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Recreating Igorot identity in diaspora

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines contemporary construction of identity in the context of the diaspora of indigenous Igorot migrants from the Cordillera Administrative Region of Northern Philippines. It focuses on the activities of Igorot Organisation-UK, a regional association of migrant Igorots in the UK. It looks at visual self-representations of the community related to performance of ritual and production of styled travel photography. The study illustrates the mobilization of migrant indigenous people to reconfigure the set of discursive frameworks that have prevailed in the production of knowledge about indigenous communities. It highlights the restorative value and emancipatory potential of these migrants' attempts for self-remaking in diaspora.

KEYWORDS

Igorot diaspora; Igorot migration; Igorot identity; Philippines; indigeneity; photography

From June to October 1912, a group of Igorots were displayed in London at the 'Shakespeare's England Exhibition' held at the Earls Court Exhibition Centre. Aimed at raising funds to create a tercentenary memorial Shakespeare theatre and performing company, this exhibition showcased English period architecture and enactments of Shakespeare's plays as they would have been performed when written. Historical English sports competitions such as jousting were held, together with balls and masquerades that were attended by aristocrats (O'Connor 1987). The inclusion of Igorots in this exhibition about seventeenth-century English life was part of a recalibration strategy when the expected number of viewers did not materialize. The contingent of Igorot performers was one of several groups contracted to draw more interest in the exhibition (see Figure 1).

According to Afable (2004), the Igorot performers were part of the Filipino Exhibition Company, which had been formed by American businessmen Edmund Felder and Richard Scheneidewind and had toured a circuit of earlier exhibitions in the US. A group of about one hundred Igorots had first been brought to the 1904 World Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri, as living exhibits. These Igorot men, women and children were made to recreate their indigenous living conditions in a 47-acre site called the 'Igorot Village'. Such exhibits served as a convenient field of observation for scholars of the then developing discipline of ethnology, whose premises were framed through nineteenth-century racial classifications and evolutionary paradigms. They were also intended to illustrate the civilizing role that the USA could play in the Philippines, thus legitimizing American colonization (Bacdayan 2011; Marshall 2018).



Figure 1. Igorot Village in the 1912 Shakespeare's England Exhibition. Image reprinted with permission from Clemens Radauer.

Following the commercial success of the Igorot Village in St. Louis, state-sponsored 'ethnological shows' became private business ventures. The Igorots drew massive attention due to their scanty dress, tattooed bodies and 'barbaric rituals'. In London, Felder and Scheneidewind utilized the US set-up of Igorot exhibits featuring an 'Igorot Village'. Newspaper reports of the 1912 Igorot Village indicate both terror and astonishment among English viewers of these 'barbarians from the mountainous district of the Philippine Islands'. Similar to the earlier Igorot exhibitions in the US which served to justify American colonial interests, this insertion of Igorots in an early twentieth-century space for the affirmation of English identity likewise produced and circulated images of the Igorot as an exotic, uncivilized Other, which have resulted in the rejection of Igorots as proper Filipinos in the subsequent Philippine nation. This rejection is encapsulated in the remark of statesman Carlos Romulo, who wrote in 1943

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. (53)

In 2015, another Igorot Village was set up for display in London, 103 years after the Shakespeare's England Exhibition (see Figure 2). Like the 1912 village, it was made by Igorots themselves, but this time not by contracted performers but by migrants who had moved to the UK for economic opportunities. It formed part of the Asia Summer Festival held in Hounslow, a showcase of various Asian cultures meant to encourage cordial relations amongst Asian migrants in the UK. The 2015 Igorot Village comprised four marquees which included a display of material culture in the Cordillera. The centrepiece was a



Figure 2. Igorot Village in the 2015 Asia Summer Festival. Photo by Marlene Baoidang.

model of the Banaue Rice Terraces, a famous landmark in the Cordilleran province of Ifugao proclaimed as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Site for being an impressive feat of engineering. Carved into the Ifugao mountains, the extensive terraces demonstrate ingenious irrigation and erosion control systems still in use today.

