

Who are the Indigenous? Origins and Transformations

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1. Introduction

When Professor Tolentino invited me to speak to you,¹ I was particularly interested in the challenge that he gave me. He said: “Despite great strides in Cordillera Studies in the last 20 years or so, the study of languages in the Cordillera region has not been given adequate attention in academic forums and conferences, hence, we feel that the 1st International Conference on Cordillera Studies should be an occasion to review the field of Cordillera linguistics and to address current issues in the study of indigenous languages. We would appreciate it if you could come to the conference to share with us your views on this matter.”

The two parts of that request that intrigued me are contained in the phrases “the field of Cordillera linguistics” and “current issues in the study of indigenous languages.” In order to discuss these matters, we need to know what we are talking about. What IS “Cordillera linguistics” and what ARE “indigenous languages”? I want to address the second question first. The simple answer to that is this: ‘indigenous languages’ are languages spoken by indigenous peoples. However, if we ask “Who are the indigenous peoples and why are they referred to as indigenous?” we run into an interesting set of problems.

So in the first part of my talk I want to discuss the various interpretations that are given for the term ‘indigenous’ in order for us to get a better perspective on the relationships that exist between the languages spoken in the Cordillera region and the languages that are spoken in other parts of the Philippines. In the second part, I will review what is known about the origins of Philippine languages, from both archaeological and linguistic perspectives and in particular the changes or transformations that have brought about the set of languages that have been called Cordilleran. In the final section, I will focus on one of those languages to address some of the current issues that affect not only that language, but all languages spoken by minorities in the Cordillera and other parts of the Philippines, minorities that in the Philippines today often go by the name of ‘indigenous peoples’. In my conclusion I will try to draw together the various strands of the talk to highlight the fact that all the languages of the Cordillera are endangered languages and a concerted effort is needed by all of us to make sure that future

generations are not deprived of the knowledge of their language and culture that form the core of their identity as Cordilleran peoples.

2. Who are the ‘indigenous’?

In this section I will discuss various definitions of the term ‘indigenous’ or ‘indigenous people’, starting with Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary, followed by those given by the United Nations, the International Labor Organization, the World Bank, and the Philippine National Commission on Indigenous Peoples.

2.1 Dictionary definition

According to Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary, the term ‘indigenous’ is defined as:

1. native; born, growing or produced locally in a country or region; not exotic, as corn and cotton are indigenous to North America. 2. innate; inherent; inborn. **Syn.** original, native, aboriginal.

From this definition, one might suppose that indigenous languages are those that are spoken by people who are the original, native, or aboriginal people of an area, so we could say that Cordilleran languages are indigenous to the Cordilleran region, because they are spoken by the first inhabitants of the Cordillera. But this creates a problem, because we might also claim that in the Philippines, any people who are the first inhabitants of a given area are indigenous, and that their language is therefore an indigenous language, so that Ilokano could be claimed to be an indigenous language, because it is spoken by the original inhabitants of the Ilocos provinces, but do we know that the Ilokanos (or the speakers of Cordilleran languages) are the original inhabitants of the areas they now occupy? One might ask the question, who are the original people of the Manila area? Were they Tagalog-speaking, making them also an indigenous group, or were they speakers of the language known today as Kapampangan before they were replaced by in-migrating Tagalog speakers from the Visayan area, as the linguistic evidence makes clear (Zorc 1993, Gonzalez 2005)? But does that make Kapampangan also an indigenous language?

Let us look further afield for ideas about who the indigenous are and what an indigenous language is.

2.2 United Nations definition

On September 13, 2007, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It had been under discussion by various UN working groups for some twenty-five years before it finally came to a vote, but unfortunately, although the term 'indigenous' occurs in the document 113 times, the term itself is not defined. According to the chairperson of the working group that prepared the Declaration (Ms. Erica Irene Daes), this was because "historically, indigenous peoples have suffered, from definitions imposed by others" (E/CN.4/Stib.2/AC.4/1995/3, page 3). However, in 1972, the working group had proposed a preliminary definition as follows:

Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them, by conquest, settlement or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form part, under a state structure which incorporates mainly national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant.

The definition applies mainly to pre-colonial populations, and would likely exclude other isolated or marginal societies. In effect, under this definition all Filipinos, during the periods of Spanish and American colonization would have been indigenous, since Filipinos were "the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the country when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin overcame them, and reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition." However when the Philippines became a Republic, this would have removed all Filipinos from being indigenous peoples, since the Philippines is no longer a colonial state. So, in 1983 the WGIP enlarged this definition to include the following criteria:

- (a) they are the descendants of groups, which were in the territory at the time when other groups of different cultures or ethnic origin arrived there;
- (b) precisely because of their isolation from other segments of the country's population they have almost preserved intact the customs and traditions of their ancestors which are similar to those characterised as indigenous;

- (c) they are, even if only formally, placed under a state structure which incorporates national, social and cultural characteristics alien to their own.

