

## **The Fading *Batek*: Problematizing The Decline Of Traditional Tattoos In The Philippine Cordillera Region**

F.P.A. Demeterio III\*

*Filipino Department, De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines*

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper builds on the findings established by an earlier paper, entitled “The Traditional Tattoos of the Philippine Cordillera Region: a Study on their Differences in Appearances, Causes and Discursive Strengths,” written by the author together with his research team and was published in Volume 8, Number 2 of SEARCH Journal. The previous paper was a synchronic study of traditional tattooing among the eight ethnolinguistic groups of the said region to establish a baseline knowledge of such practice prior to the massive influx of modern and western influences mediated by the American occupation. However, this paper aims to: 1) show some diachronic accounts of the said traditional tattooing, 2) problematize the historical vanishing of the this cultural practice, and 3) lay down some proposals on how to preserve and resignify the same cultural practice. The eight ethnolinguistic groups of the Philippine Cordillera region covered by this paper are: the Ibalays, Kankana-eyes, Ifugaos, Bontoks, Southern Kalingas, Northern Kalingas, Itnegs and Isnegs. This paper is primarily a historical work that used archival and library materials, as well as key informant interviews for its data, and they are analyzed from the theoretical lens of Michel Foucault's archeology and genealogy of knowledge and Roland Barthes' semiology. The goal of this paper is to grasp the current status of traditional tattooing in the Philippine Cordillera region in order to have some foresight to, if not influence on, its future. This paper is the concluding part of a bigger project that was funded by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts of the Republic of the Philippines.

**Keywords: Batek, Philippine Traditional Tattoo, Cordillera Region, Epochal Change, Signification and Resignification**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

*Batek* is the generic word that this paper opted to use for the various words for “tattoo” in the Cordillera region of northern Philippines. By building on the findings established by another paper, entitled “The Traditional Tattoos of the Philippine Cordillera Region: a Study on their Differences in Appearances, Causes and Discursive

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\*Correspondence email: [feorillo.demeterio@dlsu.edu.ph](mailto:feorillo.demeterio@dlsu.edu.ph)

Strengths,” written by the author together with his research team and published in Volume 8, Number 2 of *SEARCH Journal*, this paper aims to: 1) show some diachronic accounts of the said traditional tattooing among the Ibaloy, Kankana-eys, Ifugaos, Bontoks, Southern Kalingas, Northern Kalingas, Itnegs and Isnegs, 2) understand the historical vanishing of the said cultural practice, and 3) lay down some proposals on how to preserve and resignify the same practice as an intangible cultural phenomenon.

To fulfil the objectives of this study, this paper has three substantive sections: 1) some diachronic accounts of traditional tattooing in the Philippine Cordillera region, 2) the problematization of the historical vanishing of the said cultural practice, and 3) some proposals on the preservation and resignification of the same cultural practice

This paper is made possible through funding from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts of the Republic of the Philippines, as well as the invaluable assistance of my students who did fieldwork in the provinces of Bontok, Mountain Province, Kalinga, and Ifugao: Dr. Janette Calimag, Dr. Bren Zafra, Ms. Lady Aileen Ambion, and Ms. Marjorie Santiago.

**1.1 Method**

The first substantive section of this paper looked at diachronic accounts of traditional tattooing in the Cordillera region, by pursuing a historical approach to the systemic changes of this cultural practice through four different periods of the region and the country as a whole: 1) the time of the Spanish attempts to control the said mountain region, 2) the American colonization, 3) the Japanese occupation, and 4) the Post-Second World War era to the present times. This section, therefore, made use of archival and library data from and about the said periods, as well as some insights and information the research team of this paper and one thesis student of the author gathered during three short field works in Bontok, Mountain Province, Tabuk City, Kalinga province, Banaue, Ifugao province, and Lagawe, Ifugao province, to interview some key informants. The names of these key informants, together with their designations, their towns and their specific interviewers are listed in Appendix A.

The second substantive section of this paper, composed of the problematization of the historical vanishing of the said cultural practice, reflected on the findings of the preliminary paper of Calimag, et al. (2016), as well as on the first substantive section of this paper using the archeological and genealogical frameworks developed by the French cultural critic and philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Briefly, archeology of knowledge aims to probe deeper into the intellectual collective subconscious of the culture and society that produced a given practice. It is structure-oriented and systems-oriented, and it analyzes the cultural landscape of such practice and asks the question: what made this particular practice meaningful and possible in the first place? (Foucault, 1972, p. 138). Foucault called this intellectual collective subconscious, or the structures and systems that make a given practice meaningful and possible, the “*episteme*” (Foucault, 1972, p. 191). *Epistemes* consolidate and crumble in accordance to the rise and fall of their respective groups of discourses and practices (Foucault, 1972, p. 192). However, the question on how these *epistemes* actually

consolidate and crumble is beyond the scope of archeology of knowledge, as it is only intent in grasping the characteristics of such *epistemes*. Thus, Foucault formulated a supplementary method which he called “genealogy of knowledge” that examines *epistemic* changes, as well as changes among groups of discourses and practices, by delving into their mundane and often embarrassing foundations and looking into the interconnections among knowledge, values and power (Foucault, 1984, p. 81).

The third and the last substantive section of this paper, composed of cataloguing the existing measures undertaken by some stakeholders and laying down additional measures to face the fading of traditional tattooing that is brought about by the *epistemic* changes in the Cordillera region, reflected again on the findings of the preliminary paper of Calimag, et al. (2016), as well as on the first and second substantive sections of this paper, and the insights and information that the research team of this paper gathered during the aforementioned three short field works. Such reflection was done using the semiological framework developed by an older French cultural critic and philosopher Roland Barthes (1915-1980). Barthes (1972) built on the semiology proposed by Saussure by using the latter’s notion of the sign as the signifier of a deeper signified which the former called “myth.” It must be clarified that “myth” for Barthes (1972) has nothing to do with ancient legends or folklores. Rather, his usage of the word is closer to its meaning as “contemporary beliefs,” or as “knowledges that are ephemeral.” For Barthes (1972), “myths” are discourses that are both visible and hidden beneath some icons of a given society, especially icons of popular culture. Table 1 shows the equivalences between the Saussurian sign and the Barthesian signification:

**Table 1.** The Equivalences between the Saussurian Sign and the Barthesian Signification

Saussurian Sign	Barthesian Signification
Signifier	Saussurian Sign/Cultural Icon
Signified	Myth
Sign	Signification

While the formation of the Saussurian sign is predominantly unmotivated, that is no one generally creates words, the Barthesian signification is motivated, that is there has to be a group of people behind the infusion of myths on cultural icons. Hence the Barthesian semiology proved to be a useful framework for the fourth substantive section because it provides an opportunity for the people of the Cordillera region and the Filipinos in general to salvage the damaged signification of traditional tattoos by infusing it with new myths through a process of resignification.

