From Main Ritual to Main Course: Dogs, Dog Meat, and the Igorot Trope

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ABSTRACT

The ritualistic sacrifice of what is universally referred to as people's "best friend" has been part of countless ethnic rites since time immemorial. As an animal that has been culturally understood as being the guardian to the gateways of the land of the living and the dead, the dog in ritualistic slaughter plays a crucial role in the spiritual interpretations of the interplay between life and death.

As notions of influence move from colonial to more modern cultural understandings, the ritual sacrifice of dogs has moved also from areas of ceremonial worth to back-alley Igorot eateries, as dog meat found itself being incorporated into the Cordillera highland menu. Driven even more so by influences of touristic consumption, the exoticization of the Igorot has also seen the same treatment of their rituals, which have now been redesigned to cater to the outsider's unknowing gaze. The Igorot in modern conventions become privy to the creation of identifying tropes that further distinguish them as the savage devourer of a friendly animal.

This paper focuses on describing how the rituality and culture of dog sacrifice and consumption tend to shift in meaning, purpose, and representations from the past to present. The paper also explores how rituals involving dogs and their sacrifice have been interpreted over time and have become part of a modern consensus towards trope and identity construction. Although discussing Igorot traditions and rituals involving dogs, I do not go deep into the technicalities and specificities of ritual dog sacrifice as exhibited individually by varying ethnolinguistic groups in the Cordillera. Instead, I discuss how such ritualistic traits have converged and would eventually obtain varying interpretations, leading to more modern apprehensions.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Dog meat, Igorot, Ritual, Animal Rights

The barbarian is, first and foremost, the man who believes in barbarism.
-Claude Levi Strauss

Introduction

Being born and raised in Baguio, a city in the northern highlands of the Philippines, I have seen and experienced members of indigenous communities from all over the Cordillera converging in Baguio's environs and creating a multi-ethnic community. Even lowland populations have found themselves thriving within the mountainous city scape, adding more to a diverse yet integrated culture. Having an Ilokano father and an Ifontoc mother, I grew up riddled with countless cultural negotiations, as with others growing up in multicultural highland communities. Compromises usually end up seemingly amalgamating and transforming folkways and traditions, among these was the role of the dog as either pet, livestock, or ritual figure. In Baguio, as well as in other areas of convergence in the Cordilleras, dogs freely straddle such identifications. As a child, I observed eating dog meat or having dogs as pets were commonplace. Rituals that involve dogs were a regular sight but were met with the utmost ambivalence because of their ubiquity. Young folk at that time would not even bother to question or disambiguate, as such was believed to belong only within the realms of elderly folk and culture bearers from the villages who still opted to push forth old ways in rapidly modernizing landscapes.

For most of us growing up in Baguio in the last 40 years, the butchering of a dog was always understood as a prelude to a festivity, a celebratory meal that ended up with inebriated uncles and neighbors either arguing or slumped on the pavement. Neighbors would usually send over plastic containers of cooked dog meat as *padigu*, an Ilokano concept of sharing food served during celebrations. I do recall that a neighbor once gave us a big bowl of stir-fried dog meat with a generous heap of shredded onion leaks to our delight, only to find out that our pet dog was run over by a car earlier that day. Either way, everybody was happy. There was still this generally accepted idea that dog meat was distinctive and special. Its attachment to its ritualistic past and highland traditional value still held cognizance despite having been ironically normalized and exoticized in multicultural and modernizing contexts.

I explore how various understandings and interpretations from the past and the present would eventually form how dog sacrifice and tradition would become part of the Cordilleran discourse on culture. I start with a theoretical discussion of the value of ritual sacrifice in indigenous communities and how communities value and approach animal sacrifice as an integral part of their identity

and culture. This discussion should lead to an understanding of how transitional positions on rituality of animal sacrifice play a key role in intergenerational cultural dynamics and how cultural values of ritual and tradition change with varying factors driving towards modernity. This is followed by an examination of colonial texts about the role of dogs in highland rituals, to arrive at an understanding of how the outside gaze has also established its own interpretation and trope constructions of such cultural notions. By understanding how ritual communities and outsiders see and understand the role of dogs in the Cordilleras, concepts on cultural appropriation and transformations are given a better analytical perspective, especially under modern urban conditions. Using a self-affirmative and interpretative, autoethnographic methodology, I discuss how the ritual constructs of dog butchering and consumption have paved the way for their more modern transitions as part of culinary culture, commerce, animal rights, and as a source of highland exoticization.

