ON THE HISTORICAL DIFFERENTIATION
OF PHILIPPINE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES
(LECTURE OUTLINE)

1. PRE- AND EARLY HISTORY. Callao Man (Homo Luzonensis), theorized to have existed as far back as 700,000 years ago, inhabited Luzon. A fossil of this Callao Man found in Cagayan Valley in 2007 was dated to be 67,000 years old and this is older than the human fossil called Tabon Man unearthed in Palawan, which is estimated to be 47,000 years old. Archaeological and genomic studies reveal that anatomically modern humans were present in Southeast Asia at least 40,000 years ago, when the current islands formed a continental shelf called Sundaland. In the Philippine Islands, Peninsular Malaysia, and Andaman Islands, there exists indigenous groups collectively called Negritos whose ancestry can be traced to the “First Sundaland People”. At about 4,500 years ago, Austronesian-speaking peoples in-migrated to the Philippines from Taiwan bringing with them a Neolithic culture which included pottery and agriculture. It is theorized that these Austronesians “drove” the Negritos to the mountains and peripheries of the islands. Overtime, the Negritos lost their original language and adopted the Austronesian language.

By the Christian era, the Neolithic-based culture of the Austronesians would flourish in Southeast Asia. Such culture included: sawah agriculture (rice paddy farming), domestication of cows and carabaos, use of metals and navigational skills; giving social importance to women and respecting the elders as authorities; animism, anito and ancestor worship, jar burial; and the art of tattooing. With such Neolithic-based culture as foundation, the Philippines would come in contact with the “Great Cultural Traditions of Asia”: Chinese, Arab, and Indian. Of these traditions, I would consider the Arab culture, particularly the Islam culture, as a case of how the early Philippine culture has been “historically differentiated”. Islam is an example of a non-indigenous religion (at least in the Philippines), which has differentiated the Neolithic-based culture that our Austronesian ancestors commonly shared prior to the Islamization of Southern Philippines. The Islamic culture brought with it the Sultanate, Arabic language, literature and arts, Shariah, etc., which significantly altered the social and political landscape of the Islamized communities. Starting in the 13th century in Mindanao, Islam’s influence reached Manila centuries later, but the coming of the Spaniards in the 16th century would “hinder” the spread of Islam in the archipelago.

2. SPANISH COLONIZATION. Under the Spanish regime, which lasted for more than 300 years, further differentiations would happen. Socially, people of Spanish Philippines would undergo changes in its social stratification. The Spaniards born in Spain (Peninsulares)
occupied the highest rank in the hierarchy while the Spaniards born in the Philippines (Insulares) were relegated to a lower position. The Insulares were labeled by the Peninsulares as “Filipinos” (with undertones of discrimination). The mestizo class (Spanish-Indio and Chinese-Indio mix) came next. The natives (Austronesian descent) of the Philippines were the lowest racial group and were labeled Indio. For those ethnic groups outside the Spanish control, they were labeled Moro (Muslims), Negritos (Aetas), and Tribus Independientes (independent tribes)—majority of which occupied ridges and valleys of the Gran Cordillera Central. The Spaniards branded these independent tribes “Infieles” (pagans) and “Ygolotes”, “Tingues”, “Mandayas” (all terms denote dwellers of the mountains).

The Case of the Igorots: “Igorot resistance to Spanish conquest was deliberate and continuous... They successfully defended their rugged territory no matter how many invading expeditions burned their fields and towns, and took care to keep their trails and trade routes secret... Missionary fathers were refused passage through the mountains for this reason as well as for fear of lowland epidemics like smallpox... Worst of all, they were subjects of no national state, neither the Spanish Empire nor any other: they recognized no authority save their own chieftains, and reared their children in such “abject liberty” they were hardly different from wild beasts...”

Under the Spanish regime, encomiendas (entrusted lands and their inhabitants) were established. The encomendero (trustee) was given the duty to “resettle the people – the original inhabitants of the islands – in permanent communities located in suitable places; establish a just government for them and teach them the Christian religion.” As a reward, “he was authorized to collect tributes, and recruit workers for public service (polo)”.

