

The Case of the Cordillera: An Unresolved National Question

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With the imposition of the unitary Philippine state on the Cordillera peoples, policies were implemented which placed ancestral lands into the hands of local and foreign capitalists. The poverty caused by the plunder of the land's natural resources, as well as ill-conceived development projects and efforts to supplant the indigenous political system, further marginalized the Igorots and made the Marxist option an attractive alternative. However, instead of uniting the Cordillera peoples, the dogmatist approach of the CPP-NPA to the Cordillera problem led to the formation of a rival political group, the Cordillera People's Liberation Army. The Philippine government must recognize the existence of a Cordillera nation. A political reorganization of the Philippine unitary state into a federal type of government is therefore recommended.

Introduction

The problem in the Cordillera constitutes an unresolved national question deeply rooted in its being a territory composed of a distinct people with unique characteristics.

This paper attempts to provide benchmarks for our policy makers and other interested individuals, parties, or groups to a better understanding of the issues and problems in the Cordillera. Though each part of the paper can still be more fully developed, the issues and salient features of the minority's struggle in the Cordillera is initially presented. The paper, however, does not assume to be conclusive in any respect but merely attempts to influence political decisions that may affect the lives and the future of the people in this part of the country.

The author tries to explain the realities in the Cordillera from a historical perspective, for the present predicament can be traced from its past. Though anthropological studies can equally explain the roots of the Cordillera problem, the constraints encountered in the process of research in effect limits the study.

The paper tries to formulate a vision and a theoretical framework that would explain the Igorot society as a whole. It is of the belief that only through a concrete approximation of the reality can we formulate plans and

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programs that would be responsive to the needs and demands of our people. The effectiveness of any government policy therefore lies in its ability not only to promote "national progress" but to secure the future of people's lives.

Scope and Limitation

This is a study of the Igorot's struggles for autonomy and equality as a people and as national community living in a well-defined territory. It covers the historical creation of the Igorot minority and their relentless determination to defend their homelands and preserve their culture and social systems from repeated attempts by foreign and national governments to subjugate and assimilate them into the latter's systems and lifestyles.

The study likewise deals with the Igorots' indigenous political economy as reflected in their concepts of land use and ownership and the *bodong* system as a form of self-government. This socio-economic-political system accounts for the failure of several governments to gain a substantial influence on their way-of-life.

A number of policies and development programs implemented the Philippine government in the Cordillera are lengthily discussed and analyzed from the viewpoint and interest of the minority.

The role of the revolutionary organizations in the Cordillera is likewise tackled in relation to the Igorot's struggle for self-determination. And finally, a vision and a theoretical framework of indigenous socialism as a social system practiced and developed in the Cordillera is presented. The recognition of this indigenous system is envisioned to provide a more realistic perception of the Igorot society, and thus provide a better political solution to the national question.

Considering the physical and time constraint under which this study was made, the discussion on the *Pagta of the Cordillera Bodong*¹ which has now become the working paper in the establishment of a Cordillera Autonomous Government was not done. Likewise, the analysis on the proposed regional autonomy for the Cordillera was not made. The author recognizes that these issues are equally important in the framing of alternative solutions to the unresolved national question in the Cordillera. However, unless there is a deep and extensive understanding of the Igorot social system, the proposals will remain on the drawing board.

Cordillera: The Land and the People

Cordillera is a Spanish word meaning "little cord." It is generally used in geography to mean a series of parallel mountains that run along the back-

bone of a continent or an island like a twisted cord. Cordillera therefore refers to a similar geographic formation in Northern Luzon.² It is characterized by a series of mountains parallel to each other.

The Gran Cordillera ("big little cord") rises abruptly from the sea at Pasaleng on the boundary of Cagayan and Ilocos Norte Provinces. It quickly rises to a height of 7,000 feet dividing Apayao from Ilocos Norte, and then to Kalinga, with peaks reaching to 8,000 feet. These continue southward through the province of Bontoc until they reach a peak of 9,600 feet (26 meters shy of the country's highest, Mt. Apo) on Mount Pulong in Benguet. Then they descend to the plains of Pangasinan, through a spur about 5,000 feet high called the Caraballo Sur, run off to the southeast of Baguio and divide the province of Nueva Vizcaya from Nueva Ecija.³ The whole area is so ruggedly mountainous that in terms of land mass, the Gran Cordillera forms approximately 1/6 of the total land area of the island of Luzon.⁴ Located in this land mass are the mountain provinces of Kalinga, Apayao, Mountain Province or Bontoc, Ifugao, Benguet and Abra.

The whole area of Cordillera is rich in natural resources. Its mountains used to be thickly forested before commercial logging corporations denuded much of the forests. Its mossy pine, and hardwood forests provide the backdrop of many plants and animal species and likewise serve as watersheds for great rivers and waterways which flow from the uplands down to the lowlands. Aside from land, forests, and rivers, mineral resources have been bountiful. Among the metallic resources found in different parts of the Cordillera are gold, silver, copper, zinc, molybdenum, manganese, cadmium, tellurium, iron, and chromite. Among the non-metallic resources found are limestones, pyrite, silica, cement, clay, coal, guano phosphates, gravel and stones. Uranium, on the other hand, has recently been discovered in Monggayang, Kiangan, and oil has been reported in Natonin-Paracelis area and other parts of the Cordillera.⁵

Filipinos born on the Gran Cordillera Central are generally or collectively known as Igorots, but it might be more accurate to refer to them according to their ethno-linguistic groups — Ibaloi in southern Benguet to western Mountain Province, Bontok in Bontoc, Ifugaw in Ifugao province, Kalinga in the province of Kalinga, Isneg in the province of Apayao and Tinggian (or Itneg) in upland Abra. Aside from these major groups, there are still smaller but distinct ethno-linguistic groups.

Although the Igorots belong to different groups, they nonetheless share a common history — their ancestors resisted assimilation into the Spanish Empire for three centuries. This impregnable bastion which the Igorots built against foreign invasion and subjugation has consequently preserved their way of life which remained uniquely and distinctly Filipino.

Nonetheless, the indigenous Filipino cultures in the Cordilleras did not in the main, remain undisturbed during the three centuries of Spanish domination nor were the Igorots completely insulated from or unaffected by what was happening to their neighbors. Yet they were *never* really absorbed into that Christianized, tribute-paying society which "hispanized" this country.

The Igorot Minorities: Its Historical Creation

Philippine history is virtually a history of the colonized peoples. We take pride in our history of colonialism, in the Filipino heroes who displayed acts of patriotism and nationalism in the interest of freedom, and in the romantic sacrifices we offered to the motherland.

Ironically, the history of the uncolonized peoples, which we now term as the "cultural minorities" was lightly or never written of at all. Their history as a people and as a nation, however, remains articulated only in their oral traditions, myths, folklores, and legends. Although our historians made limited attempts to chronicle their historic existence in this country, there are few written records which could perhaps convincingly attest to their legacy.

Viewed from this perspective, it is clear that our history is a dichotomy of the majority-minority peoples: The majority who have been successfully subjugated by a string of colonial powers and who have become willing pawns and conspirators in the establishment of a colonial system; and the minority peoples who have stubbornly resisted assimilation by foreign powers by indefatigably continuing the struggle for self-determination.

The perception of the majority peoples that the minorities are culturally and historically apart from the societal mainstream is a product of a chauvinist consciousness, a false feeling of superiority. For centuries the minorities have been treated as ethnographic artifacts — anachronistic survivals of a bygone race. This unjust treatment runs parallel to the manner which the majority peoples were treated by their colonial masters.

