In Search of Self-determination

by Nestor T. Castro

Approximately 4.5 million Filipinos, or 6.9 percent of the total Philippine population, are considered as indigenous peoples.\(^1\) Republic Act No. 8371, otherwise known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, defined "indigenous people" (IP) as:

A group of people or 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.\(^2\)

More than forty (40) distinct groups make up the indigenous peoples of the Philippines. They are mainly found in the relatively isolated areas of the country. Among the better-known groups are the Mangyans of Mindoro Island, the non-Christian and non-Muslim Lumads of Mindanao, the various Negrito bands that are spread out across the archipelago, and the peoples of the Cordillera.

Cordillera: The Physical Setting

The Cordillera, found in northern Luzon, is the homeland of the biggest group of indigenous peoples in the Philippines. The area is now officially known as the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), one of the newest administrative regions in the country having been formed only in 1988. The region has six (6) provinces, namely Benguet, Ifugao, Mountain Province, Abra, Kalinga, and Apayao. The provincial capitals are La Trinidad, Lagawe, Bontoc, Bangued, Tabuk, and Kabugao, respectively.
There is one chartered city - Baguio, which serves as the regional capital and the foremost educational center in northern Luzon. Because of its cool climate, Baguio has also been referred to as the country's summer capital and is thus a favorite tourist destination especially during the summer months.

This region is named after the Gran Cordillera Central, a series of parallel mountain ranges that run along the backbone of the central portion of northern Luzon. The Gran Cordillera rises abruptly from the sea at Pasaleng, on the boundary of provinces of Cagayan and Ilocos Norte. It further rises to an elevation of 2,000 meters, thus separating the latter province from Apayao. Southward to Kalinga the mountain peaks reach up to 2,400 meters in height. Further south, in Benguet, is Mount Pulag with an elevation of 2,920 meters above sea level. This is the highest mountain in Luzon and the second highest in the country.

Mt. Pulag has been declared as a Protected Area by virtue of Republic Act No. 7586, establishing the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS). The Mt. Pulag National Park covers 11,500 hectares. It is rich in terms of biodiversity, particularly in flora and fauna associated with mossy pine forests. The Park is home to seventy, seven (77) species of birds as well as endemic mammals, such as the Philippine deer, wild boar, the Luzon gray shrew, Philippine flying fox, long haired fruit bat, and the giant cloud rat.

Most of the big rivers of northern Luzon have their headwaters on the Gran Cordiller. Four of these rivers trace their source from Mount Data in Mountain Province: the Agno River which flows into the Lingayen Gulf through the provinces of Benguet and Pangasinan; the Suyoc River which flows into Abra; the Asin River which flows into the Magat in Cagayan Valley; and the Chico River which flows into Cagayan through Kalinga.

Because of the presence of deep gorges, the Cordillera has been the host to several hydroelectric power projects. The oldest hydroelectric dams in the country, the Ambuklao and Binga dams, were established along the Agno during the 1950s. There is also the Bakun A/C Small Hydropower Project in Kibungan, Benguet. The biggest dam in Southeast Asia, the San Roque Multipurpose Project (SRMP), is currently under construction and is located at the Pangasinan side of the Agno although it will create a huge reservoir that will reach up to Itogon, Benguet.
The Cordillera is known for its rich mineral resources, such as gold and copper, which are found especially along the Agno. Several gold mines were established in the area, e.g. Itogon, Balatoc, SuyOC, and Antamok, as well as in Lepanto in Mankayan and Batong Buhay in Kalinga. Gold panning is also a common economic activity among the communities along the Agno River.

*The Peoples of the Cordillera*

The biggest concentration of indigenous peoples in the country is found in the Cordillera region of northern Luzon. As of 1998, there were 1,252,962 individuals in the Cordillera who were considered as belonging to indigenous peoples. This accounted to about 28 percent of the total population of IPs in the country.

The Cordillera mountain range is the traditional homeland of the Cordillera peoples. Commonly referred to by outsiders as "Igorots", the peoples of the Cordillera are actually made up of various ethnolinguistic groups, each with their own distinct language and culture. It is a myth to portray Cordillera society as belonging to a homogenous culture. There are variations in terms of subsistence patterns, architectural styles, weaving patterns, folklore, and material culture, among others. These cultural variations are reflective of the various ethnolinguistic groups of the Cordillera.

