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## **Subordination and Resistances:**

Ethnicity in the Highland Communities of the Cordillera Administrative Region, Northern Luzon, Philippines

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### **Introduction**

The past debates in ethnicity theory between the antithetically opposed primordialists and circumstantialists and those who attempt to compromise this dialectic, though rooted in discussions initiated decades ago, continue to have lively and intellectually stimulating traces. This paper, in its examination of the ethnicity of the highland communities in the Cordillera Administrative Region, who have been collectively designated as and who often subscribe to the metonym of Igorot, is situated within the primordialist-circumstantialist debate. In it, I examine Igorot (pan)ethnicity within the framework of ethnicity theory and depends heavily on ideas proposed by Max Weber, Brackette Williams, and Dru Gladney. Crucial to my investigation of Igorot ethnicity will be my own understanding of ethnicity and the dynamic discourse of identity construction. In this endeavor, I will be proposing my own model of ethnicity and identity construction, which is now tentatively referred to as the Labrador-Bell amoeba. What this model attempts to capture is the multiple, shifting, relational, relative, situational, and negotiated reality of ethnicity and identity. In turn, I will use this model in my efforts to understand Igorot ethnicity and identity, but will also find utility in my attempts to articulate what I claim as the

## ethnogenesis of the Igorots.

Echoing Brackette Williams, ethnicity, and in this case Igorot ethnicity, is a label of the subordinate, of the subaltern. The main focus of this paper, however, will be an investigation into the formation of a hegemonic "Igorot" or pan-Cordilleran consciousness and ethnicity, arguing that this regional consciousness is a result of colonial and post-colonial governments' "colonization" attempts manifested in missionizing and "civilizing" efforts, administrative planning, and economic incursions embodied by large-scale development projects. In other words, the constructions of Igorot ethnicity are a consequence of government encroachments into the area, particularly those occurring during the Marcos regime, and as a defense against these intrusions. Several disparate, but not isolated, communities attempted to construct an identity needed for collective political and social action which engendered the rise of self-conscious awareness and pride that eventually paved the way for the calls for the rights to ancestral domains and self-determination. However, this neither suggests that there existed only a single interpretation of Igorot ethnicity nor does it deny the existence of internal debates concerning the construction of this ethnicity (i.e., debates among Igorots themselves as to the definitions and interpretations of their ethnicity). On the contrary, I would suggest that multiple narratives and interpretations co-existed (and continue to co-exist), often in competitive interactions. Yet within the contexts of the Chico Basin Development Project and struggles for autonomy, one master-or meta-narrative, though not comprehensively representative of the multiple, overlapping, and co-existing narratives, seized dominance within the discourse between the state and the highland communities of the Cordilleras.

Additionally, I will argue in this paper that the reversion, reconstructions, and reinterpretations of the colonial category of Igorot was part of the mobilization efforts to combat state impingement and thus secure the survival of the highland communities. In short, the calls for consolidation and unity (and eventually autonomy) were attempts to confront the common external and oppositional threats to survival and the possibility of extinction. Integral to these mobilization efforts and forging of alliances were the remembrances of shared experiences, shared histories, shared descent, and shared land claims. Simply put, these were attempts to recognize, articulate, and construct a common ethnicity.

## History and Background

The Cordillera Administrative Region, established by Executive Order 220 in 1987, covers over 6,000 square miles of mountainous terrain and is popular for its lush pine trees, numerous waterways, and lavish and elaborate rice terraces. The region is composed of five provinces: Benguet, Ifugao, Bontoc, Apayao, and Kalinga. The total population of the five provinces is approximately one million. The most populous of the highland communities are the Ifugao, Kalinga, Tingguian, Isneg, Bontoc, Kankanaey, and Ibaloi. Since the Spanish colonial period, integrating the highland communities has been a steady policy of the Philippine government (colonial or otherwise). For the Spanish, the Cordillera region was an area to be economically explored; its populations were heavily exposed to Christianizing missions of friar. The discovery of gold, mining reserves, and an active trading network in the area brought Spanish colonizers

and fortune seekers in the late sixteenth century. Gold and other mineral resource-hunting expeditions were pursued in hopes of helping to satiate Spanish hunger for precious metals to feed the galleon trade. Military campaigns were conducted in order to establish military posts and to pacify the area. Spanish encroachment into the region, however, encountered vigorous resistance from various highland communities. According to Tauli, "they harassed the Spanish troops as they established forts in their mining areas-by refusing to supply them with food, threatening to massacre them, and actually attacking these forts....The Spanish troops were forced to withdraw." [1](#)

