

Technologies of Indigeneity: Indigenous Collective  
Identity Narratives in Online Communities

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This thesis is submitted to Cardiff University in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November 2013

**DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Date: 28 June 2013

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## **Dedication**

For my parents, Balbina and Feliberto Longboan, my first and best teachers.

## Acknowledgements

I reach this point of my academic journey with profound gratitude to my family, friends, and all who made the writing of this thesis possible. I thank Harry Basingat and John Dyte and all the members of *Bibaknets* who have permitted me to access the forum for this study. Sincere thanks goes to Leonor Mondata, Lulu Fangasan, Harry Paltongan, and Alfred Labfayong, who in one way or the other, have given invaluable assistance during the research and writing up period.

My supervisors, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Kerry Moore, have provided immense support and guidance throughout the research process. I would not have completed this thesis without their incisive comments. They have strengthened the ideas of Terry Threadgold whose encouragement saw me through the beginning of this project. I am also lucky to have the support of a small community of Filipino scholars at the Seafarers' International Research Centre (SIRC). Roderick Galam has kindly proofread and given precious feedback on my drafts. Jabeth Dacanay and Jean Pia have been a constant source of support as well as Don Prisno, Nelson Turgo, Iris Acejo, Moss Llangco, Sanley Abila, and Ralph Buiser.

My viva examiners, Mirca Madianou and Paul Bowman, deserve my sincerest gratitude. They have taken time to understand and engage with my study, giving immeasurable insights on how I could further strengthen and develop my original contributions within the wider literature.

I am indebted to the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program and the Philippine Social Science Council which partly funded my research. The Cordillera Studies Center provided access to their collection and resources while I was there as a fellow. Discussions with Raul Pertierra, June Prill-Brett, Delfin Tolentino, and Jimmy Fong have helped shape my arguments. To the UK IFP Fellows, especially to Gaudencio Natividad, Joan Gervacio, Raissa Trinidad, Shangrila Fuentes, and Gus Gatmaytan – *daghang salamat!* To Jinky Montanez and Jennifer Denton-Smith, thank you for being my foster sisters in the UK.

Embarking on this project would not have been possible without the love and support of my family. To my parents-in-law, Richard and Lynnette Kretchmer, thank you for your encouragement and love, especially when I needed them most.

To my foster parents, Mr. Tatsuo and Mrs. Reiko Nishimura, my utmost gratitude for seeing me through all these years. To my parents, Balbina and Feliberto, this work is dedicated to you. To my siblings and their spouses, Noel and Remy, Jackie and Arnel, Karen, Carol and Ken – I am forever grateful for the countless ways you have encouraged and supported me. To Justin, Juris, Lexie, Clarisse, Chloe, Paul, Nina, Aaron, and Chiara, thank you for just being there.

To my husband, Harry Kretchmer, I cannot thank you enough for being my *gulay*. This thesis has bonded us in ways I have never imagined - it is yours as much as mine.

To the Great Spirits who have made this work possible, *salasalamat*.

## Abstract

This thesis examines contemporary constructions of collective indigenous identity. It specifically focuses on the offline and online interactions among the members of *Bibaknets*, an online community for indigenous peoples from the highlands of the Cordillera Region, Philippines. The study explores the relational and positional nature of collective indigenous identity as Cordillerans attempt to resolve the tensions between their experiences of marginalisation and their goal for empowerment. Drawing upon Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality, the thesis critically analyses the processes of Cordilleran collective identity construction which are inscribed in power relations not only between highlanders and the dominant population but also among themselves. On the one hand, members are motivated to join and participate in *Bibaknets* discussions as a forum for Cordillerans. On the other hand, such participation is constrained by some members who direct the discussions and consequently define the membership of the forum.

Borrowing from Cruikshank's 'technologies of citizenship' (1999), the study argues that Cordillerans' efforts to construct their indigenous identity could be described as 'technologies of indigeneity'. In their pursuit for autonomy and subjectivity, Cordillerans govern their own conduct through their online identity narratives. In doing so, members adopt 'internal and voluntary relations of rule' (Cruikshank 1999: 4) in their efforts to discuss, clarify and protect their highland identity which both enable and constrain the emergence of alternative narratives on *Bibaknets*. The construction of their identity narratives are not confined to their marginalisation by colonisers and the nation-state but also by the unequal power relations among themselves. The positional and strategic nature of Cordillera identity construction is made visible by the self-authored narratives of *Bibaknets* members. As an online community, *Bibaknets* is a translocal (Appadurai 1995) site of mediation that enable members to re-interpret and reconstruct individually and collectively socio-political spaces and realities.

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## Prologue<sup>1</sup>

On 09 March 2006, I was privileged to attend the book launch of Dr. Gerard Finin's<sup>2</sup> *The Making of the Igorot: Contours of Cordillera Consciousness* at the University of the Philippines in Baguio City. Juan Luna Hall was packed with professors, students, members of civil society and other invited guests. At the time, I was a fledgling academic in my second year of teaching. I bought a copy of the book and, along with many others, queued for his autograph. When my turn arrived, Dr. Finin smiled at me and wished me good luck with my work. Months later, I endeavoured to read his book after a friend chided me, 'Hey, is it true that it was the Americans who created your Igorot identity?' My friend, a Bicolano historian, knew that I am a Cordilleran interested in researching my own community. His question made me reflect critically on the word 'Igorot': does this label truly reflect us as a collective? What do Igorots think of this label? I consider and describe myself as an Igorot, but what do I think of the term?

Categories and labels have shaped a large part of my life, for both good and bad. I am a Kankanaey, one of the several ethnolinguistic groups in the highlands of the Cordillera Region in North Luzon, Philippines. I am also an Applai,<sup>3</sup> so I'm told. But I am also an Igorot, a metonym for all indigenous peoples in the region. I was born with these labels, but I did not know what they meant as I was growing up. I learned to adopt and identify with them as I heard them used in my own family, in social gatherings and even in books. When my family moved from our upland village to Manila in the mid-70s, the name 'Igorot' would haunt my adolescence. I was called 'Igorot!' with derision a few times, including as an 11-year-old pupil and as an idealistic 18-year-old journalism student.

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis begins with a prologue as a narrative device to lead readers to the 'heart of the matter' (Dumont 1986). Margaret Kovach, an American-Indian scholar, writes that a prologue serves as a 'bridging function' between indigenous authors and non-indigenous readers (2009, p. 3). In writing prologues, indigenous authors (Kovach 2009; Kunnie and Goduka 2006; Daes 2000) situate themselves in relation to the issues they seek to address in their texts. In reading their work, it becomes apparent that they assert their indigeneity and its associated struggles. They draw on their cultural traditions by narrating their positions while recognising the tensions that imbue their indigeneity and their work. It is with this same purpose that I begin with the following prologue.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Finin is resident co-director, of Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP) of the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

<sup>3</sup> Kankanaey and Applai are two of the several ethnolinguistic categories used in the Cordillera Region. See Chapter 6, Section 6.4.1, page 135 for a more detailed discussion of these categories.

As a young girl, I was more puzzled than annoyed that a classmate called me Igorot. The experience of 'Othering' in social gatherings continues to this day, even here in Britain. The fact that I come from a certain region in the Philippines marked me as 'Other' from my classmates and friends who belonged to the country's major ethnic groups. This was distressing as I never felt I belonged to any group or place: I speak better Tagalog than my mother tongue and I was not familiar with Kankanaey traditions and rituals. When I returned to our village during Christmas or summer breaks, I was considered by neighbours and cousins as a 'Tagalog', the dominant ethnic group in Luzon, because of my fluency in the language. But back in Manila, I am an Igorot. I am defined by a label that meant little to me because I did not see myself as different from my classmates. I was deeply aware of some of our indigenous practices but I did not consider that a form of 'difference'. But maybe I am different. After 19 years of living in the capital, I decided to move to Baguio City, the economic and educational centre of the Cordillera. It was the perfect time to understand my indigenous heritage, I thought. I had grand expectations of seeing communities protecting the environment, upholding indigenous values and staking their claim to a common culture and history. But what I found out about Cordillerans would simultaneously inspire, puzzle and amaze me.

Years ago, while working for the regional population office, I was surprised to be told by a colleague from Ifugao that she does not want any of her sons to marry someone from Kalinga. When I asked why, she said that Kalingas continue to engage in 'tribal war' so she fears her future grandchildren may be caught in a conflict. In reality, 'tribal wars' tend to involve clans rather than tribes, but I thought, 'But don't we all consider ourselves Igorots who are part of one region?' I would later learn that some highlanders do not want to identify themselves as Igorots, preferring the label Cordilleran or their specific ethnic category. On different occasions, a Kankanaey friend warned that Ibalois would not invite guests into their homes, while an Ibaloi colleague described Bontocs as squatters in Baguio City. Because of these contradicting messages and interactions, I realised that the term Igorot was used in varying shades and intensity in different contexts by different people. The idea of a homogenous, united collective known as 'Igorot' appeared to be more of an idea rather than a reality, I thought at that time.

In the early part of 2007, however, I was struck by the concerted effort of some Cordillerans to remove a statue they perceived to be derogatory to their identity. Ben Baniaga, a prolific Igorot blogger, wrote a stinging post about a statue of a urinating Igorot outside a fine-dining restaurant in Baguio City. As a random blogger, I joined others from different Cordilleran ethnic groups in creating awareness within the 'E-gorot' community. I posted a message about the statue on *Bibaknets*, the largest online discussion forum at that time. The joint efforts of Cordilleran bloggers, *Bibaknets* forum members and their offline networks resulted in the eventual removal of the statue. The country's most widely circulated national daily newspaper even reported on this successful campaign.

Within the last 10 years, the rise of the Internet has widened the arena for Cordillerans to participate in the shaping of public opinion. Today, they have more access to the public sphere not only as consumers of the media content, but also as producers through blogs, videos, discussion forums, Facebook groups and other Internet platforms. An earlier study examined people's preferred terms of self-identification in relation to the creation of an autonomous region for Igorots (Rood 1989). However, no one yet has conducted an empirical study of discourses about the term 'Igorot' made by Cordillerans themselves. Moreover, indigenous peoples engaging in power relations among themselves is an unexplored area in indigenous research (Erazo 2010; cf Starn 1999). By focusing on the discussions and interactions in online discussion forums, I intend to critically analyse and demonstrate the compromises and negotiations involved in exploring these important questions.

This study has led me to explore the politics of identification among Cordillerans and our attempts to come to terms with the influence of colonisation, power and migration using new media technologies. I thank Dr. Finin for starting me on this path. In his book, he detailed how Cordillerans came to form pan-regional organisations and how they eventually came to embrace the word 'Igorot'. But the word itself has distanced us from lowland Filipinos and ourselves. This study seeks to continue the conversation surrounding Cordilleran indigeneity by examining critically their identity narratives in online discussion forums. In doing so, I am looking into my own culture not only with pride and appreciation, but also with critical reflexivity and distance. I believe it is essential for us to reflect collectively in order to profit from our varied knowledge, experiences and mistakes.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction: Indigenous Identity and Technology

Technology permeates social life, according to Bruno Latour (2002). It is ‘a particular form of exploring existence, a particular form of the exploration of being – in the midst of many others’ (2002, p. 248). This thesis investigates the technology of indigenous identification by looking at indigenous peoples’ use of online narratives to empower themselves. The last 20 years have shown that indigenous peoples can, and do, use digital technology, particularly the Internet, in powerful ways. The term ‘indigenous peoples’ emerged as a label for groups asserting a distinct identity from other sectors of society as a consequence of their pre-colonial ‘cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems’ (UN 2008, p. 7). While land and culture are crucial to identity, it is their experience of widespread marginalisation that is central to their identity assertions on websites, blogs and online forums. Today, indigenous peoples are acknowledged to be ‘the first global group’ to use electronic media to demand equality (Westblade 1998 in Landzelius 2006a, p. 300) and the first non-state actor to be represented in the United Nations (UN). While they are described generally as powerless and marginalised, they have, over the decades made significant strides towards empowerment.

This study explores the nexus between power, indigenous peoples and the construction of their identity. Specifically, it examines indigenous identity narratives among members of online communities. The thesis analyses how members from different ethnic groups, who describe themselves as Igorots and/or Cordillerans from North Luzon in the Philippines, are using online forums to construct and understand their collective identity. This chapter outlines the overall arguments of the thesis and how they will meet its objectives.

The collective nature of indigenous identity is inscribed in unequal power relations between dominant populations and indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are ‘the most’ researched peoples in the world (Tuhiwai-Smith 2012), yet they are silent interlocutors, rarely allowed to speak in authoritative texts (Appadurai 1988; Abu-Lughod 1991; Bialostok and Whitman 2006; Fabian 1983: 31 in Pels 2008; Trouillot 2003; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). While indigenous activists, scholars, and

authors have participated in knowledge-production within the last 20 years, majority of indigenous peoples remain sidelined in discussions that affect their lives. Hence, studies of them and their use of the Internet often underline advocacy, activism and resistance as a response to marginalisation and misrepresentation (Ginsburg 1994, 2008; Iseke-Barnes 2002; Landzelius 2006a; Leung 2005; Matthei and Smith 2008; Niezen 2005 and 2009; Salazar 2009; Soriano 2011). These issues remain relevant to those who continue to be ignored and/or oppressed by nation states, transnational corporations, and international lending institutions. Having said that, there is a palpable gap in the literature concerning the exploration of how indigenous peoples engage in power relations in order to promote and protect their rights. Fundamental to their claim for equal rights is the assertion of their 'indigenous origin or identity' (Article 2, UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). However, their increasing use of the Internet makes more visible their diverse experiences, understandings and positions of being an indigenous person in contemporary times.

Studies focusing on indigenous protest and advocacy have a special place in the indigenous peoples' rights movement, but it is equally critical to investigate indigenous peoples' collective identity narratives within the broader field of indigenous scholarship. Here, I present my preliminary arguments relating to identity and narratives. Identity is constructed socially as it is embedded in power relations (Ashmore 2004; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Foucault 2001 [1982]; Grossberg 1996; Hall 1997). It encompasses practices and discourses that emerge within the interstices of power relations (Hall 1996b; Jenkins 2008a). Identity scholars agree that individuals and groups are situated differently in temporal and relational terms (Ochs and Capps 2002; Somers 1994) so that their expressions of identity are flexible and strategic (Biolsi 2005; Clifford 2001; Hall 1996b; Nagel 1995). Meanwhile, narratives enable people to make sense of their social world; through narratives, their identities are created (Somers 1994). As an approach that locates the subject within specific moments in time, space, location and relationships, narratology does not impose *a priori* assumptions about indigenous identity (Brown 2006; Sommers 1994). Consequently, a narrative approach moves away from essentialist leanings which assume that indigenous peoples have a set of core characteristics that differentiate them from non-indigenous populations (Dean and Levi 2003; Trouillot 2003). Exploring the contemporary self-authored online identity narratives of indigenous peoples thus allows us to understand them as complex subjects and actors within local, regional, national and global arenas.

The specific texts examined in the study comprise interviews and self-authored online messages posted on *Bibaknets*, an email forum for indigenous peoples from the Cordillera region in the Philippines. I describe the messages posted by members that ponder what it means to be indigenous today as autobiographical. *Bibaknets* members are from several ethnic groups in the region but they identify themselves collectively as Igorots and/or Cordillerans. Their differing views on how to label themselves signify the diversity of their positions on several issues thereby challenging the idea of a homogenous highland identity (Casambre 2010; cf Finin 2005). Their online narratives are marked by fragmentation and collaboration, disagreement and harmony. *Bibaknets* is the longest running online forum among Cordillerans and its members have made significant contributions to their communities both in the Philippines and overseas. Specifically, for the purpose of this study, I will examine discussions and debates focusing on shared identities, shared resources and support, collective action, and shared rituals and regulations (Baym 2010; Parks 2011). Their collective identity narratives express a sense of belonging to the Cordillera region and to *Bibaknets*, but the study reveals that identification with these two 'places' imply observing particular ways of speaking and interacting. Thus, the study argues that *Bibaknets* members govern their own conduct (Foucault 200 [1982], 1997a) on issues relating to Cordilleran identity.

The thesis highlights two tensions that permeate online indigenous identity narratives: first, between marginalisation and empowerment; and second, between personal and collective identities. Members' narratives dwell on issues of discrimination by dominant populations, but they also illustrate collaborations to protest against such prejudice. Generally, indigenous peoples seek self-determination: the right to determine freely their economic, social and cultural development (UN 2008). Simultaneously, their narratives indicate the conflict between some members' personal identities and their collective identity as part of a forum and the Cordillera region. As they are becomingly increasing diasporic, many indigenous peoples move between multiple geographic, political, and cultural arenas that require them to balance their diverse interests.

Michel Foucault writes that governmentality refers to 'the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed' (2001 [1982], p. 341), which involves regulating our own and others' conduct for a purpose (Dean 2010). Some scholars



(Bose 2012; Tedford-Gold 2007) have used governmentality as a theoretical approach to analysing the policies of nation-states in relation to indigenous peoples. With the exception of Juliet Erazo (2010), this approach has not been used to examine how indigenous peoples direct their own actions. Barbara Cruikshank examined democratic participation and found that when people take action, they adopt 'internal and voluntary relations of rule' (1999, p. 4). She suggested that participatory projects are 'technologies of citizenship', the methods that promote people's transformation and empowerment (1999, p. 4). However, she argued that projects underpinned by the goal of empowerment require directing the conduct of oneself and others to achieve a particular end. Taking Cruikshank's arguments, I develop the argument that indigenous peoples' diverse attempts to empower themselves could be described as 'technologies of indigeneity': the tactics, programmes, discourses and strategies (Cruikshank 1999; Erazo 2010; Foucault 1997a) that indigenous peoples employ in pursuit of self-determination.

Technologies of indigeneity as a means of self-governance are well-intentioned, but how they constitute and regulate indigenous peoples needs to be explored (Erazo 2010; see also Cruikshank 1999). This study argues that self-authored indigenous online narratives are technologies of indigeneity as these often express a longing and a call for equality and autonomy. As explained at the beginning of this chapter, assertions of indigenous identity are grounded on their experience of marginalisation. Their attempts to achieve equality with dominant populations, thus, necessitate the opposing forces of domination and freedom, subjection and subjectivity (Cruikshank 1999). The online narratives of Cordillerans illustrate that, by asserting their collective identity, some members impose a specific viewpoint, ignoring or setting aside minority or alternative perspectives in the process. In participating in online protests against discrimination, members take different positions and influence each other thereby blurring the line between coercion and consent. These discussions suggest that members construct Cordilleran identity in ways that enable and constrain the possibilities of empowerment (Cruikshank 1999).

The thesis will unfold in eight chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 provide the theoretical and methodological approach of the study. Chapter 4 discusses the historical development of the Philippines' indigenous experience in general, and the Cordillera region in particular. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 present the study's

descriptive and analytic discussions. As the concluding chapter, Chapter 9 knits together the study's arguments and re-examines the overall findings using the theoretical approach expounded earlier.

Chapter 2 attempts to establish the study within the area of indigenous media research. In order to do this, the conceptual background of indigenous peoples is outlined along with its development as a 'social fact' producing certain discourses and practices (Baviskar 2007; Hathaway 2010). In particular, this chapter examines their diverse relationship with the mainstream media, focusing later on the Internet. Drawing on the literature, the chapter will demonstrate that marginalisation has shaped primarily their identity narratives, which have consequently yielded an overemphasis on advocacy and resistance within indigenous media research. I argue that the collective, collaborative efforts of indigenous peoples to negotiate and clarify their own positions in exploring the issues they face are as crucial as their efforts to protect their land and culture. There is a paucity of studies in this area and this is where I hope to make a contribution. Most importantly, I will develop my theoretical contribution by drawing upon Foucault's (2001 [1982], 1997a, 1979) concept of governmentality and elaborated by Cruikshank's 'technologies of citizenship' (1999; cf. Erazo 2010). I propose the concept of 'technologies of indigeneity' in locating collective indigenous identity narratives within the interplay of power relations between and among indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

The next chapter, Chapter 3, presents the entanglements of my personal narratives in parallel with my professional position in the conduct of the study. Here, the context of the study and the underlying reasons for taking an autoethnographic approach are discussed. As a qualitative method, autoethnography lies within the margins of research as it 'disrupts' traditional, dominant ideas and ways of conducting research (Adams 2011, p. 110; Ellis and Bochner 2006, p. 436). It aims to 'describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*) (Ellis 2011, p. 1). Despite its limitations, it is the most effective means to explore and analyse the collective identity narratives of indigenous peoples who, arguably, have been intellectually 'incarcerated' (Appadurai 1988) and whose views have been afforded limited recognition (Appadurai 1988; Abu-Lughod 1991; Bialostok and Whitman 2006; Fabian 1983: 31 in Pels 2008; Trouillot 2003; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). I present the study as a dialogic, collaborative effort between Bibaknetters and myself. We claim

a shared membership to *Bibaknets* and to the broader Cordillera community, but we also bring specific world views shaped by interaction with each other and with non-indigenous peoples. Ethical dilemmas surrounding access to the forum and the writing of the findings are also analysed in this chapter. The collection, organisation and analysis of the online messages posted on the forum are explained in detail in relation to the interviews and the non-random online survey.

Chapter 4 aims to situate the study within Philippine historical and political realities. Whereas I analyse broadly the constructed nature of indigenous identity in Chapter 2, this chapter will examine in detail the emergence of groups describing themselves as ‘indigenous’ in the Philippines. In contrast to the experience of indigenous peoples in North America, Australia and Canada who assert themselves as the original inhabitants of their territories and continue to live there (Browne 1996; Kingsbury 1998; Sanders 1989; UN 2008), certain groups in the Philippines claim indigeneity because of their resistance to colonisation and have consequently ‘become historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos’ (Republic Act 8371, Section 3h, Chapter 2; Reed 2009). On the one hand, the chapter investigates how American colonial officials and the state have created ‘Igorots’ (Finin 2005) using technologies of power (Foucault 2001 [1982]), emphasizing their difference from lowland populations while downplaying the cultural diversity among themselves. Conversely, the chapter also highlights how Cordillerans have adopted technologies of indigeneity in order to claim equal rights.

The first findings chapter, Chapter 5, focuses on *Bibaknets* and how it constitutes itself as a community drawing upon its members’ attachments to the Cordillera region. It describes the forum’s beginnings as a mailing list for Cordillerans based in the United States. The chapter underscores the distinct profile of *Bibaknetters*: highly educated, diasporic, generally at least 50 years old and fluent in English. In this way, they belong to an ‘indigenous elite’ (Niezen 2005: 534) and are not representative of Cordillerans in general. But as Trouillot (2003: 132) has emphasised, it is important to take into account ‘metasocial commentary emanating from local voices’, including influential members of a community. Exploring the concept of authenticity, the chapter examines the moderator and member profiles, their reasons for joining the forum and the rules that govern *Bibaknets* community life. It analyses the members’ diverse ethnic affiliations and the symbolic and disciplinary means utilised by moderators and members to create a sense of community that transcends geographic and ethnic boundaries, among

others. As a forum for educated and diasporic Cordillerans, it examines particularly how members identify themselves as Cordilleran and how such identification translates to their online interactions. The fissures between their identification as Cordilleran and as *Bibaknets* members run throughout the four findings chapters.

Chapter 6 analyses more closely forum members' shared identities as Cordillerans. It lays bare the tensions and negotiations that Cordillerans endure to assert a collective identity. Here, self-authored narratives as technologies of indigeneity become visible, where members discuss and debate identity categories including place names, historical accounts, and government policies. Members from a particular ethnic group dominated the discussions, chastising members who expressed divergent views. Gerard Finin (2005) advanced that Igorots have developed a pan-regional identity because of the American policy creating a region for highlanders. However, *Bibaknetters'* debates question Finin's assumption. This chapter highlights the shifting, positional and multidimensional aspects of Cordilleran collective identification by examining the members' diverse identity narratives alongside the different categories they assign to themselves.

Chapter 7 explores how some members engage in collective action. The discussion is preceded by an outline of the relationship between the Cordillerans and the Philippine mainstream media in the light of their contemporary engagement with the Internet. One recent case of online collective action among Igorots/Cordillerans is highlighted in this chapter. Similar to the mass actions of previous decades explained in Chapter 5, the majority of forum elders expressed concern and indignation where a comedienne, Candy Pangilinan, stated that Igorots are not human. As the discussion progressed, however, one member became the subject of discrimination by other *Bibaknets* members. This chapter underscores the power relations that configure the inter-relations of *Bibaknets*. While all members identify with the Cordillera region, they are complexly-positioned actors (Adams and Ghose 2003).

The diasporic aspect of *Bibaknets* and its membership is the focus of Chapter 8. In particular, it examines how *Bibaknetters* worldwide shared resources and support for worthy causes overseas and in the Philippines. The chapter begins by looking back at the participation of Cordillerans as paid performers in several world fairs during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Afable 1995, 2004; Buangan 2004; Vergara 1995).

Their early exposure to overseas travel is linked to *Bibaknetters'* contemporary experience as overseas workers and migrants. Highlighted in this chapter is the translocal (Appadurai 1995) nature of indigeneity. Focusing on *Bibaknets* members in the United Kingdom, the chapter explores how diasporic members have been able to create a sense of community in London, illustrating that Cordillerans do not abandon their indigenous identity when they leave their villages. In parallel, the chapter presents the process of Cordilleran identification, whereby member participation in the forum is shaped by their diasporic experiences. The discussions emphasise how places and spaces are socially constructed (Appadurai 1995; Castells 2010; Massey 1994; Trouillot 2003). This is even more evident online, where *Bibaknets* defines itself as a 'meeting place' for Cordillerans. Through the forum, money and support are generated by members for Cordillerans in need at home and in other parts of the world. Despite their many differences, *Bibaknets* allows them to take action not only to protest against discriminatory acts targeting Igorots, but also to assist individual members and other Cordillerans.

As the concluding chapter, Chapter 9 maps the trajectory of the collective indigenous identity narratives on *Bibaknets*. In a more expansive view, it evaluates the answers to the research questions and how the aims of the study have been addressed. It consolidates important arguments from the different chapters in order to examine the limitations, challenges and opportunities in the development of Cordilleran indigenous collective identity. In light of the discussions and arguments presented, the chapter will review the concepts of governmentality and technologies of indigeneity in relation to community, authenticity, and translocality. I will reiterate that indigenous identification is shaped and directed by power relations not only between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, but also among indigenous peoples. Acknowledging the role of power in intra-indigenous relations situates indigenous peoples as complex actors in diverse socio-political settings. While recognising the study's limitations, I offer insights into its contribution to theory, methodology and policy.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Technologies of Indigeneity: Indigenous Peoples, Power and Identities**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter aims to expand on the relations between power and identity-making projects specifically in the construction of indigenous identity. Within the literature, definitions of indigenous identity are offered by academics, indigenous organisations and non-indigenous institutions, such as the World Bank or the UN. However, very few studies attempt to present how indigenous peoples<sup>4</sup> problematise their identities as indigenous. As one of the most marginalised yet most researched groups in the world, indigenous voices have been afforded limited recognition by scholars (Abu-Lughod 1991; Appadurai 1988; Fabian 1983, p. 31 in Pels 2008, p. 292; Trouillot 2003).

In this chapter, I argue that indigenous peoples tread the precarious line between their experience of marginalization and their goal for empowerment. To analyse this tension, Foucault's theory of governmentality (1997a, 2001) is used to draw attention to the political, rather than the natural, aspect of being indigenous as illustrated by existing studies. More specifically, I borrow from Barbara Cruishank's (1999) discussion of governmentality as 'technologies of citizenship' to develop the term 'technologies of indigeneity', which underscores the political and processual aspects of indigeneity. I posit that indigenous identity construction is embedded in power relations not only between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, but also among them. The chapter examines governmentality as a two-level aspect of prescribing conduct. Building on Foucault's discussion of technologies of power and technologies of the self, the first section elucidates the emergence of the collective category 'indigenous peoples' and how this is linked to their experiences of marginalisation. The second part of the chapter analyses the constructed aspect of indigenous identity through the use of 'technologies of indigeneity', which are made visible through online narratives.

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<sup>4</sup> I am using 'peoples' rather than 'people' in accordance with Article 3 of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which recognises the rights of indigenous 'peoples' to recognition and self-determination (UN 2007; cf Niezen 2000).

## 2.2 Governmentality

This section expounds Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality to explore the processes involved in contemporary indigenous identification. Because meanings are produced in social interaction, indigeneity, in broad terms, is the product of the subjective experience of both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples (Langton 1993, p. 31 in Ginsburg 1994, p. 367). Foucault explains that his main objective was to outline the different ways that humans have 'develop[ed] knowledge about themselves' and to challenge knowledge as we have come to accept it (1997a, p. 224). He underscores the need to 'analyse these so-called sciences<sup>5</sup> as very specific "truth games"' that use particular techniques to help human beings understand themselves (1997a, p. 224). There are four types of 'technologies', according to Foucault:

(1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault 1997a, p. 225)

These technologies are strongly implicated with each other but for purposes of this study, I should like to draw attention to the latter two, technologies of power and technologies of the self, in examining specifically how indigenous peoples use online discussion forums to construct their identities. Foucault explains that the combination of these is referred to as 'governmentality' (Foucault 1997a; Cruikshank 1999; Lemke 2001; Dean 2010). He posits that the term 'government,' as used between the sixteenth eighteenth centuries, referred not solely to politics but also to the general administrative functions of the state (Foucault 1991[1978], pp. 92-93; Lemke 2001, p. 191). He defines the term more generally as 'the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed' (Foucault 2001[1982], p. 341) or 'the conduct of conduct'. Mitchell Dean explains that governing entails making efforts 'to shape with some degree of deliberation aspects of our behaviour according to particular sets of norms and for a variety of ends'

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<sup>5</sup> The specific areas mentioned are economics, biology, psychiatry and medicine (Foucault 1997a).

(2010, p. 18). Hence, governmentality is exercised in the plural and collective sense. Broadly, governmentality involves directing and regulating human conduct; that of others and of our own. Dean argues that the study of governmentality is not concerned with how people in positions of power rule, but rather in analysing 'regimes of practices', the assemblage of techniques and tactics, and the production of knowledge and rules (2010, p. 28).

### **2.2.1 Technologies of Power: Governing Others**

This section explores specifically the role of the state in limiting freedom. In describing governmentality in general terms, Foucault explains that the state wields enormous control in limiting individual freedom: 'the state's power is...both an individualising and a totalising form of power' (Foucault 2001 [1982], p. 332). Moreover, Nikolas Rose argues that art of government prioritizes the strengthening of the state, which requires managing its subjects (2006, p. 84). Consequently, the exercise of power no longer focuses on the family, but on the population and economy, aided by statistics (Foucault 1991[1978], p. 99; Rose 2006, pp. 86-87). In a more specific, narrow sense, Foucault uses governmentality and its totalising approach to analyse and categorise the formal and systematic classification of individuals into groups (2001 [1982], p. 332). Statistics, 'the science of the state', has shifted the model of governance away from the family to that of population by demonstrating that the activities of a population have wider socio-economic implications (Foucault 1991, pp. 96, 99; 2001[1982], p. 408; Rose *et al.* 2006, p. 87); for example, in epidemics, mortality, employment, wealth, fertility, and so on (Foucault 1991, pp. 102-103).

The interest in population has been evidenced by attempts to understand the human body. From Carl Linnaeus in the eighteenth century to Charles Darwin in the nineteenth century, biological characteristics have defined the study of society (Foucault 1977; Keyes 2003). The political dimension of identity is closely implicated by the human body, particularly in relation to ethnic, racial and national identity. Power relations often involve mastery of the knowledge of the body, or the 'political technology of the body', according to Foucault (1977: 26). The body is subject to power as it is marked, trained, punished and made to express meanings (Foucault 1977, p. 25).



### **2.2.2 Indigenous Peoples: A Product of Categorisation**

Technologies of power, through the classification of peoples, are political projects associated closely with colonisation and the development of nation-states. This section argues with other identity scholars that being indigenous is neither a natural nor a neutral category, but rather a political and social one shaped by colonial history and the relations worldwide between dominant and minority populations (Hathaway 2010; Kenrick 2004; Maybury-Lewis 2002; Niezen 2009, 2005; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). For this reason, Michael Hathaway's (2010, pp. 303-304) and Amita Baviskar's (2007, p. 278) position is adopted, whereby the category of 'indigenous peoples' is a 'social fact' that has cultivated particular discourses and practices.

The correspondence between power relations and knowledge production is manifested in the categorisation of certain peoples as indigenous. As Foucault explained, '[T]here is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (1979, p. 27). Censuses, the classification of individuals within the population, became tools for colonial governments to identify those considered culturally differentiated (Afable 1995; Finin 2005; Keyes 2003; Legg 2005; Li 2000; Winichakul 1994). In the Philippines,<sup>6</sup> Spanish and American colonial governments categorised their subjects as Christian and wild tribes, lowland and upland communities, which have highlighted differences rather than similarities (ADB 2002; Finin 2005; Fry 2006; Hirtz 2003; Reed 2010; Rodriguez 2010). Similarly, the British and French colonial governments recognised that among the indigenous populations of the countries under their authority were people from the uplands who were quite different from the dominant population (Keyes 2003). Such peoples were often labelled 'primitives' or 'savages', although the preferred term in English writings was 'tribe' by the end of the colonial period (Keyes 2003, p. 1176). In Indonesia, the Dutch colonial government divided Indonesians living in the interior into 'tribe-like groups' by codifying customary laws (Li 2000, pp. 158-159). These methods and practices promoting the integration of diverse populations within nation-states could be understood as a form of governmentality.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> I elaborate on the processes of categorisation of Philippine indigenous peoples in Chapter 4.

<sup>7</sup> This was also the case in Burma (Hirschman 1987 in Keyes 2003, p. 1175), India (Baviskar 2007; Chandra 2006; Kipgen 2013), China (Hathaway 2010; Keyes 2003) and Thailand (Winichakul 1994), among others.

### 2.2.3 Ethnicity and Race

As the discussion above outlines, notions of and about indigenous peoples are based primarily on the processes of classification and categorisation. These terms will be used interchangeably in this study as both refer to the process of arrangement based on ‘shared characteristics or perceived or deduced affinities’ (OED 2010, online). Collective identity concepts cognate to and interwoven with indigeneity are ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’. Similar to indigeneity, these terms are objects of political discourse as they involve the classification and categorisation of peoples (Chandra 2006; Chapman 1994; Jenkins 2008b; Markus 2008; Ven Den Berghe 1996), which in turn, are inscribed in political and cultural struggles.

Based on the literature, there are two main similarities between the conceptualisation of race and ethnicity. First, both are classificatory categories that may be based on biological, social and/or cultural characteristics (Chapman 1993; Eriksen 1993 in Hutchinson and Smith 1996, p. 29; Jenkins 2008b; Loveman 1999; Markus 2008; Weber [1922] 1968 in Loveman 1999; Wimmer 2008). Second, both race and ethnicity are social constructs (Loveman 1999; Markus 2008; Omi and Winant 1994; Weber 1978 in Brubaker 2009, p. 27; Ven Den Berghe 1995) therefore, they are not actual ‘things’; they are practical and analytical categories with real-life implications (Loveman 1999: 895). However, race is viewed as a more rigid category compared with ethnicity, which is flexible (Brubaker 2009; Leung 2005). In this sense, indigeneity is often framed more closely within studies of ethnicity (Clifford 2001; Hathaway 2010; Li 2000; Lynch 2011; Zapata 2009).

Despite their similarities, the concepts of race and ethnicity grew out of particular historical periods. Race appears to have been first used in 1496 to refer to ‘offspring, descendants’ (OED 2010). Its most basic meaning is phenotype or general appearance (Chapman 1993; Jenkins 2008b) while, as a biological concept, race served to justify colonisation as it assumed that some groups of people were inferior to others (Levi-Strauss 1977, p. 324 in Leung 2005, p. 25; Winant 2000). The study of race in scholarly research, however, only began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the demand for independence in Africa and Asia, and social and economic mobility among former slaves and peasants (Winant 2000). Franz Boas (1911) challenged the idea of race<sup>8</sup> by demonstrating that inherited physical

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<sup>8</sup> In Britain, social scientists moved away from race in their research from the 1950s because of their dissatisfaction with its conceptualisation and the government’s assimilationist approach to immigration. The lack of validity of the biological concept of

differences among people cannot be linked to differences in language, values, kinship and others (Markus 2008).

Race as a problematic concept has led to the emergence of the closely-linked concept of ethnicity.<sup>9</sup> Barth's conception of ethnicity has influenced significantly the current understanding of the term. He argues that it is not the commonality of cultural values and cultural forms that create ethnic groups; rather, it is the actors that determine the social boundaries for membership and exclusion (Barth 1969; Maybury-Lewis 2002). Hence, the focus of defining ethnicity and ethnic groups moved away from the 'content of ethnicity' to the 'social processes which produce and reproduce...boundaries of identification and differentiation between ethnic collectivities' (Jenkins 2008b, p. 12).

#### **2.2.4 Indigenous Peoples and Self-Determination**

Indigenous peoples are often compared with ethnic minority groups. The differences between these two terms have not been addressed frequently or directly by scholars for good reason. Categorisation of groups by others and certain groups' own self-identification often causes conflict so that one group may consider themselves an ethnic minority or an indigenous group, but the state or other groups may regard them differently. Most importantly, categories are caught in complex historical and socio-political<sup>10</sup> processes, such that they are unable to capture accurately boundary crossings within and across them.

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race has prompted British scholars to focus more on *racism* and *racialisation*, the process by which differences are naturalised (Mason 1999, pp. 19, 22; Jenkins 2008b, p. 81; Hall 1988). However, some American scholars continue to pursue race along the lines of biological differences up until this time although there is a robust research on ethnicity. For instance, African-Americans and, more recently, Latino and Hispanic Americans have race while Asians, Asian Americans, including the Irish, Italians, Mexicans or American Indians have ethnicity (Leung 2005; Markus 2008).

<sup>9</sup> 'Ethnicity' was coined by W. Lloyd Warner in 1941 (Sollors 1986, p. 25 in Fitzgerald 1992) and first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1953 (Chapman 1993, p. 19). Derived from the Greek word *ethnos*, the word originally meant 'large, undifferentiated groups of either animals or warriors' as used by Homer (Chapman 1993, p. 15). It has attained varying connotations of minority status, lower class, or else migrancy over the years (Chapman 1993, p. 39).

<sup>10</sup> Maybury-Lewis adopts a thoughtful position as he argues that 'indigenous peoples and ethnic groups are part of a continuum. All indigenous peoples are ethnic groups...but not all ethnic groups are indigenous' (2002, p. 49). But other scholars challenge this view because of the broader implication for indigenous peoples' demand for self-determination (cf Anaya 1996; Niezen 2003, pp. 8-9; Swazo 2005, p. 577).

There are overlapping similarities between indigenous peoples and ethnic minority groups. Both groups distinguish themselves from the majority population because they see themselves as a distinct collective or group that has experienced social, economic and cultural oppression and marginalisation (Maybury-Lewis 1997; Niezen 2009). Having said that, there are two substantial distinctions between ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples. First, indigenous peoples claim a global identity rather than a particular identity, as in the case of ethnic minorities (Anaya 1996; Niezen 2000). Ronald Niezen explained that UN delegates would introduce themselves as ‘indigenous’, an assertion of being part of a global community that is absent among ethnic groups.<sup>11</sup> A website seeking to rally ethnic Chinese around the world could help illustrate Niezen’s point. Global Huaren, a website dedicated for diasporic Chinese, called on members and supporters to protest the attacks committed against Indonesian Chinese in Indonesia following the Asian financial crisis (Ong 2003). Despite this lofty aim, many Indonesian Chinese have expressed their loyalty to their country rather than identifying with a global Chinese ‘race’ (Ong 2003, pp. 95-96). In contrast, indigenous peoples have achieved a high level of global identification and cooperation. The creation of the United Nations Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)<sup>12</sup> reflects this global network, whereby it serves as the highest UN body that provides specific expert advice and recommendations on all matters relating to indigenous issues.

The second difference between these collective groupings is the idea of self-determination. Article 3 of the UN Declaration<sup>13</sup> of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples describes them as ‘peoples’ with the right to self-determination without authorising them to threaten the territorial or political integrity of their states. With respect to subjugated ethnic minorities, Niezen notes that self-determination can only be equated through statehood and secession from the state (Niezen 2003,

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<sup>11</sup> Email correspondence with Prof. Ronald Niezen, 26 February 2010.

<sup>12</sup> The UNPFII has a broad mandate to promote the interests of indigenous peoples worldwide. Some of the work it has achieved in 2010 and 2011 were missions to Bolivia and Paraguay to investigate claims of forced labour and servitude among the Guarani. Also, recommendations were made to revise the indicators for the Millennium Development Goals for indigenous peoples in order to reflect their specific situation (UN 2012, p. 11). The UNPFII works with the Inter-Agency Support Group which has the mandate of supporting and promoting indigenous issues within the UN system. In this sense, the influence and reach of the UNPFII and its unique place within the UN as an agency for a particular category of peoples and not states cannot be overstated. There are many other examples that illustrate the idea of a ‘global indigeneity’ but the creation of the UNPFII after almost three decades of international advocacy and lobbying work by indigenous activists and their supporters (Morgan 2007; UN 2010; cf Muehlebach 2001; Sanders 1989) exemplify the point I would like to underline.

<sup>13</sup> The General Assembly ratified the Declaration on September 13, 2007.

pp. 8-9). In contrast, self-determination for indigenous peoples does not necessarily mean independence from the state (Anaya 1996, pp. 84-88; Niezen 2003, pp. 203-204; UN 2008, p. 4), but it does emphasise their right to full and equal participation in state-building and the control of their destinies (Anaya 1996, p. 87; UN 2008). In this respect, I agree with Niezen (2010) that self-determination is a universal goal for all indigenous peoples, unlike the particular aspirations for statehood by some ethnic groups. On the whole, this section highlights that collective identification must be understood within the context of collective social, economic and political experience (Baviskar 2007; Hathaway 2010; Li 2001; Lynch 2010; Pels 2008; Wimmer 2002; Wimmer 2004) of the peoples concerned, whether within the context of race, ethnicity or indigeneity - or none of the three.

### **2.3 Technologies of the Self: Governing the Self**

Indigenous peoples' goal of self-determination and the construction of their identity are linked in this section. More specifically, it will investigate the individual and collective responses of those classified as indigenous to the discourse of indigenous identity. Governmentality, according to Foucault, not only concerns technologies of domination, but also technologies of the self. If technologies of power are forms of circumscribing people's choices of action, technologies of the self are those enabling individuals to govern their 'bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being' as a means of taking care of themselves (Foucault 1997b, pp. 225, 231). Furthermore, Foucault writes that, 'Being occupied with oneself and political activities are linked' (1997b, p. 231). Hence, technologies of the self are transformative and self-empowering forms of power. Moreover, these are referred to as 'technologies of agency', which Mitchell Dean (2010, p. 196) describes as the assemblage of 'techniques of self-esteem, of empowerment'.

The first time the term 'indigenous' was applied to a group of people occurred in 1953 with the International Labour Organization's (ILO) report, *Indigenous Peoples: Living and Working Conditions of Aboriginal Populations in Independent Countries* (Niezen 2005, p. 539). At that time, international organisations led by the ILO sought to address the exploitation of Indians in the Andean highlands (Sanders 1989, p. 412). Indigenous peoples did not participate in the creation of this document<sup>14</sup> nor had they 'developed a self-referential

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<sup>14</sup> In 1957, the plight of indigenous peoples was more directly addressed in ILO Convention No. 107, *Convention Concerning the Protection and Integration of Indigenous and Other Tribal and Semi-Tribal Populations in Independent Countries* (UN 2009, p. 2).

“indigenous” identity’ at that time (Niezen 2005, p. 539). In 1982, the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) was formed whereby indigenous peoples from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, the Americas and Australasia made representations to advance their rights and status (Lynch 2010; Morgan 2007; Niezen 2003). Their demand for respect of their human rights was recognised formally in 2002 with the creation of the UNPFII (UN 2008).

Despite being a new category, ‘indigenous peoples’ refers to the ‘original’ and ‘first’ inhabitants of a country who continue to occupy their lands (Castree 2004; Maybury-Lewis 2002; Sanders 1989) and to a distinct group or community with rights of self-determination (Niezen 2009, p. 27). Simultaneously, it refers to ‘traditional’ people with enduring connections to ways of life that have survived ‘since time immemorial’ (Niezen 2003, p. 3; UN 2009, p.2). Thus, nomadic peoples in Africa and elsewhere are also considered indigenous within the context of their region’s history. Colonisation was one of the main factors in the creation of the world’s indigenous peoples (UN 2009). Many were driven out of their lands by white settlers and colonisers who eventually became the dominant population. However, having gained independence from colonisers, dominant groups have equally been responsible for marginalising indigenous peoples, particularly in parts of Asia and Africa (UN 2009, p. 6). In recognition of this fact, the Report of the Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights suggests that ‘the concept of indigenous must be understood in a wider context than only the colonial experience’ (UN 2009, p. 6).

Jose Martin Cobo’s ‘working definition’ has been adopted by the UN<sup>15</sup> as it provides a basic framework to describe indigenous peoples:

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<sup>15</sup> I emphasise that the UN is only one of the key forums where indigenous rights are being asserted. I recognise with other scholars (Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Kenrick 2004; Kingsbury 1998; Morgan 2007; Sanders 1980) that indigenous leaders have cooperated and networked at the regional and international levels prior to their participation in the UN. However, the UN is often cited in the literature on indigenous peoples’ rights movement because it is the first global, rather than regional, non-state actor to draw the attention of the international community to the plight of indigenous peoples. Most importantly, it was the first international political actor that attempted to identify and name groups of peoples as ‘indigenous’ with corresponding collective rights (Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Colchester 2002; Kenrick and Lewis 2004; Kingsbury 1998; Niezen 2000, 2003, 2005 and 2009; Morgan 2007; Sanders 1980;). Because of the remit of my study, I will not discuss in detail the indigenous peoples’ rights movement. My focus is the concerted attempts of indigenous peoples to assert their indigenous identity through different platforms, including the UN.

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems. (UN 2008, p.7)

The highly collective nature of the term ‘indigenous peoples,’ has, thus resulted in a *globalised* indigeneity. As a global category, roughly 370 million peoples in 90 countries describe themselves as indigenous (UN 2009, p. 1). Groups who call themselves Maoris, Aetas or Gabras may now choose to claim membership to an international community of indigenous peoples. They comprise only five percent of the world’s population and 15 percent of the world’s poor (UN 2009, p. 21), but they have learned to work together under one broad category despite the limitations imposed by this category. The global dimension of indigenous identity is exemplified by the global indigenous movement, also referred to as ‘international indigenous movement’ (Feldman 2002), ‘transnational indigenous movement’ (Manguashca 1994) or ‘indigenism’ (Niezen 2000, 2003, 2005, 2009). The global indigenous movement<sup>16</sup> is united by a common goal for ‘far-reaching social or political change, predominantly by means of collective protest and on the basis of shared collective identity’ (Morgan 2007, p. 277). These collective efforts exemplify ‘technologies of the self’ (Foucault 1997a; Dean 2010; Cruikshank 1999), indicating how indigenous peoples govern themselves in order to become empowered.

Scholars recognise the constructed nature of indigeneity: indigenous peoples are rooted in their own histories and cultures, but they also have the capacity to engage meaningfully with the demands of particular socio-cultural situations (Clifford 2001; Dean and Levi 2003; Feldman 2001). In contrast, essentialism ‘refers to the conviction that groups or categories of persons or things have one or more defining traits particular to all members of that group or category’ (Dean and Levi 2003, p. 14; Pels 2008, p. 284). Dean and Levi explain that essentialist perspectives ‘assume the presence of essential characteristics distinguishing indigenous from

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<sup>16</sup> Their collective action has resulted in the formation of regional and international organisations such as the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), the Indigenous World Association (IWA), International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), the International Alliance of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests (IAITPTF) (Morgan 2007, p. 277), among others.

nonindigenous identity' (2003, p. 14). Essentialist views have restricted indigenous peoples' engagement with the present as they are seen as 'trapped in a sort of "freeze frame", their cultures regarded if not as static, then at least not as progressive' (Dean and Levi 2003, p. 14).

### **2.3.1 Marginalisation and Indigenous Identity Construction**

In surveying various definitions of, and by, indigenous peoples, four criteria<sup>17</sup> need to be considered:

(1) priority in time, with respect to the occupation and use of a specific territory; (2) the voluntary perpetuation of cultural distinctiveness; (3) self-identification, as well as recognition by other groups and by state authorities, as a distinct collectivity; and (4) an experience of subjugation, marginalization, dispossession, exclusion or discrimination, whether or not these conditions persist. (Kenrick and Lewis 2004, p. 5)

Based on the discussion in Section 2.2, I argue that the strongest basis of indigenous peoples' collective identification is primarily their experience of extreme marginalisation and subjugation. However, I emphasise that the practice of a distinct culture, occupation of a particular territory and self-identification as indigenous remain essential markers of indigeneity. Moreover, I share the concern of some experts that a working definition is necessary to protect the rights of indigenous peoples at national and international levels (Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Niezen 2003, 2009; UN 2011) in the light of instances where powerful groups<sup>18</sup> claim indigeneity to protect their interests. However, I posit that their collective experience of marginalisation underpins their assertions of indigeneity and global cooperation.

Marginalisation is a form of practice that captures the overall experience of indigenous peoples, regardless of their changing cultures, territories and identities. In this study, marginalisation<sup>19</sup> refers broadly to practices and discourses by

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<sup>17</sup> These works also explain the criteria of identifying indigenous peoples: Colchester 2002; Feldman 2001; Kingsbury 1998; Niezen 2003; Sanders 1989; UN 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Representatives of Rehoboth Basters, descendants of Dutch settlers in South Africa, attended a meeting of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) at the UN and claimed an 'indigenous' status causing the rest of the participants to protest and walk out of the meeting (Niezen 2003, pp. 21-22).

<sup>19</sup> See the following for studies that examine indigenous peoples' marginalised situation: Alfred and Corntassel (2005; Biolsi 2005; Deloria 1988; Iseke-Barnes 2002; Iseke-Barnes and Danard 2007; Kingbury 1998; Matthei and Smith 2008; Montejo 1993; Niezen 2003, 2005, 2009; Rutherford 2010; Scott 1974; Swazo 2004; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012.



colonisers, states, scholars, international institutions, corporations and elite populations that threaten indigenous peoples' cultural and political rights, which have been addressed widely by scholars. However, the experience of marginalisation among indigenous peoples is not uniform within their own localities, countries and across the globe. Gabrielle Lynch writes that the Pokot in Kenya may have been expelled unjustly by British colonisers and never received compensation but the same can be said for the majority of other Kenyans (2010, pp. 159-160). In Guatemala, Mayans comprise approximately half of the population but their rights are not protected in their constitution (Sieder 2011, pp. 252-253). Most importantly, I acknowledge that groups who describe themselves as indigenous have also been involved in marginalising other groups that may or may not be indigenous. The *adivasis* in India, for instance, have participated in anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat (Baviskar 2007, pp. 285), while the dominant Maasai in Tanzania have exploited the Barabaig and other minority groups in order to secure foreign funding (Igoe 2006, pp. 415-416). Arguably, claims to indigeneity are also deployed by majority populations to pursue exclusionary nationalist politics, as in the case of the British National Party in the UK (Williams and Law 2012) or the Han Chinese in China (Hathaway 2010).

The discussion above underscores that the assertion of an indigenous identity should be understood within the specific context of complex power relations linked to local, national and global processes. Indeed, indigenous peoples is 'a social and political category' borne out of local and global struggles and cooperation (Baviskar 2007; Hathaway 2010; Morgan 2007; Niezen 2000; Sanders 1989) between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Here, I emphasise Foucault's view of power as relational - the assemblage of relations, processes and strategies to manage confrontations and struggles (Foucault 1979, pp. 92-95). What appears to be a crucial factor in the outcome of these struggles to define one's identity is the 'field of possibilities' available to opposing individuals or groups.

### **2.3.2 Technologies of Indigeneity**

Indigenous peoples have responded collectively to address their marginalisation in diverse ways. Many have adopted the term 'indigenous peoples' despite their contrasting circumstances and the limitations of the term. In describing themselves as 'peoples', they seek empowerment by asserting their rights to self-determination, as outlined in Section 2.2.4. Drawing on Foucault's concept of governmentality in her analysis of American participatory democracy, Barbara

Cruikshank argued that governing is not limited to ‘institutions, organized violence, or state power’, but also to the ‘voluntary compliance of citizens’ (1999, p. 4). When people act alone, they also resort to ‘internal and voluntary relations of rule’. Cruikshank investigated how marginalised groups in America participated in government ‘empowerment’ projects. She noted that democratic participation and self-government are advanced as ‘solutions to the lack of something...a lack of power, of self-esteem, of coherent self-interest, or of political consciousness’. Participatory and democratic projects are ‘technologies of citizenship’ - the ways of governing people that ‘promote their autonomy, self-sufficiency, and political engagement’ (Cruikshank 1999, p. 4). Conceived in this way, ‘technologies of citizenship’ are methods for transformation and empowerment. In the same vein, she explained that empowerment is a power relationship as its objective is ‘to act upon another’s interests and desires in order to conduct their actions toward an appropriate end’ (Cruikshank 1999, p. 69).

Cruikshank explains that participatory democratic processes impose some discipline and order that ‘enable and constrain the possibilities of political action’ (1999). In governing oneself and others, Cruikshank argues further that,

The will to empower others and oneself is neither a bad nor a good thing. It is political; the will to empower contains the twin possibilities of domination and freedom...My goal, however, is not to indict the will to empower but to show that even the most democratic modes of government entail power relationships that are both voluntary and coercive. (Cruikshank 1999, pp. 2-3)

Developing Cruikshank’s concept, I describe indigenous peoples’ diverse attempts to achieve self-determination, hence, empowerment, as technologies of indigeneity.<sup>20</sup> Conceptually, technologies of indigeneity highlight indigenous peoples’ subjectivity and agency. Indigenous peoples are complex beings who seek meaning (Ortner 2005) and have the power to direct their actions (Cruikshank 1999; Erazo 2010; Starn 1999). Here, I use empowerment broadly not only to refer to political resistance against discrimination and marginalisation (Cruikshank 1999), but also as a means by which indigenous peoples can achieve self-determination. More specifically, I argue that their efforts to construct their

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<sup>20</sup> Part III of Michael Bravo’s and Sverker Sorlin’s (2002) edited book ‘Narrating the Arctic’ is titled ‘Technologies of Indigeneity’ but the phrase was not defined in any part of the book. The book’s central theme is travel and exploration in the Nordic region.

indigenous identity are part of their goal of self-determination. However, I recognise that these attempts both enable and constrain assertions of indigenous identity. There are two premises upon which the concept of technologies of indigeneity is based. First, groups identifying themselves as 'indigenous peoples' consider their position marginalised. Section 2.3 discusses how the category of 'indigenous peoples' evolved, grounded in exploitation by colonisers, states, and dominant populations. Second, and linked closely to the first, their goal as a collective body is self-determination, their right to 'freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development' (UN 2008, p. 4). Consequently, indigenous peoples pursue their goal of self-determination by adopting technologies of indigeneity: those tactics, programmes, discourses and strategies (Cruikshank 1999; Erazo 2010; Foucault 1997a) that may be both formal and informal.

Andean peasants used disciplinary power as a means for empowerment in an earlier study conducted by Orin Starn (1999). They carried out night patrols in their own communities to prevent criminal activity, which freed them from self-destruction (1999, p. 96). Starn observed that such patrols relied on discipline and effort to create order in their communities rather than as an exercise in domination, in the way that Foucault (1979) analysed prisons, mental health clinics and other institutions. Juliet Erazo (2010) argued that many indigenous groups direct their own conduct to achieve particular goals but that these remain largely unexplored (Garcia 2005; Viatori 2007 in Erazo 2010; Warren 1998). She noted that some scholars have exercised caution in using the lens of governmentality to analyse indigenous issues because the idea of disciplining one's own ranks appears to be 'inherently devious and manipulative' (Erazo 2010, p. 1020).