“The establishment of townships started the distinction between people who came under Spanish and Christian influence and those who refused to be so ruled. Eventually, those who remained outside the towns were driven further out into the forests and the mountains. With their traditional systems and practices intact, they were considered remontados (people who fled to the hills)” and joined the infieles.

3. AMERICAN COLONIZATION. Under the American Regime the Filipinos were categorized into: Christians (civilized tribes); and Non-Christians (wild tribes). The Christians would compose the “majority of the Filipinos [Indios]” who were Christianized by the Spaniards and remained Christians during the American period. The non-Christians were composed of the pagans and Moros of Mindanao. Director of Interior Dean Worcester, referring to the non-Christians, explained that, “the only characteristic which they have in common is their refusal to accept the Christian faith, and their adherence to their ancient religious belief...I am forced to employ the term ‘non-Christian’ although I fully recognize its awkwardness”. Such categories it became the basis of identity and colonial policy formations. In 1901, the
The Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (BNCT) was created to “study the conditions of pagans and Muslims and to conduct scientific investigations of these groups”. Almost two years later, BNCT became the Ethnological Survey of the Philippines. For the next ten years or so, non-Christians became objects of anthropological curiosities.

“In 1903, the Moro province was created for the non-Christians in Mindanao, and in 1908 a Mountain Province was created for those in Northern Luzon.” Based on the U.S. President W. McKinley’s instruction to the Philippine Commission, the U.S. colonial officials were to see to it that the non-Christians were to be treated “benevolently” and “protected” from the “surrounding civilization (Christians) to which they are unable or unwilling to conform”. In the case of the Igorots, for example, the Americans determined that these non-Christians were “weak, passive, and easily preyed upon by their Christian neighbors; hence, the creation of the Mountain Province has “tucked the Igorots in the safe and protective hands of the Americans”.

**ST. LOUIS FAIR OF 1904.** Officially called The Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904, the St. Louis Fair featured a Philippine Exposition, which included more than 70,000 exhibits… Entire villages were built to replicate those of the Visayans, Bagobos, Samals, Moros, Igorots, Tingguianes, Negritos and 30 other tribes. These villages were “stocked” with over a thousand tribal men, women, and children as living exhibits… It was a stunning visual extravaganza, which also popularized distorted images of the Philippines and its people… In the Negrito Village, half-naked Negrito men and boys displayed their bow and arrow skills to curious fair-haired men and boys in suits and bowler hats. The Igorot Village, spread over six acres with 100 natives, was a World’s Fair hit. Every day, throngs of curious Americans flocked to the village to witness the G-stringed tribe boil a dog for dinner… 50 “little savages” (a quote from a souvenir brochure) and a Filipina teacher, in a classroom in a nipa and bamboo cottage, went through a regular class day. Relieved visitors saw the students learning their ABCs and not Headhunting 101. Some tribes people, unaccustomed to winter, caught pneumonia and died. Not all of the tribal groups returned to the Philippines immediately. A large number of the Igorots ended up in Chicago, working again as live exhibits in another authentic village setting.

Part of the American’s “paternal” treatment of the non-Christian tribes was to educate them and “bring them up to the same cultural plane of, and into closer union with, the Christina Filipinos”. In 1914, the Harrison administration mandated the integration of the isolated non-Christians to the larger Filipino population. And in 1916, the Jones Law provided for the “mutual intelligence and complete fusion of all the Christians and non-Christian elements” in the country. Apparently, to be integrated meant to be educated in the Christian ways; hence, “education was the equalizing tool”. With Jones Law, the BNCT was re-established in 1917.
While the non-Christian tribes were being educated, exploitation of the natural resources of the Philippines gained ground. In Mountain Province, in present-day Benguet, for example, ex-servicemen of the Spanish-American of 1898 stayed and became gold prospectors. Failing to find gold, these adventurers established friendly relations with the Ibaloi and Kankanaey folks who adorned themselves with gold jewelry. Some of these Americans even married Kankanaey women. Eventually, “the Igorots led the Americans to the lode formations where native mine workings were found”.