Spanish colonial policies towards the Cordilleras were not solely driven by economic motives, These policies also called for the Christianization, and hence "civilization" and advancement, of the population. Often accompanying the Spanish troops during their expeditions were Catholic missionaries-in a sense, the sword and the Bible went hand-in-hand. The Spanish categorized the diverse communities of the Cordilleras under the homogenized heading of "Ygorrotes" and later "Igorots," a term literally defined as "people from the mountains." However, for the Spanish, Ygorrotes signified the multiple resistances of the peoples in the region. Stressing cultural differences between the Ygorrotes and other Filipinos and thus constructing a highland/lowland divide to justify the civilizing missions and economic pursuits, the Spanish administrators and missionaries (as well as other Filipinos) depicted the highland Igorots as uncivilized, backward, violent, lacking industry, etc. (what often has become the stereotypical, racist images of cultural minorities): antithetical characteristics of the lowland, Hispanized (and therefore, Christianized) Filipinos. In these portraits, the Igorots were dehumanized and depersonalized: inferior objects ready to be exploited and dominated. Other negative generalizations portrayed the Igorots as fierce, head-hunting savages who needed to be controlled and pacified. As Scott notes,

Augustinian Fray Antonio Mozo, who never set foot in Apayao, reflected the attitude of both Spaniards and Filipinos in the more acculturated society by describing the Isnogs as bloodthirsty savages who lay in wait along the highways to cut the heads off unwary travelers.[2](#)

Furthermore, Spanish civilizing missions sought to bring their advancements to these backward peoples and uplift them from their ignorance. Meeting opposition to Spanish land and resource intrusion, these missions were largely unsuccessful. Not until the American colonial period, beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, did integration policies begin to penetrate deeper into the region and adversely affect the peoples of the Cordilleras.

Before the arrival of the American colonizers, the process of Igorot minoritization and marginalization was well under way. In his article "The Creation of a Cultural Minority," Scott illustrates this process of minoritization in his account of contacts between the Isnogs of Apayao and Spaniards. Similar to the history of subjection to missionizing efforts and military campaigns I have described above, Scott's account reveals the multiplicity of Igorot responses to the Spanish presence in the area: resistances, co-optation, acculturation, and assimilation. However, due to the hostile resistances and rejections of assimilation attempts, the Igorots were

collectively classified as different from other Filipinos, thus instituting the routinization of their minoritization and inferiorization. To this end, Scott makes the following remarks:

[Spanish Colonization] had steadily divided the Filipino people into two categories - the submissive and the unsubmissive, the faithful and the faithless, the good and the bad. The Isnegs of Apayao clearly belonged to the latter group. No longer simple indios like everybody else...they were now outcasts, brigands, and savages. They were different from other Filipinos, and therefore deserved different treatment. They were, in short, a cultural minority.<sup>3</sup>

At the turn of the century, the American colonizers inherited this Spanish legacy of minoritization. By appealing to their own experiences with Native Americans and to Spanish-established images of the Igorots as lazy, fierce, wild, and backward to legitimate the enactment of discriminatory laws, the American colonial period saw the institutionalization of "internally colonizing" the Cordillera region and the further marginalization of the Igorots. In 1901, the American colonial government created the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes whose investigations into the region produced numerous laws, bills, and policies which directly affected the region. One principal recommendation from the Bureau was the organization of the area into one administrative region, Mountain Province, enacted in 1908. As part of the American policy of separate highland development, the creation of one administrative territory to govern a diverse number of peoples was pursued, combining the communities all under the Spanish-initiated category of "Igorot." (After intensified exploitation of rich mineral deposits and other markers of economic potential, this policy of separate development shifted to one of assimilation.) Two other significant recommendations from the Bureau affecting the Cordilleras dealt with land registration and mining restrictions. In 1902, the Philippine Bill and the Land Registration Act were passed, requiring the registration of landholdings and proof of ownership through land titles. Contrary to indigenous ideas of land use and ownership, these laws enabled lands to be legally appropriated and acquired by those able to obtain land deeds and titles. These laws, in addition to the Spanish-introduced Regalian Doctrine that placed all territories within the Philippines into the hands of the state, were founded on the idea that the highland communities had no concept of land ownership and, therefore, the lands they occupied were free to full exploitation. The American colonial government also passed two mining bills (the Mining Act of 1905 and 1935) which further eased the acquisition of Cordillera land and limited "native" mining. These laws effectively took land from the indigenous inhabitants, restricted their economic activity, and further aggravated both the division between the region and the central government and that between the highlanders and lowlanders.