The peoples of the Cordillera are the Kalinga (of Kalinga Province), Itnag (of Apayao), Itneg or Tinguijan (of Abra), Bontok and Aplay (of Mountain Province), Ifugao (of Ifugao Province), Kankanaey, Ibaloy, I'wak, Karao, Kataguan, and Mandek-ey (of Benguet), and the Kalanguya or Ikalahan (of the Benguet-Ifugao- Nueva Vizcaya border). Culturally, the Bago of Ilocos Sur and the Yapayao of Ilocos Norte also belong to the Cordillera peoples. Each of the aforementioned groups has its own language although all of these languages belong to the Northern Philippine stock of the Austronesian languages. Ilocano, however, remains as the lingua franca in the region.

The Cordillera region is known for its rice terrace culture, especially among the southern ethnolinguistic groups. The Banaue Rice Terraces, which prehistorians claim to be approximately 2,500 to 3,500 years old, has been proclaimed as a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO.

Cordilleran culture is marked by a strong sense of communalism. Although homelots are classified as private property and rice fields family-owned, the forests are generally regarded as communal in
Anyone from the community can hunt in the forest and utilize its resources. Swidden (*kaingin*) farms are governed by the principle of usufruct, i.e. you are the owner of the land as long as you use it; once the land is abandoned, the land reverts to communal ownership.

There are several social leveling mechanisms operating in Cordilleran society that encourage the redistribution of wealth. The holding of *canaos* (ritual feasts) falls within this category. One sponsors a feast because of a good harvest, for wedding ceremonies, in times of death, to forge peace pacts, and on many other occasions. The entire village, as well as the neighboring villages, is invited to partake of the food. The richer host is required by custom to hold longer days of feasting than the poorer ones. In the process, the rich host’s wealth is redistributed and in return, he gains prestige.

Except for the Ibaloy in the mining districts who attained a class society, the Cordillera is generally classified as a rank society. Class societies are societies that have unequal access to economic resources, prestige, and power. On the other hand, in rank societies there is unequal access to prestige but all segments of society have equal access to economic resources and power. In the traditional Ifugao society, for example, the social structure is made up of people belonging to the *kadangyan* (upper rank) and those of the *nawotwot* (lower rank).

*The Formation of minority Group*

Although the Cordillerans form the vast majority of the population of the Cordillera region, they have always been referred to as "minorities", i.e. "national minorities", "cultural minorities", or "ethnic minorities".

The Philippines is made up of more than a hundred ethnolinguistic groups. The possession of a language distinct from that spoken by other groups is a primary criterion for ethnic identity although other factors also contribute to this identity, such as history, religion, and subsistence pattern. The cultural diversity of the Philippines is not surprising given the archipelagic character of the country.

Despite the multi-ethnic character of the country, only eight! (8) ethnolinguistic groups constitute about 87 percent of the entire population. These are the Tagalog, Sugbuhanon (or Cebuano), Iloko (or Ilocano), Hiligaynon (or Ilongo), Bikol, Waray (or Samar-Levre).
Kapampangan (or Pampango), and Pangasinan. These eight groups, therefore, make up the numerical majority of the country's population while the rest, including the Cordillerans, are the minority.\(^5\)

The term "minority", however, has its political undertones. It has come to mean that these peoples have cultures that are different from the dominant lowland Christian majority. The Spaniards called them *tribus salvajes* or savage tribes. The Americans, on the other hand, referred to them as "non-Christian tribes" and formed in October 1901 a specific agency, the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribe (BNCT), to "civilize and Christianize" these peoples.

Prior to the coming of the colonizers, however, the cultures of the low landers were not very different from their counterparts in the hinterlands. Based on early Spanish chronicles, the Visayans of the 16th century wore g-strings, tattooed their bodies, and engaged in endemic warfare just like the Kalingas of the 20th century. Thus, colonization can be considered as the trigger process that brought about the dichotomy of the Filipinos into the "majority" and "minorities". Those who have been acculturated to the ways of the colonizers have become the majority while those who have managed to resist Westernization have become the "minority".