**2. DIACHRONIC ACCOUNTS OF BATEK IN THE CORDILLERA REGION**

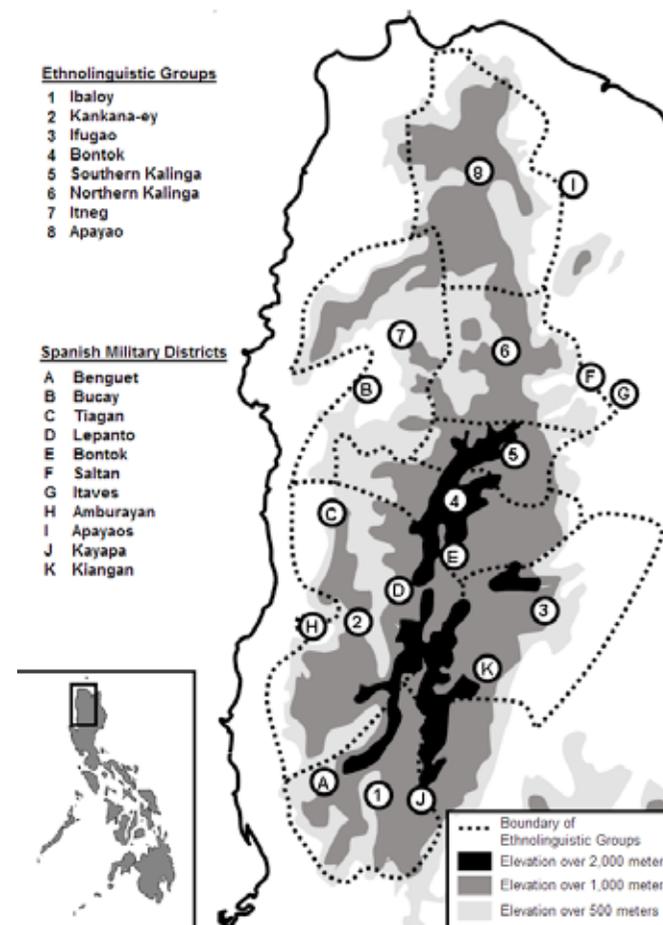
**2.1 Cordillera Tattooing during the Spanish Campaigns**

The Philippine Cordillera region happened to be rich with gold deposits, and for centuries its natives monopolized the mining of this precious metal, including silver

and copper. Hence, just after five years from conquering Manila, the Spanish explorers were already on the heights of Cordillera in search of the fabled gold mines (Scott, 1971, p. 703). But extracting gold in a very rugged terrain that is so far away from their main supplies and peopled with fierce and uncooperative natives proved to be not an economically viable venture for the Spanish explorers. The lure of the Cordillera gold turned out to be an inadequate motive for the conquistadors to permanently occupy the said mountainous region.

As Spain was supposed to own the Philippines also for the spiritual task of converting the heathens into Christianity, some Spanish missionaries feebly moved to convert some of the mountain people (Scott, 1982, p. 41). Altercations erupted from time to time between the Christianized lowlanders and pagan highlanders from disputes on rights on hunting and farming areas. Such altercations often resulted in headhunting raids that victimized the Christians, to which Spanish authorities responded with punitive attacks for the sake of establishing justice and soothing their wounded pride. Consequently, the renowned historian of the Cordillera, William Henry Scott (1921-1993) noted that from 1750 to the 1820s there had been no decade that was without such punitive attack (Scott, 1971, p. 703).

What finally pushed the Spaniards to permanently occupy the Cordillera region was neither gold, nor God, nor the glory of mother Spain, but tobacco that they themselves brought to the Philippines from the Americas. The highlanders apparently learned from the lowlanders how lucrative the tobacco leaves could be, especially at a time when its commerce was monopolized by the colonial government. The Spanish authorities simply could not allow the heathens of Cordillera region to sabotage their precious trade on tobacco (Scott, 1971, p. 715). Thus, by the 1830s, campaigns were made to build military districts in the said region. From 1846 to 1847, the military districts of Benguet, Bucay and Tiagan were established; in 1852, the military district of Lepanto; in 1857, the military district of Bontok; in 1859, the military district of Saltan; and from 1889 to 1891, the military districts of Itaves, Amburayan, Apayaos, Kayapa and Kiangan. Figure 1 presents the location of these military districts relative to the territories of the eight major ethnolinguistic groups covered by this study.



**Figure 1.** The Spanish Military Districts in the Cordillera Region on a Map Showing Roy Barton's (1930) Rendering of the Territories of the Eight Major Ethnolinguistic Groups and William Henry Scott's Rendering of the Topography of the Said Region

With almost a dozen Spanish military districts scattered over the Philippine Cordillera region, it would be tempting to think that the Christianization and Hispanization of the area happened swiftly. But things did not turn out that way. Apparently, the Spanish authorities were burdened with an international legal principle that a western nation could not anymore colonize any people against their will (Scott, 1971, p. 697).

Certainly, the Cordillera highlanders, who resisted the Spanish conquest for the past three centuries, would not suddenly will that they be colonized. In fact, the highlanders did not envy the modernized ways of life of the Filipino lowlanders. On the contrary, the highlanders looked at themselves as luckier than the lowlanders for they remained masters of their own lives. Hence, the Spaniards could only maintain their military districts in the said region, not as center for propagating Christianity and the Hispanic civilization, but as mere outposts to assure that the pagan highlanders would not bother the Christians of the plains or further sabotage the prized tobacco monopoly (Scott, 1982, p. 42).

To a large extent, the Spanish presence in the Philippine Cordillera region was not able to disrupt the cultures and ways of life of the different ethnolinguistic groups that inhabited the said region. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that headhunting and tattooing also persisted during this Spanish occupation. Among the eight major ethnolinguistic groups, only the Ibalays and Kankana-eyes did not practice headhunting and their traditional tattooing was noted to be fading practices. But these may not be directly due to the presence of the five military districts in their territories, as these could also be the effect of their more intense trade interactions with the lowland Pangasinans and Ilocanos. It was the Ibalays and the Kankana-eyes who had more direct control of the gold mines.

Albert Jenks (1869-1953), an American anthropologist who stayed in the Philippines from 1902 to 1905 and who was involved with the exhibition of some Bontoks at the Saint Louis' World Fair, had the perspective that the Spaniards, with their divide and rule tactic, on the contrary, caused the intensification of headhunting at least in the Bontok territory (Jenks, 1905, p. 39). What is more certain for the whole of the Philippine Cordillera region was the chaos and bloodshed during the Philippine-Spanish Revolution, when the Spanish forces either retreated or were killed by the natives, as the natives under the fading Spanish control relapsed to their old ways (Barrows, 1903). Hence, when the Americans came to the mountainous area to establish a civil government, headhunting and tattooing remained strong cultural practices among the majority of the native inhabitants of the said region.

## 2.2 Cordillera Tattooing during the American Colonization

The Treaty of Paris of 1898 that concluded the Spanish-American war, gave the United States of America the right to control the Philippines as a whole, including ironically the areas that Spain was not able to totally control, such as the Muslim Mindanao and some areas of the Philippine Cordillera region. It was the controversial figure of Dean Worcester (1866-1924) who convinced the Americans to fully occupy and exploit the said mountainous region. Worcester had been to the Philippines twice during the Spanish colonial period for some scientific expeditions as a student of zoology at the University of Michigan. It was during those times that he learned about the mountains of Luzon with a temperate climate and abundant natural resources. When the Americans took over the country, President William McKinley (1843-1901) organized the Philippine Commission, under Jacob Schurmann (1854-

1942), to make a comprehensive baseline report about the archipelago. Worcester was part of that Commission and he persuaded the other members to mention the potential of Cordillera as a sanitarium for the American personnel, summer residence for the government employees, and source of natural riches (Fry, 1983, p. 1-2).

In the preliminary paper of Calimag, et al. (2016), the historical baseline on traditional tattooing was primarily constructed using Worcester's "The Non-Christian Tribes of Northern Luzon" of 1906, and the Belgian missionary Morice Vanoverbergh's *Dress and Adornment in the Mountain Province of Luzon, Philippine Islands* of 1929. Yet in between these two landmark works on traditional tattoos of the Philippine Cordillera region is a bifurcation point that distinguished two different colonial policies occasioned by the Democratic interlude of the otherwise long stretch of Republican leadership in the United States of America during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, prior to 1913, it was Republican ideology that shaped the American policy on how to handle the inhabitants of the Philippine Cordillera region (Fry, 1983, p. 88-90).