In deciding to represent their community by refiguring the colonial imagery of the Igorot Village, these Igorot migrants directly engaged with the history of displaying Igorots and its adverse consequences for their identity. Their effort to draw attention to the skills of their ancestors and the vibrancy of their indigenous culture indicates a desire to narrate a story about themselves that is different from those told by earlier Igorot Villages. This intention to recreate images and narratives about the Igorot people borne by colonial discourse is a central feature of community organizing in the Igorot migrant community in the UK. The members' pursuit of an alternative story is incorporated in their attempts to reconstitute a community, to maintain relations with their home region and culture, and to reconstruct their identity as they manage their contemporary lives as migrants in the UK.

In this article, I analyse a body of self-representative works produced by Igorot Organisation-UK (Igo-UK), which was founded in London in 1995 'to provide mutual support to members, to foster camaraderie in the community and to preserve and promote Igorot culture, tradition and values'.¹ Igo-UK is the so-called 'mother organization' of four self-

¹From Igo-UK Facebook Page.

regulating 'subgroups' 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 the mother organization, Igo-UK functions as the central governing body, performing several administrative functions. Membership to one of the subgroups confers automatic membership to Igo-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 organization are supposed to make the subgroup divisions permeable and temporary, serving only to facilitate the administration of concerns specific to a province. In my analysis of their self-representations, I argue that Igo-UK has utilized mobilizing structures and enabling factors to create what can be described as 'indigenous aesthetics' (Leuthold 1998), crafted and circulated to intervene in fossilized perceptions of Igorot life and to produce novel means of translocal socialization and solidarity among diasporic Igorots and their community in the Cordillera. The members' investment in the production of these visual self-representations has given them a new sense of self and purpose that has enabled relief from various challenges in displacement. This account offers an ethnographic case that explains why displaced indigenous people are amongst the most active agents to mobilize their identity.

Igorot routes to the UK

Compared to earlier, more established migration routes (such as to the USA due to colonial relations), Igorot migration to the UK is a recent development that has yet to be fully documented. Among the challenges of writing an Igorot migration history is the absence of disaggregated data on the regional origin or ethnic affiliation of migrant Filipinos in the UK. This initial account is based mostly on the recollections of my informants who are among the pioneer Igorot migrants in London. According to them, the earliest arrivals in the UK were young, single women who came to London in the late 1960s through health service training, the au pair system and domestic work. Most resided in Walthamstow, Borough of Waltham Forest, where they were employed in various health institutions or private homes. From the early 1990s, a further group of (mostly married, middle-aged) women arrived in London, some as domestic helpers of British nationals returning from Hong Kong due to the handover of this territory to China in 1997, and others who were runaway domestic helpers of visiting Middle Eastern employers. In the early 2000s, younger Igorots arrived in greater numbers through student visas. Deirdre 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. Such programmes 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. Those who applied for these programmes considered the opportunity to qualify for post-study employment and eventual settlement in the UK. Other Igorots entered the UK during this period as skilled workers (notably as nurses, mechanics and electricians), while some who arrived as tourists stayed on, either by converting their immigration status to a work visa or as irregular 'overstaying' migrants. The Igorots have become more geographically dispersed across the UK although London, especially Walthamstow, remains a place of

concentration. 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 the UK. As this profile indicates, the Igorot community in the UK has a diverse composition due to age, residence, immigration status and employment. Although these varied circumstances rarely matter in the acceptance of members to Igo-UK, they have consequences in internal group dynamics which I discuss in succeeding sections.

The indigenous paradigm and indigenous peoples' migration

According to Niezen (2003), the emplacement of indigenous peoples in particular territories provided the fundamental principle in the international fight for indigenous rights, but it had the effect of creating a normative frame by which indigenous peoples are understood. James Clifford (2013) 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 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 reside away from their ancestral domain, they have been thought to be living in places far from civilization. Their perceived remoteness leads to another trope which considers indigenous societies as 'essentialist and primordial facts', making indigenous populations 'a distinctly other people' (Watson 2014, 7), especially in relation to the majority populations of a nation-state. Another trope delineates 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, characterizing them in terms of fixity and stasis. This understanding fails to take into account lived experiences of indigenous peoples in mobility.