Specific to the Cordillera, the peoples in the area became distinct from the rest of society because they were successful in thwarting Spanish incursions into the area. While the Spaniards managed to establish politico-military districts in Lepanto and Amburayan, these were short-lived due to continuous Igorot revolts.

On the other hand, the neighboring Ilocanos and Pangasinenses succumbed to Spanish colonial rule. Prior to the latter's hispanization, the Ilocanos and the Pangasinenses were no different from those of the Cordillerans. Linguistically, for example, the Ilocano language is closer to Kankanaey than the latter is to Ifugao. Similarly, the Pangasinan language is more related to Ibaloy than the latter is to Bontok. Moreover, there are anthropological evidences indicating that the Ibaloy and Pangasinenses had a common ancestry. The Ibaloy trace their origins from Lingayen Gulf but the group traveled upward to the Cordillera during the prehistoric period by following the Agno River." The links between the upland Ibaloy and the lowland Pangasinenses was severely curtailed, however, during the Spanish colonial period. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that the present Pangasinenses are basically Igorots who have been hispanized.

The Americans were relatively more successful in their
pacification campaigns in the Cordillera. Unlike the Spaniards, they did not resort to a purely military strategy. They co-opted the native elite by appointing them as petty officials within the colonial political structure. These included, for example, the Carino, Carantes, and Fianza families among the Ibaloy. In Ifugao, there were cases where the American governors took Ifugao wives from those belonging to *kadangyan* (upper rank) families thus assuring their acceptance by the community and the recognition of their socio-political status.

The American colonizers also employed the divide-and-rule strategy against the Filipinos. They encouraged and reinforced the mistrust of the minorities on the lowland Christian groups. Thus, the cultural differences between the Cordillerans and the lowlanders were maintained and, to a certain extent, even institutionalized. Of course, the Cordillerans also benefited from this policy by being able to preserve their indigenous culture.

The Americans were able to consolidate their political control in the Cordillera with the establishment by the Philippine Commission of the Mountain Province in 1908. This new province, with Bontoc as the provincial capital, had seven (7) sub-provinces: Benguet, Amburayan, Lepanto, Ifugao, Bontoc, Kalinga, and Apayao. There was a governor for the entire province and one lieutenant, governor for each sub-province.

*Partitioning the Cordillera*

While the country gained formal independence from the Americans in 1946, many of the colonial policies vis-à-vis indigenous peoples were continued by the Philippine State. The former BCNT established by the Americans was transformed into the Commission on National Integration (CNI) which, as its name suggests, aimed to integrate the national minorities into the mainstream of society. This would imply that the minorities were considered as "deviants" from what Filipino culture "ought to be", i.e. the same as the culture of the lowland Christian groups. The Philippines was projected as the only Christian nation in Asia. Thus, to be non-Christian was "unfilipino".

On June 8, 1966, the Mountain Province was subdivided into four (4) provinces, namely Benguet, Ifugao, Mountain Province, and Kalinga-Apayao. Large portions of the former sub-provinces of Amburayan and Lepanto were ceded to Ilocos Sur and La Union while the rest was divided between Benguet and Mountain Province.

Since then, the Cordillera was administered separately by the
Philippine government through two administrative regions: Region (Ilocos Region) and Region II (Cagayan Valley Region). Benguet an Mountain Province belonged to Region I while the provinces of Kalinga-Apayao and Ifugao were under the jurisdiction of Region II.

The splitting of the Cordillera was in line with the government's strategy of treating the region as resource areas for Ilocos and the Cagayan Valley. Because of this, there was dissatisfaction from among the Cordillerans that development thrusts in northern Luzon were primarily geared towards the lowland areas while the Cordillera itself has largely remained underdeveloped. Thus, in the early 1970s there was a movement initiated by Cordillera intellectuals to call for the establishment of Region XIV, which was to be composed of the Cordillera provinces. This movement, however, did not prosper because of the declaration of martial law in 1972.

*The Communist Movement*

In January 1971, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) sent a young cadre, named Ka Julius, to Ifugao to establish a foothold in the Cordillera. The Cordillera was envisioned by the CPP leadership as an ideal place for its Central Revolutionary Base where it would set up its provisional revolutionary government prior to the actual seizure of power in Manila.