Though tackling tradition and cultural concepts of dog sacrifice as well as butchering, this paper is not an anthropological and ethnographic piece on the specificities and variances of Igorot rituals involving dogs, nor does it attempt to disambiguate how such rituals differ from one Cordilleran ethnolinguistic group to the other. This paper acknowledges the idea that dog sacrifice and consumption occur all over the Cordillera but it is not distinctly an Igorot cultural trait. The core of this paper's discussion lies in acknowledging that such cultural practices have existed, have transformed, and have managed to persist, and in recognizing indigenous roots and multi-cultural influences.

Of Rituals and Realities

Indigenous highland spirituality relies on the interconnectedness of all things found within the natural animistic realm. The boundaries between society and spirituality are at a constant intersection where what is contemporarily seen as mystical and incorporeal are understood as absolute realities that tend to dictate on community and individual life. As a manifestation of spirituality, rituals for indigenous people play a vital role in their involvement and participation in the interplay of such supersubstantial interconnections. Every aspect of indigenous life for the Igorot is always accorded its respective ritual process. From birth to death, in sickness and health, in war and peace, and so much more, rituality is an Igorot way of life. It is distinct from common human activity. As Gaitanos and Mitkidis write:

> The most obvious characteristic that separates ritual from a common action is the certain rules that govern its function and practice. Firstly, there are specific actions that are performed

> from specific persons. Also, a great role has the area, the location where the ritual takes place. In addition, each action happens in a specific way. Another clue is the instruments of the ritual, which are irreplaceable, and a lot of times they are governed by sanctity. Moreover, in every ritual there is a script at the backwards, a history on which the ritual is based on and it often 'forms' the motive of performing. Last, especially important is the time of the performance, which is the same every time. (Gaitanos & Mitkidis 2016, 2)

The performativity of rituals follows a strict set of rules and standards that require and demand detail, precision, and conduct. But as with other human activities, rituals also evoke expression and identity. For the Igorot, rituals not only imply spirituality, these are absolute expressions of distinction, position, and power. Rituals set rules and systems that ultimately shape the individual and the community. Rituals are handed down, serving as links to those who have lived before. On values and ritual, Daniel de Coppet writes:

> …it involves expressing the hierarchy of values which orders them, a hierarchy which corresponds to the distinction specific to that society between the indissolubly linked terms of ritual and non-ritual. (de Coppett 1992, 9)

Rituals are maintained to provide a semblance of order and civilization and are passed on as a gesture of continuity and assurance of a community's transition towards the future. In the conduct of rituals, everybody involved becomes equally subject to the same binding spiritual forces, as rituals symbolically take the role of constantly binding the individual with the natural environment. But indigenous rituals always necessitate an exchange, as every ritual in the Igorot realm requires a sacrifice.

For northern highland indigenous communities, animal sacrifice presents itself as a direct interpretation of interconnectedness and the fundamental roles that animals play in the indigenous natural realm. As such, animal participation and involvement in indigenous life processes may be framed under the following features: 1) as part of kinship systems; 2) as sources of wisdom and protection; 3) as ceremonially significant; and 4) as historically important (Legee & Robinson 2017, 3).

As part of Igorot kinship systems, animals take the role of vessels that animistic belief representations may physically take. Growing up, I have personally witnessed our elders perform rituals that require animal sacrifice, and that are taken seriously, intimately, and sincerely as these have been considered requirements for specific events. My

elderly relatives from the Mountain Province would always reiterate that our ancestral spirits may come in the form of various animals, as in the case of the Kankanaey and the Ifontoc where monkeys, crows, snakes, and insects are seen as the embodiment of "ancestors" in the land of the living.