Adopting Cruikshank's technologies of citizenship, Erazo (2010) examined the participation of Kichwa leaders in local governance. Her primary concern, however, was the nexus between indigenous self-governance and the state. Organised traditionally based on their kinship groups, Kichwa elites recently have adopted broader collectivist values in order to participate in local governance and improve their social and political standing. Erazo observed that this approach was predicated on the effectiveness of such efforts to claim land rights and to obtain development projects from the state and NGOs. Such a strategy is a form of governmentality, she argued (Erazo 2010, pp. 1035-1036). She also cited other studies illustrating indigenous self-governance: the imposition of a unified

language among Mayan subgroups in Guatemala (Warren 1998) and the collaboration between indigenous intellectuals and the state in imposing 'bilingual-intercultural education' among highland communities in Peru (Garcia 2005). However, she noted that these efforts have not been analysed as forms of self-governance.

Within the wider literature, the state remains a critical reference point in deploying governmentality to understand indigenous identity. Most studies focus on the strategies of the state to govern indigenous communities. Purabi Bose and his co-authors (2012) analysed the creation of 'scheduled tribes' or *adivasis* in India, referring to its forest and hill tribes, and how this is implicated with forest management policies adopted by the British and later by the state. The *adivasis* have internalised these categories and have attempted to reclaim their land rights. However, the authors have given more emphasis to the institutional strategies in categorising *adivasis* and its impact on resource allocation rather than the particular instances when these categories have been strategically used in their favour. Sara Tedford-Gold (2007) has looked at the interplay of governmentality as a colonial and a state tool to define Aboriginal subjectivity and later, as a tool adopted by Inuits to resist this subjectivity. Through interviews among Inuit health workers, she explores their narratives of identity with respect to the Canadian state's health policies and their own indigenous subjectivity. Tedford-Gold highlights how Inuit health workers' balance their hybrid subjectivity but similar to Bose *et al.*'s study, she does not account for the specific instances when these take place.

The apparent overemphasis on the state's influence on indigeneity, however, limits our understanding of indigenous empowerment. As means and methods of self-governing, technologies of indigeneity shifts the focus to indigenous peoples themselves and their attempts to construct their indigenous identity. As a form of practice, they involve both coercion *and* consent, and subjectivity and subjection (Cruikshank 1999). One of the cases examined by Cruikshank to develop her concept is California's self-esteem project<sup>21</sup> conducted in 1983. The state rationalised the project by asserting that 'the lack of self-esteem is central to most personal and social ills' affecting the state. Cruikshank explained that clients were asked to 'write and tell personal narratives with an eye to the social good'. It was a

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<sup>21</sup> The California Assembly Bill created the project Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility (Cruikshank 1999, p. 88).

‘literary technology’ in that it produced certain kinds of selves ‘out of confrontation with texts, primarily, or with the telling and writing of personal narratives’ (Cruikshank 1999: 90). By participating in the project, clients adopted as their own the goals of reformers, thereby, blurring the line between coercion and consent.

#### **2.4 Technologies of Indigeneity: Constructing Indigenous Identity**

This section explores how contemporary constructions of indigenous identity can be considered a technology of indigeneity. Foucault states that it is crucial for people to liberate themselves ‘both from the state, and from the type of individualisation linked to the state’, encouraging the formation of new subjectivities (Foucault 2001[1982], p. 336). Rose and his companions observe that Foucault later expanded his ideas on governmentality in terms of technologies of the self (2006, p. 90; Foucault 2001 [1982], p. 326). Foucault emphasised that central to power relations is the struggle to answer questions of identity:

Who are we? They are a refusal of these abstractions, of economic and ideological state violence, which ignore who we are individually, and also a refusal of a scientific or administrative inquisition that determines who one is. (Foucault 2001 [1982], p. 331)

Identity as an analytic concept is a timeless theme in social research.<sup>22</sup> Although there are numerous definitions of identity, some agree on a few important points. There is a general concurrence among some researchers that identity is socially constructed and, therefore, involves issues of power (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Grossberg 1996; Hall 1992, 1996; Jenkins 2008a, 2008b).<sup>23</sup> Moreover, identity is always social, therefore, it is difficult to discuss the self without acknowledging the social context within which it is embedded (Ashmore 2004, p. 81; Calhoun 2003, p. 558; Hall 1996b; Jenkins 2008a, pp. 17, 45; Simon 1997, p. 321;). Consequently, some researchers also take a complementary position whereby identity is a process rather than a primordial aspect of our being (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 2002; Hall 1992, 1996b; Jenkins 1996, 2008a, 2008b; Melucci 1996; Sarup 1996). To

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<sup>22</sup> Scholars have explored identity using the lens of sociology and anthropology (Brubaker 2000; Calhoun 1997, 2003; Chandra 2006; Giddens 1991; Jenkins 1996; Wimmer 2002, 2004, 2008), cultural studies (Bhabha 1996; Hall 1992 and 1996; Grossberg 1996; Sarup 1996; ) and psychology (Howard 2000; Markus 2008). A few have also explored collective and regional identity (Melucci 1996; Paasi 2003; Reed 1979; Young 2000). In recent years, diasporic and virtual identities have become important subjects for investigation among researchers as people have become increasingly mobile, accompanied by new communication technologies that facilitated innovative ways of interaction. Clearly, there are a myriad of ways of understanding identity such that even those who come from the same academic discipline may have contrasting, diverse perspectives on this theme.

<sup>23</sup> See also Brubaker (2002; 2003), Calhoun (1997; 2003a; 2003b) and; Howard (2006).

quote Jenkins, identity is an active word: 'It is not something that one can have, or not; it is something that one does' (2008a: 5). This study will adopt both identity and identification to refer to an active process of articulation about oneself in relation to other individuals and groups.

At this point, it is pertinent to reiterate that scholars often examine the *collective* aspect of indigenous peoples' identity. However, there are studies that illustrate how some indigenous peoples regard their identity as personal, in the case of the Inuits (Dorais 2005), or limited to being part of their kinship group, for the Kichwa (Erazo 2010). Some, for example the Baktaman in Papua New Guinea, even have an amorphous idea of collectivity (Barth 2000, p. 24). Based on these studies, I suggest that many indigenous peoples choose to assert a collectivist value due to their common experience of marginalisation and exploitation, an analysis of which is provided in Section 2.2. Simultaneously, deploying collectivist perspectives enables them to highlight the magnitude of their dehumanisation<sup>24</sup> when addressing powerful actors such as states and multinational corporations. Indeed, unequal power relations have shaped indigenous identities. Hall posits that identification involves 'a process of articulation', which takes into account the role of power (Hall 1996b, p. 4). To paraphrase Hall, identities evolve within the interplay of power relations where difference and exclusion are inherent, rather than sameness and unity (1996b, p. 4). Because identities and identification are constructed, they are never completed and are perpetually 'in process' (Hall 1996b, p. 2).

That indigenous identity is embedded in power relations is reflected by indigenous peoples' diverse responses to being categorised in this manner. Despite the gains being made by indigenous leaders in national and international bodies, such as the UN, not all who fit the category have adopted the term. To paraphrase Noel Castree, the term 'indigenous' should be seen as an invitation for millions of individuals and groups worldwide to be 'interpellated' under this description (2004, p. 153). In Mexico, for instance, the politicised nature of indigenous identity only emerged after 1990 (Jung 2008, p. 67 in Hathaway 2010, p. 303). In

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<sup>24</sup> In Bangladesh, the Jumma are denied their status as indigenous and have been driven away from their homelands by Bengalee settlement projects initiated by the state (Alfred and Cornthassel 2005). Among the Crees in Manitoba, Canada, patterns of high suicide rates were the result of 'political annexation, suppression of knowledge, and economic disadvantage' (Niezen 2003, p. 63). Australian Aborigines have to prove they practice a 'sufficient level of traditional life' consisting of cultural knowledge and land ties in order to be given full title over their traditional land (Povineli 1995, pp. 508-509).

the case of Tibetans, they are often framed as indigenous yet they are divided as to which identity to adopt in relation to their political goals: indigenous or ethnic minority (Hathaway 2010, pp. 304-305).

The above discussions illustrate indigenous peoples' diverse histories of subjugation and socio-political conditions which preclude the creation of a single and official definition of the term. The UN recognises this dilemma, acknowledging that 'the notion of being indigenous has pejorative connotations and people may choose to refuse or redefine their indigenous origin' (2008, p. 8). The UN holds that indigenous peoples are differently situated<sup>25</sup> and this has consequences on how they assert their indigenous identity. Thus, the UN prefers to '*identify* [emphasis mine], rather than attempt to define, indigenous peoples in a specific context' (UN 2008, p. 9).

#### **2.4.1 Processes of Indigenous Identification**

This section examines Richard Jenkins' concept of the 'internal-external dialectic' of identification to analyse constructions of indigeneity (2008a, pp. 40-48). Jenkins explains that there are two processes in identity formation: 'group identification' and 'categorisation'. The former refers to groups 'known by their members', while the latter is imposed externally by others (Mann 1983, p. 34 in Jenkins 2008a, pp. 40, 104). To illustrate, if a group from the Cordillera region in North Philippines considers themselves Kankanaeys but someone from Manila calls them Igorots, Kankanaey is a group and Igorot is a category. These two processes inform the 'internal-external dialectic' of identification (Jenkins 2000, p. 57), where members of a group identify themselves one way, while outsiders see them in another way. Jenkins, citing Nadel, emphasises that these are not two different kinds of collectivities but rather indicate 'different ways of looking at interaction (Nadel 1951 in Jenkins 2008a, p. 104). Most importantly, 'neither is more "real" or concrete than the other: both are abstractions from the data about co-activity' (Jenkins 2008a, p. 104).

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<sup>25</sup> For instance, the nomadic Gabras of north Kenya make a pilgrimage every eight years or so to Ethiopia as part of their tradition. Their cyclical migration within and outside Kenya (Maybury-Lewis 1997, pp. 27-29) illustrates a way of life that challenges the idea of borders and homogenous national identity.

Contrary to most identity theories which privilege the individual over the collective (or that of the collective over the individual for that matter), I argue that indigenous identification is equally an individual and a collective process (Foucault 1979, pp. 94-95; Jenkins 2008a, p. 38). This argument can be linked to the earlier discussion in Sections 2.3.1 and 2.4, whereby identity construction is embedded in power relations, making it positional and contextual. Assertions of indigeneity are an exercise of power relation and, thus, a technology of indigeneity. It is not controlled and directed solely by one person or one group but develops and evolves based on the tactics used by the parties involved (Foucault 1979, pp. 94-95). For instance, the Igorots (Fong 2006) and members of Eastern Shawnee (Iseke-Barnes 2002; Martin 1995) nations asserted their indigeneity in online forums where their indigenous identity was challenged by some non-indigenous members. In doing so, the individual indigenous members adopted the same categories used by non-indigenous members to claim their indigeneity, despite using different names for themselves.

The positionality of indigenous identification and, hence, a strategy for empowerment is further illustrated by Joanne Nagel's (1995) pioneering study of American Indians. She discovered that between 1960 and 1990, there was a remarkable 720 percent increase in the urban Indian population, compared with 218 percent in rural areas (1995, p. 952). The study indicated that city-dwelling Indians have ascribed to 'Indian' ethnicity more strongly than those living on reservations. The phenomenon of 'ethnic switching' among the 'new' Indians reveals that they lived in urban areas in non-Indian regions, are part of a mixed marriage, speak English exclusively, and assign their mixed offspring a non-Indian race. Nagel explains that some of the main reasons for the resurgence of American Indian identification among urban Indians include the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and the relocation of federal spending and land claims awards (1995, p. 956). The combination of positive political conditions and favourable policies in place at that time strengthened 'both the symbolic and potential material value of Indian ethnicity' (Nagel 1995, p. 956).

## **2.5 The Internet: A New Site for Constructing Indigenous Identity**

Within recent years, indigenous peoples increasingly use the Internet to assert, clarify and redefine their indigenous identities. Although they are described as having limited technological capability, they have demonstrated that they can learn how to use the Internet if they have access to computers and an Internet



connection (Niezen 2005, p. 533). Brett Westblade described indigenous peoples as ‘the first global group to legitimately utilize the electronic media to strive for equivalence in living standards and self-determination’ (1998 in Landzelius 2006a, p. 300), a seeming contradiction to the way they have been described persistently as traditional, simple and backward. The accessible nature of the Internet has allowed them to ‘talk back’ to sources of power that have taken part in their marginalisation (Ginsburg 2002; Landzelius 2006a; Niezen 2009, 2005; Prins 2002). Apart from having the opportunity to speak their minds, I share Kevin Hill’s and John Hughes’ view that the Internet enables indigenous peoples, both individually and collectively, to represent themselves on their own terms (Hill and Hughes 1998 in Prins 2002).

As a digital platform, the Internet’s lack of editorial censorship facilitates the proliferation of new expressions of indigeneity (Niezen 2009). I acknowledge that the Internet presents some problems with respect to indigenous peoples, and to all users in general, whether they relate to access, content or regulation. Three points are highlighted and examined in this and the subsequent sections: First, the Internet has allowed indigenous peoples to become more visible – through texts, images, videos – among themselves and to non-indigenous peoples. Second, the Internet has enabled them to write autoethnographic, personal and alternative narratives that are absent from mainstream texts written by non-indigenous authors. Finally, these self-authored online narratives by indigenous peoples are technologies of indigeneity, in that they are assertions of autonomy and equality.

The limited but growing studies on indigenous peoples’ engagement with the Internet cover diverse themes: revitalisation of culture (Lee 2006; Niezen 2009); exposure of abuses by states or transnational corporations (Belausteguigoitia 2006; Landzelius 2006a; Russell 2001); protests against forms of discrimination (Fong 2006; Longboan 2009); interactions among diasporic indigenous communities (Forte 2006; Lee 2006; Longboan 2011); or self-promotion of indigenous civil society groups (Soriano 2011). These themes are underpinned by a claim for an indigenous identity. It may be reasonable to say that this is expected, as indigenous peoples assert a distinct culture that separates them from the mainstream population and is frequently the cause of their oppression (Ginsburg 1994 and 2008; Niezen 2009 and 2005; UN 2010).

It is important to stress that indigenous peoples' engagement with the Internet is uneven and diverse, as indicated by the variety of content and platforms they use – from organisational websites to personal blogs; from chat rooms to email forums. Crucially, their access to, and use of, the Internet reflects their social, political and economic situation. The absence of their narratives in scholarly and mainstream texts consequently frames the analysis in essentialist discourse, despite the gains made in the indigenous social movement and in other arenas of public life. For instance, Kyra Landzelius asks: '(C)an indigenous peoples make a home in cyberspace; and will they feel themselves at home there?' (2006, p. 293). This question illustrates the apparent 'paradox' surrounding 'native' societies and their capacity to use technology. Indeed, can the Internet be indigenised? She goes on to state that the idea of indigeneity has evolved and that indigenous peoples are using the Internet in creative and radical ways in order to respond to their socio-political situation.

## **2.6 Narrating Collective Indigenous Identity Online**

This section analyses how indigenous online narratives, specifically autobiographical narratives, function as technologies of indigeneity. Indeed, representation is a crucial issue in understanding indigenous peoples' engagement with the media as they assert their indigenous identity. Their demand for recognition as authoritative sources capable of offering their own understanding of the socio-political processes influencing their lives is often highlighted by indigenous researchers (Iseke-Barnes 2005; Kenny 2006; Montejo 2005; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012).<sup>26</sup> Examining the status of Indian women who participate in *sati* or self-immolation within the context of British colonial policies and Hindu patriarchy, Gayatri Spivak observes that subaltern Indian women cannot speak (1999). Spivak argues that by banning the rite of *sati*, British colonial officials have represented the women themselves, consequently silencing their voices (1999, pp. 287-288). Indigenous peoples, as non-elite or subordinated social groups, have also been largely silenced as subjects for centuries (Appadurai 1988; Abu-Lughod 1991; Bialostok and Whitman 2006; Fabian 1983, p. 31 in Pels 2008, p. 292; Trouillot 2003; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012).

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<sup>26</sup> See also the works of Matthei and Smith (2008), Mitra (2004), and Motzafi-Haller (1997).

Studies of indigenous peoples using ethnographic work reveal that ethnography as a means of describing social reality is situated within the workings of power and history (Clifford 1986; Hine 2000; Marcus 1992; Pels 2008; Trouillot 2002). The 'crisis in representation' recognised the inadequacy of traditional, single-perspective ethnographic texts, fostering alternative approaches to representation emphasizing dialogue, collaboration, participation, narration and reflexivity (Cann & DeMeulenaere 2012; Clifford 1986; Coffey 1999; Denzin 2006; Foley & Valenzuela 2005; Dicks et. al 2002; Marcus 1999). Within the discursive approach, representation involves not only the production of meaning, but, more importantly, the production of knowledge and power through discourse (Foucault 1979, pp. 11-12). Representation has two relevant meanings: first, it involves the description or depiction of something, 'to call it up in the mind by description or portrayal or imagination'; second, it can mean 'to symbolize, stand for, to be a specimen of, or to substitute for' (Hall 1997, p. 16). The focus on production, through representational strategies, underlines the power of the media as a tool of domination capable of shaping viewers' attitudes and ideas (Askew 2002). Examining identity narratives written by indigenous peoples is, therefore, an important challenge requiring an analytic, autoethnographic and narrative response. A detailed discussion of this method is provided in Chapter 3.

### **2.6.1 Narratives and Autoethnographic Texts**

Indigenous online narratives make visible the process and positional aspects of indigeneity as they lay bare the tensions not only between their experience of marginalisation and desire for empowerment, but also between their personal and collective interests. Andrew Brown explains that expressions of collective identity are found in the narratives that people share in their conversations, corporate histories, websites and emails (2006, pp. 734-735). Despite the proliferation of indigenous websites,<sup>27</sup> there are scarce studies (see Fong 2006; Rabia 2009; Longboan 2009) that investigate indigenous online communities where the members/authors are explicitly described, or describe themselves, as indigenous. Niezen observed that English-language websites dominate the Internet, using the term 'indigenous peoples' as a search term on any search engine (Niezen 2010, p. 50). Indigenous websites offering legal resources make up 54 percent of all content related to indigenous peoples (Niezen 2010, pp. 50-51). The proliferation of online legal resources for indigenous peoples calls attention to issues relating to

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<sup>27</sup> There are roughly 72 million websites about indigenous peoples, ranging from international NGO sites to personal homepages (Niezen 2010).

power and the inequality they face. Despite their strong online presence, Landzelius acknowledges an absence of studies of online autoethnographies by indigenous peoples (2006, p. 11). Going through some indigenous websites, she noted the following:

[I]t is not unusual for anthropology texts to be cited and/or derided! Such anthropological referencing illustrates what might prove to be an emerging genre for the subaltern online: “autoethnographic” encounters, by which I mean the recruitment of ICTs in self-representations constructed by postcolonial others. (Landzelius 2006a, p. 11)

This study aims to respond to the paucity of studies looking at indigenous identity narratives written by and among indigenous peoples, both online and offline. Michel-Rolph Trouillot explains that all people take part in history as actors and narrators (2003, p. 12). Expressing the same observations made by Tuhiwai-Smith (2011, pp. 58-77), Trouillot writes that ‘anthropologists never give the people they study the right to be knowledgeable or, more precisely, to have the same kind of knowledge about their own societies as ethnographers’ (2003, p. 129). He argues perceptively that in Geertz’s (1973) account of the Balinese cockfight, Geertz becomes an expert on Balinese cockfights and readers never get to discover what the Balinese know, or think they know, about their own society (Trouillot 2003, p. 132).

### **2.6.2 Subjectivity and Subjection**

Narratives enable people to make sense of their experience, thus, they are essential to identity construction (Bamberg 2011; Galam 2011; Georgakopolou 2006; Ricouer in McNay 2000, p. 85; Ochs and Capps 1996; Sommers 1994). Moreover, narratives allow us ‘to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities’ (Somers 1994, p. 606). Most importantly, narratives facilitate ‘the contextualization, historization, and the retrieval of the subjectivity of the Other’ (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 2012, p. 301; Sommers 1994; Georgakapolou 2006). Sherry Ortner defines subjectivity as ‘the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects’ (2005, p. 31). Subjectivity views the subject ‘as existentially complex, a being who feels and thinks and reflects, who makes and seeks meaning’ (Ortner 2005, p. 33).

Indigenous peoples face a multitude of limits in asserting their subjectivity and identity. For Foucault, 'subject' has two meanings: being under the control of and being dependent on someone; and asserting an identity by self-knowledge (Foucault 2001[1982], p. 331). Thus, the subject is 'one who is both under the authority of another and the author of her or his own actions' (Foucault 1983 in Cruikshank 1999, p. 21). Recalling earlier discussions on technologies of indigeneity in Section 2.3.2, indigeneity is grounded on indigenous peoples' experience of marginalisation to ensure they strive to participate fully in the decision-making processes affecting their lives. This tension between marginalisation and empowerment, and subjection and subjectivity, pervade indigenous identity narratives online.

Narratology attends to the specificity of indigenous peoples' use of online forums in the construction of their identity. It is an approach that does not impose *a priori* assumptions about indigenous identity (Brown 2006; Sommers 1994). Hence, I take the view that indigenous narratives tackle diverse positional perspectives which are not axiomatically political or collective thereby not imposing an essence to their identity narratives. Louis-Jacque Dorais' (2005) research elaborates on the contradiction between academics' and Inuits' view of the latter's identity. Dorais interviewed 12 academics who are considered experts on Inuit aboriginal identity and compared them with the Inuits' own perception of themselves using documents written by and about Inuits (Dorais 2005, p. 2). His study showed that while academics were inclined to interpret Inuit identity as a collective phenomenon, the Inuits saw their identity as primarily personal (Dorais 2005, p. 9). Hence, the author concluded that it is crucial for researchers to consider how aboriginal peoples think about themselves.

Building upon Jenkins' and Dorais' assertions, narratology is adopted in the study as it allows us to explore indigenous identity as processual, rather than as a given state of affairs. Based on the above discussions, analysing self-authored indigenous collective identity narratives is important for several reasons. Arguably, indigenous peoples' narratives are substantially distinct from other collectivities because of the specificity of their situation. At the same time, while there is excellent literature addressing indigenous peoples' collective identity, these focused mainly on social movements, resistance and cultural revival, which often give the impression of homogeneity among indigenous groups. Third, and related closely to the second, online indigenous narratives disclose the contrasting and diverse positions and

experiences of indigeneity. It is crucial to explore how indigenous peoples engage in power relations in the construction of their identity. Fourth, online explorations of collective identity present dimensions of interaction which differ from offline efforts to discuss indigenous collective identity. Given the theoretical and methodological imperatives attached to indigenous identity, I approached this study with the goal of examining critically the collective identity narratives present in online communities. In analysing the literature, studies on ethnic minorities are included given its conceptual link with indigenous peoples arising from the lack of studies examining indigenous autoethnographic and narrative identity texts. As explained in Section 2.2.4, both indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities face marginalisation wherever they may be found. More importantly, these two labels are often blurred in some societies because of historical and political reasons. Meanwhile, a more extensive discussion on autoethnography and narratology is provided in Chapter 3.

## **2.7 Community, Offline and Online**

This section examines the conflict between personal and collective identity narratives in online communities. As explained in Sections 2.3 and 2.4, the concept of indigeneity rests on the idea of collective identity<sup>28</sup> (Kingsbury 1998; Morgan 2007; Niezen 2000, 2003, 2005 and 2009; Sanders 1980; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). I argued that indigenous peoples' assertion of and emphasis of a collectivist and communitarian values is a technology of indigeneity based on their pursuit for self-determination (Cruikshank 1999; Dean 2010). I investigate how indigenous peoples define and practice the concept of community in their online interactions.

Linda Tuhiwai-Smith explains that the idea of indigenous community is 'defined or imagined in multiple ways: as physical, political, social, psychological, historical, linguistic, economic, cultural, and spiritual spaces' (2012, p. 128). Community refers to moral value and emotional ties (Nisbet 1966: 48 in Calhoun 1980, pp. 107-108) as well as 'social bonds and political mechanisms', which bind communities and enable them to work (Calhoun 1980, p. 108). Apart from nations, communities are also imagined, according to Benedict Anderson (1991). He places the nation and community alongside each other as he argues that 'the nation...is an imagined political community' because people believe they share a common origin and history (1991, p. 3). Pushing his argument further, he writes that: 'In fact, all

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<sup>28</sup> The following are also helpful readings: Alfred and Cornthassel (2005), Colchester (2002), Kenrick (2004), Morgan (2007), Muehlebach (2001), and UN (2009).

communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even *these* [emphasis mine]) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined...’ (1991, pp. 6-7). Anderson suggests that even indigenous, primordial communities are imagined. The argument of some scholars that traditional homelands define indigenous peoples so that once they leave, they lose their indigeneity (Lee 2006 and Rosaldo 1993 cited in Watson 2010) is thus untenable. What appears more significant is to trace how community that refers both to ‘a demarcated physical space *and* to clusters of interaction’, develops and emerges (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, p. 8).

Despite the lack of studies addressing closely this research topic, there are several studies about indigenous online communities that explore identity, culture and community (Fong 2006; Forte 2006; Lee 2006; Longboan 2011; McKay and Brady 2005; Rabia 2009). They tackle diverse themes reflecting the variety of interests and issues pursued by indigenous peoples. Some communities are comprised of both indigenous and non-indigenous members, while some consist of diasporic members and those living in their homelands. There are communities created specifically to mobilise members on specific issues, while others serve primarily as meeting places; online cafés for chats about life in general. The following sections highlight the diversity, complexity and positionality of social relations created online based on indigenous identities.

The Internet is so much a part of contemporary life, ‘it is at once technology, medium, and engine of social relations’ (Jones 1995: 15; see also Baym 2010; Miller and Slater 2000). Thus, Internet scholars view as counterproductive binaries that distinguish between real and imagined, offline and online, as well as collective and individual identities (Baym 2010; Butler *et al.* 2007; Jankowski 2006; Jones 1998; Latour 2005; Miller and Slater 2000; Rheingold 1993; Wellman 1997, 1999, 2001; Wilson and Peterson 2002). The notion of communities developing through the Internet was first proposed by Howard Rheingold (1993), who wrote about his experience as a member of *The WELL*, an email group that began in San Francisco. In his seminal book, *The Virtual Community*, Rheingold coined the term ‘virtual community’:

*Virtual communities* are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace. (Rheingold 1993, p. 6, emphasis in original)

Rheingold's definition highlights social aggregations formed out of 'webs of personal relationships' created through the Internet. His formulation is captured by the term 'social network' as conceptualised by Barry Wellman who defines the term as 'a set of people (or organizations or other social entities) connected by a set of socially-meaningful relationships' (1997, p. 179). Hence, Wellman argues that electronic mailing groups (or email groups), the particular type of community investigated in this study, are social networks (1997, p. 179). Conversely, social network sites (SNSs) are a more recent and narrow conceptualisation of social networking. For danah boyd and Nicole Ellison, SNSs such as *Facebook*, *MySpace*, *Twitter* and *LinkedIn* emphasise the combination of personal preferences and web-based features to create a bounded network of connections (2007, p. 211; Ellison *et al.* 2011, p. 124). Scholars often switch between using 'virtual' and 'online' to describe communities in the context of the Internet (Baym 2010; Jankowski 2006; Liao 2012; Parks 2011; Wellman 2001). For purposes of clarity and consistency, the term 'online community' will be used in this study.

Returning to online community, Malcolm Parks (2011) surveyed the literature and offers a list of recurring themes<sup>29</sup> despite the competing definitions given by scholars. He describes the following as the 'more relevant' defining elements of community: '1) ability to engage in collective action; 2) shared rituals, social regulation; 3) patterned interaction among members; 4) identification, a sense of belonging and attachment; and; 5) self-awareness of being a community' (Parks 2011, p. 108). Similar to Parks, Nancy Baym sets aside the debates surrounding definitions and prefers to identify the qualities of online communities. Unlike Parks, however, she distinguishes between online communities and SNSs. Baym (2010, pp. 73-89) observes that online communities share the following: 1) a sense of space; 2) practices; 3) shared resources and support; 4) shared identities; and 5) interpersonal relationships. Baym did not include collective action as she believed

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<sup>29</sup> Internet researchers cover diverse platforms, from personal web pages to social networking sites, from political forums to online role-playing games. Among the many themes under study are race and ethnicity (Fung 2002; Leung 2005; Mitra 2004; Nakamura 2002; Ong 2003; Parker and Song 2006), interest (Rheingold 1993; Wellman 1999 and 2001), gender (Ignacio 2000; Gajjala 2006), geography (Adams and Ghoose 2003), and fandom (Baym 2010, Bennet 2009, Bury 2005; Williams 2006).



that measuring the impact of online interaction is a complex undertaking (2010, p. 92). While indigenous online communities do not always take part in collective action, I take the position that they engage in some form of cooperative endeavours which may not always be political in nature. Also, rather than focus on analysing the impact of such efforts, it is more salient in this study to understand how online interaction enables or constrains such efforts.

Within the context of indigenous online communities, I propose the following criteria in understanding their interactions: 1) ability to engage in collective action; 2) shared resources and support; 3) shared identities; and 4) shared rituals and social regulation (cf Baym 2010; Parks 2011). These interrelated elements are examined more closely in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

### **2.7.1 Advocacy and Resistance**

One of the dominant themes within the literature is whether the Internet is hegemonising or emancipating indigenous peoples. Landzelius (2006, p. 4) emphasises resistance, using the phrase ‘indigenous cyberactivism’ to describe self-authored or authorised use of the Internet by indigenous peoples (Ginsburg 1994, 2008; Iseke-Barnes 2002; Landzelius 2006a; Leung 2005; Matthei and Smith 2008; Niezen 2005 and 2009; Salazar 2009; Soriano 2011). Niezen cites the important role of the Internet in the indigenous peoples’ movement, writing that ‘educated indigenous elite’ use technology as a tool for global advocacy efforts and self-expression (2005, p. 534). The Internet’s lack of editorial censorship has facilitated new expressions of indigeneity (Niezen 2009). For the first time, minority groups in Europe have claimed in Internet messages to be ‘indigenous’: Basques in France and Spain, Friesians in the north of The Netherlands and the Welsh in the UK (Niezen 2009, p. 56).

The Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas is one of the earliest and most celebrated examples of indigenous peoples’ use of the Internet for advocacy and resistance. Mexican commercial media ‘overwhelmingly refused to reproduce Zapatista materials’, which prompted supporters to send them to their networks in Usenet groups and Internet lists, in order to break the story in cyberspace (Russell 2001, p. 200). To understand discourses about the Zapatista movement, Adrienne Russell compared its coverage in American newspapers with postings from Chiapas95, a Usenet group composed of activists and scholars worldwide. Her study showed that the Zapatista movement was viewed differently by indigenous peasants and the

mainstream media. The glaring difference in the narratives about the movement presented in the mainstream print media and the discussions by Zapatista supporters highlight the 'relativity of point of view' (Ochs and Capps 1996, p. 21). What the study does not show, however, is the lack of participation in the discussions by indigenous members. The participants in the discussions were directed mainly by activists and scholars, rather than indigenous peoples. Indeed, there was only one mention of a message from the Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee appealing for help to stop the war.

In contrast to Russell's study, Marisa Belausteguigoitia (2006) critiques the lack of subjectivity of Zapatista women in Internet discourses surrounding the movement. Their limited access to the Internet and their lack of technological skills prevented them from utilising fully its possibilities. For the Zapatista women in Mexico, the Internet served both as a means for mobilisation and marginalisation (Belausteguigoitia 2006, p. 107). Belausteguigoitia argues that Zapatista women's concerns were adopted by women activists from Europe and America on their respective websites, but the Zapatista women's voice was absent. She observes that the webpages 'are often designed more to empower the visions of Euro-American, middle class (often feminist) users, than to actively struggle for the specific demands of Indian women' (2006, p. 106). In this instance, it appears that the lack of capacity by indigenous women to use the Internet has prevented them from participating in the discourse, and even turned them into mere subjects of other Internet sites promoting women's empowerment, liberation and equality.

Resistance narratives are not limited to socio-economic and political struggles. They also involve assertions of pride of indigenous identity within the context of popular culture. Jimmy Fong (2006) explored how Igorots in the north Philippines wrote proudly in their own languages in Internet discussion forums and blog sites to express support for Marky Cielo, a young Igorot who was competing in StarStruck, a reality television talent programme (Fong 2006). In one of the early episodes, Cielo was belittled by another contestant for being an Igorot and, therefore, the one who should be voted out of the competition. Igorot fans used the StarStruck online forum<sup>30</sup> to express support for Marky, dismissing English and Filipino languages used in the forum, and choosing to write in their languages (Fong 2006). Analysing extracts written by forum participants, Fong writes that

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<sup>30</sup> StarStruck had a website that featured a fan forum but it is no longer available. The website was maintained by GMA Network, which produced the programme.

fans who identified themselves as Igorots ‘engage(d) in another form of “ethnic cleansing”, cleansing the Igorot of the baseless or outdated meanings that others have of them’ (Fong 2006).

A demand for authentic representations of indigenous peoples on the Internet is another important theme in the literature. Sometime in the early 1990s, American OnLine (AOL) became involved in a scandal because of a chat room hosted by a man called Blue Snake (Martin 1995; Zimmerman *et al.* 2000 in Iseke-Barnes 2002). He represented himself as a member of the Eastern Shawnee Nation and created Blue Snake’s Lodge where he taught users Native American spirituality. Three Shawnee nations petitioned AOL to end this misrepresentation. Blue Snake turned out to be Don Rapp, a software consultant who claimed to have been adopted by the tribe (Martin 1995).

### **2.7.2 Inreach and Outreach Orientations**

A second theme or approach of the study of indigenous peoples’ use of the Internet focuses on the consumers of their creative output. Kyra Landzelius writes that ‘*authorised* engagements’ by indigenous peoples with the Internet moves between two orientations, which she describes as *inreach* and *outreach* (2006, pp. 4-5). She defines *inreach* as efforts that emphasise ‘localised interests’, while *outreach* aims to strengthen external networks (Landzelius 2006a, pp. 8-9). Landzelius explains that indigenous online engagements often move within this continuum, and that their convergence highlights the local and global processes involved in indigenous identity-making (2006, p. 9). While these distinctions are helpful for some websites and online interactions, these orientations are blurred in discussion forums where topics can range from the American presidential elections to the planting of traditional crops. In this case, the members may all identify themselves as indigenous so that it may be classified as *inreach*. However, the content may not necessarily be local but national, or even global. In parallel, members of online forums are both the audiences and producers of texts. Thus, classifying indigenous content as *inreach* and *outreach* are somewhat narrow when applied to indigenous discussion forums as the next paragraph illustrates.

Helen Lee analysed the use of language on *Kava Bowl*, an online forum for diasporic Tongans (2006). It is oriented towards both *inreach* and *outreach* purposes, connecting Tongans in the diaspora with those at home. More importantly, the forum covers both local and transnational issues important to the

online community. Lee states that discussions are not limited to the Polynesian culture, but include sensitive issues: women complaining about their husbands' drinking habits; child abuse and domestic violence; discrimination within their host societies, and so forth (Lee 2006, p. 164). The study underscores the way discussion forums blur the line between inreach and outreach orientations where there is a free exchange of narratives.

Conversely, outreach-oriented websites are more clear-cut, as exemplified by organisational and personal websites. As explained earlier, English-language websites about indigenous peoples dominate the Internet, with roughly 50 percent offering legal resources (Niezen 2010). Outreach websites are run by indigenous activists, NGOs and indigenous nations (Niezen 2010; Soriano 2011). However, individuals who maintain personal websites also exhibit outreach orientations. Neil Blair Christensen (2006) looked at the website owned and maintained by Adam Grin, an indigenous person from Greenland. The website may be read in English, Danish and Greenlandic and offers 13 menus facilitating readers to view photos, read local history, examine official data and leave comments in the guestbook. It is the guestbook menu where external networks are created and strengthened, with visitors exchanging ideas and information with Grin.

### **2.7.3 Internal Debates and Negotiations**

The literature examined in the previous section did not take into account the power relations that exist among indigenous members in online communities. With the exception of Lee (2006) who analysed the debates relating to language among Tongan members, contemporary studies provide a disturbing sense of homogeneity among indigenous groups when used to analyse Internet forum discussions. This section will show that online discussion forums comprising exclusively or mainly of members who claim shared ethnic or indigenous identities engage in power relations through their online interactions. In the following discussion, the literature cited relates mostly to ethnic rather than indigenous online communities, owing to a palpable gap in the indigenous media literature.

In 1998, a Malaysian Chinese living in New Zealand created the website Global Huaren to protest the attacks committed against Indonesian Chinese whose homes and shops were looted following the Asian financial crisis (Ong 2003). The website may have galvanised diasporic Chinese to organise protests in different parts of the world, but many Chinese Indonesians have expressed their loyalty to Indonesia

rather than identifying with a global Chinese ‘race’ (Ong 2003, pp. 95-96). Although Aihwa Ong focuses on the tensions between national belonging and diasporic alliances in relation to race and ethnicity (2003), her study illustrates that people who may share the same ethnicity may not necessarily identify with the interests of their co-ethnics to promote and protect a unified identity.

Among diasporic Tongans, young people’s inability to speak their language became a critical issue in their online forum. Lee explained that one of the reasons Tongan families migrate to the West, particularly Australia, New Zealand and the US, was to enable their children to receive ‘a good education’ (2006, p. 158). Hence, some Tongan parents prefer *not* to teach their children the Tongan language because their indicator of academic achievement is fluency in English. But this decision has worked both for and against their children, as the study revealed that those who did not know their language felt alienated from the “Tongan “community”” while those who were bilingual showed more appreciation for their cultural identity (2006, p. 158). The forum enabled Tongans to negotiate and contest their cultural identity, writing not only in English and Tongan, but even in Black, ghetto language. Radhika Gajjala’s (2006) study draws attention not only to the marginalised position of diasporic South Asian women, but also to the relativity of marginalisation. She sought to conduct an ethnographic study within the South Asian Women’s network (SAWnet), an email discussion group of diasporic South Asian of which she was also a member. She was interested in investigating how South Asian women were situated between being ‘Third-world’<sup>31</sup> women and South Asians. In an interesting twist, the members denied Gajjala’s request to conduct a study of SAWnet, as they were concerned that it would be regarded as representative of South Asian women (2006). That issues of power exist even in communities that view themselves as marginalised indicates the complex positions of people in any social situation; they can occupy simultaneously central and marginal positions (Adams and Ghose 2003).

The three studies above illustrate the workings of technologies of indigeneity. In their efforts to assert their ethnicity/indigeneity, some members impose certain rules or propose a particular agenda to which others may not fully subscribe. The coercive and voluntary (Cruikshank 1999) aspects of indigenous self-governance

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<sup>31</sup> Although diasporic South Asian women may be more specifically described as ethnic minorities in the countries in which they lived, I include them in the discussion as it is their marginalised position in their host societies that the author addresses in the study.

challenge the normative concept of collective, homogenous identity within the frame of ethnicity and indigeneity. They indicate the multiplicity of positions of members in these online communities where identities are apparently shared. The internal debates and divisions among members illustrate the processual nature of identity as it is shaped within power relations. Among themselves, indigenous peoples are cautious of views that extol homogeneity, tradition and unity as the three studies indicated. Individuals and groups are situated differently in temporal and relational terms (Ochs and Capps 2002), allowing for flexible and positional assertions of identity (Clifford 2001, Hall 1996b, Nagel 1995).

## **2.8 Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter examined the positionality and constructedness of indigenous identity, emphasising that indigenous identity construction is embedded in power relations. Overall, there are two tensions that imbue indigenous identification: indigenous peoples' conflicted position between marginalisation and empowerment, and between personal and collective interests. Using Foucault's concept of governmentality (1979, 1997a, 2001 [1982]) and its elaboration by Cruikshank (1999), these two issues have been examined in this chapter. Building upon these authors' work, 'technologies of indigeneity' was developed as an analytical perspective through which to understand the complexity of indigenous identity construction.

Indigenous peoples' experience of marginalisation underpins the construction of their indigenous identity. States, colonisers and dominant populations have governed indigenous peoples using technologies of power, categorising and labelling them as 'Other'. In directing indigenous peoples' conduct, powerful actors have created 'new' knowledge and exercised substantial power over them. Scholars recognise that most indigenous communities are generally vulnerable to losing their economic, political and cultural integrity (Kingsbury 1998; Niezen 2010; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). Thus, the collective category of 'indigenous peoples' emerged to address the abuses committed against them. Admittedly, one category cannot capture the diversity, richness and complexity of their histories, cultures and aspirations. Hence, there are many groups that do not wish to be described as indigenous for social, economic and political reasons.

For their part, indigenous peoples have also learned to govern themselves, through technologies of indigeneity. Borrowing Cruikshank's 'technologies of citizenship' (1999), I suggested that indigenous peoples attempt to empower themselves through formal and informal programs, discourses and strategies to pursue their goal of self-determination. Many of them have demonstrated flexibility in adopting categories for themselves, switching between indigenous categories (Nagel 1995; cf Fong 2006) or adopting new categories (Matthei and Smith 2008) in order to survive. Moreover, some have appropriated the categorising strategies of colonisers, states, transnational corporations and other dominant political and economic actors (Baviskar 2007; Li 2000; Longboan 2009) to strengthen their claim for self-determination. The positionality of their identity is best exemplified by the number of indigenous groups who have adopted the category of indigenous peoples to describe themselves despite the diversity and specificity of their socio-political circumstances.

The second tension linked inherently to the processes of indigenous identification is that between their personal and collective interests. I have argued that the Internet, through indigenous online communities, have made these tensions visible, highlighting the heterogeneity and multiplicity of their positions. Focusing on narrative analysis, I have explained how indigenous peoples are attempting to change 'distributions of power' and 'appropriations of knowledge' (Foucault 1979, p. 99) as they expand the boundaries of indigenous identity through online communities. Analysed as narratives, indigenous online interactions reveal how indigenous forum members engage with power relations to shape the direction of discussions and debates. The literature shows that indigenous members not only reflect resistance and collective action, but also highlight fragmentation, reflexivity and instability (Gajjala 2006; Lee 2006; Ong 2003). In this sense, discussion forums play an important role for indigenous peoples as these are spaces where members narrate, discuss and clarify who and what they are as they challenge oppressive discourses in historical accounts or contemporary mainstream texts. At the same time, assertions of indigeneity constrain explorations of identity where personal and collective interests (Jenkins 2008a) need to be taken into account.

The diversity of themes and the variety of online platforms used by indigenous peoples to create communities signifies the processual, relational, situational and variable (Biolsi 2005; Bose *et al.* 2011; Dorais 2005; Leach 1954 in Keyes 2002; Matthei and Smith 2008; Nagel 1995; Watson 2010) aspects of indigenous collective identity. It is important to stress, however, that marginalisation is just one factor contributing to the flexibility and positionality of indigenous identification. They identify themselves in diverse, ‘multidimensional’ ways that cut across ethnicity, class, education, gender and so on (Ashmore *et al.* 2004, p. 82). In this sense, indigenous peoples are not so different from non-indigenous persons with respect to identity construction.

The discussions illustrate that indigenous identities are caught between layers of power relations that are made visible by online narratives. Online forums have allowed indigenous peoples to interact with one another and to collectively understand and analyse issues that are important to them. Most importantly, the interactive, accessible and archivable nature of discussion forums has enabled ordinary indigenous peoples to participate in the writing of collective narratives that celebrate, clarify and question their identities within the context of their lived experiences. While indigenous scholars and progressive non-indigenous academics continue to stress the positionality and relationality of indigenous identity, existing literature about online communities are wanting in studies that present indigenous peoples’ narratives of their identities. Moreover, studies on indigenous identity using digital media abound, but these have not been analysed within the lens of governmentality and narratology.

In laying out the historical, discursive and theoretical trajectory of ‘indigenous peoples’ in this chapter, I acknowledge that this thesis offers only a partial view of a larger, continuously developing indigenous narrative (Clifford 1986; McNay 2000; Ochs and Capps 1996) shaped by a multitude of actors. Indeed, the emergence of the Internet and its impact on indigenous peoples’ collective identity narratives are only beginning to be captured. Resistance to domination and marginalisation remains a key theme in indigenous media literature; hence, environmental and human rights, language and cultural revitalisation, and assertions of newly-found indigenous identities are important areas for scholars, as in the case of Palestinians and Freisians (Niezen 2010). However, resistance to states, institutions and corporations and cultural revitalisation are only one part of indigenous collective identity narratives. There remains the underexplored area of indigenous peoples’



collective identity narratives that indicate power relations, positionality and the multidimensional aspects of their identities. The discursive nature of collective identity (Brown 2006) illustrates interrogations of historical processes that bring to the fore layers of negotiations between and among indigenous groups and individuals. Hence, these forums serve as a magnifying glass that brings us closer to details that are seldom found in mainstream literature (Iseke-Barnes 2002). The richness of their own texts, in this regard, deserve to be critically examined as they contribute to further explorations of indigeneity.

## **Chapter 3**

# **Power in Technologies: Exploring Collective Online Narratives of Indigenous Peoples**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter analysed the notion of indigeneity as a political and social category highlighting the marginalisation of indigenous peoples. This chapter examines narratology, specifically autoethnography, as a methodological approach to analysing indigenous identity. The first part discusses the rationale for choosing online autoethnography in the examination of collective indigenous identity narratives. Here, the connections between my position as an indigenous researcher, the marginalised status of indigenous peoples and autoethnography as an ethical approach to understand indigenous identity will be emphasised. Although online autoethnography has its limitations, it allows marginalised peoples to assert authorship and expertise; thereby, enabling their participation in knowledge production. Next, an explanation is provided of the specific ethnographic tools adopted for the study and how they complemented each other in exploring constructions of Cordilleran identity on *Bibaknets*, the online forum examined in this study. Finally, this chapter will examine the ethical issues faced during the research process and how these were addressed, given my complex position as an insider examining my own community. The key issues analysed revolved around marginalisation, anonymity and the tensions of offline-online relations.

### **3.2. Autoethnographic Narratives**

This section examines autoethnography as a method that aims to allow indigenous subjectivity to emerge. The decision to take an autoethnographic, dialogic approach to study indigenous peoples' online identity narratives is underpinned by an ontological recognition that existing knowledge is embedded in unequal power relations (Foucault 1979) shaped by colonial history and Eurocentric perspectives (Appadurai 1988; Blaut 1993; Dussell 2002; Louis 2007; Pels 2008; Said 1986; Trouillot 2001), as discussed in Chapter 2. Western scholars have long studied indigenous peoples, making them among the most researched peoples of the world (Afable 2005; Keyes 2003; Deloria 1988; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). Despite their ubiquity in academic research, indigenous peoples are intellectually 'incarcerated', to borrow from Arjun Appadurai (1988, p. 37). Michel-Rolph Trouillot observes

that they are rarely afforded the right to be knowledgeable or ‘to have the same kind of knowledge about their own societies as ethnographers’ (2003, p. 129), an observation shared by both indigenous and non-indigenous scholars (Clifford 1986; Deloria 1988; Fabian 1983 in Pels 2008; Montejo 1993 in Warren 1997; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012).

Ethics is defined as the ‘rules of conduct that express and reinforce important social and cultural values of a society...[which] may be formal and written, spoken or simply understood by groups who subscribe to them’ (Castellano 2004, p. 99). For years, indigenous peoples have viewed research as unethical and exploitative for inaccurately representing them and their cultures as inferior or deviant (Deloria 1988; Ermine *et al.* 2004; Louis 2007; Pels 2008; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). The ‘crisis in representation’ in qualitative research (Clifford 1986; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Pels 2008) was a critical period for indigenous peoples, who developed a negative perception of research, resisting being ‘studied’ even by insiders or one of their own (Ermine *et al.* 2004, p. 13).

### **3.2.1 Autoethnography as an Ethical Indigenous Research Approach**

The aforementioned crisis in representation reinforces the point that ethical research is defined differently by non-indigenous and indigenous peoples. The privileging of western perspectives and values over those of indigenous peoples as research subjects is a key theme in discussions about research ethics (Kovach 2009; Louis 2007; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). Some non-indigenous researchers have responded positively to the objections raised by indigenous peoples to the skewed representations of their ways of life. Research methods moved away from single-perspective ethnographic texts to approaches described as ‘dialogic’, ‘collaborative’, ‘participative’, ‘narrative’, ‘polyvocal’ and ‘reflexive’ (Cann & DeMeulenaere 2012; Clifford 1986; Coffey 1999; Denzin 2006; Dicks *et al.* 2002; Ermine *et al.* 2004; Foley & Valenzuela 2005; Marcus 1999).

Indeed, research methodology is a key determinant in representing indigenous knowledge and subjectivity in the process. I recognise that scholars are shaped by their personal history and cultural background, which informs their scholarship (Abu-Lughod 1991; Bridgens 2007; Denzin 2009; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Geertz 1992; Motzafi-Haller 1997; Said 2003; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). The existence of unequal power relations between non-indigenous scholars and their indigenous subjects

and the interpretation of social processes based on different worldviews (Deloria 1988; Ermine et. al 2004; Kovach 2009; Louis 2007) are not often addressed by institutional ethical protocols with which researchers have to comply in studies about indigenous peoples.

Indigenous scholars within the last decade have taken steps to define what they perceive as ethical research through the UN (Du Plessis and Fairbairn-Dunlop 2009), local, national and international indigenous organisations (Ermine *et al.* 2004), and academic institutions (Castellano 2004; Louis 2007; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012).<sup>32</sup> As a form of technology of indigeneity, some have developed ‘decolonizing methodologies’ (Tuhiwai-Smith 2012) and ‘indigenous methodologies’ (Kovach 2009) that promote indigenous frameworks<sup>33</sup> in addressing the critical gap in indigenous and Western knowledge production.

Broadly, indigenous peoples’ research agenda as expressed by indigenous scholars rests on the goal of decolonisation and self-determination. It is more than a political goal as it encompasses all areas of life: psychological, social, cultural, and economic (Tuhiwai-Smith 2012, p. 120). Indigenous researchers are one in saying that self-determination, as it is applied specifically to research about indigenous peoples, refers to the processes allowing indigenous peoples to control, create and collaborate with scholars in knowledge production (Ermine et. al 2004; Louis 2004; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). Such an approach does not mean a complete repudiation of Western knowledge, but rather one that generates knowledge from indigenous perspectives for their own purposes (Louis 2004; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). Indeed, the collaboration between indigenous and non-indigenous, Southern and Northern researchers has improved conditions in relation to health, human rights and poverty in many parts of the world. Following Foucault (1997a) and Cruikshank (1999), I argue that indigenous peoples’ goal to be recognised as owners and creators of indigenous knowledge is a technology of indigeneity that

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<sup>32</sup> There are several national and international charters and declarations written by indigenous peoples that aim to control and protect their knowledge and its dissemination, among them are the following: Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples 1993, the Amazon Basin Declaration, and the Alliance of the Indigenous Tribal Peoples of the Forests Charter 1993 (Tuhiwai-Smith 2012, pp. 123-124).

<sup>33</sup> For example, Tuhiwai-Smith explains the Kaupapa Maori research approach for the Maoris (2012, pp. 185-191) while Kovach develops Nehiyaw methodology for Plains Cree peoples (2009, p. 164). Dwayne Donald argues for indigenous métissage in examining Aboriginal and Canadian relations (2012, p. 534).

seeks to recapture their subjectivity and address the imbalance in indigenous knowledge production.

### **3.2.2 Online Autoethnography**

Given the research trajectory among indigenous peoples, as outlined in the previous section, the ethical methodological response to the silencing of their voices within Internet indigenous identity research is to adopt autoethnography. As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5, autoethnographic texts fall under the broad category of narratives. Narratology is an approach that does not impose *a priori* assumptions about indigenous identity as it views narratives as part of a configuration of relationships located in certain times, social positions, and places (Brown 2006; Sommers 1994).

Indigenous peoples' use of the Internet to explore their identity is an emerging area of scholarship, explaining perhaps why few studies exist that analyse indigenous peoples' online identity narratives. Taking into account the various approaches to autoethnography and the unique dimensions of the study, I decided to use autoethnography for three intertwined reasons. First, autoethnography connects 'the personal to the cultural, social, and political' (Ellis 2004, p. xix). The issue of identification among Cordillerans/Igorots is a highly charged matter grounded in political, economic and cultural reasons. Using my own personal narratives and that of *Bibaknets* members serves as an ethical research approach to explicate ambivalence, struggles and contradictions within and among us as Cordillerans/Igorots, especially when power relations are not always visible (Motzafi-Haller 1997, p. 215). Asserting my Cordilleran/Igorot identity together with that of *Bibaknets* members means identifying with the marginal position that Cordillerans/Igorots occupy in Philippine society. Second, and linked closely to the first, autoethnography draws attention to the marginal position of narrators yet it contextualises this marginality in specific temporal and spatial contexts, hence, it does not impose *a priori* assumptions about narrators' identities. With this in mind, my claim to marginality, and by extension, that of *Bibaknets* members, is relational and contextual. Collectively and individually, I/we experience marginalisation at different times, at different places, in varying contexts. Finally, more than a biographical project, the study is an attempt to make visible Cordilleran voices in social research through their reflexive narratives of indigeneity. The thesis aims to highlight *Bibaknetters* online narratives and locate them within the broader social processes taking place in Philippine society.

Autoethnography attends to the marginalised position of research subjects, yet does not impose essences. If stories are disregarded and not recognised, or if they are ‘difficult to tell, hear and research, a subjective approach makes a study more objective through autoethnography and narrative (Behar 1996, p. 29 in Bridgens 2007, p. 6; Ellis 2004, p. 30). By allowing indigenous peoples to speak through their own online texts, I aim to broaden and enrich public understanding of the complexity of indigenous identity that would be difficult to demonstrate using other qualitative and quantitative methods. Autoethnography evolved within anthropology, sociology and literary criticism where ethnography and life histories are key approaches (Reed-Danahay 1997, pp. 4-9). It is an approach to research and writing that aims to ‘systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)’ (Ellis *et al.* 2011, online). Qualitative researchers interpret and use autoethnography in diverse contexts. For this study, autoethnography is understood as a form of ethnography of one’s own culture (Hayano 1979 in Reed Danahay 1997, pp. 4-5; Pratt 2008).

Autoethnographers are indigenous researchers ‘concerned with examining themselves as “natives” as they are with interpreting their cultures for a non-native audience’ (Deck 1990, p. 241 in Reed-Danahay 1997, p. 128). Hence, I examine the collective autobiographical writing among indigenous peoples, including that of my own, in discussion forums. As a method, autoethnography can be used to focus on deeply *personal* emotional experiences related to trauma, illness, death, and victimization (Anderson 2006; Bridgens 2007; Smith-Sullivan 2008). At the *collective* level, issues of race and ethnic minority identities have also been explored through autoethnographic writing (hooks 1999; Gatson 2003; Moreira 2009; Motzafi-Haller 1997; Rodriguez 2006; Vidal-Ortiz 2004). It is a potent method of illustrating how individuals are ‘complexly positioned social actors’ who occupy central and marginal positions at specific situations (Adams and Ghose 2003). Analysing self-authored narratives provides an opportunity to trace ‘matrices of transformation’ by looking at how indigenous peoples attempt to change ‘distributions of power’ and ‘appropriations of knowledge’ (Foucault 1979, p. 99) as they expand the boundaries of indigenous identity in their online interaction.

Some scholars critique autoethnography because it is ‘merely experiential’ without analytical rigour, and claim that it is mainly about the personal anguish of the researcher (Delamont 2007, p. 2; cf Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). However, experience ‘is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, and always therefore political’ (Scott 1991, p. 797). While I acknowledge that some researchers may engage in self-absorption (Anderson 2006; Delamont 2007; cf. Ellis 2004; Ellis and Bochner 2000), I underline that indigenous peoples’ experiences have generally revolved around issues relating to their physical and cultural survival: the loss of their lands (Bose 2012; Erazo 2010; Landzelius 2006a, 2006b Niezen 2010;); disregard for their political rights (Belausteguigoitia 2006; Biolsi 2005; Forte 2006); disrespect for their indigenous identity (Fong 2006; Iseke-Barnes 2002; Martin 1995); and the challenges of protecting their culture (Christen 2005; Lee 2006; Matthei and Smith 2008; Niezen 2009). Most importantly, indigenous experiences and perspectives are silenced or undervalued, as stated at the beginning of this chapter.

