THE SAVAGE SPEAKS!
Post Colonial View on Translating and Interpreting Igorot Colonial Identities

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Translation as Preservation

Over the last two or three decades, "translation has become a more prolific, more visible and more respectable activity than perhaps ever before" (Trivedi 2005). At present, translation has become its own field of study where it has garnered its own identity in linguistics and its own academic momentum. In the Philippines, translation studies has made itself beneficial in relation to the country's multilingual milieu, as it has brought about a better understanding of culture and national identity.

Translation was originally considered a colonizing activity in the Philippines, a way for the colonizing West to appropriate the native. A fundamental step in colonizing was to take the subject race's language, break it down, give it a colonizing stance of understandability and then take a hold of it. As early as then, it has been made clear that there were several concepts, objects, cultural ideas etc., which the Western language could not translate using their own, so they ended up utilizing Western concepts in order to give a meaningful translation.

Translation became a "transaction not between two languages, but rather a more complex negotiation between

two cultures" (Catford 1965). But in the case of the colonized realm, translation was never a negotiation, it was a matter of the dominant culture linguistically taking over the subject race, as Homi Bhaba says, "[t]ranslation is the performative nature of cultural translation" (Bhabha 1994). Translation under these circumstances was no longer about words, but now a one-sided commodification, idealization, and essentialization of, not only the language, but also the culture.

But let us take into consideration that the study of translation, like the study of culture, needs a plurality of voices. And similarly, the study of culture always involves an examination of the processes of encoding and decoding that comprise translation (Bassnett and Lefevere 138-39). At present, translation studies give way for the formerly translated to actually translate for themselves. This is the cultural turn of translation.

The "plurality of voices" in translation, as Bhabha suggests, is evident in how the West has given meaning and interpretation to the Igorot. Below are several examples:

> **G-string –** When the Americans entered the northern Philippine highlands, they were immediately met with a plethora of unfamiliar images. Interpretation through translation was immediately conducted on various literatures written about the northern territories and its inhabitants. Though the Americans are already aware of Indigenous folk wearing loincloths (North and Southern American Indians) the word G-String became a moniker assumedly befitting the Igorot *Bahag*. Defined by Merriam and Webster's dictionary as: *"a strip of cloth passed*

between the legs and supported by a waist cord that is worn especially by striptease dancers" it was a term popularized during the turn of the 20th century when burlesque shows were gaining massive popularity in America. Using the G-String as a reference to Igorot male garment is indeed deprecating and obviously a pun which still sees common use even at present.

Head-Axe – A civilization is often defined by the tools they make and use. Degrees of civilization, sophistication, and advancement are immediately seen in their material culture. All highland cultures all over the world have developed the use of an axe, as it is an important tool in managing rough, descending and vertical terrain. Any sharp tool can be used as a weapon as any edge can be used to maim and mutilate. The Western colonizing eye simply took the authority in isolating the genocidal aspect of the Igorot axe and made it a formal and identifying symbol on who and what the Igorot are. Just like the G-String, the use of the word head-axe still enjoys popularity at present.

Head hunt / Head hunter – Decapitation and the Igorot go together like peanut butter and jelly. Colonizers will always maintain a higher level of civility, culture and morality over their colonized subjects. Colonial discourse will always see the colonized other as belonging to the negative aspect of civilization, because it is through Orientalizing discourse that the colonizers ascertain their presence as colonizers. According to June Prill-Brett (1987), there are several reasons why Igorots go to war and head-hunting is not one of them. Igorots never hunted heads; they took them. The decapitation of enemy heads occurs as a result of war and not a cause of it. The word headhunter functions under the same Orientalizing discourse that propels the referential use of "head-axe."

Igorot – The word Igorot (Y-golot, y-gorotte, y-gorot) has been used as a collective term to describe generally who the natives of the Cordillera are. Though contrary to popular belief, various ethno-linguistic groups in the Cordillera would not readily refer to themselves as Igorots per-se. For the people of the Cordilleras, the word Igorot is a reference made by lowlanders and not by the Igorots themselves. Though the word has existed even before colonial times, it is Philippine historian and physician T.H. Pardo de Tavera who at the latter part of the 19th century would define the word Igorot as "One from the mountains" in reference to the Spanish *Y* and the assumed old Tagalong word *Golot* which he declares meaning mountain. Let me go directly to the point that the word Golot has several meanings in as far as Philippine and south-east Asian languages are concerned. In Bikolano *Golot* refers to the act of harvesting rice through reaping in a sweeping motion. The same holds true in the word *Golot* used by the Ifugao as a word which refers to an act of cutting via a downward chopping motion. In Bahasa the word *Golod* means to cut in the same manner that the Bikolanos use. For the Tagalogs, only the word *Golok* sees the closest linguistically relevant comparison which refers to a long sharp bladed tool used by coconut farmers. A relevant word during the colonial times which refers to mountains was the word *Zambal* which would have been used to refer to mountain ranges (ergo Zambales). Evidently, the word Igorot was used by lowland natives in reference to a highland genocidal trope, a pre-colonial pun, an internal orientalization.

