the historical discrimination of Igorots and the instant fame of Jeyrick Sigmaton through social media

the posting of styled invitations, photographs and posts which work to symbolically connect the Igorot community in London to the home region and other Igorots elsewhere. In this section, I explore the production of symbolic connections undertaken by Igorots in the UK through its direct intervention in the so-called Carrotman phenomenon in the Philippines. Although the involvement of the community in this affair was not limited to Facebook as a platform, this site was used extensively by the community as the means of producing and circulating images related to its involvement in this event. I treat the images projected by the community on Facebook as symbolic connections because they were intended to demonstrate the process in which the Igorot community in London remains interested and concerned in the affairs of home.

The Carrotman phenomenon was an online craze in the Philippines which began in February 2016 over Facebook photos of a rugged young Igorot farmer carrying a basket of carrots. These photos were taken and posted by lowland Filipino tourists as they were on their way to a famous destination in the Cordillera. Part of the fascination over the photos was the anonymity of the young man. Admirers craved to know his name and whereabouts. The story of this young Igorot farmer trending on social media was soon reported on national television and this prompted a TV network to find him. He was found in Mountain Province and his interview aired by the network revealed that he is Jeyrick Sigmaton, an out of school youth who works as an itinerant farm labourer to help his poor family. Jeyrick was subsequently invited as guest in a television talk show in Manila where he was interviewed about his sudden fame. He appeared in several other shows where the spontaneous dramatic interludes about his family's economic struggles and his determination to help his family generated a wide admiration from Filipinos. After his appearances on television, Jeyrick was signed into a modelling contract with a

local clothing line which carried out his makeover from a rugged farm boy to a glamorous runway idol.



Figure 75. The photos of Jeyrick Sigmaton posted on Facebook by Edwina Bandong and Cheene de Guzman that started the craze over this Igorot farmer.



Figure 76. Jeyrick's photo posted by Boardwalk, the local clothing line that signed him as endorser and photos posted by fans to show Jeyrick's resemblance with Korean actor Jang Geun Suk.

With the instant fame of Carrotman, many members of the Igorot community in the Philippines and abroad expressed their pride for a good looking and hardworking youth. Some Igorots, on the other hand, expressed displeasure with lowland Filipinos who indicated surprise that Jeyrick is an Igorot. They were indignant with the intimation that Igorots cannot be good looking and virtuous. Such indignant comments flared further after the airing of the segment on Jeyrick which included an interview with a history professor from the national university of the Philippines in Manila. In that interview, the professor explained that Jeyrick's good looks can be attributed to the improvement of the Igorot race out of native women's intermarriage with American and British Episcopalian missionaries who came to the region in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Social media was flooded with fierce reactions from Igorots in the Philippines and abroad not least from those who are in the United Kingdom. Though said in many furious ways, the Igorots' collective cry was against the professor's dismissal of their ancestry and the factual inaccuracy of his remarks.

Igorots in the UK participated in this outcry by citing instances of discrimination they experienced from lowlander Filipinos in the United Kingdom. On the group's Facebook page, a member posted a review of events that illustrate the Igorots' defense of their home region against Spanish colonizers and the subsequent discrimination of Igorots in the Philippine Republic as a consequence of this defiance. This post also listed Igorot individuals considered by this member as having notable achievements despite the Igorots' marginalized status in the Philippines. This list includes Jeyrick who is projected to be the next successful Igorot celebrity following the lead of Igorot winners in earlier nationwide television talent searches.

A good number of Igorots in the UK come from Jeyrick's province and some of them have certain degrees of affiliation with him. As news of his fame spread on social

media, Jeyrick's *kailians* in the UK expressed their greetings on his Facebook account. Jeyrick acknowledged their support by posting photos of himself holding messages of gratitude. In a few months, an announcement on Igorot-UK's Facebook group account was made about the creation of a fan club called "Jeyrick Rabbits" by some members of the Igorot community to express support for the young man whom they held as embodying what they describe as quintessentially Igorot virtues of hard work and care for family. Members of this group posted updates on Jeyrick's activities on their personal accounts and on the group accounts of the provincial organizations. The members openly discussed their intention to be his watchdogs ensuring he is not corrupted nor abused by the lowland show business industry. Towards the third quarter of 2016, members of Jeyrick Rabbits forwarded a solicitation letter to Igorots in the UK asking for financial contribution for the travel of Jeyrick to the UK. The letter said the fan club invited Jeyrick as a guest of honour in the Grand Canao, the annual cultural event held by the mother organization, Igorot-UK, to commemorate its founding anniversary. In the letter, the members said "Jeyrick's travel to the UK will widen his horizon, improve his interpersonal skills and improve his stature as a modern Igorot icon."



Figure 77. This collage posted on Igorot-UK Facebook account documents some of Jeyrick's activities in London.

With the money donated by Igorots in the UK, Jeyrick and an accompanying relative arrived in London in time for the Grand Canao on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2016. During their stay in the UK, they were accommodated in the house of the then Igorot-UK President in Chelsea except in short intervals when they stayed with different hosts in Cambridge, Torquay and Helensburgh (Scotland) as part of the itinerary drawn up by the administrators.

By having Jeyrick as guest, the 2016 instalment of the Grand Cañao focused on his image as a representative of Igorot virtues and potential. The online invitations for this event used his image and highlighted the opportunity to see the Igorot celebrity in person. There was a huge turnout during the event which featured the usual programme of cultural performances from the provincial organizations and this was greatly applauded by the audience but the real interest was taking photos of and having photos with Carrotman. Photos and videos of Jeyrick in this event were immediately uploaded on Facebook by the attendees and these were shared or reposted on his fan pages.

