

# *Dividing Nations: Early American Colonial Policies and Continuing Legacies in the case of the Cordillera, Philippines*

**Dina Marie B. Delias**

Dina Marie B. Delias is a student in the Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City

**ABSTRACT:** This paper discusses how the American colonial policies in the Philippines reinforced identities that were created in the Spanish period, that is, how the concept of division into the majority “Christian Filipinos” and the “Non-Christian tribes” was further embedded in the consciousness of the people. Using primary sources from the early decades of the 1900s it shows the processes of assimilating American “civilization” among the indigenous people along with the reified cultural, religious, and politico-ethnic divisions. This division would echo itself and find centrality in many of the economic, socio-cultural and political issues that are now being contended with by the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines. This paper focuses specifically on the Cordillera in the northern area of the Philippines.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Philippine Republic is a nation that underwent more than 300 years of colonization under Spain as well as several decades under the United States of America. Despite the much shorter period of American “tutelage”, however, current political processes and institutions in the country, including its Constitution, has been largely patterned after the American model. Curious to these periods is the argument that colonial policies result to the creation of ethnic minorities who are now more popularly known as the Indigenous Peoples or Indigenous Cultural Communities. This paper does not seek to refute this and in fact aims to probe further into the phenomenon using the case of the Philippines. What this paper does is to discuss how the latter colonizer’s policies reinforced identities that were created in the Spanish period, that is, how the concept of division into the majority “Christian Filipinos” and the “Non-Christian tribes”<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> The Spanish colonizers were largely unable to penetrate the Mindanao area south of the Philippines and the mountainous hinterlands of what is now known as the Cordillera, a map of which are hereto appended. This meant that the people in these areas retained many of their cultural, social, political, and economic practices- a situation that the Spaniards could neither deny nor change; due to both the geographical difficulty (e.g. the almost inaccessible terrain) and the staunch resistance from these peoples. Given these variables, the Spaniards

was further embedded in the consciousness of the people. This issue is important even until now, as the multi-ethnic Philippines is but only starting to finally deal with implementing legislations that substantially recognizes the cultural and historical nuances that significantly address the particularistic politico-economic and cultural issues faced by Indigenous Peoples<sup>12</sup>. The Philippines is a case of a country with a plurality of ethnic identities; there are ten dominant linguistic groups- the Tagalog, Ilocano, Cebuano, Bicolano, Pangasinan, Hiligaynon, Waray, Maranao, Maguindanao and Kapampangan, as well as at least 110 ethnic groups identified by the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples (IPs) which even more numerous languages and dialect and whose historical experiences have been largely defined by struggles against colonizers and struggles against the national government that were established in the post-colonial period.

The conflicting nature that characterizes the relationship between the IPs and the national government lies in the history of “minorization” ( Rovillos and Morales; 2002) that can be seen in the frustrated attempt of the Spaniards to assimilate all of the peoples of the Philippines, and the dichotomous colonial policies of the Americans. There lay in the American treatment of IPs vis the “Filipino” government<sup>13</sup> a separation manifested through the proposal and

---

resorted to disdaining, condemning and greatly discriminating these people. They were called uncivilized , wild, and barbaric pagans. They were tagged as ‘tribus independientes’. Such name calling and disdain was spread among the assimilated and larger lowland population; and unfortunately the author (an Ifugao by descent) has until now personally witnessed and experienced prevailing discrimination.

These bias labels remained unchanged during the American period. In fact, they may have found this convenient for purposes of ‘classifying’ the people of the Philippines as well to justify their policies. This study does NOT, by any means aim to reify these concepts, the use of “Christian Filipinos” and “Non-Christian tribes” terms in this paper is for the purpose of further highlighting the dichotomy of the religious aspect (i.e. Christian and non-Christian) and politico-national identities (“Filipinos” and mere “tribes”) of the people who lived in the lands newly colonized by America.

<sup>12</sup> Republic Act 3834 or The Indigenous Peoples Right Acts (IPRA) was approved in 1997 but only has actually been implemented through the creation of the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples in 2000. It addresses matters of land tenure, resource utilization, and the state recognition of various socio-cultural practices, rites, and ceremonies. It is an achievement since it is the first actual law that tackles the said issues, but there are still areas for improving its implementation as well as the need to harmonize it with other existing laws.