Against this dominant paradigm, 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 (2009) as an indicator of future significant change in the demographics of the world's indigenous peoples. 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).

Because indigenous peoples have long been marginalized and international social movements have wanted to change this condition, much existing literature on indigenous peoples focuses on documenting cases of discrimination, dispossession and

oppression. 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 emphasize the need for shifts in perspectives in the consideration of development planning or production of knowledge systems in indigenous territories.

On the other hand, most information on the migration of indigenous peoples emerges as subsections in the study of major migration trends from countries in the global South. Often, there are no disaggregated data to account 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 peoples to Canada, the USA 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 addenda 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 lives in migration, this paper makes indigenous displacement a real issue that deserves specific attention. In this way, it is able to produce an understanding of indigenous peoples' displacement and the implication of this process in the formation of diasporas.

Igorots in diaspora

Despite the early stage of scholarship on Igorot migration in the UK, my study builds on earlier research that has examined aspects of Igorot community formation and self-representation in diaspora. Myriam Benito (2012) investigated the role of Igorot leaders in the governance of diasporic Igorot organizations. Interested in the perspective and management style of these leaders, the study examined the evolution of the organizations within the Igorot diaspora from their founding in the USA, subsequent expansion in Canada and the UK, and recent emergence in Australia and New Zealand. The author points out that in diaspora, these leaders changed their style of leadership to a hybridized form which drew on both indigenous and Western styles of leadership. Although Benito's study focused on the actions of leaders, she illustrates the worldwide network of these diasporic organizations pursuing similar goals of preserving and enhancing Igorot identity and culture at local and international levels. She described the formation of the Igorot Global Organization, a civic organization of diasporic and home Igorots and its bi-annual international consultations where members gather to discuss concerns about the Cordillera and to plan development assistance for the Igorot people. Diasporic Igorots in Europe have likewise organized a bi-annual consultation for concerns specific to those in Europe. Benito's study provides an overall context of the active mobilization of Igorots in diaspora. From this big picture, my study of Igo-UK zooms into a specific case that actualizes the aims of this international alliance, providing a geographically

specific and grassroots nuance into the general phenomenon of Igorot diasporic movement.

In her study of an online emailing community called Bibaknets composed of Igorots in the Philippines and in various overseas destination, Liezel Longboan (2013) points out that this online, global community allows the members to have a common site of socialization where Igorots can discuss their identity as Igorots. They also promote civic work among diasporic Igorots for the welfare of the Cordillera. Longboan illustrates that Bibaknets members' narratives indicate the conflict between some members' personal identities and their collective identity as part of a forum and the Cordillera region. As the forum members are becoming increasingly diasporic, many of them move between multiple geographic, political and cultural arenas that require them to balance diverse interests. My research connects directly with Longboan's work because some members of Igo-UK were members of the now defunct Bibaknets. I take her work further by looking into newer platforms of self-representation among diasporic Igorots which give rise to different opportunities and complications. My study also focuses on specific circumstances of diasporic Igorots in the UK, enabling an in-depth investigation into the actions and motivations of a particular diasporic organization.

In her book *An Archipelago of Care: Filipino Migrants and Global Networks*, McKay (2016) analyses care work among Kankanaey speaking Filipino migrants in London. She argues that amongst these care workers, there exists a 'migrant ethic of care', the notion that migrant care-givers are better inclined to care for strangers than their non-migrant counterparts. McKay illustrates how her respondents forge, sustain and adjust care relations through what she calls 'affective nodes' – churches, community centres, homes and Facebook – where they give and receive care. Faced with insecurities such as precarious immigration status, these migrants find that community-based care relations are more significant for their success and well-being than formal bonds to any government. McKay's research is closely related to my study because her respondents belong to the Igorot community in London and it looks into the care workers' community activities. Although she conducted her research earlier than I did, we both observed similar activities, which we treat as spaces of mutual support among the members. Her concern, however, is on the functioning of these spaces specifically for individuals employed in care work while I train my attention on the relevance of these activities to the collective identity construction and community formation of Igorot migrants in the UK whether they are care workers or not. Her choice to specify her respondents' affiliation as Kankanaey, referring to a particular ethnic group in the Cordillera, rather than the collective term Igorot indicates that her focus is not identity politics surrounding this label. Nonetheless, McKay's study provided significant groundwork for my subsequent interest in the dynamics and motivation of community organizing amongst Igorots in the UK.