(F/CN.4/Sub.2/1983/2/Add. para. 379)

Now paragraph (b) begins to look like it might be applicable to the situation in the Cordilleran region, in that while most lowland populations have lost most if not all of their pre-Spanish traditions, at least until a generation or two ago, ethnic groups in the Cordillera had almost preserved intact the customs and traditions of their ancestors. Then in 1986, an additional paragraph was added that

- (d) any individual who identified himself or herself as indigenous and was accepted by the group or the community as one of its members was to be regarded as an indigenous person.

(E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/7/Add. para. 381)

2.3 International Labor Organization definition

In 1989, the International Labor Organization (ILO) distinguished between tribal peoples and indigenous peoples, claiming in its statement concerning workers rights that it applied to:

both **tribal peoples** whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations, and to **peoples who are regarded as indigenous** on account of their descent from the populations which inhabit the country at the time of conquest or colonisation. (emphasis mine)

(ILO, Convention No. 169, 1989)

Again, the term 'indigenous' is defined in terms of colonization, and is not applicable to the Philippine situation, since it would include all Filipinos, whereas the term 'tribal peoples' more aptly describes the Cordilleran peoples today. But this is a term that has negative connotations, and is not widely accepted.

2.4 World Bank definition

In 1991, the World Bank presented a set of characteristics by which it claimed indigenous peoples can be identified, as follows:

- (a) close attachment to ancestral territories and to the natural resources in these areas;
- (b) self-identification and identification by others as members of a distinct cultural group;

- (c) an indigenous language, often different from the national language;
 - (d) presence of customary social and political institutions;
 - (e) primarily subsistence-oriented production.
- (World Bank Operational Directive 4.20, 1991)

Notice that in addition to the characteristics given in previous definitions related to attachment to ancestral lands, self-identification, and customary institutions, paragraph (c) introduces a characteristic not previously mentioned, an indigenous language, different from the national language. Clearly this is meant to apply to areas where a colonial language has become a national language. But this hardly helps in the Philippines, because this would mean that Ilokano, Cebuano, Kapampangan, Pangasinan and all other Philippine languages, except Tagalog, are indigenous.

2.5 Philippine National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) definition

Let us look at how the term ‘indigenous’ is defined in Philippine law. The Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act (IPRA) defines ‘indigenous peoples’ as follows:

a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized communities 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, become historically differentiated from the majority of the Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains. (Republic Act 8371, Section 3h, Chapter 2)

This definition covers nearly all bases, including attachment to ancestral lands, self-identification, customary institutions, common language, and retention of pre-colonial institutions. One of the keys here is the phrase “[groups] that have become historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos.” In effect, this separates out as indigenous

groups the cultural minorities of the country, that is those who do not speak one of the languages of the majority, and adequately characterizes the Cordilleran peoples and their languages.

Recognizing the difficulties in adequately defining the term 'indigenous', however, it is nevertheless disturbing to find grossly inaccurate characterizations even in documents appearing in the NCIP website. For example, in a speech given on October 1, 2001 to the Asian Development Bank, the then Chairperson of the NCIP, herself an Ifugao, said:

The term "indigenous peoples" refers to us, the more than 12 million descendants of the original inhabitants of this archipelago who have somehow managed to resist centuries of colonization and in the process have retained their own customs, traditions and life ways. Our ancestors were once upon a time the only inhabitants on these islands.²

Indigenous peoples can in fact be defined as original inhabitants of a country, as we noted at the beginning of this talk (see the Dictionary definition above), but it is simply not true that the ancestors of the Ifugaos, or any of the Cordilleran peoples, or of the Tagalogs or other lowland groups are descendants of the original inhabitants of the Philippines. When your ancestors first arrived in these islands, they were **not** unoccupied. They were occupied by maybe hundreds of groups of Negritos, most of whom have been completely assimilated or have died out, but today there are still around twenty-five distinct Negrito groups, all of whom are on the verge of extinction. These are the true first Filipinos, the literally true indigenous Filipinos, whose ancestors occupied the islands for perhaps 50,000 years or more, whereas your ancestors have been here for a mere 4500 years or so, and it was your ancestors who were the first colonizers of the islands. Unfortunately it is these first Filipinos who are the most downtrodden and socially marginalized of all Filipinos, and most in need of urgent action to enable them to survive in this society. Today, there are probably no surviving Negrito groups in the Cordilleran area. There is evidence however that Alta Negritos formerly lived in the Ifugao area, although now they are in the Sierra Madre and surrounding areas.³