<sup>13</sup> This is understood in that context to be the leadership and evolving government that was inherited from the Spanish period, and was being “tutored”

approval of separate laws for governing and politico-geographically separating the Christian Filipino and the Non-Christian people, setting up specialized Commissions like the Bureau for Non-Christian Tribes, and after the Bureau was abolished in 1916- the continued selection of a representative of the non-Christians in the newly set-up Philippine legislative branch by the American Governor-General. In fact, all the affairs of the non-Christian peoples were to be ultimately decided by the Governor-General<sup>14</sup>.

This policy came to an abrupt halt when, upon the end of the Second World War and the Philippines was given its independence. This circumstance did not provide enough time or opportunity to develop proper structures and mechanisms to reconcile the various aspects of the indigenous ways of life among the ethnic minorities with that of the larger, Christian populace. This also largely meant that the particularistic historical experience and context of many of the indigenous peoples were not properly addressed. Their very identity was subsumed if not totally ignored in favor of a national identity.

There were also had implications of the rich natural resources located in the areas that IPs occupied, as these were of particular interest to private firms and individuals looking forward to profit-making from the exploitation of these same resources. Given that the Indigenous Peoples were not at the very least conscious of privatizing property or the mechanics of the national much less international workings of the economy, they could not cope with the new sets of rules suddenly imposed on them<sup>15</sup>.

---

by the American government through Pres. McKinley's policy of "benevolent assimilation".

<sup>14</sup>These terms, that is, the representation of the non-Christians by the Governor General are found in the Jones Law entitled "An Act to Disclose the Purpose of the People of the United States as to the Future Political Status of the Philippine Islands and to Provide a More Autonomous Government for those Islands.

<sup>15</sup> An exemplary work done on this, in the case of land ownership in the Cordillera was done by Dr. June Prill-Brett in June, 2002 entitled "The Interaction of National Law and Customary Law in Natural Resources Management in the Northern Philippines".

A more legalistic approach to this issue, as well as dealing with various aspects of the IPRA is the work of Marvic VF Leonen and Gerard Ballesteros entitled :A Divided Court, A Conquered People: Notes on the Supreme Court Decision On the Constitutionality of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997" , Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center- Kasama sa Kalikasan, June 2000.

In order to understand properly, how this problem arose, it is worth looking back into the history of American policies that reified and even strengthened ethnic divisions in the Philippines, with a special focus on the Cordillera<sup>16</sup>. This paper in showing this will use primary sources such as the actual legislations from 1903 until 1911, news articles from the *Newcable-American Review*, the personal narrations of early foreign travelers, scientists, and officers to the Cordillera, the actual reports written by the Secretary of Interior Dean C. Worcester and Acting Secretary Merton Miller. These were corroborated and compared with other reference to establish reliability. It is noted at this point, that the reader should be constantly conscious of the colonial context of the time, and that though the author uses the language of these original writers, it is for the purpose of description and analysis but not necessarily in agreement. Notes are provided for such terms that may need further explanation.

This paper will proceed to discuss the arrival of the Americans to the Cordillera region<sup>17</sup>, the process of assimilation or how they were able to change various aspects of the peoples way of life (this will focus on how headhunting was abolished and ‘peace and order’ established), and the institution of education. The paper will then proceed to describe the justifications for legislations that were largely divisive for the “Filipinos” and the “non-Christians”.

## **II. EARLY MEETINGS OF “IGOROTS”<sup>18</sup> AND THE WHITE MAN**

---

<sup>16</sup> This is because even among the non-Christians, the United States separated their treatment of the non-Christians of the North and the Muslims in Mindanao.

<sup>17</sup> I, from hereon, will refer to the area which early literature, that is, the primary sources used in this paper, as the mountain provinces as Cordillera. It should be noted that the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) as it is called was a product of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines. It, however, actually more closely approximates the area being referred to in terms of IP population..