Following his attendance to the Grand Canao, Jeyrick received modeling offers from retail businesses owned by Filipinos in London. He also signed an acting contract with a Filipino film production group in London and together with some members of the Igorot community as extras, he filmed part of this movie in London. The producers immediately announced that this movie was going to be Jeyrick's breakthrough into film stardom. These opportunities for Jeyrick were officially announced on Facebook by the Igorot-UK President and the fan club administrators with clear excitement about the career prospects for Jeyrick opened by his trip to the UK. In the month-long stay of Jeyrick in the UK, the photos posted and status updates created on the Igorot-UK Facebook group account and the administrators' personal accounts were all about Jeyrick's travels around the UK and the opportunities being offered to him. The same is true with the personal accounts of other members, some even featuring photos with Jeyrick as profile pictures and cover photos. Based on the warm reception of Igorots and other Filipinos in the UK for Jeyrick and the opportunities he received while he was here, his trip to the UK was productive on the whole. Among Igorots, his presence inspired great pride for culture and identity and his story strengthened their commitment to help provide opportunities for fellow Igorots.

Inspired by the travel of Jeyrick to the UK, an organization of Igorots in Thailand subsequently invited him to be its guest in its 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary celebration. Just like when he was in the UK, Jeyrick was also hosted by Igorot families and was toured around Bangkok this time with his father. Shortly after this trip, he was again invited by an Igorot organization in South Korea. As Jeyrick's hosts in these travels posted photo updates, the Jeyrick Rabbits' administrators and Igorot supporters in the UK reposted these updates in the fan page thus keeping UK fans constantly informed. After his travels, Jeyrick has been officially involved as tourism ambassador of Mountain Province



and as endorser of the Cordillera Regional Tourism Office. He has appeared as guest in various festivals in the Cordillera provinces and in different social and cultural events all properly documented in photos posted on his fan pages.

In providing a detailed description of the involvement of Igorots in the UK in building Jeyrick's career, I hope to have illustrated how they have invested a significant amount of resources in this project. They are not simple admiring fans but a truly engaged group intent on making a successful career out of this young man. They managed his travel to the UK with serious planning and commitment and their efforts even extended to working out the problems that came out of the contingencies of the travel. Their support extended beyond his trip to the UK and they remain to be among Jeyrick's most committed fans. I therefore set out to understand why the Igorot community in the UK has taken such interest and involvement in this person's life.



Figure 78. Photo posted on Igo-UK Facebook account showing Jeyrick in traditional Korean attire taken during his trip to Seoul.

In the solicitation letter asking for financial support from Igorots in the UK for bringing Jeyrick over, the administrators of the project explained that Jeyrick's travel to the UK will "widen his horizon, improve his interpersonal skills and improve his stature as a modern Igorot icon." These objectives that emphasize an intention for effecting improvement on a person's current state indicate that the Igorots in the UK see certain



lack in this person's qualities which they intend to fill. But this intention of helping a fellow Igorot did not spring at the moment of Jeyrick's fame. It is, in fact, consistent with the Igorot community's efforts to contribute to their home region's welfare and development through educational and medical aids in addition to donations for the relief of victims of natural calamities. What is new in this effort to build Jeyrick's personality and career however, is the emphasis on producing an individual with admirable qualities as a representative of the Igorot people. By investing particular interest in this objective, the Igorot community in the UK appear to project unto Jeyrick the manner in which they desire to be represented. When it noted certain traits in Jeyrick that need to be improved, the group indicates he is not quite adequate as their representative. In designing how to help Jeyrick improve his "stature as a modern Igorot icon", this group of Igorots reveals their concept of how Igorots should be or should be seen. They desire for Jeyrick to have a broad mind and good interpersonal skills thus it seems they consider these attributes as definitive Igorot qualities. To form these qualities, the Igorots in the UK felt it is important for Jeyrick to travel. They consider his mobility as a significant factor in his acquisition of confidence and language skills projected for his role as Igorot icon. It seems the group consider mobility as the remedy for Jeyrick's lack of formal education and his confinement to the farms where he was employed. This strong belief in the instructive benefits of travel perhaps reflects the group's own encounters with the merits of travel. In addition to boosting Jeyrick's confidence and social skills, Igorots in the UK also endeavoured to highlight that he is deeply rooted in his ethnic culture. He was presented as an able performer of cultural arts and as an embodiment of cultural values such as care for family exemplified by his bespoke sacrifice of his own education in order to work for his family.

The efforts of the Igorots in the UK to improve the image and increase the career prospects of Jeyrick illustrate that they have clearly understood the usefulness of being involved in the Carrotman phenomenon. Taking Jeyrick under their wings was for them an opportunity to mobilize their resources to fill the lack in this fellow Igorot who had limited opportunities in life. In doing so, they fulfil their commitment to help in the welfare of their home region. But by designing Jeyrick's activities in the UK, they have, in turn, infused his imagery with their own ideals of Igorotness. They have directed Jeyrick to embody and project their own desired selves.

Their involvement in Jeyrick's personality and career build up also enabled the Igorot community in the UK to scale up their engagement in the prevailing identity politics in the Philippines. The Igorot community has constantly intended in their activities to change the negative perception of lowland Filipinos about Igorots; they have meant to educate their lowland Filipino compatriots about their history and culture in order to claim an equal status as legitimate Filipinos. By getting involved in the Carrotman affair, the Igorot community seized the chance to command a worldwide audience in their call for Igorot recognition. They utilized the attention being enjoyed by Jeyrick from Igorots and Filipinos around the world to rally for Igorot solidary and renewed cultural pride. They likewise understood the power of image production in projecting their cause at this moment and they supplied the images and information they wanted to be consumed. They have exercised control over the flow of information and imagery according to their objectives. This involvement therefore achieved for Igorots in the UK a general feeling of celebration, a moral uplift and a sense of agency derived from being part of a moment holding worldwide attention.