Having looked at the NCIP definition of indigenous peoples, and the problem statement discussed above which is now on the opening page of the Commission's website, it is appropriate that we take a look at some of the other incredibly uninformed and grossly amateurish statements that appear about the cultural minorities of the Philippines, now referred to as the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera Administrative Region, appearing in the Ethnolinguistic Profiles of the same website, and in various other websites that have plagiarized the

same sources. There we find material that has apparently been taken from popular descriptions and old, long outdated history books that refer to the multiple migration hypotheses of H. Otley Beyer, the leading Philippine ethnologist of his day, and which I am told is commonly taught in Philippine schools even today. In these profiles, we find the Ifugao described as the descendants of the first wave of Malay immigrants to the country. The Kalinga are said to be descendants of the second group of Malays who came to the islands. The Ibaloi are described as “peaceful, hardworking, and hospitable tribesmen. They are generally fair in complexion and have well-developed bodies, usually standing 4 to 5 feet above in height. They have medium and narrow noses and some have broad flat noses. They have deep-seated brown and black eyes.” Attention to the shape of the nose is also mentioned for the Kallahan: “the Ikalahans are short people, fair complexioned, black round eyes, and black straight and silky hair. Their noses are fairly developed.” For the Bugkalot (also commonly known as Ilongot), the profile states: “At the head stream of the mighty Casecnan river is another group known as the Italon tribe whose members are of regular built [sic] and with Mongolian features such as narrow slanting eyes and aquiline nose.” Of the Kalinga, it says: “They are generally known to be tall, dark complexioned, and lissome with high bridged noses. Physically they are very sturdy and well-built so that their war-like characteristics make them more like soldiers.” And of the Yogad (who live in Isabela, **not** in the Cordillera Administrative Region): “Yogads are a part of the Christianized Kalingas of Western Isabela. They are predominantly of the Indonesian type with a slight mixture of Negrito and Chinese blood. They vary from reddish brown to dark brown in complexion, are round-headed, have straight black hair, dark brown eyes, and noses of medium breadth with low regular features. Like other Philippine peoples, they are practically beardless.” Of the Ivatan, who live in the Batanes Islands, but are also listed as part of the Cordillera Administrative Region: “The dominant physical type is the Malay blend – short, squat, with a strong mixture of the short Mongol type. There are some individuals who seem to have some physical characteristics peculiar to the Ainu of Japan.” Absurd and completely unscientific descriptions such as these are internationally read, and not only give completely erroneous descriptions of Philippine indigenous groups, but cast a very poor light on the level of Philippine scholarship.

3. Where did the indigenous come from?

One of the central facts that is not mentioned anywhere in the various materials on indigenous groups of the Philippines is that all these languages belong to the Austronesian language family. Probably all university students in the Philippines, at least those who have taken

courses in the history of the English language, know that English belongs to the Germanic subgroup of Indo-European languages, but how many can tell you that the Cordilleran languages constitute a distinct branch of the Extra-Formosan (also known as the Malayo-Polynesian) family of Austronesian languages, and that all currently spoken Philippine languages developed from an in-migration of people from what is now Taiwan, around 4500 years ago? Most people unfortunately still believe the pre-scientific myth that Philippine languages are somehow corrupted versions of Malay, as the result of multiple migrations from the south. Both archaeology and linguistics, the key disciplines for understanding prehistoric movements of man, provide irrefutable evidence for the origins of Philippine people.

3.1 Origins

In order to understand what is meant by the term Austronesian, let us quickly review the facts. There are well over 1000 Austronesian languages in the world today, all of which are to some degree related to the 150 or so languages spoken in the Philippines (Gordon 2005). They include the dozen or so indigenous groups of Taiwan that still speak their own languages,⁴ most of the languages of Indonesia and Malaysia, the Chamic languages of mainland Southeast Asia, the languages of Madagascar off the coast of Africa, and most of the languages spoken in the Pacific areas of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Prior to the arrival of Austronesian speakers in the Philippines, the islands were occupied by bands of Negritos speaking languages that have now been completely replaced by the languages of their Austronesian neighbors (Reid 1987, 2007).

3.1.1 Archaeological evidence

Archaeologists are able to distinguish between sites that contain the remains of early Austronesian people in the Philippines because of the presence of pottery and other artifacts that Negrito peoples had never developed. These along with evidence of agriculture mark them as being part of a neolithic culture that existed in southwest Taiwan and spread south from there into the Batanes Islands and Northern Luzon.

Peter Bellwood, the world-renowned archaeologist and prehistorian writes:

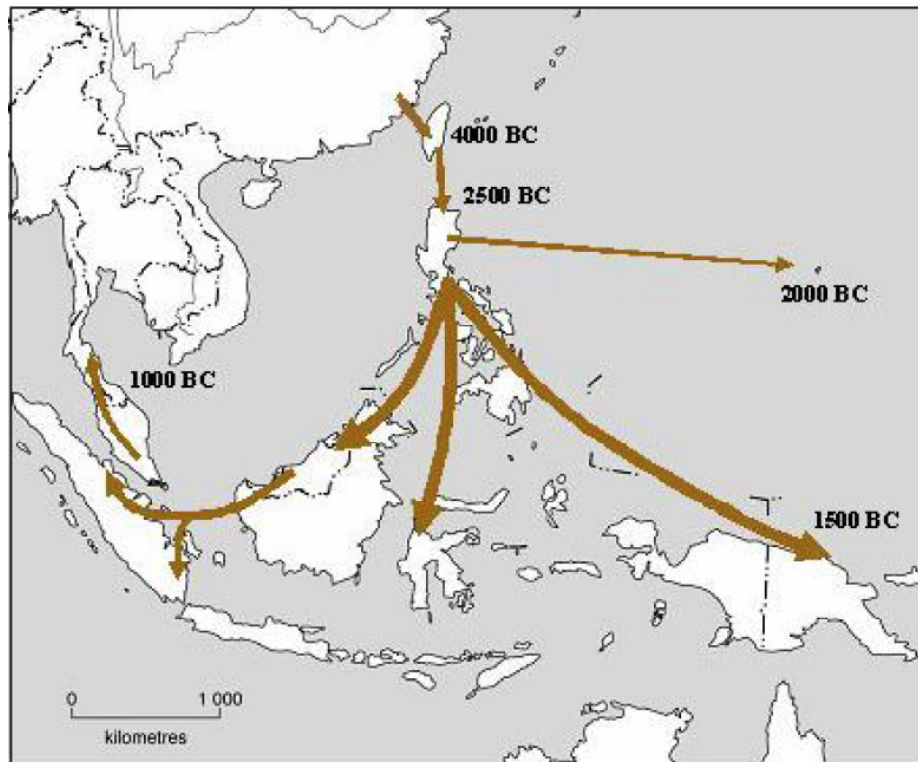
We have a new site, Rerandum Cave, right at the northern end of Itbayat. It has red-slipped ware and some sherds of fine-cord marked pottery, a classic type in Taiwan around 4500–4000 BP. We also have dates of 4000 BP from Torongan Cave also on Itbayat. As a matter of interest, we also know the site of Anaro on Itbayat

was involved in manufacturing *lingling-o* [ear rings] of Taiwan jade around 2000–1500 years ago (personal communication, May 7, 2006).

And in a paper he wrote with Eusebio Dizon of the National Museum in Manila, he wrote:

Taken overall, the inventory of material culture that points to an origin for the Batanes Neolithic in eastern Taiwan between 4500 and 4000 BP... is so strong that one is tempted to link this movement with the linguistic establishment of Proto-Malayo-Polynesian and the origins of the Extra-Formosan subgroups of Austronesian languages.... [D]erivation of the whole Neolithic complex present in Batanes and Cagayan from the *south* (southern Philippines, Indonesia or Melanesia) is no longer a viable hypothesis in terms of current information. We now have enough C14 dates from Batanes and Cagayan... to give this region an edge of several centuries, even perhaps a millennium... over the oldest Neolithic sites reported so far in eastern Indonesia. (Bellwood and Dizon 2005, 28-29)

Archaeological evidence then provides evidence for the movement of Austronesian-speaking peoples from Taiwan, south into the Philippines and ultimately into the far reaches of the Pacific, as shown in Map 1 and Map 2.⁵



Map 1. The spread of Austronesian languages from Taiwan to the Philippines.