On animals as sources of wisdom and protection, I have witnessed several Ibaloy elders imply that crows are believed to have the same intellectual capacity as any human being and are therefore able to cause trouble, distress, and even death. It is common knowledge in the mountains that if travelers see snakes crossing their paths during a journey, this is immediately seen as an omen to go back as snakes forewarn of impending danger and calamity. In ceremonial significance, animal sacrifice plays a crucial role in satisfying deities and ancestors, causing prayers to be fulfilled and answered. In Igorot oral history, animals are often spoken of as part of and contributory to the exploits of individuals and communities. The symbology of ritual animal skulls displayed on the rafters of Ifugao and Ibaloy traditional and even modern houses speak of moments in that family's history that are worth remembering. The ritual animal is a memento of importance and extreme relevance.

Dogs in particular fulfill all four features. (1) These are seen as members of the family and the community, literally taking shelter within the confines of the hut and are recognized in the entire village. (2) Dogs serve as guardians for children and the elderly, and as necessary tools in hunting and in battle. (3) In spiritual belief, dogs are seen as animals that bridge the living and the dead. The howling of dogs is believed to beckon the opening of pathways to both lands and as an effect, dogs are believed to see ancestral spirits. (4) Their ability to traverse the land of the living and the dead makes them a communicative conduit for departed ancestors, a link between the past and the present. In the indigenous realm, trans-species dialogue is possible. As Marlene Castellano writes:

> the boundary between material and spiritual realms is easily crossed. Similarly, the boundaries between humans, animals, plants, and natural elements are also permeable. This shapeshifting can be willing or inadvertent, and is framed as an essential part of trans-species dialogue. (Castellano 2014, 273)

Akin to other indigenous communities, northern highland ethnicities traditionally see human and animal life as a continuum, as animals are interpreted to also have a shared personhood and community value as well. Animals can speak, animals can think, and can affect both the physical and spiritual environment. In some instances, animals can become people and people can become animals. It is only with

colonization and the intervening outsiders' gaze that the indigenous relationship with animals is plainly and selectively portrayed as being both symbolically and rhetorically genocidal in nature, concentrating simply on framed constructs of indiscriminate slaughter and debauchery.

In ritual life, in material culture, and in all manner of ethnic expression the world over, animal symbology and mimicry is often utilized. Ethnic dances from various ethnolinguistic areas in the northern highlands often portray animal movements such as flying eagles and courting chickens. Ritual item boxes and ritual artifacts are often carved to represent various animals, like pig-shaped fetish boxes and lizard-shaped carved caskets. Animal parts even adorn ritual garb as exemplified by boar tusk armlets, dog and crocodile teeth necklaces, and monkey skull-adorned headgear as worn by ethnic shamans and warriors in conducting rites. In doing so, people invoke the animals to imbue such materials and activities with their respective traits, as animal attributes and qualities are interpreted as vital sources of power in the natural realm. But this does not imply that as sources of power, status, and authority, animals become subject to a continual cycle of being appropriated and butchered. As Paul Nadasdy (2007, 25) derives from his studies on North American Indian rituals: "Such practices commonly include food taboos, ritual feasts and prescribed methods for disposing of animal remains, as well as injunctions against overhunting and talking badly about, or playing with, animals."

Nadasdy's observations on the treatment of ritual animals also hold true among the Igorot. Indigenous shamans deter the consumption of specific animals on certain ritual days. In the case of orpi for the Ifugao, as personally witnessed, the consumption of fish and mollusks are not allowed. Ibaloy and Kankanaey traditional food restrictions also imply the non-consumption of crows, lizards, and snakes, as these are the animal forms of their ancestors, as most ritual bearers would suggest. In the Mountain Province and in Kalinga, monkeys as well as insects are strongly suggested by the elders as non-consumable due to their spiritual worth in the environment. In instances of hunting and celebratory consumption, ritual bearers often agree on what and what not to eat and hunt. Hunting parties are often conducted strictly on hunting seasons to give the animals time to reproduce and to increase in number. More traditional indigenous communities in the northern Philippine highlands believe in taking only what is needed from the forest, not one more boar, deer, or tree. Respect for animals is integral to highland ethnic spirituality and community values and this is always expressed through ceremony. There are instances though when more entrepreneurial members of the community enter into raising livestock such as pigs, chickens, and carabaos, but the traditional Igorot diet in the olden days, as elders would suggest, necessitates the consumption of meat only on ritual occasions. Root crops and grains are daily dietary staples. Ritual bearers are very particular with animal specificities in rites, demanding that such animals be taken from the forest and not raised in cages. Although livestock are used in ceremonies that require feeding a number of guests and participants, these are not directly used in sacrifice.