As must be apparent, the success of Igorots in upstaging Jeyrick's celebrity status and in creating more opportunities for him was made possible by the facilities of social

media. The community used Facebook intensively in its uplift project for Jeyrick. In addition to using their own Facebook accounts to announce and document Jeyrick's activities, the members utilized the group accounts of the organizations and they created a fan page for fans based in the UK. Because of interlinked friends list in these Facebook accounts, images and information about Jeyrick's travel in the UK and his subsequent activities reached far and wide. In fact, because of constant updating of information and reposting of images, the newsfeeds of Igorot Facebook users were saturated with content about Carrotman. As a result of this constant sharing of information and general interaction around Jeyrick's activities, diasporic Igorots and Igorots at home converged despite their distance and dislocation. This convergence has created a sense of closeness and unity based on shared support and good wishes for Jeyrick who is one of them. Their absence at home is therefore not a hindrance in gathering knowledge and information about the events back home.

For all the success of the Igorot community in upstaging Jeyrick as an Igorot celebrity, in securing more opportunities for him and in inspiring unity and pride among Igorots around the world, it must be asked what consequences these efforts have made in the social or political status of Igorots in the Philippines. I suggest that the most significant effect of Jeyrick's visibility resulting from his UK travel and his subsequent travels to Thailand and South Korea, is the awareness made in lowland Filipinos' consciousness that Igorots are in fact all over the world not confined to their mountain region. Though diasporic Igorots, especially those in North America, have always been involved in discussions of identity politics, nowhere has their involvement been made known and made visible to a wide audience other than now. The entry of the diasporic Igorots in the picture through the fame of Jeyrick seems to dispel the notion that Igorots are "barbaric" or "uncivilized". Because Igorots are in London, in Bangkok and in Seoul,

surely, they cannot be savages. The reputation of these places as international centres of culture and commerce lends a quality of sophistication for the Igorots who are there and indeed the Igorot celebrity who has been there as well. Viewers have been made aware too that diasporic Igorots practice their culture and are proud for doing so. Igorots are therefore seen to be loyal to their indigenous identity despite being away from home. A significant amount of admiration for Igorots were expressed by lowland Filipinos on social media, some commenters even found ways to make themselves have certain affiliations with Igorot people. For putting into question the negative perceptions about Igorots that many lowland Filipinos have imbibed from mainstream media, the efforts of the Igorots in the UK have fulfilled an important purpose.

In spite of the publicity Jeyrick has received and the solid backing of Igorots around the world, it has been observed that his show business career is not really taking off. He is indeed popular but his modelling contract has ended, he has not been casted in a television show after his brief appearances and the movie he partly filmed in London did not materialize due to certain problems. Some commenters attribute Jeyrick's failure to enter show business because of his poor language facility in Filipino, the national language of the Philippines (based on Tagalog, a lowland majority language) which is the medium of entertainment in the country. These criticisms surfaced after his brief appearances in television comedies and after his brief stint at hosting in a game show where he had difficulty in counting the prize money as he did not know the Filipino terms of numbers. This situation indicates that despite the great admiration for Jeyrick and the apparently dispelled negative perceptions about Igorots, certain boundaries are still firmly in place. This point can be illustrated by comparison with a newly famous young Filipino actor named Alden Richards who is said to be Jeyrick's look alike. In fact, because of their resemblance, Jeyrick has been called the "Igorot Bae" which is a

term derived from Alden's status on Philippine television as the national "Bae". Bae is a term spawned by social media which means "Before anyone else" used to refer to someone significant such as one's lover or spouse. Alden's show business career is definitely established and this is attributed to his possession of the complete package including language skills not least because he comes from a province that speaks Tagalog, the basis of the national language.

The circumstances of Jeyrick's entry into the limelight may also account for the slow progress of his show business career. He appeared as an anonymous object of desire thus, much of the initial fervour about him was the mystery of his identity. His anonymity set up among followers a romantic suspense of wondering and finally knowing who the prince charming is. When Jeyrick did get the modelling break from Boardwalk, the narrative of the clothing collection designed around him played on this discourse of desire though it shifted from his anonymity to the erotic possibilities of his occupation as a farmer. The shirts in this collection are decorated with carrots and one of them is marked "Keep Calm and Eat Carrot". A promotion poster, on the other hand, features Jeyrick saying "Ito ang kisig ng carrot ko" (This is the look of my carrot). The sexual intimations of these advertisements cannot be missed and Jeyrick's followers are quick to respond as one commenter who wrote "There is no more reason for you not to eat your vegetables" or another who said, "We just want a hand on those carrots". By marketing the clothes that Jeyrick modelled as means of possessing his manhood, the desire of followers was gratified and the company made profits. Despite the success of this clothing collection, there have been no further offers for Jeyrick from the company and this is attributed by some to his failure to launch a star status that will strengthen his modelling appeal. It seems then that despite the number and enthusiasm of his fans, Jeyrick's prospects in show business is constrained by the rules of the industry that

would not admit someone who cannot speak its language. At the end of the day, the lowland majority still determines the parameters of social participation. Mainstream mass media concedes attention to exceptional qualities but their boundaries are clear.