The creation of the Igorots as a minority has its historical roots which dates back to the direct colonial rule of the Spanish empire. These Filipinos called ethnic minorities retained more of the culture and customs of their *ethos*, or "tribe" than their colonized brothers who outnumber them. They scarcely appear in Philippine history books simply because they lived outside of Spanish control and only show up in the Spanish records as outcasts, brigands, and savages. Because the Igorots, making good use of the rugged mountainous terrain, defended their freedom from the Spanish aggression at all costs they were referred to as the *feroces*. Thus, the Igorots,

except for some areas in Benguet and Abra, generally did not experience Spanish colonial rule. As a consequence, they were able to retain much of their indigenous ethnicity apart from the colonized sectors who lost much of their distinct traditional lifestyles and became more like their masters.

In the lowland barangays, however, under the onslaught of the sword and the cross, centralized colonial order was slowly accepted. The Igorots then became the minority vis-a-vis the colonized majority.

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

As the colonized people modified their native customs under foreign domination, i.e. attending mass, paying taxes, obeying Spanish laws, going to war when the government said so, the Igorots of northern Luzon continued to resist Spanish assimilation and refused to submit to foreign domination. The existence of two types of Filipinos led the Spaniards to categorize our people into two — the submissive and the unsubmissive, the faithful and the faithless, the good and the bad.⁶ The Igorots belonged to the latter group, while the former were called the *indios*.

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

The Defense of their Homelands: A Historical Account

The Spanish Period

It was the search for gold and other precious metal reserves which brought the Spanish conquerors in the archipelago. It was also this same purpose that drove out both the Spanish colonialists and their Filipino co-conspirators to fight the Igorots gain control of the Cordillera.

Some of these military expeditions were able to encroach into the Igorots' defenses, such as those of Quirante and Monteforte which occupied

the mountains for a year. In the main, however, the Igorots were able to repulse these incursions on their land. Unrelenting harassments on the Spanish encampments by the Igorots became very costly for the conquerors. Spanish supply lines had to be constantly guarded while lowland conscripts who deserted en masse due to Igorots' attacks had to be replaced by paid recruits from the lowlands.⁷

The people of the Cordillera persistently fought the Spaniards to a stalemate up to the last years of armed attempts to subjugate them. So rare and exemplary was their courage that the lowland conscript was shocked at the stoicism of Igorots before Spanish muskets and artillery fire. It was a war where arms never played a decisive role. It was the tenacity that spelled the victory for the Igorots.

Together with military campaigns, Christianization efforts were also used to penetrate the Cordillera region. In 1584, an attempt to proselytize Igorots coming down to Tagudin was made by a certain F. Esteban Marin. In 1588, another proselytizing attempt was made by Fr. Jeronimo Martinez. However, these efforts produced few lasting converts due to the tenacious resistance of the Igorots against Spanish troops and explorers. In 1571, resistance by the Igorots to proselytization culminated with the beheading of Fr. Agustin Nino, the friar of Baratao (Bauang).⁸

The American Period

The reasons which attracted the Spaniards into the Cordillera were virtually the same reasons which brought the Americans to it, namely, mineral wealth. As early as the 1880s, American mining prospectors and surveyors were able to see and confirm the existence of gold, silver, and copper deposits in the land.⁹

Although both colonialists had the same economic interests in the Cordillera, the Americans applied the sugar-coated approach to subjugate the people of the Cordillera. They chose the softer methods of persuasion and worked within the minds of the Igorots to gain control over their resources. They tried to pacify the Igorots and make the latter submit themselves to colonial rule through education.

The American educational system proved very effective not only in debilitating the capacity of the people to resist colonialism but in strengthening the economic foothold of the Americans in the Cordillera. The Igorots then slowly adopted the American culture, learned to patronize American products, accept the establishment of American corporations, and identify American interests as theirs. This resulted then in the gradual loss of the people's cultural identity and instilled confusion between the new orientation and traditional cultural values.

Anticipating a prolonged stay in the Cordillera, the Americans constructed roads and bridges which led to mine sites. This facilitated not only the flow of American goods but also of military forces which were used to subdue Igorots' recalcitrance. A system of government, law and ordinances was likewise institutionalized to govern the "non-Christian tribes."

The Americans wittingly laid the legal foundations to dispossess the Igorots of their lands. By the end of American period, capitalist enterprise in the Cordillera was firmly established. The mining industry which the Spaniards failed to secure during their time was successfully placed in the control of the Americans.

The Americans were relatively effective in reducing the resistance of the Igorots to a manageable level. However, harassments and sporadic attacks against American corporations, camp sites, and government installations continued to be staged by the mountain people.

The Japanese Occupation

In 1941 the Second World War broke out ending direct American rule. The Igorots found themselves fighting the Japanese aggressors but this time with their brothers in the lowland. It was at this time in the history of Cordillera when the Igorots fought for the survival not of their race but of the Filipino nation. As the War ended in 1945, the Igorots continued to fight for self-determination and absolute democracy, but this time it was directed against internal colonialism waged by the Christian nation.

Land Use and Ownership in the Cordillera

The umbilical cord which ties the Igorots to their land and their passionate defense for it in over centuries of colonial rule has definite cultural underpinnings. The wide array of beliefs, value systems, technologies and social institutions developed thousands of years prior to any conquest reflect the ethnicity and environment of the Malay Filipino. This has been for more accentuated on the indigenous concepts of land. To quote martyred Kalinga tribal leader, Macli-ing Dulag:

To claim a place in the *birthright of every man* . . . To work the land is an obligation, not merely a right. Land is a grace that must be nurtured, enriched, made to bear fruit. For us indigenous peoples, *ancestral land is literally life, our continued survival as viable communities and distinct cultures with our brand of indigenous ethnic identities [depend on it].*¹⁰ (Italics supplied).

In a separate study made by William Henry Scott on pre-hispanic societies, he stated that these societies did not have any concept of real

estate ownership.¹¹ Land itself is the property of supernatural personalities whose permission must be ritually secured for safe and fruitful use. The products of the land, however, are owned by those who grow them. Fish and game taken in group enterprises are divided equally among the participants and their dependents, or according to an agreed schedule which recognizes division of labor, risk, or leadership.

One article aptly described this relationship:

To the Igorots, his ricefields were only less sacred to him than his gods. Aside from the land actually under cultivation, there is no private property in this section of the Mountain Province. The hills are his to roam over; the forests are his to collect firewood from; the water is his to irrigate his lands with and provided he takes it from no one else.¹²

The land use patterns of the Igorots have remained basically unchanged since as far back as the people can remember. For the Ibalois (or the Igorots residing in Benguet), as Pawid describes, land is considered as a resource which must be shared reciprocally with his gods, ancestors, kindred, and future descendants.¹³ He is not the "owner" of the land but rather a *steward*. It is from this land where he obtains his livelihood. His right of stewardship or use of the land is established by whoever is the first to till, mine or pasture on it.¹⁴ What he owns is actually the proceeds or harvests from the land where he invested his time and labor in fructifying the soil.

Rights to the land, however, are not limited to the living but include the beings of the spirit-world who equally have the right and responsibility to protect the natural world from human greed, because greed would result in the withdrawal of the god's favors.¹⁵ The living man has to sacrifice animals in elaborate rituals and rites (called *canao*) in honor of the gods and spirits before embarking on such activities as hunting, digging for mines, or tilling the soil.

The Kalingas speak of the god Kabunian as the owner of the land. Even lands for residential purposes are not called *pita* or land but are referred to as *Ili* or village.

The concept of land ownership has been clearly enunciated by no less than the late *pangat* (village leader) Macli-ing Dulag, to quote:¹⁶

To claim a place is the birthright of every man. The lowly animals claim their place. How much more man? Man is born to live. Apo Kabunian, Lord of us all, gave us life and placed us in the world to live human lives. And where shall we obtain life? From the land. To work the land is an obligation, not merely a right. In tilling the land, you possess it. And so land is a grace that must be nurtured, to enrich it is the eternal exhortation of Apo Kabunian to all his children. Land is sacred. Land is beloved. From its womb springs our Kalinga life. (Underscoring supplied).