According to Gerard Finin, American colonialism marked a significant period in the construction of the highlander/lowlander divide and the formation of Igorot ethnicity. He argues that, during the American colonial period, there emerged a sense of Igorot ethnicity arising both from externally-imposed designations and self-ascription. For Finin, "self-conscious images of territorial and social oneness may over time emerge from the ways in which state planning and policies are imposed via administrative grids."<sup>4</sup> He contends that American colonial policies, especially those of defining administrative grids or territorial boundaries, fostered the evolution

of regional consciousness in the Cordilleras. In other words, it was the imposition of territorial administrative boundaries which helped to diffuse the idea of the Igorot inside and outside the region. Finin writes:

The American administrative grid was imposed on the Cordillera in a manner that either directly or indirectly influenced the thinking of virtually all highland residents. Over the course of some four generations, the grid served to reorganize highlanders' identities and memories across space and time.<sup>5</sup>

Pursuing a policy of separate highland development (as opposed to integrated development with the lowland communities), American planning strategies established Mountain Province, a single administrative region governing the diverse populations in the Cordilleras. The creation of Mountain Province was founded on the perception that the various highland communities comprised only one "type" of people, and thereby could be assembled into one political and social classification: they were the "Igorots" who occupied the territories collectively known as Mountain Province.

By clustering once autonomous communities into "reservation-like territorial boundaries," social interaction between previously separate groups increased, effectively influencing the mountain community cultures and their existing social systems and institutions. For example, the sponsoring and privileging of particular rituals, like the canao (or ritual feasting), which were thought to be representative of "Igorot" culture served to bring the highland communities together. Competitors and representatives from throughout the region participated in these ritual "performances" and in this way, they were gathered in an invented social setting. It was in these gatherings that the separate highland communities could observe similarities in their cultures and, in a sense, forge a type of cultural unity. Additionally, the introduction of the American education system (the establishment of the Trinidad Agricultural School) was an important factor in developing regional consciousness. Following Benedict Anderson, Finin observed that the school and administrative systems (and their "pilgrimages") prepared an integral way for imagining an "Igorot" community. He writes:

Based on map-like thinking embodied in the grid, admission was limited to highlanders from the Mountain Province. American officials subsequently gave preference in appointment to administrative and teaching positions to graduates they classified as "educated Igorots." Since the administrative grid restricted career advancement to positions only within the Mountain Province; i.e., highlanders could never be assigned to another part of the Philippines, this reinforced the new highlander intelligentsia's consciousness of themselves as "Igorots," a different kind of people destined to belong to the special highland domain that was "theirs".<sup>6</sup>

The early years of the Marcos era marked the push for national economic development, especially in "less-developed areas," in order to integrate the nation-state into the larger global political economy and meet the demands of the international market. Marcos' "New Society" called for modernization, industrialization, and the intensification of agricultural production. In

this regard Dorall and Regpala write:

The regional development model implicit in the New Society's plans to reform the Philippines is essentially a centre-periphery one in which core-regions (urbanized regions already experiencing rapid development) would initiate the building of a dependency relationship with their peripheries....It was to be in the context of this core-periphery framework that modernization and development would penetrate into the outer peripheries from the national core regions, thus bringing about a greater measure of regional equity, and the advancement of "backward" peoples.<sup>7</sup>

For the Cordillera region, the Marcos development vision perceived the "opening up" of the region's agricultural frontier for intense cropping, the building of hydroelectric dams as alternative sources of energy, the exploitation of its rich mineral deposits, and the logging of its forested mountain areas. Such development schemes were further attempts to integrate the "cultural minorities" and to bring the highland communities into a relationship with the central government, where the latter had the exploitative advantage and control of both the region's population and its natural resources. However, these development schemes resulted in the massive displacement, dispossession, and disempowerment of many of the highland communities.

Consequently, Marcos' projects were met with opposition and dispute. One of the most controversial was the Chico River Basin Development Project which involved construction of four dams on the Chico River. The building of the dams had many stated purposes. It was intended to increase rice production with better irrigation systems, to transform water energy to electrical energy, to contribute economically to the region, and to increase the living standards of the region's inhabitants thereby preserving their culture. The four dams were to generate a potential power capacity of 1,010 megawatts annually (enough power to maintain most of northern Luzon's electrical needs), but they would have also inundated ancestral territories which would dislocate over one hundred thousand Bontoks and Kalingas.

Another promise of development came from the Cellophil Resources Corporation. The Department of Agricultural and National Resources granted land concessions to the company, covering an area of approximately 200,000 hectares. The project was to meet foreign demands for paper, logs, and timber while promising industrialization, economic opportunities and alternatives, and an increased standard of living for those in the region. But by the late 1970's, it faced firm opposition and united resistance. The promises of development never materialized.