The setback in Jeyrick's career illustrates the problem in the heavy reliance of Igorots in the UK on image production around a celebrity to carry out their agenda of revising the image of Igorots in the consciousness of lowland Filipinos. One problem in this undertaking is the focus of resources and energies on a single person; upstaging Jeyrick became an obsession that distracted the community from looking into much urgent concern affecting the welfare of the members. There has always been a call from a segment of the UK Igorot population for dealing with the issue of undocumented members, for example, but this has not been taken up by the leadership. Some members pointed out that the community was willing to devote resources for producing images that circulate their ideals of Igorot identity but not on the material conditions of the most vulnerable members of the community.

By attempting to refine and highlight Jeyrick's admirable qualities, the community also fails to make his fame an opportunity for mounting concerns affecting farmers in the Cordillera such as Jeyrick himself. As some commenters expressed, the hype around Jeyrick's good looks has romanticized the image of Igorot farmers as exotic packages of desire. Farmers' experiences of hard labour and general lack of opportunity are discussed in an animated speculation on their suitability and willingness to provide sexual pleasure. In protest against the sexualized discourse surrounding Jeyrick and Igorot farmers in general, a disgruntled Igorot Facebook user posted pictures of a regular farmer hard at work harvesting carrots with the caption "This is the real Carrotman". Although the Igorots in the UK veer away from the mainstream sexualized discourse on Jeyrick by projecting him as a representation of Igorot virtues, they employ the same

focus on individual desirability. By refining Jeyrick and making him carry Igorot ideals to be celebrated in his travels, the Igorot UK managers and fans have made him into a mobile spectacle. Because these Igorot hosts document and circulate their encounters with Jeyrick, they themselves have also become part of the spectacle. By creating a spectacle out of themselves, Igorots seem to recreate the spectacles of Igorots exhibited in World Fairs in the US and in Europe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although this time the image projected in these online spectacles are completely in Igorots' own hands, the act of wanting to be seen seems to betray an insecurity that can only be alleviated by over visibility.

Though diasporic Igorots in general, not only the Igorot icon himself, have achieved visibility which inspired a worldwide surge of solidarity among Igorots, these victories, have mostly been attained in the realm of online images and by being so, their functions are limited to symbolic affirmation of identity. The power of images cannot be dismissed of course but the speed and transience of social media communication pose a problem on the ability of these images to sustain their meaning and to push existing boundaries that constrain Igorots' opportunities in the country. With the admiring but tentative response of show business outfits to Jeyrick's prospects in the industry, it appears that the strength of his reputation as an Igorot icon cannot penetrate and revise the rules afterall.

By choosing to focus their energies in this symbolic production, the Igorots in the UK miss on the alternative opportunity to invest their resources in making real material impact. Some critics, for example, pointed out, that all the money spent for Jeyrick's travels could have secured his education. Since his chances for a show business career was hindered by limited language facility, developing this skill with studies should have been the real priority. This is not to question the manner in which Jeyrick's activities

have been managed, but to point out that if Igorots in the UK do intend to make real changes in the status of their fellow Igorots in the Philippines, they need to act beyond producing positive Igorot images online.

Although this intervention was meant as an uplift programme for Jeyrick, I suggested that it also became a means for the Igorots in the UK to project their own ideals of Igorot identity. This instance confirms that despite their absence, dislocated Igorots exercise great influence in the affairs at home. With their resources and commitment, they can extend the reach of local concerns to global attention. Their involvement in the Carrotman affair seemed to have instilled in them a subjectivity that is centred on a role as traders of cultural imagery. By being so, they have been focused on producing image and information that place the Igorot in positive light. I criticized this obsession with the production of images as a weakness in their aim to change the status of Igorots in the Philippines because it is limited to achieving visibility that does not necessarily translate to real material change.

## **Conclusion**

My discussion in this chapter regarding the activities of Igorot-UK members on Facebook has illustrated that indeed Facebook enables these migrant Igorots to imagine, project and circulate new possibilities for themselves. On the liberal space of Facebook, Igorot diasporic culture is free to emerge and digital diasporic ideas are increasingly shaping these migrants' sense of self and the desires of those who are left in the homeland. My analyses of the aesthetic productions of the community on Facebook shows, for one, that this medium allows for more opportunities for reflection elaborated from a position of difference that is based on self-awareness. This awareness is a result of



experiences heightened by critical distance achieved online. The self-representations of these indigenous migrants on Facebook exemplify their intentional fashioning of selves that can achieve for them ,and the people they represent, a sense of achievement and transformed sense of self. At the same time, the Igorots' ability to draw from their experiences back in the home and their desire to participate in the affairs of home despite their absence illustrate that cultural transaction between members of social groups are no longer restricted by facts of geography. Through Facebook, Igorot identity can be reimagined, different generations can meet and mingle and the community can be mobilised to intervene in particular concerns it desires to influence.

Illustrations of Facebook interactions in this chapter further shows that this social medium generates a compulsion to visibility among Igorot users because it offers new ways to display and manipulate images online. The Igorot community in the UK has been prolific in the creation and circulation of images that project its imagination and desires for itself and its home region. These images have stimulated robust exchanges of thoughts and sentiments not only among members of the organisation but the entire length of the Igorot diaspora and those who are in the home region. These interactions have served as unifying moments for Igorots who either rediscovered old relations or made new friends among their *kailian* online. This visibility, however, runs the risk of glossing over material differences in the community, for concealing the real challenges of migrants in the UK and in being a means to achieve popularity rather than concrete political action. Although this visibility can supply consumers with what may be empowering images, it cannot guarantee a long term and substantial revision of beliefs.

## CHAPTER 6: INDIGENEITY IN DIASPORA

In 2015, when the Philippine Department of Education implemented the restructuring of basic education in the Philippines from its original ten-year duration to 12 years, the creation and distribution of instructional materials was among its priorities. New textbooks were provided by the Department to be used in enhanced basic education subjects entailed by the new education policy. With these new materials, however, came an uproar from indigenous communities whose members took to social media to point out errors in these new textbooks. Igorot commenters were frustrated with the way indigenous peoples in the Philippines and Igorots in particular were portrayed in these textbooks. Among the objects of discussion was a Grade 4 textbook called “Edukasyon sa Pagkatao” (Education in Personhood) which includes a section about indigenous peoples in the Philippines. The commenters pointed out that the entries in this book contain factual errors about the geographical location and composition of Igorots. They also claim that the physical appearance, livelihood and languages attributed to Igorots do not represent them as a people. They pointed out, for instance, that the textbook describes Igorots to be engaged in farming, fishing, weaving and hunting deer and wild pig. They are dark, curly-haired and sturdy and they speak Ilocano and Pangasinense.

This event may seem frivolous, one of those petty quarrels among so-called netizens who voice out strong opinions over little things. Discussions like these, however, are symptomatic of the prevailing perspective in mainstream Philippine establishments about indigenous people. Even disregarding the factual errors in these textbooks such as the languages spoken by indigenous peoples in the Philippine highlands and fishing as a livelihood in a landlocked region, the manner in which these textbook entries characterise indigenous populations like the Igorots manifest what I

described in Chapter 2 as the indigenous paradigm which looks at indigenous people being emplaced in rural settings doing traditional trades closely related to a rustic environment. The description of their physical appearance also connects to living in rugged surroundings. These textbook entries therefore make Filipino school children understand indigenous people in their country as quintessentially other people removed from contemporary developments and necessarily separate from mainstream Filipinos. In this concluding chapter, I contemplate on the implications of the community building and self-representational practices undertaken by Igorot-UK on contemporary conceptualizations and understandings of Igorot identity and belonging. In Chapters 3 and 4, I described these practices as means of incorporating members into the community in London. In this concluding chapter, I think about how the interactions, narratives and images produced by Igorot-UK and the strategies of knowledge production it employed figure in the (re)shaping of knowledge about Igorots as an indigenous people and in the reconfiguration of understandings on indigeneity, indigenous people, indigenous community and indigenous belonging. I discuss how these issues might inform the conceptualization of teaching and research practices in the Indigenous Studies Programme being planned in my home unit.

### **Indigeneity as Art of Restoration**

As I described in Chapter 1, identity politics in the Philippines is a complex process of historical junctures that resulted in constrained relations between majority Filipinos and minority populations. It is about the persistence of colonial discourses and the exercise of state power on the resources of indigenous people who are keen to defend their rights on these resources. This political struggle manifests in the contests over representation, the symptoms of which can be observed in the textbook discussion I

described above. It can be noted that the information provided in these learning materials replicates the prejudicial discourse about Igorots I described in Chapter 1. These textbooks also echo the colonial narratives disseminated by early 20<sup>th</sup> century world fairs and the discriminatory attitudes experienced by Igorots in London from other migrant Filipinos which I illustrated in the same chapter. Despite the unbounded realities of Igorot life characterised by encounters with American colonial administration and culture and contemporary global connections and mobilisations facilitated by communication technologies and the migration of Igorots overseas, Igorots continue to be typified as the rural backward other among majority Filipinos who propagate this idea in mainstream establishments such as the centralised educational system.

Within the context of Igorots' positioning in the Philippines as a cultural minority that has gone and is going through a strenuous history and relationship with those who became to be majority Filipinos, I embarked on this project to produce a more nuanced understanding of Igorot migration experience. I examined how the Igorots' status as indigenous people and their experience with majority Filipinos figure in the community building and self-representational practices of an Igorot organisation. I considered these activities of Igorot-UK in London as constitutive practices of what Brubaker (2004) calls "group making project". In this way, I illustrated the emergence of an Igorot diasporic identity and community articulated in and through the agency of individuals claiming belonging and working collectively as Igorots who are indigenous people of the Cordillera. This approach reworks conventional migration models that consider ethnic groups to be having distinct affinities and boundaries that naturally make them cohere when they move from one place to another. I also accounted for the dynamics of diasporic group formation involving indigenous people through a detailed analysis of the material and imaginative aspects of this process. I argued that the project of constituting

an Igorot identity and community was achieved through the extension of commemorations, performance of remembered pasts, incorporation through the embodiment and imagination of shared values and experiences and production of symbolic spaces of belonging in various platforms. I illustrated that an underlying motivation of these practices is a desire to manage anxieties in migration to resist the relegation of Igorots to static geographical emplacement and cultural backwardness. By considering the identity and formation of this group as strategic mobilisation and tactical presentation of self in displacement rather than an inherent fact, I reconfigure the dominant view on indigenous people being determined by primordial attachments especially based on rootedness to a specific territory. I have shown that Igorot identity in diaspora is a creative art of restoration, a determined desire to transform and survive.

