

## TOWARDS A NORMATIVE INTERCULTURAL DISCOURSE IN THE CORDILLERA AUTONOMOUS REGION<sup>1</sup>

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*In this paper, I discuss the relevance of indigenous normativity in advocating a deliberative yet autonomous political institution of the Gran Cordillera. I develop what I call 'normative intercultural discourse.' This notion attempts to integrate indigenous normative approaches and deliberative theory judiciously, without eliminating the distinctive character of each. In my opinion, this view can forge a shared understanding in the direction of the proposed Cordillera autonomous region. I argue that it can open the possibility for a stronger Cordillera demos that reflects the Cordilleran aspiration to determining its economic, political, and social affairs.*

### INTRODUCTION

An imperative for a multicultural society is for people to break through prejudices, discrimination, and disregard of others, who may have different conceptions of the good. In doing so, diverse societies can work together for a cohesive and stable institution (see Finin 2005, 2-3).<sup>2</sup> In the Cordilleras—for which this paper focuses—the social, economic, and political issues such as mining, deforestation, land theft, among others, call upon the Cordillerans, in spite of their diverse views and interests, to make a reasonable and common stand to protect themselves and their homeland.<sup>3</sup> Responding to this call, one urgent task facing Cordillerans is the ongoing thrust to forge a common understanding of the right to self-determination. The Committee on Regional Development and Autonomy (2017) noted the interest in reviving the idea of a Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR). Earlier, Cordillera legislators and stakeholders have drafted and proposed laws with the aim of establishing a Cordillera Autonomous Region. These laws came to be known as Organic Acts (*Acts*) of 1990 and 1998 plebiscites, respectively but rejected.<sup>4</sup> According to Athena Casambre (2001, 26), “until authentic discourse is pursued . . . rather than ‘ideologically’ or ‘bureaucratic-legalistically’ determined, or ‘politically’ driven, the project of Cordillera Regional Autonomy will remain frustrated.”

The implication of Casambre’s observation can be construed as the problem of grassroots representation. The non-passage of both *Acts* was apparently due to lack, or

absence, of substantial representation of views from the grassroot population. Both *Acts* are hardly intelligible because they do not seem to reflect the interests and views of the affected ordinary local people. While the people cannot see themselves represented in the proposed laws, the *Acts* tend to benefit only a few (i.e., the elite group in the local and national level). Certainly, this can jeopardize the well-being of the whole Cordillera region.

Drawing from the deficiency of earlier formulations of the *Acts*, President Benigno Aquino III, through Presidential Adviser on Peace Process, Ronald Llamas (cited in Palangchao 2011, 1), on the occasion of the 24th Cordillera Day, stressed and urged the advocates of autonomy to consider seriously the output of the grassroot sector to the autonomy problem. To quote:

The pursuit of the dream of autonomy must take into account the setbacks it has suffered in the past. Although the Constitution itself has provided for the establishment of autonomy [in] the Cordillera region, it has not been instituted in large part because a great number of ordinary citizens from the various provinces that comprise the region remain sceptical of its benefits and advantages.... Our leaders, both at the regional and national levels must bring the discussion of autonomy back to the grassroots—to schools, to communities, and to individuals. Only by sharing the dream with more of our people will we see it realized.

With this background, the study aims to explore the importance of deliberative theory in developing a form of discourse, which I call ‘normative intercultural discourse’ that can reflect the Cordilleran aspiration towards self-rule, i.e., the determination of its own economic, political, social and cultural affairs. By ‘normative intercultural discourse,’ I mean a judicious blending of indigenous normative practices with deliberative theory in public institutions. I explicate more on this in the third part of the paper. In the meantime, I discuss the setting of the study.

## **THE GRAN CORDILLERA: TRIBAL, ETHNIC, AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

In this section, I discuss the notion of the Cordilleran, and the cultural and political terminologies that can adequately identify the peoples of the Grand Cordillera.

### **The Cordillera region and its peoples**

The Cordillera region (or the Gran Cordillera) is situated in the North-Central Luzon, Philippines. It refers to the mountainous provinces inhabited by an “indigenous civilization” comprising Benguet, Mountain Province, Ifugao, Kalinga, Apayao, and Abra (Finin 2005, 44). The population of indigenous groups in the Cordillera is estimated at 1.5 million (Cariño 2012). In its recent survey, the Philippine Statistics Authority (2016) estimated the overall population to 1.7 million. This number includes the migrants. The indigenous peoples in the Cordillera Mountain Range can be identified according to their places of origin. Someone who hails from Benguet Province can be an *Ibaloi*, *Kalanguya* and Southern *Kankanaey*.

The same can be said of the *Ifugao* indigenous peoples, who live in the Province of Ifugao and the *Isneg*, who inhabit the province of Apayao, etc. One can also be very particular and narrow in the delineation of group membership. A Cordilleran, for example, can be identified as *Ibanao* if he/she hails from Banao and *Isabangan* if he/she originates from Sabangan, Mountain Province, etc. The ethnic communities referred to as “indigenous civilization” have, since time immemorial, inhabited and continues to develop the Cordillera region.

Contrary to what some might think, the description neither suggests backwardness of the indigenous peoples in terms of public management nor isolates them from the rest of world. Apparently, it was these biases which prompted the American administration to create a Mountain Province in 1909 (which, in succeeding years, was divided into five provinces of the Cordillera). With the successful establishment of the Mountain Province, a scholar notes that “the wild tribes were safely removed from the field of insular [that is, national] politics” (Dean Bartlett quoted in Fry 1983, 52; see also May 2007, 167). Probably, this observation can be regarded as contentious in that these “wild tribes,” while sticking to their indigenous organizational structures, are supposedly knowledgeable of the political situations of their neighboring lowland counterparts who suffer slavery and indifference from the encroachments of foreign regimes. In addition, the remark appears to be politically motivated in the sense that the American government [took this opportunity to impose its supremacy](#) as a colonial power over what it labels as “wild tribes.” One can imagine the American administration reporting to its citizens: “Hey Joe, we’ve got wild tribes around that need beating to be disciplined and civilized,” or so they thought. Nonetheless, at the turn of the twentieth century, the education sector, research institutions, and social media continue to facilitate their interactions outside of their provincial and domestic spaces. Thus, advancements in science and technology are not foreign to them. Indeed, while they live in a mountainous region, they are not isolated from national and international public affairs.