McKinley instructed the American colonial government in the Philippines that the unchristianized and unhispanized Filipinos should be handled in accordance with their time tested policy for the handling of the Native Americans, which specified the latter's seclusion in a reserve in order for them to conserve their cultures and institutions (Fry, 1983, p. 16). Worcester was appointed to be part of the Second Philippine Commission, this time under William Taft (1857-1930), which had both legislative and executive functions in the American colonial government. From 1901 to 1913, Worcester served as the Secretary of the Interior of the said Commission that gave him direct responsibilities over the unchristianized and unhispanized Filipinos, including the inhabitants of the Philippine Cordillera region. He, therefore, became the main implementer of the Republican policy on the isolationist and conservationist handling of the highlanders of northern Luzon. Worcester did not duplicate the hostile and domineering approach of the Spanish conquistadors. Instead, he used a more friendly and benevolent posture to gain entry to the mountainous area (Worcester, 1913, p. 1243).

In 1913, Worcester published an article, practically occupying the whole issue of *National Geographic Magazine*, where he detailed the accomplishments of the American colonial government in the Philippine Cordillera region. He said that from 1901 to 1907 the Americans were busy trying to establish their baseline knowledge on the peoples and cultures of the said region, and this was accompanied by the construction of trails with low inclinations so as to be resistant to landslides (Worcester, 1913, p. 1240). He boasted that out of these trails grew cart roads that stretched to a thousand miles by 1913, where the intervening and cumbersome flying ferries were replaced with more reliable bridges (Worcester, 1913, p. 1243). Peace and order were maintained by police forces manned by trained natives and overseen by appointed governors and lieutenant governors acting as judges from time to time. These checked on the dreaded headhunting practices of a number of ethnolinguistic groups. Health was taken care of by a hospital in Baguio and Bontok and several clinics that provide

vaccinations among other things. Schools were established using English instruction for the propagation of industrial and agricultural skills. As a sign of their adherence to the Republican isolationist and conservationist policy, the Americans did not impose on the natives, except on school children, to change their ways of clothing, and the much publicized commercial exchange or periodic trading of goods which was limited to the inhabitants of the said mountainous region (Worcester, 1913, p. 1254 & 1255). This Republican ideology was the reason why in the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Vanoverbergh (1929) was still able to notice traditional tattooing among the highlanders of northern Luzon.

The lineage of Republican Presidents of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century from McKinley to Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) to Taft was broken by Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), who became the President of the United States of America from 1913 to 1921. If the Republicans wanted to keep the Philippines as an American colony for an indefinite period of time and used the backwardness of the unchristianized and unhispanized natives as a proof that the American rule was needed to civilize the archipelago, the Democrats were interested in granting independence to the Filipinos (Fry, 1983, p. 88-90). Wilson appointed Francis Harrison (1873-1957) as the sixth American Governor General of the Philippine Islands, and the person who replaced Worcester was Winifred Denison (1873-1919), who although a Republican was committed to the Democratic idea of Filipinizing the archipelago.

After surveying for themselves the Philippine Cordillera region, Harrison and Denison came to the conclusion that the Republican policy of isolating the inhabitants of the said region and conserving their cultures and institutions did not deliver its intended outcome just as the same policy failed in improving the lives of the Native Americans. Harrison and Denison, therefore, broke the barriers that separated the highlanders and the lowlanders and made it a point that from that time on the highlanders and lowlanders would embrace modernity and westernization together (Fry, 1983, p. 90-91). Their approach in handling the unchristianized and unhispanized Filipinos became the template on how the Americans would henceforth handle the said people, even though Wilson was succeeded by another chain of Republican Presidents: Warren Harding (1865-1923), Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933), and Herbert Hoover (1874-1964) (Fry, 1983, p. 118). The reason why the traditional tattooing of the Philippine Cordillera region that Vanoverbergh (1929) saw in the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was not as vibrant as the one seen by Worcester in the first decade of the same century was that the Cordillera region was already managed by a colonial government that was more interested in bringing in modernization and westernization than in conserving native cultures and institutions.

### **2.3 Cordillera Tattooing during the Japanese Occupation**

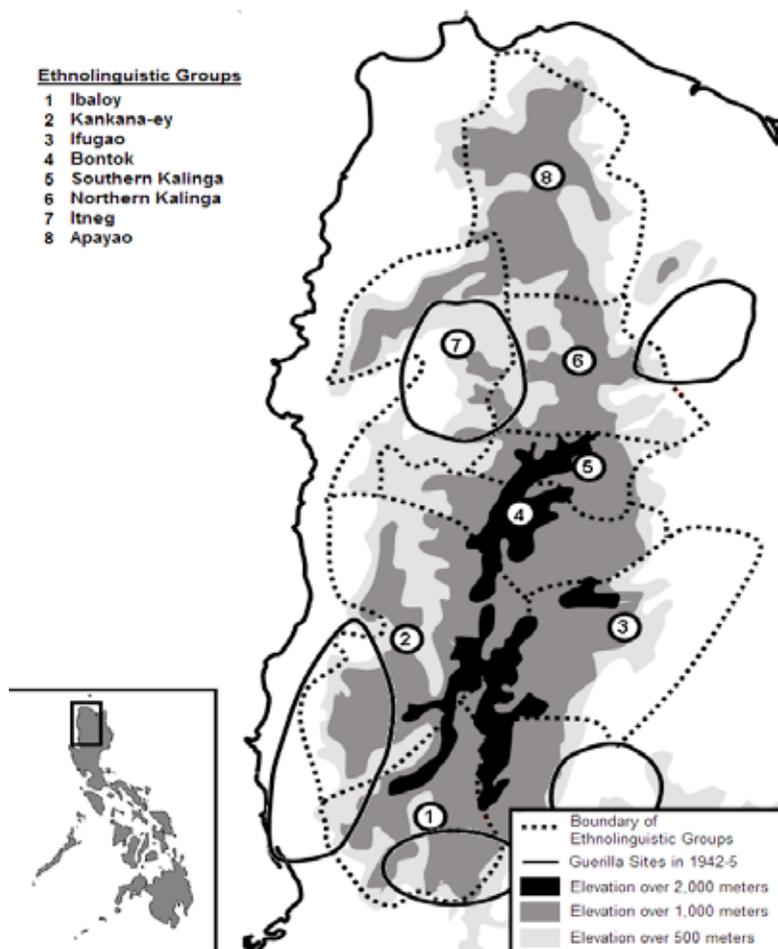
The Philippine Cordillera region had been under American control for over 40 years, and under the more aggressive assimilationist modernizing and westernizing program of the same colonial power for over 25 years, when the Pearl Harbor, in Oahu, Hawaii, was bombed by the Japanese Imperial forces towards the end of 1941. In less than

ten hours after that aggression, Japanese forces already disabled the Clark Airbase in Pampanga, allowing them to have small naval landings in Aparri, in Cagayan, and Vigan, in Ilocos Norte, in preparation for the naval landing of their main forces in Lingayen, Pangasinan (Rottman, p. 273). All these happened in a span of less than 15 days. Before the same year ended, Baguio, the summer capital of the American colonial government, which was within the Ibaloy territory, surrendered without a fight to the Japanese invaders.

The Japanese forces appeared to be interested in controlling the Philippine Cordillera region because, as already suggested, it nestled the summer capital of the Americans, it had rich copper mines that in wartime proved to be even more valuable than gold, and it was a natural fortress against American and Filipino counterattacks. Furthermore, as this will become obvious towards the end of the Pacific War, the Philippine Cordillera, together with the neighboring Caraballo and the Sierra Madre mountain ranges formed a natural barrier for the rich agricultural plains of Nueva Vizcaya, Isabela and Cagayan, and with Cagayan having a coastline that is easily accessible from the Japanese controlled Formosa (Andrade, 1996, p. 26). Thus, after the territory of the Ibaloy was occupied, early the following year, the Japanese proceeded to occupy, among others, the territories of the Bontoks, Kalingas, Isnags and Ifugaos (Fry, 1983, p. 191).