At present, the construct of "plurality of voices" is still evident as several Cordilleran concepts and words still share a varied translation of concepts and terms such as:

Panagbenga – As referring to the more popular "flower festival," a holiday, a tourist season, a flower harvest season, rather than the Sagada celebration of a rice harvest.

Dog meat – As often perceived as an Igorot regular meal which goes contrary with animal welfare acts and ethical treatment of animals rather than a ceremonial feast conducted only on important occasions.

Cañao – As a dance presentation for parades and festivals, a high school dance number, a generic Igorot dance, rather than a ritualistic act, a pious communal tradition and offering.

Though the use of Cordilleran words and concepts in modern Filipino language is indeed a breath of fresh air as far as indigenous representation is concerned, the examples above show how such words can be utilized in continuing a misinformed and culturally insensitive translation. Cultural translation reiterates the use of indigenous terms not as a supplemental form but to at least arrive at an exact or close-to-accurate meaning of its original context. Modern Filipino language now utilizes taking words from other languages in the country and not simply ascertaining itself to the use of Tagalog or borrowed "tagalicized" English words. Cordilleran ethno-linguistic groups offer so much as far as improving Filipino as a language. Ibaloy words such as: *Awil* (gift for children), *Mekhing* (mummy), *Alluyun* (bayanihan in farming) and even Kankanaey words such as: *Beska* (moon looks like a c), *Kabiti* (stone rip-rapping), *Sangadil* (death chair) are concepts which do not have words in the Filipino language and as an alternative should be included in the Filipino language.

Cultural translation does not relegate itself to words alone but also to paralinguistic keys and symbols which are often misunderstood and misinterpreted, such as:

> The absence of thank you and apologies in the Igorot context (as observed by Spanish and American colonial travel writers) is often misinterpreted as rude, ungrateful and unapologetic. But in actuality, the Igorot culture sees value more in physical remuneration rather than the use of mere words. Filipino words *Salamat* and *Pasensya* have been used later on to supplement this assumed lack of decorum.
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> Burping in several Mountain province cultures is a sign of a good meal and is made as a gesture of satisfaction addressed towards the host. This goes contrary to Spanish, American and mainstream Filipino etiquette that burping is rude and discourteous and delivers the idea that Igorots are therefore such.
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> Not punishing children in the context of the absence of physically scolding them is something that the first American colonizers found difficult to comprehend in the Cordilleras. This was immediately taken as sign of poor parenting and lack of discipline in behalf of Igorot children. Igorot culture takes into consideration that children are given recognisance to social responisbility and accountability for their actions at a very early age.
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> The Olag or house of trial marriage has often been a source of overt erotic interpretations as far as Igorot culture is concerned. It has often been appropriated as having the same stance as a brothel in the West but the Olag is taken in a much more dastardly sense since it involves girls ranging from the ages of 3 to 18. The Olag is not simply about unconsciencious sex. It has to

be made clear that the rate of childbirth in a village also dictates its survival. The Olag does not only serve as a "house of trial marriage" but as a dormitory for girls in the village to learn from the elders basic and fundamental life skills needed.

Coloniality and Postcoloniality

John Macleod (2000) in his book *Beginning Postcolonialism,* writes that "language does not passively reflect reality," it also goes a long way towards creating a person's understanding of their world, and it houses values by which we live our lives. Under colonialism, a colonized people are made subservient to ways of regarding the world which reflect and support colonialist values. "The cultural values of the colonized peoples are deemed as lacking in value, or being as uncivilized, from which they must be rescued." The colonizer remains civilized, rational, intelligent; the colonized remains the opposite of all these qualities. From this binary opposition, the colonizing peoples derive their sense of superiority and normality. Colonialism fundamentally affects modes of representation and it does not stop when the colony achieves its independence.

Postcolonial theory presents a challenge to colonial ways of thinking. The development of postcolonialism owes its formation to theories on colonial discourse. Representations are used as fundamental weapons to keep colonized peoples submissive to colonial rule even after independence. This includes the colonizer's traditional

insistence on difference that the colonized is the savage—the "antithesis of civilized value" (Spurr 1995)—and therefore the savage is the other. Colonial discourse bears an uncertainty which leads to an inherent confusion of identity and difference. This uncertainty begins as modern, civilized human beings assert authority over the savage, but such an assertion acknowledges its own incompleteness as an authority. There is a simultaneous disavowal and avowal in colonial discourse. Colonial discourse therefore assumes a number of widely divergent rhetorical forms which according to Spurr (1995), is "like a series of fragments made by stress fractures under the burden of colonial authority" (7).