As dwellers of the Grand Cordillera, they are also collectively, or misleadingly, known as “Igorot tribes.” The term refers to a mountain dweller or a “mountaineer” (Scott 1993, 69; Tindaan 2010, 82). During the Spanish colonial era, the generic term *Igorottes* was first used by the Dominican missionary Father Manuel Garcia to refer to *infidels* or non-Christian inhabitants, i.e., the Silipans or Halipans of Mayaoyao, a mountainous area in Ifugao (Lim-Pe 1981, 8). However, in his extensive research of the Ifugao people, a Belgian missionary, Father Francis Lambrecht, CICM, claims that the word “Ifugao,” from the original word “Ipugo,” which literally means “from the hills” (Dulawan 1967, 6), can be adequately rendered as “we the people of the earth” (see Lim-Pe 1981, 7). An earlier account points to the use of the same ascription by Father Francisco Antolin, O.P., in 1796 in his pioneering work, “Noticias de los Infieles Igorrotes en lo interior de la Isla de Manila, de sus Minas de oro, cobre y su Comercio; y de varias entradas y Pacificación” (cited in Lim-Pe 1981, 7; see also Scott 1974). A gradual application of the term “Igorot” to diverse groups is noticeable. Intuitively, it was first addressed to the Silipans or Halipans of Mayaoyao and later used as a generic term for all who inhabited the whole region of the Cordillera.

It can be construed, however, that some Cordillerans still prefer to identify themselves according to their place of origin, i.e., their province or town/village as portrayed in their artistic crafts such as the tattoo, indigenous woven clothing, and printed shirts bearing the name of their ethnic group, among others. Consider also those from the provinces of Benguet

and Kalinga who can call themselves collectively as *Ibenguet* and *Ikalinga*, respectively. In a much narrower demarcation of group identity, some members refer to themselves as *Ifontoc*, *Isagada*, *Ibesao*, etc. The prefix “I” attached in their language means “from” (Lim-Pe 1981, 7). Probably the reason for resisting the term “Igorot” has much to do with its derogatory connotation that easily exposes them to discrimination. The *Igorots*, especially during the Spanish and American colonial occupations in the Philippines, were perceived very badly. The Mayaoyaos, for example, were described as “cruel and treacherous, as a sort of people who found pleasure in killing and stealing by laying in ambush treacherously” (Lim-Pe 1981, 8). In another part of the region, Father Mariano Rodrigues (1990, 284) recounted in the “Religious beliefs and practices of the Igorots of Northern Pangasinan in 1895,” labels the Igorots as “uncivilized people”. According to him, the Igorots tend “to grab what belongs to another against its owner’s will, most especially the cattle which the Christians of the neighboring towns and barrios let loose...in cultivated fields and forests near their ranches.”<sup>5</sup> On a positive note, Father José Tomás Villanova (see Lim-Pe 1981, 37-38, fn. 86) believes that “However primitive and savage the Mayaoyaos are imagined to be, there is no basis for believing them to have ever lived without some kind of civilization” because one can “discern in them all the elements of society that are present in the bosom of civilized nations.” The American administration (noted in Fry 1983, 52) for its part, has referred to the Igorots as “wild tribes,” but it did not lack admiration for their “adjustment to a cruelly inhospitable environment and their 350-year resistance to Spanish conquest” (Scott 1993, 55; see also Tindaan 2010, 82).

While some Cordillerans apparently do not subscribe to the term “Igorot” because of its derogatory connotations, it did not deter other indigenous peoples of the region to embrace this identity proudly. However, this ascription of a minority group within a State seems not strong enough to mobilize a political, economic, social, and cultural agenda on the national, as well as, international levels because even with this term alone the people are divided. If this claim is correct, would they be willing to ascribe to a political identity that can accentuate their aspirations and interests adequately as a collective group? Certainly, a Cordilleran can maintain to designate himself/herself in one of the cultural identities mentioned or even ascribe to the term “Igorot,” but these self-ascriptions, in my view, need to be complemented by a more politically correct designation. The universally accepted political-legal lexicon in calling cultural communities is “indigenous peoples” (IPs). On the surface, one can assume that the above political-legal lexicon seems to relegate distinct identities and appears to impose a foreign term for cultural communities to wear. Cognizant of the seeming limitation of this suggestion, I discuss in turn the terminological transition from tribal and ethnic group to IPs and spell out the latter’s advantages for the Cordillerans.

### **The Cordillerans: From tribal and ethnic to indigenous peoples**

The Cordillerans are “tribus independentes,” i.e., independent tribes (Scott 1974). This ascription distinguishes the “Igorots” from their lowland counterparts, who became Spanish subjects. However, it is a category that has marginalized them. The Spanish and American colonizers positioned “them in the ‘tribal slot,’ somewhere between ordinary peasants and ‘backward’ primitives” (McKay 2006, 291). Indeed, it has always been thought that the notion of “tribe” generally refers to a group of people whose social organization are

primitive when compared to modern public institutions, such as the parliamentary, the legislature, and the judiciary. One can say they lack modern approaches to the means of production and consumption. Of course, while previous anthropological studies usually apply the term “tribe” to refer to a static unit of people, it does not mean that the primitiveness of an institutional practice or social organization is ineffective for the concerned group. Tribalism also does not necessarily imply inflexibility. Some Cordillerans still speak of themselves as tribal, but it does not mean they are not resilient to contemporary issues and challenges. Nonetheless, recent ethnic studies have apparently abandoned this terminology. Social anthropologists, among them Thomas Eriksen (2010, 11-13), have observed the terminological switch from “tribe” to “ethnic” to mitigate what appears as a static characterization of the term “tribe.” The term “ethnic group” has nowadays become common.

By “ethnic group,” I understand to mean a composition of people that continuously sustain, enhance, and develop their cultural and social practices, political and economic interests through creative adaptation and interaction within and beyond the confines of their locality (Eriksen 2010, 15). This view is important for several reasons: (1) dynamicity of diverse groups and (2) mitigation of biases that are prevalent in minority and majority group dichotomy. The dynamicity of groups describes their potential capability to adapt to constant change as they interact with their surroundings. In this regard, the notion of ethnicity, according to theorists, is a much more appropriate term to use when referring to diverse groups because it suggests the interaction of diversity, interrelationships, mobility, and change. It can also respond best to the problem of the term “tribe,” which indicates supposedly an isolated, ghettoized, and a static group of people. Moreover, it relativizes the issue of group boundaries, mitigating the distinction problem of “Us” and “Them,” “Moderns” and “Tribals” (Eriksen 2010, 14). Also, the term ethnic group as a relativizing mechanism can probably respond suitably to the problem of ethnocentrism—widespread among those who claim to be members of a superior race.