Outside the UK, Alison Marshall's *Bayanihan and Belonging: Filipinos and Religion in Canada* (2018) explores the experience of Filipino migrants in Canada, with emphasis on the importance of religion and belief in sustaining the lives and communities of these migrants. It focuses on Winnipeg, which is home to Canada's oldest and largest Filipino-Canadian community and showcases current church-based and domestic religious routines of migrant Filipinos. The book includes a discussion of ethnic festivals,

especially the 'Grand Cañao' held by Igorot organizations in Canada which relates to my own investigation of this practice amongst members of Igo-UK.

Repositioned understanding

In reassessing his work on headhunting among the Ilongots of Northern Luzon in the Philippines, Renato Rosaldo (1993) explained that his understanding of this practice 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 researched. However, the phenomenon of overseas migration has had consequences on my personal life because I have family members who have worked abroad. I have also been aware of various concerns in relation to Filipino overseas employment because these are regular items in Philippine national media. 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 amongst the members of Igo-UK has therefore been filtered through my own experiences of dislocation. The challenges on my mental health during my solitary years in London gave me a window into the scale of struggles that these migrants have dealt with and continue to endure. My understanding was also deepened by the details I discovered through my personal engagements by becoming a member. Although I can claim that my study of the Igorot community in the UK was informed by my being '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 a study grant from the state university where I am employed. In the parlance of the Home Office, I had 'recourse to public funds' from the Philippines. With the security of state funding, 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 confront in order to make their migration as economically viable as they can for their families in the UK and in the Philippines.

Aware of the privileges of my position, the methodology of this project attempted to create opportunities for me to know and experience the 'real' life of these migrants. I

engaged in a participant observation from 2015 to 2017 that included being a member of Igo-UK, from which capacity I was able to attend various events and activities of the organization. I also conducted interviews with ten key informants who were former and then current officers of the organization in order to get a sense of its overall functioning and history. Later, I interviewed thirty-five members who had varied employments, immigration status and age, chosen based on their active participation and involvement in community affairs. Because Igo-UK maintains a group Facebook account, which the members use extensively in organizing events and in general interaction amongst themselves and with a vast network of contacts from the Philippines and other countries, I considered this a significant site of interaction. I therefore included in my method an online ethnography or what Kozinets (2015) calls 'netnography'. I also requested to join some members in their actual places of work and helped them with their tasks as we talked about their life in the UK. 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.

In doing this study, I was therefore simultaneously insider and outsider, as described by Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) in relation to indigenous researchers working in their own communities. 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. Similarly, I became part of the UK Igorot community, but I was treated with some degree of formality such as being called 'madame' or 'maam', which is how teachers are addressed by students in the Philippines. Although I discouraged the members from calling me thus, some continued to do so and this formal address was often accompanied by their observation of my privileges as a funded postgraduate student. I was often told '*imbag ka pay*' (you are better off) after members knew 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. Although my belonging to the group has enabled me, in other circumstances, to have intimate interactions with the members of the community, I was considered by some as '*baken takun isu*' (not our kind), which did not encourage their trust for self-revelation. The analysis of this research is therefore strengthened, like Rosaldo's reassessment of his work, by the 'emotional force' of my insider experience of Igorot migration but it is limited by my outsider perspective due to favourable circumstances that brought me to the UK.

