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Ethnogenesis at the margins: A study on the origins of the Bago-Igorot identity

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ABSTRACT

There has been a resurgence of identity politics in Ilocos stemming from the search for and the establishment of the Bago-Igorot identity. This academic and personal inquiry on Bago identity examines the theories generated by congresses and scholars about the Bago's origins, the issues and debates found in various Bago social media websites, the representation of Bago-Igorots in Ilocos historiographies, and interviews with elders of Igorot migrant groups in Ilocos. Analyses show that the terms "Bago"/"Bago-Igorots" and other derivations do not represent a distinct group of Indigenous people but are exonyms—names initially used by the Spaniards to call the natives who were new Christian converts, then later adopted by the Ilocanos as a derogatory term to describe migrant Igorots in general. Ilocano became the Bago's *lingua franca* due to trading with the Ilocanos and intermarriages. The case of the Bago is arguably an example of an ethnogenesis on a small scale, similar to the process of adopting and reforming Moro as an identity in southern Philippines and, on a larger scale, of Filipino as a national identity. These shifts in identity politics may significantly affect the nation-building process, especially in the creation of a homogenous or unifying identity among diverse ethnolinguistic groups, and thus remain an important aspect of social and cultural studies.

KEYWORDS

ethnogenesis, Bago-Igorot, ethnicity, Indigenous people, historiography

Introduction

According to Jean Phinney (1993), part of a person's ethnic identity development is the exploration of their ethnic affiliation by questioning its origins, examining its structures, and studying its history. This paper is a product of our years of research both in the historical and anthropological fields, guided by the aim of exploring the

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origins and the story of what we believed to be our ethnic identity. The community known as the Bago-Igorots is recognized as a legitimate Indigenous group by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) through Memorandum no. 58, series of 2003 (BNCSPI 2003b). Today, the Bago-Igorot is considered one of the largest and most politically organized Indigenous Peoples (IP) groups in Ilocos Sur, Northern Philippines (Alviento n.d.; Tibaldo 2015).

This research, which is also a personal journey to ethnic identity formation and change, posed two challenges: first, to consolidate the theories used by Bago scholars to define and delineate the group and analyze how these theories came to be, and second, to evaluate these theories and how they are promulgated, projected, and consumed by the Bago.

In our earlier research (R. Pawilen 2013; R.A. Pawilen 2016), two of the problems we encountered in previous works examining the origins of the Bago-Igorots were 1) the varying and sometimes conflicting narratives and 2) the seeming reluctance of some researchers within the Bago-Igorot community to apply triangulation to check their narratives or to use historical documents for fear of these sources' biases against the Bago narrative.

This created further problems for us in writing about the origins and identity of the group because of the seemingly syncretic nature of the theories about the origins of the Bago-Igorot, which mixes various cultural characteristics from other Cordilleran groups such as the Itneg and the Kankanaey. Attempts of the Bago-Igorot proponents to map the group's ancestral domain also resulted in inconsistent lists of municipalities belonging to the Bago-Igorots, as gleaned from the 3rd Bago Tribal Congress (BNCSPI 2003a), Mauricio Domogan in 2003 (Dumlao 2003), National Commission on Indigenous People Region 1 (2007), and Anno (2012), among others. This issue on ancestral domain was already raised by anthropologist Jesus Peralta in his early studies on the identity of the Bago-Igorots in 1996.

Accomplishing these tasks also unraveled an underlying phenomenon of change. This is embodied by the concept of "ethnogenesis," broadly defined as the "historical emergence of a people who define themselves in relation to a sociocultural and linguistic heritage" (Hill 1996, 1). The current study, therefore, explores the emergence of the Bago identity in Northern Luzon, with a focus on the theories, narratives, and controversies that surround the group as well as the different mediums, such as social media, where these claims are promulgated.

Overall, this study signifies the importance of examining the continuing cases of ethnicity and identity assertions and politics among the Bago-Igorot, along with the struggle for recognition, inter-ethnic relations, and power dynamics embedded in such a phenomenon, especially in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies, such as the Philippines.

Ethnicity, identity, and marginalization in Philippine history

Changes in ethnic identity are not entirely new in the Philippines where major historical events are driven, in part, by the search, assertion, and ascription of identity. Such events include the late nineteenth-century propaganda movement wherein intellectuals like Jose Rizal used the term "Filipino" to refer not only to the Spaniards born in the Philippines but also to all natives of the archipelago (Mojares 2002; Schumacher 1997). The leaders of the Philippine revolution against Spain in 1896 also used "Katagalugan" as a broad term, similar to how the propagandists operationalized "Filipino," which included all ethnicities in the Philippines, qualifying the revolution as a nationwide movement (Richardson 2013). Fernando Zialcita (2011) in *Authentic not exotic: Essays on Filipino identity*, stated that the idea of a "broader community called the Philippines was born both in response to and as a result of Spanish impositions" and consolidation of different groups in the islands through various colonial policies (62). However, the process of consolidation was accompanied by exclusion and marginalization, which led to the creation of minority groups in the country. For instance, the policy of *reduccion* amalgamated Christianized communities and simultaneously separated them from un-Christianized groups who were considered uncivilized (Abinales and Amoroso 2005). Most of these so-called uncivilized areas were places where Spanish colonizers failed to impose their authority and policies mainly because of geographical impediments and local resistance. The groups from the Cordillera are one example. An area rich in forest and mineral products, particularly gold, the Cordillera is one of the most imposing mountain ranges in Northern Luzon, and the Spanish colonial government spent huge resources to send mountain expeditions. With the colonial government highly dependent upon Spain and Mexico for funds during the late sixteenth- to the mid-eighteenth centuries, sending expensive expeditions to areas that were geographically impenetrable became more of a burden than a fruitful venture (Scott 1974). The successful resistance of different groups in the Cordillera, which was mostly due to their mastery of the terrain, also became an additional challenge (Labrador 1997). Failing to establish a strong foothold in the Cordillera region, the Spaniards differentiated them from the Christianized areas surrounding the mountains, such as Ilocos and Cagayan. In William Henry Scott's (1962) article, "The word Igorot," he traced the etymology of "Ygorrote"/"Igorot" to the Spanish period, when the word was documented by the Spaniards as an Indigenous term meaning "mountaineer." It was then used by the Spaniards to refer to groups of people living in the mountainous areas of Pangasinan, Ilocos Sur, Benguet, Bontoc, and Ifugao. It gained negative connotations of being backward, uncivilized, and savage, which made Cordillera groups initially averse to the term.

During the American period (1898–1946), the Americans continued using the term to refer to the people of Bontoc and Benguet. The process of minoritization was further institutionalized through the creation of the Bureau of Non-Christian tribes in 1901. This Bureau was responsible for the creation of the Mountain

Province in 1908 and promulgated the idea of a "separate highland development." The policies of land titling in 1902 as well as the mining acts in 1905 and 1935, which provided for an easier access to Cordillera lands, also laid the foundations for the exploitation of resources that traditionally belonged to Cordillera minorities, further reinforcing the idea of an upland and lowland divide (Labrador 1997).

By the 1950s, the changing cultural and political landscape of the postwar era contributed to the change in attitude towards the term Igorot, especially among Cordillera politicians and the youth. In "The making of the Igorot: Contours of Cordillera consciousness," Gerard Finin (2005) characterized postwar Cordillera aspirations with the formation of an ethno-regional conception of Igorot as the people of the Mountain Province. The youth, especially those in the urban center of Baguio, played an important role in embracing a paradoxical view of distinguishing themselves—at least culturally—from the Hispanized and colonized lowlanders while also aiming to integrate them to the newly independent nation under the new Philippine republic. The key factors that facilitated the change in attitude towards "Igorot" as a term to refer to the various Cordillera groups include: 1) the election of Igorot representatives in Congress; 2) the establishment of the *Baguio midland courier*, a Cordillera newsletter that published articles highlighting Cordillera culture, social life, politics, and current events; 3) the transformation of Baguio to an educational center and the increase in Cordillerans who were able to attend universities in Manila; and 4) the improvement of transportation and roads, which enabled quicker movement of people and information within the region (Finin 2005).

The same process of minoritization and marginalization can be observed in Mindanao. For example, in "The state–Moro armed conflict in the Philippines: Unresolved national question or question of governance?", Rizal Buendia (2005) discussed how "Moro" was transformed from a derogatory term used by the Spaniards to an acceptable term that came to represent the Muslim peoples of Mindanao. One of the primary catalysts of this transformation aside from American aggression in the region was the collaboration of Muslim leaders with the Americans, who brought formal education that was enjoyed by Muslim elites. After failing to secure independence or recognition as a state from the Americans in the 1920s, Muslim leaders vouched for the recognition of a Filipino–Muslim identity in the 1930s, following the establishment of the transitory Commonwealth government, briefly abandoning the "Moro" term. With state-sponsored violence against the Muslims during the authoritarian regime under Ferdinand Marcos, "Moro" was revived, its meaning transformed from "unsubjugated" or "uncivilized" to a term of pride and unity among the Muslim peoples through the initiatives of Nur Misuari as well as the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and its newsletter, *Mahardika* (Buendia 2005).

The conceptualization and re-imaginations of minorities and IPs in the Philippines arguably affected legislations, with positive and negative impacts on

ethnolinguistic groups. In 1957, Republic Act no. 1888 was enacted, establishing the Commission on National Integration (CNI) with the purpose of promoting the advancement of the so-called "national minorities." Under the late President Marcos, the authority over national minorities was placed under the Office of the President through the appointment of the Presidential Assistant on National Minorities (PANAMIN) in 1968. PANAMIN was further strengthened through Presidential Decree (PD) no. 1414 in 1978 (Manapat 1991), which defined national minorities as "non-Muslim hill tribes" and stipulated that these so-called minorities should register themselves with the national government for the formal recognition of their status.