Most of the lands of the Igorots have been traditionally held in common and are not encumbered by strictly private claims of exclusive right of use. "Ownership" applies to the tribal *right to use* the land. Ownership is tantamount to work. If one refuses or ceases to work, his claim to ownership likewise ceases. The Igorots consider themselves as "secondary owners" or stewards of the land while the beings of the spirit-world are the true and primary owners of the land.¹⁷

"Property" then generally applies to the things which involves labor or the things produced from the exertion of labor. "Communal ownership" on the other hand connotes the collective right of the members of a particular tribe to freely utilize their own sources for the benefit of the clan, the village, or the tribe.

The general absence of private ownership of land in the Cordillera indicates the existence of an indigenous integrated level of development among the Igorots. While it is true that petty plutocracies¹⁸ did emerge among the Ibaloi, their authority remained localized. Likewise, the emergence of the "wealthy" class (known as *kadangyan* in the Ifugao, Bontok, and Kankanay languages and *baknang* in Ibaloi) in the Cordillera did not create any undue concentration of wealth due to intermarriages within and between villages thus redistributing whatever surpluses they may have had to the villages and other tribes.

The indigenous concept of the Igorots that "no man can own any land, but the land owns every man to which he returns when he dies" underlies their value on land use and land ownership. This has been the same value of communalism and passionate attachment to their land that successfully drove all transgressors out of their homeland.

The land use patterns of the Igorots, moreover, had provided a strong kinship structure. Families and clans are tightly knit as social units by force of necessity and the exigency of tribal life. No member of the family can live independently of the clan, the village or the tribe for it is only through collective living can life thrive.

The Persistence of the Indigenous Political System

What is probably the most democratic form of land tenure in the world is matched by the practice of a similarly pristine democracy in other spheres of Cordillera social life.

Direct democracy is observed in the process of public decision-making. Communal decisions are made directly or by the collective power of the council of elders in the *ili* (village) rather than by individual leaders.

Although there are variations in the democratic process, the general method always involves the direct participation of the village assemblies.

In Kalinga, clans are represented in the *ili* by elders or *papangat* or peace pact holders during multi-faceted decision-making. There is no political authority in the Western sense. There are only "respected elders" and bright young men who speak for the best tribal interests and whose opinions are heard over government officials. Decisions in the village are then arrived at through democratic processes among the elders.

The peace pact or *bodong* or *vochong* represents the political institution of the Kalingas. It has been the instrument whereby *papangat* of two villages establish laws and agreements with which to govern their respective rights to the use of the land and its resources. For the people, the *bodong* is the law and a means by which peaceful relations are maintained among the different Kalinga tribes.

In Bontoc, the *ator* serves as the functional organization of the people in the management of their political, economic and socio-cultural affairs. It is the center for village activity and decision-making of the Bontok elders. Bontok councils are held in the various ward centers where, although powerful personalities exert more influence than others, a consciously egalitarian concept moves peers to curb the self-interest of the more powerful among them. Bontok cases are heard in *ator* assemblies of elders where personal or kin interests are subordinated to the common weal.

In Ifugao, the role of the *munkalóngis* are central to the observance of the Ifugao custom law. The *munkalon* is called upon by the people to hear cases of theft, killing, violations of religious taboos and other crimes. It acts as a judge and/or mediator in settling disputes in the village. Its singular role in maintaining peace and exacting justice within the village and among tribal communities places the *munkalon* in a high social esteem.¹⁹

In Benguet, the councils of old men called *amam-a* or *dallakay* represent the indigenous political institutions where customary laws are kept in perfect form. Village decisions and settlement of disputes are made in such gatherings called *tongtong* where litigants debate on issues and concerns affecting them.²⁰ *Tongtong* are usually called upon whenever disputes among individuals or clans affect the peaceful existence of the tribe. The role of the *amam-a* or *dallakay* and of the village assemblies are crucial since the safeguard of the decisions made rest upon them.

For the Ibalois, the *baknang* is the powerful leader in the village. His influence extends over clans and his word holds great weight in matters concerning the welfare of the people. As with the Ibaloi boundaries, the rights

to certain areas are established through inter-village alliances in a formalized and elaborate socio-political system. The bodong establishes the *bugis* or territorial boundaries between tribes. Violations of the collective rights between tribal territories are sanctioned and can even lead to tribal wars.²¹

Apparently, the people of the Cordillera still consider their indigenous political organizations as basic to their village life. While the Christian bureaucracy has been established to govern the Igorots, its political network failed to penetrate to indigenous practice of the non-Christian tribes. The people continue to adhere to traditional systems of political organizations which exist autonomously and beyond the control of the national government. The Igorots' traditional political system still remains as the primary means by which social control is maintained in the village. It has effectively served as a venue for genuine democratic participation in decision-making.

The bodong system, known by various terms among different tribes in the Cordillera, is considered as a classical form of Igorot autonomy.²² Tribes relate with their neighbors and visitors according to well-defined laws through the bodong system which is more binding than laws made by the government.

The bodong system is traditionally a bilateral peace arrangement between tribes. The peace pact is enforced and maintained by the peace pact holders of both tribes. In Kalinga, it is called the pangat. The peace pact holders are also tasked to encourage trade and commerce between tribes and even allow inter-tribal marriages apart from the maintenance of peace and friendship. In the event that the bodong is violated by either parties, the peace holders of both sides are obliged to either take revenge on the part of the aggrieved party, or punish the assailant according to tribal laws on the part of the adversary tribe.

The possible dangers and damages that may be inflicted into the lives and properties as a result of any tribal wars has provided the people the moral values of *behaving collectively* in many aspects of village life. The responsibility of the people to maintain and persevere peace in their village rests not in their leaders but essentially in the people themselves.

The restoration of peace pacts and goodwill between villages is done in a simple way. The village which broke the peace pact will have to initiate the renewal of the bodong by inviting the people from the aggrieved village to their village and offer a feast that would last for weeks. In return, if the aggrieved village is amenable to restoring the bodong, they will have to offer the same feast as a sign of acceptance.

The social structure of villages in the Cordillera embodies democracy. While the bodong system represents the political institution of the Igorots,

it is through the village assemblies where the guarantee of fullest democracy is assured at the grassroots level.

The organization of the Kalinga-Bontoc Peace Pact Holders Association (KPA) in the 80s to resist the construction of the Chico Dam is a product of a traditional bodong system struggling against external forces trying to destruct both the autonomy and existence of the villages. The KPA is the conscious transformation of the traditional bodong system systematically fighting a well-organized institution of the 20th century. It has transformed itself into a multilateral peace pact arrangement among the Igorot tribes in the Cordillera. It now represents a collection of bilateral agreements which the traditional bodong originally represented. It also bears the executive ability and sense of direction as a system defending the cultural and economic interest of the people. As Kalinga pangat Ama Yag-ao has stated:

By the formation of the KPA, peace pact has come to add to the existing customary task a charge of punishing anyone who have collaborated with the promotion or construction as equally as the killers and the injured. (sic)

The KPA therefore is a new federation of autonomous villages in the Cordillera formed from the indigenous bodong system. This is a formidable political force of the Cordillera not only in the maintenance of peace among tribes but in the defense against common enemies who might try to subvert their national interest and survival.

Policy of Internal Colonialism

The attempts to subjugate the Igorots of the Cordillera has been translated in a litany of laws and legislations by the colonial administration including the present government. These impositions of the unitary state or "internal colonialism" has had serious implications on the people's lives, most especially on land ownership and political subdivisions of their territory.