<sup>18</sup> The name “Igorot” is highly debatable and contested. It is NOT a name that the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera call themselves. The various groups have specific names like Ifugao, Ibaloy, Kankana-ey, Kalanguya, to name some of the larger groups. The etymology of the word is traced to the Spaniards who coined the term *Y-golottes* which is translated to mean “from the mountains”. This defined the people who remained outside of the Spanish crown’s controlled realm, who typically lived in the mountain areas.

Currently, there are still negative concepts tied to the word Igorot, though it has become a more accepted term. However, because of its imposed nature, there are groups who refuse to be called Igorot but opt to be called by the group within which they belong. A more neutral term that has also become often used in “Cordilleran” to describe someone from the now politico-geographically defined

Sources show that even in the 1800's there were already explorations to the mountainous areas of the Cordillera, but the Americans, after the Treaty of Paris sent its first official mission in 1903<sup>19</sup>. Their exploratory expeditions were peaceful, instead of the use of force or re-settlement or any disruptive or combative actions. Instead, the Americans, like in the case of Ifugao, sent out invitations to the various groups that were called as 'towns'. Their particular headman was asked to meet the 'white men' in a designated place. The main agenda of these talks were centered on the seizure of head hunting and maintenance of peace. In order to monitor and implement this initial rule, the Constabulary would regularly go to each town reminding the people of the laws.

There were, however, still incidences of violence in the early 1900s such as attacks on Lt. Gov. Hunt in 1902, on Capt. Charles Nathoist in Barlig in 1903, and the fight between Lt. Jose Velasquez and the Gaddangs in 1903<sup>20</sup>. These incidences, as well the need to stabilize the communities for the facilitation of colonial rule, led to the approval of enactments that enabled the establishment of Constabulary units in the Cordillera areas. The Americans were able to select effective leaders who were given a wide range of autonomy from the central government in order to deal immediately with issues of the non-Christian communities.

The Cordillera at that time was classified by American to have 'tribes' who lived peaceably, such as the 'Igorots of Benguet; and tribes who were headhunters such as the Ifugaos, Bontocs, and Kalingas. It was in the latter that they were more concerned with, especially in terms of stopping headhunting amongst the people. There was an immediate necessity for the practice to be abolished. They, thus, focused on guarding and monitoring these communities in order to inhibit headhunting, and were quick to mitigate or literally go between groups when instances of crimes or violence occurred. In the cultural context of the Cordillera, it must be understood that crimes are not only directed towards specific individuals, but rather, in these highly communal societies- any crime committed to any of its members is also a crime committed towards the whole of

---

Cordillera Administrative Region- which coincides to the territories occupied by IPs.

<sup>19</sup> The expedition was under the leadership of Capt. Lewis Pastone, Capt. Waldo Williams, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Clayton Board, 3<sup>rd</sup> Lt. Levi Case, and Lt. Joaquin Velasquez. They had 60 men under their command from the Constabulary Unit in Nueva Vizcaya, in D.M. Delias (1998).

<sup>20</sup> Cornelis Willcox. "Headhunters of Northern Luzon and Independence in the Philippines" (Kansas City, Franklin Hudson Publishing Co., 1912), also cited in D.M. Delias "The Role of the Philippine Constabulary in Ifugao as Shaped by American Colonial Policies (1903-1905).

the community. This is especially true when the perpetrator is from another group. Thus, when crimes were committed, the Constabulary did not only have to police the victim and/or the perpetrator and their family but the whole community as well. Now, in the case of warrior-class based communities headhunting is not only an act of killing and revenge; there is a significance as to the manner of how the attack is done, as well as the significance of acquiring the head, and not just any other body part. These however, were not considered by the American Constabulary officers- they primarily focused on these practices as barbaric crimes.