The American colonial government introduced land registration in which communal resources such as mine sites became private properties. Through legislations, such as the Public Land Act of 1902, public lands were now “open and free for exploration, occupation, and purchase by citizens of both the United States and the Philippines”. This would consequently “disenfranchise the great majority of the inhabitants of the Philippines, most of whom found the idea of a documented land title alien and incomprehensible”. Of course, the non-Christians were disadvantaged by such law (being ignorant about land titles). Take the case of Mateo Carino vs. The Insular Government in 1906 as an instance. This case, which favored the Igorot’s claim of ownership of wide tracts of land in Baguio, highlighted the Supreme Court’s decision to recognize the right of traditional landowners over their ancestral lands. Unfortunately, the American colonial administrators ignored the Court’s decision and continued the exploitation of Carino’s ancestral lands.

4. POST WORLD WAR II. In 1954, amidst concerns of Muslim “banditry” against Christian in-migrants in Mindanao, which led to the redefinition of such “Moro Problem” as “nothing less than the problem of integrating into the Philippine body politic the Muslim population of the country, and the problem of inculcating into their minds that they are Filipinos and that this Government is their own and that they are part of it,” the Philippine Congress enacted a law that created the Commission on National Integration (CNI) in 1957. CNI was given the authority to “effectuate in a more rapid and complete manner the economic, social, moral and political advancement of the Non-Christian Filipinos”. Consequently, the Commission provided academic scholarships for the non-Christians, of which 16% of all scholarships were awarded to Muslims.

“In 1975, the Office of the Presidential Assistance on National Minorities (PANAMIN) was created and took over the affairs concerning only the non-Muslim minority; hence, CNI was abolished. The Southern Philippine Development Authority (SPDA) was created to take over the Muslim affairs, and handle various development projects. In 1978, through P.D. 1414, the national policy was ‘to integrate into the mainstream of Philippine Society certain ethnic groups which seek full integration into the larger community, and at the same time protect the rights of those who wish to preserve their original lifeways beside the larger community.’” This law directed the PANAMIN to implement its provisions. But while the PANAMIN had noble goals for the minorities, it was heavily criticized for its alleged role in aiding agribusiness corporations in displacing the minorities from their ancestral lands by
relocating the minorities to reservations. Other activities of PANAMIN included “prospecting mineral resources in minorities’ lands, arming minorities to create conflicts between groups, and the use of force and deceit against minority who resisted infrastructure projects that threaten their lives and culture”.

By 1981, the Ministry of Muslim Affairs was created as ordered by the President. “Its goal further reiterated the government’s policy of integrating the Muslim Filipinos into the national mainstream”. In 1984, the Ministry of Muslim Affairs absorbed the functions of PANAMIN after the latter was abolished due to allegations of corruption and its head abandoned the office; thus, the former was renamed Office of Cultural Communities, and renamed again as Office of Muslims Affairs and Cultural Communities (OMACC).

Since the CNI days, the national policy for cultural minorities has been integration into the national mainstream; however, the agencies created to achieve this goal have miserably failed due to unchecked gross violation of minorities’ rights over their ancestral lands. For the past three decades since the 1950s, “agribusiness (primarily fruit plantations in Mindanao), logging operations from northern Luzon to Mindanao and infrastructure programs have increased dramatically” in forested areas occupied by minorities. Commercial production of export-oriented crops intensified also during the Marcos regime. In effect, “lands previously owned and used by minority and majority peoples” have been acquired dubiously.

5. **POST-EDSA REVOLUTION.** In January 1987, the Office for Northern Cultural Communities (ONCC) and Office for Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC) were created by the national government “taking into consideration [the Tribal Filipinos’ or Indigenous Cultural Communities’] communal aspirations, customs, traditions, beliefs and interests in order to promote and preserve their rich cultural heritage and insure their participation, in the country’s development for national unity. The Office on Muslim Affairs (OMA) was likewise created “with the mandate of preserving and developing the culture, traditions, institutions and well-being of Muslim Filipinos, in conformity with the country’s laws and in consonance with national unity and development”. By 1997, by virtue of Republic Act No. 8371, ONCC and OSCC were merged to form the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), “which shall be the primary government agency responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies, plans and programs to recognize, protect and promote the rights of ICCs/IPs”.
MAIN REFERENCES:


