

**Colonial Ideology of “Divide and Rule”: Political Division**

You would now learn the historical antecedents of the fourth layer of the Cordillera identity – the political categorization that is essential for policy planning and implementation.

**Learning Outcomes**

- 1. describe how the change in political borders and political division affected the identity and resource management of the Cordillera and the growth of a resistance movement
- 2. give reasons for reinventing the meaning of a despised regional identity and the adoption of an inclusive regional identity

**Key Concepts to Understand**

EO 220                      militarization                      PANAMIN                      PD 01                      sipat

The fourth layer of Cordillera identity is based on political affiliation (Anongos, 2023). This layer resulted from the political creation and later a series of divisions of Mountain Province. Doyo (2015) remarked that:

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Florendo (as cited in Angnged, 2019) observed that:  
Most of the Americans who were sent to the Cordillera were designated rank of lieutenant governor who were in charge of the governance in the sub-provinces of the Mountain Province. The more familiar ones are: John C. Early (Amburayan), Norman Conner (Apayao), Elmer Eckman (Bontoc) J.H. Evans (Benguet) and Walter Hale (Kalinga), Charles Nathorst and Willima Dosser”.

In 1920, a boundary realignment was done, and the effect on cultural identity is described by Anongos (2023) to have:  
caused identity adjustments for some. Alilem, Amburayan, and Lepanto were dissolved and boundaries between Mountain Province and the lowland provinces were redefined. Consequently, Tagudin and other parts of Lepanto and Alilem were added to Ilocos Sur (Act No. 2877, 1920). Much later, Langagan and Allacapan were transferred to Cagayan. It is from these boundary changes that placed many people in units outside of their cultural connections. Some of these have been labeled as Bago but continue to align themselves with their Kankanaey roots.

The boundary rearrangements came a few years after the implementation of the Jones Law in 1916. The Jones Law allowed for the Filipinization of numerous government positions. As a result, the upper house (Philippine Commission) gave way to an all-Filipino senate. Non-Christian provinces were given special representation in both senate and the lower house, and Mountain Province was represented at different times by Juan Carino and Henry Kamora of Benguet sub-province, Rafael Bulayungan and Joaquin Codamon of Ifugao sub-province, Clemente Irving, Hilary Clapp, Rodolfo Hidalgo, and Felix Diaz of Bontoc sub-province. The BNCT was also revived not as a research arm but as an administrative office in charge of all non-Christians. This was placed under the control of Philippine legislature. **For the first time, Mountain Province was, therefore, under the direct supervision of Filipinos through the BCNT. Joaquin Luna, from La Union, became its first Filipino governor.**

At the end of the American colonial rule, science and census have already classified the people of the Cordillera Central according to perceived cultural and linguistic features. Despite clarification in ethnological works, the term Igorot, and all its bad connotations, continued to be applied to the general population. Such unfavorable connotations were translated into prejudices and discrimination when Igorots encountered outsiders. Some lowlanders, particularly, have looked down with contempt upon Igorots, and discriminated against educated natives. Customs, usages, and traditions associated with Igorotness have also been despised, even by lowlander officials and employees of Mountain Province. The term *Igorot*, which was reportedly used by lowlanders to frighten or reprove their children, has by this time become an opprobrium (Keesing, 1934). By the 1930s, Igorot themselves developed a

growing aversion to the term that an alternative label, “mountaineer,” has become more acceptable. An Igorot organization of professionals that called itself BIBKA, which stands for Benguet, Ifugao, Bontoc, and Kalinga-Apayao, preferred the term “native” over “Igorot” (Finin, 2005). ...

Schooled Igorot tried their luck in employment, which placed them against outsiders and in the course of such felt discriminated (Finin, 2005). Apparently, such different treatment of Igorots stemmed, not from intellectual inferiority, but from their being Igorot and all the negative connotations attached to it. In 1958, a bill was proposed by Congressman Luis Hora prohibiting the use of “Igorot” in printed materials. The bill supported the use of “highlander” but failed to progress into law. Highlander students in Baguio responded to the discrimination by organizing themselves, exemplified by the BIBAK (Benguet-Ifugao-Bontoc-Apayao-Kalinga) organization that unified students from all corners of the region. BIBAK allowed cultural expressions for the students, becoming the sanctuary of highlander students in Baguio and nearby tertiary schools. Alternative labels were also raised to replace “Igorot” such as “mountaineer,” “native,” and “highlander,” but these were adopted individually according to one’s liking.