Diaspora and mobilization

In studying diasporic formations, Martin Sokefeld (2006) proposed that diaspora be understood as 'transnational imagined community'. Based on ideas from social movement theory, this understanding of diaspora suggests that diasporic formation is a

discursive imagination of community and not necessarily a natural consequence of migration. Understood in this way, the study on diaspora becomes focused on social mobilization, a focus that, according to Sokefeld, effectively counters primordialist and essentializing approaches which represent diasporas as given social formations that are naturally rooted in a distant home. Sokefeld follows on Roger Brubaker's proposal that the formation of a diasporic group or a diasporic consciousness requires social mobilization. Brubaker (2005) argued 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).

In an effort to engage the criticism on homeland as an essentialist determinant of attachment, Sokefeld 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 they need 'opportunity structures', such as accessible and advanced means of communication, 'mobilizing practices' like associations and frames such as allusions to 'roots', 'home' and historical memory which feed into the group's collective imagination.

Sokefeld likewise calls attention to an empirical investigation of the mobilizing 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 in the UK, this conceptualization does not suppose that Igorots as indigenous people have an inherent identity that they carry with them when they move. Sokefeld says such identity and belonging need to be activated collectively. This emphasis on mobilization makes Igo-UK a case of diasporic formation because the creation, management and maintenance of an organization indicates collective work amongst its members. His notions of 'opportunity structures', what makes mobilization possible, and 'frames', how claims of identity are made, are pathways for understanding the forms of cultural productions and practices that Igorot migrants create. In the following sections, I therefore examine the activities of Igo-UK by pointing out the opportunity structures and frames through which an Igorot identity is constructed by this organization.

(Un)Rooting Igorotness

Perhaps the best introduction to the Cordillera Administrative Region of Northern Philippines is a song titled 'Montañosa' (Spanish for 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 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 Igo-UK events in London, this song is always played by the organization's in-house band. Though the song is addressed to outsiders, most probably tourists looking for a place to visit in the Philippines, it 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 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).

By subscribing to the idea that Igorots belong to the Cordillera, Igo-UK frames 'Igorotness' to be rooted in this homeland despite the dispersal of Igorots in various parts of the world. This is not a surprise as it is consistent with prior discourses, such as the way social movements in the Cordillera have argued for the Cordillera as the ancestral domain of Igorots. This assertion has led to the successful claim of rights on property and development as inscribed in Philippine law such as in the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act approved in 1997. Although the proper implementation of this law has been subject to political contests, this legislation strengthened Igorot claim to a regional homeland in the Philippines. This idea that Igorots belong to the Cordillera is a product of US colonial policy. When the US took over the Philippines in 1898 after over 300 years of Spanish rule, the Americans wanted to pacify 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, they also wanted to develop an urban centre where they could be relieved of the heat in the lowlands (Reed 1999).

Learning from the failures of the Spanish, US officials approached the highlanders through 'benevolent assimilation' instead of outright military invasion and overt religious conversion (Finin 2005; Reed 1999). They therefore undertook a 'scientific process' to understand the people they meant to pacify, creating the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes in 1901 and employing American academics for a systematic accounting of the practices, languages, traditions and many other aspects of these people's lives (Finin 2005; Reed 1999; see also articles by Salvador-Amores and Scheerer in this special issue). 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 organizing 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: Iballoys, Kankanaeys, Ifugaos, Bontocs and Kalingas. Until the present, Igorots are known by these tribal labels and Igorots themselves have adopted these names to designate their affiliation. The organizational structure of Igo-UK reflects the adherence of the members to the American concept of a single administrative grid for the Igorot people but which is composed of subgroupings. As the regional organization, Igo-UK also has 'subgroups' which pertain to the provincial components of the Cordillera Region. Igo-UK therefore frames Igorot identity as a unity of the diverse peoples and cultures that belong to the spatial configuration called 'Mountain Province', later renamed Cordillera Region, created by American colonial policy.