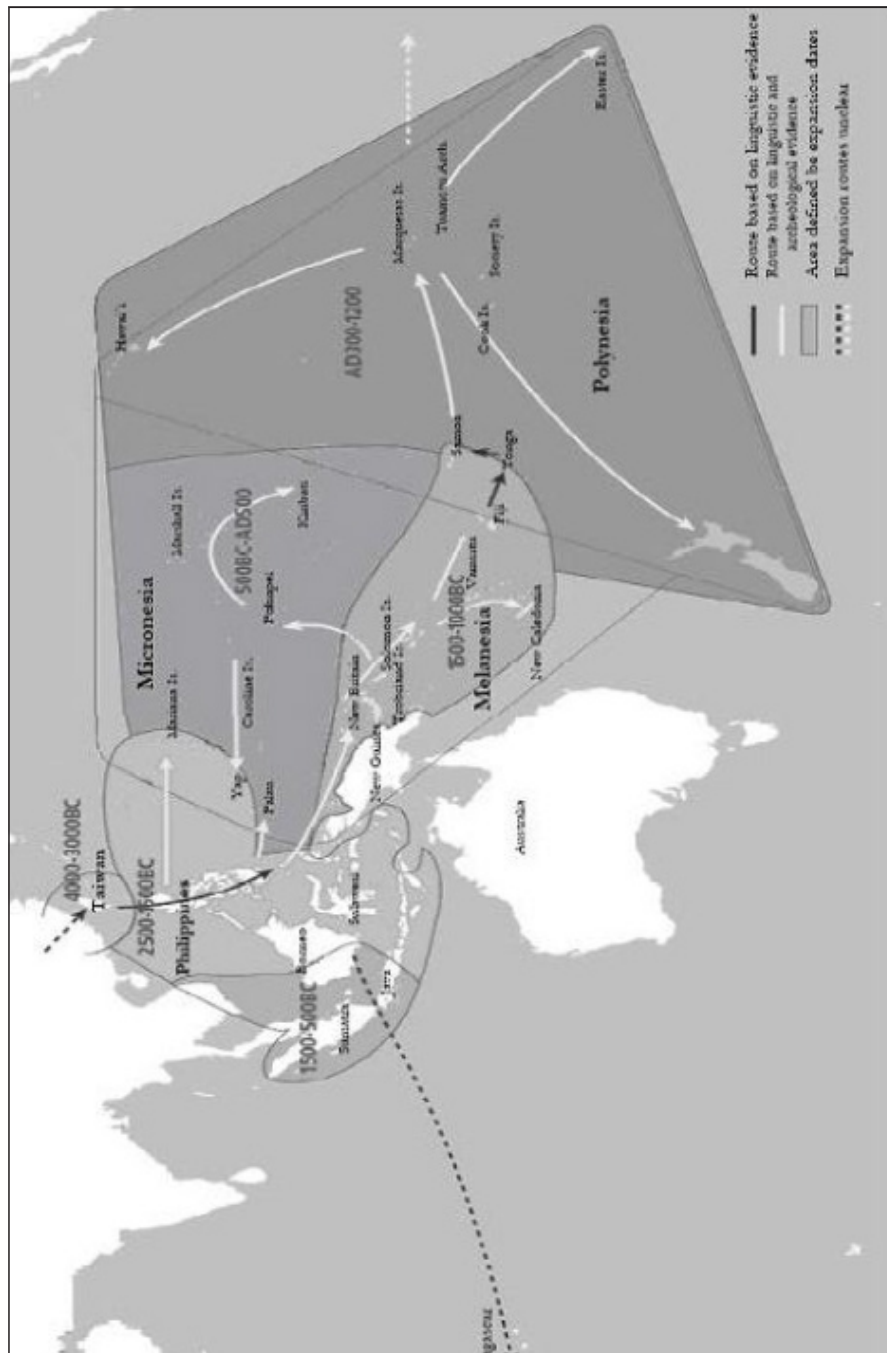
3.1.2 Linguistic evidence

There are two key facts about language that enable linguists to make informed decisions about the relationships between them, that is, which ones are close sisters, which ones are distant cousins, and which ones are not related at all. The family metaphor is important because it highlights the first of these facts, that is, every language is continuously changing as it is learned anew by each successive generation of children, so that the languages spoken today are the daughters of parent languages. The second fact is that as languages change, their sounds change systematically, that is, when the sound in a parent language changes in the way it is pronounced in one of the daughter languages, it typically changes the same in all the words that have that sound.

3.1.2.1 Languages change

Languages are only as old as the generation that currently speaks them. There are no such things as prehistoric languages still being spoken today, they died out with the people who spoke them, and it is the language that they passed on to their children, and their children's children that eventually survives in the languages of today. Between two generations, the differences are usually minimal, but as we will see later in this presentation, they can be quite large. Grandchildren usually have quite different ways of speaking than their grandparents; these are the signs of language change. These changes can affect every aspect of a language. One of the most obvious of these is the lexicon, or the words we use. When I was a child growing up in New Zealand, the basic unit of currency was like in England – it was the *pound*. Twenty *shillings* made a pound, or a *quid*. Twenty-one shillings made a *guinea*. Twelve *pennies* made a shilling, or a *bob*. Pennies were divided into two *halfpennies* (pronounced “hayp-neys”), and these were further divided into *farthings*, so four farthings made a penny. I could buy one *lolly* ‘candy’ for a farthing. *Two pennies* was pronounced “tuppince,” and there were a whole range of other terms that we used for coins, such as the coin for three pennies, called *threepence* (pronounced “thripince”) or *threepenny bit* (pronounced “thripny bit”), and so on. Today these terms have disappeared from the language, because inflation has made the smaller coins useless, and the currency was changed to dollars and cents, so a new set of terms has entered the language. You can still find the old ones in dictionaries, but children today will not hear them spoken, and normally would not understand them if they did.

The sounds of a language also change, and this is one of the first things we notice about people from other places. When I was in my late teens I went to a college in Australia where people used to tease me because of what they called my



Map 2. Expansion of Austronesian Peoples.

Kiwi accent. I pronounced the *i* vowel in words like *this*, *his*, *him*, *sin*, *rip*, etc., with a schwa vowel very much like the vowel written as *e* in Bontok, Kankananay, Pangasinan and in the southern dialects of Ilokano, while in Australia the same words are pronounced with a long “*ee*” vowel. The Aussies thought theirs was the correct pronunciation, while I thought my pronunciation was. We could understand each other, we were speaking dialects of the same language, but the sounds had changed. My pronunciation was correct where I came from; theirs was correct where they lived. But over an extended period of time, as more changes develop in each place, people cannot understand one another, and that is when dialects become separate languages, as shown in Figs. 1a-b.

The people who moved to the first of the three islands now speak Language A. But before the changes that brought about today’s language, some families had already moved on to Island B. The

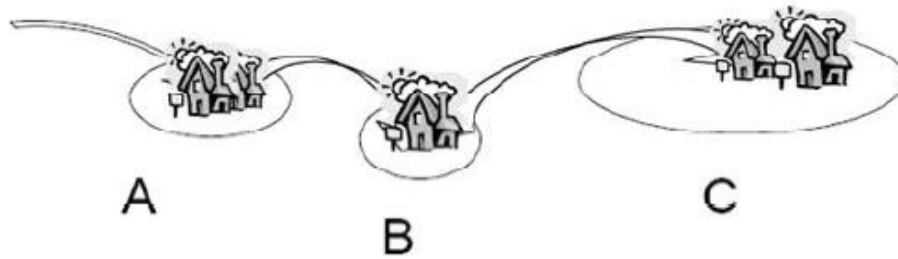


Figure 1a. Settling islands A, B, and C.