While the switch to the use of the term is significant for the above reasons, it does not explain why a primordialist-based ethnicity persists. Consider, for example, an ethnic group interacting with another group. Both can communicate in the same language, but they know they are different. In this case, the problem of ethnocentrism that the switch in terminology tries to mitigate might not hold for long. In my view, some legal measures and public policies need to be adopted in the organizational system of the society because a solution to this and related problems cannot be resolved just by changing the terms used. However, this step requires an initial reference to a more politically correct identification in which public policies, such as group rights, can be fitted.

In this study, I employ the term “indigenous peoples” (IPs). The reason for this proposal is its direct political and legal connotations (see *Republic Act 8371* known also as *the indigenous peoples rights act of 1997*, hereafter, IPRA of 1997 and the UN *declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples*). However, this suggestion neither discounts nor negates the relevance of the terms “tribe” and “ethnic group” altogether because they have their significant meaning in particular instances and contexts. That these terms are seldom used in ethnicity literature does not imply that they have lost their significance and meaning to some people.

In Philippine law, the original inhabitants of the North-Central Luzon are presented as having a legal and political status as indigenous peoples (IPs) or indigenous cultural communities (ICCs). Following the description of the IPRA of 1997 (see Ch. II, Sec. 3.h.),

indigenous groups

...refer to a group of people of homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains.

The definition of indigenous peoples covers two fundamental aspects of IPs identity: cultural and political. On the one hand, cultural identity is linked with myths (imagined or constructed), cultural symbols, beliefs and practices. It includes strong kinship/family ties, sense of connection with the earth, respect for elders, and collective responsibility, indigenous organizational systems among others. Noticeably, the IPRA also emphasizes that indigeneity is not to be understood from an essentialist or primordialist perspective. While it does not speak of abandoning the biological and genetic-traits argument in ethnic identification, the IPRA is not also blind to the process of identity construction and formation over time, including internal and external political struggles. Political identity, on the other hand, pertains to the rights of IPs over their affairs, including but not limited to, the right to self-determination in a manner that puts a premium on the general welfare. Probably, the reason behind this political dimension is to promote and to maintain a conception of social justice that “insure[s] the well-being and economic security of *all* the people” (Araneta 1962, 442). It also means that IPs can have a stronger collective lobbying and veto power at the national and international public spheres. This view is important in that it stresses the significant role of IPs in creating, defining, and facilitating the terms and conditions of their existence. Consequently, as a political entity, IPs can collectively resist and contest discourses of domination.

### **Migration and socialization of cultures**

The migration of peoples and new forms of social interactions, among them is intermarriage, could also pose concerns regarding the Cordilleran identity. A central question to raise is whether an immigrant to the region can ascribe the Cordilleran identity to himself/herself. In understanding the fact of migration of peoples from one place to another, is it still possible to speak of a Cordilleran identity based on common ancestry and shared narrative history?

Arguing from a common genetic stock perspective, one can respond right away in the negative. Certainly, this view clearly makes a distinction between IPs and non-IPs of the Cordillera. As already mentioned earlier, one can begin with the assumption that a Cordilleran is someone who originates in the same place, descends from, and belongs to one of the IPs identified. If this assertion is valid, then a Cordilleran should be initiated into the developmental process of a Cordilleran identity and Cordillera lifeworld to know his/her responsibilities, rights, entitlements, and obligations. This view sounds essentialist but, apparently, there are cultural identities which continue to persist that specifically concern the members of the said indigenous groups, in the same manner that an association has rules that bind only its members. Since the bloodline is an important aspect to demarcate between a Cordilleran from a non-Cordilleran (other Filipinos and foreign nationals), it seems difficult to defend the extension of this collective identity even to children of immigrants who were born in the region.

A recent trend in post-colonial theory is the celebration of hybrid identities, which seems to make it, nowadays, difficult to conceive of pure indigeneity. Hybridity arises from the socialization of cultures – a cultural mix – under which individuals form mutual subjectivities. In this sense, hybridity refers to the state of ‘double inscription of the self’ or ‘double self’ (Bhabha 1985, 156) and ‘in-betweenness’ (Bhabha 1994, 29). These notions describe the state of a person who views identity “not an essence but a positioning” (Hall 1990, 226). It is a politics of position because the past (i.e., origin), the present (i.e., the settlements, the culture identities) and the future can be set up with new “structures of authority, new political initiatives.” But it does not stop there. The new ontological position enables “other positions to emerge” (Bhabha 1990, 211). The dynamicity of a politics of position enunciates a sense of identity, which is not only more complex and enriched but also intricately indeterminate and undifferentiated. Such a reading renders the concept of the unity of personality and culture, homogeneity, indigeneity and hierarchy of cultures untenable. Moreover, cultural hybridity can be an adequate answer to the dangers of ethnocentrism, i.e., the binary opposition of hierarchical power-relations between “We” and “They.” Here, people transform and construct new identities through negotiations, confrontations and agonistic interactions and openness to the fluidity of history, symbol, and sign, time and space. While it accentuates pluralism and inter-subjectivity, the emphasis is “not on the exoticism of multiculturalism and *diversity* of cultures, but in the inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*” (Bhabha 1994, 38; emphasis in the original). In other words, culture’s hybridity articulates identity difference based on several factors surrounding the development of a person other than an insulated and pre-conceived metaphysical and ontological origins. Accordingly, there are different modalities of cultural hybridity just as different historical contexts abound.

Granting that this is correct, immigrants or their children who are born and raised in the region could probably ascribe to themselves the Cordilleran identity, as in a bonafide IPs. Here, the notion of Cordilleran is extended to immigrants by drawing from other parameters, namely, the birth place and domicile in the region. Indeed, a person born of immigrant parents can opt to identify himself/herself as a “Cordilleran,” just as a second or third generation Filipino-Belgian, who feels more of a Belgian than a Filipino because of environmental factors as domicile and linguistic competence. In this case, the answer to the question posed earlier is affirmative. But if this direction is endorsed, the immediate implication is to modify the commonly perceived notion of a Cordilleran as one of the IPs in the region.<sup>6</sup>

But this still begs the question whether domicile and linguistic competency in one of the mother tongues of the IPs clearly warrant access to the inner lifeworld of bonafide IPs.

A related concern that can probably attract attention is ethnic-identification of children descending from an intermarriage of a Cordilleran and a non-Cordilleran. Should these children be identified as Cordillerans? If it is correct that the bloodline is a crucial component of *Cordilleraness*, then they are supposedly regarded as Cordillerans because one of the parents is a direct descendant of the IPs. A more complicated issue to add is regarding the ethnic identity of children having Cordilleran roots but are born, raised, and lived in a foreign land. If they can be considered Cordillerans by virtue of descent, would this requirement be enough? How sure can one guarantee that these children know the Cordilleran identity and the responsibilities and rights attached with it? One can argue by referring to the various Cordilleran associations abroad. For instance, the BIBAKnet (Benguet, Ifugao, Bontoc, Apayao and Kalinga) supposedly sustains, celebrates, and imparts to the younger generation the Cordilleran identity. Certainly, it becomes a different issue when the same children decide to change or abandon their ethnicity, much more like the child of a Filipino couple who is born in the United States but feels more of an American than anything else. Of course, the feeling of belonging to a particular group can vary in degree. It depends on the variables examined, the commitments undertaken, and the collective memory and history attached, but these factors already point to a specific preference.

Seemingly, these responses suggest several ways of understanding *Cordilleraness*, i.e., the boundaries of the notion of a Cordilleran identity. One can argue from the ‘common descent perspective,’ which operates alongside with genetic makeup, distinct customs and traditions, and bloodline. Another can defend a notion of *Cordilleraness* by referring to the ‘environmental factors’ surrounding the development of a person, such as the birth place, linguistic competence, and domicile. In this sense, a case can be made where an immigrant admits that he/she is not a Cordilleran by blood but a Cordilleran by culture. However, how far this claim holds true remains to be evaluated in that the notion of culture begs to be spelled out. Others might propose the ‘threshold’ argument which means that there are levels of *Cordilleraness*. According to this view, some groups are pure, while others are less pure. Still, others can argue on the ‘diversity of *Cordilleraness*’ position, which claims to evade the problem of a hierarchical or class-based notion of *Cordilleraness* but can probably obfuscate the notion indigeneity. These concerns are interesting points for discussion, but they are beyond this paper to settle.

For purposes of this paper, I will continue to use the term “indigenous” to refer to the original peoples of the Grand Cordillera.

## **THE CORDILLERA INDIGENOUS NORMATIVITY AND DELIBERATIVE THEORY**

I will now discuss the various expressions of indigenous normativity in the practices of the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera region as it confluences with deliberative theory. On the one hand, indigenous normativity refers to institutions, conventions, and practices, which holds the potential and promise of a sincere deliberative regime. The deliberative theory advocates the resolution of conflicting claims through reasoned



discourses among free and equal participants in an “ideal speech situation” on the other hand.<sup>7</sup> In my view, deliberative theory can substantiate the marks of indigenous discourse practices. The Cordillera indigenous normativity attempts to sustain and enhance the spirit of mutual dialogue and collective action already present among the Cordilleran since time immemorial. Probably this view validates the strength of deliberative theory, but the distinctive features of Cordillera indigenous normative practices lie in their indigeneity, diversity of approaches in discussing the public affairs and resiliency to different stages of history and circumstances. It is to be noted though that deliberative theory also affirms and enhances without negating or subordinating indigenous normativity as I will try to elucidate below.

### THE CORDILLERA INDIGENOUS NORMATIVITY

The region of Cordillera is home to diverse indigenous peoples who speak different languages, practice customary laws, and share heroic pasts—factors that are crucial in nation-building. However, it also hosts immigrants, i.e., the Filipinos from the other regions of the Philippines and foreign nationals. Given its multicultural landscape, enhancing democratic discourses in the Cordillera can be considered a great challenge. A significant question can be formulated, thus: How can Cordillerans, given their diverse cultural traits and practices, among others, participate together in an open, healthy, and productive dialogue that creates mutual understanding and collective action on issues that confront them as a people? This question dovetails with the challenge of Francisco Claver (cited by Finin 2001, 37) to participants of the *Third Igorot International Consultation*: What “way of thinking, [a] way of acting, something part of our identity that we can contribute to the nation at large? Let’s find out and let’s give it.” From what Claver expressed, one can surmise that indigenous normative practices have something good to contribute to the building of a much more democratic and justice-oriented society. Indigenous normative practices refer to social conventions and institutions that IPs observe. These conventions, which were probably modified and revised over time, have sustained them as a people since time immemorial. Apparently, the members of indigenous groups adhere to social conventions to strengthen their bond, to establish social harmony among them, and to advance their common security.

However, one can suppose that some indigenous practices in a cultural community are unjust when weighed according to universally accepted normative standards.<sup>8</sup> Injustice can be in the form of tyranny, exclusion, dogmatism, and ethnocentrism. If this contention is correct, one wonders whether or not the members of indigenous groups observing social conventions are merely forced to abide by them. Of course, some theorists suggest that every culture should pass through a rigorous critique by carefully examining its contents through the “unforced force of the better argument” (Habermas 1984, 285-86). Accordingly, only those components in a culture that can enhance the deliberation of views, interests, and concerns should be accepted. Traces of unjust practices in a culture that hinder a healthy normative intercultural discourse **must** be revised or changed to facilitate better deliberative opportunities. Interestingly, several indigenous institutions and practices in the Cordillera can mitigate the problem of unjust regimes. One can describe these indigenous practices as community-enabling systems because issues are dealt with deliberatively by

the participants. Consider the following practices: *bodong*, *tong-tong*, *at-atoan*, *pechen*, and *monkalun*.

### **The *Bodong* of Kalinga**

The *bodong* is an indigenous system of how people can work together in forging covenant ties. As Casambre (2010, 47, 94) and Jun Prill-Brett (2001, 13) describe, the *bodong* event is a process of conducting “a bilateral inter-village peace pact” in Kalinga and some remote areas of Abra. Miguel Sugguiyao (1990, 47) remarks that the purpose of the *bodong* is “for collective security which is the basis for founding viable communities [and for realizing] the desire to live in peace.” It is deliberative in that the *bodong* participants can express freely their interest without fear of coercion and mutually agree on feasible options to undertake. Consider the structure of establishing the *bodong*. The community leaders (*pangat/manlilintog* or peacemakers), assisted by *manguiuugud* (go-betweens), take turns in expressing their views and feelings about a situation that disrupts their harmonious and peaceful existence. Their agreement becomes mutually binding for the whole concerned communities. Admittedly, there are limits to the *bodong* system if applied to the entire Cordillera region. While the *bodong* system is a form of forging a peaceful resolution of disputes and settling differences between two conflicting parties, it might not appeal to all Cordillerans. It is neither shared by all indigenous peoples in the Grand Cordillera, nor the immigrants to this place. Besides, every cultural group has its structures of decision-making. A wholesale application of the *bodong* to a Cordillera-wide discourse processes can be self-defeating in the sense that the people might see it as an imposition upon them. In the words of Casambre (2010, 49), the suggestion above “would require a feat of psychological persuasion to get non-practitioners to whom it is an alien institution.”