As the bombing of the Pearl Harbor disabled the Pacific Fleet of the United States of America, the Philippines could not expect immediate reinforcement and assistance against the Japanese Imperial forces. The American and Filipino fighters eventually surrendered in the second quarter of 1942, with their remnants engaged in guerilla warfare while waiting for the American deliverance that would eventually come more than two years after.

In the Philippine Cordillera region, the presence of Japanese forces and bands of American and Filipino guerillas created confusion among the highlanders, as some of the Japanese were kind and friendly while some guerillas demanded food and supplies from locals (Fry, 1983, p. 198-200). Figure 2 presents an estimate of the locations of the Filipino and American guerillas from 1942 to 1945 relative to the territories of the eight major ethnolinguistic groups of the said mountainous region (MacArthur, 1966, p. 299).



**Figure 2.** MacArthur’s Estimated Locations of the Major Guerilla Units in the Philippine Cordillera Region in 1942 to 1945

Despite the confusion in the Philippine Cordillera region, the inhabitants in general still assisted directly or indirectly the Filipino and American guerillas. In fact, a number of Cordillera inhabitants who were working in the American mines at the outbreak of the Japanese invasion became part of the guerrilla movement (Chaput, 1987, p. 55-56). Towards the end of the Pacific War, the Philippine Cordillera region would witness fiercer battles as it was to this area where the Shobu group, the main Japanese force in the Philippine archipelago that was directly under the dreaded General Tomoyuki Yamashita (1885-1946), retreated and entrenched itself. Yamashita finally surrendered

in the territory of the Ifugaos on the same day when Japan signed its formal surrender in the third quarter of 1945.

Due to the chaos and bloodshed brought about by the Pacific War, some of the Cordillera people, who were extensively and intensively pacified by the Americans for the past 40 years, relapsed into warfare and headhunting. It was from this War that Lakay Ollasic, an informant of the Cordillera anthropologist Ikin Salvador-Amores, earned his warrior’s tattoo together with 50 other Southern Kalinga fighters (Salvador-Amores, 2002a, p. 115). It was also from this War that Lakay Miguel, an informant of the American tattoo anthropologist Lars Krutak, earned his warrior’s tattoo (Krutak, 2009). At the time of his interview, Lakay Miguel still had a Japanese jawbone serving as the handle of his brass gong (Krutak, 2009). It was also from this War that Lakay Ayat, an informant of a graduate student from the University of Utrecht, Tom Kips, earned his tattoo after taking two Japanese heads and spearing three other (Kips, 2010, p. 23).

**2.4 Cordillera Tattooing after the Second World War to the Present**

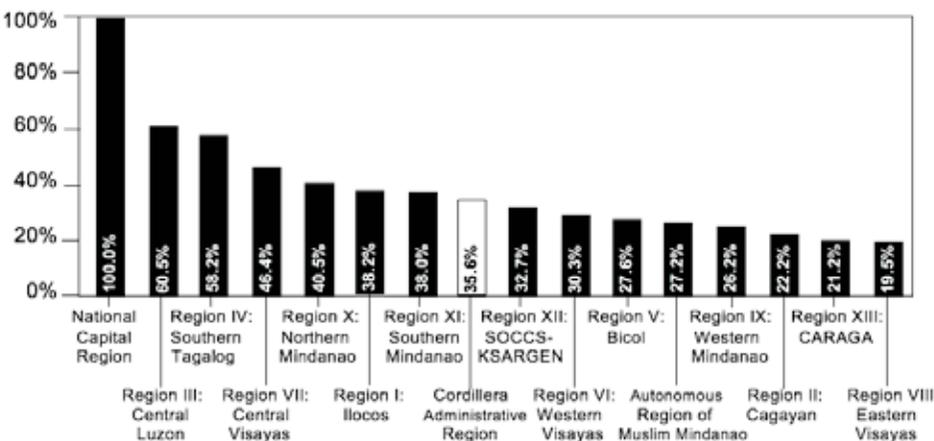
The Americans organized the Philippine Cordillera region as one political unit, named Mountain Province in 1907 with six sub-provinces: Benguet, Lepanto-Bontoc, Amburayan, Ifugao, Kalinga and Apayao. Abra, the territory of the Itnegs, was not part of this unified province as it was already made into a separate military province in 1846 by the Spanish colonial power. In 1920, however, the sub-province of Amburayan was dissolved; two decades after the Japanese occupation, Mountain Province was reorganized into four provinces: Benguet, Ifugao, Mountain Province and Kalinga-Apayao; in 1987, these four provinces, together with Abra, were placed under one administrative region, the Cordillera Administrative Region, and in 1995, Kalinga-Apayao was divided into the provinces of Kalinga and Apayao. Hence, the present Philippine Cordillera region is now composed of six provinces: Benguet, Ifugao, Mountain Province, Kalinga, Abra and Apayao, which more or less are the territories of the eight major ethnelinguistic groups studied in this paper.

Within these periods of municipal, provincial and regional restructuring, and at a micro-level, a very significant change happened in 1955 when the national government tried to rationalize and embed democracy more deeply on the barrios/barangays by stipulating that from that moment on all village officials should be elected by their constituents (Madale, 1973, p. 237). The former plutocratic, timocratic and gerontocratic villages of the Philippine Cordillera had to follow the democratization of the rest of the Philippine barrios/barangays by putting their votes on their plutocratic and aristocratic leaders.

The period after the Pacific War up to the present is generally characterized by development, modernization, Christianization, and westernization of the Philippine Cordillera region, processes that are antithetical to the native practices of headhunting and tattooing (Kips, 2010, p. 39; Salvador-Amores, 2002a, p. 127). The Christianization of the said region, which was feebly started by the Spanish missionaries and pursued more effectively by the Americans with the assistance of Protestant missionaries and

some Catholic Belgian priests had converted the formerly pagan highlanders into a population that is now 65.7% Roman Catholic, 8.9% Christian Evangelical, and 2.9% adherence to the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2003). It is noticeable that all of the five elderly tattooed women from Kalinga province and Mountain Province who were interviewed for this project already had Christian names: Mary, Marylyn, Vicenta, Cynthia, and Donata. The available statistics simply lumped the remaining 22.3% as followers of other religious affiliations that are certainly still predominated by Christianity (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2003). Hence the Christianization of the said region had definitely surpassed 80% of its current population.

The main drivers and, circularly speaking, effects/signs of these development, modernization and westernization of the Philippine Cordillera region are urbanization, education, mobility of people in and out of the said region, and mass communication. In 2010, the urbanization of this region was 35.6%, a remarkable state considering that it practically started with zero percent at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lindfield & Singru, 2014, p. 9). Furthermore, Figure 3 shows that such stage of urbanization is higher than some of the older and predominantly lowland regions like Western Visayas, Bicol, Cagayan, and Eastern Visayas that started their urban growths during the Spanish colonial period (Lindfield & Singru, 2014, p. 9).



**Figure 3.** Comparison of the Levels of Urbanization of the 16 Administrative Regions of the Philippines

Education is another key driver/effect/sign of development, modernization and westernization of the Philippine Cordillera region. From the time of the American Republican isolationist policy for this region, education had been used to carefully instill new values on the Cordillera youth, and such strategy became more intense

with the impetus sown by the Democrats, with their integrationist policy for this same region. At present there are about 1,500 public elementary schools, about 290 public high schools, and 56 tertiary educational institutions both public and private in the Cordillera Administrative Region (Department of Education, 2013; Commission on Higher Education, 2013, p. 7). These public elementary and high schools have current combined enrollments of 337,483, while these public and private tertiary educational institutions have a current enrollment of over 100,000 (Department of Education; Distribution of Higher Education Enrollment by Sector and Region, 2013). If we can bring in the enrollment figures of the private elementary and high schools, the total school attendance in this region would easily be more than a quarter of the region's total population and even approach a third of this same population. The secular and religious values and aesthetics instilled by this network of educational centers on the Cordillera youth are some of the most potent factors that are eradicating headhunting and traditional tattooing.