Despite this lack of understanding that would, admittedly, mean a less effective implementation of the rule abolishing headhunting, the leaders of the Constabulary were very successful in establishing themselves as the ultimate “apo” in the community. Acts of bravery, willingness (in rare instances) to fight, and at times luck in community tests that people considered to show how much the “anitos” or revered spirits were with you- as a warrior and leader, led to further regard for the ‘white apo’. It did much also that these apos participated in community rites, ceremonies, and celebrations as well as generally treat the people in a just manner. Frank Jenista shows how these apos in particular communities became the ultimate arbiter, peace maker, and the person to whom people addressed their grievances to- even in cases involving murder<sup>21</sup>. Cameron Forbes writes in his work dealing with his stay in the Philippines in the early 1900s of these changes; citing the case of how a soldier killed an ili-leader in Kalinga, and how the village bound the perpetrator, but instead of killing him, surrendered the soldier to the party of the Governor-General with whom Forbes was with during the time<sup>22</sup>.

---

<sup>21</sup> Within less than a decade, headhunting was abolished in Ifugao. The people had effectively inculcated that criminals were to be brought to the white apos or at least to the Constabulary.

In the 1905 the Report of the Chief of the Philippine Constabulary, it is cited that “since the conferment of Major Crawford, Philippine Constabulary, in June 1905, they have behaved very well, and no further reports of killing have been received”, page 111.

Head-hunting has been so successfully removed from the Ifugao culture that the typical Ifugao today, would have barely, if at all, have any recollection of the practice.

<sup>22</sup> The Philippine Islands. Houghton Mifflin Co, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1928. A full account of the case is in pages 601-602 of the original text.

It should be said that the set up of the Constabulary unit in the area was unique in that it recruited soldiers from the local populace- this proved to be even more efficient and effective. The warrior class- society of Ifugao for example, was ideally suited for the purposes of the Constabulary- the men were brave, obedient, had an innate sense of discipline and were almost naturally built for military service- they were even commended in national competitions as the best units as well as being the most accurate shooters<sup>23</sup>.

The Americans still consciously un-meddlesome of cultural nuances, as well as aware of the money that can be saved, allowed for the men to continue wearing g-string and go about barefoot, until slowly they became acculturated with the need to wear full dress uniforms<sup>24</sup>. The more important contribution of the locally comprised unit however, was that it performed numerous roles in society- not in the least in-effectively. Aside from peace keeping and helping prevent headhunting, they also constructed roads, telegraph and telephone lines; all of which contributed to improving communication, transportation and trade not only in the area, but also with other towns and provinces- including Manila (Delias: 26). Some of these areas being formerly inaccessible to the 'non-Christians'.

The soldiers of the Constabulary- at least in the case of Ifugao, who came from prominent and respected families were the ideal medium for indirect but effective acculturation for the whole community. The Report of the Philippine Commission in 1906 contains:

“The influence exerted by these people by having their young men enlist has been very great. The young men so enlisted have taken given and surnames, have cut either hair (which is a very extraordinary thing), have taken the rings off their ears and off their legs and arms, wash themselves regularly, eat at tables, are learning to read and write, and in fact are becoming pretty well civilized considering the time and Constabulary officers have been

---

<sup>23</sup> In 1911, Colonel W.C. Rivers writes: “...a number of companies composed of wild Igorots who make good soldiers, being tireless climbers among the rough hills, excellent shots, and superb sentries.”, *Cablenews-American Yearly Review*, 1911, page 92.

<sup>24</sup> “They are not required to hamper their activity by wearing the full uniform, and a company, with the men dressed only in forage cap, flannel shirt, and cartridge belt, presents an odd appearance to the eye, but in such “light marching order” it is ready for quick work and to march almost incredible distances over the roughest mountain trails.”, *ibid*. A similar discussion is also cited in the Report of the Philippine Commission, 1905.

with them. Those of the soldiers who are married have in most instances taken their wives and children from the dirty hovels in which they existed before their entrance into the Constabulary and placed them in very neatly made pine houses, and required them to wear clothes like more civilized tribes. **The influence is very great and can be seen on all sides.**"<sup>25</sup>

Also there were citations that mentioned:

"So, too, the enlistment of the wild Ifugaos, Moros and others have worked for civilization among them. The soldiers acquire new habits, tastes, and ideas, which they disseminate among their people. No small part of the duty which our government owes to these savages.... Is performed by the Constabulary" ( Cablenews; 1911: 35).

