

### Colonial Ideology of “Divide and Rule”: Ethnic Classification

This module presents a brief historical background on how the indigenous peoples in the Cordillera were classified.

**Learning Outcomes**

1. trace the context of labeling during the Spanish and American periods
2. describe how the colonial labels affected the contemporary social images of the Cordillera IPs

transferred

**Key Concepts to Understand**

Igorrotes      Indio      infiles      labeling theory      majority      minority

Table 1 is lifted from IFAD’s (2012) list of the indigenous cultural communities in the Philippines. The list may not be complete since some ethnolinguistic groups have their respective subgroups and surfacing subgroups wanting to be recognized as distinct groups.

**Table 1**  
**List of Indigenous people in the Cordillera**

| Ethno-linguistic Group  | Location of Domains              |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Eastern Bontok (Balangao, Tonglayan, Sakki, Madukayan, Barlig)  | Mt. Province                     |
| Central Bontok (Bontok, Sadanga, Alab)  | Mt. Province                     |
| Isneg   | Apayao, Ilocos Norte             |
| Tinggian (Adasen, Binongan, Ilaud or Itneg, Masadiit, Banao, Gubang, Mabaka, Maeng, Mayudan, Danak)   | Abra                             |
| Northern Kankanaey (Kankanaey, Iyaplay/Applai)  | Mountain Province                |
| Kankanaey Ibenguet  | Benguet                          |
| Kalanguya   | Benguet, Ifugao                  |
| Karao   | Benguet                          |
| Mandek-ey   | Benguet                          |
| Ibaloy  | Benguet, Baguio City, Pangasinan |
| Ayangan   | Ifugao                           |
| Ifugao  | Ifugao                           |
| Tuwali  | Ifugao                           |
| Kalinga (Banao, Mabaka, Salegseg, Guilayon, Cagaluan, Guinaang, Balatoc, Lubuagan, Malbong, Naneng, Taloctok, Mangali, Lubo, Tinglayan, Tulgao, Butbut, Basao, Dacalan, Sumadel, Dananao) | Kalinga, Apayao                  |
| Apayao  | Kalinga, Apayao                  |
| Bago  | La Union, Ilocos Sur             |

**Origins and Migration**

Anongos (2023) opined that Central Cordillera was peopled by migrants. He further argued that:

[T]he earliest are Negritos whose descendants are still found in Apayao and Abra. A major migration after was the Austronesian movement from Taiwan to the Philippines, which occurred between 4000 B.C, and 1000 A.D. (Bellwood, 1985). All people in the Cordillera Central, except the Negrito descendants, descended from the Austronesian migrants (Reid, 2018). ... the linguistic relations of the different languages in the Cordillera, indicating diversions in the Austronesian language overtime. Austronesian movements within northern Luzon are unclear but Keesing (1962) writes that Ibalays are descendants of the migrants from Pangasinan, while the Kankanaeys

of Benguet and Mountain Province, the Bontoks, and Tingguians came from Ilocos. Isneg came from coastal Cagayan. Southern Apayao and Kalinga came from the lower Chico River on the border of Kalinga and Cagayan. Mining activities explain the movement to Lepanto area and Itogon in pre-Spanish times. Others moved to the mountains of Cordillera as “runaways,” or to avoid Spanish rule, such as the case of Isneg in Apayao, some Tingguians in Abra, as well as Kalinga and Ifugao in the east (Keesing, 1962). Other studies argue based on linguistic similarities that Kankanaey, Bontok, and Ifugao entered Luzon by the Cagayan River and remained together in some way until they arrived at the Chico River, which the Kankanaey-Bontoc subgroup followed, while Ifugao continued along the Cagayan river and established themselves first in the Magat region before following Alimit and Ibulao rivers (Lambrecht, n.d.). ...

At the time of Spanish arrival, highlander territories extended to the lowlands of today's Nueva Vizcaya, Cagayan, Isabela, Pangasinan, La Union, and Ilocos. Highlanders were scattered as numerous and autonomous villages, a condition the Spaniards described later as “*tribus independientes*.”