The ability of the Internet<sup>34</sup> to facilitate ‘social interaction between individuals or groups’ (Baym 2010, p. 7; Fornas 2002, p. 23;) is of paramount importance in analysing Cordilleran collective identity narratives. Hence, I share Miller and Slater’s abandonment of the terms ‘virtuality’ and ‘cyberspace’, as these give the impression that the Internet is ‘a kind of laboratory in which social realities and identities can be performed, deconstructed and transcended’ (2000, pp. 4-5). Following the discussion in Chapter 1 (Section 2.6) whereby the Internet is explained as a technology and a medium imbricated in social relations (Baym 2010; Beneito-Montagut 2011; Hine 2000; Jones 1995; Landzelius 2006a; Miller and Slater 2000; Rheingold 1993), I describe my methodology as ‘online’ autoethnography, a term used by other Internet scholars (Baym 2010; Beneito-Montagut 2011; Garcia et. al 2009; Gatson 2011). Here, the term ‘online’ is deployed to draw attention to the mediated aspect of the personal narratives being examined. As a neutral term, it makes no assumptions as to the quality and

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<sup>34</sup> The Internet is defined technically as ‘a network which consists of a number of other networks connected together using the TC/IP set of protocols’ (Oxford Dictionary of the Internet 2003, p. 122). However, it is also loosely used to refer to computer programs ‘that enable particular kinds of communication and sharing of information’ (Hine 2000, p. 27). Meanwhile, the World Wide Web (or the web) is part of the Internet, and described as ‘a collection of documents interlinked by means of hyperlinks’ (Oxford Dictionary of the Internet 2003, p. 122).

authenticity of the narratives, which will be determined by the strength of the empirical data.

Computer-mediated communication offers indigenous peoples a space in which to assert visible authorship. They are found in websites (Landzelius 2006a) and, specifically, in blogs (Longboan 2009; Rabia 2009) and discussion forums (Fong 2006; Iseke-Barnes 2002; Lee 2006; Russell 2001). The ease of access to join forums, create blogs or websites through hosting sites that encourage discussions or offer templates and how-to guides have enabled indigenous peoples from diverse backgrounds to use the Internet more actively. These platforms have facilitated a multitude of indigenous narratives: collective/personal, cohesion/fragmentation, social/commercial, among others. However, Landzelius observes the lack of online autoethnographies by indigenous peoples (2006, p. 11). She notes a clear tone of antagonism against anthropological writing among some indigenous online authors. More importantly, the limited available literature indicates that these platforms engender a sense of community where collective action, shared identity, shared resources and support, and shared rituals and regulation (Baym 2010; Parks 2011) are narrated and experienced.

### **3.3 A Dialogic Position**

As discussed previously, autoethnography allows researchers to express their subject position with regard to their study without hiding behind the text. It is also reflexive in that autoethnography considers how 'the self is always located within, and constrained by, wider forces and pressures in today's global order' (Dicks *et al.* 2002, p. 35). Dicks' and her colleagues' argument that ethnography needs to be both reflexive and global, looking '*into* the self (including the ethnographer's self) and outwards *from* the self' (2002, p. 35, emphasis in original) is consolidated in contemporary online indigenous autoethnographic texts (Lee 2006; Longboan 2011). Indigenous peoples' online writings, often in English, touch on personal and local interests as well as national and global concerns, thus, demonstrating how indigeneity is defined, both in the villages and beyond (McKay and Brady 2005; Miller and Slater 2001).

The choice to study the narratives of peoples from my own indigenous community from the Cordillera region in the Philippines was motivated by a deep interest in our use of the Internet to explore our collective identity as Cordillerans/Igorots. I was fascinated by the array of available blogs, online forums, organisational



websites, YouTube videos and web articles written by and about the Cordillera region and its peoples. I also acknowledge that the pursuit of this topic has been shaped by the agenda of the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program (FFIFP), which partly funded my study. In applying for the fellowship, I had to frame my research within the programme's vision of promoting social justice and change. Focusing on the online interactions among Cordillerans, I sought to understand the issues concerning *Bibaknets* members and how they addressed these through online interactions and collaborations.

### **3.3.1 Insider/Outsider Relations**

At this point, I would like to briefly contextualize my position as a Cordilleran researcher examining my own community. As an indigenous scholar, I am adopting an autoethnographic, narrative approach to make visible my personal engagement within the social context I seek to understand (Dicks *et al.* 2002, p. 35; Reed-Danahay 1997, p. 9). Apart from claiming an indigenous Cordilleran identity, I am also a member of *Bibaknets*, the online community under examination in this study. As I proceeded with my research, my personal experience of marginalisation as a Cordilleran kept seeping into my discussions while I examined the struggles of indigenous peoples to be heard and to be acknowledged as indigenous authors, agents, and actors by dominant populations, the state, and generally those who shape mainstream discourses within Philippine society. Similar to the experiences of other indigenous scholars examining their own identities within their academic work (Donald 2012; Gatson 2003; Kenny 2006; Kovach 2009; Moreira 2012), it became apparent that conventional methods of research are narrow and limiting as they fail to capture the distinctions between Western and indigenous knowledge systems and experiences. As a researcher, I have a commitment to simultaneously 'make the strange familiar, so as to *understand* it, and to make the familiar strange, so as to avoid misunderstanding it' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, p. 231).

The paradox of being an insider and yet an outsider as a researcher is a delicate matter for indigenous scholars examining their own communities. Although he chastises Ladinos and dominant groups in Guatemala for discriminating against Mayans, Victor Montejo calls on his own community to be self-critical in forging an identity that allows them to become 'dynamic agents of their own history and constructors of their own future' (2005, pp. 12-13). Moreover, Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) narrates her initial confidence as an insider studying a community of mothers to which she belonged. But as she progressed with her research, she

realised she was also an outsider as a result of her education and class. Her relationship with the women in the community, her friends and neighbours, changed as she visited them in their homes in the guise of a researcher. They cleaned their homes and offered her food as they would do for a visitor, an *outsider*. She argues that it is 'arrogant' for indigenous scholars to use their individual experience to represent indigenous realities (Tuhiwai-Smith 2012, p. 140). Observing and understanding one's own community 'can unsettle beliefs, values, relationships, and the knowledge of different histories' (Tuhiwai-Smith 2012, p. 140), which is a sentiment expressed by other indigenous scholars (Donald 2012; Kenny 2006; Montejo 2005).

Taking Montejo's and Tuhiwai-Smith's comments as a cautionary tale, I do not examine Cordilleran indigenous identity from a moral high ground of a 'pure' native and as a champion of 'powerless' Igorots (see Motzafi-Haller 1997, p. 215). I fear it is an overwhelming task I may not be able to fulfil as I have been shaped in the interstices of Philippine indigenous and non-indigenous realities. Analysing Cordilleran texts have also allowed me to examine my own perspectives about the idea of a 'pure', authentic native. The desire to understand the processes of Cordilleran indigenous identification has become a research reality through the support of institutions, family, friends and colleagues from both indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds. With Canadian Aboriginal scholar Dwayne Donald (2012, p. 535), I adhere to 'ethical relationality' in understanding human relations in that it 'does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other'. Ethical relationality could be linked to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, which views communication as always filled with tensions, contradictions and multiple voices (Baxter *et al.* 2004, p. 229). Bakhtin saw language as a reflection of the struggles between different social groups (Maybin 2001, p.65; Bakhtin 1981, p. 428). In this sense, the study is a dialogical attempt with my fellow Cordillerans to dissect broader social processes (Anderson 2006) that influence our indigeneity.

Following the discussions above, I am aware of my complex position as an actor. In this study, I stand in a dialogic position with my fellow Cordillerans, *Bibaknets* members and the wider academic community. My views have been shaped in specific contexts in the same way that the views of the people I am in dialogue with, individually and collectively, have been formed under particular conditions. Within our collective narratives are 'specific world views, each characterized by its

own objects, meanings, and values' (Bakhtin 1981, p. 292). They encounter each other in a myriad of ways, sometimes connecting, other times overlapping and even contradicting each other. Thus, I reiterate that the study is a partial view of a constantly shifting narrative (McNay 2000, p. 85; Ochs and Capps 1996, p. 21) of Cordilleran identity.

In using the first-person narrative in my discussions, I assert my subjectivity as a researcher, conscious of the specificity of my position in relation to each member of *Bibaknets*. However, I also share a sense of solidarity and identification as an indigenous person in using 'we' and 'our' in the study. In the discussions, I shift between various viewpoints and voices – student, researcher, *Bibaknets* member, Cordilleran/Igorot, thereby indicating the multiplicity of positions occupied in the study. At the same time, I adopt 'we' and 'our' to uphold the same subjectivity for all indigenous peoples. These terms accentuate that we are fellow readers, collaborators and co-authors in the writing of this academic narrative (Adams and Jones 2011, p. 110). I also acknowledge that we may identify and see ourselves as part of a collective grouping labelled as 'indigenous peoples' but we always stand in relation to others, both indigenous and non-indigenous (Bakhtin 1981).

In exploring Cordilleran/Igorot collective identity, I consider my 'data/field texts' (Chang 2008) as narratives, constructed collectively by the members of *Bibaknets* and myself, in a reflexive, dialogic manner. Scholars acknowledge that computer-mediated-communication (CMC) and the Internet are new social environments that need to be incorporated in research design and procedure (Dicks *et al.* 2005, pp. 2-3; Garcia 2009, p. 53). I highlight the collective, co-constructed nature of this autoethnographic study by considering the members of *Bibaknets* as co-authors. The messages that the members have shared and exchanged with me on the forum have made writing 'a site of *and* method for personal discovery' (Toyosaki *et al.* 2009, p. 58). Autoethnographic texts illustrate the positional and processual nature of identity construction as narratives unfold, develop and change. The immediacy of members' interactions and their offline impact demonstrate and support the arguments made by Internet scholars that offline and online settings are part of 'one social world': online interactions are part and parcel of the human experience (Baym 2010; Garcia *et al.* 2009; Miller and Slater 2000; Rheingold 1993; Wellman 2002).

### 3.4 Research Questions

This study explores in two ways the autobiographical indigenous identity narratives of the members of *Bibaknets*, the longest surviving online indigenous community for Cordillerans/Igorots.<sup>35</sup> First, it analyses how members identify themselves as Cordillerans/Igorots, as these are tied to specific issues and events. Second, it examines how such assertions of indigeneity translate to their interactions as members of *Bibaknets*. Hence, I traced the connections and distinctions between their Cordilleran identity narratives and their *Bibaknets* identity narratives.

*Bibaknets* members are located ‘within relationships and stories’ (Sommers 1994, p. 621) inside and outside *Bibaknets*, enabling us to view Cordilleran identity as relational and processual. Based on the discussions in Chapter 2, I argue that *Bibaknets* members’ autoethnographic narratives function as technologies of indigeneity in the way they constrain and enable the discussions and debates of Cordilleran identity.

The specific questions I aim to examine in the study are the following:

1. What is the socio-cultural profile of *Bibaknets* members?
2. What are the themes of their identity narratives?
3. What issues divide the members?
4. What issues unite the members?
5. What are the collective and personal consequences of their online interactions?

In total, my corpus consists of at least 1000 texts comprising *Bibaknets* messages, blog posts, and interview and chat transcripts. These are broken down into three groups of texts: online messages posted by members on *Bibaknets* generated through my participant-observation between May and October 2009; online discussions between December 2008 and April 2009, focusing on the recurring debate surrounding the term ‘Igorot’, and; transcripts based on the interviews conducted with *Bibaknets* members between June and December 2009. These

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<sup>35</sup> Some members prefer to identify themselves as Cordilleran while some describe themselves as Igorots, a collective term for the indigenous peoples of the region (Finin 2005; Rood 1989). I examine this tension in Chapter 5.

interviews were conducted through online chats, telephone conversations and face-to-face<sup>36</sup> meetings. In addition, I made two overseas telephone calls and held several online chats with Harry Basingat and another founding member of the forum. I have also exchanged several emails with the forum moderators and some members. For each chapter, I will explain the sources of data being analysed. As narratives are found in a 'constellation of relationships (connected parts) embedded in time and space' (Sommers 1994, p. 616), I treat these three groups of texts as relating to one another to form a single yet multi-layered narrative of contemporary assertions of Cordillera identification. These

The findings chapters (Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8) detail how *Bibaknets* members practice specific elements of online communities, including shared identities, shared rituals and regulations, shared resources and support and collective action (Baym 2010; Parks 2011). While the main focus of the chapters are members' identity narratives – as *Bibaknets* members and as Cordillerans - integral to the discussions are the written and unwritten regulations that govern the content and the direction of the members' narratives.

### **3.5 *Bibaknets* as a Field Site**

*Bibaknets* could be described arguably as part of the 'first generation' of online communities that transcend the boundaries of the virtual and real. It is a web-based email group hosted by Yahoo Groups, considered one of the biggest hosting sites for email groups, also referred to as egroups, lists or forums. It uses a format which combines electronic mailing list and a threaded Internet forum. In this study, I will use the term 'forum' to refer to *Bibaknets* as this is how its members describe the community. The term 'forum' is also used by other scholars (Baym 2010, Bennett 2009, Lee 2006, Rheingold 1993) to describe online platforms that facilitate social interaction through the sharing of information, discussion and debate.

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<sup>36</sup> I use face-to-face to refer to communication between copresent individuals. Leopoldina Fortunati, citing Contarello (2003) introduced the concept 'body-to-body' communication to distinguish it from 'face-to-face' interaction (2005). She argues that the term captures more accurately 'communication between copresent individuals' where they interact not just with their faces but with their entire bodies. Baym (2010) explained that 'body-to-body' communication provides a physical context for both verbal and non-verbal cues and used the term in their discussions of mediated communication. 'Face-to-face' is now also being used to describe online video chat conversations where individuals meet 'face-to-face' using their web cameras.

Below is the description of the forum taken from its homepage<sup>37</sup>:

*Bibaknets* is the largest gathering place in cyberspace for every BIBBAKA/Igorot/Cordillera netizen, by birth, affinity or even just for the love of being associated with the names. The internet is no doubt the most powerful medium of communication in the world today. With just a push of a button, you can virtually talk to the entire universe. Start telling a friend or relative with an e-mail account and there's no telling how far this list can go. We know we can do better than just chatting with our own blood brothers/sisters, friends or other relatives. Reach out to the rest of the members of BIBBAKA in the world and let them know you're here. Share news, opinions, insights, jokes or any decent subject that comes to mind. Interesting or not, let's chat like we normally do at a fireside back home, the beautiful Cordillera provinces of northern Philippines. (*Bibaknets*, online)

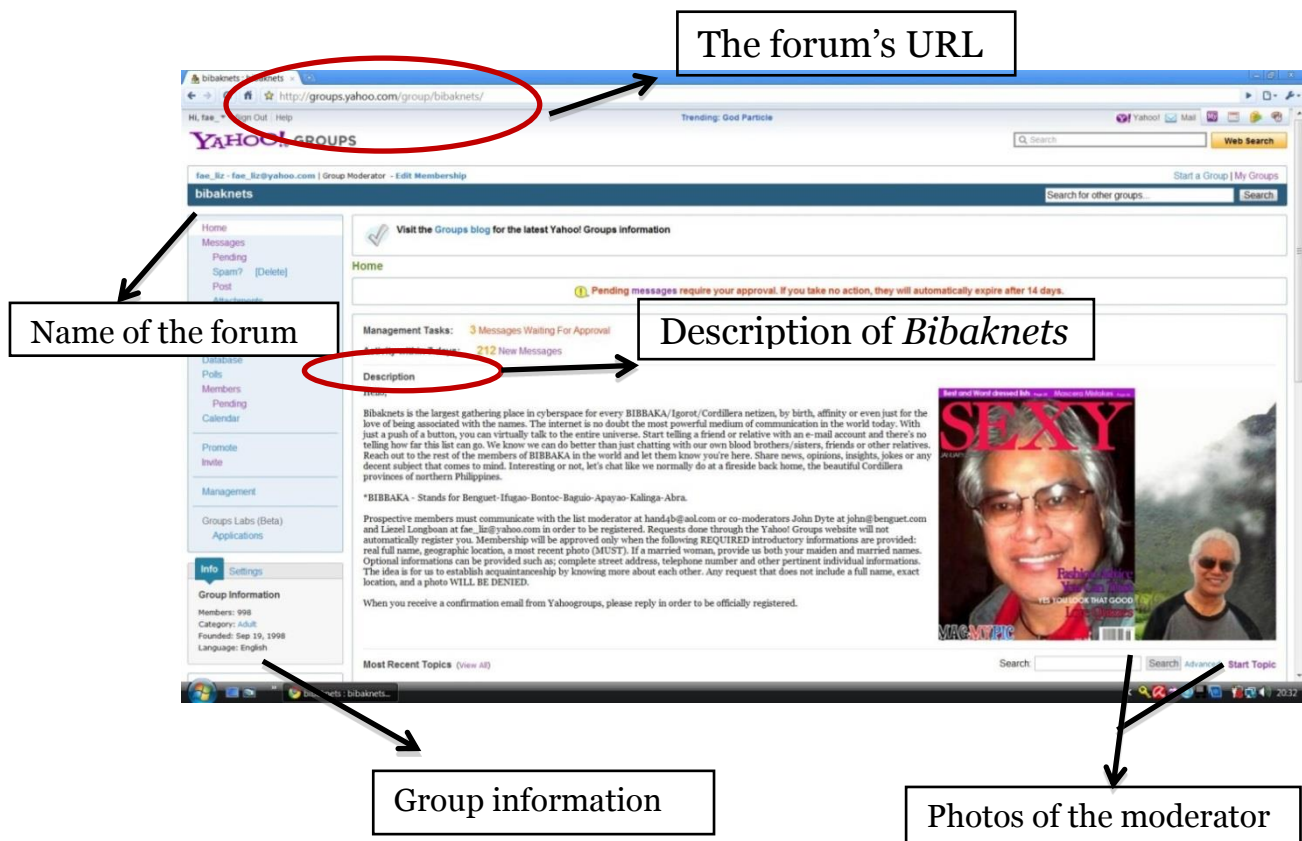


Fig. 3.1 A screen shot of the *Bibaknets* homepage.

At the time I began the study, *Bibaknets* was the biggest and longest surviving online community for Cordillerans. The forum homepage in Figure 3.1 highlights this information. In recent years, a couple of Cordilleran groups on *Facebook*, however,

<sup>37</sup> The group's homepage can be accessed at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Bibaknets/#n=about&c=about&p=0&v=none>

have overtaken the forum in terms of membership size so that in 2011, the moderator changed the forum description to acknowledge this change. The first sentence now reads: '*Bibaknets* **was** the largest gathering place in cyberspace before the advent of social networking sites like Facebook...' [emphasis mine]. Despite these developments, the contributions of *Bibaknets* need to be examined as the forum facilitated sustained and in-depth collective discussions surrounding Cordilleran identity. These discussions have not so far been replicated by newer Cordilleran communities hosted in social networking sites such as *Facebook*. The study captures an important moment in Cordilleran online and offline social life as it traces how the forum served as a key 'meeting place' for Cordillerans both at home and overseas to engage with issues relating to discrimination, migration, and identity. Hence, it was important to examine *Bibaknets* as a forum: the content and the manner of the members' interactions at that particular moment, which taken together, were creating an impact at the local, national and global levels.

The forum description above calls attention to the different sources of highland collective identity. BIBBAKA refers to the city and provinces<sup>38</sup> comprising the Cordillera. The more widely-used acronym is BIBAK, which stands for Baguio, Ifugao, Bontoc,<sup>39</sup> Apayao, and Kalinga, the provinces of the old region created by the Americans. The currency of BIBAK is demonstrated through its adoption as the forum's name. Created on 19 September 1998, *Bibaknets* is the longest surviving forum for Cordillerans. Currently, it is moderated by Harry Basingat and John Dyte, both of whom are based in the United States. At present, the forum has 1011 members,<sup>40</sup> making it one of the largest Cordilleran online communities. Because *Bibaknets* attempts to attract individuals from the entire region, it captures the complexity of Igorot identification. Here, the topics for discussions are wide-ranging: one can read about golf, gardening, sex, politics and religion, among many others.

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<sup>38</sup> BIBBAKA stands for Benguet, Ifugao, Bontoc, Baguio, Apayao, Kalinga and Abra.

<sup>39</sup> Bontoc was one of the *sub-provinces* of the old Mountain Province. After several changes in the administrative form in the Cordillera, Bontoc is now the *capital* of Mountain Province, one of the provinces forming the region. See Section 4.4.2 for a fuller discussion on the acronym BIBAK. Other acronyms have sprung up with the inclusion of new provinces in the region which I will discuss in Chapter 4.

<sup>40</sup> This figure is based on its homepage as of 11 November 2012. The forum had 916 members in May 2009.

The type of computer-mediated-communication that takes place on the forum is asynchronous,<sup>41</sup> where members are not online simultaneously but are reading and responding to messages at different times at greater leisure (Baym 1995, p. 143; Garcia *et al.* 2009, p. 66; Hewson *et al.* 2003, pp. 113-114). The interactions among members follow primarily a text-based, one-to-many format. For example, conversations may only be between two members, where one names and addresses only one particular person, but everyone is able to read the exchanges. Members also share music and photos by attaching them to individual messages. Because members oftentimes tend to banter about sexual matters, the moderators have categorised *Bibaknets* as having ‘adult’ content. In accessing<sup>42</sup> the homepage, one will see a message that says ‘You’ve reached an Age-Restricted Area of Yahoo! Groups’. Members must acknowledge that they are over the age of 18 and click the ‘I accept’ button below the statement before they are permitted to proceed to the homepage.

### **3.5.1 Online Participant Observation**

As a research site, *Bibaknets* facilitates sustained, engaging and diverse discussions that are absent from alternative media platforms, such as newspapers, radio or television, or any offline setting. Interactivity and reach are the main advantages offered by *Bibaknets* as a field site. Interactivity refers to my participation in the conversations taking place online, allowing the checking of interpretations and the learning that occurs through participation (Hine 2000). Reach is another advantage of conducting an online study. The ability of the Internet to deliver messages at the click of a button to a wide audience located in different parts of the world (Gurak 2001, p. 30 in Baym 2010, p. 10) takes into account the contemporary reality of Cordilleran life. Examining *Bibaknets* provides the rare opportunity to situate Cordillerans in the diaspora, as most of the active members live and work outside the Philippines. Although I live in the UK where a considerable number of highlanders reside I would not have been able to capture an overall flavour of Cordilleran diasporic life had I not immersed myself in their online interactions.

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<sup>41</sup> In contrast, synchronous communication involves all participants being online at the same time (Baym 1995) as is the case in chat rooms (Garcia *et al.* 2009; Hewson *et al.* 2003).

<sup>42</sup> Yahoo Groups allows members to choose how and what messages to access in four ways. They can receive them as individual emails or as daily digests. They can also opt to receive only Special Notices sent by moderators or not to get any messages at all but access the group through its homepage.



I had been a member of *Bibaknets* for more than two years at the time I began my online ethnography. I joined the forum in December 2006 after finding it on a Yahoo Groups search. At that time, I was interested in the different Internet activities of Igorots, so I was looking at blogs, personal web pages and forums. *Bibaknets* was one of the very few online groups that was not exclusively for diasporic Igorots or meant only for a particular ethnic group, e.g. Bontoc, Kalinga, Ifugao, etc. As a member, I did not participate actively in the discussions; I was one of its lurkers, members who rarely or never participate in discussions (Preece *et. al* 2004; Nonnecke and Preece 2000). I saw myself as an outsider among the core members of *Bibaknets*. Whereas most of the active members are 50 and over and come from the towns of Sagada and Besao in Mountain Province, I was younger by a few years and come from a smaller town. I was unsure how they would respond to a newcomer like me who did not move within their circles and wondered if I would be able to break into this closed network of people at all. Having been a lurker for more than two years and now a researcher interested in the forum, I had to consider the best method for the study.

A technologically-mediated research environment has its advantages in understanding social phenomena. As a lurker, I was able to observe unobtrusively the discussions and interactions on *Bibaknets*, ‘reduc[ing] the dangers of distorting data and behaviours’ by my presence (Gatson 2011, p. 183; see also Paccagnella 1997, online; Soukop 1999 in Garcia *et al.* 2009, p. 59). Moreover, lurking is acceptable behaviour in many chat rooms (Leaning 1998 online in Beaulieu 2004, p. 147), which is similarly the case on *Bibaknets*, as will be discussed further in Chapter 5. But the decision to pursue an autoethnographic approach with an indigenous research agenda demanded that I immerse myself within my field and emerge from my lurking position. After all, autoethnography involves ‘observation of participation’ (Tedlock 1991), hence, it was important to participate and present myself to the community.

Rather than remain a lurker, I decided it was important to become visible to the members as a researcher in order to pursue a dialogic, narrative autoethnographic approach. Lurking is acceptable in online communities, as in the case of Rebecca Williams (2009), who decided to remain a lurker in her study of a fan community as she was aware that many fans are concerned about possible misrepresentation. But lurking is viewed as a ‘one-way process’ in contrast to ethnography, which emphasises dialogue and collaboration with participants (Bell 2001, p. 198). For

some time, however, lurking allowed me to gain a sense of the field and develop the appropriate method before participating actively in discussions (Thomsen and Straubhaar et. al in Beaulieu 2004). Conversely, I was conscious of the experience of indigenous peoples as ‘voiceless’ and passive subjects of research, and I wanted to ensure I did not perpetuate the same unequal power relations. In the words of Heath *et al.*:

If we take seriously the imperative to locate ourselves within political, historical, and cultural processes of the practice of research, then we do not believe that to lurk online, as a singular mode of ethnographic research, is a satisfactory means to understand and/or relate to our subject matter. (Heath *et al.* 1999, p. 460 in Garcia 2009, p. 59)

Consent by the participants to a research project is essential for ethical research (Ermine 2004; Louis 2007; Wood 2006). With *Bibaknets*, I had to obtain consent at two levels. First, I had to contact the moderators and gain their consent. Despite my initial apprehension, I emailed Harry Basingat in May 2009 to introduce myself and my interest in *Bibaknets* as a research subject.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, I also emailed another *Bibaknetter* based in Austria, asking for advice on how I can get in touch with Basingat. Philip replied warmly, mentioning his personal ties with my family back in the late 70s and that he is also from Bauko, the same municipality as my family. Because Basingat was in the Philippines at the time, Philip suggested that I email John Dyte, *Bibaknets* co-moderator.

One of the most daunting moments of my participant-observation was obtaining the members’ consent. In an earlier email exchange, Dyte advised me that it is best to first introduce myself to the forum members. I was suddenly filled with dread at the prospect of being denied access to the forum. Radhika Gajjala considers herself as a ‘participant “native” ethnographer’ (2006, p. 284) on SAWnet where she was an active member for over a year before expressing her intention to conduct an online ethnography. She and an anthropologist from New Zealand, who also wanted to study the forum, were then asked to submit samples of their work to some members. Unfortunately, both researchers were denied permission after the members put the issue to a vote (2006, p. 276). Gajjala noted that they were concerned how she would ‘validate’ her findings and whether she would present an accurate depiction of the forum. She makes a strong argument that the existence of

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<sup>43</sup> The names of *Bibaknets* owner and moderators, officers of organisations, and public officials (see below) have not been changed. Places and names of other *Bibaknets* members have been anonymised to protect their identities.

marginalised people's voices in public spaces, such as the Internet, does not itself provide 'evidence of decentring hegemonic histories and subjectivities. It is in the way they are read, understood, and located institutionally which is of paramount importance' (Mohanty 1994 in Gajjala 2006, p. 280). I discuss in detail my ethical dilemma with regard to consent in Section 3.6.1.

The highly delicate and personal aspect of online ethnography points to Paul Adams' and Rina Ghose's argument that 'people are complexly positioned social actors' so that they are 'at once socially "marginal" and "central", depending on the situation in question and the type of power one looks for in the situation' (2003, p. 417). That there are hierarchies among 'Third World' women, or indigenous peoples, or any group described as marginalised for that matter, becomes more transparent in online forums. Exercising caution from Gajjala's experience, I posted a message on the forum introducing myself, mentioning my indigenous roots and seeking their permission for me to look at the forum as a possible subject for research. Within four weeks, 10 members replied to my introduction and gave their categorical approval for me to proceed with the study. Although only ten members participated in this process, it is important to point out that no one raised any objections to my plan to study the forum. I then proceeded with my participant-observation between May to October 2009.

### **3.5.2 Interviews and Attendance at Meetings**

Working on the ethnographic principles explored in the previous sections, I triangulated my online participant-observation with email interviews and chats, face-to-face interviews, and attendance at meetings in London, Manila, Baguio City and Bontoc in Mountain Province. In total, I was able to interview 27 *Bibaknets* members, only two of whom I was unable to meet in person. I used a semi-structured interview format<sup>44</sup> based on the online survey questionnaire. Apart from one member, whom I know personally, I have never previously met any of the interviewees. Moreover, the informants participating in the forum were diverse: two were active members or 'elders'; three were formerly active members who have become supporters<sup>45</sup>; and the remainder were lurkers. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit the perspectives and experiences of the relatively silent members of *Bibaknets*. The interviews were meant to complement the online participant-observation, where the discussions were dominated by active, regular

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<sup>44</sup> Please refer to Appendix 2.

<sup>45</sup> I describe in detail the four different types of members on *Bibaknets* in Chapter 5.

posters. While the online participant-observation examined both the members' narratives of Cordilleran identity and their sense of membership to *Bibaknets* as a Cordilleran/Igorot community, the interviews focused on the latter.

The interview participants were selected using the snowball technique. For my interviews in the Philippines, I posted a message on *Bibaknets* one month before travelling to ask who would be available to be interviewed. I received at least 10 replies from members residing mostly in Baguio and Benguet. They posted their mobile numbers, which I copied to my notebook. Once I arrived in the Philippines, I contacted them and made arrangements for an interview. The members I met also referred other members who were willing to take part in the study. Between June and September 2009, I was able to conduct interviews with 13 *Bibaknets* members. At the end of the interviews, I asked the participants if they would like to be named in the study and they all gave their permission. I discussed the ethical issues related to identifying informants (see Section 3.6) and the interviews were conducted in cafes and restaurants suggested by the informants. I also interviewed four experts on the Cordillera who have been engaged actively in the autonomy issue. Dr. June Prill-Brett, Brigida Hamada, Dr. Caridad Fiar-od and Tomas Killip provided helpful insights into the issues surrounding identity categories.

Table 3.1 Interview Types and Locations

	Male	Female	Location
Email/Chat interviews	2	2	UK, US
Telephone	2	3	UK, US
Face-to-face	11	12	UK: London Philippines: Quezon City; Baguio City; La Trinidad, Benguet; Bontoc, Mountain Province

In the UK, I interviewed 12 forum members between 2009 and 2010 in their homes and during Cordilleran activities in London. I arranged some of these interviews through *Bibaknets* and through Igorot-UK, an online forum for Cordillerans residing in Britain, of which I am also a member. Several *Bibaknets* members are also members of Igorot-UK. Basingat arrived from the US in 2010 to be a wedding sponsor to a couple who are also *Bibaknets* members. One of the Igorot community leaders in London decided to organise a *Bibaknets* gathering the day after the wedding, coinciding with her grandson's birthday. The day before the

event, I received a text from Janet, informing me of the occasion. It would be my first time meeting Basingat, so I made arrangements to travel the following day. The UK interviews were constrained by two factors: my residence in Cardiff and the members' legal status as migrant workers. Igorots are concentrated in the capital given the employment opportunities available in the city. I live three hours away in Cardiff where my university was located and where I worked on a part-time basis. Consequently, I arranged interviews and participated in events depending on my interviewees' and my own availability. The second issue dealt with selecting interviewees. One informant explained that migrant status is a sensitive issue as some Cordillerans may have extended their legal right to stay in Britain. Thus, I had to depend on the officers and active members of Igorot-UK, an umbrella organisation of all Cordillera groups in London. As British citizens or work-permit holders, they were confident to speak and share their experiences. With the exception of one, all of my UK interviewees were lurkers who read *Bibaknets* postings but did not really engage with the online discussions. They spoke generally of their participation in the activities of Igorot-UK, prompted by their lack of participation and interest in *Bibaknets* discussions.

### **3.5.3 Non-Random Survey**

At the beginning of the study, I devised a non-random online survey to determine the demographic profile of *Bibaknets* members. At that time, I had not yet been made a co-moderator so that I did not have any access to the members' email addresses for the purposes of conducting a more systematic survey. My decision to send the survey<sup>46</sup> in the early stages of the study was based on my months of observation that only about 30 to 40 members consistently posted messages on the forum. I anticipated that, given the low participation rate of members, I would obtain similar results even if I had access to email addresses and was able to conduct a random survey. More importantly, the survey was intended to provide background data to the members' demographic profile and was not meant to guarantee representativeness and generalisability. Some questions concerned the members' age, gender, income, location and ethnic affiliation, among others. Obtaining a demographic profile of the members was intended to complement the online ethnographic analysis. Sampling bias, low response rate, and the authenticity of responses (Ignacio 2012, p. 240; Whitehead 2007, pp. 784-788; Witte et al 2000, p. 118) are some of the issues that one needs to address in

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<sup>46</sup> Please refer to Appendix 1.

undertaking an online survey. The result of the survey indicated that those who responded were mainly active posters. A total of 99 members participated in the online survey, with 48 female and 51 male respondents from Asia, the Middle East, Australia, Europe and North America. I discuss the results of the survey in detail in Chapter 5.

#### **3.5.4 Analysing Narratives**

In terms of practice, my online participant-observation involved checking my inbox daily and logging on to *Bibaknets*, taking screen shots of particular conversations or threads, and copying and pasting discussions into MS Word. I purposely looked for discussions and issues dealing directly with Cordilleran identity. I maintained a research diary, taking notes of the themes surrounding identity issues and debates. In terms of archiving the messages, I saved all relevant discussions and printed those required for analysis. I switched between lurking and active engagement with the members in order to observe and understand the online interactions and, thus, ask the appropriate questions and clarify members' responses (Ignacio 2005; Gatson 2011). Similar to Sarah Gatson's and Amanda Zweerink's method, my field notes comprised 'literal reproductions of field events, rather than more traditional field notes' (2004: 183). I copied whole threads and related threads in order to capture the context within which they were unfolding (Bennet 2009: 62; Ignacio 2005: 15). Simultaneously, I noted observations and events in my research diary. In total, I examined at least 1000 texts made up of *Bibaknets* messages posted over a 10-month period, including blog posts, and interview and chat transcripts.



Fig. 3.2 Development of a thread or topic on *Bibaknets*

Guided by the research questions and theoretical considerations, I sifted through the unfolding narratives on *Bibaknets* in three ways. First, I looked at the threads of the discussions, which are presented textually, visually, and hierarchically on Yahoo Groups. However, this was not always a straightforward process, as presented in Figure 3.2 above. For instance, some members often used the same subject line but talked about non-related topics. Or in some cases, they used what seemed like irrelevant subject lines but were actually delving into issues related to my research questions. In Figure 3.2 above, for example, the thread was a query for members in the Philippines who would like to be interviewed. But as we can see, the conversation shifts to ‘wi-fi sticks’ (also called ‘dongles’ in the UK) within the same thread. In order to address these diversions, the second part of the process involved grouping specific threads into particular categories which were related directly to issues of Igorot and Cordillera identification. Third, I analysed the debates within each thread or topic using my theoretical frame. I also tried to preserve the original complete message, including errors in grammar. Sections were deleted if they were irrelevant to the discussion. Most messages were written in English, so translation was not required; however, I provided translation where the messages were written in ‘text’ language or in any of the local languages.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

There were several ethical<sup>47</sup> issues I faced over the course of the study, three of which are presented here as dilemmas that configured the direction of the research. The first was my concern to be accepted as a researcher, as discussed in Section 3.4.1. Although 10 members expressed their approval for me to study the forum interactions, I was anxious how the body at large would respond to me as a participant-observer over the course of the study. The active members of *Bibaknets*, those who set the tone and topics for discussion, belong to the upper strata of Cordilleran society: professionals, postgraduate degree holders, authors, business owners, and officers and leaders of various Cordillera organisations in the Philippines and overseas. Most 50 years old and over, which gave them the status of ‘elder’,<sup>48</sup> individuals who, by virtue of age, experience and influence, are perceived to be knowledgeable about Cordilleran social life. I did not know many of them, which I considered an advantage as it allowed some personal and professional distance in my interactions. However, I became cautious not to offend the active members in any way because of their status as opinion-makers on *Bibaknets* and as leaders in the wider Cordillera community. Aware of Gajjala’s (2006) experience of being denied access by her fellow forum members for her study, I became conscious not to disturb the existing internal hierarchy within the group out of fear of being stopped from pursuing the study.

#### **3.6.1 Power Relations**

As discussed in Section 3.2.1, indigenous peoples claim ownership of their knowledge and have actively sought to develop ethical indigenous research methodologies in recent years in response to their negative experience of research by outsiders. *Bibaknets* members are conscious of this point, as this message from Gani shows,

*Here's what I can probably do to help - if you have already formulated your basic thesis, and sub-thesis if you may, maybe it would be good if you forward it to this forum so we could probably share our inputs to it/them. By the way, will you be coming out with a generalized conclusion - or will there be a variance between such effect "in" the Philippines and "outside" the Philippines.*

*Gani, Canada*

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<sup>47</sup> The Departmental Ethics Committee of the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies approved my ethics form prior to the conduct of the study.

<sup>48</sup> I look more closely at the concept of ‘elders’ on *Bibaknets* in Chapter 5, Section 5.4.



Gani's reply came at the time I was seeking access to the forum, so I was slightly unsure how best to reply. In response, I explained that I am taking an ethnographic approach, writing that 'I am not testing any hypothesis nor am I particularly looking for certain things at this stage'. I added that 'I am taking the role of a learner and an observer, more than anything'. Meanwhile, two survey respondents mentioned in the comments section that they would like to be updated of the results of the study. It was at this early period of the study when I became acutely aware of Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007, p. 232) emphasis on pursuing 'an *analytic* understanding of what is being studied', suspending assumptions but aiming to make sense of peoples' accounts. The tension between being accountable to *Bibaknets* members as co-authors of the research and as a researcher aiming to understand Cordilleran social interaction engendered reflexivity on my part throughout the study.

The importance of maintaining a seemingly distant and objective position within the forum became problematic at one point during the study. I had been made a co-moderator in July 2009 and, at that time, I was asked by one of the moderators to decide whether or not a member<sup>49</sup> should be expelled for failing to observe *Bibaknets* rules. Linda, the member who wanted to remove Allan from the forum, is an influential person within the Cordillera community because of her advocacy work. Linda questioned my decision to keep Allan as a member. Rather than insist on my views and unsettle the power relations within the forum, I replied that in the end, I was there only as an observer and that it was the members who have the power to determine the rules of *Bibaknets*. There were a few times during my participant-observation when I felt nervous about posting messages, anxious that *Bibaknets* elders might not welcome probing questions from a member who did not belong to their circle. Niezen noted that indigenous activists using the Internet are indigenous elite (2005, p. 533), which could be similarly said about *Bibaknets* elders. Hence, the shaping and construction of subjectivity, agency and identity, was not only for the members but also for myself. I became aware of the need to take a marginal position within *Bibaknets* in order to explore issues of power relations among its members. I was reminded of bell hooks' observation that the struggle for freedom of expression 'may not even begin with the colonizer; it may begin within one's segregated, colonized community and family' (1999, p. 151; Gajjala 2006).

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<sup>49</sup> This refers to the case of Allan Lamang, which is analysed in Chapter 7.

### **3.6.2 Offline-Online Dynamics**

The second ethical dilemma dealt with the blurred line between online and offline social interactions among *Bibaknets* members. As an insider, one enters the field exposed – the community may not know the smallest details of your life but they know your family and hometown in the way that they would not with a researcher from outside the community. In this sense, it can reasonably be said that studying one's own community can carry greater risk than for those studying other cultures. Arguably, no one is a stranger on *Bibaknets*. When I joined the forum in 2006, I had to give my real name, hometown and profession. In 2009, when I started the study, I had to reintroduce myself and some members who knew me or were related to my family wrote welcome messages. Despite the changing family structures in the Philippines brought about by migration, intermarriage and overseas work, among others, the idea that everyone is related to everyone by blood or affinity<sup>50</sup> continues to maintain a strong hold in Cordillera culture. The possibility of being 'related' to a *Bibaknets* member, no matter how remotely, was a key consideration. The real prospect of meeting members I have never met was another concern during the conduct of the study. I was consciously aware that my research as an insider was connected intricately to my personal life (Denzin 2009; Donald 2012; Hall 1996b; hooks 1999; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012).

### **3.6.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

The final key ethical issue concerned members' identities. One distinct feature of *Bibaknets* is its aversion to anonymity and partiality towards the authenticity of members' identities. Anonymity is technically not permitted in the forum. Prospective members have to email the moderators their real full name, geographic location and ties to the Cordillera in order to be approved for membership. This information has been requested consistently from those interested in joining despite a few changes in membership requirements over the last few years. The forum description also explicitly mentions its goal: 'the idea is for us to establish acquaintanceship by knowing more about each other'. Hence, some persons introduce themselves to the moderators by giving more than the required

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<sup>50</sup> In an interview, Cordilleran anthropologist June Prill-Brett explains that in the past, Cordilleran kinship ties are generally bounded within the geographic limits of the 'ili' or village. But as our ties to the village weakened because of intermarriages and migration, our ethnic identities have also shifted. Consequently, we look at our genealogy to gain support. Brett cited the case of lawyer Alfredo Lam-en, a prominent political leader from Mountain Province. She recalled that Lam-en claimed to have Ifugao roots even if it was only by affinity in order to gain votes during one election campaign. Among *Bibaknetters*, some use two or even three surnames in signing their messages.

information. They mention the full name of the person who referred them to *Bibaknets*, or that they are the sister, brother, cousin or schoolmate of a known *Bibaknets* member. Apart from establishing personal relationships with existing members, some also mention that they are an alumnus of a particular school in a certain village or town in the Cordillera. Some of these introductions are as short as two sentences or as detailed as an autobiographical essay! Providing authentic, accurate personal information is valued in *Bibaknets* as a means of establishing connections to the Cordillera or Igorot culture.

For the online survey, I introduced myself and my research topic, stating expressly that the survey is 'solely for academic research purposes at Cardiff University'. I also included my university email address in the survey form for correspondence (Please see Appendix 1). For the interviews, I explained the nature of the study to participants and then asked if they would like to be named in the study. All of them gave their consent to be identified for the purpose of the research. But as I gathered information revealing serious disputes among some members, I decided against using their real names unless their statements did not mention any sensitive issue. I also revealed names if they were quoted in other published<sup>51</sup> sources, as these become part of the public domain. For the members' postings, all names and places have been anonymised in order to protect their privacy and identity (Bennett 2009, Ignacio 2005). I felt a sense of accountability to *Bibaknets* by presenting my study with care, as I am part of the online community and the wider Cordillera community within which it moves. They had allowed me the privilege to study the forum and I became concerned about how my representations of the discussions and debates would be perceived potentially by outsiders (Galam 2011, p. 74). Aware that I needed to balance this sense of accountability with intellectual integrity, I decided to anonymise names and places. At the same time, obtaining the members' permission to reveal their names as posters was impractical considering the volume of messages I read and analysed. It was not possible to determine which message written by which member would be used in the final copy of the thesis. Most importantly, anonymising their identity would

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<sup>51</sup> One example was a blog article written by Gina Dizon, a writer and *Bibaknets* member. She wrote an article in her blog based on a *Bibaknets* discussion about the display of Igorots during the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in 1909. She names *Bibaknets*' members as sources in her article which may be accessed at <http://kordilleraautonomy.blogspot.co.uk/2009/06/igorots-say-1909-display-was-wrong-as.html>.

not in any way diminish the substance and integrity of the data (Bennett 2009; Ignacio 2005).

Revealing members' true identities, however, is different from naming *Bibaknets* as a forum in my academic work. There is a difference between members' individual identities and *Bibaknets*' collective identity. This emerged when I posted a message in the forum asking if I could name *Bibaknets* in a paper I was presenting at a conference. Co-moderator Dyte replied saying that 'any gathering that lasts more than 10 years deserves its name being mentioned as well as its founder'. Thus, apart from *Bibaknets*, its moderators, some interviewees, and officers of Cordilleran organisations, I have anonymised members' identities and all places mentioned in the study. Indeed, *Bibaknets* has been the subject of a few Cordillera news articles because of its several fundraising activities. It has established a public face as a loose collective of civic-minded Cordillerans.

### **3.7 Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter explored the methodology that guided the research, highlighting the personal and political entanglements of research that focuses on indigenous peoples. I explained and reflected on autoethnography as a form of ethical methodology for indigenous peoples owing to their marginalised experience. I argued that there is a complex and sensitive connection between indigenous peoples' experiences of marginalisation and knowledge production.

Autoethnography as a research approach brings to the fore the iterative relation between ontology and epistemology in indigenous research. In Chapter 2, I explained that indigenous autoethnographic texts serve as technologies of indigeneity as these are forms of empowerment for a marginalised group. But this chapter explains that methodologically, the analysis of autoethnographic texts requires the contextualisation of marginality in specific temporal, relational and spatial contexts. At the same time, I presented the specific methods I used and the ethical issues faced during the conduct of the research. In this concluding section, I examine the concepts of marginality (Adams and Ghose 2003; hooks 1999) and the ethnographic process in determining the direction of the study.

Online autoethnographic texts as they appear in discussion forums differ twofold from traditional written autobiographical writing in the form of printed books or articles. First, the narratives are published in real time, and second, they take the

form of dialogues or conversations between an unlimited number of people, including the researcher. Here, I emphasise autoethnography as a process and as a product (Ellis *et al.* 2011; Reed-Danahay 1997) where the researcher is part of the social world under study (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Reflecting on the opportunity given to me by *Bibaknets* members to pursue my research, I feel grateful as an insider to have been granted access. In parallel, I have become aware of new meanings of marginality as a researcher-outsider and how this has shaped the conduct of the study. As explained in Section 3.2.2, Internet forums serve as new sites for indigenous peoples to explore issues about community, identity and history. For indigenous researchers, the challenge is to participate and capture these narratives cognizant of their insider-outsider position. In online forums, indigenous members argue, collaborate, poke fun at each other and discuss various issues on a daily basis. But the distinct characteristic of online forums to enable members to assert the subjectivity of the Other (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 2012, p. 301) also means that native ethnographers should be prepared for rejection (Gajjala 2006; cf Tuhiwai-Smith 2012), to take extra effort to be accepted (Gatson & Zweerink 2011a, pp. 192-193) and to balance being both an insider/native and an outsider/researcher (Gatson & Zweerink 2011a, Bennett 2009). Examining my approach, I demonstrated in Section 3.5 that online autoethnography allowed me to observe how marginalised Cordillerans are ‘complexly positioned actors’ (Adams and Ghose 2003, p. 417) who take marginal and central positions in diverse situations.

Despite the ‘visible authorship’ (Dicks 2002) for indigenous members facilitated by online forums, Sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 outlined the need to complement online participant-observation as a text-based research tool with face-to-face interviews, meeting attendance and a non-random survey. Hence, I was not only able to capture active members’ narratives through my online observation and participation, but I was also able to speak to lurkers during the interviews. While I sought to gather a holistic picture of *Bibaknets* online and offline interactions, I acknowledge Clifford’s assertion that ethnographic ‘truths’ are ‘inherently *partial*’ yet committed (1986, p. 7). In this regard, I view the study as a descriptive attempt at understanding Cordillera identification processes at this particular period in time.

I also assessed issues of anonymity and confidentiality in Section 3.5. Unlike other studies of online communities where members can be anonymous (Baym 2010; Bennett 2009; Fong 2006; Gatson and Zweerink; Iseke-Barnes 2002; Lee 2006; Martin 1995), anonymity is not permitted on *Bibaknets* where claims of indigenous identity need to be verified by establishing connections to specific places, families and events. The members' preference for authenticity extended to the research where all my interviewees consented to be named in the study. However, I needed to balance the individual members' privacy against that of *Bibaknets'* public identity in the study when I was informed of, and had access to, controversial issues. Despite the members' permission to be named in the study, I decided not to reveal their names to protect the integrity of *Bibaknets* as an influential Cordilleran online community.

Overall, the links between marginality and visible authorship underpinned my methodology. I have discussed that hierarchies and unequal power relations exist among marginalised groups (Adams & Ghose 2003; Baviskar 2007; Gajjala 2006; Igoe 2006). However, the more substantial issue here is the apparent lack of scholarly engagement by indigenous authors themselves with matters revolving indigenous identity construction. By taking an autoethnographic approach, I offered one view as a native researcher together with the narratives of the members of an indigenous online community. The apparent silence of Cordillerans in mainstream media discourse is imbricated in my study of Igorot identity construction. Through autoethnography, I explored identity narratives among Cordillerans as they are found in discourses they construct about their historical and political identities, in both offline and online texts.

The next chapter provides a discussion about the role of Spanish and American colonial policies in the emergence of the category 'indigenous peoples' in the Philippines. More specifically, it examines how American administrative officials created the Cordillera region and categorised its peoples as 'Igorots' and how the Igorots themselves responded to this categorisation. The unequal power relations between colonisers, the state, and culturally differentiated groups in the Philippines are examined in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4

# Constructing Indigeneity in the Philippines

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the power relations between Philippine indigenous peoples, colonisers, the state and dominant populations. I pay particular attention to the operationalisation of governmentality by American colonial officials and indigenous peoples, through technologies of indigeneity. There are three points to highlight in this chapter: first, the census and categorisation of Filipinos by American colonial officials have emphasised the differences of ‘Christian’ and ‘non-Christian’ inhabitants; second, the administrative mapping by American colonial government adopted by the Philippine state has accentuated similarities among the disparate peoples of the Cordillera region. Such ‘dividing practices’ (Dean 2010, p. 156) have underlined points of distinctions between Cordillerans and the mainstream lowland Philippine population that were otherwise absent prior to colonization. The differences between those who embraced and those who resisted colonial influences serve as one of the bases for claiming indigeneity in the Philippines. Third, I argue that the technology of government (Dean 2010) adopted by American colonisers and the state has in turn resulted in the development of a fragile yet strategic identity position among Cordillerans. The combined categorisation of Cordillerans and their administrative mapping continue to influence their relationship with one another and with the larger Philippine society, as highlighted in the narratives on *Bibaknets*.

### 4.2 Creating Philippine Indigenous Peoples

The Philippines is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. There are at least 77 ethnolinguistic<sup>52</sup> groups (NCCA 2007) with 150 living languages (Reid 2010, 2005; cf Gordon 2005). Those who speak these languages also have their own distinct cultures (ADB 2002). Filipinos’ conversion to Christianity during the Spanish colonial period and America’s subsequent colonial policy shaped significantly how these diverse groups would eventually be governed (Finin 2005, p. 40; Hirtz 2003, p. 895). Consequently, ‘some groups define(d) themselves as distinct from a perceived majority and their state institutions’ (Hirtz 2003, p. 895).

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<sup>52</sup> For brevity, I am using the term ‘ethnic’ to describe these cultural groupings.

After the fierce fighting that took place during the Philippine-American War, the US created the Philippine Commission to oversee the administration of its new colony. The province of Benguet in north Luzon became the centre of American interest after witnesses reported to the Commission that it was rich in gold, silver, copper and iron (Fry 2006, pp. 1-3). The Commission was intent not to make the same mistakes as the Spaniards, who were unable to penetrate north Luzon, so it established the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes headed by David P. Barrows, an anthropologist trained at the University of Chicago (Fry 2006, pp. 8-10, 15-18; Finin 2005, p. 28). He was responsible for organising the 1903 census, which formalised how the country's different socio-linguistic groups would be categorised, dividing residents into two groups: 'Christian or civilized tribes' and 'Non-Christian, or wild tribes' (Finin 2005; Rodriguez 2010).

The most influential American who set in place the administrative policies in dealing with indigenous minorities was Dean Worcester, who served as the country's interior secretary for 13 years (Finin 2005; Hirtz 2003). A zoologist, Worcester classified tribes based on their physical characteristics and guided American policy in delineating one province from another, establishing US colonial hold among the Igorots (Finin 2005; Rodriguez 2010). The Americans' preoccupation with classification and census was similar to the British colonial government's approach in categorising its Indian subjects, thus creating what Arjun Appadurai describes as 'a new sense of category identity' (1996, p. 116). The cultural mapping continued by Filipino Christian elites under the guidance of American administrators further intensified the gap between Christian and indigenous Filipinos (Rodriguez 2010, p. 20). American colonial policies have not only divided Filipino Christians and Philippine indigenous groups, but more importantly, the category identity they have imposed continues to shape the Filipinos' contemporary idea and experience of national, ethnic and indigenous identities. The American efforts to classify, count and map Filipinos demonstrate the workings of governmentality, creating knowledge about Filipinos in order to better manage them (Foucault 1979, 1977). Classification methods based on anthropomorphic data constituted 'political technology of the body' as a form of strategy (Foucault 1977, p. 26). As Foucault argued, 'power and knowledge directly imply one another' so that one speaks of 'power-knowledge' as an iterative process (1977, p. 27).



Today, Philippine indigenous peoples comprise a significant segment of the country's population. The majority of indigenous groups belong to the poorest regions in the country due to their 'centuries-long isolation' (NCIP 2003). Based on extrapolated data, there are roughly 12 to 15 million<sup>53</sup> indigenous peoples in the Philippines, comprising between 15 to 22 percent of the country's total population (ADB 2002; Molintas 2004). A report by the Asian Development Bank (2002) explains that the actual figure<sup>54</sup> could be higher because some groups or individuals may have been excluded by the government for failing to fall within their technical definition. That there is no accurate and current cultural mapping in the Philippines foregrounds the problematic issue of indigenous identification, discussed earlier in Chapter 2. For instance, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) lists 110 Philippine ethnolinguistic groups, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) estimates that there are about 60, while the Episcopal Commission on Tribal Filipinos (ECTF) says there are some 40 such groups (Molintas 2004; NCIP 2013). Under Philippine law through the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA),<sup>55</sup> indigenous peoples are defined as follows:

Indigenous Peoples/Indigenous Cultural Communities (IP/ICC) refer to a group of people sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized a territory. These terms shall likewise or in alternative refer to homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as a community on community-bounded and defined territory, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, and who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, become historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of descent from the populations which inhabited the country at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains. (Republic Act 8371, Section 3h, Chapter 2).

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<sup>53</sup> This is the figure often cited by researchers (ADB 2002, Molintas 2004, Finin 2005) based on the 1995 Philippine census.

<sup>54</sup> As of 8 May 2013, the NCIP website shows that there are 11, 320, 476 indigenous Filipinos.

<sup>55</sup> Republic Act (RA) No. 8371 (1997), 'An Act to Recognize, Protect and Promote the Rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples, creating a National Commission of Indigenous Peoples, Establishing Implementing Mechanisms, Appropriating Funds Therefore and for Other Purposes'.

The above definition extends the UN's conceptualisation (see Sec 2.2.1, page 18) in several ways. Specifically, I draw attention to the phrase describing some indigenous Filipinos as those who have 'become historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos' arising from their resistance to colonization (Reid 2009, pp. 7-8). Indigenous groups from the Cordillera in North Luzon, Philippines fall within this category.

### **4.3 Negotiating Indigeneity in the Cordillera Region**

The tensions of identifying Philippine indigenous peoples is based largely on the competing categories and labels that they have created for themselves and those imposed by others and the state for political, religious, economic and other reasons (ADB 2002; Afable 1995; Finin 2005; Nagel 1995; UN 2008). In Mindanao in south Philippines, for example, the introduction of Islam has divided the population into two categories: the *Lumad* and *Moros* (ADB 2002; Trinidad 2011). Those who converted to Islam became the Moros while those who did not came to be known as *Lumad*, meaning 'born of the earth' (ADB 2002, p. 4). Despite this distinction, folk literature from the various ethnolinguistic groups in the area indicates that many Muslim and *Lumad* communities share the same ancestry (ADB 2002, p. 4). Both the *Lumads* and the Muslims are considered indigenous peoples of Mindanao (Gaspar 1999; Molintas 2004; Trinidad 2011).

Lawrence Reid addresses directly the constructed nature of indigeneity among the Cordillerans. He argues that, based on archaeological findings and his research of languages in North Luzon, the original inhabitants of the Philippines are the Negritos whose ancestors arrived in the islands some 50,000 years ago (Molintas 2004, p. 274; Reid 2009, p. 8). The Negritos, 'the literally true indigenous Filipinos', are no longer found in the Cordillera and live mainly in the Sierra Madre mountain ranges and surrounding provinces (Reid 2009, p. 8). Meanwhile, the estimated 150 languages spoken in the Philippines today, including those spoken in the Cordillera region, *all* belong to the Austronesian languages, developed only 4,500 years ago (Reid 2009, p. 10; Reid 2005, p. 1). Reid explains that the ancestors of 'indigenous' Filipinos, including the Cordillerans, were as indigenous as the ancestors of majority of lowland Filipinos (Mackay 2006, p. 294; Reid 2009, p. 10) such as the Ilocanos, Visayans, and Tagalogs, among many others. That the truly indigenous Filipinos are the Negritos and that there are several groups of Filipinos who have been culturally differentiated because of their resistance to colonisation emphasises the point that Spanish and American colonisation have

altered the socio-political relations among the diverse ethnic groups in the country, leading to the dominance of some and the minoritisation of others.