The idea of being rooted in a homeland, however, is imagined by the organization as not necessarily being emplaced in the Cordillera. This is exemplified in the production and circulation of images that relate to the annual celebration of the Grand Cañao in London. As Marshall (2018) points out, Cañao is derived from the traditional ritual in

the Cordillera involving the sacrifice of animals, playing of gongs and community dancing. It is held for various reasons such as thanksgiving and sharing of wealth. The performance of the Grand Cañao has become an icon of Igorot identity among diasporic Igorot organizations. In the UK, the Grand Cañao is held annually by Igo-UK on the second Saturday of September to commemorate its own founding anniversary. It is the organization's attempt to affirm its history and by extension, the presence and unity of Igorots in this country. The subgroups contribute to this celebration by taking on specific tasks and performing a representative cultural number. Usually attended by around 500 people, the Grand Cañao is the biggest event of the year.

It is a practice by Igo-UK to design online invitations for the Grand Cañao and post these on the organization's Facebook page. 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 across the world. These invitations include basic information about the event such as date, time, venue and contact details, but as well as such necessary information, 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 narratives. The invitations I discuss in this section were posted on Facebook for the 2016 Grand Cañao. 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 3](#), while the other set shows the modes of transportation in London travelling to different places in the Cordillera, as seen in [Figure 4](#).

In the context of these images being invitations to the Grand Cañao 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 Igo-UK's Grand Cañao in London. In these images, Igo-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 Igo-UK is facilitating the movement and arrival of their fellow Igorots from the Cordillera to London.

The traditional order of things in relation to cultural performance, especially in relation to rituals such as the Cañao, 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 to attend the performance of rituals with their family or community. In these invitations, however, this order is reversed with the movement of those from the home region to attend a Cañao 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 faraway place and be considered as an act of loyalty and connection to Igorotness and the Igorot people. By de-emphasizing the primacy of the place of origin in the value of ritual performance, Igo-UK through these invitations views Igorotness as not being defined by domicile in the ancestral land. This idea was affirmed by an international Igorot audience who commented on



Figure 3. Online invitations for Igo-UK's 2016 Grand Cañao depict the arrival of transport vehicles from the Cordillera to London. From Igo-UK's Facebook Page.

these invitations. Commenters who are in the Cordillera applauded the idea that Igorots in the UK continue to practice Igorot culture despite their residence in a foreign country. They thanked Igo-UK 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 Igo-UK responded to this call by creating and posting more personalized invitations showing the London



Figure 4. The other set of online invitations for the 2016 Grand Cañao features London transport vehicles bound to places in the Cordillera. From Igo-UK's Facebook Page.

routemaster or black cab bound to the hometowns of those who asked to be fetched. On the other hand, the comments of Igo-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 had 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 commended Igo-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 they recognized the incongruity of elements in these images but they were, nevertheless, willing to indulge in the narrative that is being created. 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 collaborative fictioning between the creators and consumers of these images indicate their mutual desire to construct this world of possibility ostensibly for the performance of an Igorot ritual in London. Igo-UK was able to produce this possibility by learning and utilizing the facilities of image manipulation software and by making use of content sharing mechanisms engineered and made available by social media. The multidirectional exchanges over the invitations indicate that for members of Igo-UK as well as other Igorots in the home region and in other destinations, Igorotness is mobile; it is a commute between London and the Cordillera or vice versa, and if it is the latter route, it involves a vernacular tacking of the adoptive country's landscape. Rejecting the indigenous paradigm which detains indigenous people to ancestral land, Igorotness here is imaged as a vicarious but nevertheless deeply felt connection and interaction among spatially dispersed Igorots.