Anongos's narrative finds support in Castro's anthropological study that was cited by Doyo (2015), who emphasized that:

Prior to the coming of the colonizers, ..., the cultures of the lowlanders were not very different from that of their counterparts in the hinterlands. Based on early Spanish chronicles, the Visayans of the sixteenth century wore G-strings, tattooed their bodies, and engaged in endemic warfare just like the Kalingas of the twentieth century. Thus, colonization can be considered as the trigger process that brought about the dichotomy of the Filipinos into the "majority" and "minorities." Those who have been acculturated to the ways of the colonizers have become the majority while those who have managed to resist Westernization have become the "minority."

Specific to the Cordillera, the peoples in the area became distinct from the rest of society because they were successful in thwarting Spanish incursions into the area. While the Spaniards managed to establish politico-military districts in Lepanto and Amburayan, these were short-lived due to continuous Igorot revolts.

On the other hand, the neighboring Ilocanos and Pangasinenses succumbed to Spanish colonial rule. Prior to the latter's hispanization, the lifestyles/culture of the Ilocanos and the Pangasinenses were no different from those of the Cordillerans. Linguistically, for example, the Ilocano language is closer to Kankanaey than the latter is to Ifugao. Similarly, the Pangasinan language is more related to Ibaloy than the latter is to Bontok. Moreover, there is anthropological evidence indicating that the Ibalays and Pangasinenses had a common ancestry. The Ibalays trace their origins to Lingayen Gulf, but the group traveled upward to the Cordillera during the prehistoric period by following the Agno River." The link between the upland Ibalays and the lowland Pangasinenses was severely curtailed, however, during the Spanish colonial period. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that the present Pangasinenses are basically Igorots who have been hispanized.

### **Ethnic Classification under Spanish Colonialism**

Based on the preceding discussions, the people of the Cordillera descended from migrants from the surrounding coastal territories of northern Luzon. Their identities were primarily geographical identities or based on the villages where they resided. Anongos (2023) noted that”

[T]here was no systematic identification of ethnic groupings during the Spanish rule but scattered classifications during this period were consolidated in the works of Blumentritt (1890) who listed 36 ‘tribes’ of Northern Luzon, around 29 of which are found within the Cordillera. These include, among others, *Igorrotes*, *Busaos*, *Panipuy*, *Mayyaos*, *Ifugaos*, *Gaddanes*, *Itetepanes*, *Guinaanes*, *Calingas*, *Tinguianes*, *Apayaos*, *Ilamut*, and *Ileabanes*. The Jesuit mission of Manila also came up with a list of 26 tribes in Northern Luzon, with around 10 from the Central Cordillera (Worcester, 1906)

In general, though, Spaniards adopted geographic identifications, which they apparently learned from lowlanders, such as *Ygolottes*<sup>1</sup> (gold traders-Benguet, Kayan, Ifugao),

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<sup>1</sup> Notice that the term has no negative connotation when it was first used by the Spaniards as a label for a geographic identity.

*Tingguianes* (Abra, Ifugao), and Mandaya (Apayao). *Ygolotte*, which was later respelled as *Igorrotes*, was consistently applied to Benguet people, particularly the Ibaloy, but was also used on other and all people of the Cordillera region. The term literally means “people from the mountain” in an old Malay language. *Tingguians*, from an old Malay word *tinggi* meaning “high” or “elevated,” also persisted as a group label for Itneg-speaking people of Abra. Mandaya literally means “those up above” and was applied to some Apayao groups (Scott, 1987).

From a geographic classification, the Spaniards later adopted labels indicating how they perceived the level of civilization of the *Igorrotes* like *infieles* (pagans) and *salvajes* (savages) which were used against those who refused to be assimilated into their Christian civilization (they were later on called the cultural minority while the Christianized Filipinos are called the majority), live in the *reducciones* (villages), and submit to their political rule. It is through these labels that the term *Igorrotes* earned a negative connotation.

### The Resulting Ethnic Divide and Stereotype

In explaining the resulting majority-minority divide, Doyo (2015) posited that [T]hose who have been acculturated to the ways of the colonizers have become the “majority” while those who have managed to resist Westernization have become the “minority.”

Buendia (1987) adds that:

In the process of colonialism, the Spaniards to rule effectively, steadily divided the Filipino people. The lowlanders were conscripted as soldiers in the punitive expeditions waged by the colonizers against the Igorots. The divide-and-rule tactics institutionalized by the Spanish conquistadores thus laid the foundation for the wedge between the Filipino majority and the indigenous national minorities.