Mountain Province was subdivided into four (4) new provinces in 1966. This division created Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga-Apayao, and a new Mountain Province, which covered the Bontoc territory. It was believed that a division would bring the administration closer to the people. The proposal was not, however, new as Benguet leaders have been pushing for this action early on. They felt that Benguet holds the economic burden for the whole province because it hosts key and productive industries like mines (Fry, 2006).

Doyo (2015) added that “[L]arge portions of the former sub-provinces of Amburayan and Lepanto were ceded to Ilocos Sur and La Union while the rest was divided between Benguet and Mountain Province.”

### Partitioning the Cordillera

During the Martial Law period, former president Marcos, Sr. enacted laws through presidential decrees (PD), one of which was **PD No. 1 of 1972** resulting in the regionalization of the Philippines, that is, provinces were grouped into regions. **In the Cordillera, Mountain Province and Benguet were placed under Region I together with the Ilocos provinces.** On the other hand, **Ifugao and Kalinga-Apayao were placed under Region II together with Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, and Quirino.** In relation to the partition’s effect on regional identity, Anongos (2023) commented that:

[the] **“subdivision threatened a regional identity developed earlier. Under these separations, what kept regional affiliations among the highlanders was a historical similarity and a common label of being a cultural minority. The contentious “Igorot” label remained acceptable to others but the political division killed the spread of such acceptance.**

Meanwhile, scholars continue to iron out ethnic classification in the Philippines. For Cordillera Central, an authoritative map by Robert Fox and Elizabeth Flory prepared in 1974 named 12 groups with Balangao, I’wak, Ikalahan, and Amduntog Atipulo being added to Beyer’s list of 1916. The use of “Igorot” as an ethnic classification disappeared in this work and other works including the government censuses

In explaining the partitioning of the Cordillera, Doyo (2015) claimed that:

**The splitting of the Cordillera was in line with the government's strategy of treating the region as resource areas for Ilocos and the Cagayan Valley.**

Because of this, there was dissatisfaction among the Cordillerans that development thrusts in northern Luzon were primarily geared towards the lowland areas while the Cordillera itself has largely remained underdeveloped.

And what resources are there in the Cordillera region that can be tapped for the development of the two regions? Buendia (1987) provides the answer:

The whole area of Cordillera is rich in natural resources. Its mountains used to be thickly forested before commercial logging corporations denuded much of the forests. Its mossy pine, and hardwood forests provide the backdrop of many plants and animal species and likewise serve as watersheds for great rivers and waterways

which flow from the uplands down to the lowlands. Aside from land, forests, and rivers, mineral resources have been bountiful. Among the metallic resources found in 'different parts' of the Cordillera are gold, silver, copper, zinc, molybdenum, manganese, cadmium, tellurium, iron, and chromite. Among the non-metallic resources found are limestones, pyrite, silica, cement, clay, coal, guano phosphates, gravel and stones. 'Uranium, on the other hand, has recently been discovered in Monggayang, Kiangang, and oil has been reported in Natonin-Paracelis area and other parts of the Cordillera.

In 1995, RA 7878 was enacted and resulted in the separation of Kalinga and Apayao as distinct provinces. (Anongos, 2023)

### **Reviving a Regional Identity**

The enumerated natural capital of the Cordillera made it an easy victim of development aggression, that is, development projects were planned and implemented by the national government in violation of the IP's rights. However, the issue of development aggression was a unifying element among the varied ethnolinguistic groups in the region.

Anongos (2023) provides the historical foundation of the movement that sought an acceptable and unifying regional identity for the varied ethnolinguistic groups in the Cordillera region.

Chico river runs through Mountain Province and Kalinga. In 1973, the National Power Corporation (NPC) began its survey of a planned dam along this river. The plan was to build four dams from Sabangan in Mountain Province to Tabuk in Kalinga. The project, which did not care to secure any consent from the affected areas, was opposed by communities directly affected by the dam construction. Locals dismantled camps of the exploration group and petitioned government agencies and Malacanang to discontinue the dam.

In response, the government used a new office called Presidential Assistant on National Minorities (PANAMIN) in an attempt to stop the opposition. PANAMIN took over the functions of the CNI as overseer of the national minorities. During the Chico controversy, PANAMIN distributed goods and money to affected areas and facilitated meetings with government authorities. It also offered similar scholarship grants to selected students as the CNI did earlier. When the strategy failed, soldiers were brought in to secure the operation.

In nearby Abra, a logging concession was granted by the government to a corporation covering 200 hectares of Benguet pine trees. Cellophil Resources Corporation (CRC) began its operation also without consultation with the affected areas. The logging invited Tingguian opposition, which was countered with militarization of the logging areas.