Orientalizing and Othering

Edward Said (1991) states that the basis of cultural othering and colonial prejudices "point at which Western rationalism preserves the boundaries of sense for itself" (24). Colonial discourse will always work in maintaining difference. Though differences may remain ambivalent (positive or negative views of the other) these still work in reinforcing and emphasizing colonial stereotypes, a reassurance of colonial motives. By simply shifting views, creating stereotypes and emphasizing difference, representations of the other as based on the travel writings to be analyzed here are continuously changing as time passes, but ironically the colonized remains in essence the unchanging other.

The uncommon, for the colonizer, meant unconventional. The world at the peak of the colonial period was divided into two, the west and the rest, the occident and the orient. The Philippines was born out of a colonialist undertaking by Spain. As early as the 1600s, travel writing was already written by Spanish priests and soldiers to account for their exploits in the Christianization and colonization of Filipino natives. Most notable are those written about the Northern Luzon highlands.

Interpreting Travel Writings

Travel writings provide ready historical data based on the traveler's experiences and observations. Postcolonial theory has set new directions in approaching such texts. Analyzing travel writing is no longer set on seeing these as mere historical accounts but as a tool in the historical process of colonization.

Akin to other historical documents, travel writing raises the need to do a careful critical analysis which would also require various critical approaches. Aside from questioning issues on historical accuracy and exactness of details in the text, its analysis also stems from questioning the writer's contexts, insights, situations, and purposes among others.

There are many ways of interpreting travel writings, considering that such texts have many limitations, inconsistencies, contexts, and origins. The travel texts written by Vicente, Trincada, and Herosa were produced

under different backgrounds, with varying purposes and under different circumstances. Even the time periods of the works vary even though they were all produced during the colonial period in the Philippines.

The impenetrable and un-explorable mountain ranges created an image of the unknown at a time when the rest of the world still believed in sea monsters and mountain beasts. It was a time of exploration, when explorers made a name for themselves by discovering unchartered territories. Spanish travel writings concerning the Cordilleras then consisted of mythical and imaginary ideas borrowed from the lips of illusory Spanish troops and lowland Filipinos, of a people so brutal and barbaric, of half man half beast tree dwellers who chopped off people's heads with their vicious claws while they slept. A race of upright monkey people who took delight in bestiality and the consumption of human flesh, who did not know the difference between rock and gold. In 1619, Spanish explorer Francisco Vicente would define the Cordilleran:

> It was said that they ate human flesh and that they were so cruel that when some Christians fell into their hands, they mutilated and disfigured them in a minute, one carrying off a finger, another an ear, with the greatest prize being the skull, which the chieftain carried off in order to drink out of it - oh inhuman cruelty! It was said that they prevented the Filipinos from being from becoming Christians, and they had fallen on Christian towns in troops, killing and robbing and carrying off baptized children whom they then raised among their idolatries, etc., a thing which without any manner of doubt the church can avenge by making war against them. (Francisco Vicente, et.al. 1619)

Such images of the Cordilleran called forth many to see for themselves what it was all about. Such stories even elicited the awe and curiosity of the Western hemisphere. It was then similar to kids going to a circus just to gawk at the man who ate live chickens next to the contortionist and the pygmy. Travel writings concentrate on a re-telling of that which is different, of that which is not conventional for the writer. The aspect of othering implies a comparison between the writer and the observed. In such instances, the colonizer takes the position of the higher-level construct and the colonized is represented as the implied marginal.

Travel writings essentialize an image of a paradigmatic Oriental, an inferior personage that is peculiar and culturally backward. Misrepresentation is the main issue here, whereas such a misrepresentation becomes the standard image, whether it be true or false. Orientalism is used to convey an image of the native inferior as seen by the superior Occident.

Another Example:

> The grossness and repugnance of their customs is sufficiently shown in their manner of preparing and serving meat for eating: once the animal –whether dog or carabao—is killed with a spear, headax or stake, they cut it up without removing the skin, fighting each other as if they were a pack of wolves to snatch up the pieces which they then stick in the fire with no further preparation, and then eat them scarcely charred as if they were delicate morsels. (Trincada 1886.5-6)

In this constellation of images, Trincada presents the subject race as truly primitive based solely on his observations of how they consume butchered meat. Using descriptive words such as "grossness and repugnance" already presents the notion that the Igorots' primitive ways in culinary terms also supply their miserable and abjectable condition. The suffering felt by the subject race is brought about by their lack of civility and this is what Trincada associates with the subject races' moral and intellectual degradation. Trincada's colonial discourse requires the repetition of such images in his account as a means of justifying his presence and intervention in the area and as a way of constantly reiterating the othering of the subject race. For Trincada, the violent notion of butchering an animal with headaxes and consuming it through means described as similar to "a pack of wolves" evokes the power of the genocidal rhetoric. Trincada sees a blurring of roles between human and animal for the subject race. The use of headaxes as a weapon for war and as a butchering tool only invokes the image for Trincada that the savage treatment of the animal is the same with how enemies are treated. The mutilation of the animal is already an image for the mutilation of the enemy. The depiction of such horrific images tends to go against the borders of Trincada's sacred orderings of western value and morals.