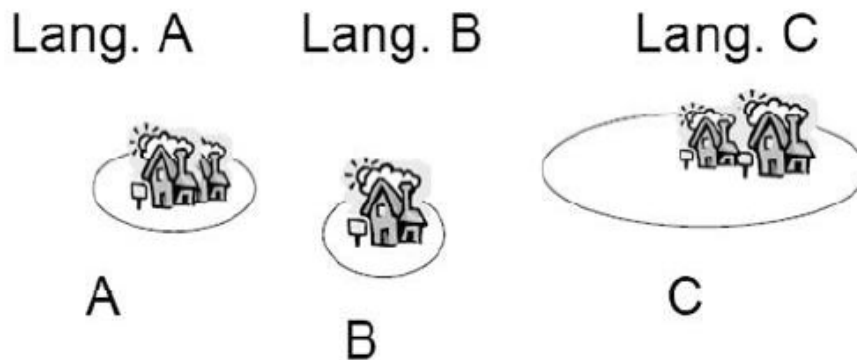


Figure 1b. Development of languages A, B, and C.

language continued to change, first to a slightly different dialect and then ultimately becoming a separate language, now called Language B. The same thing would have happened if some of the people on Island B had moved to Island C, with their language ultimately becoming Language C.

3.1.2.2 Languages change systematically

The example of the difference in pronunciation between New Zealand and Australian *i*-vowels, illustrates the second of these key principles that linguists use to determine the relationship between languages. The difference between the two vowels is systematic, that is, the difference is found in every word with an *i*-vowel like those listed above, not just in a few words. The two vowels have developed from a single pronunciation in the parent language from which the two dialects developed, and we say the two sounds correspond to each other.

It is easy to find words with similar sounds and meaning in even completely unrelated languages, just as fish and dolphins both swim in the sea, but are completely different species. Similarly birds, bats and bees all can fly, but that does not make them the same species. The similarities between them are independent developments, not because they have evolved from the same species. They are similar, but they do not correspond. This is the same with language. In Thai, for example, the word for 'fire' is *fai*, while the word for the 'rim, or edge of something' is *rim*, but this is not evidence that Thai and English are related languages. They are chance resemblances. Similarly, the Ilokano pronoun *yu* 'you (plural)' and the Karao negative *nat* 'not' are chance resemblances and do not make Philippine languages related to English. Languages can also have similar words and meanings because the words are borrowed from one language into another. For example English *boondocks* is a borrowing of Tagalog *bundok* 'mountain', and Bontok *manakáti* 'to cut grass for animal fodder' is a borrowing (via Ilokano) of Spanish *zakate*.

When languages develop from a common parent language, we say they have a genetic relationship. Sounds which were in the parent language develop in systematic ways, and when we can discover those systematic resemblances we can determine the kind and degree of relationship languages have with each other. Likewise, when we discover changes, either in words, sounds or other aspects of a language that are uniquely shared by a group of languages, we assume that these languages are all sister languages, and the changes they share originally happened in their parent language, and they have inherited the changes, just as children inherit the features of their parents. The languages are genetically related in that they developed out of the same mother tongue, as shown in Figs. 2a-b that illustrate in a simplified manner the

ways language develop. We would reconstruct the parent language of the group as Proto-ABC, and the parent of the subgroup as Proto-BC.

In Proto-ABC, there were words that were distinguished by having one of three different sounds, **l*, **d* and **r*.⁶ Proto-BC had only two of those sounds **l* and **d*. Words that originally had *r* in them were all pronounced with an *l* sound. When island C was occupied, *l* was lost. All words that formerly had an *l* or an *r* sound were now pronounced with *d*.

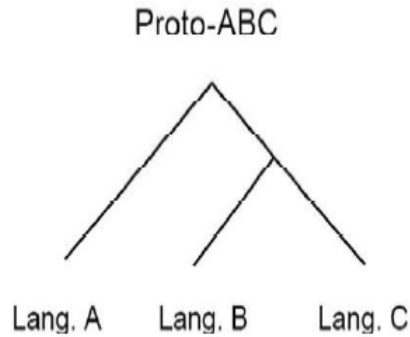


Figure 2a. Genetic relationship of Languages A, B, and C.

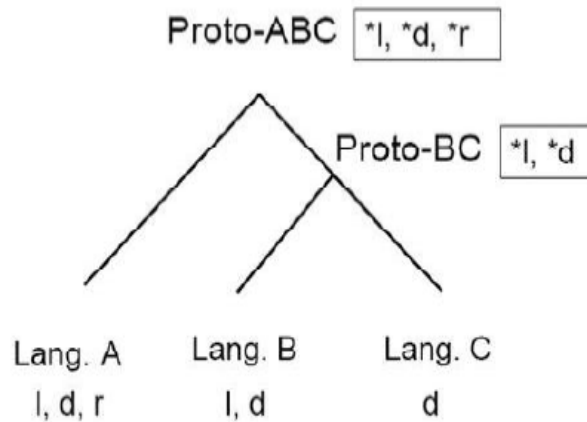


Figure 2b. Innovation in sound change in Languages A, B, and C.