The struggle of the highland communities in the Cordillera region has been examined and understood largely as a question of land rights-who "owns" the land, and, therefore, who controls its natural and mineral resources. For both the government and the highland communities, the Cordilleras (and Northern Luzon, in general) is an important region to control because of its economic productivity and potential. According to Malanes, Northern Luzon houses one of the world's largest gold mines. The Cordilleras is home to six major mining firms,

the biggest of which is owned by a United States investment bank.<sup>8</sup> Based on data gathered by Baguio's Center for Nationalist Studies in Northern Luzon, there is an estimated total of 1.8 billion tons of mineral reserves in the region, containing 38% of the Philippines' gold, 22% of the country's copper, 100% of its cadmium, and 61% of its molybdenum. Moreover, the region contains silver, iron, coal, and oil reserves.<sup>9</sup> The area is also the site of lucrative logging and tobacco industries, it stores the greatest hydroelectric potential, and it is a major source of food. However, the wealth of the area is monopolized by a regional elite and foreign-owned corporations. In short, the majority of the highland communities have not benefited from the region's abundant economic resources. This disparity has been the cause of the economic and social marginalization of these communities as well as a basis for their struggles for regional autonomy. Economics has served as the battleground between the central government and the highland communities with each using land rights as their weapon in the conflict.

The highland communities argue that, because they are the indigenous peoples of the area, they are the true owners of the land because the region falls within their ancestral domain. According to June Prill-Brett:

Ancestral domain is a concept applied to the territory occupied and recognized by an indigenous group since time immemorial, and in many instances, long before the existence of a Philippine Republic. The concept of ancestral domain includes (a) the indigenous peoples right to avail of the direct benefits derived from the exploitation of resources within its territories and (b) the right to directly decide how land, water and other resources will be allocated, used, or managed.<sup>10</sup>

Closely linked to the idea of ancestral domain is self-determination, the concept which in one sense states that indigenous peoples have the right to determine the pace and type of development in their particular residential area. According to the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Rights (drafted in 1985), as discussed in Maranan's "Development and Minoritization", self-determination means:

...the right to whatever degree of autonomy or self-government they choose. This includes the right to freely determine their political status, freely pursue their own economic, social, religious, and cultural development, and determine their own membership and/or citizenship without external interference.<sup>11</sup>

Key in this declaration is the phrase "without external influence". For the highland communities, this is often understood to mean "without government or foreign intrusion". The rights to self-determination and ancestral domain, as emphasized by the United Nations and re-emphasized by the 1986 Constitution, has been the driving and guiding principle for regional autonomy and opposition to perceived threats to their survival, manifested primarily in national development strategies and projects.

Although the situation in the Cordilleras has been examined as resource competition between

the highland communities that inhabit the area and the government of the Philippines, it is also a discourse on issues of subordination, resistances, and ethnicization. Even though one could analyze the history of the Igorots in terms of political economy, that is not my intention here. Instead, I examine the Igorots within the framework of ethnicity theory, focusing on the historical subordination and resistances and the implications of these dynamic interactions on Igorot ethnicity (or ethnicities).

## **Framing Igorot Ethnicity**

Particularly useful in framing Igorot ethnicity is Max Weber's notion of ethnicity as the "subjective belief in a common descent". According to Weber, ethnic groups are:

...those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.<sup>12</sup>

Fundamental to ethnicity, in this perspective, is the perception of common descent, regardless of reality or invention. Ethnicity is also based on the perception of shared experiences or memories of a common history, whether from migration or a colonial past. What is important is not so much the accuracy of those rememberings but the purposes for which they are employed: in this case, for remembering a shared history and subscription to a common descent. Using these terms, Igorot ethnicity can be defined (using Weber) according to the Igorots' subjective beliefs in their common descent, their shared histories of colonial resistance (as "unconquered peoples"), and their common experiences of national oppression.