The mobility of people in and out of the region is another key driver/effect/sign of development, modernization and westernization of the same region. In terms of outward mobility, one of the primary causes is tertiary education, as the best colleges and universities are concentrated in Benguet and Kalinga provinces. Other highlanders would even opt to pursue tertiary education at some neighboring lowland urban centers, if not at the National Capital Region itself. Trade and work are the other primary reasons, as agricultural highlanders would be encouraged to seek commerce with people from other localities, while non-agricultural highlanders would be forced to take jobs at urban centers. Thousands and thousands of highlanders, predominantly females, are not just moving to nearby urban center but are joining the lowland Filipinos in looking for employment as Overseas Filipino Workers. In terms of inward mobility, one of primary causes is tourism that brings in more than a million local and foreign tourists each year, a staggering number for a region that is only populated by about one and a half million highlanders. Another cause for inward mobility is that portion of student body that is not from the Cordillera region but was attracted to Benguet and Kalinga provinces that were packaged as university towns since the 1960s (Fry, 1983, p. 224). Another cause for this inward mobility is the transient or long term stays of technicians, supervisors and managers of the region's mining, electrical, electronic and communication industries. Another cause for inward mobility is the migration of some more enterprising lowlanders, mostly Ilocanos, who intend to make a living on the highlands. A proof of this Ilocano migration is the fact that the lingua franca in the Cordillera region has already been the Ilocano language. The exposure of the Cordillera highlanders to the cultures of the more dominant lowlanders have made them look down on their own culture and traditions and aspire to adopt the more dominant cultures and traditions of these lowlanders (Kips, 2010; Salvador-Amores, 2012).

Mass communication that propagates national and western ideals and aesthetics is another driver/effect/sign of these development, modernization and westernization. The whole region was already 86.2% covered by mobile services in 2008 (National

Economic Development Authority, 2010, p. 68). Five national companies were providing broadband access and internet connection to some area of the said region in 2008 (National Economic Development Authority, 2010, p. 68). The region also had 26 cable television companies and 31 radio stations in that same year (National Economic Development Authority, 2010, p. 68). Exposure to these means of communication and mass communication creates a nationalized and westernized culture among the youth that make them yearn for these more advanced cultures.

### 3. PROBLEMATIZING THE FADING BATEK

Calimag, et al. (2016), had established that there were eight traditional reasons why the different ethnolinguistic groups of the Philippine Cordillera region pursued tattooing. In the order of the most recurrent to the least recurrent, these reasons were: 1) some tattoos were simply considered aesthetic devices that were there to compliment the clothing and jewelry of the people (rank 1.0); 2) some tattoos increased the sex appeal and desirability of individuals and were taken to be signs of fertility, especially when found among females (rank 2.0); 3) some tattoos were believed to have curative powers, especially against goiters and other abnormal growths (rank 3.0); 4) some tattoos were taken as symbols of valor that were earned by individuals or groups after a successful headhunting (rank 4.5); 5) some tattoos were supposed to have protective powers against some malevolent ancestral spirits (*anitos*) (rank 4.5); 6) some tattoos were taken as markers of economic prestige that were earned after hosting huge community feasts (*canaos*) (rank 6.5); 7) some tattoos were meant to be rites of passage from one stage/status of life to another (rank 6.5); and 8) some tattoos were understood as proprietary markers that identified the owners and their marked livestock (rank 8.0). This second substantive section would therefore archeologically and genealogically explore the *epistemes* and *epistemic* changes relative to each of these eight reasons. However, for the sake of avoiding repetitious arguments, some of these reasons have to be treated together as they prove to be more intimately related with each other.

#### 3.1 *Tattoo as Aesthetic Device, Enhancer of Sex Appeal and Symbol of Fertility*

Aesthetics and sex appeal are culture bound attitudes that would prove to be fragile when their circumscribing culture is suddenly made relative through the presence of other cultures, especially those that are deemed superior and can therefore exert hegemonic influence on the initial circumscribing culture. The episteme that made traditional tattooing look beautiful and sexy among the people of Cordillera was continuously challenged and eroded by the influx of lowland Philippine cultures as well as those of the Americans and the Japanese, and currently by western-dominated mass communication. Through the supposedly benevolent, developmental and integrationist policy of the American colonizers, the people of the Cordillera eventually shed off the once proud stance they showed the Spanish colonizers and eventually accepted the superiority of the lowland and foreign cultures. In their yearning to become part of these more developed and progressive cultures, the Cordillera people adopted the aesthetics and standards of these exogenous cultures. Thus, traditional

tattooing as devices that were intended to complement the Cordillera people's clothing and jewelry and as devices that were intended to enhance their sex appeal became no longer fashionable. Many of the still traditionally tattooed highlanders would actually conceal their markings under long sleeves whenever they go the urban centers in the Cordillera region or in the lowlands and abroad. The elderly tattooed woman Vicenta Teelen of Kalinga province who was interviewed for this project narrated how she overheard a comment while in Vigan City, province of Ilocos Sur, accusing her as a murderer. Another elderly tattooed woman Donata Fagyan of Mountain Province who was also interviewed for this project admitted that she indeed covered her tattoos especially when going abroad. The once beautiful and sexy devices have gradually become ugly and shameful markings.

Furthermore, the episteme that made the Cordillera people recognize traditional tattoos as symbol of fertility among females was eroded by the western science that undergird the educational system that the American colonizers planted on the said mountain region. Such episteme was further eroded by the increase of population in the Cordillera region caused by the improvements in maternal and health care, and nutrition, and the suppression of tribal conflicts. This increasing number of Cordillera people had changed the primacy of reproduction in their hierarchy of motives for marriage. Christianity and modern family laws had also contributed to the crumbling of such episteme.

#### 3.2 *Tattoo as Medicinal Process and Protection from some Evil Anitos*

The episteme that imbued traditional tattoos with curative power for goiters and other abnormal growths, as well as protective power from some evil *anitos*, was also eroded by the influx of lowland and foreign cultures in the Philippine Cordillera region. In particular, the campaigns for sanitation, vaccination, health care and proper nutrition that were started by the American colonizers changed the traditional etiology of the highlanders as they come to understand bacteria, virus and nutritional deficiencies as the real causes of their ailments. Such campaigns were reinforced by education that propagated the more scientific and modern outlook, as well as by Christianity that assailed the myths on the evil *anitos*. Of the five elderly tattooed women who were interviewed for this project, none has a recollection that their tattoos were once a cultural practice that was related to medicine and religion.

#### 3.3 *Tattoo as Symbol of Valor*

There had been three major forces that destroyed the episteme that provide traditional tattooing with the signification of valor in the Philippine Cordillera region. The first one of these was the pacification undertaken by the Americans even prior to their assimilationist and integrationist colonial policy for the said region. The Americans made it a point that the vicious cycle of headhunting and revenge should end. They did this by training the former village warriors to become part of the colonial police and constabulary forces. By making these former warriors the very enforcers of their anti-headhunting drive, the Americans greatly reduced the number of potential

headhunters in the persons of these former warriors. Since these native police and constabulary personnel were immersed in their own social contexts, they proved to be effective in preventing the other highlanders in engaging in headhunting or pursuing vengeance with their own hands (Worcester, 1906). The symbol of valor for these native police and constabulary personnel was no longer the traditional tattoo but bits and pieces of the western police or constabulary uniform. By ensuring that justice was the business of the state, the Americans were able to drastically cut the vicious cycle of headhunting and revenge. Another strategy used by the Americans to suppress headhunting was actually not to isolate the villages from one another but to encourage their interactions through a network of roads and trails and by organizing the commercial exchanges or periodic trading of goods among the highlanders.