Land Policies

The attempt to dispossess the people of Cordillera of their ancestral lands dates back to the time of the Spanish colonial regime.

As a colony of Spain, the whole Philippine archipelago was declared to be the property of the King of Spain.²³ Consequently, all ancestral lands were considered as part of the public domain unless the occupant possessed a land title as a proof of private ownership.

The Spanish monarchy instituted a system in which all lands were required to be titled under the Torrens Title as a sign of land ownership.

This was done to establish prior rights and security of ownership for the people. This imposition has by one stroke taken away from the Cordillera peoples their age-old ancestral lands and have made them in effect aliens in their own homelands. However, the attempt to alienate the Igorots from their land through fiat never succeeded not only because the concept of private ownership is anathema to them but primarily because of their strong concept of territoriality. And this concept of territoriality underlies their belief that it is their *Kabunian* who truly owns their land.

During the American period, the Igorots lost their lands as the American government declared their lands as reservation areas and opened them for cultivation to the lowlands. Aside from the procedures of homesteading,²⁴ American laws further provided for the free granting of patents to original occupants and cultivators of the land.²⁵

Subsequent laws were passed which were totally incomprehensible concepts to the people of Cordillera, where land is owned communally or by prior right of use and usufruct.

The Igorots under the Philippine Republic did not find themselves any better. In fact, land problem issues worsened. More laws and policies were formulated and enacted that intensified the exploitation of their resources and expropriation of their land.

The various presidential decrees and proclamations dispossessed thousands of families of their lands. For instance, the Ambuklao-Binga Watershed Reserve took 123,000 hectares of ancestral lands. In the Mountain Province, a forest land with an area of 5,513 has. was converted into a national park known as the Mt. Data National Park.²⁶ In Kalinga-Apayao, the Balbalasang National Park assumed an estimated 20,000 has. of virgin forest.²⁷

Aside from the conversion of the Igorots' land into reservation and national parks, the State likewise allotted their lands for the use of the military. Camp John Hay, a US Air Force Base occupies 697,479 hectares in Baguio City, while the Philippine Military Academy in Loakan, Baguio has 363 hectares. Loakan residents, mostly Igorots, were forcibly evicted by the Benguet PC Provincial Command.²⁸

By far the most oppressive land policy inflicted upon the people of the Cordillera is embodied in the recently approved Constitution. Article XII Sec. 2 of the 1986 Constitution states:

All lands of the public domain, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum and other mineral oils, all forces of potential energy, fisheries, forest or timber, wildlife, flora, and fauna, and other natural resources are *owned by the State.*" (Italics supplied).

The Philippine Republic is now mandated by the fundamental law of the land to assume ownership over all lands of the Igorots in the Cordillera. This is a gross violation by the State on the indigenous concepts of land ownership, property rights, and land use.

Section 5 of the same Article prates about the protection of the "rights of the indigenous cultural communities to their ancestral lands" subject to the provisions of the Constitution and national development policies and programs. The protection of the State upon the rights of the minorities over their ancestral lands has already been emasculated by the provisions of Sec. 2 of the same Article. Likewise the Constitution has explicitly stated that the protection of the minority rights shall be subject to the national development programs and policies and to the provisions of the Constitution itself. This simply means that over and above the protection of such rights, the Constitution and the national development programs shall be primordial. This in effect is a concrete manifestation of the unjust imposition of unitary policies based invariably and solely on the interest of the majority people's standard.

By and large the policies on land, promulgated from the Spanish colonial regime and under the regime of the colonized Filipino people never recognized the rights of the Igorots over their communal lands and forests. Moreover, the unitary policies imposed by the State rather than alleviating the impoverished condition of the minorities, had contributed only to their further oppression and exploitation.

Development Policies

The Gran Cordillera is the richest region of Northern Luzon. However, the Igorots remain impoverished. This has been, so not because of the dearth of development programs and projects in the Cordillera but because the queue of development programs and policies were not really designed to improve the material condition of the minorities.

History is replete with examples of "development" projects imposed upon the Igorots. As early as 1948, the government implemented the Agno River Basin Development Project which provided for the construction of the Ambuklao and Binga dams. As a result of the construction, an old Ibaloi settlement of 300 families from Atok, Bokod, Buguias, Itogon, Kabayan and Kibungan were displaced and some 650 has. of prime ricelands were submerged in water.²⁹ Moreover, "just compensation" on their land is still to be fully paid, surviving even the Ambuklao dam which today, after 38 years, is no longer operational.

A more recent example is the Chico River Basin Development Project (CRBDP). The main objective of the CRBDP was the construction of four

hydroelectric plants to be located along Chico and Pasil Rivers in the Mountain Province and the sub-province of Kalinga. The total catchment area will be 3,419 square kilometers, submerging 27.53 square kilometers of land, in order to generate a total power potential of 1,010 megawatts per year. Of the four dams, commonly referred to as Chico I, Chico II, Chico III, and Chico IV, two were to be located in the Mountain Province (Bontoc and Sadanga) while the two other dams will be constructed in Kalinga (Basao and Tomiangan).³⁰

The government did not seem to understand that with the construction of Chico II, three barangays would be directly affected — Anabel, Tococan, and Betwaga, destroying 500 houses and rendering about 3,000 natives homeless and flooding 120 has. of fertile lands. Chico IV would directly affect six barangays, making 672 families homeless and flooding P31,500,000 worth of fertile ricelands³¹ and indirectly affect some barangays, 300 families and flood some P38,250,000 worth of ricefields.

Chico III on the other hand, would affect the barangays of Tinongdan and Dalupirip. Its construction would affect the lives of 1,160 inhabitants of Tinongdan and 152 families of Dalupirip. Some 2,200 has. of fertile lands will be submerged and thousands of houses will be washed out as a result of the proposed dam.

The social implications of this project are unimaginable. If economic gains can be easily measured, the unquantifiable aspects of the project would lead us to ask whether the government has the right to eminent domain over the lives, religion and culture of all the tribes in the Cordillera.

Another resource being exploited by the government in the interest of "national development" is its forest resources. In line with the interest of the government to answer foreign demands for logs and timber, it has been granting concessions and timber licenses to local and foreign companies to exploit the virgin forests of Northern Luzon.

To date, the biggest concession granted to a private company is that with the Cellophil Resources Corporation (CRC). The concessions were granted in 1973-74 to Marcos crony Herminio Disini, who had among his corporate investors several Swiss firms and Japanese multinationals such as Mitsubishi Rayon, Marubeni, and Dauce.³²

The Ministries of Agriculture and Natural Resources (now Departments), issued CRC a logging concession good for 25 years and renewable thereafter in the areas of Abra, Kalinga, Bontoc, and Ilocos Norte with a total land area of 200,000 hectares. Most of the said area is situated in Abra — covering 11 municipalities and seven lowlands or eighteen out of 27 municipalities.

The logging venture violates the basic concept of property of the minorities, viz., the indigenous use of resources and communalism. The CRC's entry invites outsiders and employees of CRC to stay and roam around the localities, thus trespassing into the Igorots' ancestral lands where no recognized peace pact exists between the minorities and the employees of the CRC. This in effect disturbs the peace and order situation in the area.

Another is the issue of maintaining and promoting the ecological balance in the Cordillera. The use of the rivers for long transport of logs will undoubtedly pollute and disturb water ecology. It will kill and drive away aquatic animals and plants and essentially affect the people's livelihood especially those settlements among the Abra river and its tributaries. Furthermore, the massive cutting of trees in the aforesaid areas will only increase the incidence of landslides and floods as these areas will be wantonly denuded.

The generation of foreign exchange for the government and profits for the private companies in the logging industry has impoverished the Igorots who live in the forests of the Cordillera. Many of the concessions encroached upon the ancestral lands and little account had been taken of the value of the forest to the lives of the people especially in defining the boundaries of these concessions.