Being an Ifugao himself, Ka Julius was able to recruit young Ifugaos for military training in the New People's Army (NPA) camp in Isabela. These trainees eventually formed the first NPA squad in the Cordillera. Initially, the NPA unit focused its operations in Banaue through the assistance of a local opposition politician in the area. Eventually, the group expanded its operations to include Benguet and Mountain Province. These expansion units were wiped out by the Philippine military however, upon the declaration of martial law by President Ferdinand Marcos in September 1972.

In 1973, the NPA sent an expansion team to Abra. This led to the formation of a specific regional organization of the CPP in charge of the Cordillera and the neighboring provinces of Ilocos and Pangasinan. This CPP unit was called the Northwestern Luzon Regional Party Committee (NWLRPC) with the village of Hapao in Ifugao as its base of operations.

In 1974, the Montanosa Branch of the NWLRPC conducted an assessment of its operations in Ifugao. It noted the dwindling membership of the NPA in the area. It attributed this problem to the fact that the Ifugaos could not easily identify with the Filipino
struggle for "national liberation" since, according to them, they did not even see themselves as part of the larger Filipino nation. Moreover, feudalism was absent in Ifugao while the CPP-NPA strategy stressed on the waging of an anti-feudal revolution. The NPA, for example, organized the nawotwot (lower rank) against the kadangyan (upper rank) consistent with its line of "class struggle". The move, however, brought more disaster as it brought internal conflict within a previously harmonious society.

Because of this, the Montanosa Branch proposed the establishment of an Igorot Liberation Army (ILA) separate from that of the NPA. The proposal, however, did not gain ground as the Central Committee of the CPP rejected the plan. Meanwhile, the NPA in Ifugao and Abra continued to suffer military setbacks.

*The Chico Dam Issue*

In 1974, the Marcos government was looking for alternative sources of energy due to the global oil crisis. Plans were made to develop more hydroelectric dams in many parts of the country, among them in Mountain Province and Kalinga.

The proposed Chico River Basin Development Project (CRBDP) called for the establishment of four (4) dams along the Chico River to generate 1010 megawatts of electricity. Chico I dam was planned to be constructed in Sabangan and Chico II in Sadanga, both in Mountain Province. Chico III, on the other hand, was to be built in Basao while Chico IV would be built in Tomiangan, both in the sub-province of Kalinga. The total land area to be submerged was 2,753 hectares. If pushed through, the Project would have displaced approximately 100,000 Kalingas and Bontoks from their ancestral lands. It was estimated that Ph 1 million worth of fruits, vegetables, and grains would be lost annually when the dam inundated the farms of 5,000 families."

Several field personnel of the National Power Corporation (NPC) frequented Kalinga and Mountain Province to conduct surveys. This was only when the Kalingas and Bontoks learned about the Project for they had never been consulted about it. The people confronted the NPC and aired their opposition to the dams.

For the government, however, the 100,000 Kalingas and Bontoks were merely squatters in public lands since they did not possess land titles. According to Presidential Decree 705, otherwise known as the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines, all lands 18 percent in slope or over are classified as forest lands and therefore
part of the public domain. This Marcos decree practically classified the entire Cordillera, with the exception of the Tabuk and Lamut valleys, as public domain. In essence, the government was applying state laws on a people living by customary law.

The conflict between State laws and customary laws concerning land is best exemplified in an incident in 1974 in the village of Gawgaw along the Chico. An NPC engineer questioned the Kalingas, "You resist relocation. You intend to fight for this land that does not even belong to you! Where are your titles?" A Kalinga pangat (chief) replied:

You ask if we own the land. And mock us, "Where is your title?" When we query the meaning of your words you answer with taunting arrogance, "Where are the documents to prove that you own the land?" Title. Documents. Proof. Such arrogance to speak of owning the land. When you shall be owned by it. How can you own that, which will outlive you? Only the race owns the land because only the race lives forever.

To claim a place is the birthright of every man. The lowly animals claim their place, how much more man. Man is born to live. Apo Kabunian, lord of us all, gave us life and placed us in the world to live human lives. And where shall we obtain life? From the land. To work is an obligation, not merely a right. In tilling the land you possess it. And so land is a grace that must be nurtured. To enrich it and make it fructify is the eternal eXhortation of Apo Kabunian to all his children. Land is sacred. Land is beloved. From its womb springs our Kalinga life.