Recreating cultural biography

As I signalled in my earlier discussion of Igo-UK's attempt to remake the colonial trope of the Igorot Village, this organization is mobilizing to participate in the general aesthetics of resistance that has been undertaken by indigenous peoples around the world. Because indigenous peoples have historically experienced discrimination and dispossession, they have explored mechanisms to call attention to their grievances, to seek redress and to produce knowledge and ways of thinking that attempt to dislodge prejudicial representations of their communities. For members of Igo-UK, the experience of discrimination has often been with other Filipino migrants in the UK. In my conversations with Igo-UK members, a recurrent story I heard was about other Filipinos' impression that Igorots are '*taga bundok*' (from the mountains). For instance, 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 mountains). 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, hiding hindi halata*' (So you are from the mountains but it does not matter, anyway it does not show, it really does not 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 that true identity. These perceptions echo the descriptions of the London



Figure 5. Igo-UK members wear their ethnic attire for photographs by Stonehenge and at Madame Tussauds. Photos by Ajet Tudlong and Juliva Tuguinay.

newspapers in 1912 during the Shakespeare's England Exhibition that Igorots were 'barbarians from the mountainous district of the Philippine islands'.

Such incidents 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' that are perceived to determine their character even in their move to another country. Such perceptions are informed by what I discussed earlier as the 'indigenous paradigm', which considers indigenous people as a 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 better opportunities. In a mobile contemporary world, Igorots are still perceived as a static group of people bound to the mountains of the Cordillera.

Igo-UK's attempt to resist such prevailing narratives can be observed in a peculiar practice among its members when they travel. The annual social calendar of Igo-UK includes group travels to different parts of the UK. There have been trips to Bournemouth, Dover, Eastbourne, Edinburgh, Isle of Wight, Cotswolds, Norwich and Yorkshire, among others. I joined some of these tours and noted that in their group travels around the UK, the members brought their ethnic attire and changed into these when they arrived in their destination for purposes of taking photographs in important landmarks (see Figure 5). These photographs were subsequently posted on Facebook and they generated threads of interactions among UK Igorots and other Igorots around the world.

Displaying cultural textiles or being dressed in ethnic attire is not unusual for diasporic groups: it is among the foremost means of affirming group identification. However, such clothing may serve other purposes, such as when outsiders dress in the ethnic attire of the places they visit in order to have a sense of authentic experience. The global tourism industry has capitalized on this desire for cultural immersion, and in the Cordillera Region, Igorot attire is available for rent in tourist areas such as Banaue and Baguio City. Having pictures taken in such attire is part of lowland Filipinos' itinerary in their visit to the highlands, alongside the earlier but still continuing practice of being photographed, for a fee, with traditionally dressed Igorot elders at tourist destinations.

In looking at the photographs of UK Igorots wearing their ethnic attires in their travels around the UK, a relation can be made between such act and the tourism practice in the Cordillera. 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 attire, although, following the tourism pattern, they should be wearing the attire of the places they visit. In effect, it seems they are trying to do something else and this, I suggest, is an attempt to imprint their presence in the spatial composition of their adoptive country. Their captured presence in the places they visited in the UK becomes their announcement that they have made it there and not as anonymous tourists but as visible Igorots. These photographs declare that Igorots are not or no longer relegated to the mountains.

These photographs appear to desire a remaking of the commodified version of Igorot visibility in photographs taken and circulated by lowland tourists visiting the Cordillera. Together with colonial photographs, 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 of Igorots in the UK posted on Facebook show the Igorot not as a laughing stock or peddled commodity but as a mobile, empowered agent. This photographic practice also seems to be motivated by a desire from 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. Lury (1998) describes this aspect of photographs as 'prosthetic biography', meaning that people manipulate their images as a way of attaching a new history to themselves. The production of this new cultural biography 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 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 is not only about personal success and mobility but also about the triumph of a particular group of people identified by their ethnic attire. The story being told is therefore a collective Igorot success story.

In pursuing, documenting and circulating these ethnic-styled photographs, Igo-UK members enjoy a sense of pride confirmed by the approval of their peers. When these photographs are posted on Igo-UK's Facebook group account and on the members' personal accounts, they invite many comments which indicate a sense of collective triumph; the adventures of Igorots in the UK are received by their international Igorot network 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 makipaspasyar en dakayo*' (we feel like we are travelling with you). These interactions illustrate what McKay (2016) described as 'affective flows' among migrants and their network of friends on Facebook. The photographs serve as 'affective nodes', attracting expressions of support and admiration from their

UK and international Igorot community that bolster their self-confidence and nurture their sense of belonging despite physical distance. These affective exchanges enable a mutual uplift among Igorot interlocutors who see themselves invested in the self-affirming narrative of these photographs.