The second of these major forces that destroyed the episteme that provided traditional tattooing with the signification of valor in the Philippine Cordillera region was Christianity. By promoting the primacy of the value of human life over the traditional values of revenge, honor and prestige and even over the traditional practices of headhunting as a condition for marriage or as part of the mourning custom, Christianity replaced traditional tattoo's signification of valor with the signification of darkness and evil.

The third of these major forces that destroyed the episteme that provided traditional tattooing with the signification of valor was the Barrio Act of 1955 that implanted democracy deep into the Philippine villages. In the Cordillera region, this democratic reorganization of the barrio/barangay made the formerly plutocratic, timocratic and gerontocratic villages simply plutocratic and aristocratic. This meant that the quest for and display of valor was no longer a pathway towards leadership and prestige for a brave highlander. The capital needed to vie for leadership and recognition in a post 1955 Cordillera village was no longer the number of heads taken and its corresponding headhunter's tattoos but educational achievement and economic success.

Although all of the five elderly tattooed women who were interviewed for this project are aware of the connection between their traditional tattooing and the valor of their warriors, none of them would say that their own tattoos are connected with their warriors' valor.

### 3.4 *Tattoo as Marker of Economic Status and Property*

Traditional tattooing as marker of economic prestige was recorded only among the Ibalays, the same ethnolinguistic group that had been most vulnerable to the onslaught of lowland culture because of their proximity to Pangasinan and Ilocano settlements as well as their trade in gold that necessitated interaction with the lowlanders. Hence, it should not be surprising to know that as early as the times of Worcester and Vanoverbergh Ibaloy, traditional tattooing had already been noted as a fading practice. This interaction with the lowlanders and foreigners was intensified starting the American colonization when the Ibaloy territory, specifically Baguio City, was made the summer capital of the colonial government and later on developed as the primary urban and educational center of the Cordillera region. These circumstances

and changes placed the episteme that gave particular Ibaloy tattoos the signification of economic prestige in a very precarious situation. Two more specific forces unraveled this episteme. The first one of these was the Ibalays' shift from subsistence to cash economy that changed the manner of displaying economic status from the dispersion of wealth through *canaos* to the accumulation of wealth and their consequent use for the purchase of lands, houses, and other modern paraphernalia, and secure the education of children (Adonis, 2011, p. 185). The hosting of *canaos* and the subsequent earning of particular tattoos became less and less significant for the most highly urbanized people of the Cordillera region. The second of these more specific forces was again Christianity that labelled the hosting of *canaos* not only as a pagan practice but also as an anti-economically progressive activity (Adonis, 2011, p. 185).

Like the Ibaloy practice of tattooing as marker of economic prestige, the Itneg practice of tattooing as proprietary marker was also an isolated phenomenon in the Philippine Cordillera region. It has to be remembered that the Itnegs had also been very vulnerable to the onslaught of lowland culture due to their proximity to the Ilocanos. In this context, the aesthetics of the lowland Filipinos that abhorred tattooing could be the main reason for the fading of the Itneg custom of tattooing as a system of establishing ownership of livestock. This inconvenient and isolated practice could have been made obsolete by the drastic improvement of literacy among the Itnegs that provided the possibility of substituting the personalized logo that had to be imprinted on both the owner and the animals, with initials that had to be imprinted on the animals alone. Another probable cause for the fading of this practice could be the emphasis on private ownership of lands introduced by the American colonizers that necessitated the containment of livestock in their respective owners' land, minimizing the problem of the animals' intermingling and their subsequent need for ownership identification.

### 3.5 *Tattoo as Rite of Passage*

Traditional tattooing as rite of passage was recorded only among the Southern Kalingas through the recent yet deep anthropological probing conducted by Salvador-Amores among some of the sub-groups of this particular ethnolinguistic group in which ample traces of traditional tattooing persisted to the present times. However a closer look at her essay "Traditional Tattoos and Identities in Contemporary Kalinga" would reveal that the rites of passage that involved tattooing among the Southern Kalingas were intertwined with the other reasons for pursuing traditional tattooing such as manifesting valor, enhancing sex appeal and signifying fertility, having spiritual protection from evil *anitos*, and sheer aesthetics (Salvador-Amores, 2002a). Thus, the discussions above on how the epistemes that supported these other reasons had been eroded by the influx of lowland and foreign cultures, the establishment of western education, the increase in population, the propagation of Christianity, the suppression of headhunting, and the introduction of a cash economy, contributed to the erosion of the episteme that supported the practice of traditional tattooing as rite of passage.

Those Southern Kalinga life events that may not be directly linked to the other

reasons for pursuing traditional tattooing were made obsolete by the spread of western and Christian life events that do not necessitate tattooing, such as baptisms, birthdays, schooling and graduations, debuts and the attainment of legal maturity, and marriage. In the western and Christian mind frame the onset of puberty is not acknowledged with any elaborate ritual and the attainment of the marriageable state has been separated from this biological event and placed in a much later state, such as the attainment of legal maturity or graduation from high school or college. Christianity and the western educational system had also changed the customs for courtship in the Cordillera region. The traditional ritual dances, where adolescent Southern Kalingas would traditionally display their tattoos with the hope of attracting a marriage partner, had been replaced with the more prolonged interaction of young men and women in high school or college.

### 3.6 *Irreversibility of Epistemic Changes*

The story of the fading of the traditional *batek* of the Philippine Cordillera region is a story of its erosion brought about by developmental forces that blanketed the said region starting the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the influx of the more advanced lowland Philippine and foreign cultures; the establishment of western education that emphasized science over traditional knowledge and folklore; increase in population brought about by western sanitation and healthcare; the introduction of Christianity; suppression of headhunting and inter-tribal conflicts; democratization; the change from agricultural subsistence economy into a cash economy; the increase in literacy; the introduction of private ownership; and the prevalence of civic western and Christian rites of passage. These changes triggered epistemic changes that made the reasons for pursuing traditional tattooing no longer meaningful. It is unfortunate that these epistemic changes are irreversible for no one in his/her right mind frame would wish to suppress these developmental forces and bring back the Philippine Cordillera region to its more pristine pre-colonial form so as to reinstate the vigor and vitality of traditional tattooing.

## 4. PRESERVATION AND RESIGNIFICATION OF BATEK

The erosion of the epistemes that made having traditional tattoos meaningful among the various ethnolinguistic groups of the Philippine Cordillera region had to be accepted as irreversible before sound steps towards the preservation of these traditional tattoos can be undertaken. This paper proposes that such preservation may be pursued under the framework of Barthesian semiology, as this can provide an opportunity for the people of the Cordillera region and the Filipinos in general to salvage the damaged signification of traditional tattoos by infusing it with new myths through the process of resignification. Salvador-Amores already tackled these themes on the fading and re-emergence of the traditional Cordillera tattoos through her concepts of “recontextualization” and “reinvention,” and Kips did the same, albeit in a more constricted sense, through his concept of “globalization” (Kips, 2010; Salvador-Amores, 2012b). This paper insists that the Barthesian concept of resignification, as

something that is overtly active, can not only subsume both Salvador-Amores and Kips’ concepts, but can more effectively draw the interest and commitment of the people of the Cordillera region and the Filipinos in general to invest these traditional tattoos with ethnic and nationalistic myths and save them from their otherwise looming obliteration.