PANAMIN, headed by Manuel Elizalde, became notorious for exploiting minorities. Amnesty International (1982) and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) (Leary, Ellis, and Madlener 1984) reported on the role of the office in allowing the incursions to ancestral domains of logging companies, such as the Cellophil in Abra, which was owned by Herminio Disini, a Marcos crony. Hamleting of minorities was also conducted by paramilitary groups (e.g., Civilian Home Defense Forces or CHDF) in the guise of protecting them from military clashes with the communist insurgency while also acting as security of logging companies wishing to exploit ancestral domains (1984).

In 1997, The Indigenous People's Rights Act or the IPRA (RA no. 8371) was enacted. Under this law, the terms "indigenous peoples" and "indigenous cultural communities" were used instead of "minorities." The law also provided a definition of what is considered Indigenous. With a population that is clearly native to the Philippines, and no majority foreign migrant groups, such as those in Canada, Australia, and the United States, the IPRA draws on the historical experience of the country. Section 3h of the IPRA defines "indigenous peoples" and "indigenous cultural communities" as those whose cultures and traditions are relatively unaffected by colonization as well as those who can trace their ancestry to IP groups, especially in cases where they are displaced or resettled outside of their ancestral domains. Therefore, for an Indigenous group to be recognized as a genuine, elements of self and ascription of others are essential legal elements, with these ascriptions based on cultures, traditions, and ancestry that bear the quality of being indigenous. With the IPRA in place, the protection of ancestral domains was also legalized, making the recognition of IPs with territorial claims an important legal requirement for all IP groups in the country.

Thus, changes in ethnicity and identity politics in the Philippines comprise a complex process of integration towards a national identity and exclusion of those considered to be minorities and, later on, IPs. Intrinsic to this process are issues on how such groups are marginalized, the factors that lead to marginalization, the quality of life of the minorities, inter-ethnic relations, and points of contention, especially regarding balancing national interests while considering the rights of minorities and IPs. The IPRA brought a new legal basis not only for the assertion of

rights to ancestral domains and continuity of traditions, but also for the assertion of identities. It is therefore necessary to consider the development of ethnicity as well as identity politics in the transformation, negotiation, and acceptance of ethnic identities, such as those of the Igorot and the Moro.

Ethnogenesis

> Ethnogenesis is similar to creolization, hybridity, and transnationalism in drawing attention to the malleability and changeability of social identities, but provides a more precise term for those situations in which new ethnic identities are formed. (Voss 2008, 408)

In *Ethnogenesis: The case of the British Indians in the Carribean*, Ruben Gowricharn (2013) stated the importance of ethnogenesis as a conceptual tool that considers the origins and the transformation of ethnicity, which are traditionally treated as a given. The marginalization of this crucial process in ethnicity can be seen in early definitions of the term, such as Max Weber's (1978) definition of ethnicity as "human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration" (389) and Clifford Geertz's (1963) idea that the presence of ethnic groups is assumed as primordial givens based on kinship, religion, language, and common norms and belief systems.

Hu (2013) also enumerated several approaches to ethnogenesis that can be useful in other fields theorizing on the concept. Ethnogenesis may start from within a group, which becomes divided due to conflict on resources. The result of this division may either be the creation of social classes and inequalities or a geographical separation of the two groups (2013). Quoting Voss (2008), "[e] thnogenesis has become a powerful metaphor for the creativity of oppressed and marginalized peoples birthing a new cultural space for themselves amidst their desperate struggle to survive" (Hu 2013, 385). This was highlighted during colonial periods when colonizers created new categorizations that were more likely inappropriate and oppressive; thus, the group or groups re-categorized the use of ethnogenesis as a form of resistance (2013). This is also true in relation to state formation and state-sponsored perspectives and categorizations (Topic 1998).

It has also been noted that ethnogenesis can occur in "frontiers" where at least two different groups interact (Hu 2013). However, this perspective presumes that ethnogenesis occurs due to conflict between or within groups. In the words of Hill (1996, as cited by Weisman 2007, 199), ethnogenesis is a kind of "creative adaptation to violent change."

Combined with the above perspectives, the role of migration has also been highlighted in the creation of ethnogenesis due to the changing environment and ethnic identity boundaries (Mittleberg and Waters 1992). Migrants to a new society,

for example, are placed in the same category as other migrants with different cultures because the prevailing state perspective sees them as such. The existing identity of the migrants, the identities of the other groups within that category, and the identity imposed by the state mold and react to one another, either forcing the creation of new ethnic identities or promoting the gradual melding of groups into new ones (1992).

Based on the above literature, ethnogenesis then can occur when at least two different groups interact (Hu 2013). It can be between two ethnolinguistic groups or an ethnolinguistic minority and the state/colonial government (Topic 1998). This interaction can be caused by natural causes like disasters or relatively nearby geographical locations, coercive forces like invasion, and migration (Hu 2013; Weisman 2007). The state or colonial power imposes new identities and categorizations on these minority groups. The former can impose these identities and categories over the latter through violent measures or non-violent means, such as social benefits for those who adhere to the categories, and the latter can use ethnogenesis to adapt or resist to such influence (Hu 2013; Mittleberg and Waters 1992; Voss 2008).

Minority groups have the option to reject this new category, fully adopt it because it suits the existing identity of the community, or reinvent their traditions to co-exist and enjoy the benefits of the new social relationship or set-up. The same can be said about the IP-to-IP interaction as they try to co-exist with one another. There might be no state to impose identities, but the interaction can create changes like power imbalances of leadership and traditions within each community.

From these approaches, we use Gowricharn's (2013) two distinct types of ethnogenesis, based on the source of stimuli that triggers the process. The first type is internal wherein the claims to ethnicity and indigeneity come from the group itself, while the second one is external wherein the source for ethnogenesis is driven by factors outside of the group, such as government policy, colonization, and changes in the global political economy. While Gowricharn's (2013) study focused mostly on the external type of ethnogenesis in studying British-Indian migrant groups, the current study on the Bago-Igorot focuses on both types, since cases of ethnogenesis in the Philippines signify a close association between both internal and external factors, an external stimulus often triggering an internal change.

For example, Jim Warren's (1978) "Who were the Balangingi Samal? Slave raiding and ethnogenesis in nineteenth-century Sulu" traced the transformation of Samal societies to the Sulu Sultanates' involvement with international trade. The Samal's ties to the Sulu Sultanate and their dependence on sea products and piracy for slave raiding facilitated the development of the Balangingi Samal identity. Some slaves, most of whom came from Luzon and the Visayas, gradually adopted the Samal language and lifestyle and eventually integrated into this society. The population almost quadrupled by 1845 that it became an emergent slave-raiding population in the Sulu Sultanate.

In another study, "The 'Chinese' and the 'Mestizos' of the Philippines: Towards a new interpretation," Richard Chu (2002) emphasized how ethnic constructions were used by colonial and post-colonial governments and by other groups of people to "achieve a political or ideological goal" (329). On the one hand, Chu enumerated the different ways by which the Chinese in the Philippines were classified under the Americans and the Spaniards and how they reacted by recreating their identity without necessarily adhering to a homogenous community (as envisioned by previous scholars), given that some Chinese communities affiliated themselves as Catholics or even Spanish by lifestyle. Chu's study, on the other hand, highlighted the process of inventing traditions, defined by Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (1983) as a group's internal mechanism of construction and unification to create a commonality and shared sense of history.

Therefore, in studying the origins and the emergence of the Bago-Igorot identity, this research considers both external and internal stimuli, with the assumption that an external stimulus triggered an internal response within the communities of Igorot migrants who migrated to the lowlands in as early as the nineteenth century. We used the term "stimuli" to refer to the external factors that cause the process of ethnogenesis, because it is more neutral than "adversity," which is more popularly used by scholars in ethnogenesis, such as Jonathan Sarna (1978) and George Scott (1990).

In line with this, the study presents theories and narratives of the Bago-Igorot origins from Bago proponents of the Bago-Igorot identity as well as various historical and documentary sources from non-Bago scholars, particularly those found in primary and secondary sources. Primary sources considered in this study include the earliest known documents and first-hand studies about the Bago-Igorots or those that directly mention the terms "Bago" or "new Christians," such as the Ilocano-Igorot peace pact of 1820, Ferdinand Blumentritt's work on Philippine ethnography in 1882 (translated in 1980), Otto Scheerer's research on the Nabaloi dialect in 1905, and Charles Beurm's study on the Bago-Igorots of Lepanto in 1929. Secondary sources used are ethnographic and historiographical works on Ilocos, especially those published from the 1950's to 2009, with Carmen Vibar-Basco's work published in 1956 as the starting point since it is the next known study about the Bago after Beurm's work in 1929. Also referenced are studies presented by Bago scholars in the three Bago Tribal Congresses (BNCSPI 2003a; Buaquen 2003; Salibad 1997) as well as independent studies conducted by other Bago scholars from 2003 to 2014.

Debates in social media groups and current interviews with Bago-Igorot elders are also examined with an emphasis on social media conversations, as this has been considered an important space for identity reconstruction and imagination in the past few years. Liezel Longboan's (2011) study, "E-gorots: Exploring Indigenous identity in translocal spaces," for example, studies how Igorots in diaspora redefined and reconstructed their identity through BIBAKnet,[1] an electronic mailing group

wherein concepts of home and the *dap-ay,* the communal home of the Igorot, are being reconstructed. BIBAKnet has also become a place of discourse as the migrants try to make sense of their current experiences and incorporate them into the Indigenous identity or construct of home. Table 1 provides a list of the authors as well as a timeline of the primary and secondary sources used in this study.

Table 1. A timeline of primary and secondary sources on the Bago as well as current social media pages that cater to the continuous reconstruction of the Bago-Igorot identity.