Nonetheless, given that some elements of the *bodong*, such as *simsim* (“to taste”), *lonok* (“to enter”), *gano* (“to take care”), and *surdip* (“to sip”), are commonly observed in the Cordillera (see Sugguiyao 1990; Prill-Brett 2001), they can inspire Cordillerans towards cooperation and social stability. The *simsim* is meant to announce and to discuss grievances publicly. The *lonok* is the entrance of guests and “delegations from other regions” into the village for the formal negotiation of conflicts and renewal of ties. The *surdip* expresses the solidarity of the *bodong* holders to uphold “lasting peace and brotherhood” by sipping the *basi* (sugar cane wine) from the same cup (Prill-Brett 2001, 16; Sugguiyao 1990, 52). *Gano* is the moment when parties to the peace-pact would offer to each other gifts of equal value. The gift is a token of honor and respect to the host family/village, but it can serve also as a reminder that the pact must be “taken care of” (Sugguiyao 1990, 51). Given these considerations, the *bodong* can contribute significantly to the general welfare of the people in the Cordillera. However, the supposed exclusivist orientation of the *bodong* at which the council of senior men officially represent the people in the discussion of public concerns can be modified to include a variety of sectors in the society to participate.

### **The *Tong-tong* and *At-atoan* of the Ibaloi and Kankanaey**

Another indigenous discourse practice is one coming from the *Ibaloy* and Southern *Kankanaey* IPs that reside in the Benguet area and the Mountain Province (Northern

*Kankanaey*) (see Prill-Brett 2001, 4-6). They have a relatively similar type of political structure. Consider how they settle disputes in and outside the community. Decision-making is the privilege of the council of elders. They refer to their political institution as *tong-tong*, *at-atoan*, and *abong/dap-ay*. The Ibaloy's deliberative political system called *tong-tong* is comprised of *inpanama* or *anum 'numen*, i.e., supposedly known as wise men and *baknang* (the economically well-off). As to the Southern *Kankanaeys*, the *at-atoan* consists of the *amam-a* or *nakay* (council of senior men), who are *mensapit* (articulate in expressing their views). Both groups claim that the purpose of the *at-atoan* and *tong-tong* is to curb injustice, resolve conflict, and violence. The council, as the gate-keeper of the law, dispenses and decides according to the demands of the law. The law should be observed faithfully by all the other members.

The *abong* or *dap-ay* in the *ili* (village) of the Northern *Kankanaey* (Mt. Province) can also be described as the largest political unit. The *dap-ay*, as in *at-atoan* serves as a tribunal. The senior men, who have established their credibility through the excellent handling of various types of conflicts, constitute the members of the *dap-ay*. When disputes are not probably resolved due to the lack of evidence, the council of elders can opt for the "ritual examination of the entrails of a chicken" or pig and other animals. At other times, the *agum* (jury) demands a suspected offender to take an oath and swear before celestial bodies, i.e., the stars, the moon, and the sun. They stand as witnesses and are believed to inflict ill fate to a person who lies.

Seemingly, this system of settling disputes and building harmonious relationships has brought about a significant and relatively peaceful community. The observation runs, however, that only seniors, mostly men, deliberate on public matters. The youth and women sectors are unrepresented, if not less represented. They only observe what is taking place in the discussion of the council. Some can argue that this process allows those who are supposedly restricted to be directly involved in the debates to learn the procedures of conflict resolutions. It is an avenue that informs them of the situation of their community and its relationship with other communities. Other than their indirect role, however, they should adhere to the decision arrived at by the council. The decision is always binding to everyone.

From a deliberative perspective, the *tongtong* system, though seemingly less sophisticated than the requirements of a modern day deliberative parliaments, can be considered already as having the basic requirements of a participative discourse. The *tong-tongan*, for example, is open to the public, allowing transparency and dissemination of information on a much broader scale. Moreover, the discursive element in an indigenous approach to politics can result to the acceptability of decisions, agreements, and judgments when assessing and weighing issues objectively. A decision derived from this approach can easily find justification and merit acceptance among the people. However, while the *tongtong* is set in an open space customarily and utilizes deliberation maximally, to reach an agreement or a decision is not always forthcoming. This is not surprising though given the intricacies of the procedure.

The theory of deliberation suggests that taking a decision would involve a long process, considering that it proceeds from gathering equally competing views that are gradually filtered by the logic of reasonableness. Here, deliberation eliminates views and approaches that do not adhere to reason, such as resorting to the entrails of animals for a

solution to problems and swearing to astronomical objects to prove or disprove a claim. Moreover, a political system that adheres to deliberative theory should also recognize the voices of all sectors as equally important in a public discourse setting. Hence, men and women, young and old alike, should be equally heard when addressing public issues. In this sense, the indigenous way of privileging the council of senior men to decide on matters affecting the society should be modified to include other sectors of society, especially the women. As *Women in development and nation building act* (R.A. 7192) advocates, if the “State recognizes the role of women in nation building” and “ensures that women benefit equally and participate directly in the development programs and project,” then it can guarantee the spring of an active and participative citizenry.

Indeed, the council of senior men supposedly have the unwavering trust of the IPs because of their supposed wisdom and ripe experience in life. This act of reverence privileges the council to make important decisions for the people. However, while the members of the council are respected and esteemed in matters of community affairs, it seems that they do not have the monopoly of opinion (or truth) because somebody, other than them, can have a reasonable idea to impart. Public concerns can affect every member. Hence, it is but appropriate that no one is marginally impeded to participate in public decision-making.

### **The Bontoc *Pechen***

The *Pechen*, from *ped-nan*, literally means “to hold tight to a grip” is indigenous to the people of Bontoc. It is a normative approach aimed at establishing covenant ties, mutual benefits, and peace pacts (Prill-Brett 1987, 20-35; Goda 2001, 19). It endorses a dialogic approach to negotiating and remedying inter-village and inter-tribal conflicting views. Among the representatives are the select senior men in the community: the *amam-a*. The discussions of issues with public importance take place in the *ator* (*maamongan nan umili* or public gathering place), a semi-circular open court. Crucial decisions for the community are made in the *ator*.

The Bontoc *pechen* embodies features of discourse theory because, through open deliberation and persuasion, it aims at a peaceful resolution of conflicts and restoration of a harmonious coexistence among the peoples from within and outside of the community. However, it has some shares of limitations regarding the diversity of representation, although it can be developed to fit in today’s multidiverse political institutions. In this case, a democratic discussion demands the consideration of the input of various sectors of society in the creation of policies. A nongender and non-class based perspective but built on persuasive and reasonable arguments can be very enriching and enlightening. It can change one’s mindset or restructures power relations on a much more equal footing between diverse peoples and groups. Indeed, when public affairs are discussed and decided democratically, it can yield acceptable and justifiable outcomes.