For indigenous communities, the interplay between animal and ritual is vital in both understanding and coming to terms with complex concepts (Legge & Robinson 2017). The physical, spiritual, and symbolic roles of animals lie in their transactive ability in maintaining natural cycles and interconnectedness within the ethnic community and beyond as well. The ritualistic role of animals is valuable in both meaning and context. As Victor Turner (1969) suggests, "ritual as made up of artful internal logic and consistency, may well be an extreme case of coherence." Ethnic rituality embodies the very core structure that holds indigenous communities together and animals are also part of this. Sacrificial rites create a world of relationships and activate and transform it, as the effects of the sacrifice do not cease when the rite ends (Jamous 1992). Sacrifices are transcendental and continuing, influencing not only the conditions of the next sacrifice, but the mobility, endurance, and continuity of indigenous life as well.

Colonial Apprehensions

The ties that perpetually bind the indigene with the more abhorrent nature of animal sacrifice was brought about by apprehensions conceived by those who are from the outside. Even before the entry of the colonial West into the terra incognita that is the Cordillera, stories of the abhorrent and barbaric northern interior have already been part of lowland oral tradition; from the savage head-hunters that victimize wayward travelers, to grizzly mountain man-beasts that take away livestock and children at night. The realm of the indigenous other was always shrouded in genocidal tropes of blood, and gore.

Upon entry into what the Spanish would refer to then as *tierra de infieles*, Western apprehension on the indigenous communities was concentrated on creating a rhetoric that clearly distinguished "us" from "them." Inscribed, analyzed, and scrutinized, the process of othering the highlander was initiated by collectively homogenizing them as one and the same, under the basic constructs of geographic boundaries and place. The inception and enforcement of "Igorot" as a collective term in reference to their homogenized personhood now would imply the substitutability as well as the interchangeability of folkways, traditions, and rituals. Animal sacrifices in particular would

catch the selective gaze of the West, as such acts would emphasize and prove colonial expectations of the indigenous other but would also function in clearly buttressing Western claims to civility. The more the other is objectified and vilified, the more the West reiterates its purpose, its manifest destiny.

The colonial gaze would put particular attention to how the Igorot would treat dogs in their rituals. Under a naturalizing stance the very image of a slaughtered dog already signifies what kind of people the Igorot were, as supporting Western edicts of dogs being pets rather than livestock and emphasis on their status as "man's best friend." In 1886, Spanish Military Captain Evaristo de Liebana Y Trincada, as part of his travel journals, would write:

> Their basic food is the same as the (lowland) Filipinos'—rice and camotes—and only on the biggest feasts or in cases of sickness do they make use of chickens, eggs, carabao meat, and dogs; and this is so much the case that many of those who have been subjugated in the military districts of Bontoc, Lepanto and Benguet and go to work in the Christian towns demand food of this kind one or two days a week as part of their contracts. (Trincada 1886 cited in Scott 1975, 5)

Trincada's discourse tends to normalize the consumption of dog meat for the Igorot, as it becomes casually mixed in with chickens, eggs, and carabao meat, rhetorically naturalizing the act as truly in itself "Igorot." Trincada continues:

> The grossness and repugnance of their customs is sufficiently shown in their manner of preparing and serving meat for eating: once the animal —whether dog or carabao—is killed with a spear, headax or stake, they cut it up without removing the skin, fighting each other as if they were a pack of wolves to snatch up the pieces which they then stick in the fire with no further preparation, and then eat them scarcely charred as if they were delicate morsels. (Trincada 1886 in Scott 1975, 5–6)

The mere use of the descriptive words "grossness and repugnance" already implies a colonial gaze that generalizes Igorot debauchery and absolute lack of civility. The inclusion of the dog with all images is deemed necessary as it symbolically evokes a power of genocidal rhetoric. "Like a pack of wolves using implements of war in butchering dogs and carabaos" does not leave much for the Western imagination and collective assumptions on how barbaric Igorot culture is.