Nineteenth-century sources (1820–1887)	American period studies (1905–1929)	Works on ethno and local history (1956–2009)	Bago Congresses and insiders' studies on the Bago Identity (1997–2014)	Current Research by the Authors (2010–present)
Ilocano-Igorot Peace Pact (1820)	Scheerer (1905)	Basco (1956)	First Bago Tribal Congress (1997)	Interview with elders
Blumentritt (published in 1882, translated in 1980)	Beurms (1929)	Keesing (1962)	Second Bago Tribal Congress (2000)	Discussions in Facebook groups of the Bago
Marche (published in 1887, translated in 1970)		Scott (1986)	Third Bago Tribal Congress (2003)	
		Hornedo (1990)	Buaquen (2003)	
		Meimban (1997)	Banato and Villamor (2007)	
		Pungayan (1999)	Vecaldo (2013)	
		De la Torre (2006)	Anno (2012, 2014)	
		Savellano (2009)		

In analyzing the theories presented by insiders regarding the origins of the Bago-Igorot group, Paul Thagard's (1978) criteria "for determining the best explanation" for any given circumstance was used (79). The criteria include the following: 1) consilience which serves as a measure of "how much a theory explains" (80); 2) simplicity, which essentially means that a theory is better if it needs less auxillary theories to support its explanations; and 3) analogicality, which emphasizes on how a theory's resemblance to other theories and explanations that are accepted to be near the truth adds credence to its validity (1978). Thagard's criteria provide a simple but comprehensive tool in evaluating and analyzing theories and hypotheses wherein the results can 1) serve as a strong proof for one theory, 2) provide a new theory of origins, and/or 3) debunk the theories about the origins of the Bago-Igorot altogether.

The current study argues for the importance of utilizing oral narratives and historical documents as well as an overview of how we can use social media in studies regarding ethnicity. Furthermore, it proposes the necessity of placing narratives and ethnic identities in a larger socio-cultural and political context to provide a better lens of analysis, such as the various angles of the relationship between the Ilocanos and the IPs from the Cordillera. The presentation of data is divided into four parts based on the time of publication of the source, the occurrence of certain events like the debate with the NCIP, and data gathering with the community. The sections are also based on the general theme of the sources.

The Bago in primary sources and ethno/local historiographies

The Ilocano-Igorot peace pact of 1820 is, perhaps, the oldest document providing a glimpse of the use of the word "Bago." As reviewed by John Flameygh and William Henry Scott in 1978, this is an eight-page document dated 1820 and discovered by Henri Geeroms in 1960 at the back of the *Libro de casamientos de este Convento de Tagudin, año de 1738* of the St. Augustine Church. The peace pact was made among the Ilocanos from Bangar and Tagudin as well as the Igorots from "Bacong, Kayan, and Cagubatan areas" (Flameygh and Scott 1978, 285).

Reading the report in its original orthography, we deduce two usages of the term "Bago" in the paper as well as the historical context of the peace pact. First, the word pertains to a place named Bago and not to a distinct ethnolinguistic or cultural group. The phrase goes: "…Agsipud iti ysasaclang ti tribunal iti Yli a taguding, ni D. Agustin Decdec, Panglacayen quet agturay cadaguiti Ygorot a sacopna iti lugar amanagan, Cay-ang, Cagubatan, Bago, quen dadomapay a Rancheros…"[2] (Flameygh and Scott 1978, 289). The text would later state the case as the death of an Igorot named Lambino, who came from Bago, "…amaipuon nagtuqueng ti panaga allatio, agapo iti ipapatay ti maisa a Ygorot a Ibago, ni Lambino…"[3]

In a translation to a more modern Ilocano orthography, Flameygh and Scott used Ibago to describe Lambino. The usage of "I" (or "y" in older orthographies) meant "from," that is, "from Bago." This is seen in the way they referred to people from Tagudin, Ilocos Sur in the text as "Itagudin" as well as "Ibangar" for those coming from Bangar, La Union. Furthermore, the Igorots who entered this peace pact were probably New Christians and/or Ilocanized as they were described to have been paying the "recognition fees" to the government and the church (Flameygh and Scott 1978, 285). This was also attended by two *gobernadorcillos*, namely Don Agustin de Valencia and Don Simon de los Reyes. This is strengthened in the phrase "…dakami a Itagudin ken Ibangar, Igorot a Ibakong ken dadduma pay a rancherias dagiti Igorot ken bago a Christianos"[4] (Flameygh and Scott 1978, 290). They correctly translated the last part of the sentence as "… and several other settlements of Igorots and new Christians" (1978, 291).

Again, we have only two usages of the term "bago" in this article that make sense in its context: 1) Bago, with a capital "B," referring to a place, and 2) bago, with a small "b," referring to new Christians. All the Cordillerans are generally referred to as "Igorots" in the text.

In formal academic studies, the Bago identity and culture can be traced to the American period, during which the term "Bago" was first recorded in Otto Scheerer's *The Nabaloi dialect* published in 1905. Similar to what was mentioned in the 1820 document, Scheerer referred to the group as the "newly arrived persons" and "newly converted Christians" from the Ibaloi group who were occupying the Rancherias of La Union and Pangasinan. From Scheerer's descriptions of the Bagos, two processes are highlighted: migration and conversion.

Conversion to Christianity can be considered the main cause of the loss of identity and culture of groups in colonized areas. Ferdinand Blumentritt's work originally published in 1882, *An attempt at writing a Philippine ethnography,* identified this phenomenon in almost all colonized countries in Southeast Asia. He singled out the Tingguians who were living in the territory—ranging from the upland boundary of Cagayan and Ilocos Norte to Namacpacan—as an example of groups who were subjected to this change in faith, which started in 1624.

Felix Keesing (1962) in *The ethno-history of Northern Luzon,* widely considered one of the first extensive studies of the history of ethnic groups in the region, did not use the term "Bago," but frequently mentioned a group described as "New Christians" or *Nuevo Cristianos*. This term was used mostly by the colonial government pertaining to the Igorots who converted to Christianity (1962). There were also *ranchерias* that were occupied by these "new Christians," such as in Osboy, Bantay, and Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur (1962). Visitacion De La Torre's (2006, 137) book, *The Ilocos heritage*, also mentioned the newly Christianized Igorots with conversions in La Union starting in 1586 in the "ministry of Purao" (now the municipality of Balaoan), which was located and "organized with several rancherias of 'new Christians' and catechumens." The changes of space and conversion to Christianity greatly affected inter-ethnic relations in Ilocos and divided the Tingguians, with some fleeing further hinterland and others migrating and settling with the Ilocanos (De La Torre 2006). Keesing (1962) would describe these new Christians in La Union as "Ilocanized," tracing their ancestry to the Tingguians in Abra.

The importance of the Ilocano language as a core factor in this process of Ilocanization was highlighted by Carmen Vibar-Basco (1956), who looked at the Bago as the group that resulted from the migration and inter-marriage of Igorot groups, including but not limited to the Ifugaos and Bontoks, among Ilocano settlements in La Union. The Ilocano language was then adapted by these Igorot groups as the means to understand and coexist with one another. This process of Ilocanization was also stressed by Scheerer in 1905.

Meimban's (1997) history of La Union is considered a pioneering work about the local history of La Union and narrates the province's history from 1850 to the American period. Here, he also referred to the Bagos as *Vagos,* who are the products of the process of integration and the "socio-cultural intercourse between the lowlanders and the mountaineers" (83). He stressed that the term came from *Nuevo Christianos*, the term used by the colonizers, specifically the Spaniards, to refer to the converted Igorots who eventually resettled to the lowlands and were integrated to Pangasinense and Ilocano communities. However, he also emphasized the fact that these groups still insisted on preserving parts of their Cordilleran traditions such as the *Begnas* and the *Abung* (1997).[5]

Meimban's claim is bolstered by Father Charles Beurm's study of the Bago-Igorots in 1929. He successfully recorded the Bago traditions of the Lepanto area such as the *Begnas,* the rites before planting rice or going into and returning

from journeys or the *mangmang* and mourning ceremonies or *caniao,* which can be grouped into three, namely, *nanagdegan, gaoa,* and *namanponan.*[6] He also recorded the importance of *Bago* political institutions such as the *abung.* Although he failed to establish the origins and the history of the group, based on the prayer that he was able to record, the Bago-Igorots from the Lepanto area were using the Kankanaey language.

Stressing the Kankanaey element in Bago culture alone was raised as an issue by Pungayan (1999), who included a broader set of groups that may be considered as interrelated with the Bago. Among these groups would be the Tingguians/ Itnegs, as presented earlier, along with the Ilocanos and the Ibalois, which were also mentioned in Scheerer's study in 1905. The presence of the Ibaloi influence in Bago culture was also recorded by Hornedo (1990) in his research regarding the oral tradition in the Bakun-Amburayan area in La Union. From Hornedo's study, especially in the "Allusan" and "Indayuan" micro-epics, two groups are portrayed to have continuous contacts with the Bagos, namely, the Ilocanos and the Ibaloi or the Nabaloi; the Nabaloi is sometimes presented as the antagonist forcing the Bago to return home to the uplands.

The relationship of these new converts and settlers with the Ilocanos was largely described as amicable, although there were still conflicts due to the changes in the political administration of the provinces with the further division of Ilocos, La Union, and Cordillera during the American period (Meimban 1997).