If the life of the race is threatened, the whole nation will fight to defend the Motherland. Your plan means our sure death. To simply accept a decree of death is dishonorable. We oppose. To clarify the meaning of our position, we will fight. We would die but our death will be honorable. It will be a long and protracted struggle. But in the end the people will prevail as our ancestors did against the Spaniards, the Americans, and the Japanese. Long live Kalinga and Bontok.

In a separate consultation in Cagaluan, another NPC engineer told the papangat (council of elders), "Don't worry. You will be duly compensated. I assure you the New Society will exchange your land with the just amount." To this, an elder replied:

Young sir, you err to speak of a financial negotiation. Money was not yet invented our forebears had already carved the pappayaw
rice terraces) upon these mountain heights. Since time beyond recall
Apo Kabunian revealed to us this place and delivered us into this
land. We belong to this land and to no other. It is sacred. Kalinga is
not for sale! We will not be bought off. We will not be relocated. We
oppose the dams or any project that will cause our dislocation. We
repulsed the foreign invaders - the Spaniards, the Americans, the
Japanese - who sought to dispossess us, to dictate on us. Your
development project is no different. It is an invasion. It will destroy
our homeland, our life as Kalinga. We are committed on our honor
to resist and struggle to defend our Kalinga life.9

Indeed, the Kalingas and Bontoks organized sporadic protests
against the Chico dams. On one occasion in 1974, unarmed Bontok
women attacked an NPC camp, bared their breasts, and dismantled
the camp's structures.

The public got to know about the uproar in Cordillera through
an open letter of the anthropologist Mariflor Parpan, who was doing
fieldwork in Kalinga, published in The Communicator. Parpan wrote
letters to Bishop Francisco Claver, himself from Mountain Province,
asking for the Catholic Church to intervene in behalf of the Kalingas
and Bontoks. The Church responded by sponsoring several trips to
Manila by Bontok and Kalinga elders in the period of February to
December 1974 to bring the problem to the attention of Malacaang.

These delegations, however, were simply neglected by the
government. Instead the government sent to Kalinga in 1975 the
representatives of the Presidential Assistance for National Minorities
(PANAMIN), the agency that replaced the CN!. The PANAMIN
offered educational scholarships to the Kalingas to appease them and
convince them into accepting the Chico Project. In one instance,
Macli-ing Dulag, the Butbut tribal chieftain, received a sealed envelope
from the PANAMIN. Believing that the envelope contained bribe
money, he politely returned it to the PANAMIN representative.

The Peace Pact as Weapon

One weapon used by the Kalingas to forge inter-village solidarity
against the Chico dams was the vochong (or bodong in its Ilocanized
version). The vochong is the indigenous peace pact institution among
the northern Cordillerans. It is also called pechen by the Bontoks
and kalon by the Tinguians. Traditionally, the vochong was a bilateral
pact among two tribes. The vochong spelled out the pagta (terms) of
the agreement and the mangjun si vochong (peace pact holders) made
sure that these terms were strictly enforced.
In February 1975, the first Vochong Assembly was convened in Tanglag. For the first time, the elders from various Kalinga villages attended the affair to forge a pact against the dams. It was here where Macli-ing became a de facto spokesman of the anti-dam oppositionists. In his speech, Macli-ing said:

"If the waters of Kayakayam (Chico) and Pasil are dammed, who will live in the dammed waters? Crocodiles! Who will the crocodiles eat? People! I say to you, the question of the dams is not a political one. The question is life - our Kalinga life.

And what is the most precious thing to man? Life! If life is threatened, what ought man to do? And this he must do, otherwise he is dishonored. That will be worse death then. If we do not fight and the dams push through, we die anyway. If we fight, we die honorably. I exhort you all then - Kayaw! (Struggle!)"

"And because we fight now, our children may win and keep this Kalinga land. And the land shall become ever more sacred then, nourished by our sweat and blood. Then we who sacrificed that they may live and be secure and happy shall abide with them and nurture the generations, guarding the fields, the pappayaw, the ili (village), blessing their lives 'til endless time."