Trincada's observations are driven by his colonial intent

and do not really serve much in clarifying and explaining Igorot culture. For his first observations, credit has to be given to Trincada for emphasizing that meats are part of a customary diet dictated by rituals and feasts, but it has to be made clear that dog meat was never distributed en masse (as previously explained). The demand for a dog is part of a demand to conduct a ritual and never a demand for consuming its meat. In his second set of images, in instances of festivities where there is a substantial number of people present to feed, the carabao is the better option, due to obvious reasons of sheer size and amount of meat it can produce. But the ritual slaying of the carabao is usually conducted with strict ritual mandates from the elder bearers, from who gets to slay the animal, how it is to be slain, what specific weapon to use, and to which parts of the animal go to whom. The idea of fighting over meat is absolutely made up again to emphasize an assumed Igorot debauchery. The savage mind is found in his stomach, the Spaniards would say.

Dogs, just like other animals used for ritual and even for consumption purposes, are also subject to stringent selection guidelines, as common knowledge would imply. Sickly, mangy, weak, etc. animals are not fit for utilization. Indisputably healthy, strong, and vigorous dogs are mostly favored. As with any other ritual preparation, the selected dog is then cleaned properly and not fed overnight, which are still relatively done as measures even at present. In some traditions such as the daw-es, a cleansing ritual for the Ifontoc, some ritual bearers would address prayers to the ancestors directly to the animal. Apologies are also given to the dog, thanking it for its sacrifice.

In 1890, Hans Meyer, a German botanist and anthropologist, would conduct ethnocultural and botanical studies in the Cordilleras, specifically in Ibaloy and Kankanaey territory. As part of his observation notes he would write:

> Men, women, children, dogs and swine crept up and lay around us and gawked at, felt and laughed at the "castilas" who were something entirely new for the greater part of these isolated mountain dwellers. (Meyer 1890 cited in Scott 1975, 71)

In this set of images, aside from putting the native in the position of belonging in a colonially produced nostalgia of the innocent and ignorant other, putting the ethnic body in the same communal space with dogs and swine creates a rhetoric which puts the native within the same existential level as their animals. Having been bestowed bestial qualities by the West, the Igorot becomes mythologized as free, simplistic, yet at the same time primal.

The indigenous relationship with animals under a colonizing

gaze functions within two notions of apprehension: first, the animal as food and second, the animal as an equal. By combining both, the Igorot literally becomes what it eats, which leads more to the West's creative interpretative agency and authority over the vilified savage. The idea of eating your pets evokes much horror to the Western stance, as such a gesture creates not only abhorrence, but distrust, and absolute abandonment of humanity.

In continuing the German apprehension of the Igorot, Carl Semper's exploits in the northern highlands in 1862 would produce the following observations on the interiors of the Igorot household:

> The one room serves as bedroom for men and dogs alike, and the upper part of the house from four feet up to the roof serves as a granary for storing rice. These houses are very dirty. Everything is covered with soot and ash; at night all members of the house lie around the fireplace with their dogs to protect themselves from the cold. (Semper 1862 cited in Scott 1975, 27–28)

The gaze has the ability to observe and permeate. In this set of images, Semper's gaze into the privacies of the Igorot domicile creates an intimate and close colonial look literally behind Igorot-made walls. The idea of sleeping with pet dogs is not that new in European communities, but if taken out of the contexts of breeding and pedigree, of woven dog baskets and embroidered blankets, the imagery of savages lying on the ground with their dogs, all within the confines of a soot-laden and flea-infested structure, is in itself achieving nothing more than propagating a vilifying view of the subject other. Both Meyer's and Semper's observations portray a community where dogs are free to roam, creating no delineations and barriers between men and beasts.

In reality, such observations are undeniably true. In any Igorot community, past or present, the image of stray dogs roaming streets and villages is very prevalent. Under traditional contexts dogs are taken care of by the entire community, are given food and shelter, and are not physically abused and maltreated, which in turn give the animals a sense of complacency and security even if away from their direct owners. Instances where dogs are tied to house posts are when the animal mating season comes or if they become violently aggressive or sick. Having dogs in the household is common practice, as they are recognized members of the family; in many instances they are given names and spoken to like regular town folk.