This had direct bearing on the peace and order situation of the area. And as a general sense of established peace and order can be felt in the area, based on accounts, more Western elements were introduced. There is an almost amazed tone in early writings of how the people of these areas were able to grasp the 'civilized ways of the white man'.

There are accounts of the school established by Mrs. Harsgreaves and Mrs. Alice M. Kelly, which later because of its success received support from the government, in teaching the girls of reading writing, cleanliness and grooming, and other skills. This inspired the Americans to send 'native' girls to Manila to study the rudiments of nursing ( Forbes: 602; Cablenews:126). This system of education of course also became a way for furthering American culture assimilation among the people. There are documentations, in accounts, in newspapers such as the Cablenews-Review, and photographs<sup>26</sup> that attest to how deeply the American culture has been absorbed in the Cordillera. Cameron

---

<sup>25</sup> Emphasis provided, Volume III of the Report, pp. 116-117.

<sup>26</sup> In as much as I would want to add these photographs to the article, the laws on Intellectual Property disallows me to do so, and I have yet to secure proper permission to re-print them. I personally find the photographs amazing such as the boys playing baseball and the structures built for schools. There are also anito figures clothed in the American flag- all these from the earliest decade of 1900.



Forbes notes that it was not a surprise to hear American songs and jingles being sung in various villages, or baseball being played by children<sup>27</sup>.

Mr. Arthur Wards writes:

“The opening up of the trails has brought with it civilization and the influence conducive to the influx of cultured and sympathetic people. It has encouraged the establishment in many sectors of the province of schools conducted by various missionary societies where the boys are taught to work in the fields, and pursue useful occupations, while the girls are taught to weave, make lace and in time to earn sufficient money to keep them out of the fields. Modern civilization with the Igorot has taught him to use his head in conjunction with his hands and he has been found to be an apt pupil. His well developed sense of humor is blessing to himself as well as his instructors and greatly lightens the burden of the white man in the Mountain province (Cablenews- Review; 1911: 127).”

Notably however, the Americans did not impose to Christianize nor directly change the religious practices of the people. Despite missions being sent to the Cordillera, there are no records of coercive process or use of force. This policy on religion can be largely understood in the context of previous Spanish experience of coercive conversion to Catholicism among the Filipinos, to which the non-Christians vehemently opposed.

Dean C. Worcester notes that the two shared characteristics among the non-Christians of the Philippines were that they were 1) “unwilling to accept Christianity”, and 2) had a feeling of “hatred of several Filipinos who professes it”- as he further explains “their animosity is readily understood when it is remembered that their ancestors and they themselves have suffered grievous wrongs at the hands of the (Christian) Filipinos” (The Philippines Past and Present; 1914).

This also explanation largely explains the dichotomous policies for Christians and Non-Christians that eventually arose during the American period. In order to contextualize, it would be meaningful to review how the “non-

---

<sup>27</sup> “... it is not until the schools of Mrs. Kelly and Mrs. Hargreaves are visited that the real interest in the sturdy native finds the channel through which one may see their future. Through industrial education these people are learning to be producers of many articles they use. The pupils are proud of the English they command and the writer was not a little surprised to find on the table in the room of an Igorot who still wears a gee string a **well worn copy of Kipling**.”

Christian tribes” (particularly in Northern Luzon) were actually regarded by the Americans.

Aside from expeditions to establish peace and order in the Cordillera, the Americans also put effort in gathering as much information about the people in the Philippines, especially of the unhispanized ‘tribes’. They conducted a census in 1903 that divided the populace into the civilized and “wild” people- the latter, being the more unexplored and thus needed to be studied further. Thus we find in the 1905 report of the Secretary of Interior that a “... liberal amount [was] spent on ethnographic surveys in the Philippines”, and enumerates several works such as that of Dr. Albert E. Jenks on the Bontoc Igorots<sup>28</sup>, Dr. Merton L. Miller on the Mandayas of Agusan and Mamanuas of Surigao, Mr. William E. Reed on Negritos of Zambales, Mr. Emerson Christie on native languages, work on the Nabaloi language of Benguet by Mr. Otto Scheere and the Bataks of Paragua by Lt. E.Y. Miller. These are apart from accounts done by Cameron Forbes, Cornelis Willcox, Felix and Marie Keesing, and Dean C. Worcester.