This process of restorative self-presentation is accomplished by Igorot-UK through the resourceful utilisation of elements of remembered tradition. This creative process may be accounted by the concept of iconography introduced by Gottman which Bruneau (2010) employed in the study of diasporas. As in the work of Bruneau, my project illustrates the importance of visible and palpable symbols that contribute to consolidating social networks and to preserving a diasporic group during the hard times of displacement. For Igorots in London, one of the key operating principles that support identity and community formation are “the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration” (Gilroy 1994, 204). I described in Chapter 3 that indeed, memory is a primary ground of identity formation in the context of migration as pointed out by Gilroy. Memory was invoked in the recreation of rituals in the annual cultural festivals that are meant to commemorate the founding of provinces in the Cordillera. In these events, there are three layers of remembered past – the rituals performed in the villages that regulates village life which were very much part of the lived experiences of Igorots

before they moved to the UK, the historical political moments that instituted both the spatial independence and demarcation of the Cordillera provinces and the earlier instalments of these festivals which the members attended or watched remotely. In these cultural events, Igorot bodies were engaged in the performance of music, movements and narratives that incorporated them into a community of belonging. These performances were also felt to connect the London community to the home region and to other diasporic Igorots in different overseas destinations. These connections were materially expressed by lively social media interactions of both home and diasporic Igorots around the documentations of these events posted on Facebook. These conversations focused on celebratory exchanges about the extension and nurturing of Igorot culture in different places.

What this discourse of mobilisation implies on an Indigenous Studies Programme is the accounting of strategies that have been devised by indigenous peoples to reconstitute their identities in the midst of historical and political entanglements. It is important to examine not only the adaptive strategies in themselves but also the circumstances that have given rise to these responses. In this way, a researcher will be able to point out the principles that underlie the art and work of self-presentation across a network of indigenous people. This investigation will be able to account for how indigenous peoples thrive and survive as they move from their homelands to different places in the world.

### **Mediated Belonging**

In her works about migrants from the Cordillera Region, Mckay (2012; 2016) pointed out the salience of mediated belonging and relationships not only in the fortitude of migrants in managing challenges in their lives abroad but also in the maintenance of a

common field of sociality between the migrants and their home villages. In the case of Ifugao domestic helpers in Hongkong, Mckay (2012) discussed the role of materials such as monetary donations and personal photographs sent by the migrants back to the village in affirming their connections to their home. These materials help fill the lack of progress in the village and at the same time configure the desire of villagers to embark on futures in migration. With Kankanaey caregivers in London, Mckay (2016) described the role of Facebook as an “affective node” (12) which mediated “care, censure, support and haunting” (162) between the migrants and their family members in the Philippines and among themselves and their network of Facebook friends around the world. What Mckay points out in these studies are the rich and vibrant reciprocal links forged between the migrants and their places of origin including other connections in various destinations.

The results of my project affirm the significance of virtual interactions in consolidating a shared belonging between Igorot migrants, their home region and other diasporic Igorots in different countries. Online platforms, now especially social media, facilitate the strengthening of ties among Igorots worldwide through affective exchanges premised on the common identification as Igorots. My discussion in Chapter 2 about the utilization of Facebook in organising the logistics of the gift relation and transnational practices that Igorot-UK members have with their home region and my discussion in Chapter 5 on the symbolic aesthetic mechanisms produced on Facebook by the organisation to engage with their *kailian* in the Cordillera illustrate the virtual configuration of homing practices by Igorots in London. As the notion of Avtar Brah’s (1996) “homing desire” explains, the desire of diasporic communities for a homeland is not about a return to a particular place but a matrix of intimate social relations. In the case of Igorots in London, this homing desire is expressed and accomplished through the

virtual organisation of material care for the home region and the virtual incorporation of their fellow Igorots into their narratives of success and mobility in the UK.

The specific contribution of my study in the illumination of virtually mediated relationships built between Igorot migrants and their home region is its discussion of the virtual pathway in which Igorot-UK pursues a politics of counter self-representation. This facet of migrants' engagement with home is partly taken up by Longboan (2013) in her study of an online forum of Igorots worldwide but her discussion is limited to textual exchanges allowed by the medium and her focus on the consequences of internal production of rules that govern the members' discussions of their identity. In my project, I pointed out that Igorot-UK harnessed the multimodal facilities of Facebook to produce and make visible an image of Igorot pride and achievement projected to recreate the negative imagery of Igorots entrenched in historical and contemporary discourses of power in the Philippines. The creative visual productions and stylized photographs of Igorot-UK on Facebook construct and circulate a narrative of Igorot mobility that resists the static picture of Igorots as mountain dwellers stuck to their spears, G-strings and winnowing baskets. Similarly, the organisation's intervention in the career development of Jeyrick Sigmaton through travel and facilitation of opportunity publicized through Facebook presented an image of Igorot mobility and solidarity that runs counter to the imaging of Igorots being emplaced in primitive villages inclined to savage acts of eating dogs and headhunting.

My discussion of the efforts of the organisation to formulate and deliver a counter discourse on Igorot identity through Facebook illustrates the emancipatory potential of the engagement of diasporic Igorots on matters of identity enabled by the technical affordances of social media. Utilizing the easy uploading and fast delivery of content engineered by Facebook, Igorot-UK is able to invite the attention and response of



variously located Igorots. Although much of the Facebook materials produced by the organisation are oriented to its own concerns as part of a self-conscious effort to sustain a community in London, the convergence and interaction of Igorots in the UK with their fellow Igorots living elsewhere around these materials creates the opportunity for the production and exchange of affirmative meanings read into the images that the participants behold. In this way, the organisation is able to immediately assess responses and facilitate the confirmation of meanings it intended to convey. Thus, when participants in the Cordillera collaborated in the production of a symbolic collective space for unhampered Igorot mobility in the online invitations as I pointed out in Chapter 5, Igorot-UK affirmed this cooperative response by producing more invitations personalised to those who saw themselves invested in the operation of the narrative being collectively formed. Igorots in the UK are therefore creating innovative work not only in the form of their visual productions on Facebook but also in the social relations they are creating through this practice. The convergences, participations and exchanges elicited by the visual posts on Facebook facilitate the contemplation of Igorot selfhood and belonging and the extension of networks and solidarity. In this way, these Facebook productions have emancipatory potentials for enabling the exercise of Igorot agency.