Scott (1986), in his book titled *Ilocano responses to American aggression, 1900–1901*, mentioned that the Ilocanos, Apayaos, Tingguians, and Itnegs or Igorots were in good terms, and the Americans observed this in Vigan. The Bago are said to be like the Itnegs coming from the upland of the Cordilleras but who adopted the Ilocano language and converted to Christianity (1986). They were also integrated and accepted in the Ilocano community, although they were still seen as Igorots and, at times, they went to the mountains to bring back products from the forest or gold (1986). Scott emphasized that the conversion to Christianity had a huge impact in creating the Bago-Igorot community. Aside from conversion, the case of the Ilocanized Igorots could be contextualized under already existing political and economic relations between Igorots and Ilocanos (Keesing 1962; Marche [1887] 1970).

Former Ilocos Sur Governor Deogracias Victor "DV" Savellano's *Ilocos Sur: An illustrated history* (2009) mostly generalized all Indigenous groups from the Cordilleras as Igorots. However, he did single out the Tingguians as the indigenous group pacified by the Americans through education (2009). He then described the Bago as the IPs who were occupying most parts of Ilocos Sur, including Nagbukel, Burgos, Banayoyo, Lidlidda, San Emilio, Salcedo, Galimuyod, Quirino, Gregorio Del Pilar, Cervantes, Sigay, Suyo, Sugpon, and Alilem (2009). However, Savellano was not able to determine the origins of the group or their relationship with the Tingguians, Kankanaeys, and Ilocanos aside from providing exotic fruits like the lanzones (2009).

The common themes about the origins of the Bago-Igorot in primary sources as in various local historiographies include themes on migration and the process of conversion to Christianity of upland groups. These movements are further augmented by the process of Ilocanization, which began with migrant groups' adoption of the Ilocano language to better communicate with other migrant groups and the Ilocano majority. Adopting the language, however, does not guarantee cultural change.

With the origins of the group tied to the movement of various upland groups, such as the Ibaloi, Itneg, and the Kankanaey, the challenge for the proponents of a separate Bago- Identity would then be to provide a more defined origin story that would hopefully be less intertwined with other upland groups. Along with the objective of establishing a community would be defining traditions that are uniquely Bago, or at least traditions that have been modified enough to be considered an integral part of the Bago culture.

IPRA, first Bago congress, and disagreement with the NCIP

Even if it was only in 2003 that the Bago-Igorots were officially recognized by the NCIP as an indigenous group, the campaign for its recognition was said to have started as early as 1997. Elders described the enactment of Republic Act no. 8371 or The Indigenous People's Rights Act of 1997 as a significant event that paved the way for the recognition of the Bago-Igorots.

Here, IPs or Indigenous cultural communities were defined as:

> [G]roups of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription or ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory…sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions…or who have, through resistance to… colonization, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. (Chapter II, Section 3, letter h)

The IPRA provided a legal basis on the importance of IPs, the preservation and continuation of culture, as well as the identification and protection of ancestral property and domain.

On 28–30 January 1997, around nine months prior to the establishment of the IPRA, the First Bago Tribal Congress and Cultural Festival was held at Balaoan, La Union through the initiative of Bago-Igorot proponents and the Bago Cultural Society, Inc., now known as BNCSPI or the Bago National Cultural Society of the Philippines, Inc. This festival was attended by Bago representatives from various areas in Region 1, Cordillera, and even from Mindanao. Notably, this event was proposed by the Tribal and Cultural Affairs Division of Region 1 and the Office of Northern Cultural Communities in coordination with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) to discuss the concerns of "self-ascribed Bago tribesmen" who "are not adequately articulate in explaining their ethnic identity"

because of "years of ambiguity" of the Bago culture (Salibad 1997, 1). It was during this congress that the Bago proponents discussed and presented the cultural practices of the Bago, based on the oral accounts provided by elders who were able to attend the said congress, as well as the three theories of its origin as proposed by Bago-Igorots scholars present in the event: the "New Christians" (Bagong Kristiyano) theory, the "New settlers" (Bagong tribu) theory, and the "Neo-tribe" theory (Salibad 1997, 4). It must be noted that the use of the term "tribe" from henceforth is due to the self-ascription of the proponents and those who adhere to the Bago-Igorot identity. While this is no longer utilized in modern anthropological studies and this paper will avoid using the concept as much as possible, this must still be noted here as the "emic" or insider's perspective on how these proponents, Bago researchers, and adherents see or call themselves. Furthermore, "tribe" was used in the commemorative publication of the first Bago Tribal Congress.

As the name implies, the first theory states that those originally called Bagos consisted of IPs converted to Christianity by the Spanish missionaries. The second one had two versions, one stating that a group called "Bagong Tribu" migrated to the Philippines as part of the latest wave of migration to the archipelago, and the other stating that many converts were led by the Spanish missionaries from the mountain of Cordillera to the lowlands of Ilocos, thus the idea of new settlers. The last theory is also about migration but is focused on the migration of IPs from the Mountain Province to the uplands of Ilocos Sur and La Union (Salibad 1997).

This first Bago congress adhered to the second theory, which they loosely based on the Wave of Migration theory popularized by Henry Otley Beyer and Jaime C. De Veyra in 1947 through their work "Philippine saga: A pictorial history of the archipelago since time began." This was in line with the BNCSPI's objective of proving that the Bago identity is distinct and unique from other Igorot groups in the Cordillera (Buaquen 2003). According to this theory, the Bagos were descendants of a certain group of Malayan origins who traveled from the Malayan Peninsula and discovered the Amburayan River and Abra River. These groups then settled in areas along the river and further inland to the areas of the Mountain Province and Abra. They also proposed that these migrants were eventually influenced by their neighbors through time (Salibad 1997).

There was no update regarding these theories in the second Bago Tribal Congress in 2000, but the theories were replaced by a new one from Vic Buaquen during the Third Bago Tribal Congress in 2003, partly because of Memorandum no. 83, series of 2002 from the NCIP Region 1, which threatened the recognition of the Bago as IPs.

Preliminary research done by Jesus Peralta on the Bago-Igorots in 1996 became one of the bases of this memorandum. With key informants from Pangasinan, La Union, and Ilocos Sur, Peralta's study concluded that the word "Bago" came from the Ilocanos to describe the Indigenous migrants in general, though most would come from the Tingguians and the Kankanaeys. The term would also be

synonymous to Tingguians in other cases, although it has been emphasized that the Ilocanos use this to refer to people of other cultures. Most of these migrants would intermarry with other Indigenous groups or Ilocanos and some of them would adopt the Ilocano language with variation from their parentage. Peralta added that the Bago cannot be considered a genuine ethnic group, as it has no clear cultural boundaries.

Narciso A. Somyden, Attorney IV of the NCIP Region 1, also submitted a similar report with a conclusion that the word "Bago" is just a generic term from the Ilocanos to describe the people from the Cordilleras who converted to Christianity, migrated to the lowlands, or intermarried with other groups in the lowlands (2000). Therefore, the word and similar terms or iterations, such as "Bag-o," "Bag-bag-o," and "Il-iluko," do not refer to any specific ethnic group but are general umbrella terms like how the word "Igorot" is utilized.

Somyden's report also identified key problems: 1) many Christian converts have forgotten their original customs and adopted the Ilocano culture; 2) the descendants of the Tingguians maintained their identity as Tingguians, so it is incorrect to refer to them as Bag-bag-o or Bago as the Bago-Igorot proponents and the BNCSPI suggested; and 3) at least during the early 2000s, the NCIP had not yet fully identified the Indigenous groups in Ilocos Sur and La Union and, therefore, was not aware of their differences (Somyden 2000). By 2007, a map of the distribution of IP groups in Ilocos Sur produced by NCIP Region 1 (Figure 1) as a result of an extensive survey conducted in the province signified that migration did not necessarily influence change in ethnicity of IPs.

With an understandable outrage, the BNCSPI submitted a position paper in 2003 to NCIP, citing the definition of IP in the IPRA and focusing on the phrase "identity by self-ascription" and on the provision in Section 2, Chapter V regarding the right of IPs to assert their character and identity. However, they did not provide any proof to counter the NCIP study (Peralta 1996, Somyden 2000) and assert the legitimacy of the Bago as a tribe. The position paper also contained a kind of *ad hominem* argument and even blackmail as the BNCSPI elders who signed the document threatened the officials of the NCIP Region 1, eventually gaining their recognition as IPs back. The research for more proof of origins would, therefore, continue with the use of scholarly methods.

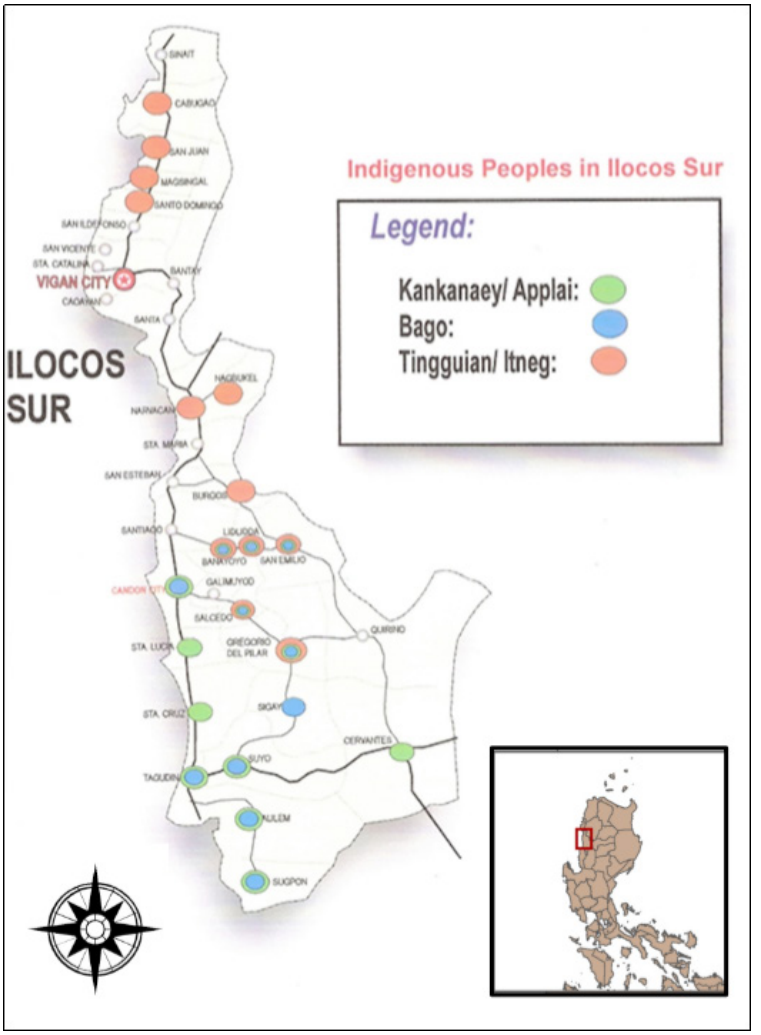

Figure 1. A map produced by the NCIP Region 1 in 2007 showing the distribution of IPs in Ilocos Sur. This supports the claim of Atty. Somyden that Igorot groups who migrated to Ilocos did not necessarily change their ethnicity to Bago as claimed by Bago proponents. Most of these groups, such as the Tingguian, maintained their ethnic affiliations. (Map courtesy of NCIP Candon Service Center)