#### 4.4 The Cordillera Region and Its Peoples

Spanish and American colonial policy in the region has left lasting consequences among Cordillerans' sense of indigenous identity. Specifically, this section will focus on how American colonial rule shaped highlanders' relationships with one another and with lowland Filipinos. I examine how governmentality is manifested in the political formation of an indigenous region in North Luzon – as technology of power on the part of American colonial officials and the Philippine state, and as technology of the self on the part of Cordillerans. The notion of government as the 'conduct of conduct' refers to how authority is exercised over individuals and 'abstract entities such as states and populations', but also how individuals and groups govern themselves (Dean 2010, p. 19; Lemke 2001).

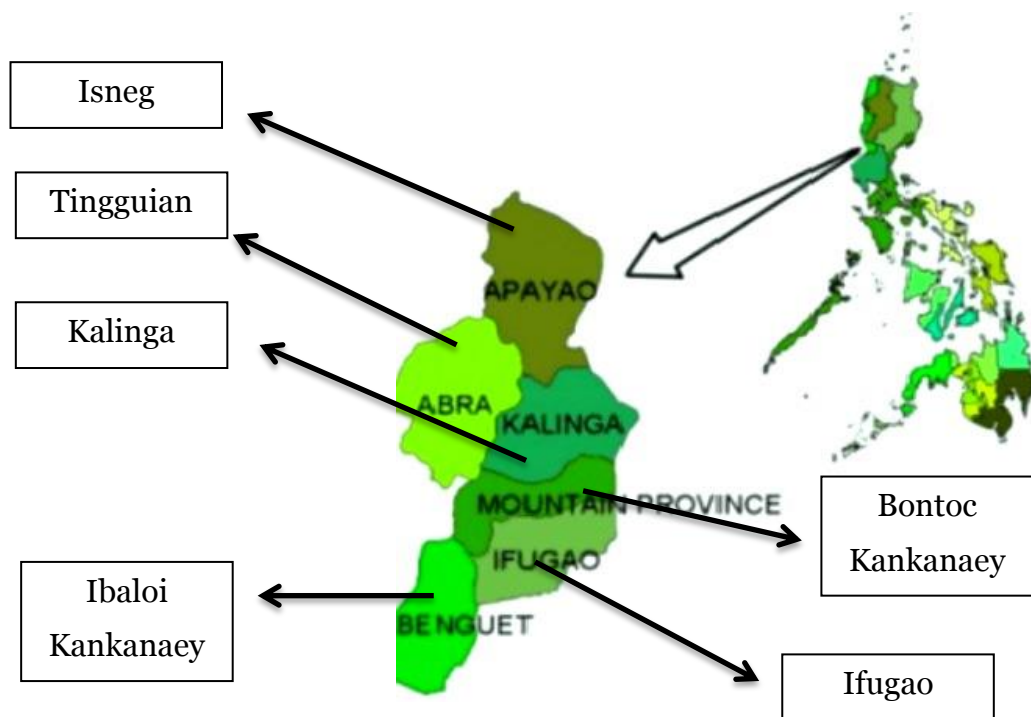


Figure 4.1<sup>56</sup> Map of the Cordillera region and the major ethnic groups in the region.

□ Ethnic group

<sup>56</sup> Map taken from the National Statistical Coordination Board – CAR website but revised for purposes of this thesis. The map may be accessed at [http://www.nscb.gov.ph/rucar/fnf\\_car.htm](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/rucar/fnf_car.htm).

Apart from living in a mountainous region, Cordillerans exhibit cultural heterogeneity. Figure 4.1 shows the map of the region and the major indigenous groups residing each province. They are the Ibalois, Kankanaeys,<sup>57</sup> Bontocs, Ifugaos, Kalingas, Isnegs and Tingguians (Afable 1995; Prill-Brett 1987; Rood 1989). They speak distinct languages, have diverse indigenous political structures and processes, and practice different economic activities (Finin 2005; Fry 2006; Prill-Brett 2000; Rood 1989). Cordillera-born anthropologist Patricia Afable writes that, with the exception of Bontoc, *all* ethnic categories and labels for peoples in the Cordillera ‘arose from descriptions of outsiders’, rather than within the groups themselves (1995, p. 12). Afable writes that the category Bontoc may have originated from the Bontoc peoples themselves (1995, p. 12). In the same manner, all the names of the provinces in the region were imposed by the Americans as part of its ethnological survey and regional mapping efforts (Scott 1962, p. 236). Conversely, the naming of groups in the region was based generally on their location (‘mountain’, ‘forest’), direction (upstream/downstream), cultural or behavioural traits (‘enemy’), or an aspect of their language (Afable 1995, p. 12).

Cordillerans are referred to collectively as Igorots by the lowland population. It is a category used by Spanish and American colonial officials, and later by the Philippine state, to identify the highlands peoples. Based on the 2010 government census, there are 1.6 million<sup>58</sup> inhabitants of the Cordillera Administrative Region. They are described as having occupied their ancestral lands since time immemorial, and ‘have kept their traditions, distinct languages, and socio-political systems’ over the centuries (ADB 2002, p. 25; Finin 2005; NCIP 2003; Rood 1989). The failure of the Spanish colonial regime to bring them under their control (that is, to Christianise them and to penetrate their land), has made Cordillerans a ‘minority’ compared with the Christianized Filipino ‘majority’ (Finin 2005; Rodriguez 2010). Their classification as ‘non-Christian’ by the Spaniards was adopted by the Americans who created the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes in 1901 (Forbes 1928 in

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<sup>57</sup> Kankanaey as an ethnolinguistic group is divided into two categories: Southern Kankanaeys, referring to those who speak the language in parts of Benguet, and Northern Kankanaeys, referring to those who speak the same language in parts of Mountain Province. It also spelt as Kankanay, Kankana-ey, or Kankanaey. I am using Kankanaey rather than Kankanay as used by Afable (1995) because the former spelling is the one used by Kankanaey themselves and by several Cordillera scholars (cf Follosco 2011; Casambre 2010; Rood 1989, Prill-Brett 1987).

<sup>58</sup> The latest available data from the National Statistics Office based on the 2010 census gives the Cordillera population at 1,616,867. However, this figure does not reflect the ethnolinguistic composition of the population. As I explained in Section 4.2, there are conflicting statistics about the number and size of Philippine indigenous communities.

Finin 2005, p. 29; Fry 2006; Rodriguez 2010). In its circular, the Bureau explains that the use of the term 'non-Christian' referred not to their pagan ways but to their 'low level of civilization' compared with the 'newer patterns of Spanish-Filipino-American life' (Keesing 1934, p. 13). After gaining independence from America in 1946, the Philippine government has mostly adopted the same colonial policies towards indigenous peoples.

#### **4.4.1 Creating Mountain Province for Mountaineers**

At the time America colonised the Philippines, indigenous groups in the Cordillera lived in autonomous settlements. They did not have a sense of unity or identity as peoples belonging to one region, but their loyalty was 'confined to community and kin' (Keesing 1934, p. 39; Scott 1993). Several Spanish missionaries, German scholars and American ethnologists have classified them based on culture, language and race (Keesing 1934; Scott 1974). Their studies have shown the difference between highlanders and lowlanders, but Cordillera scholar Dr. William Henry Scott stressed that highlanders were also different from each other (1974). Some scholars reveal that there was fluid inter-ethnic relation among them and those from the surrounding lowland communities (Afable 1995; Finin 2005; Scott 1974). Lowland and highland communities traded clothes and weapons even before the Spanish colonisation. For example, Igorot loin cloths were actually woven in the Ilocos region in the lowlands, while head axes as weapons or tools can be found in different towns in the region (Scott 1974). Even early scholars acknowledge that it was sometimes difficult to distinguish highlanders from their Ilocano neighbours because the former cut their hair and practised Christian customs (Miller 1905, p. 12 in Finin 2005, p. 39). Moreover, the political boundaries created by the Spaniards 'did not reflect real ethno-linguistic divisions', according to Scott (1974, p. 310). The province of Bontoc included Kankanaey speakers in Sagada, Kalinga speakers in Besao, and Ifugao speakers in Banaue. Thus, the imposition of labels and categories, and geopolitical boundaries assigned to them by Spanish and American colonisers have obscured the variable and dynamic nature of their interactions (Afable 1995; Finin 2005; Fry 2006; Scott 1974).

Based on the 'scientific' classification of highlanders into particular categories, Dean Worcester combined seven provinces<sup>59</sup> within a supra-province called 'Mountain Province' on 18 August 1908. Worcester named each province to represent the typology of peoples he came up with who lived within its borders; for example, Apayao was for the 'Apayaos', or Benguet for 'Benguet' communities (Finin 2005, p. 42). Worcester justified the creation of a separate region by the oppression of highlanders by their lowland counterparts (Fry 2006). Under his administration, American deputy governors had direct rule over the subprovinces, as he believed that 'only under direct American control could highlanders become mentally and morally, as they now are physically, a superior type of citizen' (Finin 2005, p. 44). In this manner, Worcester systematised the highland-lowland divide (Finin 2005; Fry 2006; Labrador 1997), exercising governmentality (Foucault 2001 [1982], 1979) in implementing strategies and programmes constituting 'Igorots' as a collective, seemingly homogenous body living in one region known as the Cordillera.

The rise of educated Igorots eventually allowed them to participate in electoral politics. In 1966, Alfredo Lam-en, representing the second district of Mountain Province in the Philippine Congress, proposed the division of Mountain Province because of the political opportunities it presented. Finin explains that local officials foresaw how such a move would multiply the elective and administrative positions within the provinces (2005, p. 196). A new law, Republic Act 4695 or the Division Law<sup>60</sup> was approved in Congress, paving the way for the separation of Mountain Province into its constituent provinces. Apart from the increased political positions provided by the new law, the separation of the provinces could be interpreted as recognition of the heterogeneity of indigenous cultures within the Cordillera, which were often downplayed by colonial officials for the purpose of imposing order.

Under Martial Law, President Ferdinand Marcos<sup>61</sup> used regionalisation once more to pursue his economic agenda for the country. He enforced the 'Ilocanization' of the Cordillera by joining its provinces with Region I (Ilocos Region) and Region II<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The province was divided into the subprovinces of Amburayan, Apayao, Benguet, Bontoc, Ifugao, Kalinga and Lepanto. But in the 1920s, Amburayan and parts of Lepanto were taken away from Mountain Province (Casamber 2010, p. 17).

<sup>60</sup> The new provinces were Kalinga-Apayao, Mountain Province, Ifugao and Benguet.

<sup>61</sup> Marcos declared Martial Law on 21 September 1972 and had absolute law-making powers.

<sup>62</sup> Abra, Baguio, Benguet and Mountain Province formed part of Region I while Ifugao, and Kalinga-Apayao joined Region II.

(Cagayan Valley) (Galam 2008, pp. 90-91). Both regions are the closest neighbours of the Cordillera and are populated mainly by Ilocanos. Earlier, Marcos declared all lands owned by cultural communities as ancestral lands but that these may be alienated and disposed of under certain conditions. Marcos excluded Abra, a province with a large indigenous population known as Tingguians (Galam 2008, p. 91). His intentions for Abra became clear when he approved massive logging operations by Cellophil Corporation in the province<sup>63</sup> (Finin 2005, p. 237), subsequently, threatening the lives and livelihood of highlanders. Igorots held widespread protests in Baguio and Manila against the building of a timber mill and a dam as they joined other Filipinos in rallies against the imposition of Martial Law.

The threats faced by Cordillerans during the Marcos dictatorship and their continued marginalisation encouraged militant highlanders to demand for an autonomous region with the return of democracy under Corazon Aquino. But the factionalism among Cordillera leaders and the substantial differences in their demands – between autonomy and regionalisation<sup>64</sup> – led President Aquino to sign Executive Order 220 creating the Cordillera Administrative Region (Casambre 2010, pp. 20-26; Finin 2005, p. 265). The order served to reconstitute the old regional grid created in 1908 (Finin 2005, pp. 265-266) but this time with the inclusion of Abra. Today, the region comprises six provinces and one city, namely: Benguet, Ifugao, Mountain Province, Apayao, Kalinga, Abra and Baguio City (refer to Figure 4.1 above). It needs to be stressed that intermarriage between indigenous groups, migration of Ilocanos in the region during the American period, and outmigration of Igorots to neighbouring regions for work have and continue to shape the population profile of the region.

The above discussion illustrates the contrasting operationalisation of governmentality by American officials and Cordillerans' own technologies of indigeneity with respect to the creation of the Cordillera region. Geo-mapping undertaken by American colonisers served to impose geographic and cultural boundaries for Cordillerans as a totalising and marginalising power (Foucault 2001 [1982], p. 332). Creating a regional grid facilitated a centralised system for the

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<sup>63</sup> The owner of Cellophil was Herminio Disini, Marcos' relation by marriage and a golfing partner.

<sup>64</sup> In 1984, Cordillera lawmakers filed bills in the National Legislature seeking the creation of a separate *administrative* region similar to the supra-province that existed before 1966 but this did not materialize (Casambre 2010: 18; Finin 2005: 265; Rood, 1989: 3).

colonial administration in terms of imposing order among highlanders, accessing their natural resources, building schools and roads, and documenting their ways of life (Finin 2005). In contrast, Cordillera leaders have adopted the same strategy as a means to empower themselves. Proposing the concept of technologies of indigeneity (Foucault 2001 [1982], 1997a, 1979; Cruikshank 1999) in Section 2.3, I explained that indigenous peoples use programmes, strategies and tactics (Erazo 2010) to empower themselves. Citing the continuous institutional discrimination against Cordillerans by the state, highlander activists aim to forge a regional collective identity using the term 'Igorot' to claim political and cultural rights for the region (Casambre 2010, pp. 32-33) as a technology of indigeneity (cf Cruikshank 1999; Erazo 2010). However, I emphasise that not all indigenous groups in the region ascribe to the category of Igorot.

#### **4.5 Who is an Igorot?**

This section examines the tension among highlanders in the use of the collective category 'Igorot' imposed by outsiders on Cordillerans. The category has systematically found its way into history books (Corpuz 2007; Finin 2005; Fry 2006; Quibuyen 1999; Scott 1974, 1993), photographs (Afable 1995; Rafael 2000; Torres 2006; Vergara 1995) and newspapers (Ocampo 2006). I will explore two specific moments when diverse groups within the region came together to speak as Igorots and claim their highland identity. Scholars have offered various explanations for the origin of the term 'Igorot', which is not part of any of the languages within the region. One of the earliest written documents where the term appears was in 1698 in Fray Gaspar de San Agustin's *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas*. He describes the 'mountaineer Indians, called Sarnbales and Igolotes; who possess the richest mines in the whole island' (de San Agustin 1698 in Scott 1962, pp. 237-237). According to Filipino anthropologist June Prill-Brett, it may have been derived from the Ilocano word '*gerret*' which means 'to cut off, or slice' and can be traced to the head-taking past of Cordillerans (Finin 2005, p. 11). Head-taking, however, was not confined to the Cordillera and was documented to have been practiced even in the lowlands (Scott 1962, p. 239). By the 1940s, Cordillerans no longer resorted to head-taking to resolve disputes after it was outlawed by the Americans (Amores 2007; Keesing 1934; Prill-Brett 1987). A second, but often cited, explanation is that offered by Scott (1993). He writes that Igorot was based on the Tagalog word *golod* meaning 'mountain chain' joined by the prefix *i* which means 'people of' (1993, pp. 44-45). Scott points out that there was 'no record that the subject people ever called themselves Igolots-but then they



didn't call themselves by any other one name either' (1962, p. 236). Given these two views, I am more inclined to support Brett's theory considering that the Igorots have interacted more closely with their Ilocano neighbours, compared with the Tagalogs, who lived further south. Regardless of its etymology, it is clear from historical accounts that highlanders have never referred to themselves as Igorots.

#### **4.5.1 Igorots are Not Filipinos**

A key moment when Cordillerans united to defend their common highland identity was when they were disowned by a Filipino leader. After the Second World War, Carlos Romulo wrote *Mother America* (1943), a book that aimed to convince Americans that the Philippines was ready for independence. Romulo was on leave as Lieutenant Colonel in the Philippine Army when he wrote the book in the United States. Harvard-educated, Romulo lamented that people in the Orient 'have neither representation nor voice' in the press. Citing the Philippines, he expressed annoyance that the Igorots were represented as Filipinos:

These primitive black people are no more Filipino than the American Indian is representative of the United States citizen. They hold exactly the same position – they are our aborigines...Doubtless the Igorot has a better claim to the Philippines than we – as the American Indian has prior claims on America.

The fact remains that the Igorot is not Filipino and we are not related, and it hurts our feelings to see him pictured in American newspapers under such captions as, "Typical Filipino Tribesman". We passed laws in the Philippine Legislature forbidding pictures under such captions to be taken out of the Philippines. (Romulo 1943, p. 59)

If Romulo felt that the Filipino was being misrepresented by the American press, then Igorots were being misrepresented twice; once by Americans, and a second time by a fellow Filipino. But it was 10 years later, in 1953, when an Igorot lawyer encountered this book. By this time, Romulo was the UN Secretary-General and was seeking office as President of the Philippines. Lawyer Alfredo Lam-en severely criticised Romulo in an article in the *Philippines Free Press*, a nationally-circulated magazine, and in the *Baguio Midland Courier*, a local newspaper. In a letter, Romulo apologised to Lam-en, who he described as a Filipino like himself. The *Baguio Midland* published the controversial passage and, for two months, Cordilleran readers wrote passionate letters to the editor questioning Romulo's claims (Finin 2005, pp. 182-183) and asserting both their Igorot and Filipino identities. Writing in English, Vice Governor Timothy Chaokas stated that Igorots

have shown their bravery in defending Bataan and Corregidor during the Second World War. The controversy about *Mother America* was the first time that Igorots publicly and collectively asserted in writing their highland identity. In examining letters to the editor, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen observed that letter-writers' personal opinions can build solidarity among community members (2001, pp. 315-316). Cordilleran readers showed such solidarity in their indignation at what Romulo wrote. The pejorative connotations of the term Igorot, from wild, dirty, rough and uneducated (Afable 1995, p. 13; Finin 2005, p. 188; Scott 1962, p. 242), motivated Congressman Louis Hora of Mountain Province to introduce a bill in 1958 banning the word in any printed material (Scott 1962, p. 234). It is worthy to point out that, despite the controversy, the *Baguio Midland* did not take up Romulo's attack on the Igorots in any of its editorials between June and July 1953.

#### **4.5.2 Martial Law and the Rise of Igorotism**

Cordillerans developed a more pronounced and politicised 'Igorot' collective indigenous identity during the period of Martial Law. In a speech<sup>65</sup> she wrote for the third Igorot International Consultation (IIC) in 2000, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz narrated being part of a militant 'Igorot' student organisation in Manila in the 1970s called 'Kilusan ng Kabataan ng Kordilyera' (KKK<sup>66</sup>, Cordillera Youth Organization). Their headquarters was at the home of William Henry Scott, an American Episcopal missionary and historian. In the 1960s, he established the Igorot Studies Center at Saint Andrew's Seminary in Manila where future priests, mainly from Bontoc and Sagada, studied liberal arts and theology (Finin 2005, p. 222).

Tauli-Corpuz is a Kankanaey from Besao, Mountain Province. She wrote that she attended the 'First Cordillera Congress for National Liberation' in 1971 in Bontoc where Scott presented a paper describing 'how Igorots have been minoritised and discriminated against because of their resistance against more than 300 years of

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<sup>65</sup> Tauli-Corpuz was unable to give her speech during the IIC as she was then the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations and had meetings to attend in New York. It was read by her representative, Bernice See. A copy of the IIC programme and proceedings is held by the Cordillera Studies Center, University of the Philippines, Baguio City. Tauli-Corpuz was chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues from 2005 until 2010.

<sup>66</sup> KKK also stands for Kataastaasang Kagalanggalang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan (or Highest and Most Respectable Society of the Children of the People), a revolutionary organisation founded by Andres Bonifacio in 1892. Bonifacio led the revolution against the Spaniards in 1896 (Quibuyen 1999). The use of the KKK by Cordilleran activists gives an indication of their political leanings.

Spanish colonization'. In recalling the events of the congress, Tauli-Corpuz used the word Igorot to refer to all highlanders, as this passage shows:

In this Congress we reread our history, discussed *our present situation as Igorots* [emphasis mine] and identified the key problems which we strongly feel should be addressed. As early as that time, we already identified that Igorots who were then considered cultural minorities, are suffering from multiple burdens and levels of oppression. (Tauli-Corpuz 2000)

One of the papers Scott (1993) presented during the Congress was entitled *The Origin of the Word Igorot*, an essay celebrating the culture and independence<sup>67</sup> of highlanders. This essay is the most often cited work that defines the term Igorot. Scott underlined that highlanders were collectively and consistently referred to as Igorots by colonisers, lowlanders and scholars. Although he mentioned the Ifugaos' and Kalingas' resistance to the word (Scott 1993 [1971]: 68), he emphasised that different groups have adopted the term. He used the word Igorot throughout his paper to extol the achievements of highlanders, indicating his position that they should see themselves as a unified collective body (Finin 2005). Clearly, Scott has influenced how Cordillera student activists, like the young Tauli-Corpuz, regarded their status as ethnic minority within the broader Philippine context.

Tauli-Corpuz wrote how she and other highlander activists became involved in mass mobilisations and campaigns against two large-scale construction projects in the mid-1970s that threatened the lives and livelihoods of thousands of Cordillerans: the Chico River Dam project in Kalinga and Mountain Province, and the Cellophil logging operations in Abra (Finin 2005; Galam 2008; Rood 1989). The increased militarisation in Kalinga and the peoples' resistance to the project led to the murder of Macli-ing Dulag, a village elder of the highest rank and a staunch oppositor of the Chico Dam project (Finin 2005, p. 257). The killing of Dulag by officers of the Philippine Armed Forces served as a catalyst for awakening a pan-Cordillera consciousness among Igorots. At this time, Cordillera activism

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<sup>67</sup> Citing historical data, Scott (1993) commended the bravery of Igorots in resisting Spanish colonisation unlike lowland Filipinos and that American officials recognised their gallantry against the Japanese during the Second World War. He offered a counter-narrative about lowland-upland relations as it highlighted the peaceful interactions among Igorots and their neighbours.

flourished with the involvement of students, professionals, priests and seminarians in the Episcopal Church, and other concerned citizens. The extent of the threat posed by these projects resulted in a more unified, policy-level campaign at asserting a distinct pan-Cordillera or a pan-Igorot identity. Dulag's death may have prevented the building of a dam and logging facility but it did not cement highlanders' self-identification as Igorots. Interestingly, the peoples of Abra and Kalinga, from where Dulag originated, have resisted this label (Afable 1995, p. 13; Malanes 2002).

#### **4.6 Collective Identity and Collective Category**

The discussion in Section 4.5 illustrates that between the 1950s and the 1980s, the word Igorot became a unifying category when indigenous ethnic groups in the region struggled for equality and respect in their cultural rights, particularly in relation to their lands. It remains a powerful category today in shaping the relationship between highlanders and lowlanders. However, among highlanders, the term Igorot has become divisive over the years, creating barriers between those who proudly adopt the term and those who do not. Hence, I am adopting the more neutral term Cordilleran in this thesis to refer collectively to persons from the Cordillera region who identify themselves as indigenous. On the one hand, the term Cordilleran may be 'devoid of any cultural content' (Rood 1989, p. 13) but it does not give the wrong impression that there exists a 'monolithic' culture in the region which the term 'Igorot' conveys (Prill-Brett 2000, p. 3). As Prill-Brett explained, '[T]here is diversity in cultural beliefs and practices among the different ethnolinguistic groups of the Cordillera' (Prill-Brett 2000, p. 4). What the term 'Cordilleran' underlines, however, is the peoples' shared geographic origins (Rood 1989, p. 13).

In a survey relating to Cordillera autonomy,<sup>68</sup> Steven Rood (1989, p. 13) attempted the difficult task of measuring highlanders' region-wide identification with three collective categories: 'Igorot', 'Cordillera' and 'Montañosa' (or 'Mountain'). The majority of respondents, including lowlanders residing in the region, preferred to describe themselves as 'Cordilleran' rather than 'Igorot'. The study showed that only three indigenous groups – Bontoc, Kankanaey and Ibaloi – described themselves as Igorots. Meanwhile, the peoples of Ifugao, Kalinga, Abra, and

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<sup>68</sup> Lydia Casambre's (2010) *Discourses on Cordillera Autonomy* and Steven Rood's (1989) paper *Issues on Creating an Autonomous Region in Cordillera, North Philippines* offer an authoritative discussion on Cordillera autonomy.

Apayao generally do not adopt the collective term Igorot to describe themselves (Afable 1995 & 2004; Molintas 2004; Rood 1989). With the exception of the peoples of Apayao, the second group prefer to call themselves Cordilleran (Rood 1989, p. 13). The survey showed that highlanders are divided between calling themselves Cordillerans and Igorots.

Peoples from the Cordillera may claim a region-wide identification with all other indigenous groups, but their primary affiliation is with their villages or ethnic groups (Casambre 2009; Prill-Brett 1987; Young 1976 in Rood 1989, p. 11).

‘Cordilleran’ is a neutral term, a geographical description referring to those who reside in the provinces in the region (Rood 1989, p. 11), which may explain why the majority of respondents could identify with the term. Most importantly, Rood acknowledged that investigating broad levels of identity is a complicated undertaking that forces one to make simplified assumptions. He explained that the survey results have not provided a clear picture of ‘how wider loyalties are developing in the Cordillera’ at that time (1989, p. 13). Moreover, Rood’s study did not explore the existence or absence of a Cordillera-wide identity; rather, the survey highlighted the *diversity* of collective identification among the respondents.

The literature indicates four possible sources of identification among Cordillerans. Highlanders use one or a combination of these, depending on the context of the situation (Botengan 2000). First is identifying with specific places – the villages, towns, or provinces where they were born or raised. Another way is to ascribe with their ethnic group or community. In the Cordillera, there may be two or three different ethnic groups living in the same town or province, as in the case of Benguet and Mountain Province. The town of Itogon, Benguet, for instance, has at least three ethnic indigenous communities: Ibaloi, Kankanaey, and Kalanguya (Follosco 2010, pp. 46-47). A third possible way of identification is with the geographic region, that is, the Cordillera. And finally, asserting a collective, indigenous political identity linked primarily with the term ‘Igorot’. The latter two are distinct forms of collective identification among highlanders conflated by two Cordillera scholars.

Two important contributions to the literature concerning Cordilleran collective identity have been written by Gerard Finin (2005) and Lydia Casambre (2010). Finin analysed Cordilleran identity within the area of regional planning, while Casambre looked at the same issue through the lens of political science. Finin

advanced that the Americans created Cordillerans' sense of collective, regional identity through the imposition of a colonial administrative grid (2005). He posited that, through the public schools, an agricultural school, road building projects and the opening of the mining industry, highlanders had the opportunity to interact and work together. He equated such consciousness of being part of one territory with the apparent adoption of the term 'Igorot' by the Cordillera intelligentsia. He wrote that 'the growing sense of Igorotism, or shared regional consciousness' (2005, p. 175) had profound implications on highlanders' views of themselves. Finin gave a detailed explanation on how some Cordillera leaders after World War II and during the Martial Law period described themselves Igorots and used the term for various political purposes; however, he failed to state that *not* all highlanders wished to be referred to as Igorots. Thus, he overlooked the need to distinguish between two different collective terms: one that conveys identifying with the region, that is 'Cordilleran', and; one that asserts an ostensible homogenous indigenous identity, that is 'Igorot'.

Lydia Casambre, on the other hand, challenges the existence of an 'Igorot' identity. Analysing the texts written by key political actors pushing for regional autonomy in the Cordillera, Casambre looked specifically at the position of the Cordillera Peoples' Alliance (CPA), a federation of progressive and militant highland organisations. The CPA presses for the recognition of a regional collective land rights among highlanders, using the term Igorot for all the peoples of the Cordillera as revealed in this extract from their brochure:

The Cordillera Peoples' Alliance was organised with the aim of uniting the Igorots, the diverse people of the Cordillera – the Bontoc, Ibaloi, Ifugao, Isneg, Kalinga, Kankanaey, Tingguian, Bago, Balangao, Gaddang, Kalangoya and other ethnolinguistic groups – for the defense of their ancestral domain and for self-determination.

The Igorot people need to unite on the basis of common history, culture, and current problems. They also share the same territory and ancestral domain – the Cordillera... (Casambre 2010: 32)

Casambre argued that the phrase 'need to unite' implied the ideological nature of 'Igorot'<sup>69</sup> as a collective identity among highlanders (2010, p. 33). She interpreted that, because some highlanders do not want to call themselves Igorots, such Igorot collective consciousness is yet to emerge as 'a vision or project'. Hence, she

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<sup>69</sup> Also referred to as 'Kaigorotan' or the collectivity of Igorots (Casambre 2010, pp. 30-33).

concluded that, ‘There was, and is, no pan-Cordilleran identity’ (2010, p. 97). Similar to Finin’s oversight but reaching a different conclusion, Casambre has conflated Cordillerans’ lack of use of the Igorot label and their identification with the region.

Based on interviews and online discussions on *Bibaknets*, which will be presented in the following four chapters, I argue an alternative position to that offered by Finin (2005) and Casambre (2010). Highlanders’ sense of collective indigenous identity is not and should not be linked to the use of the term Igorot. On the one hand, I agree with Finin that highlanders have a pan-Cordilleran identity. There is an emergent Cordilleran collective consciousness as evidenced by the offline and online interaction and cooperation among *Bibaknets* members. In contrast, I diverge from Finin in that such consciousness is not tied to the use of the term ‘Igorot’. On the other hand, I agree with Casambre that the term Igorot is an ideological term. Having said that, I posit that such consciousness is not captured by their self-ascription of the category Igorot, a label imposed by outsiders.

#### **4.7 Discussion and Conclusion**

Indigeneity in the Philippines has been shaped by the marginalisation of certain groups of peoples who resisted Christianity during the colonial period and maintained their traditions and customs, unlike the majority of the population. This has been systematised during the American colonial period when ‘Christians’ and ‘non-Christians’ were distinguished from each other for the purposes of colonial administration. In the Cordillera region in North Luzon, several diverse groups of communities speaking different languages and practising different cultural traditions have been categorised and mapped onto a regional grid. In doing so, colonial officials highlighted Cordillerans’ difference and obscured their similarities with their lowland neighbours.

The creation of the geographic region of Mountain Province, later renamed as the Cordillera Administrative Region, also required the creation of knowledge about the peoples living in this region. Igorot as a collective term used initially by Spanish and propagated by American colonial officials became the dominant term used to refer to the peoples of the Cordillera. Contrary to Finin’s (2005) analysis that the use of Igorot signified a Cordilleran collective consciousness, I analysed that highlanders have adopted this imposed category for strategic purposes in order to empower themselves. This was demonstrated by Cordillerans’ acts of

protest against Carlos Romulos' claim that they are not Filipinos, and the building of infrastructure projects that threatened their lives. I expound on the strategic use of Igorot and the tensions it generates in the next four chapters.

Cordillerans' changing socio-economic circumstances and the political relations between regional leaders and the national government within the last 30 years are re-shaping their collective identification with the term 'Igorot'. For decades, Cordilleran leaders have described themselves as Igorots as a technology of indigeneity to claim their rights and protest acts of discrimination and injustice against them. Today, Cordillerans face new forms of discrimination and many have abandoned the term Igorot. While these sentiments have been captured previously in surveys and informal studies, the online discussions found in *Bibaknets* reflect complex narratives, which have not been reflected in previous studies. Chapter 5 analyses *Bibaknets* as a Cordillera online 'community', looking at its membership rules. More specifically, I examine three cases of members' online life cycle, understanding how they joined the forum and the factors that shaped their participation and/or non-participation in the discussions.



## Chapter 5

### From Igorots to E-gorots

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to examine how *Bibaknets* has been constructed as an online community for Cordillerans. Indigenous media and indigenous rights scholars generally highlight the use of the Internet by indigenous peoples to explore the collective aspects of their indigenous identity (Ginsburg 2008; Landzelius 2006a; Lee 2006; Niezen 2010; Wilson and Stewart 2008). As I explained in Chapter 4, the Cordillera region is marked by a plurality of languages and cultural practices (Prill-Brett 2000; Rood 1989). Despite their cultural diversity, members join *Bibaknets* with the main purpose of connecting globally with other Cordillerans on the basis of a shared, collective indigenous identity. At the same time, forum membership is motivated equally by the need for social support. Indigenous online communities have become translocal (Appadurai 1995) sites for creating linkages between diasporic members where shared indigeneity is only one of the motivating factors of membership.

This chapter has two objectives: first, it will describe the general profile of *Bibaknets* members in order to contextualise their online interactions; and second, it will examine *Bibaknets* as an online community using the indicators drawn from the works of Baym (2010) and Parks (2011). In this chapter, I focus specifically on the members' shared identities and shared rituals and social regulation. I argue that membership of *Bibaknets* involves the observance of written and unwritten rules for interaction, demonstrating the workings of technologies of indigeneity. Members may assert and 'prove' Cordilleran identity, but power relations among members determine how membership is eventually played out in the forum.

I examine several interview and online narratives to weave together a broader picture of *Bibaknets* as a Cordillera online community. Using the survey results first discussed in Chapter 3, I attempt to look closely at the situatedness of the members' motivations for joining and participating in the forum. Examining the personal motivations and circumstances of *Bibaknetters* may enable us to see more closely how these bear upon their sense of collective identification with the forum and the Cordillera.

## 5.2 *Bibaknets*, the Greatest Dap-ay in the Sky

As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.6, indigenous identification is generally framed as inherently collective (Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Colchester 2002; Kenrick 2004; Kingsbury 1998; Morgan 2007; Niezen 2000, 2003, 2005 and 2009; Sanders 1980; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012; UN 2009), thus, indigenous collective identity is also interwoven with the concept of community. In this section, I analyse *Bibaknets*' presentation of itself as a Cordilleran online community and the members' sense of belongingness to the forum. One element of an online community is members' identification as being part of a specific grouping. Members demonstrate emotional attachment to at least 'some other members' and to the community in general (Parks 2011, p. 109). They express emotional ties by posting messages, interacting with other users and naming themselves as a collective.

The collective aspect of online communication among Cordillerans has been analysed in two studies focusing on blogs (Longboan 2009; Rabia 2009). Stephanie Rabia analysed Igorot blogs and argued that bloggers 'positively self-identify themselves as Igorots or as members of specific Igorot ethnic groups but do not share a collective understanding of the (*sic*) Igorot identity' (2009, p. 319). Despite the apparent contradiction in this statement, Rabia concluded that there exists an Igorot online 'speech community' because bloggers demonstrate shared ways of speaking. Among other indicators, bloggers identified themselves as Igorots or as members of specific ethnic groups, and that they value Cordillera news and current events (Rabia 2009). Meanwhile, I examined Cordilleran bloggers' interaction in relation to their efforts to remove a controversial statue in Baguio City (Longboan 2009). In the article, I explained that Cordillerans from diverse ethnic groups collaborated to have a statue they perceived as derogatory to their 'Igorot' identity taken down. I argued that their collective action, facilitated through blogs, was an assertion of their collective indigenous identity.

On its homepage, *Bibaknets* describes itself as a forum open to 'every BIBBAKA/Igorot/Cordillera netizen, by birth, affinity or even just for the love of being associated with the names'. The acronym BIBBAKA stands for Baguio City and the six provinces comprising the Cordillera region. Therefore, apart from individuals of indigenous parentage, prospective members include immigrants to the Cordillera who identify with the region and its culture, lowlander spouses of highlanders and anyone who wants to be part of the virtual Igorot community.

Described as ‘netizen’, *Bibaknetters* are not only citizens of nation-states, but also ‘citizens of a globally connected Internet’ (Mackinnon 2012: 1). That the majority of members live outside their villages but are linked globally through the Internet highlights the diasporic condition of many Cordillerans. Despite the seeming inclusivity and openness of the forum, membership is regulated by two requirements: potential members must email the moderators with one, their *real* full name and two, their geographic location. I look more closely at membership requirements in Section 5.4 below.

### 5.2.1 Dap-ay in the Kankanaey Tradition

*Bibaknets* describes itself as a ‘*dap-ay* in the sky’, or a village meeting place in cyberspace. The Kankanaey<sup>70</sup> term ‘*dap-ay*’ refers traditionally both to a physical structure and an indigenous decision-making process in the community, which was once a role exclusively for male elders or ‘*amam-a*’ (Comila 2007; Prill-Brett 1987). In an interview, Dr. Caridad Fiar-od explains that, as a physical structure, the *dap-ay* is ‘a place where elders gather and make their corporate decisions relative to management of community affairs that revolve around certain customs and traditions affecting the peoples ‘way of life’. As a decision-making institution<sup>71</sup>, it follows an informal structure composed traditionally of older men (Comila 2007, p. 8; Prill-Brett 1987, p. 7), convening as a council of elders. Fiar-od, an active member of *Bibaknets*, explains that they are not elected by the community and their membership emanates from their cultural competence and integrity. However, a hierarchy of functions is observed among the members as to who may perform executive, legislative or judicial roles. Tomas Killip, presidential adviser for the Cordillera region, explained that presently, older women who are regarded as leaders in the community can also be part of the ‘*dap-ay*’ elders. Elders are respected and valued in these cultural communities; they are given the role of decision-makers, due largely to their ‘seniority and rich experience in life’ (Prill-Brett 1987, p. 39). Elders in indigenous settings are generally regarded as leaders ‘who manifest their strong grasp of indigenous socio-political systems and values’ (CPA and AIPP 2012, p. 43).

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<sup>70</sup> Kankanaey is one of the seven major ethnic groups in the Cordillera.

<sup>71</sup> The concept of community decision-making as being lodged with a council of elders is documented not only among the Kankanaeys but also among the Ibalois, Tingguians and Bontocs (Prill-Brett 1987: 42) in the Cordillera region.

The use of *dap-ay* to describe the forum is indicative of its history. Edwin Abeya is one of the founders of the Igorot Global Organization (IGO), an international organisation of Igorots comprised mostly of US-based professionals and entrepreneurs. In 1997, he began a mailing list called *igorots@onelist* to plan the second Igorot International Consultation (IIC) in Arlington, Virginia. Jerry Abeya, Edwin's brother, narrates that the original list constituted a small group of Cordillerans living in different parts of the United States. In an online chat, Jerry explained that the list served as a means for fellow Igorots living in the US to maintain contact with each other. After the event, Harry Basingat took over and renamed the forum as *Bibaknets*. Although the current membership of *Bibaknets* and IGO overlap, they are distinct and independent from each other.

Basingat created *Bibaknets* on September 19, 1998 using the hosting site Yahoo Groups. He is originally from Sabangan, Mountain Province before he migrated to the US in 1977 to join his wife. In a telephone interview, he explained that he changed the name 'igorots@onelist' to *Bibaknets* because the former 'was not inclusive of all people from the Cordillera provinces'. He said that there were debates about his suggestion, but he knew that some fellow highlanders, such as the Ifugaos, did not want to be called Igorots for historical and cultural reasons. I would like to underline three intertwined points from these accounts. First, the creation of *Bibaknets* has been directed and shaped by individuals from Mountain Province in the Cordillera. They also belong to the Kankanaey indigenous ethnic group, which explains the use of the Kankanaey term *dap-ay* to describe the forum. Second, although the forum was created and led overall by Kankanaeys from Mountain Province, it aims to attract all indigenous groups from the Cordillera. The emphasis on creating a forum mainly for indigenous Cordillerans appears to be the fundamental *raison d'être* of *Bibaknets*. Taking the first and second points together, in using the Kankanaey term *dap-ay* to portray the forum, Basingat is drawing from his specific cultural heritage to appeal to a broad spectrum of Cordillerans with diverse cultural traditions to become *Bibaknets* members. As I discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.4, the highlands is characterised by a plurality of languages and cultural traditions. The last point is that the forum was created as a means for diasporic members in the US to keep in touch with other Cordillerans in the Philippines and in other parts of the world. In summary, the collective aspect of Cordillera indigenous identity underpinned the creation of the forum.

### 5.2.2 Redefining ‘Dap-ay’

*Bibaknets* members have given ‘dap-ay’ a new meaning, using the term to describe the forum as a meeting place for sharing stories and dialogue, rather than as a place for decision-making. As the description indicates (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5), *Bibaknets* is ‘a gathering place’ for Cordillerans in different parts of the world where members are encouraged to participate and contribute ideas. It can be argued more accurately that *Bibaknets* can be framed as a village (‘ili’) in the sky, where people who come from the same village, town or region – in this case, the Cordillera – can join in the conversation. However, members compare *Bibaknets* not to a traditional village but to a café, bar or restaurant. In an interview, Jessica explains that ‘*Bibaknets*...it’s like a bar where there are many tables. If you have just come in...you need to listen to the talk, if you don’t like it, go to another table. The topics are at different levels’. Members acknowledge that, similar to a café or a restaurant where people come to meet and sit in different tables, *Bibaknets* has several topics in which people can join. In a long-running discussion about Ifugaos-Igorots, Harry wrote,

*To all, I will leave this **table** [emphasis mine] open for two more days. After that, the moderators will no longer entertain postings on this Igorot/Ifugao issue. It will not be the end of course for we all know that there will never be an end. New Igorots and Ifugaos are born every second and if the educational and doctrinal trends don't change from the parents, they will continue to debate...*

*LET LOVE REIGN AND RAIN ALWAYS!*

*<> HA LEE, DA KING <>*

By comparing the forum to a café with many tables, *Bibaknetters* acknowledge that the forum is primarily a space and place for socialisation. In a discussion about the longevity of *Bibaknets*, Harry explained members’ attraction to participate in the discussions. ‘It’s not religion, not economics, not politics, not science, not careers, not about highly intellectual matters. Guess what, it’s the BANTERING, it’s the teasing, the joking, it’s all about the lighter side of life’.

The image of the *dap-ay* and Igorot elders was used by the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT)<sup>72</sup> in its print advertisement in 2001. The

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<sup>72</sup> PLDT is the Philippine’s largest telecommunications firm.

advert shows three male Igorot elders<sup>73</sup> or *lallakays* wearing their traditional clothes and headgear sitting in front of an earthen jar and an open fire (Torres 2009). One blurb states, ‘Someone emailed me about starting an e-business’, while another declares, ‘That will make us ‘e-gorots’ (Cimatu 2002; Fong 2008). The advert portended the widening online engagement by Cordillerans in the next couple of years. *Bibaknetters* began to describe themselves as E-gorots sometime after the advert came out. Adrian, in August 2002, welcomed a friend from his village who had joined *Bibaknets*, saying; ‘Welcome to the cyberworld of e-gorots’. Gilberto, a medical doctor, echoed the same observation about the interactions on the forum, but stressed its diasporic element. In a message posted in September 2003, he described the forum in these terms,

*And den it transmuted [sam say, transmogrified] into what it is now - a global transoceanic organ for connecting those in the e-gorot diaspora who wanted or needed a communication tool dat's faster & cheaper dan snailmail and da telfon or da telegraf [ini one remember how this worked?].*

*Gilberto, Philippines*

The term ‘E-gorot’, as used by forum members, reflects the increasing role of the Internet, not only among Cordillerans but in Filipinos’ daily lives. In 2011, the Philippines was described as the world’s social networking capital, posting an overall 95 percent penetration rate of three social networking sites: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (Stockdale and McIntyre 2011<sup>74</sup>). Whereas the US has 43.8 percent Facebook penetration rate, the Philippines stands at 93 percent, making the country the top Facebook<sup>75</sup> user worldwide (Stockdale and McIntyre 2011). The Filipinos’ Internet sociability complements its status as the ‘texting capital of the world’ (Braid and Tuazon 1999; Celdran 2002; Thomson 1999 in Sy 2001, p. 300; Wireless Intelligence 2007 in Mendes, *et al.* 2007, p. 8;).

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<sup>73</sup> The original photo used in the advert was re-posted on *Bibaknets* by one of its members. It appears that the men are ‘venerable Sagada elders’ and two members even know them by name. Attachments are now excluded on *Bibaknets* so that I could not retrieve the photo posted in 2002.

<sup>74</sup> The report appeared in *24/7wallst.com* and cited in the 2012 Broadband Commission for Digital Development Report by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). The article may be accessed at: <http://247wallst.com/2011/05/09/the-ten-nations-where-facebook-rules-the-internet/>

<sup>75</sup> The authors reveal that the top ten users of social networking sites such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *LinkedIn* are found in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Malaysia and Indonesia ranked sixth and seventh, respectively, while Chile, Argentina, Colombia and Venezuela took the fourth, fifth, ninth and tenth spots (Stockdale and McIntyre 2011).

For Cordillerans who are able to access the Internet, they are not only netizens but are also E-gorots, indigenous Cordillerans who are connected globally to the Internet (McKinnon 2012). Gilberto's message emphasises how the Internet's speed and reach enable diasporic members to stay in touch with one another. From using traditional media forms, such as letters, the telephone and the telegraph, members are now able to communicate using their mobile phones, computers and laptops. However, considering Basingat's observation, I propose that the most important function of the Internet, particularly of online communities for Cordillerans such as *Bibaknets*, is that it enables individuals of diverse ethnic affiliation to speak to each other, explore their history and discover how it has shaped and continues to shape their regional identity.

### **5.3 50 Years Old and Over as *Bibaknets* Elders**

At this point, it is necessary to provide a typology of members on *Bibaknets* to understand the relationships and interactions among the members. I draw upon Amy Kim's (2000) typology of membership in online communities in developing categories that reflect more closely the interactions and frequency of members' participation on *Bibaknets*. Hence, this typology does not necessarily reflect the quality of their messages but is indicative of their hierarchical relationship. Kim (2000) described her typology of membership as a 'life cycle' where members progress in terms of their involvement in the community. Meanwhile, *Bibaknets* membership is hierarchical and becoming an elder as a leadership status can be both an achieved and ascribed status. For instance, one can become an elder not only by one's membership longevity and discursive skills, but also by one's social position and influence.

There are four mutually-exclusive member types within the forum: elders, supporters, novices and lurkers. Similar to the traditional concept of elders as cultural guardians, as discussed in the previous section, *Bibaknets* elders are 'respected sources of cultural knowledge and insider lore' (Kim 2000). They are seasoned members 'who share their knowledge, and pass along the culture' (Kim 2000) within the online community. In this sense, Kim's use of the term 'elder' to describe online community leaders is similar conceptually to the indigenous idea of elders discussed in Section 5.2.1. However, *Bibaknets* elders do not only exhibit cultural competence in the traditional sense that is defined among the Kankanaeys and Bontocs, Ibalois, and Tingguians (Prill-Brett 1987, p. 42). The contemporary idea of elder within *Bibaknets* is closer to the Kalinga idea of *pangat* who possesses

‘wealth, lineage, family connections with other *pangats*, personality, cooperativeness, fairness, oratorical ability, [and] a record of having settled cases of controversy between kinship groups’ (Prill-Brett 1987, p. 40). *Bibaknets* elders are diasporic, hold university degrees, are fluent in English and occupy leadership roles in Cordillera organisations within their own communities, wherever they may be located. They initiate discussions and suggest actions in their messages. They are seldom contradicted by supporters, novices and lurkers.

One of the astonishing characteristics of *Bibaknets* is that majority of its *active* members are at least 50 years old. Based on the online survey conducted at the beginning of the study, members aged 50 and over were in the majority (39) in the forum. They were followed by those between 40 to 49 years old (29) and 30 to 39 years old (19). Those aged between 20 and 29 (6) and below 20 (2) represented the smallest number. That older members appear to be well-represented in the egroup is one of the reasons for its stability, according to John Dyte, co-moderator. He writes in one of the discussions in the forum:

*As I think of reasons, it just dawned on me that its possible we have been around so long is because the die-hards(members+ moderators) are mostly older people. A younger crowd would have a much quicker and faster changing life pace because they would be dealing with a new family, new jobs, building a home, etc, while we(older) folks are pretty much set. We still have our jobs but we are at a point where we have more control of what we do with our time.*

*John Dyte, USA*

Studies of Internet use by age in the Philippines, the UK and the US all show that younger people use it more than older people (Nielsen 2011, online; OxIS 2009; Zickhur & Madden 2012). *Bibaknets* clearly indicate a uniqueness that has yet to be captured by existing data. However, it needs to be pointed out that Internet use among over 50s in the US at 77 percent (Zickhur & Madden 2012, p. 4) and the UK at 76 percent (OxIS 2009, p. 17) is significantly higher than the Philippines’ pitiful three percent (Nielsen 2011, online). Considering these data together, it may be inferred safely that the unusual profile of *Bibaknets* members within the Philippine context may be explained by their geographic location. As I explain in Section 5.4.2 below, 67 out of 99 respondents live overseas, mainly in the US, Canada and the UK. In this sense, *Bibaknets* members in the over 50 category are in a far better position than their Filipino counterparts.



*Bibaknets* members are also highly educated. To reiterate, the survey does not necessarily reflect the members' educational profile as a whole, but is indicative of the *active* members' level of education. Out of 99 respondents, 19 hold postgraduate degrees, 9 have reached postgraduate levels, 43 have university degrees, while 18 have reached university level. Those who obtained secondary and vocational courses comprise a total of 8 members, while two did not provide answers. More than half (68) of those who responded were above 40 years old.

Rather than the term 'regular' (Kim 2000), I use 'supporter' to describe the second hierarchical category of *Bibaknets* membership. 'Supporters' are long-time members who post in the forum at least once in two months and are generally known to the elders. They participate in discussions but often adopt a respectful or neutral position. They are supporters in the sense that they generally approve of and participate in activities suggested by the elders. 'Novices' refers to new members (or 'newbies') who are still learning the ways of the forum (Kim 2000). They may post occasionally, but have very limited participation in discussions. I define lurkers as members who only post messages once or twice a year (Nonnecke and Preece 2000; Preece *et. al* 2004, p. 202). They prefer to read messages and view the forum primarily as a source of information. On *Bibaknets*, novices and lurkers are rarely heard in the discussions. The descriptions of these roles serve mainly as a guide to understanding the influence and frequency of members' participation on *Bibaknets*. For instance, supporters may sometimes be more active than the elders but, generally, both supporters and elders have a stable presence in the forum.

Lurking is the norm among *Bibaknets* community members, a typical behaviour found across different online communities (Baym 2010; Katz 1998; Preece 2004). As I explain in Section 5.4.2, roughly 10 percent of *Bibaknets* membership participates actively in the discussions. Of these, only three to five percent consistently post messages on a weekly basis. Although tolerated, lurking is otherwise discouraged on *Bibaknets*. Studies of online communities show that lurkers comprise the largest segment of their membership, from fan communities to software support groups (Baym 2010; Katz 1998; Preece 2004). In a survey to determine people's reasons for lurking, Jenny Preece and her colleagues found that 53.9 percent of 1,188 respondents felt browsing was sufficient for their needs and did not feel any obligation to post (2004, p. 216). Moreover, 28.3 percent gave shyness as a reason for not posting, while 15 percent wished to remain anonymous.

In other studies, fear of being treated poorly by other members discouraged lurkers from participating (Katz 1998), while lurking was found to be more prevalent in communities that do not respond to new posters, thus, indicating that new members should be given special attention (Preece et al 2004, p. 221).

#### **5.4 Becoming a Bibaknetter**

This section examines the membership rules of *Bibaknets*. As mentioned in Section 5.2, *Bibaknets* welcomes as members all who claim a connection to the Cordillera region. However, I will demonstrate in this section that such openness does not translate in practice within the forum. I argue that members are drawn initially to join *Bibaknets* because of their shared identities as Cordillerans, but that such intention is overlaid with the need for ‘affiliation, social support and affirmation (Donath 1996 in Yong *et al.* 2011, p. 683). I use social support to refer to ‘the flow of emotional concern, instrumental aid, information, and/or appraisal (information relevant to self-evaluation) between people’ (House 1981 in Riding 2004, online). Moreover, I demonstrate that membership to the forum is governed by internal relations of rule (Cruikshank 199), which limit the contours of identity construction within the forum. It is worthwhile to remember that Kankanaeys from Mountain Province started *Bibaknets*, as explained in Section 5.2.1. They also comprise a significant proportion of the forum. I examine three interview narratives to explore members’ identification with the forum as a Cordilleran online community. Online messages and survey results complement the interview data. I analyse members’ motivations for joining *Bibaknets* and their participation in the forum’s offline and online activities.

I joined *Bibaknets* in 2006 with the goal of observing its online and offline interactions. The first time I sent a request to become a member in November 2006, I forgot to include my name although I mentioned my place of birth and my reasons for joining the forum. John Dyte, one of the co-moderators, replied and asked for my name. So I sent another email giving my name, profession, birthplace and my interest on *Bibaknets* as a possible research area. Almost one month after sending the second email, my application for membership was finally approved on 3 December 2006. As I stated in Chapter 3, I had been a member of the forum for more than two years before I started my participant-observation, allowing me a reasonable time to observe the forum discussions and interactions.

#### 5.4.1 Nelson – In Search of a Cordilleran Community

As a forum for Cordillerans, *Bibaknets* has strict requirements<sup>76</sup> for prospective members. In January 2009, the required information included: ‘real full name, geographic location, Philippine tribal affiliation/origin/affinity’. Married women were encouraged to give their maiden names. Considered as ‘optional’ information were ‘complete street address, telephone number and other pertinent individual informations (*sic*)’. Potential members have to email Uncle<sup>77</sup> Harry Basingat and *Manong* John Dyte with the information mentioned in order to be registered. These requirements were stated on the homepage, followed by the statement: ‘The idea is for us to establish acquaintanceship by knowing more about each other’. As a site where shared ethnicity defines the community, *Bibaknets* values genuine personal information of prospective members unlike in similar forums where anonymity is allowed (Lee 2006; Martin 1995; Parker and Song 2007). Clearly, there is recognition that potential members and existing members do not know each other, although they all claim ties to, or affinity with, the Cordillera region.

*Bibaknetters* are made up of loosely bound individuals from diverse ethnolinguistic groups whose common tie is their geographic origin, the Cordillera. The non-random survey shows that the Applais (27), Kankanaeys<sup>78</sup> (27) and Bontocs (20) comprise the three biggest ethnic groups in the forum. Applais and Bontocs trace their origins to Mountain Province while Kankanaeys are generally found in the provinces of Benguet and Mountain Province. The Ibalois (11) from Benguet and the Ifugaos (3) from Ifugao come next. Overall, the survey indicates that members from Mountain Province comprise the majority of forum members in the forum. The survey also revealed that almost half of the members know at least one other member within the community, as demonstrated in the table below.

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<sup>76</sup> Requirements for membership have been modified twice since 2009. In July, Basingat asked prospective members to submit a photo. The moderators changed the requirements in 2011 so that members now only have to give their real full names and geographic location.

<sup>77</sup> In my first couple of emails, I addressed Harry as ‘Mr. Basingat’ but in our Yahoo Messenger chats, subsequent emails, and telephone conversations, I addressed him as ‘Uncle’ in the way that Filipinos generally refer to an older person as ‘*tito*’ or ‘*tita*’ (uncle or aunt). In face-to-face settings, referring to an older person you meet for the first time as *tito/tita* or uncle/aunt is deemed polite and appropriate despite the lack of actual blood relations between the parties. Using these terms generally imply respect and acknowledgement of their seniority brought about by their experience. In the Cordillera, English is widely spoken so that many English words are now part of our everyday language.

<sup>78</sup> See Section 5.5 for a full discussion on the debate regarding the categories Applai and Kankanaey.