The Second Vochong Conference was held in Quezon City in May 12-13, 1975 under the auspices of the Share and Care Apostolate for Poor Settlers (SCAPS). 150 Bontoks and Kalingas attended the conference. This was the first time that the Bontok and Kalinga villages forged a multilateral peace pact against the dam. The conference decided to forward letters addressed to President Marcos, President Robert McNamara of the World Bank, and President Filemon Rodriguez of the Engineering and Development Company of the Philippines asking them not to be a party to the virtual genocide of the Kalingas and Bontoks. The letter to President Marcos was hand-carried by Bishop Gaviola on May 15, 1975 in the presence of Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile.

Because of the growing opposition against the Chico dams not only by the Kalingas and Bontoks but including Church groups and oppositionists in Baggio and Manila, the government decided to scrap Chico I and III and to suspend Chico II. On the other hand, this could be a ploy by the government to split the ranks of the Kalingas and Bontoks by telling the latter that they would no longer be affected by the Project.

Alliance with the Communists
In 1976, a seven-man NPA squad from Isabela - the Pangkat sa Dulong Hilagang Isabela (PDHI) - accidentally strayed into Kalinga to escape pursuit from the Philippine military. Led by Ka Sungar, the unit reached the village of Tanudan and was eventually accepted by the people there when Sungar married a local maiden.

The NPAs learned about the protests against the Chico Dam IV project. They linked up with the dam oppositionists in the Upper Chico area and offered their assistance against a common enemy - the Philippine government. The Kalingas accepted the NPA offer. The NPA’s call for arms is very compatible with the Kalinga concept of kayaw (struggle). They needed arms to fight the Philippine military. Thus, the NPA provided them with high-powered rifles, such as M-16 armalites and AKA 7s. Being a warrior society, many Kalinga youth joined the NPA. They saw the NPA as an opportunity where they could learn tactics in battle, show-off their military prowess, and in the process gain prestige as true warriors. Eventually, Sungar and his men moved to Bugnay, Macli-ing’s home village. "We face a common enemy," Macli-ing said to Sungar."

In 1977, 55th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (PA) was deployed to Kalinga. Armed encounters between the NPA and the PA became commonplace in Kalinga. The losses experienced by the Army during that period has been immortalized in the Kalinga salidummay (native song):

堇i 1977,
Nagrugi da tambangan
Pip-pip-pip natamaan
Soldados nagkalasan.
(In 1977,
Ambushes commenced
The 55th [Infantry Battalion] was hit
The soldiers scampered away.)

A year later, the NWLRPC-CPP based in Ifugao was able to link up with the NPA unit in Kalinga. Realizing that the NPA had greater support in Kalinga than in Ifugao, the NWLRPC leadership decided to transfer its headquarters from Hapao to Bugnay. Among underground circles, Bugnay was referred to be the new "capital of the Cordillera". 12

In December 29, 1978, the first NPA-sponsored vochong was held in Bugnay. It was attended by peace pact holders corning from
the villages of Tinglayan, Luplupa, Ngibat, Bugnay, Dognac, Tanglag, Cagaluan, Ablec, and Bangad, all in Kalinga, and Anabel and Barlig in Mountain Province. An NPA commander facilitated the discussions during the meeting. A seven point *pagta* was agreed upon in the affair:

1. All persons in Bontoc and Kalinga that will be affected by the dam project are prohibited from working for the dam project;
2. The oppositionists are not to be blamed in case there is someone from Bontoc or Kalinga who is killed at the dam site because of his work for the project;
3. Kalinga or Bontok families that have children who have become government soldiers should inform them that they should not harm those who oppose the dam;
4. All barrios affected by the dam project are forbidden to sell their goods to or to provide food for the workers of the National Power Corporation (NPC);
5. Anyone who is found to be a traitor, or who works against an oppositionist, or who supports the NPC will be punished with death;
6. The *bodong* that has been forged between two barrios should not be affected even if there is someone from one barrio who is killed because of his employment with the NPC;
7. In case there is someone who seeks revenge for a kinsman who was killed because of (his support for) this dam project, he too Shall become an enemy of the oppositionists.

While the anti-dam struggle in Kalinga was brewing, the Tinguians of Abra were also becoming restless because of their opposition to the operations of the Cellophil Resources Corporation (CRC) in the province. Herminio Disini, who is believed to be a Marcos crony, owned the CRC. In January 25, 1979, an anti-CRC peace pact was held in the village of Tiempo attended by about 500 people. Later that year, the NPA resumed its operation in Abra.