Non-government organizations, churches and the media joined the opposition against the two projects. The New People's Army (NPA), which was just starting its operation in the region, sided with the affected communities, attracting hundreds of recruits as a consequence. Among those recruited in Abra were Catholic priests like Conrado Balweg, Bruno Ortega, Cirilo Ortega, and Nilo Valerio.

It was on the occasion of these oppositions that the traditional Vochong or Bodong peace pact system was utilized by affected communities to forge united resistance to the dam project and later to the logging activities.

Part of the strategies employed by opposition to the dams was to attract attention from the public and the media. For this it was decided that it was easier to do so by utilizing the "Igorot" as such term would easily bring to mind the stereotype of a loincloth-wearing man with unkempt hair playing gongs. The term also was meant to project the warrior spirit of old headhunting practices against a government enemy. The use also revived historic and successful Igorot resistance to Spanish colonialism. Speeches, communication, and conferences made use of "Igorot," and "Kaigorotan" was also coined as an inclusive name for the entire Igorot population. In a way, the opposition to these projects brought affected communities closer, bringing

Tingguians closer to other highlanders of Mountain Province and Kalinga. In this context, “Igorot” was somehow redefined as an identity to a resistance.

The projects eventually were discontinued but not after it occasioned disunity and violence in Abra, Mountain Province and Kalinga. In 1980, a known opposition leader from Kalinga, Macliing Dulag, was gunned down in his own home in Bugnay. Instead of silencing the opposition, the assassination of Dulag widened support, including international groups, for the stoppage of the project. The CRC operation was finally halted in 1984 and the Dam project ended a few years later.

An important lesson derived from the two projects and the experience of resistance to the projects is the realization of how national minorities, as an alternative label for cultural minorities, were treated. The territories of minorities were viewed only as a resource base for the benefit of the majority. Add to that the absence of serious consultation and consent. These and a shared history of Spanish colonial resistance as well as having a distinct culture combined to convince highlanders to seek autonomy. It was not surprising that activists of the period, later to be led by the Cordillera People’s Alliance (CPA), began the drive for an autonomous Cordillera. This was reinforced by the Cordillera People’s Liberation Army (CPLA), led by Father Balweg, and a breakaway group of the New People’s Army (NPA). Because of the absence of a single administrative unit that would unify the entire region.

Another geographical term was adopted to group people of the old Mountain Province and Abra. As a geographic jargon, Cordillera refers to parallel mountains, and for northern Luzon. Cordillera includes Sierra Madre, Malaya range, and Cordillera Central. It is from Cordillera Central that “Cordillera” and “Cordilleran” were derived as a new label for the region and its people. The term competed with Igorot as an identity in the 1980s and the 1990s, and a number of key players for the autonomy named their groups with “Cordillera” in it, such as Cordillera Broad Coalition (CBC), Cordillera People’s Alliance (CPA), Cordillera People’s Liberation Army (CPLA), Cordillera People’s Democratic Front (CPDF), and Cordillera Bodong Administration (CBAd). ... decision to name the region “Cordillera” and the title of the advocacy of “Cordillera Autonomy,” as well as naming related offices with Cordillera like Cordillera Executive Board (CEB), and the Cordillera Regional Assembly (CRA) ...

While “Igorot” and “Cordilleran” are both geographical words, the latter appealed to many because of its unadulterated meaning and history. It is also favored over its ethnic neutrality, making it more inclusive to all residents of the Cordillera Central regardless of their ethnicity. The aspiration for regional autonomy was successfully lobbied with the Constitutional Commission and was included in Section 4 of Article X of the Philippine Constitution. At the same time, the Aquino government entered into a peace agreement (*sipat*) with Conrado Balweg’s CPLA. Thereafter, Executive Order No. 220 was signed on July 15, 1987, (celebrated each year as Cordillera Day – a special holiday for the region) establishing ... Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), effectively removing the provinces from regions I and II.

While the colonial masters and some of the Filipinos who were misled and miseducated used the term “Igorot” as a tool for non-recognition and misrecognition resulting in discriminatory policies and actions, the post-colonial generations of the Igorots reinvented the term to become a badge of pride symbolizing their ancestors’ successful resistance to foreign domination and the colonizing policies of their national leaders. And for a more inclusive term to embrace migrants, who, by self-ascription consider themselves as members of the region, the term “Cordillera” and “Cordilleran” was promoted and is now generally accepted.

**Reflection**

Branding you want for your ethnolinguistic group and for your country