Table 5.1 Members' Personal Networks

None	6
Personally knows 1 to 10 members	42
11 to 20	18
Over 20	31
Invalid	2
Total	99

Nelson was one of the new members in February 2009. He is a friend of a *Bibaknets* supporter who introduced him to the forum. At the time he joined, six other persons were approved as new members. *Manong* John usually writes a generic 'welcome message' addressed to everyone to introduce a new member. He would also include the introductory email that the 'applicant' sends to him and Uncle Harry. Here is a portion of Nelson's message,

*Hi John,*

*This is Nelson, Engr. Frank Mesina is my friend. I sent an application to bibaknet but haven't received any reply. I think, I needed to be accepted first.*

*My roots are from Mountain Province and Benguet. I am presently working in Manila.*

*Nelson, Philippines*

Nelson's message illustrates the rules for membership to *Bibaknets*. First, he has to email the moderators and establish his identity and connections to the Cordillera. Nelson informs them that he traces his 'roots' to two provinces in the region. He also mentions that he is a friend of Frank Mesina, a *Bibaknets* supporter. Thus, Nelson not only asserts indigenous familial ties, but also substantiates the veracity of his identity by saying that he is a friend of another *Bibaknets* member.

#### **5.4.1.1 Authenticating Indigeneity**

In an interview, I learned that Nelson was born in La Trinidad, Benguet. His father is a Kankanaey from Mountain Province and his mother is an Ibaloi from Benguet. Speaking mainly in English, he explained that his family migrated to Tagudin, Ilocos Sur in the lowlands when he was five years old. Nelson's and his family's mobility reflect the increasing movement of Cordillerans outside their villages to

look for non-agricultural work since the 1930s with the opening of the mines in Benguet and of teaching positions to educated highlanders (Finin 2005). Today, home for Nelson is Tagudin, where he visits his older sister and her family every vacation since the death of their parents. That he grew up in the lowlands and has moved between Tagudin, Baguio, and Manila partly explains his lack of personal connections within the forum. Nelson explained that he joined *Bibaknets* because he needed to belong to a group with which he can identify. He said that he and Frank Mesina attended different universities in Baguio City but were both members of a youth organisation. He moved to Manila in 1990 but they have kept in contact over the years.

*Frank told me that there is a network...it's an egroup for BIBAK people. They are sharing everything...because I'm not really very familiar with our culture...I studied in Manila and then Baguio. So I'm not really that into it. I understand a bit of our culture but not the whole thing...And another thing, I just found out that my classmate in Baguio City High, Carmen...We were both staff members in our school paper. Frank's invitation...the reason why Bibaknets exists...and Carmen being another member (made me join Bibaknets)... And another reason is...it's [made up of] of pure Cordillerans. I asked him [Frank] are you sure it's just BIBAK? I think it's for identity. Even if I know who I am...it's some sort of a sorority or maybe...I need to belong to a group. I want to belong to a group. It has something to do with who I am as an identity....*

#### *Nelson, Philippines*

In his online message and during the interview, Nelson emphasised his indigenous roots and connections, and his need to join a group composed of 'pure' Cordillerans. An accountant working in Manila, Nelson is a diasporic Cordilleran. Here, I use diaspora to describe 'multi-locale attachments, dwelling, and travelling within and across nations (Clifford 1994: 306; cf Delugan 2010; Watson 2010). Being diasporic, he expressed attachments to a homeland and 'a sense of co-ethnicity with others of a similar background' (Cohen 1997: x). When I told him that not all members are 'full-blooded' Cordillerans, he said that it does not matter as long as they have 'some' Igorot blood in them and that they understand the 'BIBAK' culture.

In joining *Bibaknets*, Nelson could be said to adopt an essentialist perspective. He believes forum members share a core genetic make-up and/or cultural tradition. But as a senior accountant in Manila, these characteristics only become particularly salient for Nelson when he hears disparaging comments about Igorots. Thus, he

expressed a desire to learn more about his indigenous culture and join a group made up of 'pure' Cordillerans. Nelson's diasporic condition, thus, provides a new dimension to his understanding of Cordillera identity. Although he lives in Manila and not overseas, Nelson said during the interview that he has to adapt to a different culture in the capital. He says, 'At home I know who I am but outside the home I have to...adjust to a different culture especially that I work in Manila...Sometimes my identity as an Igorot only comes out when there is a negative comment about Igorots...They don't know what to say when I tell them that I am an Igorot'. Nelson's experience of lowland prejudice against highlanders is shared by many who identify themselves as Igorots. As I explained in Chapter 4, not all highlanders call themselves Igorots, so that their experience of prejudice may not be related to the use of the term but may be similarly related to their cultural distinctiveness.

Studies about indigenous identity have been marked by intense debates between essentialist and constructivist perspectives because of their legal and political implications for indigenous communities. Essentialism pertains to the view that some groups or categories of people have a set of defining characteristics that distinguish them from others (Dean and Levi 2003; Field 1999; Pels 2008). Conversely, constructivism holds that cultures and identities are shaped through the process of social interaction and are, thus, constantly changing (Appadurai 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Handler 1986; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Trouillot 2000; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). Let me state at the outset that the view that cultural groups have an essence is not held only by indigenous peoples, but also by non-indigenous peoples. For example, the British National Party claims that whiteness is the key distinctive aspect of British identity and culture (Williams and Law 2012, online). In the US, the government in 1920 adopted the 'one-drop rule', where a person of mixed 'Negro' and white background is considered 'a Negro...regardless of the amount of white blood' (Hickman 1997, p. 1187).

In the case of indigenous peoples, some states have pursued essentialist policies, requiring them to provide evidence of their indigenous culture in order to be granted certain rights. This is particularly true for American Indians (Field 1999) and Australian Aboriginals (Povinelli 1995) who have to prove their indigeneity to access rights to indigenous lands, among other rights that have been denied them in the past. Because their identity is attached to social, economic and political rights, indigenous peoples move between essentialism and constructivism in

complex ways. Indigenous peoples claim authenticity, ‘an objectively definable essence or core of customs and beliefs’ (Handler and Linnekin 1984 in Linnekin 1986, p. 446) to ground their claim for justice and human rights (Escarcega 2010), which is the very same reason that they have been oppressed over the centuries.

With Tuhiwai-Smith (2012), I view indigenous claims for authenticity as the struggle to recover, and in the process, recreate their subjectivity forged in diverse socio-political and historical realities. Indigenous peoples’ high level of adaptability for cultural and political survival has been theorised in different ways by indigenous scholars. Nelson’s claim to an indigenous identity and his lived experience as a professional in Manila displays ‘indigenous cosmopolitanism’ in the words of Thomas Biolsi, like American Indians who are at home in universities and cities, as well as on reservations (2005, p. 249). Nelson also displays ‘flexible ethnic identity’ (Matthei and Smith 2008, p. 228) shown by the Garifuna who have adopted various names for themselves over the centuries as a strategy for survival. Understood within this context, indigenous peoples’ marginalisation by dominant populations inscribes indigenous identification in power relations, where they need to resist centripetal discourses being imposed on them with their own centrifugal views about themselves (Bakhtin 1981).

#### **5.4.1.2 *Bibaknets* Community Practices**

Assertions of collective highland indigeneity are experienced differently in practice, as Nelson would discover. One of the routine practices on *Bibaknets* is to welcome new members. After a new member is introduced to the community, existing members who may know him or her would usually say ‘Hello’ and give a short message establishing their relationship with the person. On the one hand, this practice demonstrates how existing members authenticate the identity of newbies. At the time I joined, for instance, I was welcomed by three members who are all from my village and are part of my extended family. In contrast, welcoming newbies – or failing to do so - likewise indicates the newbie’s low status within the forum.

At the time Nelson joined, six other new members (Rico, Brenda, Olive, Mike, Fe, Jerome) joined the forum. Nelson felt excluded from this ritual because four of the five welcome greetings were addressed to only two new members. Patricia, an elder based in Baguio, was the first to start a thread greeting everyone. Her subject line was titled, ‘ATTN; All New Members’ and named *all* the new members in the

*body* of her message. But Nelson apparently failed to read this welcome message as the same subject line was edited by four other members who then greeted specific individuals. It appeared that the four members know Rico and Brenda because they are all from Sagada, a municipality in Mountain Province. Members who in one way or another know Rico and Brenda welcomed the two by establishing their connections. For instance, Greg greeted Brenda in this way:

*Hi Brenda and to all new members,*

...

*I have not met you but I know some of your brothers and sisters. I met your brother Max who resides in Lyon, France, in fact we went to "dag-os or dagas" and slept in their beautiful house last summer 2005....*

*cheers,  
Greg*

A couple of days later, Bridgette, an elder living in the US, posted a welcome message that named all new members in the *subject line*, including Nelson. Nelson thought that this was the first time that he was being welcomed so that he did not hesitate to express his sentiments in this message,

*Hi Bridgette,*

*Thank you for the Welcome. Did you know that you were the only member in this egroup that officially welcomed me, aside from the moderators of course. I want to thank you for that. But, even then I alreadyh felt welcome because one of the best friends I have, Engr. Mesina personally recommended that I join the group to keep in touch with my Cordillera roots. I am a mixture of Tadian and Benguet blood...*

*Nelson, Philippines*

It is rare for new members to express their observations candidly, especially when they have just been accepted by the community. Apart from Nelson, three other newbies had not been addressed specifically by existing members, so it cannot be said that he was being purposely ignored by the members. Nelson's frank message elicited nine responses from members who all greeted him and apologised in some form for not taking time to personally welcome him. Nelson likewise apologised and said he did not read Patricia's message in its entirety. His introduction to the forum showed that claims to Cordilleran identity do not generate automatic



feelings of affinity among members. There are small groupings within the forum based on the members' offline personal connections. Those who are from Sagada or who have some personal connections with Rico and Brenda welcomed the latter, while only two members greeted Nelson. Despite this shaky start, Nelson contributed interesting articles and photos, and interacted with other members over the next six months, developing bonds with some members.

#### **5.4.1.3 Leaving *Bibaknets***

After my interview with Nelson, I posted the initial results of my survey, asking for members' insights into what maintains *Bibaknets* as a community. Basingat replied that it is 'INCLUSIVENESS' and 'BANTERING' that attract participation among members.

*The bottomline: I created Bibaknets as a meeting place for all Igorots/Cordillerans around the world. I expected that if you meet with us here, you have in mind to make friends with everyone you meet here. We are supposed to be here to help establish camaraderie among the rest of the members.*

*To cite a very bad example, Nelson Kidipan seems to have come in to maintain his friendship with Frank only and other few select ones but not to this bad moderator as he can't interact with me directly.*

*Harry, US*

I was puzzled more than surprised to read the last paragraph of Basingat's email where he castigates Nelson for not interacting with him. Although he was highlighting the value of inclusiveness on the forum, he was excluding Nelson by singling out his behaviour. Basingat is known for being straightforward in his messages and this is not the first time he has expressed displeasure over a member's conduct offline or online. However, I was somewhat perplexed by his message, considering that other novices and supporters do not address him specifically in their messages. Admittedly, Nelson posted messages and participated in the discussions without interacting with Basingat, the central figure on *Bibaknets*. Unlike in other forums where moderators do not engage actively with members, Basingat directs and animates *Bibaknets* interactions on a daily basis. He gives strong opinions on certain topics, enjoys bantering, and sets the written and unwritten rules for members. His position as owner legitimises his position in disciplining and removing members. He also engages in heated debates with some members on certain issues. But he is known to share amusing anecdotes,

even creating an insider-joke about his search for a new partner after the death of his wife. Despite his strong personality, he has supported various fundraising campaigns over the years to help Cordillerans both in the Philippines and overseas. Basingat's message indicates that personal relations shape online community interactions more than a collective sense of belongingness to one region.

One week after Harry's posting, four members unsubscribed, including Nelson. In his message, Nelson wrote that he 'truly enjoyed reading the exchanges, even if I am just a silent listener or reader'. He added that he agreed with Harry's 'conditions of membership without question'. In a text message he sent me a week after he unsubscribed, he said it is unfortunate he did not get along with the moderator and that he had now joined *mountainprovince*, another forum hosted on Yahoo Groups 'for people whose roots and affections are in the the (*sic*) Mountain Province of the Philippines' where he felt more welcome.

The incident between Nelson and Harry reflects the latter's patriarchal<sup>79</sup> role on *Bibaknets*. Here, I go back to the earlier discussion about the *dap-ay* among Kankanaeys in Section 5.2.1 and Section 5.2.2. In the traditional concept of the *dap-ay*, a group of male elders make important decisions for the community. *Bibaknetters*, including Basingat, explain that they have redefined this indigenous concept as it is practised within the forum. They argue that *Bibaknets* as an online *dap-ay* is a place for sharing stories, rather than for decision-making, where *all* are welcome to participate. This assertion is only partially true as this incident illustrates. Basingat, as founder and owner of the forum, wields enormous influence on who stays and who leaves the forum. Although he and other forum elders describe *Bibaknets* as a seemingly inclusive platform, such claim needs to be questioned in the light of Nelson's departure from the forum. As a younger male member who is relatively new on *Bibaknets*, Nelson has not gained the status to challenge or question Basingat's remark. Despite the forum's emphasis on inclusiveness, this episode shows that *dap-ay* practices in the village – one dominated by male elders – are similarly practised online.

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<sup>79</sup> Gender relations in the region is marked by two views: one asserting gender equality and one highlighting gender oppression (Guerrero *et al.* 2001 in Rafal 2011). Bontoc women for example are exemplified as empowered because of the lack of distinction in gender roles among women and men in both private and public life (Prill-Brett 2012) while the opposite view is presented for the Kalingas (Yoneno-Reyes 2010). This binary is unhelpful and need to be further explored in future studies in the light of the interactions observed on *Bibaknets*.

Unequal power relations exist in the forum, as demonstrated by Nelson's brief stay. Applying the concept of technologies of indigeneity, Basingat created *Bibaknets* to enable Cordillerans worldwide to interact as a collective body. Despite his good intentions, however, he and other members have over time governed the interactions in the forum through specific written and unwritten rules that members have to observe. In this way, members' subjectivity were both promoted and subordinated (Miller and Rose 1988) in the interest of maintaining the continuity of the forum. But disciplinary rules were not always related to the pursuit of collective goals, as highlighted in Nelson's case. In his message, Basingat's main issue against Nelson was personal – he had ignored him in his interactions. Moreover, this case also illustrated that membership to *Bibaknets* as a Cordilleran community means different things to different people. This will be explored further in the next section.

#### **5.4.2 Mina – Feeling Alone and Lonely in America**

Mina, 56, a businesswoman, learned about *Bibaknets* while on vacation in America. She found a second home on the forum where US-based members extended support and friendship offline and online. For Mina, *Bibaknets* opened doors to new friendships and opportunities.

*I went to America for the first time in 2000. If you're there for the first time, you know, you get lonely, you get home sick...And then you just came from the Philippines, you're used to having chitchats. If you feel like talking to a friend, you just go to Session Road<sup>80</sup> (chuckles)... My sister emailed me...'there's this website if you're interested, it's an Igorot website'...That's how I found out about Bibaknets. So I introduced myself, 'Hi, I'm Mina...who is lonely in America' (laughter)...something like that.*

*I was welcomed in the usual procedure...I didn't realize Bibaknets has many members. I was so happy...you know people from way back, people you don't remember anymore...That was how I found out that right in the area where I was, like Chicago, there were Bibaknetters. I went to New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, California...there were Bibaknetters everywhere.*

*Mina, Philippines*

Mina is a Kankanaey from Benguet, but traces her family origins in Besao, Mountain Province. She owns a restaurant and also works as an insurance agent.

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<sup>80</sup> Session Road is Baguio City's high street.

In contrast to Nelson’s story, Mina joined *Bibaknets* because she was feeling socially isolated while visiting her sister in Chicago. The survey revealed that the majority (42) of *Bibaknetters* joined the forum to connect, socialise and network with fellow Igorots and Cordillerans. Out of these, 25 specifically used the word ‘Igorot’, while the rest used ‘Cordilleran’, ‘*kailian*’ (Ilocano/Kankanaey term for townmate), and ‘*kababayan*’ (Tagalog word for countryman) to describe their connections. The second reason (32) cited was to connect and network generally with family and friends. The third reason for joining *Bibaknets* was broadly for information, education and entertainment (11) purposes. The top two reasons show that 74 members were motivated to join the forum for social interaction. Internet scholars recognise that, apart from seeking information, members of online communities seek friendship, affirmation and material support (Baym 2010; Wellman 1997; Yong 2011). In Mina’s case, her primary interest in joining *Bibaknets* was to find companionship while she was in the US. That *Bibaknets* is made up of Cordillerans appears to be secondary to her main motivation. Moreover, the forum as a web-based community was a convenient space she can access from her sister’s home.

Mina’s narrative also highlights that she learned about *Bibaknets* while in the US. At that time, the forum was only in its second year and was dominated by highlanders in America. US-based Cordillerans remain the majority of the members in the forum, as Table 5.2 shows.

Table 5.2 *Bibaknets* Members’ Location

Australia	4
Belgium	1
Canada	8
Germany	2
Hong Kong	1
Kuwait	1
Norway	1
Philippines	30
Saudi Arabia	3
Switzerland	1
Taiwan	1
UK	6
USA	38
Invalid	2
Total	99

Mina was preparing to return to the Philippines in October 2001. On 11 September, the Twin Towers were destroyed in a terrorist attack in New York. 'People were saying, it seems it's the end of the world. I thought I will die in America...that was how I felt because when you were in America at that time...Everybody is expecting that they will bomb...you know...all parts of the world'. The paranoia brought about by the attacks made Mina decide to stay in the US for another six months. Even if she wanted to go home and see her family, she felt she had no choice but to stay considering the prevailing doomsday mood in the US at the time. For a tourist with limited mobility, *Bibaknets* allowed Mina to get in touch with members across the US as the Internet transcended spatial limits. Because of her wide personal connections on *Bibaknets*, she was invited by several members to their homes in different states. Members took turns hosting her in their homes, that she said she lost count how many houses she has stayed in.

Like Nelson, Mina also had to learn the written and unwritten rules of the forum. At the time she joined, she was welcomed by several members, some of whom she personally knew from her college days in Baguio City. 'I was so flattered, I was so happy...I'm sure you would feel the same way if many people welcome you', she said.

*I replied to them one by one... And then there's this...one message coming from a lady. She was saying 'those of you who are emailing each other, if you just email somebody, why don't you email them privately'...I was shocked...I wasn't the only one who just joined at that time and there were several people who were doing that. But I felt I had to defend myself because I felt I was the one she was addressing. So I said, what is the rule of Bibaknets? When I came in, I was looking for rules and regulations, and I said I didn't find any...Please accept my apologies...*

*So I said, you know if I wanted something heavy to do, some hard reading...I wouldn't go to Bibaknets. But I'm so lonely here in America so I came into Bibaknets...It's like talking, it's like regular conversing with your relatives, new found friends, I thought that was how it is in Bibaknets...But she later apologized...She's a nurse...'I just came back from a toxic day in the hospital'...She even invited me to California the second time I was in the US.*

*Mina, Philippines*

Mina's insights illustrate three points. There is often a disjuncture between identification as a *Bibaknets* member and identification as a Cordilleran, which I argued earlier. While members all claim to hail from one region and describe themselves as indigenous, forum interactions are shaped equally by their age, gender, social class, interests, and so on (Putnam 2002). Second, claims to a common geographic origin or collective indigenous identity do not preclude the interplay of power relations among members. Hence, homogeneity and heterogeneity exist on *Bibaknets*, in relation to interests, cultural traditions and personalities. In looking at Cordilleran indigeneity, Jenkins' 'internal-external dialectic' of identification is relevant as it views identity as being shaped through individual and collective processes (2008a, pp. 38-40). The seeming clash between members' diverse personal backgrounds and interests and the assumed collective sense of identity among indigenous Cordillerans predominated on the forum. Finally, membership to *Bibaknets* does not bring about 'consensus of values or conformity in behaviour' (Jenkins 2008a, p. 136). Community membership is interpreted differently by different members, as the next section further illustrates.

#### **5.4.2.1 Leaving *Bibaknets***

I describe Mina as a *Bibaknets* elder. She was a long-time regular poster and participated actively in the discussions on the forum. She shared her views about different issues and engaged in offline activities with other *Bibaknetters*. Three months after my interview, Mina decided to leave *Bibaknets*. In her personal email to me, she explained that she had become busy with her business and that she did not have the time to open her emails. During the interview, she mentioned she had experienced 'three major run-ins' with some members in the past and, consequently, had decided to keep a low profile on the forum,

*I met Grace [a Bibaknets elder] the other day and she asked me why I haven't been posting for some time. I told her, ahh, I don't want to be stressed...especially at the time that they were posting very stressful messages. When manong Conrad was there, he was very active and they are talking about religion...Why talk about those things in this, anyway? 'It's not because you're a priest you'd think that you're holier than me', I said...We met after that and you can see he was uptight.*

*Mina, Philippines*

Unlike Nelson, who felt he had to leave because he did not get along with Basingat, Mina left because she became busy with her business. However, it later transpired that Mina had unsubscribed due to a disagreement with a *Bibaknets* elder.

### 5.5 The Lurkers

This section examines the lurkers who comprise the majority of *Bibaknets* members. During the period of my online ethnography, about 100 to 120 members participated in the threads I was monitoring. On a day-to-day basis, some 30 to 40 dedicated elders of the forum's 986 members consistently posted messages. While this number does not take into account other posters who may be participating in other discussions, it is reasonable to say that between 85 to 90 percent of the members are lurkers. Cathy, 41, is an Ibaloi lecturer living in Baguio City and one of *Bibaknets*' lurkers. In an interview, she describes how she joined the forum.

*One of my colleagues at the University of Baguio told me about it...So I joined. Bibaknets was just organised in 1997, 1998 and we were building up membership...the discussions were very interesting and educational. Aside from the exchanges there, you get to meet people with different backgrounds from all over the world.*

*Cathy, Philippines*

Cathy enjoyed the gossip, banter and the members' discussions on 'high culture'. She said that she was not an active poster because of her busy schedule. She admitted that she is somewhat reserved and preferred to post short greetings rather than participate fully in the discussions. She said that some members will post a message only to be 'shot down' by others. 'There is actually one member who writes in a very intimidating way...Sometimes I feel like posting a message but then I would have second thoughts and decide I'd rather not', she explained. Cathy suggested that the fear of being questioned or intimidated by elders could be one of the reasons why most members would rather not post something. 'If I post a message, it's just a short greeting like, 'Hello, I'm back' and then I would retreat again in my corner (laughter)', she said.

Cathy may belong to the silent majority in the forum but she takes time to attend *Bibaknets* reunions whenever she has the chance. She said that she would meet with Basingat and other overseas members when they are on vacation in Baguio. Although participation is encouraged in the forum, lurkers are seen as integral part of *Bibaknets*. Lulu Fangasan, a *Bibaknets* elder, explains that, 'If there are people

who decide just to read messages, they are still part of the conversation. Sometimes that's what bothers Uncle Harry, that there's only a few who participate in discussions. But why would you force people if they don't want to join?' In the survey, those who posted between one to two messages a year formed roughly a third (32) of the respondents. They were followed by those who wrote a message every month (22) and those who posted three to five times a year (21). Members who posted once in two months and those who never posted each had 11 respondents. Overall, those who never wrote messages and those who wrote a maximum of two messages a year made up 43 of the respondents.

Basingat would often remind members to come out from hiding and join in the discussions. In one of his messages, he wrote that he gets 'very frustrated with members who never participate'. Fangasan admits that like me, she felt nervous the first time she contributed in the discussions. She compares the interactions on the forum with those in the classroom: 'If you have 50 students, there are those who would raise their hands and recite while there are those who will not recite unless you call them. Any kind of meeting that I have attended...there would only be 3 who would be debating'.

Lurking as a norm runs counter to the main reason cited by members for joining *Bibaknets*. Nelson and Mina expressed eagerness and excitement when they joined the forum. For Nelson, it was an opportunity to meet other Cordillerans and learn about her own indigenous culture. For Mina, *Bibaknets* offered an escape from her confined situation as a tourist in the USA. They both participated actively in the discussions but they both had to deal with members' age, gender, interests, professions and ethnic affiliations (Putnam 2002). Considering the general picture of the social interaction taking place on the forum, it is understandable that Cathy decided to stay on the margins. By not ruffling elders' feathers, she remains a member.

## **5.6 Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter attempted to present the processes of becoming a *Bibaknetter*. As a social network (Wellman 1999), *Bibaknets* is composed of Cordillerans who are geographically dispersed, have limited interaction with one another and provide restricted social support. In attracting members, *Bibaknets* draws mainly on individuals' ties to the Cordillera and/or a claim to a highland indigenous identity. The history of the forum's creation and its goals to bring together Cordillerans



across the globe suggests that technologies of indigeneity govern forum interactions. Basingat imbued the forum with Cordilleran symbols by calling it *Bibaknets*, which is derived from the popular acronym of the provinces in the region. He also describes the forum as a ‘*dap-ay*’, likening it to a Kankanaey tradition. The symbolic construction of *Bibaknets* as a Cordilleran online community has, thus, facilitated particular rules for membership and interaction.

Based on the online survey and interview narratives, *Bibaknets* members are diasporic, highly educated, over 50 years old and hail mainly from Mountain Province in the Cordillera. That Internet use among indigenous peoples is limited to ‘a formally educated indigenous elite’ (Niezen 2005, p. 533) is a reality for *Bibaknets* as it has been found out among South Asian (Gajjala 2006) and Tongan (Lee 2006) diasporic indigenous forums. Hence, *Bibaknetters* are not necessarily economically poor but belong to a politically marginalised group in the Philippines because of their indigenous identity. I define marginalisation<sup>81</sup> as the practices and discourses that threaten indigenous peoples’ cultural and political rights. Nevertheless, I emphasise that the experiences of marginalisation among indigenous peoples across the globe are not uniform and should be understood within their specific contexts. With their access to and knowledge of the Internet, *Bibaknetters* are in a far better position than 71 percent of Filipinos who do not use the Internet (Broadband Commission for Digital Development 2011).

Computer-mediated-communication is ‘in essence, a socially produced space’ (Jones 1995, pp. 14, 17), which facilitates the creation of new forms of subjectivities and social relations. For diasporic Cordillerans, *Bibaknets* is a space for collective assertions of highland identity. As an online community, prospective members have to establish their indigeneity by giving their real full names and their geographic location. Appadurai argues that the Internet has enabled the creation of *virtual neighbourhoods*, online communities which are connected to lived, local neighbourhoods (1995). He observes that they may be ‘hard to classify and their longevity difficult to predict, [but] clearly they are communities of some sort’ (Appadurai 1995, p. 219; McKay and Brady 2005). For many *Bibaknetters*, they are physically in one place but are connected socially and materially to many other places, as evidenced in the interviews with Nelson, Mina and Cathy. They have also

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<sup>81</sup> Some of the notable studies that analyse indigenous peoples marginalisation are the following: Alia 2009; Biolsi 2005; Iseke-Barnes 2002; Kingbury 1998; Niezen 2003, 2005, 2009; Matthei and Smith 2008; Scott 1974; Trouillot 2003; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012.

re-appropriated the term '*dap-ay*' in relation to the forum. *Bibaknets* is a meeting place where members sit around different tables talking about various topics. In this sense, Cordillerans exhibit the capacity to construct and present their cultures which 'embody the primal values of technological simplicity and self-sufficiency' (Niezen 2005, p. 533) using the latest technology. The online activities of Cordillerans answers affirmatively Kyra Landzelius' question that indigenous peoples '[c]an make a home in cyberspace' and will feel at home there (2006, p. 293). Cordillerans are able to address each other and a wider community of readers and authors not only from their own village or province, but also from places inside and outside the Cordillera.

Membership of *Bibaknets*, however, is embedded in power relations. Digital technology is redefining the 'status hierarchies, resistance strategies, and conceptions of collective self of many so-called traditional societies' (Niezen 2005, p. 533) not only in relation with non-indigenous peoples, but also among themselves. Indeed, *Bibaknets* as an online community is a *collective* online space that unravels the workings of age, gender, indigenous affiliation, geographic location, education and personal networks in the construction of a broad Igorot/Cordilleran identity. Whereas Cordillera blogs are '*individual* online spaces' that makes an individual blogger 'an oral and textual agent of cultural transference' of their specific cultures (Rabia 2009, pp. 312-313, emphasis mine), indigenous online communities are sites for contesting what it means currently to be indigenous (Lee 2006) at personal and collective levels. Although the members assert a Cordilleran identity, such identification does not necessarily bring about 'consensus of values or conformity in behaviour' (Jenkins 2008a, p. 136). *Bibaknetters* define community membership differently. Nelson thought that he was being sociable, only to find out that this was not the case in Basingat's opinion. Mina replied to everyone who responded to her introductory emails but was told that conversations between some members should be confined to private emails. Cathy may be a lurker but she is a happy tour guide and host to overseas *Bibaknetters* visiting the Philippines.

The interview narratives showed how members were motivated to join the forum not only to interact with other members from the Cordillera but also for what it offers in terms of social support. The tension between their individual subjectivities and their identification as part of a larger Cordillera community is illustrated by Nelson's and Mia's assertions of common geographic and indigenous

origins at the time they joined and the different responses they received from the members. Nelson was given a 'generic' welcome message by two members unlike newbies from Sagada, Mountain Province who were directly or indirectly known to some members. Within *Bibaknets*, there are sub-groups defined by their hometown, interests, and personal connections.

The hierarchy within the forum is also indicated by the predominance of lurking as an online behaviour among the members. Although 74 members expressed their desire to socialise, connect and network with their fellow Cordillerans, 43 members never posted a message or wrote only one or two messages a year. Such limited participation is puzzling considering that 71 out of 99 respondents have at least a university degree. At the personal level, *Bibaknets* interactions are typical of other online forums where debates and disagreements (Bennett 2009; Gajjala 2006; Lee 2006; Parker and Song 2007) take place. Although Internet scholars acknowledge that lurking is a typical online community behaviour (Baym 2010; Katz 1998; Preece 2004), the low participation rate on the forum indicates that asserting a common geographic and indigenous identity is only the basic requirement of becoming a *Bibaknets* member. Participation in the discussions is shaped by the members' social capital (Putnam 2002), such as age, interest and profession. Having said that, it is important to underline that members' personal interactions do not at all times affect their collective undertaking as an online community, as I will show in Chapter 7.

The next chapter examines more closely how *Bibaknets* members collectively discuss, narrate and explore their indigenous identities regardless of their personal differences. I will demonstrate how members' personal situatedness shape their understanding and interpretation of their sense of collective identity as Cordillerans and as *Bibaknets* members.

## Chapter 6

### In Search of Our Roots

#### 6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described and analysed the extent of members' shared identification to *Bibaknets* as an online community. In this chapter, I will examine the members' assertion of a collective Cordilleran identity. To recall my discussion in Chapter 4, highlanders express collective consciousness in two ways: first, as Cordillerans who are part the Cordillera region; and second, as Igorots who are part of a collective indigenous political body. I argued that it is essential to make this distinction explicit in order to understand contemporary assertions of Cordilleran indigeneity.

Discussions of Cordilleran collective identity remain an important issue, not only within the political context of regional autonomy. Identification as Igorot influences the daily interactions of indigenous peoples both at home and overseas, and the relations between highlanders and lowlanders. Lydia Casambre (2010) posited that the term Igorot – or Kaigorotan – as a regional collective indigenous body advanced mainly by left-leaning political actors is a construct and still has to be generated. She concluded that there is no pan-regional Cordillera identity. In contrast, Finin (2005, p. 175) advanced that highlanders have a 'shared regional consciousness' based on their identification as Igorots.

I take Finin's and Casambre's positions as points of departure in my analysis of contemporary Cordillera online identity narratives. In this chapter, I aim to present an alternative view that distinguishes between Cordilleran collective consciousness and the use of the collective term 'Igorot' to signify that consciousness. At the same time, I examine how some members understand their specific ethnic categories Kankanaey and Applai. Through the members' online interactions, I attempt to make visible how some *Bibaknetters* govern the conduct of others and their own in the construction of a highland identity.

## 6.2 Clarifying Collective Identity Categories

*Bibaknets* is the longest-running online forum where regular discussions take place relating to Igorot/Cordillera indigenous identifications. It establishes itself as the ‘gathering place for BIBBAKA/Igorot/Cordillera netizen, by birth, affinity or even just for the love of being associated with the names’. The use of three descriptors – BIBBAKA, Igorot, Cordillera – points to the varied collective identifications that indigenous peoples from the region use to identify themselves. Although it has been documented that Ifugaos, Kalingas (Molintas 2004), and Apayaos (Rood 1989) do not ascribe to the category of ‘Igorot’, challenges to categories that suggest a sense of collective and not necessarily homogenous Igorot identity has also come from Ibalois, Kankanaeys and Bontocs in the online discussions. Since the creation of *Bibaknets* in 1998, there have been frequent and often antagonistic discussions in the forum that relate directly or indirectly in defining who is an ‘Igorot’. Some of them take the shape of jokes and anecdotes, while some develop into serious debates. The diverse indigenous ethnicity of the members reflects their varying views about the term. At the beginning of my research, John Dyte,<sup>82</sup> forum co-moderator, offered the following observation of how the members are using the forum to explore their indigenous identity.

*Perhaps the most glaring use of the internet by indigenous peoples of the Philippine Cordillera, that I have witnessed with regards to identity construction is in identifying, defending, or clarifying the use of the term "Igorot". As you know, one group would like to use "Igorot" to refer to all indigenous peoples of the Cordillera, but some groups continue to use "Igorot" to refer mainly to those who speak Kankanaey. If you read the archives, you will hear the arguments.*

...

*Perhaps, the most beneficial use of the forum is the exposure to the various points of view from different ethnic groups which oftentimes clarifies any conceptions one has of other groups. In direct personal contacts, one often defines ethnic groups by those you meet, but that is limiting and results in a myopic view. A forum with many members provides the opportunity to distinguish between simple personality attributes and ethnic group characteristics.*

*John Dyte, USA*

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<sup>82</sup> I have reproduced *in toto* all the email posts, selecting appropriate paragraphs for the discussions. However, all names and places mentioned in the messages have been anonymised to protect the identity of the members, except for the moderators, officers of organisations, government officials, and some interviewees who gave their permission for their real names to be used in the thesis.



Figure 6.1 A view of a mountain village in Mountain Province.

### 6.3 Challenging Imposed Categories

Between December 2008 and January 2009, *Bibaknets* members were engaged in debates surrounding the collective term ‘Igorot’. A heated discussion ensued concerning the category and why certain indigenous groups in the Cordillera region do not wish to identify themselves in this way. A total of 3189 messages were posted in January, the highest number of posts in the forum based on its message history index. According to Basingat, it was the most highly debated (and if I may add, most protracted) topic on *Bibaknets*. The intensity and regularity of these exchanges encouraged me to explore this issue.

The thread began with a member expressing his ‘shock’ that ‘some Igorots who are NOT really beggars make it a norm to beg on the streets even when they are healthy and can work...with the *inabels*<sup>83</sup> with them when they do that’. This post about begging among Igorots polarised members who see themselves as Igorots and those who describe themselves as Ifugaos. Several Ifugao members replied that Ifugaos do not engage in begging. Two members narrated how they have encountered beggars in Baguio, Manila, and adjacent southern Luzon provinces claiming to be from Kiangnan, Ifugao.

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<sup>83</sup> *Inabel* refers to traditional Cordillera hand-woven cloth.

*But in 1966, during my senior year, I had a very unpleasant experience with some Igorots. A group of beggars came begging at our apartment misrepresenting themselves as tiga Kiangán when I asked. I got so mad at what I viewed as slander and told them to go away shutting the door. Obviously, begging is disgraceful to all Igorots, including the beggars, thus the IDENTITY THEFT to hide their identities. First hand accounts continue to this day of Igorot beggars claiming to be Kiangán or Ifugao, including Lando's accounts. Begging itself is not a sin but IDENTITY THEFT is morally wrong! We know where most if not all the beggars originate - not Ifugao, not Benguet, not Kalinga, not Apaya, not Eastern Bontoc, not Central Bontoc - but Ifugaos are being asked to "just grin and bear it" when their identity is used by the beggars.*

*Daniel, (USA)*

Another Ifugao member, Judith, had the same experience as Daniel. She wrote that she had met some Cordilleran mendicants in Metro Manila and nearby provinces. Judith felt strongly against beggars from the highlands who 'FALSELY IDENTIFY themselves, with all bravado, that they are from KIANGAN, or IFUGAO'. She said that 'these BEGGARS cannot converse with me in any of the several Ifugao dialects like Kalanguya, Ayangan, or Tuwali'.

The discussions that followed involved mostly members from Ifugao and Mountain Province, where people identify generally with the term 'Igorot', with posters from each side attacking the other and defending their positions. Rick in Australia apologised on behalf of the Applai from Mountain Province. Parts of his message read:

*'[A]lmost all of us from Mt. Province, particularly the 'applai' tribes that I belong to, do understand your sentiments and concern that your (Ifugao) image is being adversely affected by "beggars" from Mt. Province claiming they are from Ifugao...I, for one, when I was a student in Manila had been irritated when I see them begging in Manila.'*

*Rick, Australia*

Begging among elderly people from Mountain Province has been documented by Jeannette Palangchao-Scott (Cabreza 2004). In her study, Scott discovered that those who engage in this practice come from certain villages in the towns of Bontoc and Sagada. They travel to Baguio and Metro Manila during the Christmas holidays when people are expected to be more generous. The issue about begging is tied to the ethnic category of 'Applai', which is discussed in Section 6.4.1.

### 6.3.1 From Begging to Difference

While the debate about begging raged on, a novice member posted a message asking why some Ifugaos object to being called Igorots. Mark explained that he created a BIBAK group on Friendster<sup>84</sup>, a popular online social networking site, where there was a similar debate about Ifugaos and Igorots. Apparently, the topic was ‘dividing the group’ and he asked the ‘older’ members if they could help answer some of his questions:

*I'm Mark, son of Joseph and Eva... sunga i'm just one of many of your sons and daughters reading the discussion. i emailed to ask what is really the reason why some of the ifugaos dont want to be called an igorot. i created a group of BIBAK in friendster (where online discussion are made in the forums, it has 2000+ members of my generation 18-30 yrs old at most) and the topic of "ifugao and igorot" is dividing the group.*

...

*now back to my question: "what is really the reason why some of the ifugaos dont want to be called an igorot?", "what made some of the ifugaos not accept the word igorot?" and "had this debate been going on years ago? or did it just start in my generation?"*

...

*Mark, Philippines*

From begging that specifically pitted Ifugaos against ‘Applais’ from Mountain Province, the issue became broader as it touched on indigenous *collective* identity. However, as the majority of forum elders are from Mountain Province, they posted more messages than their Ifugao counterparts. In the discussions, Northern Kankanaeys offered tolerant and respectful replies, but they were generally dismissive of the points being raised by Ifugao and Kalinga members. Some were also vitriolic, with two members expressing negative observations about Ifugaos. One such comment was made by Hilda, a government doctor in her late-50s. In the following message, it was clear she was referring to Ifugaos as it was a reply within the thread focusing on Igorots and Ifugaos.

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<sup>84</sup> Friendster launched in 2003 (Heer and Boyd 2005), and is generally acknowledged as the precursor to Facebook.



*There is a media person who once told me, "Trust only the dead \_\_\_\_\_, referring to one Cordi IP group." I think some of us in Bibaknets have heard this prejudice against the \_\_\_\_\_ said in a different way: "Never trust the \_\_\_\_\_." Ammo yo siguro nu anya nga IP group dijay.<sup>85</sup>*

*Hilda, Philippines*

The main arguments expressed by three Ifugao members are grounded in history and culture. Efren's message sums up the views of his fellow Ifugaos on the forum in this message:

*Hilda,*

...

*My position, lest I be continued to be misunderstood, are as follows:*

*1. There is nothing wrong in being Igorot. What is wrong is considering Ifugaos as Igorots, too.*

*2. Ifugaos come from the mountains of the Cordilleras but they are not Igorots. The Igorots are fellow dwellers in the Cordillera Mountains covered by Benguet and the current Mt. Province...*

*5. There is no single word that would collectively apply to the peoples of the Cordillera Mountains...*

*8. Igotot means "from the mountains"; In the Ifugao language, it also means "to butcher by cutting the throat"...*

*10. I am IFUGAO, CORDILLERAN (because I belong to the Cordillera Administrative Region and Ifugao is found in the Cordillera Mountains), FILIPINO, ASIAN ...*

*Proudly Ifugao!*

*Efren*

Efren makes it clear that, for Ifugaos, the term 'Igorot' refers to the act of taking the enemy's head (see number 8 in his message above), drawing attention to the practice among some highlander communities which ended in the 1940s (Keesing 1934; Prill-Brett 1987). Here, he illustrates that Ifugaos understand and use 'Igorot' differently from Hilda. Efren was thus inclined to say that that there is no appropriate word which could be used as a collective name for all highlanders, except Cordilleran, because they are from a region with the same name.

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<sup>85</sup> Translation: 'Maybe you know which IP (indigenous peoples) group the person was referring to'.

Romeo, a resident of Canada and an Ifugao, narrates how he came to know that he is an 'Igorot'. He wrote that he has always identified himself as an Ifugao and it was only as a young student in Manila that he was addressed as an Igorot by fellow students from the Cordillera.

*In my experience, I was only addressed as Igorot for the first time by fellow highlander students from when I was student in Manila in the 70s. It was only then that I questioned myself, igorotak ngata (am I an Igorot)?*

*Bryan questioned the social status of those who refuse to be called igorots. Actually social status has nothing to do about igorotism. The ifugaos from the countryside who may be at the lowest level of society have the strongest belief of their being only but ifugaos, and not igorots, with the basis as mentioned above... when I think about it, it is somewhat funny that we are ready to die for the term imposed to us, ignoring some realities. We try to ignore the fact that our region is Cordillera, and that should be the basis of our identity at large...*

*Let us be practical and not be blind folded by our overflowing love of the term Igorot imposed to us by outsiders.*

*Romeo, Canada*

In contrast to the Ifugaos' historically and culturally-based reasons, those offered by members from the Bontoc and Applai/Kankanaey groups were political and cultural. Katherine, in particular, emphasises the political need for highlanders to identify themselves as Igorots:

*[W]e are up against State-sponsored discrimination. We have no time to waste fighting among ourselves.*

*By the way, many of us prefer \*Igorots\* to \*Cordillerans\* to refer \*collectively\* to the Cordillera IPs because Cordillerans under Administrative Order No. 13 issued by Cory Aquino also refers to non-IPs in the Cordilleras. The word may not have been so contentious and many of us would have embraced it for a collective identity, but the Aquino government diluted the meaning. Many would say this is because the State does not want IPs to have a collective identity with which they can assert their fundamental collective rights particularly land rights and the right to self-determination.*

*Katherine, Philippines*

Katherine draws attention to the importance of using the term ‘Igorot’ as a collective category for addressing ‘state-sponsored discrimination’. Asserting a collective identity would enable highlanders to obtain ‘land rights and rights to self-determination’. Clearly, she was linking the use of Igorot with empowerment. Here, I use empowerment not only to refer to political resistance against discrimination and marginalisation, but also as a means for Cordillerans to ‘promote their autonomy, self-sufficiency, and political engagement’ (Cruikshank 1999, p. 4). For Barbara Cruikshank, ‘technologies of citizenship’ refers to methods of empowerment. Drawing on Foucault’s concept of governmentality in her analysis of American participatory democracy, she argued that democratic processes are ‘not *necessarily* more or less dangerous, free or idealistic than any other’ because they are relations of power. In the same vein, she explained that empowerment is a power relationship because its object is ‘to act upon another’s interests and desires in order to conduct their actions toward an appropriate end’ (Cruikshank 1999, p. 69).

Borrowing Cruikshank’s concept, I use ‘technologies of indigeneity’ to examine *Bibaknetters’* diverse efforts to empower themselves, which includes how they would like to collectively identify themselves. These technologies as a form of governmentality consist of power relationships involving both domination and freedom (Cruikshank 1999). The exchanges between Efren, Romeo and Katherine draw attention to the oppositional aspect of technologies of indigeneity. First, in their efforts to understand and promote Cordilleran collective identity, members from Ifugao and Mountain Province expressed a common desire for empowerment by asserting their subjectivity. Efren and Romeo take pride in the identity Ifugao because it means ‘from the hills’ and ‘rice’, unlike Igorot, which means headhunting. Romeo also points out that Igorot is a category imposed by outsiders. For Katherine, using the metonym Igorot is the means of accessing land rights and rights to self-determination. However, implicit in her message is the problematic assumption that all highlanders should also adopt the collective term Igorot to assert such identity. Second, despite their common desire to advance highlander interest, power relations shaped the tone and content of the discussions. Some members from Mountain Province, including Basingat, dismissed the issues being raised by Ifugao members. Indeed, Hilda even resorted to questioning the reputation of Ifugaos.

The debate about the term 'Igorot', in this case why 'most' Ifugaos do not identify with the term, is an enduring topic not only in *Bibaknets* but also in various public forums, both online and offline. These discussions are particularly relevant in naming pan-Cordillera organisations. Lambert Sagalla (1999, online) argues that some highlander leaders have decided to use the term Igorot in forming the Igorot Global Organization<sup>86</sup> (IGO) and its activities, such as the Igorot International Consultation (IIC) and their publication, *The Igorot Quarterly*, in order to 'cleanse the word Igorot from its negative connotations'. By re-appropriating the term, IGO members attempt to 'revalue an externally imposed negative label...by self-consciously referring to itself in terms of that label' (Galinsky 2003, p. 231). However, during the third IIC in Baguio City, participants failed to reach an agreement on 'the definition of the [term] Igorot and whether ethnolinguistic groups under this broader groups should be referred to as such' (Malanes 2000). Zenaida Brigida Pawid, current Chair of the NCIP, recalled how participants during the third IIC were 'quarrelling' about the word Igorot. The IIC is a biennial conference for members of the IGO and other interested participants, composed mostly of diasporic Cordillerans. 'Why does it have to be such a big issue? You see...they were defining themselves as Igorots when they're outside (the country)...But those from here don't want to be called Igorots...They are from Bontoc, from Kiangnan, and so forth'.

### **6.3.2 Using Our Own Names**

Francis from Kalinga and *Bibaknets* co-moderator John Dyte offered the most insightful comments in the discussions. They were quite emphatic in their posts, reiterating that individuals and groups who do not want to call themselves Igorots for whatever reasons should not be rebuked for their choice. Francis lives in New Zealand and is an officer of a BIBAK organisation. His long reply dwelt on history, culture and politics to explain his position.

*First of all, and this is my opinion, the term "Igorot" is not even found in any of the dialects of the different ethnic groups of the Cordilleras. It is a word that was coined by the lowlanders to identify the people of the Cordilleras or the mountains for that matter...*

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<sup>86</sup> The IGO was formed in 1995 in West Covina, California 'to preserve for future generations the heritage of the Igorot People and proactively promote their upliftment, advancement and interests and those of related people'.

*The use of Igorot was accepted among us when there was only one province in the Cordilleras. I do not believe that the term Igorot has always been widely acceptable to the other ethnic groups in the area, Ifugao of which is the best example. With the division of the then Mountain Province, these different groups were given the chance to identify themselves accordingly that is accordingly to their heritage and not to a name derived from other sources. The Kalingas call themselves Kalingas outside of the province but within the province, they start identifying themselves as i-Lubuagan, i-Tinglayan, i-Balbalan, etc. simply because they do have differences in features, dialects, traditions among others. I believe that we have to come to an age that we are starting to identify ourselves for who we are and not where we come from...*

*Francis, New Zealand*

There are three points to highlight in Francis' message. First, he states that Igorot is not a term found in any Cordilleran language, rather it was a label conceived and imposed by outsiders. He illustrates that in his home province of Kalinga, individuals describe themselves as Kalingas to outsiders but identify their specific towns when conversing among themselves. Cordillera scholars are united in the view that highlanders' primary identification is with their villages or ethnic groups (Casambre 2010; Prill-Brett 1987; Young 1976 in Rood 1989, p. 11). Second, he links the adoption of the term by highlanders 'out of convenience' when the Americans created the regional grid called Mountain Province. Finally, he believes that Cordillerans should not only recognise their commonality as part of one region, but that they should also acknowledge their different cultural traditions.

Another insightful message was provided by Dyte, an Ibaloi from Benguet. He proposed that preserving their 'ethnic uniqueness is the driving force for those who do not want to be called Igorots'. Here is the salient part of his reply:

*Those of you who have Kankanaey roots either from Benguet or the Mountain Province, must understand that you currently constitute the majority of all collective gatherings anywhere in the world. Whenever, there is a gathering, it is your cultural practices in dance and ritual that is most commonly heard.*

*That puts us who come from other tribes at a disadvantage...*

*I suspect that the Ifugao's feel the same way in attempting to preserve their culture. To be called Igorot, diminishes their Ifugao identity.*

*This is the reason, why I have emphasized that Igorot must be used in context as a collective name if it is to be used to unite peoples.*

*Unfortunately, the term "Igorot" is being used to identify very specific things which should not be identified if the term is to be used to identify all of us from the Cordillera.*

*It was never the name that united us, it was our own fierce desire to be independent that kept us together.*

*John Dyte*

Dyte identifies specifically the Northern Kankanaeys of Mountain Province and Southern Kankanaeys of Benguet to be the most visible during Cordillera gatherings anywhere in the world. In doing so, they leave the wrong impression to non-Cordillerans that Kankanaey dances and songs represent the 'Igorot culture'. The concept of an 'Igorot culture' is likewise challenged by Prill-Brett who argued that the term 'implies a monolithic culture' (2000, pp. 3-4). The different ethnic groups in the Cordillera have diverse cultural beliefs and practices so that one cannot say that there exists a single 'Igorot culture'. As stressed in Chapter 4, the Cordillera is marked by heterogeneity of indigenous customs, traditions and languages. Dyte offers an important reflection that highlanders have never been united by one name but by their common efforts in resisting colonisation and maintaining their cultural practices.

The members' messages could be divided into four perspectives. First, there are members who believe that all indigenous peoples in the region should call themselves 'Igorot' as a signifier of our collective identity. This is the position held by several members from Mountain Province. Second, there are those who hold the view that different groups should be allowed to use their preferred terminology, a position taken generally by members from other provinces, although two members from Mountain Province also support indirectly this view. Third, several members recognised that, regardless or in spite of their preferred labels, all highlanders share a collective indigenous identity. Finally, although they share a collective indigenous identity, some members felt that that the representation of this collective identity is dominated by certain indigenous groups, mainly those from Mountain Province.

Hector, an Ifugao member from Hingyon ('i-Hingyon') also replied to Mark. Like Francis, Hector explained that all indigenous groups in the Cordillera have distinct traditions, but this does not make them a divided group. He described the

different 'tribes' as part of one family and highlights his own experience of building friendships in the mines with people from different parts of the region.

*Mark,*

*The ifugaos and igorots are not a divided group, instead we are one in a family comprising several tribes that abode the vast cordillera. I grew up in Acupan mines, Itogon and had several friends...from Bontoc. During my stint in Acupan, our "barkada"<sup>87</sup> which comprises offspring of miners from benguet, ifugao, bontoc, kalinga and abra never insinuate anything like, " am not an igorot" or "the kalingas or ifugaos are not igorots", instead we just accept the fact that we are children of miners whose ancestors are natives of the old mountain province. And we always have a good time, always sharing anything that each of us have...*

*Hector  
i-Hingyon (Manila)*

Gerard Finin explained that the opening of the mines forced miners from different indigenous groups to work together under the supervision of American managers and engineers (2005, pp. 90-99). Hector wrote how, as children of miners, he and his friends looked beyond their indigenous groupings and saw instead their commonality as children of Cordilleran 'natives'. Meanwhile, another layer of complexity was added by Philip. Apparently, it is not only the Ifugaos, Kalingas, Apayaos and Tingguians (Afafe 1995; Molintas 2004; Rood 1989) who prefer to use their specific indigenous ethnicity. Alfredo wrote that children born in Manila and whose parents are originally from Mountain Province also do not want to call themselves Igorots. He underlined the fact that not all Ifugaos dissociate themselves from the term Igorot but that even those who come from the Mountain Province may also choose to abandon the category for personal reasons.

*You all made some good points answering Mark's query. Some of my friends from Ifugao really don't want to be identified as Igorots and some of them proudly claim they are Igorots...*

*It's up to the person you are talking to. In the 90's, I met pipol from the Mountain Province who refuse to be called igorots kasi daw they were Manila born, kaya "parents lang daw nila ang igorot"<sup>88</sup> he he. But then as they grew older, they came to appreciate how it is to be*

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<sup>87</sup> Translation: 'mates' or 'group of close friends'

<sup>88</sup> Translation: In the 90s, I met people from Mountain Province who refused to be called Igorots because they were born in Manila so that they claim it is only their parents who are Igorots....Long live the Igorot, long live the Cordillera!!!!

*an Igorot and now claim from high heavens...that they are  
IGOLOTS. Sunga Agbiag ti Igot, Agbiag ti Koldilyera!!!!*

*Alfredo, US*

Many members felt that the Ifugao-Igorot discussion is a perpetual theme on *Bibaknets* and other online forums, but that it is important to allow continued dialogue about the matter. Both Ifugao and non-Ifugao members posted messages that sought to clarify or at least inform members about the different indigenous groups in the region. One member explained that there are four ethnolinguistic groups in Ifugao, while another contributed several definitions of Igorot, complete with bibliographic citations. The theme related closely to another ongoing thread about begging, thereby prompting the moderator to declare that it was time to put the issue to rest. The discussions also showed that certain groups were seen as dominating Cordilleran collective identity representations and discourses. Lando, an Ifugao, acknowledged *Bibaknets* as a space where minority viewpoints such as his could be posted.

*By the way, blame the exchange of ideas on the emergence of the internet as a means of communication; and Mod Ha Lee (sorry, sir, hehehe ) for creating the Bibaknets yahoogroups. Whereas in the olden times, we are confined to line of sight communications and we can impose our opinions on other people simply on account of a LOUDER voice, such is not a case in these age. Today, I can whisper my sentiments from Mt. Kappugan, Kiangan; and here you are, answering with your own tune.*

*Lando, Philippines*

The diverse viewpoints offered by members with respect to their understanding of their indigenous identity illustrate the workings of technologies of indigeneity in the construction of Cordilleran identity. Members were divided between different positions – cultural, ideological, historical – indicating a struggle for meaning between different indigenous groups (Maybin 2001). Ibaloi, Ifugao, and Kalinga members wrote about their own personal reflections and observations about indigenous categories and practices within the limited context of their specific ethnic groups. Francis explained that in Kalinga, people identified themselves based on their towns. Dyte wrote how his father's attempt to play Ibaloi music was 'drowned out' by other indigenous groups, perhaps by the Kankanaeys who he said are the most visible in Cordillera gatherings 'anywhere in the world'. Hector, another Ifugao, spoke more about the bond among highlanders, citing his friendship with other Cordillerans in the mining area of Acupan. Katherine, on the



other hand, a Northern Kankanaey, underlined that the *collective* and political gain of adopting Igorot as a collective indigenous label would advance highlanders' rights. Katherine was more concerned with the idea of empowerment, taking an authoritative view that all Cordillerans should refer to themselves Igorots.

### **6.3.3 BIBAK or MIBAKA?**

Apart from the category of Igorot, another discussion arose relating to acronyms that could best describe contemporary Cordilleran relations. In May 2009, three months after the heated debate about the term Igorot, a discussion arose about the acronym BIBAK. BIBAK stands for Bontoc, Ifugao, Benguet, Apayao and Kalinga, the five original provinces comprising the Cordillera region. BIBAK was first used in 1950 to refer to the organisation founded by students from these provinces who were studying at the Baguio Colleges Foundation, the first college established in Baguio City (Finin 2005, pp. 156, 161-162). Formerly called Baguio-Mountain Province Native Students' Association, the organisation was renamed BIBAK to reflect a more inclusive and neutral name consistent with its aim of 'unifying the different tribes in the Mountain Province' (Finin 2005, p. 161).

Gerard Finin writes that the student members 'surely knew that these administrative jurisdictions were in reality *not* coincident with ethnolinguistic boundaries', but they associated with these provincial designations (2005, p. 161). At around the same time, Manila-based highland students also formed the Mountain Province Association of Manila with the similar purpose of bringing together students from the different indigenous groups in the region (Finin 2005: 160). BIBAK's prominence and historical significance could be traced to its campaign against gambling in 1951, when some 500 highland students from the different schools in Baguio City petitioned the city council to stop granting permits for slot machines, which have lured Igorots into gambling (Finin 2005, p. 165). Today, the name BIBAK continues to be used by many organisations or associations, both in the Philippines and overseas, whose membership comes from the different provinces within the Cordillera. To cite a few examples, there is BIBAK-Saint Louis University, a university-based student organisation in Baguio City, Philippines, and BIBAK-San Diego, an organisation of diasporic Igorots in San Diego, California (See Figure 6.2 below). But like the category Igorot, the relevance of BIBAK as a regional acronym has also been questioned by some members of *Bibaknets* in light of the socio-political changes in the region.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Groups homepage for 'bibaksandiego - BIBAK San Diego'. The page layout includes a search bar at the top right, a navigation menu on the left, and a main content area. The main content area features a 'Home' section with a 'Join This Group!' button, activity statistics (35 New Messages), and a description of the group. A central photograph shows a group of people in traditional Igorot attire performing a dance. To the right, there is an advertisement for Yahoo! Autos and a section for group email addresses.