The general description of the people of the Cordillera from these works create an impression of a people with a combination of characteristics that the writers judged as ‘bad’ or ‘good’; they were depicted to be ‘backward and ignorant’ but also innocent; they were ‘wild and savage’ but needed protection from “Christian Filipinos”; they were uncivilized but made apt students and obedient to established laws. Their accounts also appear to tend towards a romanticized description of the people. Forbes description most effectively captures this when he wrote that :

“They (non-Christian Igorots) are kindly, appreciative, truthful, and to marked degree, faithful to trust.”<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Early ethnographers such as Dr. Jenks who spent time and lived with the people were already able to identify the necessity to specify ili to which the Igorot belonged to, which in this case are the Bontocs.

<sup>29</sup> Page 604; his book also contains numerous accounts of first hand experience attesting to the Igorots being honest, dependable, loyal and diligent. He writes, as a matter of fact how a parcel for delivery entrusted to any Igorot (even one you have just met on the road for the first time) will surely find it in the hands which it is intended for. He notes how nothing that the Americans have entrusted to Igorots, be it gold, property or money were lost- except in one case where the carrier was robbed by an American.

These descriptions can literally carry the reader to a place and time much like the biblical paradise of Adam and Eve- before the ate the forbidden fruit, of course.

This is seconded by C.H. Forbes-Lindsay:

“In general they are physically superior to the Filipino of the lowlands. They are intelligent, happy people, of good morals and industrious habits, with a string vein of independence in their composition.... [but still] almost all wild, or savage races.” (CH Forbes- Lindsay; 1906: 103).

Of course it was not always the case that the virtues were extolled; to start with, those who identified the virtues of these people still regarded them as savage, barbaric, backward pagans. Cameron Forbes who speaks kindly of them, in the same breath states that their virtues can be taken to merely counterbalance “defects common to savages”<sup>30</sup>. There were also writers who described these people in a very negative manner, such as John Foreman who said that “[Igorottes<sup>31</sup> are] indolent to the highest degree... they cannot be forced or persuaded to embrace the Western system of civilization”<sup>32</sup>.

In relation to determining the actual policies that were to be carried and accepted by the American government; it is important to note the role of Dean C. Worcester who took great interest in the non-Christians. Worcester occupied important seats in the colonial administration including being the Secretary of Interior. He became regarded as the “Guardian of a Million Wild People”<sup>33</sup>, although paradoxically, he was not held in such a high esteem by Christian Filipinos<sup>34</sup>. In his reports as well as in a two-volume book he wrote, he raised the “maltreatment”, “oppression”, “abuses”, “exploitation”, “robbery” and “slavery” that has been suffered by the non-Christians in the hands of Christian Filipinos. These reports became pivotal to the policy of separating Christians and non-Christians. Worcester argued that there was still a need for special legislations

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, page 604, and if I may, within the same sentence where he describes the virtues of the Igorot.

<sup>31</sup> Still referring of course to the Igorots.

<sup>32</sup> The Philippines Volume II. Offprint copy of 1906 edition printed by the Filipiniana Book Guild, Manila, 1980.

A note that must be made at this point is the inherent bias that being civilized necessarily refers to that which is Western (i.e. “the Western system of civilization”). This matter will be dealt with in the latter parts of this paper.

<sup>33</sup> The Cablenews-American Yearly Review, 1911, page 77. Several authors more especially Cameron Forbes and Felix Keesing also note his extraordinary concern for the non-Christians.

<sup>34</sup> He filed and later won a case of libel against one of the national newspapers of his time for an editorial that alluded to him being a “bird of prey”.

for governance for these people in consideration of the need to protect them from any further abuses. Dr. Miller, who was then the Acting Chief of the Ethnological Survey, supported this when he wrote that: "No class of people are in greater need of protection and assistance than were the non-Christian inhabitants" (Report of the Philippine Commission; 1905: 58).