In the same year, the Kalinga Zone Branch of the CPP, led by Ka Sungar, proposed for the establishment of the Anti-Dam Democratic Alliance (ADDA) which was envisioned to unite all anti-dam activists. The NPA would then be the military arm of the ADDA. This proposal was based on the premise that the anti-dam struggle was the "key link" in their revolutionary efforts in the area. This was a departure from the classic CPP line that the 'anti-feudal struggle was the "key link in the national, democratic revolution". The Kalinga Zone Branch argued that since feudalism is absent in the interior villages of Kalinga-Apayao and Mountain
Province, it could not be considered as the "key link" in their revolutionary activities. This theme brings to mind the Igorot Liberation Army (ILA) concept raised by the NPA in Ifugao in 1974.\footnote{14}

The NWLRPC Secretariat, however, rejected the ADDA proposal. Ka Sungar was later demoted for his alleged "right opportunist" views.

Meanwhile the Chico area became more highly militarized. In April 24, 1980, soldiers led by Lieutenant Adalem sneaked into Bugnay and murdered Macli-ing Dulag and wounded Pedro Dungoc, another leader of the anti-dam opposition. Macli-ing's death did not frighten the Kalingas. On the contrary, it fanned greater opposition against the dam. The anti-dam movement spread to the town center of Bontoc and gained ground among the students and professionals in Baguio City. Macli-ing was seen by many as a symbol of the Cordilleran struggle for justice. Since then, every 24th of April has been commemorated as Cordillera Day.

\textit{Cordillera After Macli-ing}

Because of the unpopularity of the Chico Dam, Marco eventually shelved the Project in October 1981. The next year, the veterans of the anti-dam struggle established the Kalinga-Bontoc Peace Pact Holders' Association. The name of the organization was changed to Cordillera Bodong Association (CBA) in December 1983 when they decided to expand their membership to the other provinces of the Cordillera.

Meanwhile the NWLRPC and the Northeastern Luzon Regional Party Committee (NELRPC) of the CPP were fused to form the Northern Luzon Commission (NLC). On the other hand, the guerrilla zones in Kalinga and Mountain Province were merged to establish the Northern Guerrilla Front.

In 1984, the CBA and 26 other organizations of indigenous people, students, and professionals in the region formed the Cordillera People's Alliance for the Defense of the Ancestral Domain (CPA). The said coalition called for the establishment of an autonomous region for the Cordillera, to include the provinces of Benguet, Ifugao, Mountain Province, Kalinga-Apayao, and Abra. The Province of Abra was never a part of the old Mountain Province although it has been historically considered as the ancestral domain of the Tlinguians.

In February 1986, the Marcos government was toppled through
a people power revolution. Among the first pronouncements of President Corazon C. Aquino was the permanent cancellation of the Chico Dam Project.

With Marcos gone, the Kalingas extended their gratitude to the CPP-NPA for their support to the anti-dam struggle. They felt it was time to bid the NPA farewell. The latter, on the other hand, believed that the struggle for national liberation was not yet over.

It was during this conflict that the Lumbaya Company of the NPA decided to split from the latter and formed the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA). The latter was led by, among others, Fr. Conrado Balweg, S.V.D., a Tinguian priest who fought the CRC in Abra and later joined the NPA. The CBA led by Mario Yag-ao, in turn, split from the CPA and aligned itself with the CPLA. The CBA was then renamed to Cordillera Bodong Administration (CBAd) and envisioned to be the prototype of the autonomous government in the Cordillera. Eventually, the CPLA and the CBAd forged a peace agreement with the Aquino administration. 15

The 1987 Philippine Constitution called for the establishment of an autonomous region for the Cordillera:

There shall be created autonomous regions in Muslim Mindanao and in the Cordillera consisting of provinces, cities, municipalities, and geographical areas sharing common and distinctive historical and cultural heritage, economic and social structures and other relevant characteristics within the framework of this Constitution and the national sovereignty as well as territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines. 16

The exact area to be covered by this autonomous region, however, shall be decided by the people in a plebiscite.