### **The *Monkalun* of Ifugao**

The “kinship group is the most important socio-economic [and] political unit” among the people of Ifugao (Prill-Brett 2001, 17). Every family manages its affairs directly. However, when disputes arise among the different kinship groups (*hintutulang*), a go-between

(*monkalun*) presides over in settling the conflict. The term “monkalun” comes from the root word “kalun,” which means “to advise.” The go-between is considered to be “a whole court, completely equipped in embryo. He is judge, prosecuting and defending counsel, and the court record” (Barton 1919, 94). He does not only facilitate how two different groups can reach a mutual understanding. Rather, he also judges and oversees the execution of the decision. As a one-man team, he administers and dispenses justice. Failure to achieve a settlement through dialogue allowshim to wound or kill a member of the familyat fault. As Roy Barton (1919, 94) says:

To the end of peaceful settlement he exhausts every art of Ifugao diplomacy. He wheedles, coaxes, flatters, threatens, drives, scolds, insinuates. He bends down the demands of the plaintiff or prosecution, and bolsters up the proposals of the defendants until a point is reached at which the parties may compromise.

A *monkalun* tends towards peaceful coexistence, restoring order in the village. Villagers can live and work peaceably when resolutions to controversies are acceptable to all parties involved. In today’s Cordillera society, the significant role of a *monkalun*, who facilitates the exchange and assessment of controversial views and competing interests that aim at a fair agreement, is instructive of how political institutions should be organized in such a way that they become sensitive to diversity. This means that political institutions should not limit itself to a single legal theory or normative standard. Rather, it should welcome a variety of approaches when dealing with public affairs. However, it should be noted that violent aspects on a *monkalun* system could be changed to accentuate its deliberative potential. Hence, dealing with a public issue should not resort to coercion or use of force against the will of a person.

## **TOWARDS A NORMATIVE INTERCULTURAL DISCOURSE IN THE GRANCORDILLERA**

In this section, I will show how the notion of a normative intercultural discourse can contribute to the Cordillera region.

### **Why a normative intercultural discourse?**

What I call a *normative intercultural discourse* can be described as a deliberative approach that blends indigenous normative practices with deliberative theory judiciously. Also, a normative intercultural discourse is sensitive to “indigenous resources” and consider seriously “customary laws and practices” in the process of decision-making (Casambre 2001, 22). The discursive approach is “intercultural” in that it takes the issues and concerns, views and interests of affected IPs seriously. To be sure, the claims of diverse IPs in the Cordillera are at stake in policy-making; hence, the creation of policies should respond adequately to these interests. When public policies reflect the values, views, and aspirations of the IPs, it can be considered legitimate. An aspect that legitimizes a policy is the sense of ownership on the part of the affected members. In this regard, a normative intercultural approach in the creation of policies should not marginalize arbitrarily the views of the

people, especially if these are justified reasonably. Doing so eliminates the privileging of the interest of the few, especially the local elites at the expense of justice for the indigenous groups. In this case, it underlines the concerns and needs of affected members regardless of cultural identification, language, and social, political, and economic position, considering that among and between the said IPs is the ever-present interplay of supremacy and inferiority. Consequently, this view can be a plausible answer to the problem of factionalism and distribution of powers between diverse group.

The discursive approach is also “normative” because it involves the formation of a reasonable decision and plan of action that ought to be satisfied. It identifies which adequate option can be taken for the needs and concerns of the society. Hence, it inquires what actions should political institutions and stakeholders are supposed to do. The above description of the nature of normative intercultural discourse can probably direct future endeavors toward a more just-oriented and open society. However, it does not say much about fulfilling the requirement of the normativity of discourse. How should the normativity of discourse be justified? Apparently, there are varied answers to this question as there are different legal and political theorists among other agents who can offer different answers.

I subscribe to the Habermasian recommendation which, in my view, is supposedly accepted and, in some cases, modified within the legal circle and political theory. The justification for a normative theory of discourse relies on its legitimacy (legal validity) and validity (communicative action).<sup>9</sup> I do not have enough space here to discuss this subject in a much more detailed way. Elsewhere, I have tried to give a sufficient attention to this concern in another paper (Cabunilas 2012; see also Weinberger 1999). Nonetheless, one can say that the two requirements are fundamentally intertwined and necessary to achieving the normativity of discourse because they treat different societal questions by applying existing *just laws* and examining *facts*. The absence of these requirements can lead to the marginalization or colonization of a lifeworld by another. However, insofar as the claims of participants in a deliberative procedure are open to examination, critique, and reasonable argumentation, the legitimacy and validity of the normative discourse can be secured. Along this line, I add the instructive criteria of Mary Dietz (2000, 122) to guarantee the same: “*intelligibility* (comprehensibility), *truth* (regarding the propositional content, *justifiability* (or appropriateness in terms of the norms invoked) and *truthfulness* (or sincerity in the sense that a participant in a discourse does not deceive their interlocutors).”

The requirements of a valid and legitimate deliberation that I have roughly sketched above can be interwoven with the Cordilleran indigenous normativity. Doing so can have positive implications. The deliberative approach can shape a Cordillera normative intercultural discourse, which accentuates mutual interest, shared values, and strengthens collective action.<sup>10</sup> The appropriation and maximization of a normative intercultural discourse rather than a bureaucratically-laden approach can serve best the needs and interests of the IPs. Perhaps, it can significantly contribute to envisioning a roadmap towards an autonomous region of the Cordillera, where the IPs struggle for social, political, and economic determination can be realized eventually.

However, building on this shared vision, minority representation in the public sphere and better economic opportunities for *all* IPs is still a painstaking long task ahead. Along with this predicament is to seriously study how to make the connection of a normative

intercultural discourse within the autonomous political system of the Cordillera. In other words, part of the task of envisioning a more just-oriented and open and interactive Cordillera Autonomous Region is to fit together discourse theory with systems theory creatively.

A systems theory refers to “the arrangement of and relations between the parts which connect them into a whole” (Heylighen and Joshlyn 1999, 898). In my view, I find no opposition between these two theories. Political institutions, while different and diverse, follow a specific form of discourse and system. In fact, there are cases in which a system of government is supposedly democratic, but tyrannical in its conception of discourse. In this case, a dialogue which is supposedly participative can be carefully manipulated to benefit one’s interest at the expense of others. However, the proposed normative intercultural discourse intends to mitigate sufficiently the problem of colonial-oriented regimes.