More importantly however, it manifested the underlying but more significant regard for the American for non-Christians- this is the policy of integrating these people into the larger population- but not necessarily the lowland, Christian Filipino population, but to the Western, American 'civilization. The initial task given to the Bureau of Ethnography was crucial, was to make:

"... [a] systematic investigation with reference to the non-Christian tribes... **with special view to determining the most practicable means for bringing about their advancement in civilization and material prosperity.**"<sup>35</sup>

An article published in Cablenews cites that:

"This bureau was established at the insistence of Mr. Worcester for the express purpose of the furnishing facilities for the accomplishment of the avowed purpose of the government to raise the lowly wild man to the estate of a citizen of the country in which he has a right to dwell equal to that of any other inhabitant of these Islands." ( Cablenews: 29)

It was clear that the Americans were bent on bringing the 'wild, tribal man' into the folds of civilization'. It was not very far-away stretched from the policy of 'benevolent' assimilation that was used as the justification for the American occupation of the Philippines.

As a result of this, along with the lobbying done by Worcester, two laws which he drafted were also approved- Act Number 337 on January 28, 1902 which established the provincial government of Nueva Vizcaya , and on April 9, 1902 Act number 387 that provided for local self-government in townships and settlements that divided and separated the governance of the Christians and non-Christians<sup>36</sup>. These laws established the separation of the system of governing

---

<sup>35</sup> Act Number 127 of the Philippine Commission, approved in May 15, 1901. This was cited by Cameron Forbes (1928) and Rustico de Belen (2000).

<sup>36</sup> Report of the Philippine Commission, Volume III, 1903, page 58.

non-Christian provinces (the first being the Benguet province) and townships (as was the arrangements for the Ifugaos in Nueva Vizcaya). Due to the adjudged success of these laws in the particular areas, they became a model for replication in other areas like Lepanto-Bontok, Mindoro and Palawan as provinces; in Isabela, Abra, Pangasinan, Zambales, Tarlac, Bataan, Sorsogon, Antique, Negros and Misamis.

The areas of non-Christians were clearly drawn as outside of the ‘meddling’ of Filipino Christians- who at that time were beginning to master the systems of republicanism and representation, as taught to them by the Americans. The former were directly governed by Americans, often the head of the Constabulary Unit of the area who controlled locally recruited and trained men .

### III. THE DIVIDED NATION AND CONTINUING LEGACIES

The resulting education, and the introduction of Western ‘civilization’, on a hindsight, were among the more desirable results of American policies in the Cordillera. It cannot be denied also that they had long lasting and currently observable influences among the ‘non-Christians’ not last of which is the abolition of headhunting, regardless of its original cultural intents. However, not all was well, especially if these are to be viewed from the perspective of the aspiring leaders and members of a soon-to-be established independent Filipino nation. This was not lost to the Filipino leaders of that time, and sources cite how it became subject to attack by the Philippine Assembly and a bill was actually presented for its abolition.. There are accounts of criticisms of these policies geared towards the non-Christians in terms of future political implications such that, it is possible that upon the granting of Philippine independence, these areas may become completely separated from the new nation-state. Marie and Felix Kesing note this resentment of the special treatment received by non-Christians as compared to the more typical population<sup>37</sup>.

This fear was not fully unfounded- as already discussed even as the Bureau for Non-Christian tribes was abolished it was maintained that **all** the affairs of non-Christians would remain with the Governor General. Even as a legislative body was allowed for the country, the representation of non-Christians was left with the Governor General.

A disjunction historical that aggravated this pervading dichotomy was the Second World War. Up until the war there was a big role being played by the Americans in the Philippine government; it abruptly ended with the occupation of the Japanese of the Philippines. The international conditions after the war that

---

<sup>37</sup> Taming Philippine Headhunters: [A Study of Government and of Cultural Change in Northern Luzon](#).

included the greater attention -both politically and financially- that was given to Europe and even Japan, implied less focus on the Philippines, and more so on the smaller non-Christian populations. What was sad in this case is that the Americans have so effectively established their dominion on the said peoples as well as have alienated these communities from other Filipinos, that recognition for the newly established, independent government in 1946 was almost absent amongst these groups. This worked both ways, the majority of the typical Filipinos had barely any understanding of their 'non-Christian' countrymen. The new political leaders, and a large part of the population could not approximate the attention and special governance experienced by these cultural communities during the American period. This was understandable of course with the need to cope with the damages from the war as well as consolidating the young republic. This however led to further resentment among the Cordilleras; and intensified alienations of these indigenous peoples.