Figure 6.2 The homepage of BIBAK-San Diego.

In May 2009, Ceasar Castro, President of IGO<sup>89</sup> posted a message regarding the arrangements being made by BIBAK-Pacific North West (BIBAK-PNW) to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition (AYPE). The exposition was held in Seattle in 1909 and was one of the three fairs participated in by Igorots in the United States, the first being the Saint Louis Fair in Missouri in 1904, and the second, the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in Oregon in 1905 (Afbale 1995, p. 16).

*I took the risk of forwarding this email thread to all the Igorot groups there are, just so to update you with the very important upcoming event in Seattle this June 6-7. It is a tremendous task to all the members of the BIBAK-PNW of Seattle which they need all the support from us all. This is part of Pagdiriwang "IGOROT VILLAGE REVISITED" from the AYPE 100 years ago.*

*We need your support and enthusiasm.*

*Ceasar Castro, Canada*

<sup>89</sup> Igorot Global Organization (IGO) is a US-based non-profit organisation that seeks to promote the 'rights and causes of Igorots' all over the world. Their website: [http://igorot.com/cms/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=28](http://igorot.com/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=28)

Some hours later, Sonia in the UK replied, saying that it is time to use Mountain Province instead of Bontoc. While she did not refer to any specific item in Ceasar's email, her message could be linked to Peter's use of 'BIBAK-PNW'. There was a flurry of messages among the members arguing both for and against the use of BIBAK by organisations.

*Just a little comment ...*

*During the IIC-3 that was held in Baguio in 2000, I read that one of the resolutions was to teach others about us and one way was to start using the correct acronym ... by using "Mountain Province" instead of "Bontoc". I know I previously reminded folks in the IGO about this resolution but no one seems to care. What's the point of resolutions if they are just going to be made and then forgotten? Also, Abra should be included. I heard an Abrenian comment that ... *dida kami met inaynayon, hindi naman kami kasali!*<sup>90</sup> Something to think about.*

*Best wishes on the upcoming event.  
Sonia, Britain*

Opinion was divided among the elders who joined the discussions. Nestor agreed with Sonia and a couple of others that a new acronym<sup>91</sup> should be adopted to indicate the current geopolitical subdivisions in the region, which now include the province of Abra. In his last paragraph, Nestor links this discussion to that of the term 'Igorot'.

*Insisting on retaining the term "BIBAK" is like closing the door against Abra, and isolating Bontoc from the rest of the municipalities of Mt. Province, as well as slashing the others from the group...*

*But, again, let us be practical. Our political and geographical region is Cordillera. The provinces that we are representing in our Association are, Mt. Prov. Ifugao, Benguet, Apayao, Kalinga, and Abra, MIBAKA. I hope NOT, another foreign intervention will give us another word to describe, or be the acronym, rather than us, like the way the term igorot was introduced. Do we like it that way?*

*Nestor, US*

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<sup>90</sup> Translation: I heard an Abrenian comment that...you are excluding us!

<sup>91</sup> Other existing acronyms are BIBBAKA, MABIKA, BIMAKA, BIMAAK, among others. These new acronyms all attempt to capture the cities and provinces, old and new, which are deemed part of the Cordillera.

In these exchanges, Sonia and Nestor seek a new acronym to include all Cordillera provinces. Sonia wrote that IGO does not seem to care about a resolution to use Mountain Province rather than Bontoc. Nestor, meanwhile, would like Abra to be included. He also prefers a new name to be conceived by ‘us’ rather than outsiders, as was the case for the word ‘Igorot’. With their alternative views, Sonia and Nestor took an inclusive and respectful position towards provinces not represented in the acronym BIBAK.

#### **6.4 Understanding One’s Ethnic Category**

The earlier section examined the tensions involved in the collective category Igorot. In this section, I analyse how forum members clarified and explored the specific ethnic categories that they use for themselves. In the online survey, one of the questions asked for respondents’ ‘ethnicity’ or ethnolinguistic category. Ethnicity is a common term used by the members based on earlier forum discussions. I included in the survey the following categories: Applai, Bontoc, Ibaloi, Ifugao, Isneg, Kankanaey, Kalinga, and Tingguian. Respondents could also tick ‘Other’ and specify their ethnicity if none of the choices applied to them. Relevant literature identifying the major ethnic groups in the region often omit the category Applai (Afable 1995; Casambre 2010; Follosco 2011; Molintas 2004; Prill-Brett 1987; Rood 1989). However, Patricia Afable explains that the Northern Kankanaeys<sup>92</sup> who live in the western portion of Mountain Province have decided to ‘dissociate themselves socially and politically from their Bontoc neighbours by calling themselves Iyaplay (“upriver people”), in fact the name that Bontoc people use for them’ (1995, p. 12).

##### **6.4.1 Applai or Kankanaey?**

After posting a message inviting members to participate in the online survey and providing a link to it, I received an email from Beth, an English teacher based in Manila. She explained that ‘Applai’ describes the geographic origins of a person, while Kankanaey refers to one’s ethnolinguistic group. She suggested that all those who ticked Applai should be categorised as Kankanaey. Reviewing the initial survey results, I noticed that one respondent wrote ‘Aplai (sic) and Kankanaey’ while a couple identified themselves as members of two ethnic groups and/or places: ‘Sagada and Bontoc’, ‘Ilocano/Bontoc’, and ‘Bontoc & Ifugao’. One member

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<sup>92</sup> I have decided to include Applai in the choices for ethnic categories as my purpose was mainly to determine members’ self-ascribed ethnic identifications rather than a fixed, ‘authoritative’ list based on academic literature. As I explained in Chapter 4, the given categories were meant to serve as a guide for respondents to use in describing themselves.

also wrote, 'My parents are from Sagada'. In total, 27 respondents ticked Applai, while 26 chose Kankanaey.

In the light of these responses, I posted a message on the forum asking for members' insights and feedback on the matter. What started as a mere clarification of indigenous ethnic categories turned out to be an exercise in collective reflexivity relating to how certain groups and places in the region are named and categorised. The topic generated 12 related threads and roughly 100 responses over a period of one month, mostly from members outside the Philippines. Those who responded had different perspectives, understanding and even 'experience' of the terms 'Applai' and 'Kankanaey'.

*What I understand is that an ethnolinguistic group is a group of people who are bound together by a common language and basically similar though not necessarily identical ways of life, and are distinct from other groups on account of their language and culture.*

*If this is correct, then Kankanaey is the ethnolinguistic group. Applai is based on geography ("applai" means "from upstream," I think). The Northern Kankanaeys (simply the Kankanaeys in Mt Province) are commonly called the Applais, but they are Kankanaeys nonetheless. Is it perhaps correct to say that like the word Igorot (from the mountains), i-Applai does not make reference to an ethno group but to a group of people in a certain geographical setting?*

*I remember a conversation with an anthropologist (could it have been the highly respected Dr. June Prill Brett?)<sup>93</sup> who told me that the people from Eastern Mountain Province (from downstream?) used the word applai to refer to the people from upstream.*

*Beth, Philippines*

The message above posted by Beth once more demonstrates Cordillerans' use of narrower categories to identify themselves and other highlanders. Moreover, it highlights their search for clarification as to which category is more authoritative or not, as indicated by Beth's reference to Prill-Brett's explanation. For Peter, both categories of Applai and Kankanaey are applicable to people from western Mountain Province. He also makes a distinction between place and language, but believes that indigenous ethnic grouping is a fluid category.

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<sup>93</sup> See page 71 where Dr. June Prill-Brett explains how Applai started to become used as a category.

*I'm one of those who responded in your survey that I'm both Applai [by geography - Western Mtn. Province] and Kankana-ey [by language]. The specific ethnic or tribal group that a respondent would put him/herself in would depend on the basis of your list of choices. If the list includes both **geographic** and **language** (emphasis in original) groups, the respondent would check both, whichever applies.*

*Peter, Manila*

The Kankanaey language is spoken by Northern and Southern Kankanaeys, respectively in Mountain Province and Benguet. Peter explains that there are differences between these two languages, and even among Northern Kankanaey (NK) speakers themselves.

*BTW, the Kankana-ey spoken by the iyApplais [referred to as "Northern Kankana-ey" samet] has some differences from that spoken by the i-Benguets [Southern Kankana-ey]. The difference is usually in the use of different words for the same thing, object, entity, or whatever. And even w/in NK or within SK, denotations and connotations of words can differ. Most of the time the speakers understand each other. Sometimes they dont, and scratch-my-head-confusion happens. Yes, please somebody shed light.*

*Peter (Manila)*

Christopher, who is from the province of Benguet, offered another view on the issue. For him, Kankanaey refers only to those from Benguet.

*My first time to hear Aplai, I am from Benguet and I know we speak both Ibaloi and Kankana-ey. The majority of Kankana-ey speaking municipalities in Benguet are Kibungan, Kapangan, Bakun, Buguias, and Mankayan. La Trinidad, Atok, Bokod, Itogon, Kabayan, Sablan, Tuba and Tublay are Ibaloi speaking majority 🙌🙌🙌🙌 canao tayo 🇵🇭.*

*Aplai must be applied to Western Bontoc because to me Kankana-ey are only in Benguet, similarities in the dialects like Kayan, Tadian where my wife came from is all I know. Maybe some of my Kankanaey relatives from Kapangan, Buguias and Itogon will respond to this topic. No offense To the Bontoc or Mt. Prov Kankana-ey 🇵🇭 😂*

*Have a nice day 😊*

*Christopher 🇺🇸 (US)*

The issue was made more complicated as Christopher and Joan conflated the Bontocs of Bontoc town in Mountain Province with the Kankanaeys of Bontoc. In this particular discussion, some members revealed their lack of awareness of the different indigenous groups in Mountain Province. Joan, a Southern Kankanaey from Benguet and an Australian citizen, wrote that she and her clan are the ‘true Kankanaeys’:

*Hi Ms. Liezel*

*You don't know me, I don't know you. I don't know where you are getting your information. To answer the # 1 that "Applai in one's geographic roots and the latter refers to one's language is absolutely incorrect. I am a living (and the rest of my clans) proof that I am called kankanaey by roots and by my dialect....*

*When I went back to Ba-gew to visit my relatives, the subject of "ibontok" came. This was most of them said. Why do these Bontocs now claim that they are Kankanaey? They have a different voice/intonation and a different way of speaking – yet they claim to be Kankanaey?...*

*Liezel, I am not trying to be hard on you, but maybe you can understand the "true kankanaey" side. I felt like my identity as kankanaey was being stripped from me by other "igorot" proclaiming that they are kankanaey too. As I mentioned in my earlier posting, kankanaey is my identity and I hold it to my dear life.*

*Joan, US*

In contrast to Beth’s view that groups from Western Mountain Province are Kankanaeys, Joan was adamant that it is only Benguet groups who speak this language who can be called Kankanaeys. I replied to Joan that I do not know the answers and hope to receive clarification from fellow forum members. Basingat posted a message addressed to Joan explaining that I am conducting a research and encouraged members to participate in the discussions.

It turns out that ‘Bontoc’ denotes both a place and a ethnic group (Afable 1995; Prill-Brett 1987; Rood 1989). However, some Northern Kankanaeys sometimes switch between Kankanaey and Bontoc for historical reasons when identifying themselves. While in Baguio in 2009 to conduct my interviews, my parents and I had lunch at Central Park, a popular Chinese restaurant. As we were leaving, my mother bumped into an acquaintance who is originally from the lowlands. ‘By the way, where are you from?’ Mrs. Pesigan asked my mother. To my surprise, Mama

said ‘We are from Bontoc’. On our way to the car, I asked her why she said we were from Bontoc when we were not and she explained that people know Bontoc better than Mountain Province.

As I explained in Chapter 4, the Americans created Mountain Province and designated Bontoc as its capital (Finin 2005; Fry 2006). After the Philippines gained its independence from America, the supra-province was divided into four separate provinces: Benguet, Ifugao, Mountain Province (formerly Bontoc), and the combined provinces of Kalinga–Apayao. Meanwhile, Mountain Province has two major indigenous groups; the Bontocs and Northern Kankanaeys, also known as Applais. In Section 6.4, I mentioned that Northern Kankanaeys have decided to call themselves Applai in order to ‘dissociate themselves socially and politically from their Bontoc neighbours’ (Afable 1995, p. 12). However, Afable’s assertion appears to contradict some members’ messages on *Bibaknets*. Beth, for instance, is from Besao and prefers the category Kankanaey to Applai. Meanwhile, Peter, who is also from Besao, explains that he is both an Applai and a Kankanaey. In contrast, two other members explained that they always considered themselves Kankanaey until they were asked to choose Applai in order to have a better chance of obtaining university government scholarships.

*You're correct there. It is really confusing. I remeber when I was still a student applying for a scholarship exams. In my application, I was told to put applai as my tribe since I came from western Bontoc. I speak the kankana-ey vernacular which is also being spoken in some parts of Benguet like Buguias. Until now I am still confused but I consider a kankana-ey. Paging Dr. Morr Pungayan, my professor at SLU. Maybe he can shed light on this matter.*

*Miriam (Baguio City)*

Another member, James, also applied for a government scholarship for indigenous peoples and was similarly advised by ‘some experts’ to choose Applai. However, he offers a different explanation for the distinction between Applai and Kankanaey, drawing from his own childhood experience. He makes the point that Iyappay refers only to people from Sagada and Besao, and not to groups from other municipalities in Mountain Province, where the same language is spoken.



*We all experienced the same. I also ticked applai as my tribe as told by some "experts" when I was applying for an scholarsip, because it is a smaller tribe compared to the kankana-ey tribe, unfortunately I failed because I was not that clever enough to compete with those who are more intellectuals than myself...*

*I always thought that Applai is a geographic location and kankana-ey refers to a dialect spoken in a certain geographic location. My late father is Iyappay (the bontocs pronounce it this way, you see) and my late mother is Ifontoc or from Samoki to be exact... interestingly enough, Appai as i always thought only refers to the i besaos and i sagadas only, as though the i pidlisan, aguid, tanulong, antadao etc are not i applais? the i sabangan are just calledas i sabangan as well as the i baukos etc...*

*James (UK)*

In an interview, Dr. June Prill-Brett explained that 'applai', meaning 'downstream' used to be a derogatory term referring to peoples from the towns of Besao and Sagada. After the Second World War, some individuals from Taccong, Ankileng, and Bugang in Sagada started to beg in Baguio, Tarlac and Pampanga which has consequently degraded the term 'applai'. The proliferation of beggars in the city led the Baguio City council to propose an Anti-Vagrancy Law as a deterrent. Sagada lawyer and politician Alfredo Lam-en said in a speech during the 1970s, '*I-applai tako*' (We are from down the river). Prill-Brett stated that Lam-en wanted to give a sense of pride to the term applai, emphasising the geographic origin of these communities. A study by Jeannette Palangchao-Scott (Cabreza 2004) showed that beggars from Bontoc and Sagada villages have their own houses in Baguio and have university-educated children, thereby substantiating Prill-Brett's view. The study revealed that they resorted to begging to supplement their income when the planting season was over.

Taking a more inclusive view, Rey from Sagada, explained that using these identity categories is not an either/or choice because they are used in different contexts: the category he uses depends on the person he is addressing and where they are located geographically. Rey replied:

*How general or specific I would identify my ethnicity or ethnic affiliation depends on what I perceive is relevant to the receiver. In other words, it would depend on up to what level of 'specificity' [if there is such a word] is needed.*

*Level 1: I'm Asian [as opposed to Caucasian, Black...]*

*Level 2: I'm Filipino [as opposed to Japanese, Chinese,...]*

*Level 3: I'm Igorot [as opposed to Ilocano, Visaya, ....]*

*Level 4: I'm Northern Kankana-ey*  
*Level 5: I'm Applai*  
*Level 6: I'm from the Sagada tribe*  
*Level 7: Ineee, keedeng... (Oh, this seems endless...)*

*Rey, US*

Kristine, a former teacher now working in Kuala Lumpur, wrote that the labels Kankanaey and Applai do not bother her as she identifies herself primarily as 'i-Sagada' (or coming from Sagada), one of the municipalities of Mountain Province. Rey's and Kristine's different responses could be evaluated within the context of their offline realities. Rey's nuanced perspective is indicative of his migrant status in the US as he locates his identifications in the multiple geographies and ethnicities of his life in the diaspora. He expresses what he describes as a multilevel identification, voicing a cosmopolitan perspective that suggests 'complex repertoires of allegiance, identity and interest' (Vertovec and Cohen 2002, p. 4). Meanwhile, Kristine who is a contract worker in Kuala Lumpur, expresses stronger ties to her village than to her host city because of the temporary nature of her overseas work. In previous posts, she has frequently shared links to the latest news items about the Cordillera or the Philippines as she describes the weather or the time in her city.

The series of discussions about Applai and Kankanaey, and the use of BIBAK, prompted Basingat to acknowledge that the members' knowledge of themselves – their collective names, the names of their villages and towns - may not actually be the 'truth'.

*Let's continue to explore the truth because what we know about ourselves may not be the truth afterall. For example, whoever decided tocall Bontoc province "Mountain Province" must have been out of their minds and probably need to revisit the name and rename it appropriately, if not to make it sound englishly right.*

*Harry Basingat, US*

Basingat encouraged all 'to explore the truth' about ourselves as a people. Like Francis and John Dyte in Section 6.3.2, he takes a reflexive view with respect to the members' understanding of Cordilleran history and identity. Foucault viewed truth as shaped by power relations (1972). He saw history writing as concerned not only with unities and stabilities, but also with disunities and ruptures. After all, relations of power establish objects of knowledge and that relations of power-

knowledge are never static (Foucault 1979: 99). The existence of different ‘truths’ being revealed by the members about their identities as Appalais and Kankanaeys demonstrates the instability and fluid nature of indigenous identities in the Cordillera.

## **6.5 Discussion and Conclusion**

In this chapter, I analysed two major themes revolving around Cordilleran identity as they were discussed and debated upon on *Bibaknets*. The first focused on the enduring debate about the collective category Igorot and, with it, the acronym BIBAK. The second looked more specifically at the ethnic categories Kankanaey and Applai. The messages from both themes signalled collective self-reflexivity where the members shared their opinions, experiences and understandings of their sense of indigenous identities: that of their collective identity as Cordillerans, and that of their specific ethnic identity as Ifugaos, Kankanaeys, Ibalois, and so forth. Their messages examined their colonial past in conjunction with their contemporary personal experiences of indigeneity as they sought to clarify the meanings of the terms Igorot, Kankanaey and Applai – words that they have always used for themselves or have been imposed upon them by lowlanders and other highlanders. The ‘scientific’ ethnological survey and the accompanying categories created by American colonial officials, together with the geopolitical region they formed, are currently being examined and debated by their former subjects. Indicative of their narratives is their uneven knowledge and experience of the categories they use for themselves, underpinned by a sincere interest in contributing their views and being heard by their fellow highlanders.

The diversity of the members’ messages highlights four points. First, Cordilleran indigenous identity categories are positional, situational and contextual (Ashmore 2004; Brubaker and Cooper 2002; Hall 1996b; Hathaway 2010; Matthei and Smith 2008; Nagel 1995). Their acceptability varies for different groups at different times. They do not necessarily reflect cultural homogeneity or political unity. Existing indigenous categories within the Cordillera, except Bontoc, are said to have been imposed on highlanders (Afable 1995; Keesing 1934; Scott 1973), but these have been generally adopted and used by the members for themselves over time. Most members see themselves as part of one geographic region, the Cordillera, but they assert distinct indigenous identities based on their village, town, province, or language.

The most contentious and protracted debate focused on the collective label of Igorot. In Chapter 4, I examined two important events between the 1950s and 1980s when highlanders asserted and defended their 'Igorot' identity. There has been resistance to this label from some indigenous communities (Casambre 2010; Scott 1971) but this has not been addressed fully by Cordillera scholars. Efren of Ifugao, Francis of Kalinga, and John Dyte of Benguet expressed in different ways that Igorot is a hollow category because an 'Igorot' culture, and with it, an 'Igorot' collective identity, does not exist (Prill-Brett 2000). All three took the view that highlanders are all part of the Cordillera region, but that it is inappropriate and misleading to use the term to signify collective identity. Igorot, as an imposed category, fails to reflect the cultural heterogeneity of the region. These discussions refute Finin's (2005) view that the adoption of the word Igorot which he called Igorotism is equivalent to a 'shared regional consciousness'. At the same time, they also run counter to Casambre's position that there is no regional consciousness among Cordillerans. I argue that regional consciousness exists among *Bibaknetters* based on their identification of being part of one geographic region, but that such consciousness is not captured by the use of the category Igorot. As I explained in Chapter 5, membership of *Bibaknets* for Cordillerans is indicative of highlanders' collective consciousness. In this chapter, Efren, Francis and John expressed identification with the Cordillera region in their messages.

The second thread focused on the ethnic categories Kankanaey and Applai. Members who considered themselves both Kankanaeys and Applais from the neighbouring towns of Sagada and Besao in Mountain Province observed that their languages had variations despite their common attributes. Meanwhile, some Benguet Kankanaeys were not aware that there are also groups from Mountain Province who call themselves Kankanaey. Miriam and James also wrote about their experience of using either category in order to obtain government scholarships.

Second and closely related to the first point, is that Cordilleran identification involves individual and collective processes (Jenkins 2008a, p. 38). *Bibaknets* members not only narrated their own experiences of selecting categories imposed on them by the state and by other indigenous ethnic groups, but also the tensions between these categories and their own understanding of their own village, ethnic, or other sources of identities. The discussions illustrate Richard Jenkins' assertion that identification is shaped by both individual and collective factors contrary to

most identity theories which privilege the individual over the collective, or that of the collective over the individual for that matter (2008a). An Ifugao, Hector, explained that he became friends with other children of miners from various ethnic groups. Despite the pride held by Ifugaos in terms of their identity, Hector's personal relationship with other young highlanders forced him to occupy the middle ground in the debate. Another example was how some Kankanaey members willing to change their ethnic category to 'Applai' to qualify for government scholarships, illustrating the intersection between personal and collective interests.

Third, the members' negotiations and discussions reflect the power relations that exist among highlanders themselves. Although it was American colonial officials who have systematically organised the peoples and geography of the Cordillera and the rest of the Philippines, *Bibaknets* members also engage in defining, determining and limiting the discourse on highland collective identity. Today, some Cordilleran political actors are limiting the subjectivity of Ifugaos and other groups who do not identify with the term by pushing the term Igorot to refer to an ostensible unified grouping of highlanders. The discussions on *Bibaknets* show that uneven power relations exist not only between highlanders and lowlanders but among Cordillerans themselves. Some members from Ifugao, Kalinga, and Benguet are perplexed to the point of annoyance that other members, mostly from Mountain Province, criticise those who do not want to identify themselves as Igorots. Barbara Cruikshank (1994) has developed the concept of 'technologies of citizenship' to refer to the programmes, discourses and other tactics that are aimed at making individuals politically active and capable of self-government. These technologies are a means of empowerment, yet they also constitute and regulate individuals (Erazo 2010). Thus, the process of governmentality through the categorisation and classification of highlanders continues to this day but are now led by educated, left-leaning diasporic Cordillerans themselves. Such an approach appear contrary to the values of indigenous collective decision making generally lodged within a council of elders or respected individuals in the community (Prill-Brett 1987).

Harry Basingat, thus, urges members to 'continue to explore the truth' because what they know as truth may be questionable. While acknowledging their differences, *Bibaknets* members also distinguish themselves from lowland Philippine populations, claiming a distinct history and culture from Hispanic

Filipinos. This unique highland identity becomes especially salient for diasporic members who often organise themselves into Cordillera organisations such as the IGO, BIBAK Pacific North West, MABIKA-Australia and other regional organisations overseas. Hence, *Bibaknets* members express diverse identifications while interacting with others from the Cordillera, but their choices of categories become more limited when they address outsiders.

In describing governmentality, Michel Foucault not only emphasised the disciplining role of the state and its agents with regard to its population, but also that of individuals and groups with respect to others (2001 [1982]). Instead of regarding power as centralised, he pointed out that it is also localised, whereby the ‘micro-physics of power’ – strategy, techniques and tactics – are used at every level of society (1977, pp. 26-27). That *Bibaknets* members are able to switch between various categories that have been imposed on them show that they are also able to manoeuvre their way into these artificial divisions in order to claim rights and benefits that have been generally denied them in the past. The discussions on *Bibaknets* draw on both history and contemporary experiences which reflect discontinuities and ruptures rather than stabilities and unities (Foucault 1972, p. 4). Forum members challenge taken-for-granted concepts and groupings which Foucault describes as ‘reflexive categories’. To quote Foucault:

In any case, these divisions – whether our own, or those contemporary with the discourse under examination – are always themselves reflexive categories, principles of classification, normative rules, institutionalized types: they, in turn, are facts of discourse that deserve to be analysed beside others; of course they also have complex relations with each other, but they are not intrinsic, autochthonous, and universally recognizable characteristics (Foucault 1972, p. 22).

The debates surrounding imposed ethnolinguistic categories and labels illustrate the real-life effects of knowledge. As Foucault argued, power and knowledge constitute each other (Foucault 1979, p. 27). Just like Foucault, Bakhtin believes that language should be studied in relation to its use in society, recognizing that it is a product of social interaction ‘where language is always motivated and therefore framed within the struggle between different social groups’ (Maybin, 2001, p. 65). The identity narratives on *Bibaknets* provide points for consideration in looking at the failure of the Cordillera autonomy bid in 1990 and 1998 and to the existing dominant discourse on the autonomy. Steven Rood (1989) writes that there is a wider identification with the neutral term ‘Cordillera’ in the region rather than with

the politicised term 'Igorot'. Conversely, Lydia Casambre (2010) suggests that a way forward in pursuing regional autonomy is to acknowledge the diversity of indigenous customs in the highlands. *Bibaknets* narratives indicate that identity categories are instrumental and positional – members are ready to use whichever category is useful and productive for them. All members identify with being part of one region but they are divided as to which category to use for themselves because of their diverse socio-political, educational and religious backgrounds.

The fourth point relates to the role of *Bibaknets* as an online indigenous community in shaping Cordilleran identity. Despite their different languages, names and cultural practices, many of the forum members were motivated to join *Bibaknets* 'to socialise with fellow Igorots'. As an online community, *Bibaknets* facilitates reflexivity and discussion among members who assert diverse ethnicities although claiming and contesting a common indigenous identity. As Lando observed, *Bibaknets* enables everyone, not just those with the 'louder voice', to participate in debates. Despite the members' differences, many have stayed on through the years because of their established online and offline relations: they are perhaps distant kin, or belong to the same BIBAK organisation in their host country, attend the same Anglican parish, or come from the same village or town in the Cordillera, and so on. *Bibaknets* as an online forum makes visible the power relations among members as it also facilitates their in-depth discussion of issues affecting them as a collectivity.

The narratives indicate reflexivity in the sense used by Bruno Latour: 'a heightened awareness that mastery is impossible and that control over actions is...a complete modernist fiction' (2003, p. 36), thus, complementing Foucault's aforementioned arguments. Cordillerans may never come to a definitive, unanimous agreement as to their collective category because of their diverse political, economic, religious and educational positions, but this does not hinder collaborative efforts to advance their collective interests. This chapter attempted to draw attention to the negotiations, clarifications and debates surrounding the concept of an 'Igorot' identity facilitated through *Bibaknets*. *Bibaknets* has generated inter-ethnic dialogues, allowing members from diverse backgrounds to explore their knowledge of who they are as a collective body in a changing socio-political milieu.

## Chapter 7

### Boundaries of Cordilleran Identity

#### 7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined members' shared collective identity as Cordillerans. They disagree about the use of the term 'Igorot', among other categories, but generally view themselves as part of the Cordillera region. In this chapter, I attempt to analyse how *Bibaknetters* participated in a collective action. The chapter explores the contrast between their efforts in protesting a comedienne's ethnocentric remark against highlanders and their discrimination against fellow forum members.

There are three key arguments which I expound in this chapter. First, individuals are complexly-positioned actors occupying simultaneously central and marginal positions (Adams and Ghose 2003). Second, *Bibaknets* both constrains and enables the construction of Cordillera indigenous identity because of existing power relations that exist among the members. With these perspectives in mind, I conclude that the emphasis on the collective aspect of indigenous identity needs to be examined critically because culture is an 'ideology and social process' (Mazzarella 2004, p. 355). The members' experience and idea of highland identity is 'continuously made and remade through constantly shifting relations, practices, and technologies of mediation' (Mazzarella 2004, p. 355).

#### 7.2 Indigenous Peoples and the Media

The production, consumption and circulation of media content focusing on race, ethnicity and indigeneity operate within specific socio-political and cultural processes (Ginsburg 1994; Hall 2005; Moore *et al.* 2011; Salazar 2009). In the case of indigenous peoples, studies of their engagement with the media, including the Internet, focus generally on advocacy and resistance, whether these are oriented to outsiders or among themselves (Landzelius 2006a). 'Indigenous media', according to Faye Ginsburg, refers to media production and consumption activities by peoples who describe themselves as "First Nations" or "Fourth World People" as part of their attempts to assert cultural autonomy and self-determination (1991; 1993; see also Wilson and Stewart 2008). Ginsburg uses 'media' to refer to diverse media platforms, which have a powerful influence over small-scale communities (1991, p. 92). Sharing Ginsburg's framing of indigenous media, Juan Francisco



Salazar sees indigenous media as a 'defiant form of political activism and more broadly as specific instances of cross-cultural communication' (2009, p. 508). Salazar elaborates on the concept of indigenous media, writing that indigenous media production is a process that involves technologies, social and legal structures, and cultural principles. This is underpinned by the goal of self-representation, whereby the 'control, ownership, and self-management of communication and information media' play a crucial role (Salazar 2009, p. 508). Ginsburg and Salazar both link the importance of self-representation with self-determination.

Debra Spitulnik observes that Ginsburg's definition of indigenous media is problematic because it 'refers quite flexibly to the producers, owners, subjects, locales, and/or audiences of these various mass media' (Spitulnik 1993, p. 304). Hence, it may be difficult to ascertain indigeneity when the producers are indigenous but their audiences are not, or when the audience are indigenous but the content is about popular music (Spitulnik 1993). She cites the complexity of media production in the case of *Imparja*, the first television station in the world owned by indigenous peoples (Ginsburg 1993, pp. 569-570; cf Spitulnik 1993, p. 304). Although it is owned by Aboriginal Australians, only 10 percent of the staff are indigenous and 98 percent of the programming is devoted to 'white' content (Ginsburg 1993, pp. 569-570; Spitulnik 1993, p. 304). Another example she cites are Brazilian Kayapo filmmakers who are oriented towards international markets rather than domestic audiences (Turner 1992 in Spitulnik 1993, pp. 304-305). She explains that '[T]he producers and subjects are indigenous...but they are oriented toward a later stage of the mass communication process in which the producers and audiences are not indigenous' (Spitulnik 1993, p. 305).

I acknowledge Spitulnik's observation that there exists a diverse array of alternative and oppositional use of the media among indigenous peoples (Spitulnik 1993, pp. 305-306). However, Spitulnik's arguments indicate essentialist thinking as she restricts the parameters of media engagement by indigenous peoples. For instance, if some indigenous musicians decide to produce an opera for television, does this production make it non-indigenous? I agree, however, with her observation that the concept of indigenous media needs to take into account the links between indigenous and non-indigenous media structures (Spitulnik 1993, p. 305). We could cite here the Navajo Nation which installed a wireless network in 2000 using funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Alia 2009, p. 49) or the

Baguio Midland Courier in the Philippines, which is a joint venture between highlander and lowlander entrepreneurs (Finin 2005).

### **7.2.1 Coverage of Cordillerans in the Media**

Overall, indigenous Filipinos have limited access to the media and have even fewer opportunities to create media content because of their socio-economic marginalisation (CCJD 2011). Within the last 100 years, highlanders have generally been subjects of texts written by ‘foreigners or outsiders’ (Fong 2005, pp.3-4), particularly colonial officials, foreign anthropologists, and foreign Catholic and Anglican missionaries. In recent years, representations of Cordillerans by the Philippine mainstream media have contributed to the existing ‘regime of truth’ (Foucault 1979) about Cordillerans. Despite their considerable number, Cordillerans are seldom covered by the media, and are often represented in a stereotypical manner (Zapata 2006), highlighting their distinct practices, dances and material culture. Ethnic minority or indigenous media has only been recently covered in Philippine media literature (Pertierra 2012).

Igorots were first mentioned by the national press in 1908 in an editorial criticising American colonial policy. Fidel Reyes wrote a piece entitled ‘Aves de Rapiña’ (Birds of Prey) that cast doubts on the remarkable efforts by American colonial officials to develop the far-flung but apparently mineral-rich areas of the country. The editorial appeared in the nationalist Filipino-owned Spanish language newspaper, *El Renacimiento*, parts of which follow:

There are men who besides being eagles, have the characteristics of the vulture, the owl, and the vampire. Ascending the mountains of Benguet to classify and measure the skulls of the Igorots and study and civilize them, and to espy in his flight, with the eyes of the bird of prey, where lie the large deposits of gold—the prey concealed within the lonely mountains—to appreciate them for himself afterwards, thanks to the legal facilities made and unmade at will, but always for his own benefit. (Ordenez 2007)

Although no names were mentioned, Dean Worcester, Secretary of the Interior and social planner of the Cordillera region, felt he was the one being alluded to and filed a case for libel. Reyes was eventually acquitted but his editor, Teodoro Kalaw, and the publisher, Martin Ocampo, were found guilty (US vs Ocampo *et al.* GR No. L-5527, December 22, 1910; Ordenez 2007). ‘Aves de Rapiña’ appears to be the

earliest known journalistic piece by the mainstream, national press that not only mentions, but also indicates an interest for the welfare of highlanders.

Arguably, Cordillerans' contemporary engagement with the media may be described as exceptional compared with other indigenous Filipinos which could be partly attributed to the Americans' economic and educational efforts in the region. The rise of the mining industry in Benguet during the early years of the American occupation significantly influenced the development of the media in the region. As early as 1911, Baguio had its first newspaper, *The Baguio News* (Ordonez 2007). Benguet's economic prosperity, brought about by mining and tourism, led the country's leading business newspaper, *Manila Bulletin*, to publish the *Baguio Bulletin* as a weekly supplement on 21 November 1930 (Finin 2005, p. 305). On 28 April 1947, a group of 13 Ibalois and Ilocanos published the *Baguio Midland Courier* (Finin 2005, p. 305), currently described as the longest-running local newspaper in the Philippines and arguably the first indigenous newspaper in the country. Behind this effort was Sinai Hamada, the son of a landed Ibaloi mother from Benguet and a Japanese engineer who immigrated to the Philippines during the early American period (Macansantos 2004).

Cordillerans' access to the media and involvement with media production, has not, however, significantly changed the way they are represented in the national mainstream media. Despite existing constitutional provisions and specific laws upholding equality for all Filipinos, they are often the subject of jokes on national television and on the Internet (Alanguí 2010; Fong 2006; Salanga 2009). In 1999, Filipino actress Lucy Torres was summoned by the House of Representatives to explain her unfair comment relating to Igorots in a sitcom where she was a mainstay (Dizon 2009). In one episode, she tells their household help, 'You're so ugly, maybe your parents are Igorots'. Cordillerans complained about this ethnocentric remark and the ABS-CBN Network, which aired the programme, apologised for the comment. Nothing came out of the Congressional investigation although it is worth noting that legislators have shown some interest in this incident.

### **7.2.2 Access to Information, Communication and Technology (ICT)**

Cordillerans have mainly expressed their views about issues affecting them in regional papers and broadcast stations. Their opposition to the Chico River Dam

and Cellophil projects in the 1980s was covered by the national media because of the controversy these projects generated. Today, highlanders continue to suffer from marginalisation and discrimination, but their access to and knowledge of the Internet has dramatically changed their responses to prejudice. Not only do they respond more quickly to ethnocentric statements or representations, but they are made all over the world using different online platforms. In 2006, Cordillerans took to the Internet to defend Marky Cielo, a contestant in a reality-TV programme, who was denigrated by another contestant for being an Igorot (Fong 2006). In 2007, bloggers collaborated with their offline networks to remove a statue they perceived as derogatory to their indigenous identity (Longboan 2009). Their collective effort was covered by the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*,<sup>94</sup> the country's leading broadsheet (Cabreza 2007). Their efforts to challenge Carlos Romulo through letters to the editor in the 1960s (Finin 2005) continue to this day, albeit in a more sustained, systematic and widespread manner facilitated by the Internet.



Figure 7.1 The Commission on Information and Communications Technology<sup>95</sup> (CICT) office, Bontoc, Mountain Province, Philippines.

<sup>94</sup> The article titled 'Statue of pissing Igorot removed amid blog protests', inaccurately said that it was 'Cordillerans based abroad' who protested about the statue (Cabreza 2007) although it nonetheless credited the role of Cordillera bloggers in the story.

<sup>95</sup> The Commission was created by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo under Executive Order 269 in 2004 to lead the various ICT-related policies and projects of the government. Their website may be accessed at <http://www.cict.gov.ph/content/view/45/82/index.html>

Despite the limited broadband structures in place in the region, access has been greatly improved by mobile broadband services dominated by the Philippine Long Distance and Telephone Company (PLDT). Around Bontoc, there are several Internet café shops subscribed to PLDT-SMART charging 20 Philippine pesos (or roughly 27 pence) per hour. The provincial office of the Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) in Bontoc, as shown in Figure 7.1, also provides Internet services to the public by renting out three Internet-enabled computer units at the same rate as other shops.

Mobile broadband is accessible through mobile phones with Internet access and dedicated mobile broadband services, which account for 36.5 percent penetration in the Philippines (Katz 2012, p. 20). Among *Bibaknets* members, 98 out of 99 respondents had access to the Internet. Fifty respondents accessed the Internet at home primarily, 23 used it both at home and at work, while 19 accessed it mainly from work. Only five used Internet cafés, while two accessed the Internet using their mobile phones.

### **7.3 Protesting Discrimination of Cordillerans Online**

One of the elements of an online community is collective action (Parks 2011). Unlike personal blogs which are maintained by individuals, online discussion forums are shaped by the moderators and members. As a virtual community, members participate in an ‘ongoing discursive activity’, where writers and readers exchange a series of texts (Burnett 2000, p. 2). The following sections will analyse how homogeneity and heterogeneity, exclusion and inclusion occur simultaneously on *Bibaknets*. This forum may claim to be an online community for Igorots where members’ affiliation with an indigenous and/or regional highland identity is essential, but power relations configure how such an identity is narrated and negotiated.

#### **7.3.1 *Bibaknets* Members Confront a Comedienne**

In May 2009, Juliet in Canada posted a message with the subject "TAO PO AKO, HINDI PO AKO IGOROT!" (I am a human being, not an Igorot). This is a forwarded message from Jean of Baguio Web International<sup>96</sup> (or Baguio Web), an email group for people with ties to Baguio City. Apparently, Jean attended a Mother’s Day programme at SM Baguio, a shopping mall, hosted by Candy

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<sup>96</sup> This is a forum for people from Baguio City or has ties to the city. It can be accessed at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/baguiowebinternational/>.

Pangilinan, a popular comedienne. Jean wrote that Pangilinan opened the programme in a comical way, saying that she is a person and not an Igorot. Jean explained that no one reacted to the comedienne's comments because most of those present were lowlanders. The original message from Jean was in red and bold text. Here is a portion of her message:

*What she has said is not something to be ignored, it is not a RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, but a RACIAL MURDER. We were not simply discriminated, but we were wiped out from humanity by her statement alone. We are now in the modern times where we are supposed to be more educated and more exposed. Would you believe if she would say in the future that she didn't know that we, the Igorots are humans too? What would the children who have heard those statements think and say when they go back to school?*

*What would you suggest that we do about this?*

*Jean (Baguio Web International)*

Juliet, the *Bibaknets* member who shared Jean's message, expressed sadness that 'some' Filipinos are still 'so ignorant about Igorots' and placed the blame for this on the educational system. She then encouraged members to 'teach others (particularly Filipinos) about Igorots'. The slur, described as 'racial murder' against Igorots, spread across a few Cordillera online forums<sup>97</sup> within the next few days. In total, 86 messages were posted on *Bibaknets* within 22 threads all linked to Candy Pangilinan. Two *Bibaknets* members found Pangilinan's accounts on *Multiply*<sup>98</sup> and *Friendster* and posted links to these sites, encouraging members to leave messages for her. Monica, a prominent activist and a *Bibaknets* elder, pursued the issue actively, exchanging messages with Candy on *Facebook*. With Candy's *Multiply* and *Facebook* accounts deluged with negative comments from Igorots near and far, the comedienne eventually penned an apology to the Igorot community on the two social networking sites a few days after the unfortunate event.

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<sup>97</sup> Some of those I came across through *Bibaknets* were: Kotim Ya Eta, available at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/kotim-ya-eta/> [Accessed on 05 May 2009]; Baguio City Online, available at <http://www.baguiocityonline.com/> [Accessed on 05 May 2009]; MABIKA-ANZ, available at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mabika-australia/> [Accessed on 05 May 2009], and; Igorot-IGO, available at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Igorot-IGO/> [Accessed on 05 May 2009].

<sup>98</sup> Available at <http://candiva.multiply.com/> [Accessed on 30 January 2012]. *Multiply* started as a social networking site but has now re-branded itself as a social shopping site. *Friendster* is one of the earliest social networking sites which started in 2003 (Boyd 2011).

*I am truly sorry if I have uttered such insensitive remarks. I did not mean to hurt anyone, especially the Igorots from whom I know our roots come from...If you read my blogs, you would certainly see that I am not a racial murderer. Again, I am deeply sorry. I hope that you can find it in your heart to forgive and understand me.*

*Candy Pangilinan*

By this time, the Philippine Entertainment Portal (PEP),<sup>99</sup> the country's premier entertainment website, ran the story of Pangilinan's apology on her blog (Salanga 2009), which was the same apology posted to her *Multiply* account. The article mentioned particularly the role of online forums in calling the public's attention to the ethnic joke. A few *Bibaknets* members, however, found her apology insincere, as they felt that she did not confess fully to her action. Marianne, a teacher in Manila, likened Pangilinan's statement to Carlos Romulo's infamous line in 1943 that 'Igorots are not Filipinos' (see Chapter 4). The comparison between these two statements was made by other Cordillerans in other forums, blogs and news sites. Marianne wrote that Pangilinan needs to make a 'public apology' or Igorots will continue to be looked down upon. Despite Pangilinan's statements of remorse on *Multiply* and *Facebook*, highlanders could not be pacified as they demanded a national, televised apology. At around this time, the Baguio City Council had intervened, declaring her *persona non grata*. Supported by a complaint from a woman who attended Pangilinan's show, the city council approved a resolution authored by Councilor Fred Bagbagen, parts of which read:

*It is believed that the statement of Candy Pangilinan that Igorots are not homo sapiens displays an unmitigated bigotry and her total ignorance of the ethno-linguistic groups of her native country which is discriminatory and unpatriotic and should be condemned by peace-loving Filipinos. (GMA Network News, online)<sup>100</sup>*

The City Council's ban against Pangilinan was picked up by the national print and broadcast media, which gave it prominent coverage. The online discussions generated by Pangilinan's offensive comment once again unified Igorots worldwide. As in the case of Marky Cielo and the urinating Igorot statue, Cordillerans from different ethnic groups protested against what they perceived as an insult to their collective highland identity in online forums, news websites, blogs, YouTube and other websites where users and guests can leave comments.

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<sup>99</sup> Available at <http://blogs.pep.ph/candidly/?p=271> [Accessed on 2 February 2010]

<sup>100</sup> Available at <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/161593/showbiz/candy-pangilinan-declared-persona-non-grata-in-baguio> [Accessed on 31 January 2010]

Despite the protests, which were covered extensively by local and national media, a few members dissented against the prevailing view. Dennis, a government executive in Manila, shared a perspective that contradicted most of the posts. He felt that the council resolution was an ‘overkill’. He writes on *Bibaknets*:

*I think it was an overkill for the council to pass a resolution as such...The words were already said and she already apologized. Whether or not such was sincere, that is her burden and not ours. After all, this kind of event breeds a positive light as we are galvanized to unite in the face of a seeming affront against our identity. (Even if such identity is somehow blurred as time merges us in the mainstream)... For me, she is so insignificant and miniscule to even pose a serious threat against the Igorot honor and pride. She does not deserve my 2-cents. But we might have unwittingly made her even bigger in stature than CPR.<sup>101</sup> Who is she really to deserve so much mental and emotional uprising from all Igorot fronts?*

...

*Dennis, Philippines*

Dennis also observed that Igorot/Cordillera identity is becoming blurry, a perspective influenced by his marriage to a lady from the Southern Tagalog region. He is from Tuding, Mountain Province and currently a legal consultant at the Central Bank. A *Bibaknets* elder, Dennis explained that his three children are ‘half-Tagalogs’. He noted that ‘As we marry non-Igorots which is becoming the norm rather than the exception, we spread out thinner and thinner the Igorot blood’. While he appears to believe in the idea of cultural purity, he also recognised that education and work are merging Cordillerans into the ‘mainstream’ population. Dennis’ professional and personal ties are no longer bound by the geographic and cultural confines of the Cordillera, but include a wider, more cosmopolitan social and cultural arena. He wrote that people asked him his opinion about Pangilinan’s racial slur ‘in the office, in the golf clubhouse, in some business meetings’. It was perhaps important for him to maintain a balance between his roles as a *Bibaknets* leader and a government executive.

#### **7.4 Discrimination Within *Bibaknets***

The collective effort among some *Bibaknets* members to protest the ‘racial murder’ committed by the comedienne Candy Pangilinan took an interesting turn a few days later. This section focuses on the intersection between the members’ shared

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<sup>101</sup> The acronym stands for Carlos P. Romulo. See Section 4.3.2, pp. 62-63.



assertion of an indigenous identity and their practices as members of *Bibaknets*. While identification as Cordilleran/Igorot is an essential requirement for joining *Bibaknets*, meaningful membership of the forum requires the observation of certain rules and practices, one of which is the use of English in posting. Nancy Baym writes that members develop ‘community norms of practice’ which are ‘displayed, reinforced, negotiated, and taught through members’ shared behaviours’ (Baym 2010, p. 86). In one of the discussions relating to Cordillera identity, Felix draws attention to the English-language skills of highlanders. However, this is not peculiar to Igorots owing to the diversity of languages in the Philippines. The Visayans in the south are also known to dismiss Filipino and prefer to speak their languages and English (Maceda, n.d.).

*Some Igorots that I met were even ashamed that they could not speak Tagalog but they must be proud that they are on the best advantage especially in the international arena because of their strong grip of the English Language.*

...  
*Best regards,  
Felix (Qatar)*

The use of Filipino, the national language, has become more widespread in the Cordillera. Robert Reid observes that migration, education, and access to television, the Internet, and mobile phones are threatening local languages and local knowledge, and warns that Cordillera indigenous languages are ‘fast joining the ranks of endangered languages’ in the world (2010, pp. 19-20). Despite the English-only rule on *Bibaknets*, many members would include short phrases or expressions in their local languages to emphasise a point. Generally, however, elders mainly write in English in their postings. This rule is a constant source of irritation among some supporters who live in the Philippines, Southeast and East Asia and the Middle East. Elders who are based largely in English-speaking countries, such as the US, Canada and Australia, are those who often remind other members who switch to the dialect and do not provide a translation.

#### **7.4.1 Fluency in the English Language**

At the height of the controversy surrounding Candy Pangilinan’s ‘racial murder’, as discussed in Section 7.3.1, an unknown member posted the following message to share his reaction to the comedienne’s apology:

*actually it is true sometime that Igorot are not Filipino.  
As Igorot, Our culture is different from Filipino culture( I hope  
everybody observe that).  
But because we are belong to the Country so we are Filipino.  
I can see also that Filipinos are not Filipino.  
they are Spaniard because there culture are always American and  
spanish  
culture( I hope everybody observe that also).  
Look at Igorot or Mountain People from Taiwan, Burma, Thailand,  
Japan, Papua New Guinea, African American, Peru and other  
mountain side of the world we have a common culture and tradition.  
We are all native people that have lot of knowlegde because we know  
how to deal with the past, Present, and future. But this Filipinos  
today have knowlegde only about themselves.  
believe me or not I deeply say it is true.*

*Let me explain Clearly if Filipino ask me. ("Your Igorot?, where is  
that, Where are you came from? You're not Filipino right? Do you  
tail?, your Street performer right? where is your horse? do you know  
what Is Passport? you dance like this  
like eta and african right?  
I responce all the time.*

...

*Benny, Saudi Arabia*

Benny is one of hundreds of lurkers on *Bibaknets*. To recall the discussion in Chapter 4, Cathy explained that she has decided to be a lurker out of fear that her posts will be 'shot down' by active members who engage in discussions about 'high culture'. Cathy suggested that intimidation from other members could be one of the reasons 'why most members do not post' on the forum. Bearing in mind Cathy's perspectives, Benny's message stands out for two reasons. First, his original message did not conform to the forum format, which requires an addressee. Second, although he was writing in English as required, his poorly-worded, badly spelled but rather philosophical message may be described as below the general standard of writing found on *Bibaknets*. Banter and informal writing predominate in the forum but, as a long-time member, I can say that members generally spell words correctly. Benny's message elicited diverse responses from the members. The first to reply was Manuel, a retired engineer living in Manila.

'Oy, Yodaman,

*Ta mensampitau me is bas8, owen? [Lemme insert sam talk, yes?]<sup>102</sup>*

**Pigahkah!**

*1. Hwer is da mountain dat you belonging or wer ur ancestors was camfram? I aks bekos ur nem is not luklyk any Igot name dat I saw... I nose sam espangyol palabras and sam Filipino salitas, but like you, desdo not make me wanopdem...*

*2. I berimats lyk ur observatories and your ancens oldatym toda eggnorans pipols opda pilipins. En I belibs, wedder u like it or nuts, d@ w@ u c s deep-so-deep lee tru.*

*3. Ur langwich is my kind of langwich, billybibits or nuts. En I've bin accused of being Jack da Inglis ripper.. woops.. Inglis wrangler... eneh.. manggler? I 4g8s samtyms.*

...

*Manuel (Manila)*

Manuel is one of the *Bibaknets* elders. He poked fun at Benny's message and poor language as he questioned the latter's surname, asking the origins of his 'ancestors'. He and a few other elders are known to post syllabised English for amusement. This is done by spelling English words as they would be ordinarily pronounced in Filipino. This peculiar writing style has gained acceptance among supporters and elders; however, Julie, an interviewee, expressed annoyance with Manuel's writing, saying that she just could not bring herself to read his message in full. A dentist, Julie mentioned that there is a famous rule in *Bibaknets*: 'delete if not interested' or the acronym DINI. The acronym is often included in the subject line (For example, 'Life is beautiful [DINI]') or in the main message by some members who share forwarded messages or even personal matters, to acknowledge that their messages may not be relevant for some members.

Benny replied to Manuel's post a few hours later. He was angry, saying the latter put him down and twice asked Manuel if he is really an Igorot. Benny also raised the issue of class. Addressing Manuel, he rebuked his snobbery, asking him if it is

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<sup>102</sup> Translation: Let me insert some talk, yes? Oh dear! 1) Where is the mountain that you belonging or where your ancestors come from? I ask because your surname does not look like any other Igorot name. I know some Spanish words and some Filipino words but like you, this does not make me one of them...2) I very much like your observatories and your answers all the time to the ignorance people of the Philippines. And I believe, whether you like it or not, that what you say is deep so deeply true. 3) Your language is my kind of language, believe it or not. And I've been accused of being Jack the English ripper...woops English wrangler...oh...manggler. I forget sometimes.

because he is educated and rich. Benny wrote in English, Kankanaey and Ilocano in his reply, using the last two languages in emotive sections of his message. At the end of his post, he asks: is *Bibaknets* only for the rich?

*Are you Igorot or you are modern Igorot?  
no man kalkali ka kaman kan nala-ing.  
Ay gapu ta Elementary di nalpas ko?  
wenno gapo ta de adal ka ken nabaknang ka?  
Ay siya'y insuron apong mo sa?<sup>103</sup>*

...

*Aguray ka, apay daytoy Bibaknets ket para kadagiti babaknang?  
no kasta garod piki daytoy!!!*

*Benny, Saudi Arabia*

I checked Benny's profile and learned that he joined *Bibaknets* in 2007. That year, he posted two messages in Kankanaey and Ilocano languages and interacted with three members known to him. The message he posted about Pangilinan was his first in two years. The exchange between Manuel and Benny moved the discussion away from Pangilinan and brought to the fore issues of prejudice between and among Cordilleran ethnic groups. There was a flurry of messages among supporters and elders, reacting to the interaction between Benny and Manuel. A total of 11 threads and 104 messages were generated as a result of their interaction. In his reply to Benny, Manuel also wrote in his dialect, saying he does not debate nor put down people. He said that he will email Benny once the latter is sober so they can get to know each other.

Two male elders replied to Benny's posts brushing aside his anger. Rico also mocked Benny, writing that 'more comedians are coming to town', referring to the former. Rico said that Benny writes in English as if he is a lawyer. Another male elder replied, 'Send in the clowns. Let them debate (over *Bibaknets*, not DZWT<sup>104</sup>) on modern and not so modern Igolots'. Understandably, Benny felt bullied by these elders who know each other personally through their offline and online interactions. In a further reply to one of these messages, Benny explained his perspective, saying that members have the right to make jokes 'but if you jokes

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<sup>103</sup> Translation: (Original in Southern Kankanaey) You talk as if you are intelligent. Is it because I only finished elementary? Or is it because you are rich and educated? Is that what your grandparents taught you? Instead of teaching me the right grammar, you insult me. Are you an Igorot or are you just pretending to be one? (Original in Ilocano) Hang on, is this *Bibaknets* only for the rich? In that case, this is fake!

<sup>104</sup> DZWT is a local radio station owned by the Catholic Diocese of Baguio-Benguet.

hurts (*sic*)the feeling of individual then theirs (*sic*) no different what Candy Pangilinan jokes for Igorot’.

The male elders’ reaction was quite different from the messages posted by female supporters and elders. Except for one female member who made fun of Benny like Manuel, five of the six female members who replied to Benny offered words of support and advice in relation to his joblessness, which helped diffuse the tension in the forum. Diana, a nurse in Canada, wrote that, despite her bad English, she continues to post messages in the forum.

*I have been reading your posting and your debate with Manuel and Rico. Sorry to hear about your family sad story , i know i"t s hard if you don"t have a job , no money to pay your monthy bills and it does affect our daily lives , our thinking process , i only hope and pray for you to find job soon as possible, uray partime job nu adda makatulong met...You know i"m one of the members here who can"t write well and i have mentioned this before you joined Bibaknet and it"s true i have poor grammar in English ngem uray ah sigue ladta surat tak nga surat basta ma-awatan ti agbasbasa ,if they laugh at me it:"s okay , I know i"m not a good writer anyway...<sup>105</sup>*

*Diana (Canada)*

Fluency in English is a source of pride for many Cordillerans. English became the medium of instruction in the Philippines with the coming of American teachers to supplement the lack of educators in the newly-established centralised public school system (Trinidad 2012). In the Cordillera, English became more entrenched with the close interaction between Cordillerans and American administrative officials, and the establishment of mission schools by American Episcopal missionaries and Catholic Belgian priests in different parts of the region (Finin 2005; Fry 2006; Scott 1993). Scott, for example, praised the highlanders’ fluency in English, writing that ‘an Igorot topped the English exam<sup>106</sup> administered to 3,000 University of the Philippines freshmen’, an indication of ‘academic maturity’ and a source of highland pride (1993, pp. 59-60). In remote highland villages, visitors can be assured of finding locals who can communicate in English, but probably not in Filipino. According to Finin, Igorots see their fluency in English as a means of

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<sup>105</sup> Translation: (Original in Kankanaey) despite my poor grammar, I still keep on writing as long as readers understand...