There are varied ways on how indigenous normative discourses are carried out in the Cordillera region, but they share fundamental components. These are crucial factors in managing various disputes, claims, and concerns that affect the IPs. Because of the shared foundational values attached into indigenous normativity, a normative intercultural discourse can happen. Indeed, insofar as genuine deliberation can frustrate any violence, armed conflict, coercion or use of brute force, a stronger and cohesive autonomous Cordillera demos can be realized.

### **The search for a sincere communication**

A sincere communication establishes cohesive and harmonious relationships. When harm and turmoil, for example, beset the community, the council of elders gather to discuss and decide which plan of action is appropriate to undertake. Their decision is almost always to heal wounds, to amend grievances, and to establish possibilities for a renewed relationship to flourish. Along with this vein, the goal of a normative intercultural discourse is to create relationships that mutually advance the interests of the people involved. Hence, every participant should break through their egoistic tendencies to realize the significant contribution each can make, noting that it is a democratic process of expressing one’s thoughts, feelings, and views without illegitimate coercion. I say illegitimate coercion because there are also lawful institutional interventions that safeguard the liberal values such as a just treatment and equal opportunities for women. Where these democratic ideals are suppressed, democratic institutions can intervene. Here, different interests and views do not only meet. Rather, it can mobilize people towards a collective action. Following these processes, Jürgen Habermas (2005, 2) believes that “the political ethos of the community is reproduced and revitalized.”

The search for a sincere communication, however, has often been dismissed as objectively unrealistic because cultures will always have their biases, prejudices, and narrow perspectives. This view, it seems, finds concrete expression in cultures that cling only to self-serving agenda. Political theorists, among them Habermas (1984, 285), ascribe to this type of discourse as “instrumental-strategic action” which is nothing but a brute use of force to influence a decision. It deploys a coercive manipulation of rules to attain one’s individualistic motive. However, selfish interest hinders sincere communication to take place. In July 1988, for instance, the first Cordillera Regional Assembly was held with so much hope that it would usher a culture of discourse among the indigenous peoples but to no avail. As Finin (2001, 33) maintains:

...it was indeed an amazing gathering of talent *pangpangat, lalakay*, teachers, *barangay kapitan*, men and women, young and old. Unfortunately, it was not long after the multi-day session got underway that the proceedings were usurped by those in formal educations, who imposed western parliamentary style process. To make matters worse, even though everyone in attendance could speak Ilokano, English predominated, and made non-English speakers extremely reluctant to participate.

A normative intercultural discourse from all walks of life seems to be the key towards achieving a respectful communication and social cooperation for a stable society. Here, normative intercultural discourse is not some kind of moralism, but a recognition of the capacity of people for spontaneous interaction and discussion without the fear of coercion, discrimination, or use of force. A fruitful normative intercultural discourse happens where there is a meeting of minds and hearts regardless of participants' affiliation and background.

Apparently, a normative cross-cultural dialogue sees to it that the decision arrived at is something acknowledged and accepted by the people affected. The process of discourse, however painstakingly long and exhausting, should not be something to abhor. In fact, the arduous process can be its strength. This approach would imply that there is no shortcut towards a sincere and cohesive coexistence among diverse groups. Nonetheless, the people can experience through a sincere normative intercultural discourse that solidarity is the key to pursue their common aspirations.

### **The search for consensus and reconciliation**

Consensus and reconciliation are tough issues that people with different interests can tread. They serve as crucial building blocks that can guide normative intercultural discourse processes. Although they aim at mutual understanding, this goal is something that is difficult to achieve. However, as an avenue for reasonably weighing facts, evidence, needs, and views, they can function as a check and balance system, challenging corrupt ideologies. In his Introduction to Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action I*, Thomas McCarthy (1984, xiii) writes that since "validity claims can be criticized, there is a possibility of identifying and correcting mistakes, that is, of learning from them." The normative intercultural discourse, in this sense, can unveil and unpack diverse interests into the light. The commitment to a profound and enlightened understanding of various situations can promote and initiate the meeting of minds and recognition of differences, thus strengthening the bond that connects every person to each other.

The above views are obviously present in the normative practices of IPs of the Cordillera. For instance, the council of elders and go-betweens should be brave in pursuing acceptable terms and conditions that can nurture better relationships and end further conflicts, discomfort, and misunderstanding. Of course, some groups can feel the inadequacy of negotiations or compromises because others are probably dominating the deliberation of issues. However, a normative intercultural discourse should be committed to exhausting all possibilities for dialogue and to deterring further division. It can learn from the go-betweens or council of elders, who sought amicable steps to settle a case by approaching the aggrieved party immediately or penalizing a member justly for placing the community at risk whenever



some unfortunate circumstance breaches agreements. It can also incorporate the act of giving gifts, which symbolizes sincere remorse for the harm done and acceptance of an apology. Finally, the hosting of a festivity in which disagreeing parties are invited to celebrate, to discuss, to settle, and to amend conflicts together that have grievously tarnished their relationships is also a possible course of action that it can integrate.

### **The search for truth and intelligibility**

Truth (on statemental content) and intelligibility (comprehensibility) are important reasons for a normative intercultural discourse in the governance of a Cordillera public life. Both are factors that can inspire people to exert effort in unmasking ideologies, selfish motives and curbing injustice or violence (Deitz 2000, 122). To say that open discussions and dissensions on matters that are principally significant to the lives of people are a waste of time is self-defeating. This attitude does not even contribute to the formation of a normative intercultural discourse. It expresses a stance that is not open to suggestions and clarifications or even alterations. One can claim that this behavior points to how cynical some people are of what others can contribute into the discussions. Probably, it also shows their insecurity to the active scrutinizing participation of the people. In addition, it seems to suggest that some people are merely interested in the benefits they can get at the expense of others. However, discourses on public affairs are important in bringing out the truth and comprehensibility of a matter in question. Discourses are likewise necessary in the public sphere because it can reveal why some people think, feel, and perceive things differently.

Probably, truth and intelligibility are factors that the people should accept as objectively significant because it can mobilize them to create a socially cooperative political environment. In former times, a breach of agreement among different groups signals an imminent danger lurking right next door, placing the security of the whole community at risk. In the same manner, worse things occur when truth is hidden and intelligibility obscured. Apparently, this action can put people in a situation that they would regret in the end. In this context, a normative intercultural discourse plays a crucial role in building a stable and harmonious open society for everyone because of its civilizing impact. Thus, it would be a community's loss when it is taken for granted.