Mineral resources have also not escaped exploitation in the name of national development. Like the logging industry, support by the government to the mining industry in the Cordillera has been equally substantial. The industry has been rehabilitated after the war with a government rehabilitation fund of \$30 million, one third of the amount going to mining firms in Benguet. By 1953, the mines had been put back in operation led by the Benguet Consolidated Mining Company, the Atok Big Wedge Mining Company, the Itogon Mining Company, the Baguio Gold Mining Co., and the Lepanto Consolidated.³³

The rapid exploration and mining operations of metallic reserves in the Cordillera not only radically diminished available resources for the country's industrialization but more so had destroyed the environment as well as the homelands of the Igorots. Modern mining methods like open pit mining, and underground tunnel mining disturbed the vegetation cover and underground water resources. The ricefields of the people residing within the vicinity of the mines were permanently damaged by the mine tailings, which contained toxic substances like cyanides and acids. The productivity of the land and irrigation channels were likewise destroyed due to siltation out of mine tailings. Farmers who depended on their rice-lands for survival experienced famine. Igorots who were displaced by the

operations were even prohibited from gold panning or engaging in small-scale mining within the periphery of the concessions.

The Cordillera people's mineral resources, forests, rivers, and lands and indeed their lives are sacrificed to the altar of the majority peoples' development. The plunder of their natural as well as human resources have been carried out by the majority peoples' government not only for their own interest but to serve their foreign masters' interests.

Marginalization of the Igorots

As a consequence of the aforementioned policies, the Igorots of the Cordillera were relegated to a state of marginality and bankruptcy. The national government's policies on land grossly violated the indigenous people's territorial prerogative and rights over their ancestral lands. It tried to dismember the Cordillera ancestral domain and made the Igorots squatters in their own lands. Additionally, the encroachment of infrastructure and industrial projects in the Cordillera caused widespread destruction of agricultural production, environment, and of watershed areas as source of irrigation and consequently diminished to a large extent food production. The shortage of food in the villages forced the people to beg for their survival or to purchase/import rice and food items from the lowlanders at exorbitant prices. Such a situation drove the Igorots deeper into the quagmire of poverty and deprivation.

The dwindling agricultural area for food production and the expansion of extractive industries, viz., mining and logging, into the Cordillera, had slowly pushed the Igorots out of their land as the brewing industries pulled them to serve as wage-earner miners and loggers. This push-pull factor then essentially precipitated the destruction of the natural subsistence economy in the Cordillera to pave the way for the steady growth of cash economy. The Igorots are slowly being proletarianized as a result of "development." The petty and small-scale producers have become "guild workers." Their agricultural products which were normally produced for consumption are now being converted into processed commodities to answer the demands of the market. The Igorots of Cordillera who were previously self-sufficient now live in poverty. The people who were formerly living in the security of their homelands are now being dispossessed of their lands. The people who were once living in autonomous self-respecting villages are now subject to national oppression. And the people who were once living in peace are now again at war.

The CPP-NPA in the Cordillera: A Marxist Option

Brief Background

Inspired by the victory of the People's Republic of China against neo-colonialism, Jose Ma. Sison "re-established" the Communist Party of the Philippines on December 26, 1968 and the New People's Army (NPA) on March 29, 1969 with National Democracy as its political line.³⁴ Sison was strongly influenced by the Chinese revolution and adopted Mao Tse-Tung Thought, now spelled as Mao Zedong, as the guiding ideology of the CPP in addition to Marxism and Leninism.

Sison likewise imbibed the electrifying experience of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s to spearhead the Second Propaganda Movement³⁵ and proceeded with the task of exposing the root causes of Philippine problems as US imperialism, domestic feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism. In the book, the *Philippine Society and Revolution* (PSR)³⁶ written by Amado Guerrero (Sison's nom de guerre), he explained the state of Philippine society, the motive forces of the revolution, and the strategies in achieving victory under the leadership of the Communist Party, the New People's Army and the National Democratic Front. Juxtaposing Sison's book with the books and manuscripts written by Mao Tse-Tung, it is obvious that a parallelism has been adopted by the former in analyzing Philippine society. As such, strategies adopted were essentially the same.

The Struggle Begins

Armed with the Chinese model of liberation, the CPP-NPA penetrated the wilderness of the Cordillera on December 1970. A squad³⁷ of NPA guerrillas composed of Igorots were sent as expeditionary force from Isabela to prepare the groundwork for the eventual establishment of a guerrilla base. The guerrillas centered the Cordillera in Sabangan, Mountain Province, traversing through the forested Mt. Polis (Mt. Pulog), and finally establishing the first revolutionary base in Habboong, Banawe. This later expanded to 40 contiguous barrios, including the barrio of Uha, Banawe. Barrio Uha has a special historical significance in the revolutionary struggle in the Cordillera, because it was also here that the *Hukbalahap*³⁸ in the 1960s attempted to develop it as their revolutionary base. The Igorots, having no peace pacts with the Christians, construed their sojourn in the area as an act of intrusion into their lands and completely wiped out the 100-man contingent.

Learning a lesson from the experience, the NPA painstakingly started organizing the people of Cordillera using the indigenous socio-political system as the backbone to gain strong foothold in the area. In a span of a year, the squad was able to expand into a platoon (3 squads) with a mass

base support from 40 barangays. This platoon then became the general formation of the NPA in Northern Luzon, aside from the regular mobile force headed by renegade Lt. Victor Corpuz. Operational command in the Cordillera then expanded into three — Mt. Province and Pangasinan, Ifugao, and Benguet.

The success in organizing and consolidating revolutionary gains in the Cordillera prodded the operational command to propose to the Central Committee of the CPP that a special region be organized for all Igorot areas, using the Igorot's political structures and the bodong or peace pacts. This proposal essentially worked on the premise that the Igorots' struggle for emancipation can only be realized if the indigenous structures and concepts of the people of Cordillera are utilized to serve the purpose of the revolution. The concept of an autonomous struggle of the Igorots for self-determination has thus been pronounced as early as 1971. However, this proposal was rejected by the Maoist ideologues in the CPP, who felt that an autonomous struggle of the Igorots separate from their classic concept of national liberation would loosen their grip on the Party organization.

The CPP in the Cordillera tightened its grip upon its cadres and stifled any attempt from independent thinking cadres to deviate from the policy. One of the party cadres who did so was subjected to the Party's disciplinary action for defying Party decisions, policies, and directives, despite the fact that he suffered six years of military detention.³⁹ Even among cadres and comrades inside the detention cell, he was isolated and branded as "persona non-grata" for his thinking.

The Option Analyzed

The CPP-NPA employs orthodox Marxism in its analysis of the Igorots' society. The society is understood principally in terms of class struggle, relations of classes to economics, and the forces of production and social relations of classes to production. They have divided the Igorot society into two classes — the exploiting class and the exploited class with dialectically opposing interests. From this class antagonism will rise what will essentially be the basis of a more developed society.

In a statement released by the *Gil-ayab*, the official publication of the New Peoples' Army in Central Cordillera,⁴⁰ class struggle in the Cordillera is recognized as indispensable:

Class contradiction is central to the question of revolution. It is class conflict which propels society towards development, and class antagonism which impels revolutionary change... Yet *to negate class antagonism in the Cordillera betrays a Marxist way of thinking.* (Underscoring supplied.)

Such viewpoint finds its foundation in the *Communist Manifesto* where Karl Marx wrote: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle." Marx and Engels in their *Manifesto of the Communist Party* likewise pointed out that "every class struggle is a political struggle."⁴¹

The class struggle is a hypothesis that Marx, and the CPP for that matter, uses to explain change. This concept is based on the contradiction between the modes of production and the relations of production. It is this contradiction that produces development.⁴² Classes are economic in nature and are groups ordered according to their relationship to the non-human forces of production. Their differences in terms of economic interest would then ultimately produce a revolution where the exploited class would assume power and stir the society to greater development.