3.2 Transformations

It is not possible in the space of this article to go into the details of how we know that all the languages of the Cordilleran area developed from a single language, or even to provide some of the features that

distinguish them from other Philippines languages. These details have been published in a number of papers (Reid 1974, 1978, 1979, 2001, 2006a, 2006b; Himes 1998, 1996, 1997; Zorc 1979, etc.). It is enough to take a look at the family tree that displays these languages (see Fig. 3, a family tree taken from Reid [2007]). Note that this family includes far more languages than those considered to be “indigenous” languages of the Cordillera. It includes, for example, Ilokano, Pangasinan, all the languages of the Cagayan Valley, and the languages spoken in the Sierra Madre and down the East Coast of northern Luzon. This is why I no longer refer to the family as Cordilleran and the parent as Proto-Cordilleran, but as Northern Luzon, and its parent language as Proto-Northern Luzon. What is important in the context of this conference is the fact that the “indigenous” languages of the Cordillera do not constitute a distinct subgroup of Philippine languages. Pangasinan, not a Cordilleran language nor an “indigenous” language, is more closely related to Inibaloi and Kallahan (and other Southern Cordilleran languages such as Karao and I-wak, which because of space considerations are not included in the figure) that **are** spoken in the Cordillera.

The changes, or transformations, that have developed over the last few thousand years and which have resulted in the language differentiation that we have just looked at were the result of communicative isolation, as people gradually moved into previously unoccupied mountains and valleys, developed their own dialects and eventually separate languages. Geographic features such as mountains and rivers along with regional and local conflicts all reduced the possibility of meeting and interacting with peoples who originally had the same language, and contributed to the development of distinctive ways of speech in each area. But today this has all changed. Even the most remote barangays have access by roads and bridges to the town and other barangays. Regional and local disagreements rarely lead to dangerous hostilities, so that today people can move freely between villages that a few generations ago were sworn enemies. Add to this two other major factors, 1) the almost universal presence of modern communication systems, such as radio, TV, the internet, and cell phones, access to which brings the whole world into our living rooms, and 2) modern education systems typically conducted in languages which are not native to the Cordillera, and what we find is that massive changes are taking place in the local languages, mostly the result of the influence of Filipino/Tagalog, Ilokano, and English – the main languages used in education.

4. Bontok

In nearly fifty years of visiting Mountain Province and studying the

Bontok language, I have witnessed the extensive changes that have taken place in the barangays as a result of the factors I have just discussed. The language as spoken today is very different from the one that was spoken when I first arrived in Guinaang in 1959. Back then, hardly any of the girls in the village had been to school, there were a few elementary grades attended by a handful of boys, but the great majority of the villagers had never been to school. Most had never been beyond the capital, then a two hour walk down the mountain from the village, and little was known of the outside world. There was no road access, no electricity, no market, no *sari-sari* stores, and no clinic. Local institutions such as the various marriage rituals, agricultural rites and the working group system were strong. Today this has all changed. Today there is a full elementary and high school in the village, a large percentage of young people have at least a high school education, and college education with a job to follow make up the dreams of young men and women who fifty years ago would have thought only of farming. There are lawyers, priests, policemen, school teachers and college instructors who got their elementary education in Guinaang, but their college education in major cities such as Baguio and Manila. Today, many of the rituals are no longer practiced, most of the old men who knew the ritual prayers have died, and younger men no longer remember them (or are interested in learning them). The working group system (*obfo*) has disintegrated. Girls' dormitories (*pangis*) that once played a key role in the establishment of working groups (Reid 1972) have disappeared. Traditional houses, tools and weapons are all gone, sold to antique traders for cash to send children to college or overseas as workers.

These changes are having an on-going effect on the language spoken in the community. Other sources of change are the in-migrating people such as teachers from areas outside the village, the non-local spouses brought back by villagers educated in Baguio and Manila, and the overseas workers who return with money to build multi-storey luxury homes in place of the traditional, thatched-roofed, humble, one-room homes of their parents and grandparents. Some of these changes are discussed in Reid (2005). But what I find most disheartening are not the new words and new ways of saying things that are being used today, these are just part of the natural course of events as a result of intensive language contact. What disheartens me is the loss of traditional knowledge. Not only is ritual knowledge fast disappearing, but common terms for traditional baskets and their functions are no longer known by young people. The names for all but the most common of the flora and fauna of the region are no longer known, or have been replaced by equivalent Ilokano or Tagalog terms. In other words, the unique richness of the dialect is being compromised. This is true, not only of the dialect spoken in Guinaang, but in the dialects spoken in

each of the other 15 Bontoc barangays, and probably also in each of the other areas of the Cordillera. The unique richness of the dialect is being compromised. Whereas fifty years ago local languages were used in all communicative situations, today Ilokano or Tagalog are often the languages of choice, with the local language being downgraded or restricted to home use. The use of the local languages is declining. It isn't "cool" to use one's local dialect, and old, formally uneducated people who are often the only repositories of the rich knowledge that distinguishes each community are disrespected because they are not fluent in languages with higher status.