Origins from the Bago-Igorot proponents

The situation with the NCIP had a great effect on the Bago community, causing the proponents to turn to research to solidify their claims of indigeneity. Their methods characterized wariness of outside sources, such that they focused more on oral traditions, almost limiting the sources to the proponents themselves. Although there were attempts to vary the methods, most would fall back to oral accounts and interviews.

One such attempt is published in the souvenir book of the Third Bago Tribal Congress sponsored by the BNCSPI in 2003, which enumerated several towns allegedly occupied by Bago-Igorots. There was, however, no clear and specific elaboration of when the Bago-Igorots really occupied these territories. Here is the list as presented during the Third Bago Tribal Congress (we have also determined which places mentioned "Bago-Igorots"):

1. Alilem, Ilocos Sur (no mention of Bago/Igorots)
2. Candon, Ilocos Sur (no mention of Bago/Igorots)
3. Cervantes, Ilocos Sur (mentioned as a small Igorot village along the route of Igorot and Chinese traders and then later transferred from the Mountain Province to Ilocos Sur)
4. Galimuyod, Ilocos Sur (no mention of Bago/Igorots)
5. Lidlidda, Ilocos Sur ("Agsalog" natives from Mountain Province who converted to Christianity)
6. Nagbukel, Ilocos Sur (no mention of Bago/Igorots)
7. Narvacan, Ilocos Sur (no mention of Bago/Igorots)
8. Pugo, La Union (immigrants from eastern Ilocos Sur and was originally part of Benguet, Mountain Province)
9. Salcedo, Ilocos Sur (no mention of Igorots)
10. San Emilio, Ilocos Sur (formerly part of Mountain Province)
11. San Gabriel, La Union (part of Amburayan, Mountain Province occupied by many Christianized and pagan Filipinos)
12. Santa Cruz, Ilocos Sur (it was a place for the constant battle between Igorots and Ilocanos but Spaniards later Christianized the natives)
13. Sta. Lucia, Ilocos Sur (Ilocanos and pagan Igorots worked together with Christian missions in the hinterlands)
14. Santol, La Union (once part of Amburayan, Mountain Province)
15. Sigay, Ilocos Sur (original settlers were Igorots who intermarried with Ilocanos; their descendants were later called "Bagos")
16. Sison, Pangasinan (populated by different migrating tribes)
17. Sudipen, La Union (originally part of the Lepanto-Amburayan sub-province with Kankanaey population from Mountain Province; they later intermarried, and their offspring were called "Bagos")
18. Sugpon, Ilocos Sur (also of Kankanaey ancestry and part of Mountain Province before the town was transferred to Ilocos Sur)
19. Suyo, Ilocos Sur (described as populated by Bagos)
20. Tabuk, Kalinga (the Bago population there were Bago migrants from Cervantes and other areas of Ilocos Sur)
21. Tagudin, Ilocos Sur (part of the Amburayan sub-province of Mountain Province then transferred to Ilocos Sur)

In the speech delivered by Vic Buaquen during the Third Bago Congress, he noted that the controversial withdrawal of the recognition of the Bago-Igorots "resulted…

in the termination of all Bago scholarship in Region 1 to the disgust and anger of many Bago scholars and their families" (2003, 25). He criticized the research of Peralta as incomplete, having only four days of surveys conducted in six identified Bago communities with 46 respondents, citing that proper research should take several months or years with "voluminous documentation" (265).

With this, he introduced an origins narrative that would later become the widely accepted story and definition of a Bago-Igorot. His father was his sole oral source, whom he claimed to be a Bago originating from Agawa in the vicinity of Besao, Mountain Province—someone who traded in the lowlands, married a lowlander, and settled in Sigay, Ilocos Sur (2003). From this story, he would conclude that the "Bago is a product of trade and the offspring of intermarriages between the Cordillera mountain tribes and the lowland Ilocano. They dwelt in the border regions of the lowland Ilocos and the Cordillera mountains" (2003, 26). In line with this idea, he also noted that these offspring developed their own culture, including a new language combining the Ilocano and Cordilleran languages, although there was no further elaboration on this idea and there are no current updates on any study regarding a Bago-Igorot language.

To bolster his conclusion, Buaquen mentioned the works of Carmen Vibar-Basco entitled *Two Bago villages* (1956); H. Otley Beyer's article on non-Christian peoples (1921), although there was no mention of Bago; Charles Beurms on "Bago-Igorot sacrifices" (1929); and E.L. Morr Tadeo Pungayan's (1999) article, "The Bago struggle for distinct recognition" (Buaquen 2003, 26). Beurms's (1929) study of the "Bago-Igorots" in the Lepanto areas near Ilocos Sur highlighted the Igorot aspect of the Bagos. Scott, in the aforementioned paper, stated that the Bago was a branch of Kankanaey but Pungayan (1999) argued for a greater set of groups related to the Bagos. Included in this set are the Tingguians and the Ibalois or Nabalois, as Hornedo (1990) emphasized in his study of the "Allusan" and "Indayuan" micro-epics.

According to Buaquen, the Provincial Planning Officer of Abra, Felipe Tinggonong affirmed his theory of trade being a primary catalyst that encouraged Igorots to migrate, settle, and intermarry with Ilocanos in the lowlands. Buaquen (2003) also mentioned that the NCIP of Ilocos Norte allegedly also confirmed that the Bagos in Ilocos Norte might be a mixture of Tingguian-Ilocano or Apayao-Ilocano marriage. As for the Bagos in Ilocos and Pangasinan, Buaquen said they originated from Bontok and Lepanto and tried to evade the forced labor of the Spaniards.

While most studies, arguments, news articles, and descriptions of the Bago-Igorots would use Buaquen's definition or a similar one on the theme of intermarriage, other ideas continue to thrive. For example, the study of Banatao and Villamor (2007) on the Bakun Indigenous Tribe Organization of the Bago-Kankanaey tribe in Bakun, Benguet described the Bago-Kankanaeys as residents of that area since time immemorial.

Well-known among Bago-Igorot proponents is Ferdinand Anno (2014) and his works "Of sintatako, tongtongan, begnas, and papatayan toward an indigenous spirituality for the struggle: A Bago perspective" (2012) and *Bago origins: The tale of two Sapo*. He utilized what he called the "siguey," a traditional "sapo" or prayer relayed by Manuel Waley, which also allegedly tells the history of the Bago people (2012). He described his theory as the formation of a Bago Nation.

Accordingly, the "Aplae" people migrated from the Mountain Province to Anggaqui or Quirino, Ilocos Sur, which was already occupied by the Ma-eng Tribe of the Tingguians of Abra (2012). There was an intermarriage and then because of land issues, a "tongtongan" (meeting/dialogue) followed by a "gabbo" or wrestling match to settle their problems. As there was no winner, some of the members migrated to Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, La Union, and Pangasinan (2012). According to Anno, the site of the wrestling match is what is now known as Nagtablaan, Sta. Cruz, Ilocos Sur.

From this story, Anno proposed a five-phase development of his Bago Nation idea. First, there was nation-building that began in Anggaqui with the Anggaqui Bagos. Then, the Anggaqui Bagos descended into the lowlands to Nagtablaan, Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur, and Anno called them the Nagtablaan Bagos. Third, the separation of the group into northward and southward movements occurred, resulting in what he described as the Settlement Bago. Fourth, these migrants were converted to Christianized Bagos. Finally, Anno called the migration of Bagos abroad as the "Bago diaspora" (2012). As an attempt to trace the history and development of the Bago-Igorots, the analysis and conclusions of Anno in this article lacked specific time frames regarding when each of the phases happened. He also failed to provide further proof from sources other than his interpretation.

Anno's second essay used the "Legend of Biag" of the Sagada, Mountain Province, which is basically a story of three members of the Biag family from Abra who migrated to Candon, Ilocos Sur before further migrating to other places in the hinterlands because of issues with Christianization (2014). The three siblings, Doday, Dina-ongan, and Biag, moved to Angaki (Quirino) before parting ways: Doday went "downstream and southward," Dina-ongan returned to the Ma-eng tribe of Abra, and Biag went on to establish Sagada (2014).

While there was no mention of Bagos in both oral traditions, Anno insisted that the "siguey" and "Legend of Biag" prove the existence of Bagos, with their roots traced to the Kankanaey even if the "Legend of Biag" indicated that the siblings came from Abra. He also admitted that there were no other traditions that supported the connection between the two, and that the leaders and elders from Sagada also have not given any thought on the relationship of the said oral traditions (2014).