These virtually mediated interactions also recreate the notion of a geographically determined home. Although Igorots consider and affirm the Cordillera Region as their home, they speak of desires for sustaining multiple mobile homes which are made and linked by the achievements and solidarity of Igorots wherever they go. Such agreements imply that the primacy of attachment to place that was strategically employed by indigenous peoples as a political capital in the definition of indigeneity becomes de-emphasized. Igorot migrants' absence in place, however, is counterweighed by the intensity of their virtual engagements with the home region and with fellow dispersed

Igorots so much so that the homeland, its concerns, its welfare and its peoples' relations to it become more effectively conjured and discussed in this way compared to the limited opportunity for immediate convergence in actual domicile. Absence from the homeland therefore works to solidify rather than dissolve this place even more so with the production and consolidation of its mobile incarnations where diasporic Igorot are. There is therefore a dual aspect in the strategy of indigenous people in relation to home. They articulate the affirmation of rights and responsibilities to a specific homeland but they also develop global networks of indigeneity. Diasporic Igorots are evidently trying to develop an identity as cosmopolitan citizens as presented in their images of travel and mobility but they are, at the same time, unlikely to dispense of their local identity which is securely tied to the Cordillera.

Because of this, indigeneity or indigenous belonging in an indigenous studies programme will have to be understood not in relation to physical settlement but in terms of performed social relations that produce a sense of placeness. Because relations to home and identity have now come to depend on the mediation of new communication technologies, the notion of an originary and stable home should be analysed as “cybernetically redefined not simply as a physical location but as a relational network of dialogic interactions” (Shohat 1999, 224).

The dependence on mediated relations also implies that in the study of indigeneity or indigenous people, the engagement of indigenous populations with computer-mediated technologies be considered not only as important resources for observing relations and interactions but also as significant means of analysing the vision that indigenous communities are creating and projecting for themselves. It must be acknowledged that indigenous communities are not isolated and bounded by hereditary values that necessarily bind them to land. Often, conventional studies involving

indigenous peoples in the Philippines consider mediated relations as “inauthentic”, separate from the conduct of indigenous life. This understanding descends from earlier Western notion of insular and isolated pristine cultures or pure tribes unsullied by and therefore needing to be protected from contact with a wider world. In the case of the Igorots, this paternalistic attitude was undertaken by American colonial administrators who clothed their colonial intentions in a discourse of saving these “noble savages.” An indigenous studies programme therefore needs to explore a wide array of critical methods to examine the ways in which indigenous peoples inhabit, employ or exploit these technologies not as inauthentic practices or invented traditions but as mechanisms for expressing their views and priorities; students should be trained to explore how indigenous people attempt to “indigenise” virtual media for their specific purposes or to inquire on the dynamics of this engagement especially from the context of the Third World. It must be noted that the experiences of indigenous peoples across different continents are varied and uneven given the different socio-political contexts that indigenous populations contend with in these places.

On the other hand, discussions in indigenous studies should also tackle the constraints of indigenous peoples’ engagement with communication technologies. Apart from the issue of access to technologies which is indeed a problem with some indigenous communities to begin with, issues such as the contradictory implications of visibility in social media should be vigorously analysed instead of quick association of visibility with empowerment. As I have pointed out in the case of Igorots in the UK, their visibility on Facebook worked to produce a narrative of mobility achieved through a chronicle of freedom to navigate the geographical and cultural realms of the country of destination, but this apparently empowering mobility made visible on Facebook conceals unspoken disenfranchisements among some members. On the other hand, the concealment of such

disenfranchisements behind visible images of joyful travels and happy faces has enabled some members to manage the personal costs of their displacement. In analyses of indigenous peoples' virtual engagements then, there must be adequate attention not only on the visible but also on the possible symptoms of such visibility. There should be an incredulity to the apparently automatic empowering value provided by new communication technologies especially to traditionally marginalised communities like indigenous people. Although communication technologies can foster new transnational communities of identity and belonging, what Blunt and Dowling (2006) call a "virtual geography of home" (207), the utilisation of these technologies by indigenous people must be critically interrogated in terms of both the democratic aspects and constraining relations they engender. To be sure, Igorot identity cannot be reduced to surface appearance, but the centrality of the visual nonetheless sustains a significant definitional status of the Igorots' identity formation in diaspora. As I have shown, the Igorot identity project is steeped in the ideal of visibility that reveals the extent to which identity formation is not an innate nature but a matter of telling and showing a group's own idea of who they are.

### **Reiterating reconstructive indigeneity**

As I discussed in Chapter 1, the history of Igorots as a people has been marked by the creation of boundaries between proper Filipinos and marginal Igorots. As seen in the responses of mainstream Filipinos to the World Fairs held in the United States and Europe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Igorots were rejected as equal members of the nation because of their difference. Their insertion into the American colonial design of the Philippine highlands created further cultural disparity between them and the Hispanized lowland majority. Although certain measures have been taken by the state to integrate

Igorots into the nation such as the enactment of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act which recognises their customary laws in determining property rights, Igorots remain to be relegated to stereotypical representations that regulate who they are. In their movement to another country, supposedly away from the spatial reach of lowland prejudice, they are haunted by the fossilized narratives about them carried over by lowland Filipino migrants. Igorots therefore suffer from a historical injury of isolation that constrains their relationship with majority Filipinos even in migration.