The CPP-NPA, in the same paper (*Gil-ayab*), analyzed that "class contradictions already existed in Cordillera society long before the coming of the Spanish colonialism,"⁴³ and that "open class confrontation may not have been observable, but this was because class exploitation often came masked by kinship."

Thus while there is a recognition of the role of kinship in the maintenance of a tenacious Igorot society, the CPP-NPA considers it a camouflage in concealing the innate class contradictions existing in the Cordillera. If class contradiction is a product of opposing economic class interests and if revolution is the only way of solving class conflicts to spring the society towards development, then kinship among the Igorots is viewed as a deterrent in attaining the goals of a new economic order as envisioned by the Marxists. The destruction of the kinship relations therefore becomes the primordial task of the CPP to bring forth a "better society."

The CPP wanted to impress upon the Igorot society the existence of economic classes which are antagonistic in nature but subdued by kinship. This fantasy of class struggle in a predominantly communal society is definitely a dogmatic viewpoint and a blind worship of Marxism. The CPP erroneously identified the social stratification in the Cordillera as economic classes. They tried to fit in social realities in Igorot society to their theory.

Contrary to the analysis of the CPP that "semi-feudalism" and "semi-colonialism" exist in the Cordillera society, its stage of economic development has not reached the stage of feudalism, nor is there the existence of feudal lords among the Igorots. Land accumulation and the dispossession of lands from the Igorots resulted because of the incursions of cash economy — an external and artificial imposition over the natural subsistence economy of the Igorots. It is to be emphasized this was done not by the Igorots but by the Christians and foreign individuals and corporations, and was prevalent only in a few areas in the Cordillera.

To prove that neo-colonialism exists in the Cordillera, *Gil-ayab* alleges that:

Class contradictions in Cordillera society were accentuated by the colonial experience. The Americans did succeed in colonizing the Cordillera. . .

As part of overall imperialist planning, the Americans lay hold of the mineral and forest lands of the Cordillera. They also introduced the growing of temperate-climate vegetables, coffee and oranges to meet their direct consumption needs. . .

Thus, not even in terms of politics were the Cordillera people spared from the clutches of colonialism. Under American tutelage, the Cordillera *produced politicians who would surrender their people's interests to colonial, and later neo-colonial will. On the whole, the Cordillera was left without substantial resistance to imperialist domination.*" (Underscoring supplied.)

Indeed there were colonial incursions into the lands of the Cordillera and it cannot be denied that a number of Igorot *ilustrados* did succumb to the trap. However, this applies only to a few areas and to people who were fascinated with the superior economy. Thus, to say that neo-colonialism had been imbibed by the Igorots is pure overestimation. Furthermore, to say that these violations into Igorots' land and culture "was left without substantial resistance" is not only an act of obscurantism but an anachronistic conception of the Cordillera history.

The CPP-NPA in the Cordillera not only misread the distinct culture and socio-political relations of the Igorots but also misunderstood the economic system which had been indigenously rooted in their legacy as a people and as a nation. Even the CPP's concept of Marxism has not only been limited to orthodoxy but by and large suffers from dogmatism. Their superimposition of orthodox Marxism into the stark realities of Cordillera system is not only a form of dictatorship, it has also alienated themselves from the people.

The CPP has not only erred in its analysis of the Cordilleran society but has been trying to impose upon the people a political institution which is alien to Igorots' way of life.

The CPP assumes that "any State is *only* a means of ruling class power, what is most essential is that it should be as effective as possible in its leadership functions and expressive of the will of the working class."⁴⁴ What is not so important, however, is to worry about the particular *form* of a new

state relations as purely political institutions. For in the CPP's view, "the evolution of the State is subservient to the evolution of the economy and therefore all that is crucial is that the State be able to enhance the socialization of the economy in the worker's interests."⁴⁵

The CPP's political forms are extolled in two forms — vanguard leadership and democratic centralism (Leninism). Now, since it considers itself as the Party which embodies the interests of the working class, it is then the most able leader to carry revolutionary change. In this context, the idea of "vanguard" follows. It is their belief that there is no "need for a plurality of party because it is only the working class which is to become a new ruling class and therefore only the most able party representing the working class which should exercise political leadership." To quote the CPP further as manifested in their various theoretical papers:⁴⁶

The vanguard party is simply a mass of individuals who are political experts due to their professional attention to matters of political theory and their devotion to political practice. There is *no need for a plurality of leadership because there is no need for a plurality of options to be expressed and debated*. One program will suffice, for it has the power of science behind it. All other programs, for example that of an autonomous national movement, of an opposition political group, *will necessarily be 'non-scientific,'* and therefore mere ideology representing the interests of some recalcitrant class — the bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeois. (Underscoring supplied.)^e

Within the CPP, "democratic centralism" is the main organizing principle. This principle has been idealized to promote and take maximum advantage of expertise within the party. Democratic centralism simply means that the party will be arranged in a hierarchy with the *politburo* at the pinnacle. Directives are formulated by the political experts in the *politburo* and after a brief debate they are implemented without question by the Regional Party Committees down to the basic Party branches at the grass-roots. Obedience is rewarded by the granting of favors from superiors and criticisms from below become a lost art. This paternalism is experienced down the hierarchy at each lower level of Party organization where superiors are regarded as learned teachers and members as aspiring pupils.

This principle of democratic centralism is not only alien to the Igorots' indigenous political system but it is anathema to the direct exercise of communal democracy in the villages. The indigenous political structures of the Igorots is an expression of absolute democracy in the Cordillera, where decisions are expressed by the collective leadership of the Council of Elders or the pangat after the people, through village assemblies, had democratically discussed the issue(s) involved.

Since democratic centralism and vanguard approach to leadership as embodied by the CPP are antithetical to the "creation of a better society,"

conversely these threaten the democratic political institutions of the Igorots. Democratic centralism breeds authoritarianism — a division among people along lines of giving and taking orders. It creates a political elite, diminishes critical faculties and stifles creativeness among people, disposes people to obedience, and promotes dictatorial dominance by a few often pursuing very narrowly defined interests.⁴⁶ On the other hand, a vanguard approach militates against autonomous movements that can struggle around kinship, community, and economic issues. A cult of experts is itself antithetical and objectionable to the idea of communal management in the Cordillera for it relegates all authority to experts as if one cannot make decisions unless one has the fullest possible technical understanding of all intricacies involved in a situation.

The consequence of the application of these forms of political organization is bureaucracy on a grand scale: a multi-tiered state wherein each individual is subordinate to some and superior to many and motivated primarily by the desire to preserve or accumulate personal status and power by impressing superiors.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, the struggle of the people in the Cordillera continues. Their demands for political autonomy has been misread by the present Aquino government which promises and administrative autonomy. The CPP-NPA and its front organization, the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA), cannot genuinely represent the Igorots for they carry the same interest as the present government. The Cordillera Peoples Liberation Army (CPLA) and the Cordillera Bodong Administration (CBA) which was born on April 1986 on the other hand remains to be supported by the whole people of the Cordillera.

Unless there is a genuine recognition that the Igorots maintain a distinct identity as a people and as a nation, conflicts will continually arise. Unless the indigenous social-economic-political system of the people is recognized, ultimate democracy and freedom will remain an elusive goal. It is only through the comprehensive understanding and recognition of their indigenous systems can the country resolve the national struggle being waged by the Igorots.