<sup>106</sup> The University of the Philippines (UP) is the country’s premiere state university where students gain admission through competitive examinations.

asserting their superiority over lowlanders, as in the case of Ilocanos, who did not have the proper American accent (2005).

Paradoxically, educated Cordillerans not only use English to demonstrate superiority to lowlanders, but also as a mark of being Cordilleran. In the 1960s, public schools in the region ‘were reminded to know the national anthem and other “national” songs in Filipino [Tagalog] rather than English’ (Finin 2005, p. 307). In the present case, *Bibaknetters* were quick to assert their indigenous identity in protest against the ethnocentric remark made by Candy Pangilinan, many writing in English not only on *Bibaknets*, but also on her *Facebook* and *Multiply* accounts. In a seemingly contradictory way, forum members were also quick to put down Benny who could not write in perfect English but was expressing his pride at being a Cordilleran in the wake of Pangilinan’s statement. Thus, active *Bibaknetters* have effectively appropriated the language of the oppressors to assert their indigeneity in public forums as a means of empowering themselves, but such practice has also marginalised those who do not have the facility of the language.

#### **7.4.2 Prejudice Among Cordillerans**

Edwin in Germany shared some information about Benny’s family background. He wrote that he had been corresponding privately with Benny and learned that he had just been made redundant. He added that Benny could be the only *Bibaknetter* who comes from Barrio Bugnay, a village in Sadanga, Mountain Province. As emotions had now cooled down, Winston in the US made this observation:

*There are De Castros, Dominguezes, Lardizabals, Carinos, Yamanes, Yamashitas and others in Igorotlandia and no one ever questioned where they are from or if there is any foreign blood in them aside from the Igorot blood. Why now with Benny Dulyen?<sup>107</sup> Most of us are very much aware how these names came about with some Igorots and I do not see any valid reason to question how they got their names, their bloodlines much more to ridicule any Igorot with an unusual name.*

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<sup>107</sup> The surnames mentioned by Winston indicate mixed lowland and Japanese ancestry. During the Spanish period, lowland Filipinos were required to adopt Spanish surnames for purposes of taxation. Lowlanders and some Japanese immigrants have intermarried with Cordillerans which explain the Spanish and Japanese surnames. The majority of Cordillerans, however, have maintained their indigenous names. Benny’s surname, although fictitious, is an example of a Cordillera surname.

*I do agree with Benny that while Bibaknet is a good place to exchange ideas, opinions, joke with one another, there should be a degree of sensitivity when it comes to personal matters as in the case of Benny...*

*Winston, US*

Winston's concerned reaction that Benny's lineage is being interrogated by an esteemed member of *Bibaknets* exposes the relative exclusivity of the forum to members from prominent families. Some of the surnames mentioned by Winston have political and business links. Moreover, it is clear from their posts that many *Bibaknets* elders are officers and active members of Cordillera organisations in the Philippines and overseas. In an interview, Miriam said that she considers the forum an 'elite group'. A researcher in Manila, she explained that 'I actually feel so small when I am at a *Bibaknets* gathering, especially when they start talking about things that you can't have because you don't have the money'. However, despite this, she felt that she was 'in the right group (because) there are still people who get to provide the balance'. *Bibaknets* elders possess wealth and influence, which they appear to take pride in and value.

Taking a reflexive tone, other members shared Winston's sentiments and recalled memories of some forms of prejudice they have observed or experienced in their own towns. Margaret from Besao wrote that being a 'half-half', having an Igorot father and Ilocano mother, she also endured criticisms from both her highland and lowland relations. She writes,

*But I second the concern of Winston and Delfin also about us reacting this way to what we perceive as slurs to our ethnicity but at the same time committing the same even among us and also against other groups. How can we expect every Filipino to know so much about us when we are not that informed also about every ethnic group in the country?...*

*Like what Delfin pointed out - even among those from Besao, there are those who are from the villages and there are those from the centre of the town. In Bontoc, they would say ibarbaryo<sup>108</sup> in such a derogatory term but people in Baguio or Manila would also say ibarbaryo to those who are from Bontoc. Hehehe. That's Central Place Theory for you - those at the center think they are more superior than those at the peripheries...*

*Margaret, Baguio*

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<sup>108</sup> Translation: from the village

Margaret noted that, in her town, those from the barrios are looked down upon by those from the 'poblacion' or the town centre. The discussions about Candy Pangilinan in other forums had taken a more reflective turn as the days passed. As I mentioned previously, many *Bibaknets* members have multiple online group memberships so that messages in these communities receive a wide circulation. Joseph, for example, is a member of three forums: *Mountain Province*, *Kotim ya Eta* and *Bibaknets*, all hosted by Yahoo Groups. He came across a message posted by Arnel on *Mountain Province* and shared it with the two other forums. Arnel's message underlines how people's reaction to Pangilinan's insensitive remark needs to be tempered because discrimination incorporates various forms, even among Cordillerans.

*Even the way we speak...intonations ...become jokes and pity the one who cannot handle it well...The list can go on and on <sup>109</sup>... Peoples of the world, nations, regions, ethnic groups have their own biases, even racial slurs. That's a fact. Again, let's leave their ignorance about us as is. Perhaps its only their way of getting up a notch higher in a country whose citizens are looked down upon in the international stage. And now....take it away Alec Baldwin, American actor...."I think about getting a Filipino mail-order bride at this point or a Russian one, I don't care, I'm 51," Baldwin told host David Letterman...*

*Alberto, Mountain Province Yahoo Group, Philippines*

The contrast between the members' apparent unified narratives expressing frustration and anger about Pangilinan's controversial remark and their fragmented discussions of discrimination among themselves indicates the social and structural construction of public narratives over time (Sommers 1994: 619). Clearly, *Bibaknets* members' online narratives do not exist in a vacuum (Baym 2010; Lee 2006; Pertierra 2006). The members' preference for English can be traced not only to American colonial policies and Christian missionisation in the early 1900s, but also to the migration of highlanders to the US and other English-speaking countries within the last 50 years. It is the Cordillerans in these countries who dominate and shape the rules of and discussions on *Bibaknets*.

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<sup>109</sup> The examples he cites poke fun at certain group's language although other bases of prejudice in the Cordillera exist. Just to cite a few examples, Ibalois are often described as 'shymango' (shy), the Ifugaos are chided for 'spitting blood' associated with their practice of spitting betel nut residue on the streets, or the Kalingas are still seen as warrior-like because some individuals in the past have resorted to vengeance killing.



Moreover, the messages highlight that there are as many collective identity narratives as there are members (Brown 2006, p. 738). The thread began with *Bibaknetters* discussing Pangilinan's statement and what they could do collectively to stop the 'vicious cycle' of Filipino celebrities poking fun at highlanders. Members proposed steps to tackle the controversy within the context of their professional lives. Faye, an artist, wrote how her son showed her a textbook of an Igorot boy 'who had thick lips, big nose, short and with a big belly', which prompted her to start painting more positive Igorot images. Carol, a lawyer, posted how she read the email about Pangilinan in the middle of a seminar-workshop about indigenous peoples' rights. In contrast to the clearly-written messages of these accomplished women, Benny Duliyeen joined the discussion, his crude writing revealing his lower educational status. From a narrative that focused on protesting discrimination against Cordillerans, the thread developed into discussions on collective action, but was later tainted by accusations of elitism and internal discrimination.

### **7.5 Defining Participation and Authenticity**

A second case of internal discrimination involved Allan Lamang. In the previous example, Benny's shortcoming was his inability to communicate effectively in English. In Allan's case, it was his apparent lack of interaction with other members that caused his removal from the group. In July, Linda posted a message addressed to the moderators complaining that one member was merely posting propaganda for the government and was not actually interacting with other members. A researcher, Linda is an elder in the forum. She enjoys bantering with members and giving her own opinion about issues being discussed. In her message, Linda asked if Allan Lamang was a pseudonym and whether he was only using the forum to promote his political agenda. Linda was referring to a post entitled 'Faked abduction by Fil-Am<sup>110</sup>', which she believed to be misleading. She complained that it was merely a news report about the abduction of a Filipino-American activist and does not state in any way whether or not the abduction was staged.

*Dear Moderators, is it possible to ask Allan Lamang also to tell us how he is related to the military and to GMA<sup>111</sup>? I noticed that most of his posts sing praises to the military and GMA. Never did he add any personal greeting to Bibaknetters. I think he should be dealt with in the same manner you dealt with Ramon Cruz who I noticed*

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<sup>110</sup> The article focused on the abduction of Melissa Roxas, a Filipino-American activist who is a member of the United States chapter of *Bayan*, a left-leaning organisation.

<sup>111</sup> GMA stands for former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

*finally stopped posting. Again, to be very sure, I do not mind if Lamang promotes his personal beliefs in this forum as long as he interacts with us.*

*Linda (Belgium)*

Eight members replied to Linda, all agreeing with the latter's observation that Allan does not reply to any reactions to his posts. However, two members also commented that there are members who persistently post anti-Obama and religious messages but do not interact with other *Bibaknetters*. The replies prompted co-moderator John Dyte to compose a message addressed to Allan asking him to answer the questions presented because *Bibaknets* is 'a forum intended for interaction and not a bulletin board'. Overall, a total of 10 threads and 164 messages were generated by Linda's strongly-worded query. A day after Linda posted her message, Basingat announced in the forum that, in response to my request, I was being made a co-moderator for one month. I previously emailed Basingat if I could be given the permission to be a temporary co-moderator so that I could explore the Yahoo Groups features which were available only for moderators. With his announcement making me a co-moderator, some members with whom I have interacted online and even some of my offline interviewees sent me warm greetings with this new role. Within this thread, Dyte unexpectedly suggested that I 'evaluate Mr. Allan Lamang's membership'.

*Hello Liezel,*

*In the interest of your study and since you only have a month, may I suggest you take this opportunity which does not come very often to evaluate Mr. Juan Lamang's membership. You need to determine whether he even reads our posts or is even interested in reading our posts. After your evaluation and you feel it is warranted, you can go ahead and terminate his membership. The steps you take to arrive at your decision as well as your evaluation of your own decision and its impact to you and the group will be invaluable in your research.*

*Thanks,  
John, US*

I had mixed feelings when I read Dyte's request. The task posed ethical issues for my role a researcher and as a member of *Bibaknets*, which were discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.6.1. As a researcher, I was aware that I was participating in the discussions and eliciting responses to explore my research questions, but ultimately, the members are also part of my offline network. We may not move

within the same circles but I am certain I would meet them and interact with them in other social settings. Due to these concerns, I wanted to ensure that my interaction with the members was dialogic and respectful. Although I come from the Cordillera and identify myself as an Igorot, I did not want to fall into the trap of taking a privileged position as an expert among the members, imposing my own interpretations rather than taking their lead (Lutz and Collins 1993 in Spitulnik 1993, p. 302), a complaint I make when reading some researchers' work. In contrast to Gajjala (2006), I was keenly aware that marginalisation of less powerful actors also occurs even in online spaces for marginalised groups such as *Bibaknets*. The task assigned to me was daunting, considering the continuation of a person's membership depended on my assessment. Despite my apprehensions, I decided to accept the task. I was guided by the perspective that my aim was not to seek coherence, which naturalises the idea that communities are bounded and discrete (Abu-Lughod 1991; Barth 2000). As an interlocutor, my goal was to explore the particular identity narratives being played out by the members on *Bibaknets*.

### **7.5.1 Meaningful Participation**

After searching the archive, I presented a short report to the forum. Allan had been a member since 2007 and had shared a considerable number of articles between 2008 and 2009. I concluded that he was mainly forwarding news articles about diverse topics: environment, governance, politics, entertainment and health. I also noticed that the political articles he shared were generally critical of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Rather than decide on his fate, I raised three issues with forum members: lurking, participation and debate. First, I suggested that maybe Allan was not confident enough to interact with other members and preferred to forward articles. Second, I asked if Allan should actually be recognised for his efforts to be part of the forum considering the low participation rate of members in actual conversations. I shared that two interviewees described themselves as being 'active' members because they *read* the messages in the forum. They said that they may not contribute messages or interact with other members but for them, reading and becoming informed through the forum translates to active membership. The third question I posed referred to the nature of discussions and debates within the forum. I asked if all members have to agree on certain issues. I cited Basingat's message on the *Bibaknets*' homepage, which encourages members to 'Share news, opinions, insights, jokes or any decent subject that comes to mind'. I ended by saying that, ultimately, it would be Basingat and Dyte who will take the decision regarding Allan's membership.

The discussion surrounding Allan's limited participation became linked to the authenticity of his identity. Dyte explained that the actual number of *Bibaknets* members may be lower because many have multiple accounts<sup>112</sup> for different reasons. He also acknowledged that there are members whose accounts are no longer active but that these have never been cleaned. He surmised that some members use a different account to 'introduce topics which they want to hear opinions about but do not want to give their own opinion'. He then pressed me to decide Allan's case:

*Hello Liezel and All,*

...

*Don't dodge the responsibility of making a decision. That is so central to understanding group dynamics. This forum has been around for more than 10 years now. That longevity is an important study in continuity. Many Philippine organizations have a problem with continuity...*

*When you make this decision concerning Allan Lamang, you will also let everyone know that it is ok to make such decisions and the group will continue to thrive because of or inspite of it.*

...

*John Dyte, US*

A few members compared Allan's case with that of Ramon Cruz, who had been expelled from the forum just weeks before. Ramon joined *Bibaknets* in May 2009, when he was introduced by the moderators as 'Ramon from Pampanga'. Pampanga is one of the larger provinces in central Luzon. It was clear from the outset that he is not from the Cordillera and does not identify himself as an Igorot, but he had indicated some interest in the region and its peoples<sup>113</sup>. From the day he joined, he shared messages in support of a political figure almost daily, to the annoyance of the forum elders. A few members reacted to his messages but he never replied. In July, Dyte reminded Ramon to interact with other members or he may be removed from the list. Dyte eventually expelled him from the forum after failing to receive any reply from Ramon.

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<sup>112</sup> One has to have an email account and a user ID to join a group on Yahoo Groups.

<sup>113</sup> It was John who introduced Ramon to the forum. Based on John's message, Ramon had made it clear that he is from Pampanga and not from the Cordillera. The moderators must have approved his membership because he claimed an interest in the Cordillera and Igorots.

Returning to the current case, Claire replied that, like Allan, she considers herself a 'quiet' member. She explained that she feels 'more entertained and contented reading the postings rather than posting my own'. She admitted being 'worried' that some members might not like her reaction or she was perhaps 'unsure how to interact'. She asked the moderators to consider those like her – readers more than writers – as active members of the forum. She ended by asking the moderators 'not to clean us up on your evaluation of members'. Taking all these responses together with Dyte's urging for me to decide on Allan's case, I replied that despite my uneasiness to resolve the matter, I believe that Allan should be allowed to remain a member, regardless of the authenticity of his identity. I explained that, in comparison with Ramon's case, Allan's political stance is not as clear as that of the former who was simply flooding the forum with information supporting a political figure. In response to my decision, Linda posted a detailed 'Motion for Reconsideration', admitting that she was not happy with my decision. Posting the key points of her long message is important in order to highlight her reasons and the effort she put into crafting her reply.

*Dear Moderators and All Bibaknetters,*

*To be very honest, I am not happy with the decision to allow Allan Lamang to remain. I know that Liezel really gave this a million and one thoughts...However, I think that there may have been important things that were overlooked or misapprehended. Thus, I seek reconsideration of the decision. Here are my thoughts:*

*1. The question I posed had to do with Allan Lamang who apparently is a fictitious person and is using only this forum to promote a political agenda. He has not shown any desire to interact with Bibaknetters. He just posts press releases favorable to GMA against the progressive left of the Philippines (of which admittedly I am one) and their perceived links to the NPA<sup>114</sup>. Does he read our posts? This has not been shown...*

*2. It is very, very unfortunate that some of us and apparently Liezel as well equated Allan Lamang with lurkers. This is very flawed. For one, there are so many of us who are lurkers but they are really people connected to BIBAK, either by birth or blood relationship or by self-ascription...In fact, since I raised my question, no one has ever come out to vouch that this person does exist...*

*6. Mng John, I think your statement saying that Lamang is perhaps a fictitious person who does not want his identity revealed and in effect saying that he be allowed to "go on as usual" is for me*

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<sup>114</sup> New Peoples' Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

*dangerous for Bibaknets. It can reduce the forum into a venue for some people like politicians to promote their personal agenda and their issues...*

*9. ...I am moving for reconsideration of Liezel's decision and presenting it to the en banc body (all three of you.) If I may suggest, I think what should be done is for the moderators adopt the course of action on Ramon Cruz. First, Lamang should be asked to reveal who he really is, where he is from, who among the Bibaknetters are his relatives or friends or acquaintances. If he does not respond, he should be shown the exit door...*

*Warmest regards,  
Linda*

Linda is a highly regarded member of *Bibaknets*. She traces her roots to Ifugao although she is a resident of Belgium. In the beginning, Linda only wanted Allan to reveal his political leanings and for him to interact with the members. On that basis, I decided that Allan should stay as a member, aware that *Bibaknetters* enjoy lively political discussions. But now, Linda wanted Allan to reveal his true identity, arguing that he may only be using the forum to pursue his personal agenda. Clearly, the case took on a more serious dimension as the question now being posed revolved on the authenticity of Allan's identity. It was a sensitive issue, which I knew I was not in the right position to resolve. Moreover, I did not want to offend Linda as a *Bibaknets* elder. The fact that elders could at any point decide to exclude me was also at the forefront of my mind.

### **7.5.2 Authenticity and Participation**

Linda's lengthy message revealed that she had investigated Allan's online activities beyond *Bibaknets*. One of the key issues she raised was that of his real identity. As a member of the 'progressive left', she took offense that Allan was also a member of several forums and that 'he merely does what he does in *Bibaknets*: Post pro-GMA messages'. She argued that permitting Allan to remain in the forum could make politicians take advantage of *Bibaknets* and use it to promote their interests. Below is part of my reply to Linda's message,

*At that time, you only wanted him to reveal his political leanings. The concern for him to reveal his real identity has not been made clear yet in your first email about Allan L... It's worth noting that it was Allan L's political stand which stirred the interest of a couple of members to bring out issues of membership to the egroup.*

*As I wrote to Joy back in June, I'm here at this time only as a participant and as an observer... The moderators and the group members are the ones who shape the direction the egroup and my brief participation as researcher is perhaps only part of the story.*

*Liesel*

While the issue was under discussion, Basingat suspended Allan from posting in the forum and reminded members that on the *Bibaknets* homepage, they are asked to provide their 'real names, geographic locations, and a recent photo'. Although he was aware that some applications are approved despite violating these requirements, he stressed in bold letters that he does not 'condone using pseudonyms<sup>115</sup> to subscribe to the list'. Overall, the majority view of the members who responded to the discussions was that *Bibaknets* members should comply with the rules, particularly in supplying their real names. The importance of observing rules in order to maintain order was emphasised by two elders who are also moderators of other online forums. Celso moderates two BIBAK forums and he explained that he is liberal in approving subscriptions. However, when a member's identity becomes an issue, he takes Basingat's approach to ask the person to reveal who she or he really is. Some of the subscribers who supported Linda's call to remove Allan linked authenticity with meaningful participation. Mila wrote that she replied to Allan's messages twice but did not hear back from him. She said she 'felt ashamed thinking that what I said was nonsense'. Susan, meanwhile, equates using a pseudonym with rudeness and unfriendliness.

*How would you feel when somebody comes to your table in the dap-ay but this person is wearing a mask or he/she refuses to introduce himself/herself? This person goes on talking blah blah blah but never cares to listen to the others, never even reacts to anything anybody is saying. It's not only rude, it is veeerry unfriendly - in direct collision with apo Hari's basic requirement...*

*Susan, Hong Kong*

Only a couple of members sided with Allan and lurkers who do not in any way participate in the life of the forum. Interestingly, those who expressed this minority view were members who seldom participate in the discussions. Oscar wrote that members have the option to read only the topics they want. He felt that removing a member because of his choice of topic is 'undemocratic'. Other

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<sup>115</sup> Harry recalled an incident in the past when a female member using a fictitious name launched a vicious attack against a male member because of a personal quarrel. The member was found out and was removed from the forum.

members joined the discussion but drifted on to other topics without giving their opinion on Allan's case. Allan did not reply to the queries posed to him, including a private email I sent him while I was still contemplating the matter. Eventually, Basingat removed him from the list.

The expulsion of Allan from the forum indicated once more the internal-external dialectic of indigenous identification (Jenkins 20008a). Although *Bibaknets* prides itself as a forum for Cordillerans where members see themselves as sharing a common indigenous identity, both personal and collective interests shape the interactions. Based on the members' messages, the main reason Allan was removed from the forum was his political leaning, which contradicted that of Linda. His lack of sociability and apparent fictitious identity were only secondary reasons for his expulsion. Granting that Allan's identity was indeed fictitious, Linda would not have raised any issue against him except for his apparent pro-government and anti-Left position. Linda was motivated by her own personal agenda in questioning Allan's membership, but this was overlooked by other elders who focused on the issue of failing to follow the rules. As a long-time member and an elder in the community, Linda had the backing of the majority of the core members with whom she meets regularly on *Bibaknets* and at offline events. Allan, meanwhile, has not built any relationship with *Bibaknetters*, maintaining a ghostly presence in the forum. The elders' observations that Allan did not follow the forum rules became a legitimate excuse to remove him from the forum.

Allan's expulsion demonstrates that the idea of authenticity on *Bibaknets* has a powerful discursive role as it can be strategically deployed in struggles over membership to the forum. Members decide on the veracity of others' identities based on their participation, or lack of it, in forum discussions. Difference and exclusion are inherent in identity construction (Hall 1996), even in indigenous communities where members value the *collective* aspect of their identity. Although the homepage encourages members to participate in the discussions by sharing news, opinions and insights, such invitation appears to be constrained by both the personal and collective motivations of its members. Within the forum, social boundaries are drawn and re-drawn in different ways on who can and cannot participate or be a member. Fredrik Barth (2000, p. 24) observed that among the Baktaman in Papua New Guinea, 'conceptualizing and creating a discrete collectivity of people, i.e. a social group, was something elusive, obscure and opaque'. Contrary to the normative view that indigenous identity is primarily



collective (Ginsburg 2008; Niezen 2010; Salazar 2009; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012), the discussions suggest that indigenous peoples engage in boundary-making and identity construction in multiple ways (Cohen 2000; Erazo 2010; Gajjala 2006; Lee 2006; Ong 2003). The overemphasis on the collective element of indigenous identity prevents a critical and a nuanced discussion on the complex ways that indigenous peoples engage in power relations in constructing their identities.

## **7.6 Discussion and Conclusion**

The two cases examined in this chapter explored how *Bibaknetters* practise collective action and enforce forum regulations. Members were galvanised by Candy Pangilinan's ethnocentric remarks, prompting some of them to post their indignation on the latter's social network sites. While this topic was being discussed, Benny Duliyan, an unknown member, joined in the discussion that forced members to examine the rules for interaction among members. Meanwhile, Allan Lamang's lack of engagement with members also drew attention to the arbitrary application of rules within the forum. I argue that both cases illustrate examples of marginalisation on *Bibaknets*.

*Bibaknetters'* united and swift response to Pangilinan's statement is explained by the persistent stereotypical and marginalising discourses about them as indigenous peoples. Broadly, Cordillerans' defiant yet active relationship with the mainstream Philippine media has been shaped by their negative portrayal over the decades. Despite the enactment in 1997 of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, a comprehensive law that seeks to protect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples and communities, its meaningful implementation has yet to be appreciated by indigenous and non-indigenous Filipinos alike in promoting a fairer and more equitable Philippine society. Viewed in this context, *Bibaknets* is both a site for inreach and outreach orientations (Landzelius 2006a), whereby members not only communicate among themselves, but also through localised discussions that impel them to bring particular concerns to a broader, diverse audience. The members' lengthy discussions about Pangilinan have served as an impetus for some of them to inform the comedienne of their displeasure. The members' shared sentiments of discrimination and their consequent collective action indicate their shared identity as Cordillerans.

Simultaneously, the interactions among *Bibaknetters* as a community are not always straightforward and predictable. Contrary to the idea that ‘new technologies often enhance “categorical” identities rather than the dense and multiplex webs of interpersonal relationships’ (Calhoun 1998, p. 385), the interactions among highlanders indicate clearly that social relations formed on *Bibaknets* both enhance and constrain such identities (Adams and Ghose 2003). Cordillerans unite as a distinct collective to protest discriminatory statements against them, but they also divide and form narrower groupings in the process. On the forum, some members created social boundaries, marginalising those who do not have the linguistic and social skills, and interpersonal networks to achieve a certain status within the group. The prejudice against Benny Daluyen and the expulsion of Allan Lamang highlight the fact that being ‘marginalised’ needs to be understood contextually. As a collective, *Bibaknets* members view themselves as marginalised because of their indigenous identity. They have expressed these sentiments in different ways in Chapters 5 and 6, and in the present discussion regarding Pangilinan’s ‘racial murder’. However, among themselves, some are more marginalised than others. Benny was derided because of his inability to express himself in English, while Allan was banished because of his political leanings.

How do power relations configure members’ collective identity narratives? To borrow Steven Jones’s question, ‘Does participation in online communities increase or decrease individuals’ feelings of power?’ (1995, p. 25). In examining how *Bibaknets* members reified existing boundaries between themselves and non-Cordillerans, or created boundaries among themselves, I adopt Paul Adams’ and Rina Ghose’ argument that ‘people are complexly positioned actors’, who may occupy simultaneously a marginal and central position (2003, p. 417). Hence, indigenous online activism may be more complicated than merely addressing an external public or localised interests, as Landzelius explains (2006, pp. 4-9), because unequal power relations may exist among actors themselves.

Despite their differences, however, members share a social perspective, ‘a set of questions, kinds of experiences and assumptions with which reasoning begins’ (Young 1997, p. 395 in Parker and Song 2006, p. 590), so that there is no complete fragmentation among the members. The members’ ability to engage in collective action is one of the defining criteria for online communities (Parks 2011, p. 108). Based on the messages and the steps taken by members in response to

discrimination, I argue that their narratives are connected to a configuration of relationships ‘composed of symbolic, institutional, and material practices’ (Sommers 1994, p. 616). The main theme of the members’ narratives about Pangilinan was the negative representation of Cordillerans in Philippine history. *Bibaknets* members compared Pangilinan’s statement with Carlo’s Romulo’s infamous line that ‘Igorots are not Filipinos’ written in 1943, expressing frustration and anger that, more than 50 years since, Cordillerans still have to struggle to find their rightful place in Philippine society. Forum members were guided to act by ‘cultural and structural relationships in which they are embedded and through which they constitute their identities’ (Sommers 1994, p. 624). Hence, contemporary Cordillera identity narratives are shaped by ongoing events and discussions, which are configured by their past relationships with colonisers, missionaries, lowlanders and the Philippine nation-state.

Conversely, the marginalisation of Benny and Allan illustrates Mazzarella’s argument that culture is both an ‘ideology and social process’ (2004, p. 355). He explains that culture is dynamic as it is shaped continually by fluid ‘relations, practices, and technologies of mediation’. Rather than focus on the constraining elements of the Internet (cf Mazzarella 2004, p. 358), it was the power dynamics within *Bibaknets* that appear to constrain the exchange of narratives on the forum. Joining the forum requires identification with a collective Cordillera/Igorot community. However, it is only *one* of the basic requirements to participate fully in the *Bibaknets* community as explained in Chapter 5. Second and linked to the first point, membership to *Bibaknets* is also shaped by proficiency in English and personal networks. It is important to draw attention to the changing perception of English language use among forum members. In the past, educated Cordillerans took advantage of English to assert their superiority over lowlanders. Today, however, preference of English over local languages has created tension among members who belong to different generations and live in different countries. In the day-to-day interactions that take place on *Bibaknets*, fluency in written English and online social skills are more salient in the absence of issues where they need to assert a collective Cordilleran identity.

Barry Wellman points out that it is commonality of interests, rather than age, gender, social class, including *ethnicity*, which facilitates feelings of closeness in online communities (1999, p. 16, emphasis mine). But online communities are not bound by clearly-defined interests (Baym 2010; Bennett 2009) because they are

composed of individuals who are constantly in the process of becoming rather than being (Hall 1996b). In contrast, factors such as class, ethnicity, education and gender, and so forth (Putnam 2002, p. 11) are as important to become accepted on *Bibaknets*. Possessing a good command of English, writing about one's offline social activities and sharing one's insights into diverse topics - culture, history and contemporary events – shape the overall quality of *Bibaknets* interactions. In the case of Benny, his social class was not important at the start of his membership on *Bibaknets* but it became salient later on as he participated in discussions where grammar, spelling and the quality of the arguments became signifiers of social status (cf Hiltz and Turoff 1993 in Wellman 1997, p. 10). Benny's poor grammar and ambiguity did not measure up to the standard of language and reasoning that characterise *Bibaknets* discussions. In Allan's case, it was his perceived support for Macapagal-Arroyo that provoked Linda to question his identity. He was excluded because he did not share Linda's opinion. In both cases, *Bibaknets* elders asserted their authority in interrogating the two lurkers. If Benny and Allan wanted to be accepted by the *elders* – rather than by the community at large – they would have to play by the written, and unwritten, rules of the forum.

Individual and collective interests, as well as homogenous and heterogeneous elements, inflect *Bibaknets* community life to varying degrees. As a form of 'interest', indigeneity is a homogenising element that motivates individuals to join online communities. *Bibaknets* is made up of individuals who identify themselves as part of one region, the Cordillera, or a collectivity called Igorots, yet it is also comprised of members who belong to indigenous ethnic groupings. Moreover, its members also have diverse educational, economic, and political backgrounds. Consequently, their experience and understanding of indigeneity will not be uniform, as articulated by Leung (2004) and Parker and Song (2006). The way we deploy the word 'indigenous' is stratified; we populate it with our own intentions, accents and make it our own (Bakhtin 1981, pp. 293-294).

As an online forum, *Bibaknets*' distinctive contribution is that it serves as a dialogic space (Dillon 2011, p. 216-217) where multiple identity narratives are allowed to emerge, albeit within certain parameters. Dillon writes that spaces become dialogic 'if they help individuals to address tension and ambiguity and to explore alternative possibilities for themselves in ways that prompt growth in self-definition' (Dillon 2009, p. 217). As we have seen, narratives of resistance and protest are only one part of the discussions. The apparent 'racial murder' committed by Pangilinan also

engendered collective self-reflexivity, where some members asked for restraint, admonishing those who were writing threatening messages in Pangilinan's blog and stressing that she had already apologized. Members also demonstrated reflexivity when Manuel questioned Benny's family background, by sharing their own experiences of discrimination within their own communities. Although Allan was eventually removed from the forum, it is important to note that the discussions brought to the fore power relations that exist within the forum. This prompted one member to observe that banishing a member because of his political belief is 'undemocratic'. Parker and Song explain that 'New media forms update rather than delete existing collective affiliations, no matter how individualistically they are felt and expressed' (2006, p. 590). As the discussions showed, Bibaknetters' ethnic groups continue to influence their social relations despite their identification with a broader pan-Cordillera community.

The trajectory of the narratives in this case indicates the hierarchy of power on *Bibaknets*. I adopt Fredrik Barth's conception of *ethnicity* with respect to indigeneity, as he had argued that it is not the commonality of cultural values and cultural forms that create *ethnic groups*; rather, it is the actors who determine the social boundaries for membership and exclusion (Barth 1969; Maybury-Lewis 2002). To claim an indigenous identity online is not necessarily tied to one's origins or homeland, or the practice of one's culture. As the discussions showed, the process of authenticating Cordillera identity involves the observance of certain rules within the forum. Those who are best able to articulate their messages in English and belong to the same offline networks determine the rules of membership and participation on *Bibaknets*. In the next chapter, I will examine in greater detail the concept of translocality (Appadurai 1995) and how place and space is constructed on *Bibaknets*.

## Chapter 8

### The Global Cordilleran

#### 8.1 Introduction

Indigenous peoples are often described as rooted to the land so that discussions concerning them are oftentimes based on their physical location. Contemporary narratives of Cordillerans, however, present their growing diasporic condition. In this chapter, I analyse specifically the translocal (Appadurai 1995) connections that shape *Bibaknets* narratives. An important theme in the forum dwells on the movement of Cordillerans and the exchange of material resources in various locations. The increasing mobility of Cordillerans draws attention to the mediated aspect of Cordilleran identification where online forums, such as *Bibaknets*, become spaces and places where the complexities of their offline relations are narrated.

This chapter has four objectives. First, it analyses the contemporary diasporic condition of Cordillerans in relation to their colonial experience and the Philippine government's policy of exporting labour overseas. Second, it explores the translocal aspect of *Bibaknets* as an online platform and the relations of *Bibaknetters* to one another and a wider community. The forum and its members are at once socially, materially and spatially connected to the Cordillera and to cities and countries in which *Bibaknetters* live and work. Third, it demonstrates that highlanders' socio-economic circumstances also influence their offline and online interactions, contrary to Barry Wellman's (1999, p. 16) argument that commonality of interests determines primarily the interactions in online communities. Finally, in analysing how highlanders shared material resources and support online and offline, I argue that *Bibaknetters* exhibit a sense of collective consciousness, which is both contextual and positional.

#### 8.2 Diaspora and Cordilleran Identity

In Chapter 5, I explained that diaspora involves 'multi-locale attachments, dwelling, and travelling within and across nations' (Clifford 1994, p. 306; Delugan 2010; Watson 2010). Being part of a diasporic community also entails recognition of shared attachments to a homeland, and 'a sense of co-ethnicity with others of a similar background' (Cohen 1997, p. x). Aihwa Ong approaches diaspora in the

strict sense, that of migration as exile, preferring instead the term *transnationalism*, an apparently more neutral term that describes the flexible movement of people between their homelands and across national borders (2003, pp. 86-87). In her analysis of globalisation, diaspora and agency, Ong argues that the nation-state remains a dominant institution in defining and regulating populations, 'whether in movement or in residence' (1999, p. 15). At the same time, individuals are able to pursue local strategies in order to 'seek to evade, deflect, and to take advantage of political and economic conditions in different parts of the world' (Ong 1999, p. 113). Ong calls this tactic *flexible citizenship*, as exemplified by Chinese managers and professionals from East and Southeast Asia who now travel between America and their countries of origin with multiple passports and transnational agendas. However, Ong's assertion that, 'Flexibility, migration, and relocations, instead of being coerced or resisted, have become practices to strive for rather than stability' (Ong 1999, p. 18) is only partially true. For many people in the developing world, especially the Philippines, 'flexibility, migration and relocations' are forced upon them by a weak state which is unable to generate employment for its citizens (Asis 2008, 2011; Galam 2011; Opiniano 2009).

### **8.2.1 Displaying Igorots to the World**

The production and construction of Igorot identity was not confined geographically to the Cordillera region and in the Philippines. The earliest opportunity for Igorots to travel overseas was for them to be displayed in international expositions. In 1887, highlanders, described as 'Igorots', took part in the Madrid Exposition, together with other Filipinos. Scott writes that Cordillerans were asked to build houses based on their 'own style and architecture' and perform rituals for audiences in Madrid (1974, p. 276). Their indigenous culture would likewise be tapped by American colonial officials and entrepreneurs who recruited over 100 Igorots as paid performers during the 1904 St. Louis World Fair in Missouri, USA (Afafe 1995, 2004; Buangan 2004; Fry 2006; Vergara Jr. 1995). The fair was in celebration of the centenary of the Louisiana Purchase of 1804, 'the first of the westward expansion of the United States of America' (Fry 2006, pp. 39-40). Most importantly, it was an opportunity for the US government to showcase its 'civilising mission' in their new colony in Asia (Fry 2006).

The fairs have not advanced the interest of all Philippine indigenous peoples who participated in them. Apart from the Cordillerans, there were also the Tingguians, Bagobos, Negritos, and Mangyans (Vergara 1995) whose narratives about the fairs

have yet to be captured (Buangan 2004, p. 496). Among these ‘non-Christian’ Filipinos, it was the highlanders who indirectly benefitted most from the fairs, and generally from American colonial policies. Cordilleran scholars acknowledge that highlanders’ travels to America have left enduring consequences for the participants and subsequent generations (Afable 2004; Bacdayan 2009; Prill-Brett 2009). Lowlander Filipino scholars, meanwhile, offer a widely different view of the Igorots’ treatment and representation during the fair. The fairs have perpetuated stereotypes and ‘racist myths’ not only about Cordillerans, but also Filipinos as a whole (Cordova 2009; Torres 2009; Vergara 1995).

### **8.3 Indigeneity, Mobility and Global Forces**

Today, Cordillerans are found in different parts of the world, although the majority continue to reside in the Cordillera Administrative Region. With a population of 1.6 million based on the 2010 census, it is one of the least populated regions in the country (NSCB 2013). The Cordillera is one of two regions that contribute least to the national gross output, and is dependent mainly on an underdeveloped agriculture-based economy. More than half of the population are involved in agriculture, followed by the services and industry sectors. Despite its low income, the region hosts three large mining companies that produce one-fourth of the country’s mining products (Follosco and Soler 2011, p. 36). Development in the region is uneven; there is a glaring economic divide among its six provinces. In 2009, Benguet had one of the lowest incidences of poverty in the country at two percent, as compared to 23.2 percent for the province of Apayao (Follosco and Soler 2011, p. 36). At the same time, 17 percent of its population are considered poor in contrast to the national average of 20.9 percent (National Statistical Coordination Board 2011). Conversely, the region ranked third with the highest functional<sup>116</sup> literacy rate in the country at 93.9 percent, higher than the national average of 89.8 percent (National Statistics Office 2010).

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<sup>116</sup> The NSO defines a functionally literate person as ‘one who can read, write and compute or one who can read, write, compute and comprehend’. Generally, persons who completed high school or a higher level of education are also considered functionally literate (NSO 2010).



The Cordillera is the seventh biggest source of overseas<sup>117</sup> labour in the Philippines. Reflecting the national trend, highlanders are generally motivated to emigrate for economic reasons (Follosco and Soler 2011; McKay and Brady 2005). The most recent study on Cordilleran migration shows that lack of employment opportunities, low wages and poor local government services contribute to the decision of indigenous peoples to work overseas (Follosco and Soler 2011). The government is the region's largest employer. Delfina Camarillo, Head of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) in the Cordillera, explained in an interview<sup>118</sup> that there is no way to determine whether or not an overseas worker is an indigenous person because applicants are asked only for their '[place of] origin' in POEA forms. The lack of disaggregated data indicating workers' ethnicity and indigeneity and, with that, the general lack of centralised data on overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) reflects the government's treatment of international labour migration as a source of jobs for Filipinos (Asis 2011). International migration and its impact on the country's development are not addressed in the national development plan, despite being one of the world's major exporters of migrant workers, alongside India, Mexico and China (Asis 2011; Camroux 2008; Opiniano 2009). As of 2008, there are an estimated 8.2 million Filipinos worldwide, comprising 3.9 million permanent migrants, 3.6 million temporary migrants and 650,000 irregular workers (Asis 2011).

The journey of the Cordillerans to different parts of the world continues to this day. Among the six Cordillera provinces, Mountain Province 'is the source of most of the several thousand northern highlanders who now live and work abroad, primarily in North America' (Afable 2004, p. 469; Afable 1995). As mentioned earlier, US-based Cordillerans have formed the Igorot Global Organization (IGO), with its members living in different parts of the world. In Europe, some Cordillerans have formed their own groups, such as Igorot-Austria, Cordillera Community in Belgium (Cordi Bel), BIBAK Ireland, BIBAK Spain and BIBAK Switzerland. Highlanders continue to construct their indigeneity, but with the added layer of being part of a

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<sup>117</sup> Overseas migration among Filipinos began with the American colonisation of the Philippines in 1898 (Galam 2011; Tyner and Kuhlke 2000; Villarama and Lalicon 2011). As a new colony, Filipinos became US citizens, facilitating their ease of travel to America. Single men from the Ilocos region became cheap replacements for Chinese and Japanese sugar plantation workers who were banned in the US (Villarama and Lalicon 2011). Apart from the sugar plantations, the US Navy also contributed in the international migration of Filipinos (Tyner and Kuhlke 2000).

<sup>118</sup> The POEA oversees the deployment of Filipino contract workers. It is the primary source of data on overseas workers with respect to their profile, the nature of their jobs overseas, and their destinations (Asis 2008, p. 367).

diaspora. Watson's "diasporic Indigeneity" – the fluid negotiation and extension of modern Indigenous identities in non-local settings' (2010, p. 273), appears to be an essential part of their diasporic life in Manila, Hong Kong, Paris, Jeddah, London and New York, among many other cities in the world. However, as studies on diasporic Igorots are just beginning, there is scant literature<sup>119</sup> available currently on the subject (McKay 2006, p. 92). In the following sections, I examine the links between diaspora, identity construction, and the sharing of resources and support.

#### **8.4 Cordillerans in Britain**

This section presents the offline and online interactions among *Bibaknets* members in London and the wider Cordilleran community. To provide a brief context to the discussion of mobility among highlanders, it is worth mentioning that the earliest record of Cordillerans in Britain was in 1911 when they performed in England as part of their tour of Europe. Apart from America, they were taken to fairs in Canada, France, England, Belgium and the Netherlands by their American employers (Afable 1995, 2004; Prill-Brett 2009). Meanwhile, official diplomatic ties between the Philippines and the UK were only established in 1946<sup>120</sup> after the Second World War. The Philippine Embassy in London reveals that Filipinos are a growing community in Britain. From 18,000 in 1986, their number stands at 250,000 as of 2010. Filipinos in Britain work in diverse sectors such as information technology, engineering, aviation, education, hospitality and healthcare. There are about 100 Filipino associations and charities registered with the embassy.

Within the last two decades, Cordillerans are part of a growing number of Filipinos coming to Britain. The first generation of Filipino migrants arrived in London sometime in 1968 (see Llangco 2012) as student-nurses, cooks, domestics and chamber maids, according to Corazon. In 1970, aged 18, Corazon arrived in London as a student-nurse and is considered one of the pioneer Cordillerans in

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<sup>119</sup> Deirdre McKay and Carol Brady (2005) looked at the changing economic and social patterns related to place-making in Asipulo, Ifugao brought about by overseas contract labour. Many of the women in this indigenous farming community are domestic helpers, carers, and nurses in different parts of Asia and the Middle East, including Canada and the Netherlands. Their remittances have encouraged new economic ventures for their families both within Asipulo and in nearby towns, producing translocal ties between their villages and the places where they have acquired lands (McKay and Brady 2005).

<sup>120</sup> A brief history of the bilateral relations between the Philippines and the United Kingdom is found on the the Philippine Embassy website which is available at <http://philembassy-uk.org/bilateral-relations> [Accessed on 15 January 2013]

Britain. She said that there were only three of them from the region at that time but they now number at least a 1000. UK-based highlanders work mainly in the service industry as nurses, carers and nannies, although some also work in the manufacturing sector. Overall, highlanders in Britain are younger and less economically stable than their counterparts in America. In Chapter 5, Section 5.4, John Dyte described *Bibaknets* 'die-hards' in the US as 'more stable' because they are no longer restricted by work and family life pressures. Hence, they have more time for leisure, including socialising on *Bibaknets*. In contrast, forum members in the UK have young families and are in temporary contracts that limit their movement and interaction with other highlanders both online and offline.

With the exception of Sylvia, my key informant in London, UK-based *Bibaknetters* generally do not post messages on the forum. A sensitive issue among highlanders is their migrant status in Britain. Noel, a car mechanic in Bristol, said that some highlanders are cautious about giving their names, addresses, or telephone numbers because of their insecure status. 'They fear that other Filipinos would tell on them. Some have to lie about their status to be accepted...to be equal with others'. Interviews and forum messages among *Bibaknetters* would reveal that highlanders' migrant and socio-economic status in Britain have created a division between 'old-timers' and 'newcomers', which I analyse in the next section.

#### **8.4.1 UK Grand Cañao 2009**

Doreen Massey explains that space is the 'simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations at all geographical scales' (Massey 1994, p. 168). Place, on the other hand, 'is formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location (Massey 1994, p. 168). Hence, both space and place are socially constructed (Rodman 1992 in Low 2009; Massey 1994). With these arguments in mind, I examine the practices of Cordilleran indigeneity in spaces and places.

In May 2009, I attended my first Grand *Cañao* in Darlington, London. It was also my first time to attend a Cordillera event since arriving in the UK in 2007. A *cañao* is a 'socioreligious ceremony that brought people together to renew kinship and community bonds, and to invoke divine blessings' (Masferre 1999, p. 54). It is a term used widely within the Cordillera to refer to thanksgiving celebrations involving the butchering of animals to be shared by people within the community. I took a late morning train from Cardiff to London with some notes from Sylvia on how to get to Darlington. By the time I was at the corner of Barnsley Road from the

tube station, I saw groups of people walking, a few of them wearing Cordillera woven vests and skirts. I decided to join the group as I was certain we were going to the same place. The community centre was packed with people who were mostly sitting in groups. I felt slightly out of place in a pair of jeans and a casual top as most of the women were smartly dressed in skirts and dresses while the performers were in their traditional costumes. I did not see anyone I know but I registered and took my seat in the busy hall. Sylvia later rang to say that she was inside the hall and to suggest that I join her.

Province-based groups prepared food, traditional dances and songs for the event. Performers danced to the beat of gongs played by several men. Cordilleran food was also served, such as *diket* (sweetened glutinous rice), *etag* (smoked pork), *pinikpikan* (chicken stew) and *tapey* (rice wine). Throughout the evening, I could hear attendees speaking in their own languages and Ilocano, the *lingua franca* in the Cordillera. Despite the distinctly British architecture of the building, I felt like I was in a small town hall back in the village attending a local community event. The fact that the celebration was taking place in England was brought home to me only when Gene Alcantara, the main guest speaker for the evening, addressed the audience. Alcantara is a Filipino-British who, at the time, was running as a member of the European Parliament. He was impressed by the turnout for the event, saying 'I did not know there are so many Igorots here in London'. His presence could be interpreted as recognition of Cordillerans' growing importance as citizens and voters in Britain.

A few days following the event, one of the key members of the organisation posted a message on *Bibaknets* thanking everyone who had attended. Raul described the unexpected number of attendees, which he estimated to be at 400. However, he also wrote about the conflict among some members.

*On behalf of the Igorot-UK officers and organisers of the recently concluded Igorot-UK Grand Canao, I would like to thank all, especially those from afar who found time to attend the event where everyone showed their enthusiasm and determination to be counted as an Igorot/Cordilleran in these ever-changing and difficult times...*

*We hired a hall bigger than what we used to be hiring with the thought that it would all accomodate us based on previous occasions taking also into consideration the influx of students from the home country. We even considered the fact that some of the so called old timers who should be promoting the event boycotted and even tried*

*to sabotage the event would somehow sway others not to attend. But God or Kabunian is on our side. He stood by us all the way through...*

*Raul, UK*

Raul's message brings into focus Igorot-UK, an umbrella organisation for Cordillerans who are mostly based in London. Although highlanders may be found in different parts of the UK, they are concentrated in the capital where job opportunities abound. Formed in 1995, the organisation has faced divisions among 'old-timers' and 'newcomers' over the years. I was not aware of the politics between these two groups at that time as it was only my first time to join their activity. Except for a couple of issues which could have been improved through better organisation, I felt that the Grand *Cañao* was successfully staged. I replied to Raul's message saying how much I enjoyed the Cordilleran dishes that were served that night and decided not to comment on the rift between the two camps.

According to Cristina, 'old-timers' are the pioneer Cordillerans who have been in the UK since the 70s and 80s and are now British citizens. In contrast, 'newcomers' are those who arrived in their wake. A nurse, Cristina arrived in Britain in 1998 working first as a carer before transferring to a hospital in London. She has been an active member of Igorot-UK for more than a decade and has witnessed the changes within the organisation during this time. 'Old-timers' are Cordillerans who are over 50 years old and have gained experience, status and wisdom in their long period of residence in the UK. In this context, the term is comparable to the word 'elders' which I have explained in Chapter 5, Section 5.3. 'Elders' are generally held in high esteem in the Cordillera because of their cultural competence and rich experience in life (CPA and AIPP 2012; Prill-Brett 1987). Cristina observed that, for a long time, the 'old-timers' led the activities and shaped the direction of Igorot-UK as an organisation. However, this soon changed with the influx of younger highlanders on student visas. Cristina explains:

*The group interaction was altered with the coming of the students. Our elders were shocked that they no longer monopolise the leadership. Because of the sheer number of students who are now here, the old timers have been set aside...In the last election, none of the old timers was elected, all the new officers were young. So they said, 'let's see if they can do it'.*

*Cristina, UK*

A total of 11 messages and five threads were posted by UK-based *Bibaknetters* regarding the Grand *Cañao*. The messages were divided between those defending Raul and those encouraging the concerned parties to resolve the issue in private. One member replied to Raul's controversial message, saying he should have taken more care in his email.

*Why don't you approach the old timers and asked their help for the good of the organization instead of accusing them of something that is unfounded. You have apologised but the arrow have been shot. Any way thank you for acknowledging your error.*

MABUHAY IGOROT U.K.

*Tony, UK*

Another *Bibaknetter* in London, Helen, wrote that 'the proper way to discuss this is over the round table with *pinikpikan*, *etag*, and *tapey*'. She added that a discussion of this nature is not appropriate online because they 'could not see each other's face'. Basingat also joined in the thread, commenting:

*I honestly don't have an iota of knowledge about what has been going on in your wonderful organization but you folks are spilling out the beans for the world to grind...Let's not spoil the beauty and the grandeur of an event that is being claimed to be a great success. Though it's true that despite beauty and greatness, no organization is immune from the evils of misunderstandings among leaders and members (Just ask Oscar and me, he he he).Tayo'y mga Igorots (We are Igorots). Mga tao rin tayo katulad ni Candy Pangilinan (We are human beings like Candy Pangilinan). Let's continue to show our passion for the betterment of our organizations...*

*Harry, US*

In his message, Harry acknowledged that he has also been involved in disagreements as a member of a Cordilleran group. He also mentioned Candy Pangilinan, the comedienne who made an ethnocentric remark against Igorots (Chapter 7, Section 7.3). In saying that Igorots are like Pangilinan, Basingat was making the point that highlanders likewise make mistakes. Raul later apologised on *Bibaknets* for the accusations he made. Two UK-based *Bibaknetters* wrote that the concerned parties have met and sorted their differences, bringing the thread to a close.

The celebration of the Grand *Cañao* in London and its discussion on *Bibaknets* underline three points. First, it illustrates Doreen Massey's argument that social relations create, shape and define space, place and time (1994, p. 263). Indigenous peoples as small-scale communities are often framed as immobile and rooted in their geographic origins (Clifford 1994; Lee 2006; Rosaldo 1993 in Watson 2010). Their increasing mobility shows, however, that their sense of community is socially constructed (Massey 1994; Rodman 1992 in Low 2009). Indeed, being Cordilleran is practised in physical places like London and even in spaces like *Bibaknets* where highlanders congregate and shape these environments with their own distinct interactions. Second, the online relations of *Bibaknets* members are embedded in other social spaces and structures (Miller and Slater 2000). The minimal participation on *Bibaknets* by UK-based members reflects the frictions that inflect their offline community interactions in London and their insecure socio-economic status.

Contrary to Wellman's (1999) argument, commonality of interest does not determine primarily members' participation in online communities but also their personal circumstances, as the analysis above demonstrates. Finally and closely linked to the second point, personal and individual relations among members also shape their community interactions. Membership to *Bibaknets* and/or Igorot-UK as collective bodies is formed within the context of their lived experiences. The processes of community-building and place-making on *Bibaknets* is further analysed in the next section.

#### **8.4.2 Death and Translocal Cooperation**

Despite the differences among Cordillerans in Britain, these are set aside in times of calamity, death or illness. In August 2009, three months after the Grand *Cañao*, an officer of Igorot UK posted this message on *Bibaknets*,

*Dear All,  
This is to inform everyone that a newly-arrived student from X village, Y town, Benguet, by the name of KC died in her sleep yesterday. We are now arranging for her body to be sent to Darlington where the Igorot-UK will make arrangements for her eventual transport back to the Philippines. Please inform other kakailians (townmates) and watch for further developments in Bibaknets, as well as the Igorot-UK yahoogroups site.*

*Thank you,  
Pamela (UK)*

The global movement of people, including those who describe themselves as indigenous, requires a broader conceptualisation of place and how it relates with Cordilleran indigenous identity and technology. Arjun Appadurai (1995) developed the concept of *translocality* as an analytical lens that transcends the dichotomies between place and space, local and global, the nation and other sub- and supra-national groupings. Consequently, locality is no longer anchored only to the nation-state, but extends beyond it through *translocalities*:

[T]ies of marriage, work, business and leisure weave together various circulating populations with kinds of “locals” to create neighbourhoods which belong in one sense to particular nation-states but are from another point of view, what we might call *translocalities*. (Appadurai 1995, p. 216, emphasis in original).

Pamela’s message illustrates the translocal processes taking place on *Bibaknets*. Here, she gives specific details of KC’s geographic roots but she addresses the entire forum without mentioning certain ethnic groups, organisations or individuals. Pamela is aware that she is writing to a dispersed, ethnically-diverse community who are simultaneously socially connected to specific places, and not only to the Cordillera. The details of KC’s death emerged over the following days. She arrived one year ago as a student, leaving behind her husband and two teenage children in Benguet. Her husband was unemployed, which raised concerns about how her body could be repatriated back to the Philippines. Pamela’s email generated approximately 90 messages in 12 threads for about two weeks.

Dave, a US-based member replied that Benguet 13, a group whose members are from Benguet province, would start raising funds for KC.

*To all,  
I would like to make a motion: That Benguet 13 will start raising funds for KC. I will start collecting here in San Diego.*

*Dave, US*

Dave’s reply prompted donations from individuals and organisations in Washington DC, San Diego, Los Angeles, London, Manila and Baguio, among others. Apart from Benguet 13, various Cordilleran organisations in the UK, US, Canada, Australia, and other places also initiated fundraising drives among their members. Through the announcement on *Bibaknets*, members raised a total of £11,549.99 and \$480.00 within a couple of weeks. Officers of Igorot-UK wrote that



that the money could be used not only to repatriate KC's body but also to help fund the studies of her two children. Those who donated and participated in the discussions were not only Kankanaeys, the ethnic group to which KC belonged, but also forum members from other ethnic groups. In a message posted on *Bibaknets* and *Igorot-UK*, Henry praised the cooperation and generosity of Cordillerans in the UK and worldwide.

*It's good to know that Igorots, as usual, mobilize quickly when tragedy strikes one of our own...Some years ago, I got a message about a Pinoy<sup>121</sup> named Inhumang in his ID who lost consciousness in a public place and in a coma in a hospital in California. The name sounded Ifugao so I passed it on to the Ifugao email group. It turned out his relatives were looking for him.*

*Henry, US*

Henry is an Ifugao who is now based in the US. Although Ifugaos do not generally identify themselves as Igorots, as explained in Chapter 6, Henry acknowledged the cooperation and unity among the different indigenous groups in the region. He identified with a broader Cordilleran community, expressing a sense of collective identity by using the phrase 'one of our own'. In making arrangements for the donations for KC, members shared information on the best or cheapest means to send money to the UK or the Philippines from wherever they were. A few members also wrote about their own experiences in organising the repatriation of their deceased relatives.

Igorot-UK officers decided to hold KC's necrological rites at an Anglican church in Darlington, London, where an Igorot community has been formed. Highlanders in Britain belong to different Christian denominations, but the parish in Darlington serves as their community centre. In an interview, Noel explained that the outpouring of material and emotional support given to KC inspired the formation of town-based sub-grouping among Cordillerans in the UK:

*The collection of donations for KC was coordinated through smaller groups whose members come from the same town. Now, we have the Tadian, Sagada and Bauko groups, among others. Although they now have their own groups, they still see themselves as part of Igorot-UK which now serves as an umbrella group of all Igorots in Britain.*

*Noel, UK*

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<sup>121</sup> 'Pinoy' is a colloquial term for a Filipino.

Some of my informants share Noel's observation that Cordillerans prefer smaller groupings to a large regional organisation, such as Igorot UK. Cristina said that beginning in 2007, Cordillerans who come from the same province or town formed their own smaller groups. Those from the provinces of Benguet, Ifugao and Abra formed their own groups, but those from the towns of Bontoc, Tadian, and Bauko have also decided to create their separate groups. She said, 'I can't blame them from forming their own groups because we (Igorot UK) have become a very big group. That's their prerogative for as long as we support each other'.