In the process of rebuilding their lives in the UK, Igorot migrants engage in what I have argued as reconstructive indigeneity, an attempt to recuperate from the anxieties of displacement by creative and strategic performances of Igorot identity. In Chapter 4, I illustrated that this attempt for recuperation and survival manifests in the revisionist efforts of Igorot-UK as an organisation. The members endeavoured to repurpose the image of an Igorot Village from the discourse of colonial and commercial exhibition in the World Fairs at St. Louis in 1905, Shakespeare's England in 1912 and elsewhere in the United States and Europe. The organisation redeployed the familiar image of the Igorot Village, popular in American colonial history as the quintessential manifestation of the savage subjects in the Philippines which warranted American occupation of the islands. In using the Igorot Village to represent themselves, Igorots in the UK redesigned it to speak of pre-colonial highland ingenuity, innovation, cultural vibrancy and independence. By emphasising the state of Igorot life before colonisation, this narrative called attention to the mechanisms of power by which the Igorot Villages in the past exhibitions were made to produce a more sinister story about Igorot difference. The alternative history narrated by the new Igorot Village made in London allowed these contemporary Igorots to claim continuity with the aspects of Igorot life unspoilt by the designs of colonialism. It is in this manner of recuperating what they described as

“authentic Igorot culture” that these contemporary Igorots can insist on an identity that precedes the prejudice of lowland Filipinos. They invoked the authority of their culture’s precedence over the ravages of Spanish colonialism to speak confidently of being Igorot. The operation of this counter-history making involved reconstruction through the concrete act of renovating a structure to change the image and narrative attached to it. Reconstruction was also done in the symbolic sense of re-assembling a history that has not been told by official histories.

As I have described in the section on Mediated Belonging, the virtual engagements of Igorot-UK also illustrate the operations of a reconstructive indigeneity. Related to the production of an alternative history in the renovation of the Igorot Village as an image of identification for Igorots, Igorot-UK members also endeavoured to construct and publicize new biographies for themselves through the stylization of digital photography posted on Facebook. I discussed in Chapter 5 how the practice of posing for photographs wearing ethnic attires against the background of well-known UK landmarks created for the members a story of mobility, freedom and exploration. Their attires identified them to their homeland origin and their travel in those places chart the progress of their journey from the Cordillera to the various places in the UK. This story of mobility not only documents their spatial movement from one country to another but also speaks of the implicit success of moving from the Third to the First World. As I pointed out in Chapter 5, reconstruction here operates in the effort to transfer aspects of the pictorial setting to the self in order to infuse it with the cultural sophistication and historical attributes of the background. More importantly, these socially mobile selves are offered as representatives of the people whose attire they wear. These photographs of mobility therefore resist the incarceration of Igorots in colonial photographs that frame their fixity on primitive surroundings and cultural backwardness. This manner of

constructing a mobile self is also important to members of the community who are rendered immobile by the precarity of their immigration status or the demands of their employments. For these members, the construction of a new biography of movement enables them to function in a way that overcomes the personal collaterals of migration.

The idea of reconstructive indigeneity through the creation of new biographies in displacement may also be extended to describe the efforts of Igorot-UK members to embody the skills, rituals and discipline of being Igorot as I discussed in Chapter 4. These members pointed out they have taken these matters for granted and yet in their migration to the UK, they have felt the necessity to incorporate their bodies in the practices of belonging. I discussed the importance of this bodily reconstruction of culture for some members who were able to gain renewed self-esteem after being weighed down by contradictory social mobility, changed filial relations and feelings of isolation.

The foregoing instances that illustrate the operation of reconstructive indigeneity among Igorots in London characterise indigeneity as among “resources of hope”, a term coined by Raymond Williams (1989) to describe opportunities that can still be generated from contested identification and belonging. The affirmation of an Igorot identity and belonging to an indigenous community through various acts of engagement is a strategic recourse that enables diasporic indigenous people to manage the adverse consequences of their historical marginalization and the anxieties of working and living in a foreign environment. Reconstructive indigeneity therefore calls attention to the active and creative ways that indigenous migrants seek to recover and function out of the injuries of history and migration. This is not a new sense of indigeneity, of course, because indigeneity has been deployed as a strategic identification. The international indigenous peoples’ movement during the twentieth century appropriated a range of stereotypes about indigenous people including the possession of primitive cultures practiced in

specific bounded societies in a bid to win public support for their campaigns. In the Cordillera, Igorots inhabited these stereotypes as well in order to insist on their rights to own and determine the development of their resources. While this notion of indigeneity has highlighted the ability of indigenous peoples to intervene in political discourse, its' legacy has been to confirm that indigenous people are confined to essential features and fixed territory. In the notion of reconstructive indigeneity that I suggest to describe the engagements of Igorots in London, I also call attention to the character of indigeneity as a strategic mechanism but here I point out the specific inflection of diasporic Igorots who perform indigeneity as material, embodied and symbolic resistance that produces a different sense of self. This indigeneity involves purposive self-re-making premised on the desire for both personal and communal enfranchisement. With its performative character, this indigeneity is not a simple assumption and deployment of essential values and repetition of ethnic culture but an attempt to produce an emancipatory difference in displacement. In speaking of the status of Igorots as indigenous people then, it is necessary to account for the nuances that diasporic Igorots make based on the particularities of their experiences instead of assuming an essential identity for all Igorots in the world.



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