Indigenous Socialism in the Cordillera: A Vision and a Theoretical Framework

From the preceding account, it is clear that the inability of the present government as well as the other colonial governments to assimilate and integrate the Igorot communities into their social systems can be attributed to their non-recognition of the indigenous systems prevailing in the Cordillera. Likewise, the CPP-NPA instead of uniting the Igorots against

“imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism” only engendered the division of their organization with the establishment of the Cordillera People’s Liberation Army (CPLA) and the Cordillera Bodong Administration (CBA).

The concrete realities of the Igorot society indicate that its common culture is a distinct social system from the majority peoples’ system. Their struggle to defend and preserve it have enhanced their awareness of a common Cordillera national identity. The concept therefore of a “one nation, one state” setup in the Philippines is not only a creation of our colonial legacy but is an artificial and arbitrary organization for a country that is in reality multi-nation and multi-culture.

At this point, it should be recognized that the communal stewardship and utilization of land and natural resources and the ramification of this concept in the social structure and value systems provides the essence of *socialist economy* and moral order indigenous to the Cordillera tribal communities. This has also been the key factor to the peoples’ successful defense of their homelands.

All socialists agree that one precondition of socialism is the elimination of the distinction between capitalist and worker.⁴⁸ The concept itself finds its relevance under a modern industrial state where the capitalist class owns the means of production and the worker produces wealth for the capitalist in exchange for subsistence wages. This exploitation by the capitalist class on the working class rests on the inimical property relations characterized by private ownership where the mode of production has already been socialized. The elimination therefore of the distinction between classes which is based upon private ownership means the elimination of exploitation through public ownership of the means of production.

The Igorots’ land has been their means of production. They feel they are part and subject rather than conquerors of nature. For them land is Mother Earth, which he nor anybody else can own. Land belongs to *Kabunian* and what they have are tribal rights to use the land or to control it territorially. The means of production then belongs to no one. At best the people believe that what they have is a communal stewardship or trusteeship of the land. This trusteeship does not only apply to the present generation but to the future ones. Furthermore the concept of property applies only to the things which involve labor, or which come from labor.

For the Igorots, classes in the Cordillera are non-existent since the concept of private, individual and exclusive ownership of land is alien to them. Though social stratification exists, this is merely in relation to the division of labor rather than antagonistic in character. On the economic

sphere, the way of life of the Igorots may be considered generally as socialist in nature.

Socialists believe that political relations are fundamental because it is through this sphere that political will, through the state, is expressed. The state is considered as the central institution of society and relations between people in political and bureaucratic hierarchies are most critical to life.⁴⁹ The seizure of state power from the bourgeoisie is most crucial for the socialists because it is through this seizure that the proletariat will be able to consolidate itself and institute structural change in the society. Marxism and Leninism, being a dominant school of thought on the nature of socialism, extolled two institutional forms, viz., democratic centralism and vanguard leadership. However, these institutions have nothing to do with the establishment of socialist democracy. On the contrary these forms tend to impose authoritarianism and impede the development of popular participatory impulses and instead promote popular passivity.

Promoting democracy should be the concern of socialist politics. And democracy must be practiced in making decisions. A non-hierarchical decision system must be built upon the power of the citizenry itself. This can be expressed on a nested network of many communes and other living units into a neighborhood assembly, or many neighborhood assemblies into a township general assembly, of many townships into a regional federation, and of many federations into the national state.⁵⁰

The concept of socialist politics in the Cordillera is not new. The fact remains that the pristine democracy persisted in their political system since time immemorial. Direct democracy has been observed through village assemblies, the spirit of social cooperation at the village or tribal level finds supra-tribal expression in the bodong system, and the bodong system which has been the traditional expression of self-government operates as a federation of tribes for the maintenance of peace interrelations and concerted defense against common enemies. In the concrete sense, the practice of direct democracy and collective leadership of the Council of Elders in village governments is the traditional expression of socialism in the political sphere.

The goal most often espoused by orthodox Marxists is community homogenization.⁵¹ This ignores the value of cultural diversity while simultaneously underestimating the complexity and profundity of cultural creation in general. Community homogenization only eliminates the problem of intercommunity relations at the expense of the possibility of diversity. It ignores the need to form a cohesive and yet diverse community of communities. It fails to meet two socialist criteria: it is destructive of the

development of variety in human social relations, and it also damages the development of self-management since it precludes people from participating in the collective synthesis of their own ways of dealing with life.⁵² Real diversity is sacrificed to achieve solidarity, but only a forced solidarity of imposed uniformity. True solidarity that comes with mutual respect and growth is obstructed.

Cultural homogenization therefore is the ultimate threat to all distinct communities. Socialist intercommunalism, on the other hand, takes the view that diverse communities, cultures, and collective solutions should be encouraged.

Summary and Conclusion

The Igorots of Cordillera are indeed a distinct people with a distinct social system and a separate national community. Among the more pronounced proofs in support of these are:

(1) *Existence of own territory and name.* Apart from their actual place of settlement, which is the Cordillera, every tribe further possesses considerable territory for hunting, mining, planting, fishing, etc. The land-water territory is smaller between tribes related in language and larger between tribes not so related. The territory delimited by these uncertain boundaries is the common land of the tribe, recognized as such by neighboring tribes and defended by the tribe itself against attacks;

(2) *A distinct dialect peculiar and endemic to the tribe alone.* Tribe and dialect are substantially co-extensive;

(3) *Common religious conception and ceremonies.* Their religion is a cult of nature and of elemental forces in the process of development to polytheism. The various tribes have regular festivals with definite rituals, especially dances and games. Dancing is the essential part of all ceremonies. Each tribe holds its own celebration separately;

(4) *A tribal council for the common affairs of the tribe.* This is usually composed of the village elders proven of profound integrity and probity. All issues concerning the village is deliberated upon in public who have the right to join freely in the discussion and to make their views heard. The council is likewise responsible for the handling of relations with other tribes. These features are similar to the structure which existed in American Indian tribal groups prior to their near extinction by the American Government.

The unresolved national question in the Cordillera has dragged on for centuries. The structures of national oppression remain to be dismantled.

The government continues to regard the Cordilleran question as a case in development administration rather than a national question. Palliatives are offered in areas of administrative autonomy rather than political autonomy and self-governance. The Igorots of Cordillera are conceived as victims of government negligence rather than a people with distinct identity. This continued denial and non-recognition by the national government underlies the unresolved national question.

The CPP-NPA likewise suffers from an ideological deficiency in handling the Cordilleran question. Their dogmatic application of Marxism and blind adherence to the Maoist concept of people's war has not made them any better than the current government in articulating the ideals and interests of the Igorots. They stubbornly maintain that classes exist in the Igorot society when classes are inconceivable in a communal society. Their unimaginable worship of Marxism has blinded them into misreading the basic and elementary realities of the Cordilleran society.

Aside from seeing classes where there are none, the CPP-NPA tried to create an antagonistic class struggle in purely non-antagonistic relations between social groups in the Cordillera. Because of their eccentric analysis, they only brought about divisions among kins, instead of preserving and maintaining a tenacious Igorot kinship. In essence, the CPP erred in considering the struggle of the Igorots for national identity as a struggle of classes.

Complementing the error of reading societies, the CPP-NPA further plunged into oscurantism by not recognizing the existing pristine democracy in the Igorot society and trying to superimpose the Leninist concept of "democratic centralism" which only promote authoritarianism rather than socialist democracy. Problems, issues and questions arising among the Igorots were resolved in Party organizations rather than the non-hierarchical structures of village assemblies and the council of leaders. The CPP-NPA failed to recognize the processes and institutions as viable pillars of socialist democracy. They instead glamorized themselves as the "vanguards" of the Igorots' struggle for self-determination. This "vanguard" approach essentially divorced them from the Igorot masses who still maintain that indigenous democracy is a part of their political life.