5. Conclusions

So is there a need to be concerned about these trends, and if so what should we do about it? These are all the signs of endangered languages. Of the more than 6000 languages still spoken in the world today, it is estimated that more than half of them are in danger of disappearing over the next century. With the out-migration of speakers of local languages, and the in-migration of people who speak only Ilokano or Tagalog, the local languages are fast joining the ranks of endangered languages. Even Pangasinan, one of the Northern Luzon languages with over a million speakers has been carefully documented as probably also being endangered (Anderson and Anderson 2007).

Since culture is embodied in the language we use, the degree that our traditional languages are lost is the degree that our traditional cultures are disappearing. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? It is obvious that no one wants to turn the clock back a hundred years, or even fifty. We do not want to return to the hardships of the past, or to give away the progress that has been made because of education and the introduction of modern ways of living. But homogeneity ultimately means loss of identity, and I believe the redefinition of cultural minorities as indigenous peoples, especially here in the Cordillera, is actually an attempt to redefine one's identity in the face of the sometimes overwhelming trends towards globalization and homogenization of language and culture.

Our identity, however, is built not only on who and what we are in fact, but on who we perceive ourselves to be, and also by the knowledge of who and what we were in the past. This means an appreciation of the prehistoric and historic conditions which have brought about the diversity of language and culture that we cherish. For people who speak major languages, it is possible to research the dictionaries and grammars written by Spanish linguist-priests hundreds of years ago to find out what their society was like at that time (see for instance Mintz [2005, 2006]), but for the minority languages we have no access to how the society functioned in the past nor the words that the language

used to talk about it. A concerted effort therefore needs to be made to record as much as possible of the knowledge of the old people before they too are gone, taking their wealth of knowledge of the past with them to their grave.

Who are the people working on Cordilleran languages today? There are relatively few. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), Philippines has linguists operating in a few locations, but there is a great need for local people, such as each of you, to take a keen interest in recording the distinct language used in each barangay that marks it as distinct from others. Remember that there is strength in diversity, and by discovering all of the features that mark that diversity, we are not only celebrating our unique identities, but we are building a hedge against the forces of globalization that eventually would destroy our cultures and what remains of the languages we speak.

Finally let me remind you of your rights, under the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with reference to language (emphasis mine).

Article 13

1. Indigenous peoples have the **right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions**, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.
2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected and also to ensure that indigenous peoples can understand and be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means.

Article 14

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing **education in their own languages**, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

Article 16

1. Indigenous peoples have the **right to establish their own media in their own languages** and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination.

If you perceive yourself to be part of an indigenous group, whether or not the group is truly one of the original groups in the Philippines or part of the Austronesian cultural minorities, now labeled as indigenous, then you have a basis for claiming these rights, and hopefully recovering some of your fast disappearing heritage to pass on to your children.

NOTES

1. This is a revised version of a paper that was originally presented as a plenary talk at the 1st International Conference on Cordillera Studies, February 7-9, 2008, University of the Philippines, Baguio City.

2. <http://www.ncip.gov.ph/resourcesdetail.php?id=1> (accessed July 10, 2008).

3. There are two Alta languages spoken by Negritos over a fairly wide area of the Sierra Madre from eastern Nueva Ecija to the boundary of Aurora and Nueva Vizcaya provinces north of Maria Aurora. The northern and southern Alta languages are very different from one another, and are not mutually intelligible. The only published materials for Northern Alta are Vanoverbergh (1937), who refers to the language as Baler Negrito, and Reid (1991); the latter also provides the only published data on Southern Alta. The first reference to the Alta is probably in Ferdinand Blumentritt's 'Versuch einer Ethnographie der Philippinen' (1882, 32), cited in Worcester (1906, 791). Blumentritt referred to a group called "Altasanes" who lived in northwestern Nueva Vizcaya. Worcester (1906, 826) stated categorically, "Altasanes. Name formerly applied to the *Ifugaos* of northwestern Nueva Vizcaya. No such people now exists." An Amganad Ifugao narrative text however makes reference to contact between Ifugaos and Alta Negritos. It is found in Madrid (1980, 117-121). The text states that these Negritos lived in caves "on the mountain top between Hingyon and Ubwag." The location of these place names is not further identified in the article, but was apparently in the hunting range of Amganad Ifugao people.

4. At least as many indigenous languages in Taiwan have become extinct in the last couple of hundred years, and the rest are all in danger of becoming extinct (Blust 1999, 33; Li 2004, 49).

5. Map 2. Expansion of Austronesian Peoples is based on the map on p. 2-3 in *Oceania: Umi-no Jinrui Dai-idou* [Oceania: Expansions of the Great Seafarers] (Kyoto: Shōwadō, National Museum of Ethnology, Japan, 2007).

6. The asterisk before the sounds indicates that these are the reconstructed sounds of a parent language, based on the way words are pronounced today.

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