Up until 1997, there were no legislation that tackled pertinent issues that included the retained rites, ceremonies, and social arrangements of these peoples. Primary of these are the already mentioned land ownership, resource utilization and cultural and social systems. To elucidate, most communities in the Cordillera even now still practice communal ownership of land. Private ownership much less land titling as established early on in the greater parts of the country are not the norm. This has resulted to massive land grabbing and displacement among Northern Luzon IPs. In terms of resource utilization, "aggressive development" has done much to compromise areas where these people live. Due to the rich mineral resources in the area, large companies that are favored by the national government have been established and continue to operate in lands that were owned by cultural communities. Even as the people have already been displaced, they still have to live with the consequences of environmental degradation massive land erosion, and denuded forests.

The construction of dams were not any less damaging. IPs still become the most affected by displacement as well as the destruction of sacred lands, rice and planting fields, as well as grazing areas<sup>38</sup>

It is by no means implied that these issues only arose after the American period. Contrary to this, is that these deep seated issues that have become compounded through the decades originated during the American period. The abrupt changes, such as American withdrawal and the issues and new policies of the Philippine government, all led to a situation where the IP formerly 'protected' and 'separated from the larger population, was suddenly thrust in a new context of which they were ill-prepared.

---

<sup>38</sup> Kindly refer to Carino, Leonen and Ballesteros, Rovillos, and the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of IPs, Mr. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, for discussion on the said issues.



*References:*

**June Prill-Brett 2002.** *The Interaction of National Law and Customary Law in Natural Resources Management in the Northern Philippines.* Baguio City: Cordillera Studies Center.

**Rustico de Belen 2000.** *The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (RA 8371) and Its Implementation: Implication for the Philippine National Security.* Quezon City: Unpublished Thesis.

**Jacqueline Carino 1999.** *Dams, Indigenous Peoples and Vulnerable Ethnic Minorities: A Case Study on the Ibaloy People and the Agno River Basin, Province of Benguet, Philippines.* World Commission on Dams.

**Dina Marie B. Delias 1998.** *The Role of the Philippine Constabulary in Ifugao as Shaped by American Colonial Policies (1903-1905):* Baguio City, Philippines: Unpublished Thesis.

**Cameron Forbes 1928.** *The Philippine Islands.* Cambridge, Houghton Mifflin Co, The Riverside Press.

**John Foreman 1906.** *The Philippines* Volume II. (Offprint copy of 1906 edition, reprinted in 1980) Manila, Philippines. Filipiniana Book Guild.

**Felix Maxwell Keesing and Marie Martin Keesing 1934.** *Taming [Philippine Headhunters](#) : A Study of Government and of Cultural Change in Northern Luzon.* Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press.

**Marvic VF Leonen and Gerard Ballesteros 2000.** *A Divided Court, A Conquered People: Notes on the Supreme Court Decision On the Constitutionality of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997*”. Quezon City, Philippines: Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center- Kasama sa Kalikasan.

**CH Forbes-Lindsay 1906.** *The Philippines: Under Spanish and America Rule.* Philedelphia: John C. Winston Company.

**Raymundo R. Rovillos and Daisy Morales 2002.** *Indigenous Peoples/Ethnic Minorities and Poverty Reduction:* Philippines. Manila, Philippines: Asian Development Bank.

**Cornelis Willcox 1912.** *Headhunters of Northern Luzon and Independence in the Philippines.* Kansas City: Franklin Hudson Publishing Company.

**Dean C. Worcester 1914.** *The Philippines Past and Present* Volume II. McMillan Company.



**PRIMARY SOURCES:**

**An Act to Disclose the Purpose of the People of the United States as to the Future Political Status of the Philippine Islands and to Provide a More Autonomous Government for those Islands 1916.**

**Cablenews-American Yearly Review 1911.**

**Report of the Philippine Commission 1903, 1904, 1905. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.**