However, when examining Igorot ethnicity according to the ideas proposed by Weber, several critical questions arise. If descent is culturally defined as ancestry, how far back does one need to go in order to legitimate one's descent? Is descent a matter of blood quantum or simply rooted in subjective belief? Who defines and interprets descent and ethnicity? How many definitions and interpretations are there? Implicit in these questions is the interactional and discursive nature of ethnicity (and other types of identity) and the power relations within which these interactions and discourses occur. These interactions and discourses place claims of descent and ethnicity under constant threat from within and without. For each claim of common descent, one can expect alternative claims, counter-claims, repudiations, or outright rejections and denials from those who subscribe to the same claims (or make similar claims) as well as from external agents involved in this discourse of metonymization. In short, ethnicity is a negotiated reality, an interaction and interplay between self-ascriptions which co-exist and often compete and external categorizations and classifications. In this way, interpretations and definitions of Igorot ethnicity are contested and challenged among Igorots themselves as well as between Igorots and non-Igorots. What is also missing in Weber's discussion is a discourse of power embedded in the discourse of ethnicity.

The discourse of power, lacking in Weber, is an integral component in Brackette Williams' discussion of ethnicity. Within her convoluted review of previous ethnicity literature, we find her definition: "ethnicity labels the politics of cultural struggle in the nexus of territorial and cultural nationalism that characterizes all putatively homogeneous nation-states. As a label it may sound better than tribe, race, or barbarian, but with respect to political consequences, it still identifies those who are at the borders of the empire."<sup>13</sup> In other words, ethnicity is contextualized within the power relations of the nation-state (and the larger global economy) and is constructed as a label of the subordinate as measured against the dominant group which is characterized by an "invisible" ethnicity: "not all individuals have equal power to fix the coordinates of self-other identity formation. Nor are individuals equally empowered to opt out of the labeling process, to become the invisible against which others' visibility is measured."<sup>14</sup> By subscribing to Igorot ethnicity, the highland communities attest to and orient themselves within the nation-state but at the margins of Philippine society. Referring to the Cordillera Peoples' Democratic Front (CPDF) General Program and Constitution, this idea of inclusion and marginalization is captured by the following statement:

We, the peoples of the Cordillera which include non-indigenous inhabitants belong to the democratic classes and sectors of Philippine society....We are among the oppressed and exploited majority....We, the peoples who inhabit the Cordillera, are Filipinos. We know that the problems we face are linked with those that confront the entire Filipino nation.<sup>15</sup>

For the CPDF, ethnicity labels their incorporation into Philippine society though it is a position of peripheral weakness among the exploited and oppressed. Interestingly enough, included in this declaration of subordination are the non-indigenous peoples of the Cordillera. One can understand their inclusion as an attempt to forge an alliance with the more populous collective of "peoples of the Cordillera" in an effort to confront a common opponent: oppression (and hence, the Philippine government). Also intriguing is the omission of the term "Igorot", demonstrating the CPDF's rejection of the colonial category, which is laced with negative connotations. This omission further illustrates the internal debates concerning the collective term to be applied to the peoples (in the CPDF case, indigenous and non-indigenous) of the Cordilleras. The multiplicity of self-definitions will be elaborated on later, but it is important to note that the CPDF represents only one of many resistance-type organizations and movements in the Cordilleras.

Also interesting in Brackette Williams' analysis of ethnicity is her insistence on the subordinate's seeming inability to shed their marginalization. She writes:

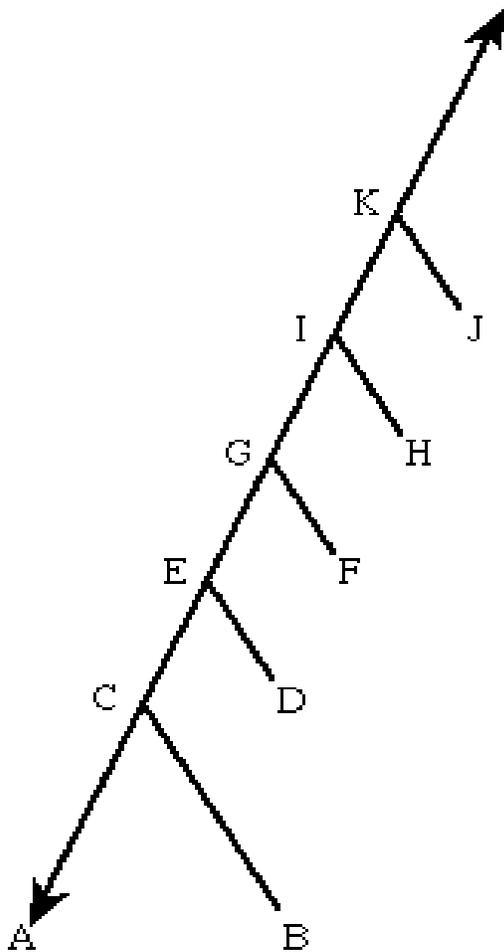
Such a categorical unit cannot be dissolved by the acts of persons so labeled. They cannot eradicate the category-either by process of individual material assimilation to different class strata or by their shedding of inappropriate cultural enactments across generations, or by a socialization process that directs individuals to apish acculturation of a national mainstream to which their

contributions ultimately are calculated by those who metonymize the nation.[16](#)