Finally, we include the research of Vecaldo on the "Urok" practice of the Bagos in Kalinga in which he stated that the Bagos of Casigayan, Tabuk, Kalinga are migrants from the upland Ilocos Region, specifically from Sigay, Ilocos Sur (2013).

He further traced that ancestry by stating that these migrants originated from the Mountain Province, citing the works of Anno and of Banatao and Villamor (2013, 38). As mentioned earlier, the focus on insiders' oral tradition meant that the narratives lacked documentary proof and needed confirmation, necessitating the use of Ilocano historiographies.

Representation in social media and current interviews

For the Bago-Igorot community, there were two main active Facebook groups in the early to mid–2010s: the "Bago Tribe FB group" and the "Bago Tribe (Igorot Diaspora)/Bago Tribe Igorot Diaspora." Permission to cite posts and discussions from these groups was acquired in 2016 for R.A. Pawilen's Master's thesis.[7] However, with some of the members being inactive and one of the groups now non-existent or inaccessible, we decided to summarize some of the important points and discussions. We have also decided to exclude the Facebook account names to protect their privacy and identity. By reading the contents, we can surmise how the narratives of external and internal factors intersect in the personal experiences of the members. One can also see the dynamics of ethnic identity development, as the individuals themselves seek to clarify their origins in the virtual world, beyond the confines of the politics of the Bago-Igorot proponents and the state.

Posts from the Bago Tribe FB Group from 2014 for example, showed that several members learned through these online discussions that other groups in the Cordilleras did not consider the Bagos as Igorots or as a distinct IP group. Some groups, like the Ibalois and the Kankanaey, were surprised about the organization of the Bago Cultural Society in Baguio. Furthermore, a few members noted that there was no Bago Tribe organization in their college days (perhaps the 1990s to early 2000s based on their Facebook profiles), so they usually joined the Tingguian Tribe.

A member of the group shared that although she considers herself a Bag-bag-o, Tingguian is still her "tribe". Another explained that the Bagos came from intermarriages, but the former noted that this is a contentious idea, because all offspring of intermarriages would automatically become a Bago.

An official of a certain government agency (name of agency withheld) shared information that the Bago was listed 6th out of the 133 IPs in the Philippines but was unable to provide the list. Ethnographic maps, definitions of IPs from the IPRA, and inclusion or exclusion of the Bago in IP lists such as that of katutubo.lorenlegarda.com.ph were also subjects of the discourses.

In the Facebook group, Bago Tribe (Igorot Diaspora)/Bago Tribe Igorot Diaspora, an entry was posted on 12 June 2012 proposing new characteristics and definitions. For example, instead of saying that the Bago created their own language, it said that the Bago spoke a "dialect" (the proper term is "language") similar to the Kankanaey, Tingguians, and Ibalois, although most would be using Ilocano but with distinct intonation. The Bago culture also persisted to this day

despite modernization and influence of outsiders although this culture is, again, very similar to those of the Kankanaeys, Tingguians, and Ibalois. However, the same post also stated that intermarriages and integration with the Ilocanos and other lowlanders led to the loss of the Bago identity. In fact, this was identified as the main reason why we cannot trace the Bago culture in history.

This post was questioned by few members asking for proof of the claims but the response reflected how the claims were more of opinions formed from interpretations of oral traditions.

Another post in 1 February 2014 presented three possible origins of the Bago: 1) that there was already a Bago community residing between Ilocos and the Cordillera before the Spaniards came to the archipelago, 2) that the Bago came from a community from the Cordilleras who migrated to the lowlands, and 3) that there was already a Bago community in the old Montanosa (Cordillera), but it was separated due to geopolitical changes imposed by the Spaniards. The third theory stated that migrants intermarried with the residents of upland Ilocos Sur and La Union, which eventually resulted in the Bago-Igorots.

A post made on 26 January 2014 enumerated the municipalities where the Bago-Igorots resided and mentioned that the people in these areas came from the tribes of Tingguian, Kankanaey, Aplay, Bontoc, Ifugao, Kalinga, Ibaloy, and others.. Other ideas raised from the posts include the effects of the changing political demarcations of Ilocos Sur and Montanosa, the use of "Bag-bag-o" as a derogatory term by the Ilocanos to call the baptized or migrant Igorots, and the possibility of having different types of Bago-Igorots based on their geographical origins.

As mentioned earlier, these Facebook groups provided venues for presenting and debating on narratives about the origins of the Bago-Igorot identity. Christianization through colonization is the main external stimuli emphasized by members, although there are attempts by some to completely remove its role by linking the Bago-Igorot identity to pre-colonial Malay migrations. As such, the processes of migration and intermarriage remain to be the internal stimuli/responses that are generally believed to be the basis of the Bago-Igorot identity. Intermarriages resulted in a distinct culture, which also slowly diminished due to increased contact and relations with other groups, especially with the Ilocanos.

However, personal experiences and viewpoints discussed in various social media platforms add another perspective, which shows that the proposed Bago-Igorot origins caused by the interplay of external and internal stimuli/responses continues to be scrutinized by members of the community themselves. The diversity of the ethnic parentage and geographical contexts of those who are called Bago has also consistently cast doubt on the idea of a new and distinct ethnicity and history. If anything, the FB Groups prove that the ethnogenesis of the Bago is an ongoing process, and as the comments of some members suggested, proof is still needed to substantiate the claims of the proponents. Hence, interviews with the elders to provide essential insights and clarifications are a substantial aspect of this study.

The interviews conducted in 2016 were part of a study on the customary laws of the Bago-Igorots and the Bodong Indigenous Allied Group (BIAG) in Ilocos Sur, a group created to help and protect the indigenous people in Ilocos Sur from injustice and discrimination (R.A. Pawilen 2016). As such, several questions inquired about the respondents' knowledge or perspective of the history and identity of the Bago-Igorots. The participants were chosen mainly by being the recognized elders of the community and the elected or former officials of the BIAG. It was a purposive as well as snowball sampling as the BIAG members also referred other possible respondents. Many expressed interests in sharing their ideas but due to limitations brought by transportation logistics, typhoons during the research, budget, and schedule of both researcher and respondents as all had full-time jobs, the respondents were limited to five.

As a result of the snowball sampling, the five respondents were 50 years old and above, all male, and were part of the Indigenous community as well as the BIAG organization. While they all gave their verbal consent for their names to be cited in R.A Pawilen's (2016) thesis, they were made anonymous for security and ethical reasons during the preliminary drafts. The same concerns arose during the writing of this article but for transparency purposes, the description of each respondent will be shared (2016).

1. Mr. RC (interview conducted July 2016) – His father was a former president of the BIAG and the members recognize him as an "expert" on Bago and Bodong matters. Researchers from other schools and the NCIP were said to consult with him.
2. Mr. GD (interview conducted July 2016) – President of the BIAG organization.
3. Mr. CD (interview conducted August 2016) – One of the founders of the BIAG and a migrant from Abra.
4. Mr. PL (interview conducted July 2016) – President of the Burgos, Ilocos Sur Chapter of the BIAG organization.
5. Mr. CQ (interview conducted August 2016) – Indigenous People Mandatory Representative of Galimuyod, Ilocos Sur.

The interviews yielded the idea that the Bagos are the same with the Igorots or Itnegs who migrated from the "daya," an Ilocano word for "east" commonly used to refer to the mountainous region.

The word "Bago" or "Bag-o" then is not an Indigenous term but a word that the Ilocanos used to call these Cordilleran migrants, because they act or speak differently from the Ilocanos. They also stated that there are no pre-existing Bago communities from the Cordilleras who migrated to the upland portions of Ilocos Sur because the terms "Bago"/"Bag-o"/"Bag-bag-o" are general terms used by the Ilocanos to refer to the Igorot migrants in a derogatory way, i.e., "these people are not from here and they look and talk funny" (Mr. RC, personal communication).

Mr. RC said that the Bago history and culture are the same as the Itnegs', because most of what the Ilocanos call Bago came from the Maeng/Ma-eng Tribe of the Itnegs of Abra, even those who migrated to Kalinga and Mountain Province. Although there were also Kankanaeys, the Ilocanos just commonly called everyone Bagos.

The respondents shared that when NCIP Director Bistoyong agreed to call the IPs in Candon, San Emilio, Suyo, and Lidlidda as Bagos, not all elders agreed because they considered themselves to be Itnegs. The same happened during a Bago Conference in 1998 in Baguio City (either the second undocumented Bago Congress or the date was wrong and should be 1997 for the First Bago Congress) wherein the Bago proponents wanted to call the Itnegs and all IPs in Ilocos Sur "Bagos," but many elders allegedly objected, arguing that, "*Apay ngay paadaptar kayo idta sao nga Bago ket saan tay met nga Bago?*" ("Why would you adapt/accept to that term Bago if we are not Bago?").

They do not know where the Ilocanos acquired the word "Bag-bag-o," as the word for new in Ilocano is "baro." However, they remember from childhood experiences that this was used by the Ilocanos to taunt all the upland people or "taga-sursurong" when they went to the lowland towns. The Ilocanos would jeer at them, "*Adda man ditan dagita Bago!*" ("Here comes the Bago again!") In return, they would also insult the lowland Ilocanos when they go to the upland communities with the words "Il-Iluko" and "Kul-kulungaw." By our experience, this is not an apparent practice anymore.

As for the intermarriage origin, they do not adhere to it, because one's affiliation is still either Itneg or Ilocano, depending on cultural upbringing. One respondent said that identifying lineage with a tribe is by means of blood, and one cannot change that composition and call it something else. One of the respondents argued that such a marriage does not immediately create a new culture, language, or history in the offspring, as this logic defies the definition of IPs and their lineage. The claims for a Bago language were dismissed as a variation or dialect of Itneg or Kankanaey, as it was already mixed with Ilocano terms.