In 1988, President Aquino signed Executive Order 220 creating the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), composed of the provinces of Benguet, Ifugao, Mountain Province, Abra, and Kalinga-Apayao. The said law also called for the establishment of a Cordillera Regional Assembly (CRA) and a Cordillera Executive Board (CEB) in the region. Later, in 1995, Kalinga and Apayao became separate provinces by virtue of Republic Act No. 7878.

The Philippine Congress has passed two laws intended to implement the Constitutional provision on the establishment of the Cordillera Autonomous Region. The first was Republic Act No. 6766, otherwise known as the Organic Act of the Cordillera. However,
the people of the Cordillera overwhelmingly rejected this Act in a plebiscite held in 1990. Only the Province of Ifugao voted in favor of the Act. In 1997, Republic Act 8438 was enacted as an amendment to the proposed Organic Act. This was again rejected by the Cordillerans during the plebiscite. This time, only the newly established Province of Apayao voted in favor of the revised Act. Because of these failures, the establishment of an autonomous region for the Cordillera remains an elusive dream.

The situation in the Cordillera is not very different from the plight of the indigenous peoples elsewhere in the country. The Mangyans of Mindoro, the Lumads of Mindanao, the various Negrito groups spread across the archipelago, and several other ethnic minorities also experience the same economic and cultural marginalization as the peoples of the Cordillera. They, too, continue to assert their right to self-determination and democracy.

ENDNOTES

1 Manaligod, p. xvii. There are, however, different estimates on the number of indigenous peoples in the Philippines. Dulay (in Manaligod, p. xii), for example, gave a higher estimate of 6.5 million to 10 million indigenous peoples. This discrepancy has been brought about by the absence of an official census on their population. The 1980, 1990, and 1995 censuses did not cover ethnicity as a variable.

2 Republic Act No. 8371: Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997, Chapter II, Section 3h. The IPRA also uses an alternative term ———: "indigenous cultural community" (ICC), which is what is officially used in the 1997 Philippine Constitution. In the past, the terms "national minorities", "cultural minorities", "ethnic minorities", and "tribal Filipinos" have also been used.

3 Botengan, p. 9.

"The name "Igorot" is originally an etymon, i.e. it was the term used by lowlanders to refer to the peoples of the highlands. The label is derived from the Tagalog root word gulod, which means "mountain ridge". Eventually, the natives of the districts of Amburay and Lepanto adopted the term to igolot to refer to themselves. The Spaniards have transformed this name to Y gorrote and later to Igorot. Thus, the word Igorot literally means "people of the mountains". Not all Cordillerans, however, accept the name Igorot. Most Ifugaos and Kalingas do not identify with the name Igorot. Only those of the southwest Cordillera, i.e. the Bago, Ibaloy, Kalanguya, Aplay, and Bontok, identify with the term Igorot.

5 These ethnic minorities can further be classified into the Muslim groups and the indigenous peoples. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) excluded the Muslim groups, such as the Tausug, Meranao, Maguindanao, Yakan, Samal, Iranun, Molbog, lama Mapun, Kalagan, Sangil, and Badiao, from the category "indigenous peoples" because Islam, just like Christianity, is non-indigenous to the Philippines.

6 Manuel.

7 Parpan, p. 45.

8 Ibid., p. 37. Parpan identified the author of this statement as an elder from Gawgaw. Other sources, however, say that the statement came from Macli-ing Dulag.

9 Ibid., p. 38.

10 Ibid., p. 41.

11 Gimenez, p. 3.
At the end of the 1981 Plenum of the Regional Committee of the Northwestern Luzon Regional Party Committee of the CPP, however, decided to form a new revolutionary front organization for the Cordillera called the Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF). In its 1989 program, the CPDF aimed to "(f)ight for the right to self-determination and equality, (and) work for the establishment of the Cordillera People's Revolutionary Autonomous Government."

Since then, the CPLA has split into three factions: one led by Fr. Balweg, the second one led by another Tinguian and ex-convertor Maile Molina, and the third one led by Jimmy Sawatang, a Kalinga. Molina's faction called for the integration of the CPLA into the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) while Sawatang focused his efforts on the CBAd's participation in the Cordillera Executive Board (CEB). Balweg, on the other hand, was assassinated by the New People's Army (NPA) in December 1999 in his home town in Malibcong, Abra. The NPA unit involved was led by Jovencio Balweg, the brother of Fr. Balweg.

16 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, Article 10, Section 15.

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