Visibility and agency, however, are not always guaranteed in this seemingly empowering act of visual production. 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 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 likewise devious even for the regular members of the community, because the images emphasize being seen rather than being heard. In my conversations 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 mobility and adventures created by their happy photographs online. This kind of visibility also 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 the same luxury. This issue of class distinction, for example, interrogates an 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 experiences in the UK as result of different social status.

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 training, had regular employment in East London hospitals. With confidence and opportunity 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 that primarily served Igorot customers, who felt comfortable with a service provided by one of their own. With the success of this business, Auntie Paulina was able to build a resort in the Philippines which has also become well-patronized by diasporic Igorots. Given the comfort of wealth from successful businesses, Auntie Paulina has been active in the international network of diasporic Igorots, 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 between the Philippines and 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 holidays. Auntie Nora left her employer because of certain misunderstandings which put her in a bad situation. As a runaway, Auntie Nora sought the help of a non-government organization which provided her shelter, and 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 amongst 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. She found employment as a domestic worker, babysitter, carer and cleaner with various families, and these jobs 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.

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 lines of other women in the community hold different levels of power to exercise agency. 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 Igo-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.

It can also be argued that the stylized photographic practice of Igo-UK promotes a visibility that indulges in a celebrity and celebratory discourse which distracts attention from the pursuit of collective welfare that is among the foremost objectives of the organization. Some members expressed the opinion that Igo-UK as an organization engages only in the celebration of culture and in presenting a glossy image of the community in the UK. These members are disappointed that Igo-UK does not directly participate in political action to help organizations campaign for irregular members, despite approaches for collaboration made by charity and church organizations. These community tensions are not visible in the Facebook photographs, and this situation calls attention to the partiality of stories told by the photographs. The visibility of Igorots in the UK through styled photographs enables the re-signifying of negative representations of Igorots but it is not without contradicting results. The Igorot image is somehow freed from its encumbrance in negative stereotypes but the new images produced conceal the variety and complexity of situations faced by the members in migration.

Conclusion

I began with how the members of Igo-UK endeavoured to repurpose the colonial image of an Igorot Village borne out of World Exhibitions in the early twentieth century. The organization redeployed this colonial trope to represent themselves, redesigning it to speak of pre-colonial highland ingenuity and cultural vitality. Related to their revisionist agenda on the Igorot Village, Igo-UK also attempted to reconfigure the primordialist notion of indigenous identity by framing Igorotness as an identification that is not determined by spatial rootedness in an originary homeland. Through its online invitations for a ritual in London, the organization encouraged a global social intercourse among Igorots and this interaction illustrates that Igorots have come to perceive their lives as imbricated not only in a homeland but in a global network of variously located fellow Igorots. Pursuing its project for an alternative story, the organization also created and publicized a mobile and cosmopolitan

biography for themselves and the Igorots they represent through their ethnic stylization of digital photography circulated on social media. Through these images, they asserted the status of Igorots as agents who are fully participating in the trappings and trends of contemporary life. All these endeavours have produced a discourse of symbolic resistance that has inflected the transnational imagination of identity and community among Igorots in the Cordillera and around the world.

The manner in which Igo-UK has framed and mobilized Igorotness illustrates the creative reconstruction and resourceful mobilization of identity by displaced indigenous peoples, like the Igorots in the UK, to manage challenges caused by historical marginalization and displacement. For these migrants, engagement with their identity becomes an opportunity for purposive self-remaking premised on a desire for both personal and communal enfranchisement. The case of Igo-UK illustrates the creative art and possible emancipation that can be achieved through mobilization amongst indigenous peoples in diaspora. With their ability and motivation to harness resources and enabling structures in their places of destination, contemporary indigenous migrants hold a crucial role in imagining and creating a more inclusive environment for indigenous peoples' lives, whether in the homeland or anywhere else in the world.

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