Perhaps here, she overemphasizes the idea of subordination, where the subordinated are completely disempowered, acting only in passive acceptance of derogatory labels and exploitative relationships. She seems to discount resistances and the ability to change the relationship between the subordinate and dominant. In Williams' analysis, Igorot resistances could be ignored because of their inability to effect change in the subordinate-dominant relationship. Lost in this analysis, however, is the subordinate's historical agency; regardless of resistances, the Igorots have not been able to eliminate their category of subordination. But, by neglecting these resistances as well as the alliances and oppositions associated with them, Williams glosses over an important aspect of ethnicity: the interactional and discursive contestations among the subordinates themselves and between subordinate and dominant. Furthermore, in viewing the dominant and subordinate as categorical units, Williams ignores the multi-level and multi-vocal internal debates within these categories. In other words, ethnic categorizations and formulations involve self-self, other-other, and self-other interactions.

A model which more sufficiently captures the dynamic interaction in ethnic categorizations and identity formations is the relational alterity model proposed by Dru Gladney (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Relational Alterity Model.[19](#)



Drawing from Evans-Pritchard's classic study of the Nuer, Gladney's relational alterity model incorporates the idea of nested hierarchy and stratification within the context of dialogical social relations. The relational alterity model is based on Gladney's personal observations and interpretations of social histories (particularly of the Hui Muslims) and is diagrammed in hierarchical segmentary nodes of alterity. In this model, "people *subscribe* to certain identities, under highly contextualized moments of social relation." [17](#) Gladney explains this as follows:

...when "A" and "B" encounter a higher level of opposition "D," they form "C," moving a node up the scale to form higher-level relations, or conversely, down the scale when the higher-level threat subsides. While this scheme is binary, it is always constructed in the field of social relations, and is inherently ternary in that A and B are always in union or opposition depending on their interaction with D. [18](#)

The relational alterity model is particularly useful in understanding Igorot resistances to Marcos-imposed Chico Basin Development Project as well as in the examination of the autonomy issue in the Cordillera Administrative Region. Like Brackette Williams, the relational alterity model contextualizes Igorot ethnicity and resistances within the power relations of the nation-state.

Although the issue of resistances will be elaborated upon later, here, I will give a brief account of the applicability of this model to Igorot ethnicity within the context of these resistances. If we take "A" to represent the Kalingas and "B" as the Bontocs, we can suggest that the construction of "C", which I will equate with the Igorots, is the result of the union or opposition in response to "D", the state as manifested materially in the proposed Chico River Dams and symbolically as the threat to sociohistorical survival. When construction of the dams commenced, various alliances were forged, based upon the traditional bilateral peace pacts or *bodongs*, in response to the perceived threats; consequently, there emerged constructions of a "higher-level" identity which I call Igorot ethnicity. With the postponement of dam construction in the mid-1980's, after years of resistances, this threat subsided, yet the constructions of Igorot ethnicity persisted. The persistence of this ethnicity, however, does not discredit the value of the relational alterity model. On the contrary, it further validates its applicability in that a newly emergent context demanded similar union and opposition. It was within the context of the struggles for autonomy, the rights to ancestral domain and self-determination, that Igorot ethnicity persisted: "D" was now interpreted in terms of national oppression. Although "C" or Igorot ethnicity was not interpreted in the same way, it found similar expressions within the demands of autonomy. It was the hegemonic interpretation of "C" which found its way into a discourse with the state and became crucial to the inclusion of the autonomy provision in the 1987 Constitution.

The relational alterity model applies conveniently to the way I have interpreted Igorot resistances. However, one should be critical of the relational alterity model and my application of it in the Igorot context. Gladney, himself, in anticipation of criticism provides a series of disclaimers. He notes:

...there is nothing determinative in these relations. They are merely reflections of

what I have observed in the field. The hierarchy of segmentation is not fixed; it is determined by the local context of difference, as defined by specific constellation of stereotypical relations, of hierarchy, power, class, and opposition, that are often shifting and multifaceted, but never arbitrary....The relational alterity approach seeks to map out the significant fault lines of relation, opposition, and nodes of hierarchy—a heuristic way of depicting this phenomenon. It does not, of course, pretend to have predictive or universal, dehistoricized explanatory value.<sup>20</sup>

Even with these disclaimers, the relational alterity model's emphasis on the hierarchy of segmentation generates a sense of naturalism and determinism. Although Gladney admits to other types of identity subscription within the dialogical and social relations of identity construction, the stratified hierarchy of segmentary identities indicates a rigid inevitability in identity subscription. What is quite useful in the relational alterity model is the idea of oppositions and alliances and the inherent fragmentariness of identities. The model itself represents one of the primary ways in which individuals and communities align themselves according to the conditional and situational particularities of a contextualized historical moment. In order to avoid the seemingly situational essentialism of the relational alterity model, I propose the use of the Labrador-Bell amoeba, as first proposed by Thomas Bell.