### 4.1 *The Iconic Figure of Whang-Od Oggay*

If not for her national and international fame that started in the late 1990s and early 2000s and consolidated by her appearance in Discovery Channel and countless testimonies and comments in the social media, Whang-Od Oggay would have been the last traditional tattooist of Southern Kalinga and probably of the whole Philippine Cordillera area. It is estimated that from the stream of local and foreign enthusiasts who are trekking to her isolated village in Kalinga Province, this nonagenarian is earning more than ten times compared to the minimum wage earner in Metro Manila. She had the foresight to train some of her relatives in the craft of traditional tattooing: Kalina Suyam who is in her late fifties, and the much younger Grace Palical and Ilyang Wigan.

According to Lorraine Alunday-Ngao-I, tourism officer of Kalinga Province who was interviewed for this paper, the local government is making plans of training some young Kalingas in this craft with the hope of establishing other traditional tattooing sites in the province: “You know, Whang-Od is now very old, we have plans to conduct tattoo seminars so that we can at least preserve the culture of traditional tattooing.” Alunday-Ngao-I, however, specified that the participants of this training must come from families that in the past practiced the said craft in deference to the Southern Kalinga belief that the mastery of the same craft can only be passed on to blood relatives: “In our seminar, we plan to train others we desire to become traditional tattoo artists, but they have to be screened. They have to be actually traditional tattoo artists. . . tattooing runs in the family, it has a lineage.”

According to Natividad Suguiyao, the Provincial Director of the National Commission for Indigenous People in Kalinga who was interviewed for this paper, detached from their original epistemes the traditional tattoos given by Whang-Od are actually “reinterpretations” of the real Southern Kalinga tattoo, or “recontextualizations” and “reinventions” if one would prefer Salvador-Amores’ terminology. The provincial government of Kalinga is trying to recontextualize and reinvent further the Southern Kalinga tattoo. The Bontoks and the Ifugaos, who at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were supposed to be bearers of discursively strong tattooing traditions, may benchmark on the revival efforts undertaken by the Kalingas and recontextualize and reinvent as well their own traditional tattoos. They may no longer have a living traditional tattooist, but they too can train younger Bontoks and Ifugaos to resurrect their ancient craft and perhaps boost tourism in some of their sites. In the near future, some of these trained Southern Kalinga, Bontok, and Ifugao traditional tattooist can offer their services in Baguio City, the epicenter of tourism in the Philippine Cordillera region.

Just for the sake of displaying the beauty of the traditional Cordillera tattoos and educating the younger Filipinos and foreign visitors about their significance, nothing should stop the more enterprising individuals in Cordillera in giving henna versions to tourists who may be hesitant to have the more painful and indelible markings. Since the Filipino nation should appropriate the traditional Cordillera tattoos as national icons, nothing should also stop the existing henna shops and stalls in Boracay and Palawan, and other similar summer tourist destinations, to market the said Cordillera tattoos instead of or together with their more modern and western designs. Under the resignification strategy espoused by this paper, these softer approach of propagating the traditional tattoo designs are acceptable as long as their rich cultural contexts and lores are properly explained to the tourist/vacationist-clients.

#### **4.2 Identity Politics of the *Tatak ng Apat na Alon* Tribe and Other Advocates**

Around the time when Whang-Od was steadily rising to national and international fame, Elle Festin, a Filipino-American in California who majored in anthropology, became fascinated with Polynesian tattoos that were being revived since the 1970s. While talking to a Tahitian tattooist, Festin was challenged to discover his own Filipino tattooing tradition and spur its revival. Festin founded the *Tatak ng Apat na Alon* (Mark of the Four Waves) Tribe to advocate the revival of traditional Filipino tattoos among Filipinos in diaspora and eventually became a tattooist himself specializing in the traditional hand tapping technique that turned out to be a common method in the Pacific area. Today, the *Tatak ng Apat na Alon* Tribe has more than 500 tattooed members of Filipino descent (Orphilla). Traditional Filipino tattoos, including the ones from the Cordillera region, were used by these predominantly young diasporic Filipinos as part of their identity politics to emphasize their ethnic origin as distinct from those of the dominant whites as well as from those of the other minority ethnic groups. The activities of this organization were the primary referent of Kips' "globalization" concept.

When the tattooists of the *Tatak ng Apat na Alon* Tribe custom design a tattoo for a member or prospective member, they usually root the design on a specific traditional ethnic or regional Philippine tattoo. Hence, these tattooist would ask their members or prospective members about the latter's place of origin in the Philippines, and if the latter were born in diaspora, the former would ask them about their parents' or grandparents' place of origin in the said country (*Tatak ng Apat na Alon* Tribe). Although the organization starts with specific traditional ethnic or regional Philippine tattoo, when these markings are finally presented to the western world, these are all nationalized as Filipino tattoos. At this point the group should realize that the hunger for Philippine cultural symbols is something that can be felt also by the non-diasporic Filipinos, such as the students and young professionals, as much as it is felt by their diasporic counterparts. Thus, the services of the *Tatak ng Apat na Alon* Tribe of custom designing Filipino tattoos, if not its membership, could be extended to these non-diasporic young Filipinos.

There are two famous cultural advocates from the Cordillera region who had the

courage of having their bodies tattooed as an explication of their commitment to this otherwise fading cultural practice. The first one is Suguiyao who has traditional Southern Kalinga tattoos in her arms, shoulders and collar. She proudly said: "At the age of 62, I'm one of the youngest women who have traditional tattoos. . . . But my art of having tattoo is for its preservation. This is somehow a reinterpretation of a Kalinga woman before. I have it because I want to serve as a living canvass." The second one is Salvador-Amores, the foremost authority on Cordillera tattoos in the present times, who as a member of the *Tatak ng Apat na Alon* Tribe has a smaller custom designed tattoo on her back. Ma. Cirila Bawer, of the Kalinga-Apayao State University who was interviewed for this paper, intended to have a traditional tattoo but found it a little inappropriate for an academic to have such markings: "It is really okay to have traditional tattoos in my university, but I just do not want my students to stare at my tattoos while I am teaching." She proudly stated that at least three of her younger sisters have traditional tattoos to manifest their support for this cultural practice. Definitely, more cultural advocates, scholars and students should help in the preservation of the fading Philippine tattoos by having their own bodies marked.

#### **4.3 Appropriation in Textiles and Clothing**

Salvador-Amores mentioned two specific recontextualizations and reinventions of the traditional Philippine Cordillera tattoos: one through the adaptation done by Roberto Feleo, a fine arts professor at the University of the Philippines Diliman, of an Ibaloy tattoo design that was recorded by the German explorer Hans Mayer in 1885 as an embroidery on a *barong Tagalog* (traditional Filipino formal shirt for males); and the other through the appropriation of traditionally tattooed persons as designs for contemporary t-shirts (Salvador-Amores, 2012b). However, because of the subtle color scheme of *barong Tagalogs* the recontextualization/reinvention of the Ibaloy tattoo is not very recognizable without an accompanying explanation by the wearer. Furthermore, the t-shirt designs only indirectly recontextualized/reinvented the various Philippine Cordillera tattoos because they do not present the traditional Cordillera tattoos but the iconic photographs and renditions of persons with these traditional Cordillera tattoos. Perhaps a more obvious and direct recontextualization/reinvention should be to reproduce these Ibaloy, or Ifugao, or Bontok, or Southern Kalinga arms, chest and back designs on long sleeved and short sleeved t-shirts and market them as tourist souvenir or specialty products. White prints on black fabric would be as good as black prints on white fabric. Arm, hand and leg designs from traditional Cordillera tattoos can also be printed on loose sleeves, gloves, leggings and board shorts and marketed the same way. Traditional motifs and designs can also be printed on handkerchiefs and scarves.