As the colonized people modified their native customs under foreign domination, i.e. attending mass, paying taxes, obeying Spanish laws, going to war when the government said so, the Igorots of northern Luzon continued to resist Spanish assimilation and refused to submit to foreign domination. The existence of two types of Filipinos led the Spaniards to categorize our people into two - the submissive and the unsubmissive, the faithful and the faithless, the good and the bad. The Igorots belonged to the latter group, while the former were called the *Indios*.

Towards the end of the Spanish colonial rule and even towards the direct rule of succeeding colonial masters in the country.. the *Indios* adapted more of their conqueror's culture and ways of life. In the process, they became more and more like each other and less and less like their ancestors. Conversely, the Igorots, together with the other freedom-loving Filipinos, preserved more of the culture of their ancestors and came to look less and less like their acculturating neighbors. In this way a cultural minority was created who retained their traditional lifestyles.

Another negative consequence of the Spanish colonial rule is the undying or pervasive stereotype against the Igorots. Negative labeling was effectively used by the Spaniards to divide the Filipino people and which division aided their colonial rule for 333 years. Understood from the lens of labeling theory, the authority of the Spanish colonizers lends credence to the negative labels they used against the *Igorrotes*. The purpose of the negative labels was to stigmatize and discredit the target group. The long-term effect of this stigmatizing process is to lock the target group into that negative image, close off legitimate opportunities, and erode the trust of other people in them (Giddens, 1992). Bacdayan (2001) explains that:

[T]he negative stereotyping of the Igorot which is at the root of the ambivalence toward him in Philippine society at large, is a legacy of colonialism, particularly Spanish colonialism. Records of early colonial Filipino society do not reveal any ill will and radical cultural separation between lowlanders and highlanders. There apparently was free and easy movement through trade between the two groups relating to equals. There were cultural similarities: head taking, family organization, animism, and use of the breechclout or G-string. Highlanders making extensive contacts with lowlanders today, especially in rural areas, are often amazed by the similarities of some superstitious and magical folk beliefs the two groups share.

The rich common cultural ground was largely forgotten as the negative stereotype developed. It grew out of the frustrating inability of the Spaniards, helped

wittingly or unwittingly by their Hispanized lowlander allies, to impose their will, their religion, and their law, on the technologically and politically simple indigenous societies of the Gran Cordillera Central. The stereotype was well entrenched in the conventional wisdom and mind-set of the lowland Christian population by the end of Spanish rule in 1898, surviving into the period of American colonial rule and on to this day. ...

The first statement of the Spanish anti-Igorot view was occasioned by the efforts of the governor general to legitimize the launching of the first major expedition in 1618 to search for the mines from whence the Igorots got their gold. The Spaniards got wind of these gold mines shortly after establishing Spanish authority at Cebu in 1565. Since the return of Juan Salcedo to Manila in 1572 from his expedition to the Ilocos which established the existence of these gold mines, Igorot gold had come to be seen by the crown as a lucrative source of revenue. Thus, when the royal treasury was depleted by the Thirty Years War, the King sent a Royal Order on December 19, 1618 to the governor general in Manila commanding him to go after the Igorot gold with all due speed and by whatever means he thought best, including offering economic incentives to participants in the effort and enlisting the help of the religious orders. An expedition to expropriate Igorot gold was in order!

Appreciating that the Igorots would resist such an undertaking and perhaps feeling awkward about striking the first blow, the governor-general convened a conclave of theologians to consider and decide whether or not a war against the Igorots was a "just war." The charges against the Igorots were that they were "highwaymen, bandits, and murderers who killed for purposes of revenge, robbery, intimidation or extortion and mutilated the bodies of their victims." Further, it was charged that "they prevented other Filipinos from becoming Christians, kidnapped baptized children to be raised as pagans and gave refuge to ex-convicts, lawbreakers and delinquents. Worst of all they prevented innocent passage to Spanish vassals from one area under Spanish jurisdiction to another."

... Most likely reflecting their experience with the Igorots in the foothills of the Cordillera such as northern Pangasinan, La Union, Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte, rather than in the Cordillera proper, the image portrayed is interesting in being already so negative so early. ... In any event, the list may have been considered validated and added to by the experiences of the three or four gold-seeking expeditions that followed. The first one lost the heads of two lowlanders who wandered off from camp at Boa, and the commander was laughed at when he started to ask the people to become vassals of the King and to accept Christianity. The second expedition was tricked into thinking that the Igorots wanted peace, only to be attacked when supplies ran low, necessitating that the expedition's survivors run for dear life. The third one managed to find some mines but failed to get gold because working them ran away, staying beyond musket range, shouting at and deriding the expedition. In any event, the ores tested were of poor quality. So the disheartened force withdrew. In his report the leader of this last expedition expressed the view that Igorots are dumb and stupid and are wont to be treacherous. The final gold-seeking expedition also did not get any cooperation from the people who had pretended friendship. ...

These attributes were to be further reinforced in the course of the subsequent efforts of the Spaniards to induce the highlanders to join the Hispanized society that was rapidly evolving and solidifying in the lowlands through what is called *reduccion* – Christian converts to settle in a town where religious instruction and supervision and where town life would be guided by rules and duly constituted authorities. ... It is not surprising that converts became the enemies of those who remained true to the original animistic faith and culture. Attacks on the towns of the "reduced" were not uncommon. Apostasy or reversion to animism with the apostates turning on and killing those who remained faithful Christians was experienced in Kalinga, Ifugao, the Magat area, in Aritao and elsewhere. Igorots also feigned conversion and willingness to pay tribute to put off the invaders and then reverted to the old ways when conditions turned favorable. ...

It is arguable that the lowland Filipino had a more deep-seated visceral or emotional response to the Igorots than did the Spaniards. Although the incredible resistance of the Igorots to religious and political subjugation hurt Spanish pride as well as cost them some lives, it was lowland society that bore the brunt of the Igorot resistance. The Spanish forces consisted mostly of soldiers and civilian auxiliary

personnel recruited from the ranks of Hispanized lowland Filipino groups – Pangasinenses, Ilocanoes, Pampangoes and Tagalogs. Quite naturally most of the casualties of the long and protracted anti-Igorot campaigns would have been from these groups. Therefore, the families – wives, children and relatives – that suffered the anguish of the loss of loved ones at the hands of the Igorots for centuries were mostly lowland Filipino families especially from the aforementioned groups. Given the lowlanders' expectation that the Igorot should be subject to Spanish Authority as they were, and should surrender his territory, his religion and way of life to the invaders, it was logical for them to blame Igorot bloodthirstiness, recalcitrance and unreasonableness for their losses rather than their Spanish governors. Most likely no thought was ever given to the perspective that to the Igorots the invasion of their homes and villages was a life and death situation. The negative beliefs and attitudes toward the Igorots, forged and nurtured throughout the long years of conflict, eventually became a deeply imprinted mindset among the lowlanders. Subsequent developments starting with the American period which resulted in ever-widening avenues of contact between the lowlanders and the mountaineers by and large failed to shake those attitudes. ...

### **Ethnic Classification under American Colonialism**

In comparing the Spanish and American colonial rule, Doyo (2015) concluded that: The American colonizers also employed the divide-and-rule strategy against the Filipinos. They encouraged and reinforced the mistrust of the minorities in the lowland Christian groups. Thus, the cultural differences between the Cordillerans and the lowlanders were maintained and, to a certain extent, even institutionalized. Of course, the Cordillerans also benefited from this policy by being able to preserve their indigenous culture.

As regards the contribution of America to ethnic classification in the Philippines, Fry (2006, as cited in Anongos, 2023) mentioned the creation of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (BNCT) the aim of which was “to investigate the actual conditions of the pagan and Moslem peoples, and to conduct a scientific investigation regarding the ethnology of the Philippines”

The accomplishment of the BCNT is summarized by Anongos (2023), as follows: Studies conducted under the BCNT and later the Ethnological Survey did not contradict earlier Spanish and other European observations about the highlander. In general, the people of the region were perceived to be “less civilized” and culturally as well as racially distinct. Ethnic classification of Philippine population was also formalized under the BCNT and Ethnological Survey, the results adopted by the 1903 Philippine Census. The head of the bureau, David Barrows, disregarded the Blumentritt classification and went on to identify only one ethnic group (Igorot) in the Cordillera region. This Igorot group is made up of different sub-groups including Gaddang, Dadayag, Kalinga, Banao, Bontoc Igorot (Ipukao), Bunnayan, Silipan, Mayoyao, Tingguians, Kankanay, and Nabiloi. The use of Igorot for all Cordillera people by Barrows is a departure from earlier association of the term with Benguet people. And because Igorot as “tribal” name was used for all inhabitants of Cordillera Central in the 1903 Census, it was formally recognized as a label. By this time also the Igorot identity was already mired with negative meanings being associated with backwardness, savagery and paganism, a connotation the American ethnology did not attempt to contest.

In 1906, Dean Worcester, who was Secretary of Interior and member of the Philippine Commission, questioned Barrows' classification and asserted his own to include Kalingas, Ifugaos, Bontoc Igorot, Lepanto-Bontoc Igorot, and Tingguians. Notice that Worcester applied the label Igorot only to Bontoc, Lepanto, and Benguet, acknowledging that he included Bontoc as Igorot because he could not find any appropriate classification for them. Apayao people were not also included in the list but were presented as part of Kalinga or Tingguian group (Worcester, 1906). Worcester's classification clearly defined the administrative division of the newly formed Mountain Province in 1908, and influenced later ethnic classifications.

Ethnological studies from UP Diliman headed by Otley Beyer adopted Worcester's list of “tribes” but corrected the application of Igorot back to Kankanaey and Ibaloy. Beyer also added Apayao and Gaddang as distinct ethnographic groups (Beyer, 1917), this list and Beyer's categorization of Philippine population as Negrito, Indonesian, and Malay were included in the 1918 Philippine Census.

**Table 1**  
**Beyer’s ethnographic groups in Central Cordillera**

| Ethnographic Groups | Languages   |
|---------------------|---|
| Apayao              | Apayao or Isneg   |
| Bontok              | Bontok/ Kadaklan-Barlig/ Tnglayan/ Dananao-Bangad                               |
| Gaddang             | Gaddang/ Yogad/ Maddukayang or Kalibugan/ Katalangan/ Iraya                     |
| Ifugao              | Pure Ifugao, or Kiangan/ Sub-Ifugao, or Silipan. Lagau                          |
| Igorot              | Kankanai/ Baukok/ Malaya/ Inibaloi/ I-waak                                      |
| Kalinga             | Dadayag/ Kalagua or Kalaua/ Nabayugan/ Mangali-Lubo/ Lubuagan/ Sumadel/ Gina-an |
| Tinggian            | Itneg or Tinggian   |

Source: Beyer (1917, as cited in Anongos, 2023)

Beyer’s ethnolinguistic groupings remained unchanged up to the end of American rule as evidenced in the recognition of the same group in the 1938 and 1948 Philippine Censuses.

Under US rule, Igorots were also assigned other tags such as “Non-Christians,” “tribes,” “headhunters,” “savages,” and “wild,” a continuation of Spanish labeling. The creation of the BCNT was itself revealing of American categorizations. American officials explained that the use of the term non-Christian is not purely along religion but more cultural and historical, to refer to those who cling to their indigenous culture and refuse to submit to Spanish-American ways. The assignation of “tribal” was also something tentative and misused as there really were no tribal boundaries, nor did Igorots fight tribal wars or claim descent from common tribal ancestors. American officials acknowledged that Igorot groups do not qualify as tribes. Tribe was simply used for the absence of a better word to indicate distinct cultural and linguistic identities.

Doyo (2015) adds that:

While the country gained formal independence from the Americans in 1946, many of the colonial policies vis-a-vis indigenous peoples were continued by the Philippine state. The former BCNT established by the Americans was transformed into the Commission on National Integration (CNI) which, as its name suggests, aimed to integrate the national minorities into the mainstream of society. This would imply that the minorities were considered as "deviants" from what Filipino culture "ought to be," that is, the same as the culture of the lowland Christian groups. The Philippines was projected as the only Christian nation in Asia. Thus, to be non-Christian was "un-Filipino."

Based on the preceding narratives, there are three layers of identity that developed over time: geographic location, level of “civilization,” and ethnolinguistic groupings.

Reflection

The stereotype used against your ethnolinguistic group and how you managed it  
Label against your ethnolinguistic group you wish to clarify and rectify