Mr. RC (personal communication), one of the elders and the most vocal in the group about the Bago origins and identity, believes that quest for a Bago-Igorot identity and legitimacy as an Indigenous people is best described as a political movement started or supported by mostly political personalities.

Sifting through the theories of origins

With all the aforementioned sources, we identified the following factors in the creation and development of the Bago or Bago ethnogenesis, as seen in Figure 2.

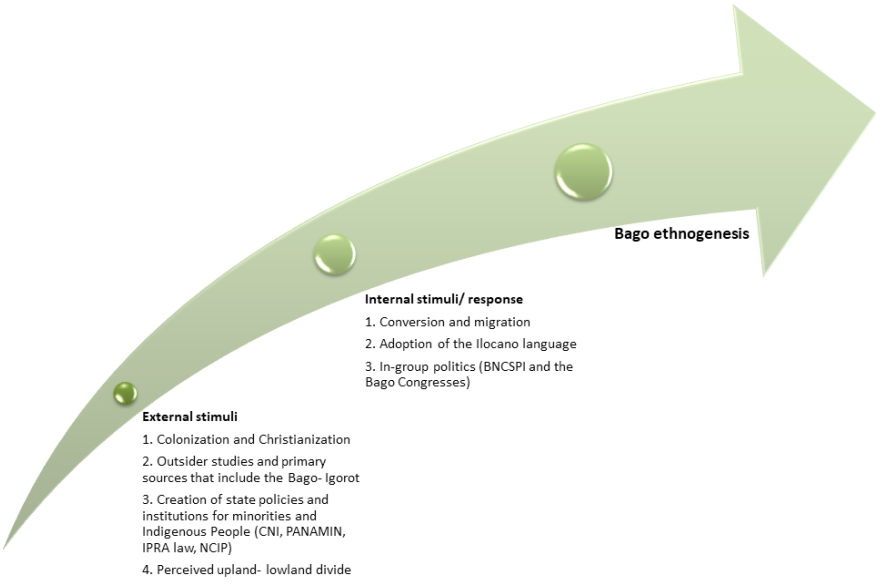

Figure 2. A conceptual map showing the external stimuli and the internal responses that eventually led to the Bago ethnogenesis.

Historical accounts generally presented a narrative of the interplay of external stimuli that eventually prompted an internal response. For example, the colonization and Christianization processes are the external stimuli, and the conversion and consequently the migration to the lowlands as well as the adoption of Ilocano language are the internal stimuli/response.

There are those who implied an existing separate Indigenous identity but did not elaborate on the matter. An NCIP study even debunked the existence of the group. Nonetheless, one can also glean from the historical accounts the prevalence of Cordilleran-Ilocano interaction and movement in Northern Luzon.

The Bago-Igorot proponent's narrative focused more on the internal stimuli and response with emphasis on migration and intermarriage, although there are those who say that the Bago-Igorots existed since time immemorial.

Interviews with several elder members of the community, however, provided a scenario of internal struggle or politics of identity, maintaining that the Bago must relate themselves to their true ancestry. Further, these elders saw the IPRA as an external factor that pushed proponents to gain recognition of the Bago-Igorot to gain the benefits provided by the law.

This internal politics can also be reflected in the personal identity questions of the members of the Bago community, as demonstrated in some Facebook groups where members debated the external and internal factors believed to be crucial in the formation of the Bago-Igorot identity. Narratives of intermarriage and

migration were widely propagated, while questions of historical proofs and the acknowledgment from the NCIP were constantly raised. Analyzing these groups provided a perspective that the Bago ethnogenesis is not only a communal or institutional issue, but also part of the personal realities and experiences of the members of such FB communities.

Considering the presentation of external stimuli and internal response gathered from all the above-mentioned sources, what follows is a list of all the possible theories of the origin of the Bago-Igorots:

1. The Bago came from the latest wave of migration in the Philippines, which settled near the Amburayan area.
2. The Bago is a result of the intermarriages between Ilocanos and the IPs from any group in the Cordillera, who migrated to the lowlands and created their own customs and language. However, these traditions later disappeared due to the Bago's enculturation/integration into the other groups, specifically the Ilocanos.
3. The Bago were Igorot migrants who were Christianized; thus, the term was adapted from *Nuevo Christianos* or *Vago,* as the Spaniards would call them, and which would also be used later by the Ilocanos.
4. There was already a Bago community before they migrated to the lowlands. In addition, this community developed further as a "nation" due to their contact with other groups.
5. The Bago is a branch or sub-group of the Kankanaey or other Cordilleran groups.
6. Finally, there is no Bago because the name itself came from the Ilocanos as a derogatory term to call all migrants and converted Igorots. Most of the Bagos in Ilocos Sur, even in Kalinga, would also trace their ancestry mostly to the Itnegs or Tingguians or Abra.

Recent historical and anthropological data and interpretation already debunked the Wave of Migration Theory popularized by Beyer.[8] Also, there are no historical records, oral history and mythology, or artifacts that support the migration of a distinct Bago group. Furthermore, the idea of the Bago-Igorots as part of a wave of migration into the Philippines has not been followed by recent Bago-Igorot proponents in recent narratives or theorizations of origins.

This leaves us with theories two to six. Looking at the logic of said theories, we could further combine their similarities. Theory number 2 or the intermarriage between Cordillerans and Ilocanos remains the same and is the one commonly used by the proponents. This we will refer to for now as the "Intermarriage Theory." Theories 4 and 5 state that there is already a community in the Cordilleras, probably as a sub-group to the Kankanaey or any IP group, whose members migrated and then enculturated in the lowlands. This we will refer to as the "Genuine Bago Theory."

Theories 3 and 6 can be combined as they both identify the word "Bago" as an exonym—a name given by an outsider to the group. Theories 3 and 6 state that the word "Bago" is a term utilized by the Spaniards to refer to converted Igorots regardless of their ethnic origin, or a word adopted by the Ilocanos as a derogatory label for all Igorots. Thus, there is no specific and separate Bago identity from other Igorot groups. This we will refer to as the "Bago-as-Exonym Theory."

So now we have the "Intermarriage Theory", the "Genuine Bago Theory, and the "Bago-as-Exonym Theory" examined using Thagard's (1978) criteria.

The "Intermarriage Theory" would be questionable according to Thagard's critera, especially in terms of consilience and simplicity. First, while Buaquen criticized Peralta's study for time given to the research as well as the sample size, his only highlighted source for his theory would be the story of his parents, which is way smaller and biased as a sample compared to Peralta's study. Second, the idea that an offspring of two people from different cultures, in this case a Cordilleran and an Ilocano, would produce a new culture and Indigenous group is problematic and vague by definitions of culture formation and Indigenous people alone. Third, while he argued that self-ascription should be enough as basis, the definition of IP in RA 8371 Chapter II, Section 3, letter h also includes the recognition by other (Indigenous) groups which, if we move forward to the experience of the members of the Bago FB groups, was not necessarily true. This is further challenged by the idea that some elders of the community allegedly even reject being called "Bago-Igorots."

A closer look at the theory and succeeding narratives following its premises also revealed the complicated effects of using only "self-ascription" as the basis of Indigenous identity. Some Bago-Igorot proponents utilized oral traditions which to support their study even though they admitted that their sources did not see any connection between the oral tradition and the Bago-Igorots, as in the case of the papers of Anno in 2012 and 2014. Reading through the works of Bago-Igorot proponents also revealed that they are unaware of, if not reluctant or disinclined to use, the triangulation method of research because of the idea that the Bago-Igorots must write their own history.

Triangulation would have been a challenge as, despite being described as the biggest and most organized Indigenous group in Region 1, the Bago-Igorots have limited historical documentary records from primary sources as well as in Ilocano historiographies compared to other migrant groups such as the Tingguians/Itnegs or Kankanaey. This was countered in some of the Bago-Igorot proponents' narratives with the explanation that the Bago culture disappeared because of acculturation to Ilocano culture. However, Indigenous groups like the Tingguians/Itnegs, Kankanaeys, and Indigenous groups from mountain provinces also have a recorded history of migration to lowland Ilocos Sur and prolonged contact with the Ilocanos, even conversion to Christianity, but have retained aspects of their culture or the sense that they are from one of the said groups. In fact, the interview with the elders showed that they still acknowledge their Tingguian/Itneg roots.

It must also be noted that with all the data and argument provided by the proponents on the origins, history, and development of a Bago-Igorot identity (even a nation in some claims), none presented timelines of these events or transformations. The use of the term "Bago" referring to "new" was also not examined; thus, the narratives failed to explain why the people would use this Tagalog/Filipino term instead of the Ilocano word "baro" or other Cordilleran equivalent.

While the "Intermarriage theory" is straightforward, its premises, explanations, and sources are vague, complicated, and contradictory, hence failing in terms of consilience. It also creates numerous auxiliary explanations, thus failing the criterion of simplicity. It attempts to clarify the variation of the culture but is unable to strengthen the argument that the Bago formed its own distinct language and culture because it cannot present verifiable and concrete evidence. While there were alleged attempts to create a Bago-Igorot language dictionary, nothing materialized and there are no updates on the said project. The "Intermarriage theory" also fails Thagard's criterion of analogicality as it cannot account for the Bago-Igorot narratives from documentary sources and experiences presented online as well as incorporate the initial studies on Bago villages and Bago-Kankanaey connection.