#### **4.4 Presence in Festivals**

According to Alunday-Ngao-I, Kalinga Province is conscious about the need to preserve the traditional Southern Kalinga tattoos: "The province helps to advertise [its traditional tattoos]. Before, the government is only interested in infrastructure, not so

much on culture. But now, culture is given attention.” Hence, aside from its efforts in training younger traditional tattooists, the annual Batok Festival is organized in Tabuk City every October with the intention of propagating the consciousness and pride among modern Kalingas about this fading cultural practice. Tattooed elders would congregate in this city and display their markings, while seminars and workshops are conducted on how these markings are traditionally made. Every May, the Tam-Awan International Arts Festival is celebrated in Baguio City. Often, traditional Cordillera tattoos are featured in this art and culture festival. But since the traditional tattooists of the other ethnolinguistic groups are gone, the workshops and presentations become partial to Southern Kalinga tattoos. Both the Batok Festival and the dominance of the Southern Kalinga tattoos at the Tam-Awan International Arts Festival should be construed as a challenge to the other ethnolinguistic groups, especially the Bontoks and Ifugaos, to undertake their own consciousness raising to arrest the total fading of their traditional tattoos.

Every November, the Grand Cordillera Festival is celebrated in Baguio City, where a parade of the different major ethnolinguistic groups in their colorful traditional costumes and tattoos is usually done. A closer look, however, at these tattoos would reveal some hurriedly executed drawings on the skins of the performers using felt tipped pen. To make it more effective and raise a beneficial consciousness, effort and time can be invested to make these impermanent markings more faithful to their respective traditional designs. In as far as the preservation of the traditional Cordillera tattoos are concerned, the Grand Cordillera Festival can be an educational opportunity not only for those who draw these fake tattoos, but also for those who receive them as well as those who watch the whole parade.

Every September, a national tattoo convention, *Dutdutan*, is held in Manila through the efforts of the Philippine Tattoo Artists Guild. Traces of the motifs from the Philippine Cordillera region find their way into this annual event, but these are usually drowned by the sea of foreign and contemporary designs. This annual event is a good venue for the municipal governments, provincial governments and the regional administration of the Philippine Cordillera to more systematically showcase the traditional Cordillera tattoos by investing in booths and by lobbying for workshop and presentation slots. The tattoo enthusiasts in the National Capital Region and nearby regions can easily appreciate these traditional expressions if somebody would take the trouble of properly introducing them to the beauty, value and significance of these traditional tattoos.

#### 4.5 *The Demand for Documentation and Curation*

The preservation of the traditional Cordillera tattoos requires a more comprehensive and intensive documentation of the existing photographs and texts as well as of the living tattooed individuals and tattooists. Many of the old colonial photographs need to be electronically retrieved and copied from their various archives here in the country and abroad. Some of these photographs need to be enhanced and reconstructed due to the fact that some tattoos are not easily visible in these photographs' black and

white and sepia prints. Scholarly video documentaries need to be made not only about Southern Kalinga tattoos but also about the traditional tattoos of the other seven major ethnolinguistic groups. The bigger and the more endowed museums in Baguio City, Tabuk City and Metro Manila can invest in life-sized wax images, if not in three-dimensional holograms, of tattooed Cordillera men and women. The smaller museums in the Cordillera region can create wall panel expositions on these same tattooed men and women, or smaller wax images. Some of the tattooed Ibaloy mummies need to be preserved more properly to prevent their further deterioration.

#### 4.6 *Some Bold Proposals*

Lastly, if this paper will be allowed to proffer some more bold proposals, it would be the recontextualization, reinvention and resignification of the traditional Cordillera tattoo as a community recognition once again but in a non-bloody and gory way. The local governments of the Cordillera region may award the right of getting specific tattoos to Cordillera citizens who rendered exemplary service to their respective communities in various fields such as education, business, medicine, and the like. Such award may only be the form of a right and may or may not be actually pursued by the recipient, and it should therefore be given together with other tokens of recognition such as medals or special citations. In this manner highlanders may proudly display some tattoos just as their ancestors proudly displayed their headhunter's tattoos. This suggested award can be extended to the police and military personnel who likewise rendered exemplary service to their respective communities and the nation as a whole. In this manner, echoes of the discourse behind the headhunter's tattoo can be revived in the modern Cordillera societies.

### 5. CONCLUSION

This paper showed some diachronic accounts that explained the epistemic fading of traditional Cordillera tattoos since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This paper also problematized the historical vanishing of the said cultural practice and realized that such epistemic fading is something irreversible and to preserve the physical and tangible traces of the same practice would necessarily involve the process of resignification, or recontextualization and reinvention. This paper also examined the current efforts undertaken by various stakeholders to address this epistemic fading and laid down some more strategies to further address the same phenomenon.

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## APPENDIX A: KEY INFORMANTS

Key Informant	Reason for Selection	Address	Interviewer	Date Interviewed
Mrs. Natividad Suguiyao	She is knowledgeable of the traditional tattoos of the Cordillera Region in general and of the Kalinga province in particular. She is the Provincial Director of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples in Kalinga Province.	Tabuk City, Kalinga	Dr. Janette Calimag, Dr. Bren Zafra, & Ms. Lady Aileen Ambion	May 2, 2015
Ms. Maria Cirila Bawer	She is knowledgeable about the traditional tattoos of the Cordillera Region in general and of the Kalinga province in particular. She is currently writing a dissertation on these tattoos while holding an academic position at the Kalinga-Apayao State University.	Tabuk City, Kalinga	Dr. Janette Calimag, Dr. Bren Zafra, & Ms. Lady Aileen Ambion	May 2, 2015
Ms. Lorraine Alunday-Ngao-I	She is knowledgeable about the efforts undertaken by the Kalinga province to preserve its traditional tattoos. She is the Tourism Officer of the Kalinga province.	Tabuk City, Kalinga	Dr. Janette Calimag, Dr. Bren Zafra, & Ms. Lady Aileen Ambion	May 2, 2015
Mrs. Mary Otto-Pagtan	She is an octogenarian with traditional tattoos from the Kalinga province.	Tabuk City, Kalinga	Dr. Janette Calimag, Dr. Bren Zafra, & Ms. Lady Aileen Ambion	May 2, 2015
Mrs. Marylyn Tumbali	She is an octogenarian with traditional tattoos from the Kalinga province.	Tabuk City, Kalinga	Dr. Janette Calimag, Dr. Bren Zafra, & Ms. Lady Aileen Ambion	May 2, 2015

Mrs. Vicenta Teelen	She is an octogenarian with traditional tattoos from Mountain Province.	Bontok, Mountain Province	Dr. Janette Calimag, Dr. Bren Zafra, & Ms. Lady Aileen Ambion	May 15, 2015
Mrs. Cynthia Miing	She is an octogenarian with traditional tattoos from Mountain Province.	Bontok, Mountain Province	Dr. Janette Calimag, Dr. Bren Zafra, & Ms. Lady Aileen Ambion	May 15, 2015
Mrs. Donata Fagyan	She is an octogenarian with traditional tattoos from Mountain Province.	Bontok, Mountain Province	Dr. Janette Calimag, Dr. Bren Zafra, & Ms. Lady Aileen Ambion	May 15, 2015
Mr. Benzie Ngayawan Catbagan	He is knowledgeable about Ifugao culture in general. He is working at the Banaue Inn Museum.	Banaue, Ifugao	Ms. Marjorie Santiago	June 7, 2016
Ms. Annie Dumangeng Pebenito	She is knowledgeable about Ifugao culture in general. She is working at the Lagawe Cultural Center.	Lagawe, Ifugao	Ms. Marjorie Santiago	June 7, 2016
Mr. Charlie Farmoca	He is knowledgeable about Ifugao culture in general. He is working at the Lagawe Cultural Center.	Lagawe, Ifugao	Ms. Marjorie Santiago	June 7, 2016

**F.P.A. Demeterio III** is a professor of Filipino language and culture and the director of the University Research Coordination Office at the De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines. He has published three books and more than sixty scholarly articles on Philippine studies, cultural studies, and Filipino philosophy.