The Igorots in the Cordillera have been living since time immemorial as part of the Philippine Archipelago but as separate national community. They were able to preserve their communal society and concomitantly maintain their social, economic, political and cultural systems as a result of successful defense of their domain. Since their society remains insulated from foreign and local intrusions, the Igorots' economy as well as its political and cultural systems has assumed the essence of socialism. While their brother Filipinos, as a result of colonialism, experienced the process of

acculturation and impositions of cash economy, the Igorots' indigenous economy and moral order still corresponds to the ideals of socialism — the elimination of classes and the promotion of pluralist democracy.

The existence of indigenous socialism in the Cordillera explains the development and consolidation of Cordilleran nationalism. This type of nationalism in turn explains their resoluteness and determinism in defending their territory from contemporary and modern versions of aggression. The preservation, consolidation, and development of the socialist way-of-life and moral order indigenous to their homelands therefore underlies their struggle for independence and freedom.

Only from the vantage points of free strong communities can the minority peoples willingly, confidently, and competently contribute to the building of a single unified Filipino nation. The Igorots of the Cordillera wish peace to reign in their homelands and 'desire' peaceful relations with the majority people. However, the Igorots and the other minority groups in the country have always borne the brunt of the most unjust treatment of the unitary Philippine state which continues to frustrate the existence of guaranteed sovereign and autonomous homelands.

Recommendations

It is only through a federal setup of government in the Philippines can the Igorots of the Cordillera and the other minority peoples attain equality, democracy, and freedom and thus operate as co-equal states with the majority people. A federal reorganization of the Philippines should be a sound strategy for both regional and overall development of the country where the varying social systems, cultural and natural-resource parameters, and other peculiarities of the different national communities are taken into account.

The following recommendarions are forwarded:

(1) A new body must be created by the President of the Philippines responsible for studying the problems, questions, or issues raised by the national-liberation struggles of the minority national communities. Corollary to this is a reexamination of the assumption that only a single nation should exist in the Philippine archipelago. This body should be tasked with making recommendations on how best to bring about harmonious relations and close cooperation among the Christians, Moro, Igorots and other indigenous national communities. The possibility of a federated Republic of the Philippines must be looked into which would allow the co-existence within its framework of autonomous and co-equal states, including the Autonomous Socialist State of Cordillera, the Bangsa Moro State as demanded by

the Moro Nation, as well as similar state or states of minority national communities and the rest of the Filipino society;

(2) The integrity of the Cordillera national community must be respected. Artificial and divide-and-rule political boundaries cutting across the tribal peoples of the Gran Cordillera Central and contiguous areas must be dismantled as these exist in complete disregard of their common indigenous culture binding them together in a single society with a distinct identity; and

(3) A codified custom laws and mores of the various peoples of the Cordillera nation must be integrated into the system of laws of the Philippine Republic, which shall have prior operation within the Autonomous Socialist State of Cordillera over and above external laws.

Endnotes

¹An indigenous charter developed by the Cordillera Bodong Administration during the second quarter of 1986.

²William Henry Scott, "The Gran Cordillera of Northern Luzon," *History of the Cordillera: Selected Writings on Mountain Province History* (Baguio City: Baguio Printing and Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), p. 27.

³Scott, "Introduction," *The Discovery of the Igorots: Spanish Contacts with the Pagans of the Northern Luzon* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1974), p. 1.

⁴"National Minorities and Development, A Cordillera Situationer," n.d., p. 1.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶"Cordillera Studies: Part II - History," Cordillera Schools Group, n.d., p. 229.

⁷*Philippines Free Press*, January 20, 1934, as cited in Howard Fry, *A History of the Mountain Province* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1983), p. 24.

⁸Mariflor Pagusara, "The Kalinga Ili: Cultural-Ecological Reflections on Indigenous Theory and Praxis of Man-Nature Relationship," paper read at the First Multi-Sectoral Land Congress (FMLC), Baguio City, March 13, 1983.

⁹"Cordillera Studies . . .," *ibid.*, p. 241.

¹⁰See William Claver, "Land, Culture and Identity," keynote address, Dialogue Asia Conference, Baguio City, October 20-30, 1984.

¹¹Scott, "Class Structure in the Unhispanized Philippines," *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1982), p. 131.

¹²*Philippines Free Press*, *ibid.*

¹³Zenaida Hamada Pawid, "Indigenous Patterns of Land Use and Public Policy in Benguet," paper read at the FMLC, Baguio City, March 13, 1983.

¹⁴Moss, 1920, as cited in Ben Tapang, "Innovation and Economic Change: A Case History of the Ibaloi Cattle Enterprise in Benguet," (master's thesis, Graduate School of Economics, Center for Research and Communication, 1982).

¹⁵Pawid, *op. cit.*

¹⁶Pagusara, *op. cit.*

¹⁷Mercy Lactao-Fabros, "Our Tribal Filipinos: The Long Trail," *WHO*, January 14, 1979.

¹⁸Petty plutocracies are socially and politically recognized classes of rich men whose status were attained through birthright, property and performance of specified ceremonies.

¹⁹Scott, "Class Structure. . .," *op. cit.*, p. 138.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹"Land Use and Ownership and Public Policy," n.d., p. 5.

²²Masaharu Osaki, "Anthropology on Igorot Politics," *The Cordillera Report*, n.d.

²³Known as the Regalian Doctrine, this legal fiction was based on the belief that all lands in the still unexplored and politically undefined archipelago belong to the King of Spain. This was however disputed by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes in the 1909 landmark case where he recognized ancestral land ownership. See volume 41 of *Philippine Reports*, as cited in Owen Lynch, "Freedom and Injustice: Towards Recognition of Human Rights for Ancestral Land Ownership," *Sandugo*, volume 3 and 4 (1983).

²⁴Original occupants can only occupy the land for five years, after which application for homestead must be secured, otherwise the land will be declared open for lowlanders.

²⁵"Cordillera Studies . . ." *op. cit.*, p. 255.

²⁶"Mt. Data National Park Reforestation," *Montanews*, August-September 1979.

²⁷R.A. 6463 as cited in "Cordillera Studies . . .," *op. cit.*

²⁸*Ibid.*,

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 360.

²⁹*WHO*, October 13, 1979, p. 29.

³⁰"The Early Beginning," n.d., p. 2.

³¹*Bulletin Today*, May 26, 1985.

³²"National Minorities and Development: A Cordillera Situationer," n.d., p. 5.

³³"Cordillera Studies . . ." *op. cit.*, p. 325-326.

³⁴The Communist Party of the Philippines explains national democracy as the struggle of the Filipino masses for national independence against US imperialism and a struggle for the democratic demands of the people – land reform for the peasants, and the establishment of workers' control over the operations of industries for the proletariat.

³⁵Sison considered the propaganda movement of Rizal, Lopez-Jaena, Del Pilar, Jacinto and Luna in the 1800s as the First Propaganda Movement.

Amado Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution* (Manila: Pulang Tala Publications, 1971).

³⁷A group of six cadres. Military formations of the NPA are usually undersized as compared to formations used in conventional warfare due to the nature of guerilla warfare.

³⁸The Hukbong Mapagpalaya Laban sa Hapon (Anti-Japanese Army) became the nucleus of the Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (People's Liberation Army) after the Second World War.

³⁹The cadre referred to is Abrino Aydinan.

⁴⁰*Gil-Ayab*, Special Edition, November, 1986.

⁴¹Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party: Selected Works*, Volume 1 (Moscow, 1969), pp. 116-119.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Gil-Ayab*, *ibid.*

⁴⁴Michael Albert and Robin Hannel, *Socialism Today and Tomorrow* (New York: South End Press, 1981), p. 24.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶Albert and Hannel, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁵¹Lyman Tower Sargent, "Communism," *Contemporary Political Ideologies* (Homewood, III: The Dorsey Press, 1981), p. 271.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 347.