The "Genuine Bago Theory" argues that the Bago-Igorot is a not just a product of intermarriage and proposes that there is already an existing Bago-Igorot identity, presumably from a place called Bago in the Cordillera (hence the name), before they migrated and intermarried in the Ilocos regions. To further explain the Cordillera influence in Bago-Igorot tradition, this theory also promotes the notion that the Bago might have been a subgroup of more established Cordillera groups such as the Kankanaey, Ibaloi, or the Tingguian/Itneg. However, aside from the challenge of tracing and proving ancestry, this raises the debate that if the Bago then is a sub-group of the Indigenous people in the Cordilleras such as the Kankanaey, they should be convened under Kankanaey and not treated separately. Moreover, in terms of simplicity, there is still a need to search for the original location of the alleged Bago community and strengthen the claim of connection to or distinction from other Indigenous groups, which prompts the need for more studies and auxiliary theories regarding this aspect.

This theory is also not analogous to common notions about the Bago-Igorot presented in various primary and secondary sources, thus failing to provide explanations to the following points: 1) what IP group the Bago belong to since other elements of Cordilleran culture other than that of the Kankanaey can also be observed in various Bago-Igorot communities as shown in studies of Scheerer (1905) and Vibar-Basco (1956); 2) the impact of migration and Christianization and how the Bago-Igorots relate to the so called new Christians; and 3) the accounts from interviews of Itneg elders that outright deny the legitimacy of the group, stating that it is merely a derogatory term for migrant Igorot groups in the Ilocos region. The gaps in the "Genuine Bago Theory" leave much to be desired in terms of consilience and analogicality based on Thagard's criteria.

Finally, "Bago-as-exonym" theory offers the most controversial solution of the three: that there is no Bago ethnicity, only a "Bago" term used by the Spaniards and consequently by the Ilocanos to refer to all Igorot migrants and converts in general.

In terms of consilience, this theory provides satisfactory explanations to the varying narratives found in primary and secondary sources about the Bago-Igorot identity and helps clarify some of the issues surrounding the group. For one, using Bago as an exonym contextualizes the choice of the word "Bago" from "Nuevo" or "Vagong Christiano," used to refer to new converts of the Catholic Church, specifically along the fringes of the Cordilleras during the Spanish period (Blumentritt [1882] 1980; Keesing 1962). This term was later adopted by the Ilocanos to refer, sometimes derogatorily, to Igorot migrants, which explains why some IP elders in the area would rather use their original ethnic affiliations, as exemplified by the BIAG elders in Ilocos Sur who continue to associate themselves with the Tingguian/Itneg group.

Treating the Bago as an exonym rather than an ethnic identity also explains why communities that are considered Bago-Igorots have varying cultural influences from different Cordillera groups, as shown in the studies of Scheerer (1905) who identified Ibaloi influences in Bago communities in Benguet; Beurms (1929), who identified Kankanaey elements in Bago-Igorot traditions in the Lepanto-Amburayan area; and Vibar-Basco (1956), who identied Kankanaey, Ibaloi, and Itneg influences in her study area in Pangasinan. This further reconciles the vague notion forwarded in the "Intermarriage theory" that Igorot-Ilocano marriages produce Bago offsprings since individuals born out of these intermarriages would either continue the cultural practices and ethnic affiliations of their parents or adopt the majority Ilocano culture and identity of the area where they migrated. Scholars like Beurms (1929) and Hornedo (1990) are therefore correct in using the Bago as a qualifier meaning Igorot migrant group or new Christian converts while still acknowledging the original ethnic affiliation of migrant groups in the Ilocos region (e.g., Bago-Kankanaey).

Compared to the "Intermarriage theory" and the "Genuine-Bago theory," the "Bago-as-Exonym theory" provides the most in terms of consilience in explaining the origins of the Bago-Igorot identity. It also requires the least auxillary theories to explain its claims, with the element of time being one of the main concerns, especially regarding when and how the word Bago was adopted by Ilocanos to refer to migrant groups.

Conclusion: Making sense of the Bago-Igorot identity

Making sense of all the sources and theories leads to the conclusion that the terms "Bago"/"Bago-Igorots" and similar derivations do not refer to a distinct group of IPs, but are labels coined by the Spaniards to refer to newly converted natives. The terms were later adopted by the Ilocanos as derogatory terms to describe all migrant Igorots. Ilocano became their lingua franca due to trading and intermarriages.

The attempt to create and promote a Bago-Igorot identity, mainly through the efforts of the BNCSPI and continued by scholars who identified themselves as Bago-Igorots, is arguably an ethnogenesis or the creation of a new ethnic identity. The question then is, "Why is there a need to create a new ethnic identity?"

There are many possible answers to this question. On the one hand, it can be socio-cultural, following the internal trend among the IPs in the Cordilleras to assert their Igorot identity amid the need for national integration—an external stimulus—during the postwar years (Finin 2005). This assertion of culture, heritage, and identity can be seen through the creation of alliances, such as the BIBAK in the 1950s and eventually the establishment of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) in 1987 (Executive Order no. 220, s. 1987).

On the other hand, as mentioned by the elders and gleaned from the speech of Buaquen regarding the effect of Memorandum no. 83, series of 2002, the reason can be political. The enactment of the IPRA, an external stimulus, provided more benefits to IPs or Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICC) and separation from other groups meant more funds for the community. In fact, when we checked proposals of alleged Bago-ancestral domains that should be the basis for the creation of a Bago province, we identified a changing landscape depending on the preference of the proponent that is not necessarily in line with the territories with Bago-Igorot settlements as agreed upon in the Third Bago Tribal Congress. In 2003 for example, then Baguio City representative Mauricio Domogan along with public officials from the municipalities of Cervantes, San Emilio, Quirino, Gregorio Del Pilar, and Lidlidda proposed the creation of a Bago province composed of 14 interior towns of Ilocos Sur, three towns of Abra, and one town of La Union[9] (Dumlao 2003). Domogan's proposed Bago Province excluded a lot from the original list, such as those who from Kalinga and Pangasinan. The BNCSPI's map in the *Sagunto Star* (2014) website also proposes a different territory from that of the Third Bago Tribal Congress and Domogan's proposal. BNCSPI's map is comprised of six municipalities of Ilocos Sur, ten municipalities of Benguet including the city of Baguio, two municipalities of Mountain Province, and four municipalities of La Union.[10]

Meanwhile, social media discussions reflect the notion that the search for identity is an interplay of internal and external factors, as the members seek to find acceptance with those having a common experience that they cannot find through simple association with either Ilocanos or their upland ancestors. Other migrant Igorot groups, such as those from the BIAG in Ilocos Sur, however, still strongly identify with their Igorot ancestry. It is also through our recent engagements with the BIAG, especially the BIAG secretary who has records, lists, and locations of the different subgroups of the Itneg in Ilocos Sur and Abra, that we were able to find that our lineage is with the Maeng subgroup of the Itneg from Abra.[11]

The case of the Bago can be considered a significant example of how dynamic and complex cultural processes are and how a simple question of identity can expose a

string of historical, cultural, and political issues that may seem insignificant from a national perspective. Therefore, keeping track of these changes in the cultural and ethnic landscape of a country as culturally and ethnically diverse as the Philippines remains an essential aspect of cultural and identity studies. Ethnogenesis, as a framework, is a useful conceptual tool in considering the unique ways by which external and internal stimuli can trigger changes or create new ethnic groups and identities.

Endnotes

1 The acronym BIBAK represents Benguet, Ifugao, Bontoc, Apayao, and Kalinga.

2 "…since it is within the tribunal of town of Tagudin under the leadership of D. Agustin Decdec, an elder, who presides over Igorots from Cay-ang, Cagubatan, Bago and other Rancherias."

3 "…our gathering is due to the killing of an Ygorot from Bago named Lambino."

4 "…we from Tagudin, Bangar, Igorots from Bakong and other rancherias of Igorots and New Christians."

5 *Begnas* is a cultural festival that usually happens before or after the rice planting season. The begnas in Ilocos Sur today is held in December, after the rice harvest. *Abung* is a communal house of the Igorots that is usually located near the center of an Igorot settlement as observed by Charles Beurms in 1929 and Carmen Vibar-Basco in 1956.

6 Beurms in 1929 described *nanagdegan* as the slaughtering of a chicken which is shared to the community without any prayer. *Gaoa* is held during the midnight of the second day of the person's death wherein another chicken is slaughtered and consumed without prayer. *Namanponan* is conducted during the burial ceremonies wherein a pig and a chicken are slaughtered and shared with the community for the safe passage of the dead to the afterlife.

7 Permission requested through posts in the group by author Ryan Alvin Pawilen in 2016 for his MA thesis entitled "Identity transformation, and customary law among the Bago-Igorots: Examining conflict resolution methods in a changing ethnoscape."

8 Perhaps one of the most notable works that examined and critiqued the Wave of Migration theory by Beyer was William Henry Scott's *Looking for the prehispanic Filipino and other essays in Philippine history* published in 1992.

9 Municipalities from Ilocos Sur that are included in Domogan's proposal are: Cervantes, San Emilio, Quirino, Gregorio Del Pilar, Lidlidda, Suyo, Sugpon, Segay, Alilem, Burgos, Banayoyo, Salcedo, Nagbukel and Galimuyod. Municipalities from Abra are: Tubo, Villaviciosa, and Luba. The lone municipality from La Union is the town of Sudipen.

10 Municipalities of Ilocos Sur included in the map are: Tagudin, Alilem, Sigay, Gregorio Del Pilar, San Emilio, and Cervantes. Municipalities from Benguet are: Mankayan, Bakun, Kibungan, Buguias, Cabayan, Atok, Bokod, Kapangan, La Trinidad, and the City of Baguio. Municipalities of Mountain Province are: Bauko and Sabangan. Municipalities of La Union are: Santol, San Gabriel, Sudipen, and Naguilian.

11 This was accomplished through the help of BIAG officers who provided us a master list of Itneg subgroups and explained where in the Cordillera and upland Ilocos Sur these subgroups are located. We were able to identify the Maeng subgroup of the Itneg based on our lineage from our father's side.

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