Modifying the various expressions of indigenous normativity judiciously into a normative intercultural discourse in the Cordillera can have a positive impact in the promotion of peace, respect, understanding, and reconciliation. Further, it expresses the ideals of discourse theory, such as freedom and equality, responding significantly and relevantly to the demands of the times. Working within the framework of an intercultural normative discourse can motivate the IPs to renew, modify, and enhance their capacity in responding sufficiently to various concerns. It can also allow people to do something about their differences by promoting mutual understanding of intentions through open-contestations and public dissent.

### **CONCLUSION**

A normative intercultural discourse is one of the most suitable approaches by which people from all walks of life could assist each other in securing the common good and

frustrating the tendency towards self-aggrandizement. It is a process and not an end in itself, which searches continuously how best to serve the concerns and needs of the people. One can describe it as a significant journey towards mutual recognition and harmonious integration of the political, social, and economic dimensions of life.

As a process, the normative intercultural discourse is hospitable to dissent and diverse views, treating them as ingredients to a fruitful and richer discussion. It respects the views raised by deliberative participants and accommodates them for consideration, review, and debate, hence transforming sectarian interests into mutual concerns. Accordingly, it leaves no room for violence and illegal coercion that dictate what people should think and do. Rather, it expresses the freedom to share and to debate on views and interests that can draw alternative options, important decisions, and worthwhile actions. Hence, participants of the intercultural discourse are expected to commit themselves to deliberation and cooperation in the pursuit of goals that support self-respect of peoples among other important values.

Indeed, the people of Cordillera do not lack approaches that can facilitate a respectful and constructive discourse. They have indigenous normative discourse practices to start with which can be sources of political insights. These can be modified and applied suitably to a broader political context, i.e., Cordillera-wide. Indigenous forms of discourses can thus continue to intensify the struggle for an effective and participative autonomous region. When maximized, they can help the Cordillera region re-examine and determine its political structures, needs, and objectives. Accordingly, the Cordillerans can craft laws and legislations that can represent their aspirations adequately.

The move towards a normative intercultural discourse in the Cordillera can affirm the superiority of deliberation and debate against hostile structures when tackling concerns affect the entire region. A sustained public discussion can immerse the Cordillerans into a broad range of interests, alternative options and issues, motivating them to become more politically involved. Significantly, aiming at a synergy of views through dialogue can also allow Cordillerans to advocate social cooperation and cohesion. Doing so can gradually eliminate unjust practices. It can also educate and change the mindset of the people who tend to perceive violence as an essential ingredient to get justice done. As such, through intercultural normative discourse processes, the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera can continue to rise above themselves. If this is correct, an intercultural normative discourse can accentuate a politically autonomous Cordillera nation that marches towards a more democratic and justice-oriented society for the indigenous peoples.

## NOTES

1. This paper has benefitted from the various workshops and seminars: “Modern and contemporary theories of normativity”(Kant Leuven Conference 2017) and “Justice seminar of Research in political philosophy”(Leuven 2016-17). I thank the participants and my colleagues and promotor, Antoon Vandeveldel, for their valuable comments that helped shape the arguments in the paper. My gratitude also goes to the editors of the journal, Prof. Jove Jim S. Aguas and the late Prof. Ronaldo Gripaldo and the anonymous reviewers for their instructive remarks.

2. Racial discrimination and stereotyping are not foreign to Cordillerans. The much-publicized statement from Gen. Carlos P. Romulo is one of the few examples. Romulo (1953,

59) claimed: “The fact remains that the Igorot is not Filipino and we are not related to them, and it hurts our feelings to see him pictured in American newspapers under such captions as ‘Typical Filipino Tribesman.’” Zenaida Pawid (1995, 143) responded with reference to her Ibaloy identity: “we know, we are Cordillerans because we are Ibaloy, and we are Filipinos because we are Cordillerans.” The derogatory and insulting remarks have not hindered the Cordilleran-Filipinos to fight for their rights. As a people, “having worth and dignity,” they must be respected just as anybody else. The question remains, however: How could Cordillerans further their unity and rally behind their claim as one “great race”?

3. By reasonable, I mean a matter of commitment to public ends and responsible action, considering the welfare of others (see Rawls 1997).

4. The BIBAK [Benguet, Ifugao, Bontoc, Apayao, Kalinga] Professional Association, Provincial Board of Benguet, Cordillera People’s Liberation Army, Cordillera Peoples Alliance, Cordillera Board Coalition, Kalinga Bodong Federation, and National Economic Development Authority supposedly contributed in the input.

5. Apparently, the “Igorots” identified in MarianoRodrigues’s account could refer to the non-Christian population of Benguet. For this suggestion, see June Prill-Brett’s (2015, 261-90) “Ethnohistory of Baguio.” In this article, she traced the movements and contacts of the inhabitants of Benguet with Spanish explorers.

6. One can note of the adopted sons and daughters of certain provinces, towns, and municipalities in the Cordillera region. However, on what basis can one become illegible as an adopted son or daughter of the Cordillera? What criteria should be applied? In the history of the Cordillera region, some personalities had been adopted sons and daughters by indigenous peoples because of their remarkable contribution to the upliftment and recognition of the said groups. Consider the missionaries and academics who were adopted even in the absence of any blood relations. Apparently, this claim indicates the possibility for a non-indigenous to share in the life of the indigenous peoples. This honor and privilege accorded to them suggest that the requirement to be treated as one of the indigenous peoples does not extend only within the domain of ancestry.

7. Deliberative participants are diverse but expected to be free from threat or coercion and have equal opportunities for their views to get heard. Hence, it is not coercion but the “force of the better argument” that legitimizes political choices. However, while it aims at mutual consensus, it is not always forthcoming. Apparently, it is one of the leading theories that emerged in recent years as an alternative to the aggregative model dominated by economic and rational choice theory. For further readings, see Jurgen Habermas (1984), John Rawls (1996), Jon Elster (1998), Joshua Cohen (1989), and Maeve Cooke (2002).

8. Some deliberative theorists claim that culture is crucial in the pursuit of a life-nurturing community. Culture is the very locus through which “socialization processes” take place among peoples, who are “composed at any given time.” It has also allowed them to “embody cultural forms of life in which they have developed their identity” (Habermas 1994, 126). The fact of culture expresses the worldviews of the people. Apparently, this gives it primacy among many other things in community life.

9. Apparently, many of those who compose the council of elders have a respected position in the community because of their economic status or heroic deeds.

10. The confluence, as it were, of deliberative theory and indigenous normativity suggests not a monolithic but a broad-range and variety of approaches when dealing with the

political life. In this regard, it does not accept the monopoly of one school of thought such as the universality of reason. Rather, passion and indigenous wisdom also play crucial roles.

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