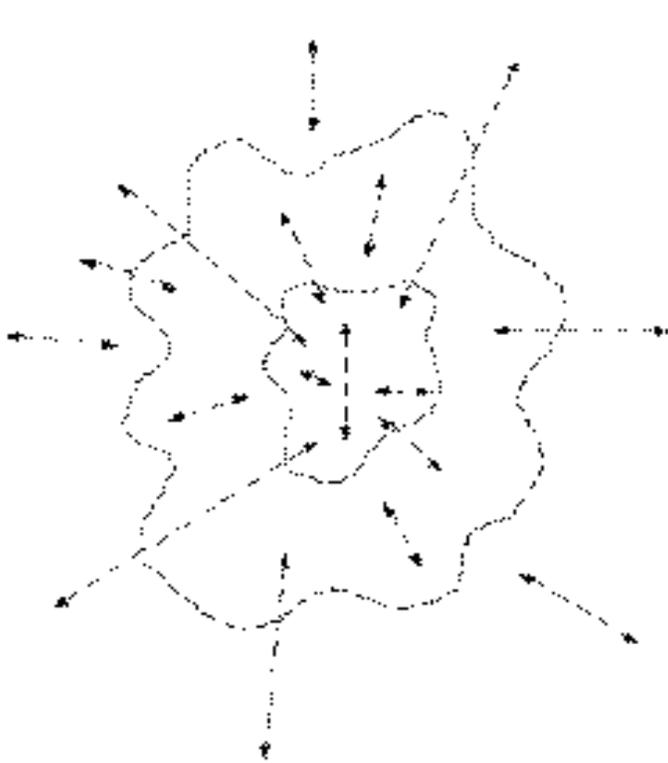


Figure 2. Labrador-Bell Amoeba

The Labrador-Bell amoeba (Figure 2) avoids the normative and deterministic construction of ethnicity with its semi-permeable dotted boundaries and a conditionally changing nucleus. Neither completely hermetic nor absolutely penetrable, the Labrador-Bell amoeba not only

embodies fluidity and transformation but also salience. The amoeba moves constantly, changing shape with each motion. It has neither a particular center nor a privileged core. But this is not to deny that a core exists. Its fluidity does not deny its existence, nor does it scream for consistent cognitive constructions and prescriptions of identity. Instead, the Labrador-Bell amoeba negotiates its space and location within an embroidered weave of external and internal forces and stimuli. This is not to say that the Labrador-Bell amoeba functions only in reaction to the forces and conditions that surround it, but it is engaged in a discursive navigation and interaction with them and within itself. It is a discursive negotiation within the context of nondeterminative alterity. In the end, the Labrador-Bell amoeba embodies the shifting, relational, relative, situational, and negotiated reality of identities. It is within the framework of a contested terrain of co-existing and often competing definitions, interpretations, and narratives that the Labrador-Bell amoeba resides. The construction of ethnicity and identities is discursive, in the sense that it is different from a dialogue. Identity construction is not necessarily a conversation between two (or more) equal agents which are diametrically opposed. Instead it is a multi-vocal conversation in which the agents may or may not be diametrically opposed to one another. The seemingly binary construction of the amoeba is averted by its flux and fluidity. In this way, the project of binary subversion or co-optation is itself subverted by the amoeba's proclivity for anastomotic multi-level and multi-vocal co-existence and intercommunication, rather than a field of relational turmoil and unrest with clear and determined hierarchies.