The interviews suggest that the increasing number of Cordillerans arriving in the UK has encouraged the formation of province-based groupings. In recent years, however, these have fragmented into narrower groupings as they formed town-level associations based on their places of origin. Sylvia, a nanny working for a young British family in London, explained that highlanders have decided to form smaller groupings within Igorot-UK as result of their different circumstances. 'Is having a big group the measure of strength? Actually, smaller groups are stronger. It's where problems are solved regarding work or documentation'. She said that as an umbrella organisation for all Cordilleran groups in Britain, Igorot-UK mainly provides opportunities for highlanders to meet for 'fellowships', such as Christmas parties, Grand *Cañao* and other celebrations.

Attending to the 'serious concerns' of its members is not the organisation's objective, observed Sylvia. That some Cordilleran leaders 'do not want to get involved in politics' was expressed similarly by Cristina. Sylvia and Cristina refer obliquely to issues related to employment and immigration. For both women, smaller and informal groupings provide better support because they meet more regularly during birthdays or other social occasions. The death of KC illustrated how these smaller groupings became effective networks for collecting donations and for sharing information. Sylvia said that smaller groups provide 'practical benefits' for its members in terms of emotional and financial support. With a big organisation like Igorot-UK, one still has to consider the opinions of the old-timers when planning activities, according to Sylvia. 'Will the elders accept the planned activity?' she asks. Thus, the town and province-based groups managed to quickly raise donations for KC because of their stronger social bonds.

Drawing on the interviews, the issue between ‘old-timers’ and ‘newcomers’ lies in the former’s position not to get involved in members’ personal concerns relating to work and immigration. For the old-timers, Igorot-UK’s primary function is to organise social events for its members. Newcomers, however, demand more from the organisation which they see as a possible source of social support particularly when they face problems in their host country. My informants’ views about the strength of loose and small social formations reflect the the basis of Cordilleran identity which is based at the village level (Casambre 2010; Prill-Brett 1987; Young 1976 in Rood 1989;). As I analysed in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2, Cordillerans identify themselves by their village of origin when interacting with fellow highlanders. The interviews reveal that a region-wide association was important in the early years of community-building among Cordillerans in Britain for pragmatic reasons. The old-timers hail from different towns and provinces in the region so that they needed to support each other despite their different socio-cultural background. But the influx of newcomers has weakened the ties among Cordillerans. Simultaneously, the increasing number of highlanders from the same towns and provinces allowed them to form smaller groupings where emotional and financial support was more readily accessible - resources that Igorot UK could no longer provide to many newcomers. However, I recognise that this may not be the case for some diasporic Cordillerans who, for whatever reason, have not developed strong attachments to their villages or towns.

In mid-September 2009, Arnel in the US posted a message saying he had received a text that KC’s remains had arrived at her hometown in Benguet. He attached photos of the text messages sent by one of KC’s relations thanking him and everyone who helped the family during their time of need. Philip in Canada commented on the importance of digital communication in facilitating the arrangements for KC’s repatriation. He observed that ‘Once upon a time when communication was limited to reach out other parts of the world, no texting, no emailing, only telegraph, long distances through post offices available, that people can deal with difficult situations like this’. Indeed, the collaboration of *Bibaknetters* through email, voice call and texts lends support to Madianou’s and Miller’s (2012) theory of polymedia. *Bibaknetters* used a particular medium in relation to other media, bearing in mind the social and emotional contexts of the communicative act. For overseas members in direct contact with KC’s family in the Philippines, texting was the quickest way of exchanging information about the latest developments. Meanwhile, some members expressed a preference for private

emails when distributing mobile phone numbers and addresses for the purpose of sending donations. Thus, *Bibaknetters* navigated the polymedia environment as an integrated structure for communication, whereby each medium complemented others (Madianou and Miller 2012).

As demonstrated in these exchanges, forum members have overlapping indigenous and diasporic identifications. They continue to have strong ties to their villages, towns and indigenous groups regardless of their location, which is their basis for joining either formal or informal organisations in their host communities.

However, knowing the diverse languages and cultures among forum members, they are constrained by an informal rule to use English. Apart from recognising their cultural diversity, members are also aware of their different migrant circumstances in the way they arranged the sending of donations to the Philippines or overseas, and the type of information that can be exchanged with the forum, and the medium of communication that suit their purposes.

### **8.5 Books and Scholarships in the Philippines**

In October 2009, more than one month after I arrived in the UK, super-typhoon Parma, named locally as Pepeng, battered the province of Benguet. Severe flooding and landslides affected northern Luzon but the heavy and continuous rain triggered a massive landslide in Benguet, burying nearly 200 people (de los Santos 2009). At around this time, the President of *Bibaknets* Educational Support Fund (BESF) Harry Paltongan, sent a message about a new programme to help those who have been orphaned because of typhoon Pepeng. BESF was initiated in 2005 after *Bibaknets* member Paul and his wife died in a tragic vehicular accident. Forum members raised about £1200 at that time to pay for the school fees of Paul's two young children. Lulu Fangasan explained that even before this, members have contributed money to help other members in need. According to Fangasan, they assisted with a *Bibaknetter's* cancer treatment and, after her death, supported her daughter until the latter obtained a degree in accountancy.

*Bibaknets*, similar to a traditional *dap-ay*, is a loose group (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3), save for having two moderators, Harry Basingat and John Dyte. But with its increasing projects aimed at helping members in need, some elders suggested creating its charity arm, the BESF. Fangasan narrated with amusement that members held 'some sort' of an election where Paltongan came out as Chairman and Basingat as Vice Chair and Fundraiser. Fangasan was made co-Treasurer.

Three officers were based overseas while the rest were located in the Philippines. The online discussions show that elders saw the importance of having a set of officers to manage and coordinate donations for the forum's projects. Although there was a formal group of officers, donations to the fund were strictly voluntary. In an interview, Fangasan explained,

*What makes Bibaknets unique is that it is able to accomplish many things despite its loose form. We already had one graduate unlike IGO<sup>122</sup> which was still sorting out its system. I think that's the difference between Harry Paltongan and Uncle Harry. That's what I read between the lines... Harry Paltongan is a lawyer...He was the one who suggested we come up with a board of trustees. We were actually doing well with the Elena Laduan fundraising. But when it became very formal...there was something lacking...it's the same with indigenous institutions. Very loose in the sense that we don't have CBL<sup>123</sup>, no written document but tight in the sense that the thing that binds us is something more than the document. That's how I...I look at it. It's not a formal organisation but it is doing something.*

*Lulu Fangasan, interview (Baguio)*

As discussed previously in Chapter 5, the members of *Bibaknets* and IGO overlap but they are distinct associations. IGO publishes its own magazine and its main activity is the biennial international consultation which is held in different locations. I also explained in Chapter 6 that one of the issues dividing IGO<sup>124</sup> members is the use of the term 'Igorot'. Fangasan's observation about the difference between a formal organisation like the IGO with the informal set-up of *Bibaknets* could be linked to the earlier discussion on the strength of smaller, informal, associations among highlanders and role of indigenous practices in their social relations. In her analysis relating to the failure of the regional autonomy bid in the Cordillera, Lydia Casambre (2010, p. 83) wrote that the use of the 'parliamentary procedure' during the public consultations restricted the substance and the direction of participants' discussions. She was 'puzzled' that the 'proponents of a Cordillera region, paying homage to a distinct Cordillera history and culture, persisted in employing alien forms of dialogue'. More importantly, the structures proposed by leading political actors emphasise regional governance which runs counter to 'the indigenous concept of self-governance at the village-

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<sup>122</sup> The Igorot Global Organisation, which I mentioned in Section 5.3.1 and Section 6.3.1.

<sup>123</sup> CBL: Constitution and by-laws

<sup>124</sup> The IGO has been saddled by other internal problems that are not addressed here due to the remit of the study.

level' (Casambre 2010, p. 91). Casambre's and Fangasan's observations indicate the weakening of indigenous institutions in the region. Educated Cordillerans appear to set aside indigenous practices relative to decision-making in favour of formal Western systems of debate and social structures.

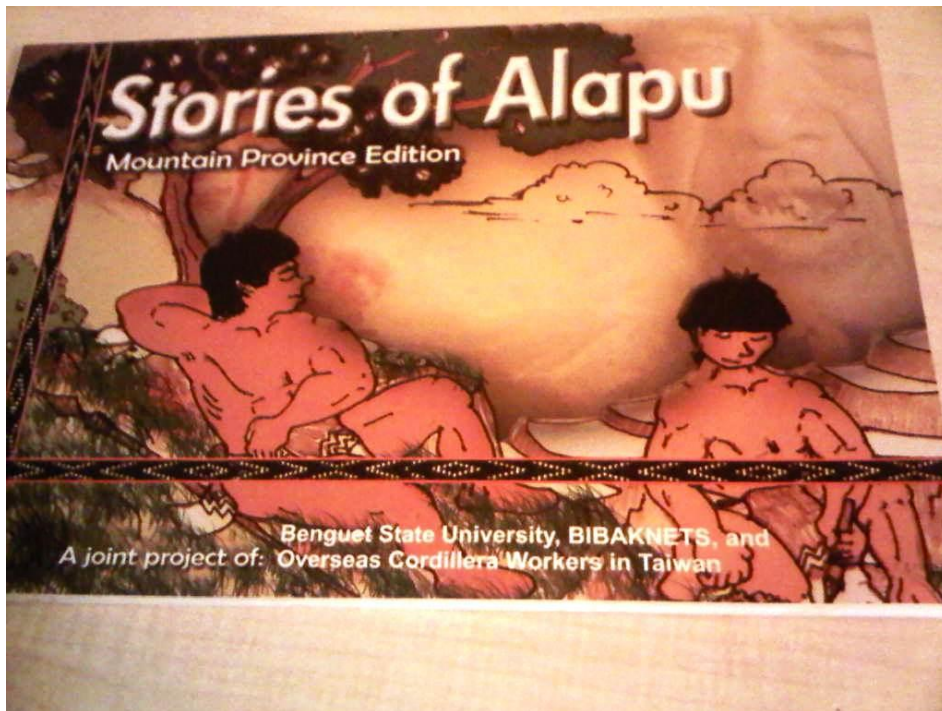


Fig. 8.1 A copy of *Stories of Alapu*, a book project jointly funded by the members of *Bibaknets* and the Overseas Cordillera Workers in Taiwan

A notable project funded by the BESF is the publication of *Stories of Alapu*<sup>125</sup>, an anthology of Cordillera folktales (see Figure 8.1 above). Fangasan developed the idea as member of the Department of Development Communication at Benguet State University (BSU), but the university did not have the money to fund the project. She turned to the forum through the BESF and Cordillera overseas workers' associations in Taiwan to raise the needed funds. These two groups raised roughly £3000 for the printing of 2000 copies of the book. The book project won a national youth award for the BSU in 2009.

Coming back to Paltongan's message, he wrote that the BESF has decided to allocate its remaining fund of roughly £1300 to help the children orphaned by typhoon Pepeng. Both he and Basingat appealed for donations in the light of the devastation brought upon Benguet by the typhoon. By 2009, the BESF had

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<sup>125</sup> *Alapu* is a gender-neutral Kankanaey word for 'grandmother' or 'grandfather'.

provided tuition fees for 34 students taking up technical and vocational courses in Baguio, Benguet, and Mountain Province. As usual in these appeals for donations, members generously sent donations to Basingat in the US and to officers in the Philippines. As of 2011, the BESF has raised about £3800 and assisted five university students who lost one or both parents because of the storm in 2009. One can trawl the forum archive and find messages about who donated how much, when and from where. Financial reports about the orphan scholarship fund are also shared publicly in the Attachments section of the forum website. Despite a certain level of transparency in the accounting for donations, Fangasan admits that the scholarship programme has its problems. Discussions also reveal some accountability issues confronting the programme's officers. Despite these problems, the BESF continues, and is currently helping three students obtain university degrees.

*Bibaknetters'* support for educational initiatives reflects their personal background and values. As discussed in Chapter 5, the majority of *Bibaknets* elders are highly educated professionals; they are lawyers, engineers, doctors, business owners and educators, among others. That they have achieved some measure of success in the Philippines and overseas with their university and postgraduate degrees has shown them the value of higher education in overcoming poverty and discrimination by lowlanders (Adonis 2010). Most importantly, attaining a higher level of education has enabled them to achieve their personal goals and give back to their own communities.

## **8.6 A Global Network of Personal Connections**

This section explores the sharing of resources among members at the personal level. Interactions on *Bibaknets* are not confined to collaborative efforts to protest discrimination against Cordillerans, as explored in Chapter 7, or to raise funds for worthy causes, as analysed in Sections 8.5. and 8.6. Members also develop personal relationships with one another, which translate to the sharing of material resources and support.

One of the strong indicators of the community's overlapping offline and online interactions is the extent of the members' personal networks within it. In Chapter 5, a survey of 99 people showed that a total of 92 members have a personal relationship with at least one other member of *Bibaknets*. Only six individuals had no personal connection with other forum members. Martin is a bank officer in one

of the more established banks in Baguio. He shared how he assisted a *Bibaknetter* friend from university in securing a job at the same bank.

*Through Bibaknets, I got in touch with Robert, an old classmate who was based in New Zealand. His family was with him and he was working there as a carer. He asked if there any vacancies in our company and I said yes. Robert told me he did not want to retire as a carer but as an accountant. And because we needed one at that time, I took him in and he came back to the Philippines.*

*Martin, Philippines*

Martin's experience illustrates how offline relationships can be rekindled online. He said that he had not heard from Robert for some years before joining *Bibaknets*. Martin was happy to assist Robert in securing a job not only because of their friendship, but also because the latter was qualified for the role. When he joined the forum, little did he expect that there were several university friends and relations who were already *Bibaknetters*. However, relationships can also develop in online communities (Baym 2010), as revealed in Susan's experience:

*In February 2010, I went to Canada for a conference and Bibaknets was a big help. Those who took care of me were people I've met through Bibaknets. Manang Jane...she was a classmate of my cousin. When I went to Victoria, I was at so at ease...She really looked after me...When I went to Ontario, others took care of me...*

*Susan, Philippines*

Susan became friends with Jane through the forum. As a regular poster, they exchanged messages on *Bibaknets* and through private emails. When she posted a message that she was going to Canada for a conference, Jane offered her home even though they had never met in person. Susan has received other invitations from her *Bibaknetter* friends over the years. 'Anywhere you go, you will find a *Bibaknets* member', she said, similar to an observation made by Mina in Chapter 5. When she went to Canada, Susan also met for the first time some *Bibaknetters* with whom she had not interacted online. 'I met Henry...he was a lurker and I never read any post from him.' Susan explained that although she did not personally know these persons, membership to *Bibaknets* has made it easier to relate to them. 'That's the beauty of *Bibaknets*', she said.



The nexus between local and global relations among *Bibaknetters* was also highlighted by Teddy. He said that he and his family were planning a trip to the US eight years ago and he asked some friends if they knew of Cordillerans living in the states they planned to visit. ‘The next thing we knew, we were referred to this forum where we discovered many of our province-mates already actively reading and posting messages’, he said. Teddy said that their visit proved to be ‘very fulfilling and convenient’ as US-based *Bibaknetters* provided the ‘accommodation and transport, as well as travel guidance and company’. Like Susan, Teddy said that although it was his first time to meet many of them, he felt like he had known them for a long time because of their forum interactions.

In the Philippines, Martin, Susan and Teddy are gracious hosts to overseas *Bibaknetters* who come for their holiday. For instance, Susan learned that she and an overseas member had a common friend. She then arranged a reunion between the *Bibaknetter* and his friend who have not seen each other since their university days. Teddy spoke of taking some of them to lunch or dinner when they are in the country. The sometimes overlapping connections among members make their personal meetings quite meaningful. Martin said that he and some overseas members who formerly resided in the same area in Benguet went to visit their old neighbourhood. ‘I gave them a bit of a tour of the area and we all recalled our happy times in the old days’.

Social support is an important aspect of the *Bibaknets* community. In Chapter 5, I defined social support as the exchange between members of emotional concern, instrumental aid and helpful feedback (House 1981 in Riding 2004, online). An allied concept is ‘social capital’, which refers to ‘social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them’ (Putnam 2000, p. 19). This covers broadly the material and non-material ‘resources that people attain because of their network of relationships’ (Baym 2010, p. 82). The exchange of social support among *Bibaknetters* contributes to their accumulated social capital (Baym 2010) as demonstrated in the narratives of Martin, Susan and Teddy.

## 8.7 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter examined the connections between the increasing mobility of Cordillerans and how *Bibaknets* is shaping the members' indigenous identities. Despite the claims of certain scholars that electronic media and the global movement of people are undermining people's sense of place (Castells 1996; Fitzgerald 1992; Meyrowitz 1986), place remains a crucial source of identity for indigenous peoples. Whether in California or in London, Cordillerans form associations based on their places of origin, whether at the town, provincial or regional levels. At the same time, the interview narratives and online messages also show that their identification as part of one region rests on the social relations that they are able to form with one another, not only based on their place-based associations but also on their online interactions on *Bibaknets*.

Indigenous peoples continue to assert a sense of place while reconfiguring and redefining their indigeneity within the contemporary realities of their lived experience. In explaining his concept of 'diasporic indigeneity' to analyse Ainu migration to Tokyo, Mark Watson (2010, p. 274) argues that the Ainu continue to articulate and reproduce their indigenous identities in urban environments, recreating their own place in cities. Biolsi (2005) pursues a similar position in his critique of American laws for imposing geographic limits on where one can practice and live as an Indian. He stresses that Indian people do not lose the right to be Indian or their claim to Indian culture when they leave the reservations. American Indians exhibit 'indigenous cosmopolitanism' because they are 'at home in cities, universities, the entertainment industry and mass media, and so on, as they are in reservations' (2005, p 249; Goodale 2006, p. 639). Cordillerans in Britain also exhibit a certain 'indigenous cosmopolitanism' in leaving their villages and towns to work and/or study in a foreign country. In coming to the UK, they have to possess language and technical skills, and some level of financial security before they can be granted visas. That they are able to navigate their way through the British immigration system while organising themselves into Cordilleran groupings once they arrive in London illustrates their cosmopolitan ways.

For diasporic Cordillerans, locality is 'primarily relational and contextual, rather than scalar or spatial' (Appadurai 1995, pp. 204-6). In the Western cities where they congregate, they continue draw on their indigenous cultures and take effort to express them through food, dances, clothing and music. The Grand *Cañao* in London demonstrated their connection to their villages and towns, and the cultural

practices in these places. Highlanders are diasporic, cosmopolitan and indigenous all at the same time, blending and adjusting to their urban environments while maintaining their social and cultural ties to their fellow Cordillerans. According to Linda Matthei and David Smith (2008), indigeneity is flexible as a 'survival strategy' for indigenous peoples. In their study of the Garifuna, an Afro-Indian ethnic group originally from St. Vincent in the Caribbean, they observed that the Garifuna continue to speak their language and propagate their culture despite having to take on different identities in order to survive in their new communities. Indeed, the 'tribal-diasporic binary is not absolute' (Clifford 1994, p. 310) because of the diverse situations of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples negotiate their identities not only within their countries, but also outside their national territories.

Focusing on *Bibaknets*, I highlight in this chapter the argument that the forum itself is a translocal site where indigenous identity is shaped textually and materially. Deirdre McKay and Carol Brady posit that locality is a 'property both of "traditional" or "place"-based community, and a "virtual" Internet-based community or a combination of both' (2005, p. 91). They extended their position to argue that translocalities may be found in particular physical spaces, or in virtual neighbourhoods, and may even 'extend along complex nodes and pathways' (McKay and Brady 2005, p. 91). As a translocal site, *Bibaknets* has facilitated the exchange of material resources among members in different parts of the world. The death of KC motivated members in the Philippines and overseas to mobilise monetary and other resources to assist her family. Some members volunteered to collect donations so that details about contact persons, bank accounts and money transfers were all exchanged on the forum. Likewise, relationships have been rekindled and developed, as exemplified in the experiences of Martin, Susan and Teddy.

The connectedness of *Bibaknets* to physical places and Cordilleran social structures is also evidenced in the forum's scholarship fund. Despite its loose and informal structure, *Bibaknets* was able to create and sustain a scholarship fund for needy students. It has also funded a book project initiated by one its members. Lulu Fangasan observed that the forum draws its strength from Cordillera indigenous institutions which do not rely on hierarchical and formally structured decision-making processes. Members' discussions regarding Cordilleran history and culture may be regulated, as explored in Chapters 6 and 7, but issues requiring urgent action appear not to be bogged down by rules of interaction as this chapter has shown.

This chapter has explored the translocal practices of *Bibaknets* through Massey's (1994) and Appadurai's (1995) arguments that social relations create, shape and define space, place and time. Although indigenous peoples as are often described as small-scale, traditional communities confined to geographic spaces (Clifford 1994; Lee 2006; Rosaldo 1993 in Watson 2010), I argue that their sense of community is socially constructed (Massey 1994; Rodman 1992 in Low 2009). As the interactions on *Bibaknets* show, many Cordillerans live outside their villages in the Philippines, in Britain, America, Canada, Australia and other parts of the world. Despite their dispersed situation, *Bibaknetters* from across the globe exchanged material and non-material resources that have contributed to their social capital (Putnam 2000). Massey writes that 'places are processes', which unites local and global processes (Massey 1994, pp. 155-156). Manuel Castells expounds the same view that all places are processes: they are renamed, lose or gain new people and businesses or structures, or even lose or gain geographic area (2010, pp. 412-417). Hence, it is weak to identify place with community because the same community can exist in different places and at different times, and online, as in the case of *Bibaknets*.

The offline and online relations among *Bibaknetters* in London and other parts of the world demonstrates that there is only 'one social world' where online interactions are part and parcel of the human experience (Baym 2010; Garcia et. al 2009). Practices of community, solidarity, empathy, philanthropy are strengthened because these are enabled and facilitated by *Bibaknetters'* online interaction. Generational tensions and intra-ethnic politics become much more pronounced in offline communities whereas in the online community of *Bibaknets*, these are openly debated with a measure of restraint. Age or seniority is assumed or tacitly accepted as one of the governing rules of hierarchy and interaction while knowledge of the differences and similarities among ethnic groups is shared more widely among the members.

Finally, the discussions signify *Bibaknetters'* collective consciousness as Cordillerans. Despite the gap between 'old-timers' and 'newcomers' in Britain, they were able to work together to raise the required funds for the repatriation of KC's body. Moreover, *Bibaknetters* from various ethnic groups, including Ifugaos who do not identify themselves as Cordillerans, donated money to KC's family. The same can be said of the *Bibaknets* scholarship fund which has been supported by members from diverse backgrounds. Community-building and identity

construction among Cordillerans are clearly embedded in power-relations. Their primary groupings may be based on their village-level identification but they also ascribe to wider associations which are influenced by their practical needs for emotional and financial support (cf Yong *et al.* 2011; Riding 2004, online). The interviews and messages reveal once more the processual and positional aspect of Cordilleran indigeneity. Cordilleran social relations are marked both by division and cooperation at specific times, spaces, and places.

## Chapter 9

### Indigeneity, Power and Technology

*How far have we gone? I do not think we have gone very far as rewriting our history in order to account for the event of colonialism. That's an area that is a challenge for young Igorots to do – to write our history the way it has developed, that is fair and that is from our 'own' eyes. Therefore, that is an area of scholarship that needs to be done by students here who are Igorots or of Igorot descent.<sup>126</sup>*

*Albert Bacdayan*

#### 9.1 Introduction

At the beginning of this study, I shared the above views expressed by eminent Igorot anthropologist Albert Bacdayan. But as I reach the end of this thesis, I confess to having mixed feelings about the writing of Cordillera history 'that is fair and from our "own" eyes'. As I examined online and interview narratives of *Bibaknets* members, it became apparent that as a collective body we are only scratching the surface of our identity narratives. Most importantly, I argue that there can never be *one*, if any, definitive narrative of Cordilleran history and identity, as demonstrated by the four preceding chapters. Cordillerans come from one region and assert a highland indigenous identity, but we have also been shaped by colonial policies, Christian missionisation, education and political formations in divergent ways. That we are just beginning to understand and to accept the different categories imposed by both outsiders and ourselves have been made visible by the online discussions on *Bibaknets*.

In this concluding chapter, I attempt to weave together the main arguments that run through the thesis based on *Bibaknets* discussions, interviews and other textual sources analysed in the final four chapters. Alongside the key concepts elaborated in the chapters, I examine the study's main arguments in order to evaluate how they have addressed the research questions and the overall aim of the study. With

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<sup>126</sup> Response given by Dr. Albert Bacdayan to the question, 'How far have we gone into the rewriting of history?' posed by Philian Weygan during the first National Conference on Cordillera Research hosted by the Cordillera Studies Centre at University of the Philippines-Baguio. See Cordillera Studies Center, 2001. *Towards Understanding Peoples of the Cordillera: A Review of Research on History, Governance, Resources, Institutions and Living Traditions*, page 263.

the study's limitations in mind, I consider the contributions of the thesis to theory, methodology and policy relating to indigenous peoples.

## **9.2 Technologies and Identities**

In broad terms, the study has explored 'social technology': those materials, programmes and strategies whose purpose is 'to produce changes in human behaviour' (Pinch et. al 1992, p. 266; Foucault 1997a, 2001 [1982], 1979) among Cordillerans. It looked at 'technologies of power', which is concerned about directing the conduct of others, and 'technologies of the self', which deals with how individuals govern their own actions (Foucault 1997a). Foucault termed the interplay of these technologies as *governmentality*, or the 'conduct of conduct' (Dean 2010; Lemke 2001). Analysing Cordillerans' self-authored narratives using these concepts is one of the key contributions of the study to indigenous peoples' literature.

Narrative analysis has made visible the workings of 'technologies of indigeneity' among Cordillerans. In proposing the concept technologies of indigeneity, I proffered that constructions of indigenous identity are grounded on two tensions: between indigenous peoples' experience of marginalisation and their consequent demand for self-determination; and between their personal and collective identities. Thus, I defined technologies of indigeneity as the programmes, strategies, and tactics used by indigenous peoples to achieve autonomy, self-sufficiency and political participation (Cruikshank 1999; Erazo 2010). Governance is not limited only to institutions or structures, but also to groups of individuals who act upon themselves through 'internal and voluntary relations of rule' (Cruikshank 1994, p. 4). Through their self-authored texts, *Bibaknets* members have made visible how they have negotiated, clarified and debated identity categories and issues that affect them as a collective body.

Forum members interrogated history and personal experiences with the use of the term 'Igorot'. In the process, it became apparent that there are different power struggles surrounding its appropriation, depending on a range of complex and contingent factors. While they agree that they have been marginalised by colonisers, the Philippine state and dominant populations, their discussions reveal that some form of marginalisation also occurs internally within the community. *Bibaknetters* are positioned complexly in relation to each other (Adams and Ghose 2003). US-based *Bibaknetters* from Mountain Province are the staunchest

supporters of the term 'Igorot'. They make up the largest membership group on the forum as well as that among highlanders in North America (Afable 2004). It was US-based highlanders who formed the Igorot Global Organization (IGO) which aims to be 'the advocate of Igorot rights and causes – linking Igorots and related people worldwide'. Bacdayan explained that it is 'Igorots' in America, presumably referring to those originally from Mountain Province, who advocate for the collective indigenous term of 'Igorot', 'because they see it as a better label for their group there as a whole rather than the label "Cordillera", which is a recent term' (2001). He added that highlanders in the US prefer the term because it is based on 'cultural similarity', unlike Cordillera/n which is based on territoriality. If the Cordillera becomes divided geographically, how would people from the region be referred to as a collective grouping? he asked. But June Prill-Brett linked this initiative to the marginalised position of expatriate Cordillerans. She suggested that those overseas feel a stronger need to associate with fellow highlanders because of their migrant status. Thus, even those who do not want to describe themselves as Igorots use the term for instrumental purposes. 'You are powerless when you are abroad, but when you stick together, you are more powerful,' Brett explained. She believes that once many Cordillerans become educated, their desire to associate with fellow highlanders may diminish. But the same rationale emphasises the arguments of Philippine-based *Bibaknetters* who are promoting the term 'Igorot'. They see its potency in claiming collective rights from the state, as Katherine in Chapter 6 wrote.

According to Barbara Cruikshank, 'the will to empower is neither a good nor a bad thing' (1999, pp. 2-3). This thesis has demonstrated the formal and informal regulatory rules that govern Cordillerans' social interactions with respect to their efforts to empower themselves. Foucault suggests that rather than look for who has or has no power, we need to be aware of the changes to the 'distributions of power' and 'appropriations of knowledge' (1979, p. 99). The discussions on *Bibaknets* indicate the shifting distribution of power among Cordillerans, which were made manifest by the debate about identity categories, such as Igorot, Kankanaey, Applai, including BIBAK. Members' attempts to clarify and question their knowledge about their own identity categories express their desire to assert new forms of subjectivities. In the words of Foucault:



Finally, all these present struggles revolve around the question: Who are we? They are a refusal of these abstractions, of economic and ideological state violence, which ignore who we are individually, and also a refusal of a scientific or administrative inquisition that determines who one is (Foucault 1982, p. 331).

Today, it is not only the state that dominates the creation of knowledge about Cordillerans, but highlanders themselves are shaping what and how knowledge of the region and its peoples circulates and functions (Foucault 1982, pp. 330-331). In pursuit of empowerment, some highlanders are advocating for particular viewpoints and exerting more influence in the discussions than others. These have, in turn, marginalised minority perspectives, creating friction and fragmentation at different levels. As regards Cordillera autonomy, Casambre (2010) noted that some ethnic groups have dominated the debate on the matter impeding its progress. For members from Mountain Province, the term 'Igorot' indicates a collective indigenous identity useful in pursuing collective rights from the state, as expressed by Katherine. It is a term of empowerment as far as she and other like-minded members are concerned. For those who reject the term, they explain that it gives a false impression of homogeneity among highlanders. They are *not* Igorots – they are an Ifugao, a Kalinga or other specific categories that they prefer. The uniqueness of their specific grouping is equally important for them as their regional, collective identity. Hence, they see themselves as *Cordillerans* but not Igorots.

Here, I go back to my earlier argument in Chapter 4 that a distinction needs to be made between Cordilleran and Igorot as signifiers of highland collective consciousness. The four findings chapters have established that there exists a Cordilleran collective consciousness, albeit fragile and emergent. As in the 50s and early 80s when they came together to protest discrimination and threats to their life and livelihood, highlanders continue to collaborate and network as a collective body wherever they are in the world. The formation of offline regional groupings such as Igorot-UK or IGO, and online communities such as *Bibaknets*, are expressions of this collective consciousness. *Bibaknets* members have demonstrated that they collaborate not only to defend their Cordilleran identity, but also to assist fellow highlanders in need. However, they disagree with the use of the collective category Igorot because this is a term imposed by outsiders. Moreover, as a political category, it was shown that some groups indicated more affinity to the term because they benefitted from its use more than others. Lastly,

some ethnic groups use the term Igorot to represent their own cultural heritage, giving an inaccurate impression of cultural homogeneity among Cordillerans. Cordilleran collective consciousness, however, is fragile and emergent because highlanders are still learning more about each other at this point in time.

Igorot identification is multi-layered and complex. I link the tension generated by the terms Igorot and Cordillera to our lack of knowledge of our historical roots. As Francis from Kalinga asked, 'Before the lowlanders named us Igorots, what were we called then? My thought is before the term Igorot got started to identify us, our forefathers had names to call their tribes or communities'. Ifugao members explained that they have always called themselves Ifugaos for as long as they can remember. They learned they were Igorots only after leaving their villages, a sentiment similar to that expressed by members from Kalinga. Drawing on my own experience, I began to describe myself as an Igorot as a young girl in Manila because that is what I heard my parents and siblings say. It was only when I was at university that I came to learn more about the term by reading history books. The fact that there were highlanders who preferred to identify themselves differently came as a shock. I remember hearing cousins and friends who described Ifugaos and Kalingas as 'proud' and having a sense of 'superiority' over the rest of 'us' because they did not want to be called Igorots. It was only after meeting people from these places that I came to have a less rigid view of a label that I learned to use without knowing why I used it for myself. As Richard Jenkins explains, identity is shaped by peoples' own understanding of themselves and how they are categorised by others (2008a). Hence, it can never be simply imposed on people because it is 'fundamentally situational and contextual' (Brubaker and Cooper 2004, p. 14).

The members also examined narrower identity categories in the course of the study which showed the members' lack of awareness of their own or others' history. The discussions of the categorisation of Applai and Kankanaey became tenuous, with some members receiving accusations of stealing other ethnic identities. Northern Kankanaeys from Mountain Province appear to be on the receiving end of these from Ifugaos and Southern Kankanaeys of Benguet. That some Northern Kankanaeys take a positional perspective about their identity category was evinced by their readiness to switch between categories in order to have better prospects of receiving free education. Two members narrated that they have always described themselves as Kankanaey, but were told to tick Applai when they sought government scholarships. That they chose to do so reflects the members' flexibility

of moving between categories to pursue their goals and the existence of a classification hierarchy. Finin writes that the Commission on National Integration (CNI) required applicants for government scholarships to prove their ‘specific “tribal” affiliation’. Apparently, some Cordilleran applicants chose unheard of categories ‘on the hope that there would be only a small number of applicants from that particular “tribal” group’; thus, increasing their chance of selection (Finin 2005, p. 209). Because of the differing opinions, experiences and understanding of the members’ in relation to these two categories, Rey in the US wrote that he asserts a ‘multi-level identification’ depending on where he is and the person he is addressing. These narratives indicate positional, multidimensional, flexible and processual identities.

As the above discussion showed, debates about several categories permeated *Bibaknets*: Igorot and Cordillera, Applai and Kankanaey, Bontoc and Mountain Province, BIBAK and MABIKA. The diverse views about these terms shared by the members illustrate how narratives of empowerment promote specific positions relative to Cordilleran identity, functioning as technologies of indigeneity in the process. Members negotiated meanings of identity categories where members presented competing narratives drawn from history, tradition, experience and academic sources. Some elders spoke with authority and finality, while others challenged the authority of the former’s claims. Although they had divergent positions, they all wanted to distance themselves from derogatory stereotypes – from being beggars, headhunters, pagans, wild and other negative connotations. The power relations that exist among *Bibaknetters* is an ‘agonism’ characterised by strategic struggle rather than outright confrontation (Foucault 2001 [1982], pp. 342, 346). Rather than focus on the state’s technologies of power, I have demonstrated how Cordillerans direct their own conduct by regulating the narratives shared on the forum.

### **9.3 Empowerment and Domination**

The twin possibilities arising from technologies of indigeneity are empowerment and domination (Cruikshank 1999). The creation of *Bibaknets* as an online forum for Cordillerans was impelled by diasporic members’ desire to maintain connections with their relations and friends in the Philippines. However, participation in these intense discussions requires more than a claim of connection and identification with the Cordillera, as illustrated in the discussions in Chapters 5

and 7. Apart from authenticating their indigenous identity, members also have to observe certain etiquette when interacting with fellow members.

Forum regulations are generally set by the moderators, particularly Basingat, who is the forum's creator and owner. As explained in Chapter 5, Basingat is a Kankanaey from Mountain Province from where the majority of *Bibaknets* elders originate. While members claim to reappropriate the Kankanaey term *dap-ay* to describe the forum as a 'gathering place in cyberspace' for *all* the peoples from the Cordillera, they maintain in practice some of the elements of a traditional *dap-ay* where male elders dominate the discussions. Apart from the moderators, *Bibaknets* elders, both male and female, participate in governing members' conduct. Like Basingat, the majority of elders are also Kankanaeys from Mountain Province. As a forum for Cordillerans, prospective members are required to authenticate their identity by emailing the moderators their *real* full name and geographic location. A photo requirement was later added so that members could match names to faces, according to Basingat. In Chapter 5, the brief membership of Nelson illustrated the disjuncture between members' identification with the Cordillera and their participation on *Bibaknets*.

Disciplinary rules in relation to membership requirements, posting and interacting are expressions of technologies of indigeneity (Cruikshank 1999). Indigenous peoples are constrained by legal and political structures and processes that limit their expressions of indigeneity. On the one hand, they have been oppressed by colonisers and dominant populations because of their distinct customs and beliefs. On the other hand, their rights are now being recognised by states incumbent on the condition that they are able to prove the distinctiveness of their ways of life. Cultures and identities are shaped constantly by the processes of social interaction (Appadurai 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Trouillot 2000; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012), but this perspective is not applied to indigenous peoples who are required to establish and maintain a static culture. Viewed in this way, indigeneity is a double-edged sword that indigenous peoples need to handle with utmost care.

### **9.3.1 Shared Rules and Regulation**

*Bibaknets* moderators and members direct each other's conduct, with some exerting more power than others. Indeed, taking part on *Bibaknets* requires a high standard of language and social skills. The messages and interviews show that

connections to the Cordillera serve only as a basic requirement to participate fully in forum life. To be accepted in the community, members have to personally engage with the elders and be able to write in reasonably good English. Most importantly, they have to know their own place in the community by being attuned to the written and unwritten rules of the forum.

The written rule that requires English as a medium of communication and the unwritten rule to engage and interact with *Bibaknetters* have served as barriers for interaction, even acts of domination, against some members. The rule-makers are *Bibaknets* elders, members who exert influence on the forum by virtue of their age, high social status, and active participation in the forum and the Cordilleran organisations where they live. They belong to intricate offline social networks where wealth, education, ethnic affiliation (especially for the Northern Kankanaeys) and personal connections matter. Although Harry Basingat, forum moderator, underlined that it is an *inclusive* online community, the debates and discussions illustrate that some persons and perspectives are sidelined due to various factors. On the whole, *Bibaknetters* may have joined the forum because of a common interest (Wellman 1999) in the Cordillera, but these interests are diverse and fluid.

### **9.3.2 Shared Support and Material Resources**

Despite the regulation of interaction and perspectives on the forum, this has not prevented *Bibaknetters* from collaborating towards a common good. They have protested against discriminatory statements and raised funds for worthy causes both at home and overseas. Despite their differences, forum members unite to provide material and emotional support to members in need. *Bibaknets* elders are keenly aware of the stark realities that Cordillerans face in different locales: poverty in the villages, homesickness among migrants and lack of government support for overseas workers, among others. In Chapters 5 and 8, I analysed the personal relationships and the sharing of resources that develop or break down on *Bibaknets*. I argued that members' identification with the region and with the forum is inscribed in their personal relationships and interactions both online and offline.

The materiality of the translocal interactions among *Bibaknets* members was made more evident by the way they have raised funds for KC's family. KC's untimely death in the UK spurred contributions not only from Cordillerans in London or

those from her specific ethnic group, but also from virtually all sectors of Cordilleran society. *Bibaknetters* are able to set aside their divisions to help fellow highlanders in need, wherever they may be. Moreover, KC's death showcased the cooperation and networking among global Igorots, providing subsequent inspiration for the formation of town-based groups in the UK.

#### **9.4 Technologies of Mediation**

In examining *Bibaknets* interactions, it is imperative to understand them within the environment of the Internet. Marshall McLuhan observed that media technologies are 'extensions of man' (1964, p. 3). Refining this assertion, Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman posit that 'technology and society are mutually constitutive' (1999, p. 41) so that they are part of a seamless web (Bijker and Law 1992, p. 201). The thesis has examined how forum members have mediated their understanding and practice of Cordilleran indigeneity. By mediation, I adopt Roger Silverstone's definition:

Mediation, in the sense in which I am using the term, describes the fundamentally, but unevenly, dialectical process in which institutionalized media of communication (the press, broadcast radio and television, and increasingly the world wide web), are involved in the general circulation of symbols in social life. (Silverstone 2002, p. 762)

The thesis has illustrated that online communication is becoming central to contemporary discourses and practices of Cordilleran identity. *Bibaknets* discussions surrounding Cordilleran issues were characterised by vigour, depth and regularity which have not been found in offline platforms. Mirca Madianou has argued that media is a process integrated in everyday structures with its corresponding limitations (2002, p. 130). Indeed, mediation is a non-linear process whereby relations between individuals and institutions, as well as the social and cultural environments that shape these relationships, are altered by communication processes (Couldry 2008; Madianou 2002; Silverstone 2005).

Through *Bibaknets*, Cordillerans engaged with one another to dissect broader issues affecting them as a collective grouping. The forum has also enabled members to collaborate in projects to help individual members in need or to protest against forms of discrimination towards Cordillerans. Through the exchange of personal narratives online, captured by the term 'digital storytelling' (Couldry 2008), *Bibaknetters* are simultaneously authors and audiences, actors

and observers at different communicative moments. At the same time, their narratives demonstrate how they close ranks and divide at specific times and for certain reasons. Thus, forum members' online interactions have been enabled and constrained not only by technology but also by specific social, economic and political structures and relationships.

However, mediation also involves 'negotiating between positions and values', whereby people, practices and resources can be excluded and included (Getto et. al 2011, p. 162). In this way, *Bibaknets* has made visible the competing autoethnographic identity narratives of its members as technologies of indigeneity. Although *Bibaknets* describes itself as a virtual meeting place for 'Cordillerans/Igorots', the discussions about ethnic categories have shown the complexity and diversity of peoples from the same region. Misunderstanding, discrimination and antagonism exist in the *Bibaknets* community, where some members impose their own agenda over the rest.

The limitations of *Bibaknets* as an online platform are determined more than anything by the power relations among the members. The use of English, the predominance of members from Mountain Province, particularly those who belong to the Kankanaey ethnic group and the close offline personal relationships among elders restrict the interactions among members. Despite the internal governance taking place in the forum, it could be argued that *Bibaknets* is the first and most effective online forum that brings together highlanders from different ethnolinguistic groupings and provinces to discuss, narrate and challenge ideas and categories about ourselves as a collective. It offers a controlled 'dialogic space' in that it provides members an 'opportunity to engage in fruitful conversations that support the ability of individuals to conceive themselves in many different ways' (Dillon 2009, p. 217).

The Ifugaos, Kalingas and members from other provinces and ethnic groupings may be a minority within the forum but their messages, although often contradicted, are still allowed to emerge. The regularity, depth, diversity and vigour of the discussions on *Bibaknets* has not been replicated in any other forum, either offline or online. Previously, Cordillerans came together to discuss issues affecting them as a collective in BIBAK meetings held in different chapters around the world (Finin 2005, p. 160). *Bibaknets*, however, has managed to close the geographic gap among people wishing to participate in these discussions. While

the socio-economic profile of its members are made up of highly-educated Cordillerans, it has not stopped Benny Duliyan, a construction worker in Saudi Arabia, from posting a message in broken English and challenging the apparent snobbery of some members.

Mazzarella has written that a medium is also a 'reflexive and reifying technology. It makes society imaginable and intelligible to itself in the form of external representations' (2004, p. 346). *Bibaknets*, in this sense, has enabled Cordillerans to see for themselves the heterogeneity and homogeneity of their own experiences and perspectives as indigenous peoples. Hence, it has given them the opportunity to imagine new ways of coming together as a collective indigenous community.

These narratives show that investigating identity construction on the Internet requires looking beyond participants' online interactions because these are embedded in other social spaces and structures (Adams and Ghose 2003; Miller and Slater 2000). The nature of computer-mediated interactions did not simply replicate Cordilleran offline group interactions, but recreated and extended them in new and 'significantly different' ways (Morton 2001, p. 4, cited in Wilson and Peterson 2002, p. 457). *Bibaknets* is made up of members who come from diverse 'places' ethnically, geographically and socially. However, the forum not only brings together members who see themselves as part of the larger Cordilleran diaspora, but also appeals to and is the means by which a Cordilleran regional indigenous identification is crafted and mobilised in the Philippines. These different factors provide members a broader, more dynamic outlook that changes the way they talk and act together, making *Bibaknets* a distinct indigenous virtual community.

### **9.5 *Bibaknets* as a Translocal Community**

The four findings chapters have provided evidence that *Bibaknets* is a translocal space and place: the sum linkages and connections between places which are brought to life by the corresponding histories and identifications of its members (Mandaville 2003, p. 653). Locality for Arjun Appadurai is primarily relational and contextual, rather than as scalar or spatial' (1995, p. 204-6). The material production of locality takes place through situated communities, whether spatial or virtual, which Appadurai refers to as 'neighbourhoods'. Thus, locality is 'the property that makes space into place' (McKay and Brady 2005, p. 91).



As a translocal place, *Bibaknets* is defined by the members' identification as Cordillerans or Igorots who originate from the Cordillera region. In general, any person who claims some affinity to the region can join the forum. But it is also an embodied location (Low 2009) that requires members to authenticate their identity by sharing their real name, geographic location and connections to peoples and places in region. In this online community, new members are introduced and welcomed, birthday invitations and death announcements are made, and photos and videos of members are shared.

The membership of the translocal, online *dap-ay* (meeting place) might itself be an extension of the *dap-ay* that was a site of shifting and contested membership in historical practice. Thus, *Bibaknets* is not only a translocal space, but also a site of mediation. As a translocal site of mediation, the forum facilitates self-distancing and self-recognition (Mazzarella 2004) allowing members to re-interpret and re-construct individually and collectively socio-political spaces and realities. Although they all identify as part of the Cordillera region, there are other factors that influence the conversations taking place in the forum such as language, politics, and their specific diasporic situation. The members' discussion of their ethnic categories as Applai or Kankanaey illustrated how members encountered and used these terms both in the Philippines and in their host communities. Self-distancing and self-recognition occurred simultaneously as members shared, challenged and clarified categories imposed on them by outsiders and their fellow Cordillerans who belong to other ethnolinguistic groups.

The seeming contradictions that they face are not contradictions at all. Just like the Yupiits who are 'both traditional and modern' (Fienup-Riordan 1990, p. 231, cited in Christensen 2006), the Indians who are indigenous cosmopolitans at home both in cities and on reservations (Biolsi 2005), the isolated Inuits who are also 'net-savvyges' (Christensen 2006), highlanders are challenging discourses that emphasise binaries rather than process and fluidity. The translocal interactions, both online and offline, among the members of *Bibaknets* suggest that indigenous identity is not bound to geographic places. Consequently, they continue to identify themselves as i-Sagada, Ibaloi, or Kankanaey wherever they may be. But while the translocal *dap-ay* de-territorialises the meeting place, it simultaneously re-territorialises indigeneity by facilitating links with, and necessitating demonstrable connections to, a particular home place and locale, even if and when those

connections are made and authenticated solely through online communication (Longboan 2011).

## **9.6 Reflections on the Study's Contributions**

Despite its limitations, I offer some insights on the study's modest contributions to theory, methodology and policy. In Chapter 2, I proposed that indigenous peoples' online self-authored identity narratives have not been given sufficient attention by scholars (Landzelius 2006a). Indigenous media literature has focused generally on indigenous peoples' collective efforts to pursue advocacy and resistance in communicating with a non-indigenous audience. My study has attempted to respond to this gap by examining critically the autobiographical narratives written by indigenous peoples in online communities. Through a close reading of their self-authored texts, I drew attention to the argument that indigenous peoples are complexly-positioned actors, occupying marginal and central positions (Adams and Ghose 2003) in relation to one another, not only in relation to non-indigenous peoples. This is the methodological contribution of the study. Exploring indigenous peoples' experience, perspectives, and actions through their written texts has facilitated the 'contextualization, historicalisation and retrieval' of their subjectivity (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi 2012: 301). Indigenous peoples are individuals who feel, think, reflect and seek meaning (Ortner 2005, p. 33) from the relationships, structures, places and spaces they inhabit. Moreover, narrative analysis has demonstrated the positionality and multidimensional aspect indigenous identity. We have seen how their narratives expressed heterogeneity at one moment, and homogeneity the next. The competing themes of cooperation and fragmentation at particular times and contexts ran throughout the discussions, revealing layers of complexity which de-essentialises our understanding of indigenous identity.

Theoretically, I attempted to complicate contemporary understanding of indigenous peoples by demonstrating how power relations shape their online and offline interactions. Their marginalised position in relation to dominant populations, the state and colonisers are established firmly in the literature. However, I argued that it is equally critical to examine how internal power relations constrain and enable their subjectivity. By developing the concept technologies of indigeneity in understanding the constructedness of their identity, I sought to problematise the underpinnings of their identity narratives. I argued that their identity narratives, whether online or offline, are permeated by the tension between

marginalisation and empowerment, and personal and collective interests. Although states and international bodies now recognise their rights, they remain 'incarcerated' (Appadurai 1988, p. 37) by policies and laws that require them to prove their indigeneity in order to be granted these rights. Technologies of indigeneity as the means and methods adopted by indigenous peoples' to achieve self-determination brings into focus the continuing marginalisation of indigenous peoples by unequal processes and structures in society. Indigeneity as a double-edged sword is both the cause of their oppression and the means for their empowerment. Examining the tactics, strategies and programmes used to achieve their goals for equality exposes simultaneously the constraints they face in the societies in which they live.

In terms of its contribution to policy, the study's analysis of *Bibaknetters'* discussions surrounding the term 'Igorot' contributes to the existing debate on Cordillera autonomy. In 1989, Steven Rood conducted a survey to determine highlanders' collective identification as part of one region. The result indicated that the majority of respondents, lowlanders included, preferred the term 'Cordillera' (1989, p. 11). As early as then, most people from the region have indicated their preference for a neutral term with which to describe themselves. The divided opinion among members showed that this remains the case until today. Members from Mountain Province and Cordillera leaders who maintain that all highlanders should adopt the category of Igorot need to consider these counter-narratives if the campaign for Cordillera autonomy were to move forward. Gerard Finin (2005) posits that the American colonial policy creating a regional grid for highlanders has influenced Cordillerans' sense of collective indigenous identity. I suggest that this ostensible collective identity remains nascent and rests on fragile grounds, partly because of the superficial categorisation and geo-mapping created by the Americans as the online narratives of *Bibaknets* members indicate. The debate about the term is counterproductive because the bases of the competing arguments are limited by Cordillerans' specific historical, personal and contemporary understanding of the term. Hence, all efforts should be made to allow diverse voices and multiple narratives to shape discourses on Cordillera autonomy. I believe it is critical to emphasise that Cordillerans' varying preferences for particular collective categories should not be necessarily interpreted as an illustration of lack of Cordilleran collective identity. Rather, it points to the important idea that collective identity can exist alongside differences in the way groups want to be identified.

The mediated aspect of Cordilleran indigenous identity has also been examined in this thesis. Despite the power relations that were taking place within *Bibaknets*, the online nature of the forum has facilitated cooperation, dialogue, and debate which would not have otherwise been possible in other offline venues. Cordilleran interactions on *Bibaknets* pointed to the strength of the argument that social relations and technology are inextricably linked as a seamless web (Bijker and Law 1992; MacKenzie and Wacjman 1999). *Bibaknetters'* engagement with the forum was embedded in their offline relations with one another and with mainstream Philippine society. Indigeneity and technology, in this sense, are mutually constitutive (MacKenzie and Wacjman 1999).

Within the last two years, discussions on *Bibaknets* have been dwindling significantly because of various factors, two of which are highlighted here. First is the creation of *Bibaknets* on Facebook where members can chat, share photos and videos instantly, and where the conversations appear as a thread visible to all. The quality of conversations on the mailing list and on Facebook as a social networking site is very distinct, indicating that the present study is a snapshot of a particular moment. The discussions on the mailing list are more dialogical, where members exchange banter and debate regardless of the topic. On Facebook, the messages are more like monologues, whereby members post messages, photos and links but with limited interaction with others. Second is the diminishing presence of Harry Basingat as a moderator. Although John Dyte continues to act as co-moderator, he does not post regularly because of his family and work demands. *Bibaknets* would be turning 15 years old in September 2013 and if it were to continue as an online village for Cordillerans worldwide, it needs to keep pace with the development of newer forms of online social networks while taking into account the needs of its members. Should it develop its own website to suit its needs, or should it focus on Facebook as its new dedicated site despite its limitations? Also, a moderator's role is important in animating the discussions. With the membership of the forum dominated by the over 50s, the current moderators could consider inviting another moderator who has strong networks with the younger members. Bringing in new voices in the discussions could help revive the passion and interest of existing members. As an area for further research, a study of Cordillerans' use of Facebook and other social networking sites for collective action or collaboration could contribute to contemporary understanding of the practices of Cordilleran identity construction.

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## Appendix 1

The online questionnaire posted on Bibaknets.

If you have trouble viewing or submitting this form, you can fill it out online:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/viewform?fromEmail=true&formkey=cIN2M3ZubnpIVjdWTzlHNmI2Yok5X1E6MA..>

### Questionnaire for Bibaknets members

Dear Bibaknets member,

Hi! I am Liezel Longboan, a fellow Bibaknets member and currently a PhD student at Cardiff University. My research focuses on Igorot email groups. I would be very grateful if you could please help me in this study by answering the following questions. All the information provided will be solely for academic research purposes by Cardiff University. Please don't forget to click the 'Submit' button once you have filled out the questionnaire. Kindly ignore this request if you have already filled out the questionnaire. Sala-salamat! Sincerely, Liezel Longboan Cardiff University [longboanl@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:longboanl@cardiff.ac.uk)  
Top of Form

Sex \*

- Male
- Female

Age \*

- under 20
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50 and over

Religion \*Please tick 'Other' and specify your religious affiliation if none of the choices apply to you.

- Episcopal
- Roman Catholic
- Evangelical
- Islam
- Other:

Ethnicity \*Please specify your ethnicity if none of the choices apply to you.

- Applai
- Bontok
- Ibaloi
- Ifugao
- Isneg
- Kankana-ey
- Kalinga

- Tingguian
- Other:

Education \*

- Elementary
- Secondary
- Vocational
- University level
- University degree
- Post-graduate level
- Post-graduate degree
- Other:

Average monthly income (optional) Please indicate currency (ex. PhP, \$, £,)

Occupation \*Please specify your job if none of the choices apply to you.

- Legislator/senior official/manager/business owner
- Professional
- Technician or associate professional
- Administrative and secretarial
- Skilled agricultural and fishery
- Personal services
- Sales and customer services
- Plant and machine operator/assembler
- Elementary occupation
- Armed forces/military
- Student
- Unemployed
- Other:

Country where you are currently RESIDING \*Please tick 'Other' and specify where you are currently residing if none of the choices apply to you.

- Philippines
- USA
- Canada
- Australia
- New Zealand
- United Kingdom
- Hongkong
- Saudi Arabia

Other:

Why did you join Bibaknets? \*

How long have you been a Bibaknets member? \*

- less than one year
- 1 to 2 years
- 2 to 3 years
- over 3 years

Country where you are currently WORKING? \*Please tick 'Other' and specify the country where you are currently working if none of the choices apply to you.

- Philippines
- USA
- Canada
- Australia
- New Zealand
- United Kingdom
- Hongkong
- Saudi Arabia
- Other:

How often do you post messages in the forum? \*If you tick 'Never', please answer the next question

- Very often (at least once a month)
- Often (once in two months)
- Sometimes (3 to 5 times year)
- Rarely (once or twice a year)
- Never (Please answer the next question)

If you answered 'Never' above, why have you never posted a message?

- I have no time to post messages.
- I just enjoy reading other people's posts.
- I can't relate to the discussions.
- The discussions are boring.
- Other:

Do you have your own computer? \*

- Yes
- No

On the average, how many hours IN A DAY do you spend online? \*

- less than one hour

- 1 to 2 hours
- 3 to 4 hours
- more than 4 hours

Where do you primarily access the Internet? \*

- At home
- At work
- At an Internet cafe
- Both at home and at work
- Through my mobile phone
- Other:

Do you personally know any of the forum members? \*

- Yes (Please answer the next question)
- No

If you answered 'YES' above, how many of the forum members do you personally know?

- 1 to 10
- 11 to 20
- over 20
- Other:

Are you a member of any other email group/forum for Igorots? \*

- Yes (If yes, please answer the next question)
- No

Please specify which email group you are a member of other than Bibaknets.

Would you be willing to participate in other areas of this study? \*If yes, please leave your email address for future reference.

- Yes
- No

Your email address (optional)

Thank you very much for kindly participating in my study. Please leave any comments you

would like to share.



## **Appendix 2 Interview Guide**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Profession: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

1. When did you join Bibaknets?
2. What made you join the forum?
3. How did you know about it?
4. Do you know any member of Bibaknets?
5. How often do you use the Internet?
6. Are you a member of other Cordillera online groups?
7. Are you a member of any Cordillera organization?
8. How often do you post on Bibaknets?
9. How would you describe the discussions on Bibaknets?
10. Based on your experience, how would you describe Bibaknets as a forum?