Another traveler would write:

> …a people superior in everything to the natives of the conquered provinces, who excel them only in being raised in the faith,

> civility and society, which lack in the said pagans makes them very cowardly, so much so that a few natives of the provinces , with no other arms than bows and arrows, can make them flee though there are many and they are sure to be huskier and stronger than the natives of the provinces. (Herosa 1780, 3)

Herosa's comparison of the Igorots with the lowlanders tend to classify the latter into a category of superiority over the native lowlanders based primarily on physical strength and brute prowess, a ready assumption which tends to rationalize the idea that the Cordilleran rugged environment produces rugged people who are assumed to be used to various inclemencies of mountain life. It is a strength coming from savagery rather than civility. Herosa maintains that even though Igorots are physically stronger, they are still exceeded by the lowlanders' "faith, civility and society".

Conclusion
For Translation

Translation has two roles: reproduction and transformation. But aside from these, translation also becomes an instrument for emancipation, challenges fixed identities, sensitivity to arbitrariness, and interrogations of ontological securities.

The so-called "The Cultural Turn in Translation Studies" now takes into consideration contexts of culture in the field of translation. Translation now not only has the ability to interpret but also to preserve. At present,

translation can be a tool for decolonization. But in order for translation to preserve it, should learn to respect.

Matters on Colonial Discourse

Aguilar-Cariño (1994) in her article "The Igorot as Other: Four Discourses from the Colonial Period" writes that many descriptions of the Igorot accrued through historical time and space and that these descriptions until today still remain distorted and inaccurate. The proliferation of texts concerning the Cordilleras during the Philippine colonial period has "mythologized" the Cordilleran image at a time when a book-learning culture flourished. Early Cordillerans did not have a system of writing nor access to such texts.

Different kinds of information on early Cordilleran tribal life and customs are widely distributed and circulated through foreign chronicles which perpetuate and help reproduce stereotypical notions of Cordilleran life, culture and imageries. Cariño says that the authors of such colonial texts could not escape the condition of their own subjectivity and cultural difference. Even the non-Cordilleran Filipino response towards the image produced by foreign colonial authors about the Cordilleras tends to gravitate towards the image of the Igorot as subjugated. The "civilized versus uncivilized" framework has spawned realities whose fictiveness has been forgotten where apprehension on who the Igorot are, no matter how

unrealistic these may be, immediately gain currency as factual and accurate

In order to provide a context for the understanding of foreign realities, colonial discourse treats the non-West as either a source of sentimental human interest or melodramatic entertainment. But nothing exudes more emotions and interest than the interpretation of the non-West as a rhetorically insubstantiable experience for the Western world. By rhetorically insubstantializing the primitive, colonial discourse takes a flight from ordinary civilized living with the notion of having the ability to return to normal surroundings, bringing prestige and adventure to having confronted the strange, the abhorrent, the dangerous. The more the non-Western is portrayed as exotic and different, the more he becomes interesting. The lack of interest and indifference the Westerner has with the Philippine Christian lowlander is brought about by their lack of uniqueness and distinction. The lowlander becomes somewhat of a lesser copy of the Westerner himself, an image they are already accustomed to and familiar with.

The Igorot became the savage because it is what the West demanded and designed them to become. Sources of his othering emanate from all aspects of his life, tradition, and culture, an othering which has persisted even at present. The Igorot was over studied by the West but under questionable objectives which transform the observed into a mere spectacle, whose own point of view becomes what dictates and defines them. As Spurr suggests, “Western institutions have developed a taxonomic machine for

making authenticity." The colonial intervention, if not responding to either the betterment or the appropriation of the native and his resources, implies a need to understand and study them. The nature of discourse being produced here is such that transforms the primitive into an object of learning and observation, where their ways gain value not only because of their ability to induce what is different and interesting but in producing academic value. At present, the Igorots should redefine themselves under their own terms and through their own means. Earlier texts should not be thrown out the window nor immediately acknowledged as fact, but instead should be questioned and analyzed for posterity's sake and for more relevant future studies.

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