The Labrador-Bell amoeba is central to understanding Igorot ethnicity. The amoeba takes into consideration the multiplicity of Igorot interpretations of ethnicity. If we take, for example, the amoeba to represent Igorot ethnicity, we see, by way of the arrows within the amoeba, that Igorot ethnicity is an internally contested reality, in which multiple voices co-exist and often challenge one another. Yet, there exists (or at least appears to be) a hegemonic voice within the multi-vocality. The dominant voice does not suggest that the other voices are non-existent or have been co-opted and appropriated; rather, it is privileged within the highly contextualized historical moment. During the resistances against the construction of the Chico Dams, for instance, there appears (arguably) a dominant narrative, a master-narrative of ethnicity, one privileged by historical documentation. This dominant narrative stresses common descent, the importance of ancestral domain, and the shared experience of oppression. [21](#) The appearance of this dominant narrative does not deny the existence of alternate interpretations of Igorot ethnicity, but it demonstrates how an interpretation can dominate within a particular time and specific conditions. Additionally, what this suggests is that the organized and institutionalized Igorot resistances are not unitary and monolithic but instead involve a multiplicity of narratives and interpretations of history and identity.

## **Conclusion: The Ethnogenesis of the Igorots**

The 1970's and 1980's in the Philippines was a time of great social change and unrest. The country experienced several energy crises, attempted coups, the increased dependence on IMF-World Bank financial assistance which resulted in these institutions' involvement in national development strategies and the deafening international demands for economic development

both through modernization and export-oriented industrialization. It was within this context that development efforts began to concentrate in the Cordilleras (many other parts of the country, like Mindanao, also felt these demands), the home of numerous disparate, but not isolated, highland communities. In response to these development projects and the threats they posed to the communities' survival, these communities began to forge alliances, based on traditional peace pacts, in opposition to the perceived external challenges. From this process emerged "higher-order ethnic collectivities where once there were disparate peoples or dispersed populations,"<sup>22</sup> what I have claimed as Igorot ethnicity. Following these alliances and resistances to development projects was the movement for autonomy and the claims to both ancestral domain and self-determination. This movement was ethnopolitical in nature but with the underpinnings of an ethnic nationalism. But more than an ethnic nationalism, it was an ethnogenesis in the sense of a resurgence and aestheticized revitalization of ethnic pride resulting in the heightened collective self-consciousness of the highland communities. Igorot resistances and the movement for autonomy were also the re-assertions of historical agency. In this paper, I have examined Igorot ethnicity in terms of subordination and resistances and have argued that awareness of this subordination and the resistances to this subordination, historical marginalization, minoritization, exploitation, and oppression have served as sources of cohesion. It is in the examination of resistance, or more accurately resistances, where I have attempted to delineate Igorot ethnicity and the ethnogenesis of the Igorots.

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## Notes

**1** Anne Tauli, *Dakami Ya Nan Dagami: Papers and Proceedings of the 1st Cordillera Multisectoral LAND CONGRESS*, 11 March - 14 March 1983 (1984), 69.

**2** William Henry Scott, *The Discovery of the Igorots* (Quezon City: New Day, 1985), 37-8.

**3** Scott, *Discovery of the Igorots*, 40.

**4** Gerard Anthony Finin, "Regional Consciousness and Administrative Grids: Understanding the Role of Planning in the Philippine Gran Cordillera Central" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1991), 912.

**5** Finin, "Regional Consciousness and Administrative Grids", 913.

**6** Finin, "Regional Consciousness and Administrative Grids", 915.

**7** Richard F. Dorall and Ma. Elena Regpala, *Dams, Pines, and Tribes: Reflections on Frontier Development in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day, 1982), 256.

**8** Maurice B. Malanes, "Myth, Money and Power in the North: Political Alliances in Northern

Luzon May Shift, but Greed is a Constant," *Solidaridad* no. 2 (1991): 13.

**9** Malanes, "Myth, Money and Power," 13.

**10** June Prill-Brett, *Preliminary Perspectives on Local Territorial Boundaries and Resource Control* (Baguio City: Cordillera Studies Center, University of the Philippines - Baguio), 1.

**11** Ed Maranan, "Development and Minoritization," *Diliman Review* 35 (1987): 13.

**12** Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischof, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 389.

**13** Brackette Williams, "A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18 (1989): 439.

**14** Williams, "A Class Act," 420.

**15** Cordillera Peoples' Democratic Front, *General Program and Constitution* (1989), 1.

**16** Williams, "A Class Act," 439.

**17** Dru C. Gladney, "Relational Alterity: Constructing Dungan, Uygur, and Kazakh Identities Across China, Central Asia, and Turkey," *History and Anthropology* (forthcoming), 1.

**18** Gladney, "Relational Alterity," 16-17.

**19** Figure 1 courtesy of Gladney.

**20** Gladney, "Relational Alterity," 19.

**21** *Dakami Ya Nan Dagami: Papers and Proceedings of the 1st Cordillera Multisectoral Land Congress, 11 March - 14 March 1983* (1984), 1-13.

**22** G. Carter Bentley in Gladney, "Relational Alterity," 5.