The American administration of the Cordillera and its inhabitants drew new structures of understanding as brought about by exoticized notions of adventure and tourism. As the Spaniards would assess the Igorot and their realm with such repugnance and the Germans with

their more technical scientific ardor, American apprehension of the savage-other would come in the form of emphasizing backwardness as a precondition to moving forward. The Igorot was the perfect catalyst in proving American might and enchantment. In his thirty years stay in the northern highlands, former governor of the Mountain Provinces, Samuel E. Kane, would start his autobiography with the following paragraph:

> I was getting tired of answering the foolish questions of tourists who wished to know if it were actually true that the Igorots hunted for human heads; that they practiced trial marriage, sacrificed dogs in certain of their sacred rituals and had constructed the finest and most wonderful system of rice-terraces in the world. One old lady from one of the middle states had asked me if I had ever cut off any heads and how many dogs I had eaten. Experience had taught me that if I answered one of their questions I was in for a long siege, so I usually took refuge in silence. (Kane 1938, Preface)

In emphasizing themes of development, progress, and civilization, the American administrative government did not hold anything back as far as subjecting the Igorot to more tropes as inspired by those that were first institutionalized by the Spanish and the Germans. The American idea of the Igorot was a rhetorical interplay of what is noble with what was savage. Noble, as under American tutelage, even a loin-cloth-wearing dog eater can become a model of American humanity and manifest destiny. Savage, as there is no challenge too great for the American, let alone a pygmy with a spear. Samuel Kane, after having served Bontok communities to the very end, even being labeled as one of the original "white apos," has been witness to how America has taken Igorot indigeneity and molded it to its own selfish purposes, even transforming exoticizing tropes, creating a new touristic culture that persists even at present. The touristic expectation of the Igorot realm is condensed into imageries of headhunters living in rice terraces, but Kane emphasizes that even as early as the 1930s the touristic appeal of Igorot dog culture was already fledgling. And as Kane would take refuge in silence, so would an entire highland civilization. Without American intervention and permission, and with the help of a growing global industry, the Igorot was now officially Uncle Sam's little brown dog-eating native.

The spectacle of the savage in Western circus and carnival shows was already a growing staple, with caged spear-clad and face-painted men put in close proximity to the bearded woman, the mermaid, and the sword eater. Under orientalizing terms, even taboo

has value, as exemplified in the colonial designs of the representation of the Philippine indigene in the St. Louis Worlds Fair, and among a multitude of other human zoo exhibitions that followed suit. Scheduled dog-sacrifice and cooking became a major draw in all of the Igorot exhibitions conducted abroad, as such evoked a detachment of the savage from its controlled foreign geographic placement. It is in such savage acts that the West assumed to witness the authenticity of primitive life.

The exoticized value of primitivism and all of its attached genocidal tropes have found commercial value here and abroad. In the 1920s, Mabel Cook Cole, British ethnographer and anthropologist, would write the following commentary:

> Everyone had heard of the Philippines, but there seemed to be considerable discrepancy in the notions concerning them. From one we got the impression that Manila was a thoroughly American city, surrounded by small green islands which were inhabited by dog-eating, head hunting savages, some of whom had tails. From another we learned that they were beautiful islands extending for fifteen hundred miles north and south and inhabited by highly civilized Malays. Another informed us that the climate was insufferably hot, unfit for the white man. We heard that the nights were so cold that we must wear flannels. The animal life seemed to consist of everything from centipedes to carabao. The rivers were said to be raging torrents most of the year. In only one detail were all agreed, that it was not a desirable place to go. (Cole 1929, 3)

Cole's rhetoric indeed fits the contemporary notions of the Philippines under a new construct of neo-coloniality. As the traveler has now become the tourist, and the colonizer now a purveyor of hotels and nature-walks, the experience into the land of the others is now met with opposing structures, of cities and mountains, of modernity and rurality, of the unbearable and the temperate. Akin to seeing lions in a cage, the once-feared Igorot is now subject to a more apprehending and controlling gaze, which tends to emphasize their primitivity and savagery but also acknowledging their imposed civility. As in classic orientalist discourse, Prescilina Patajo-Legasto writes:

> In classic orientalist discourses, such prejudiced discourses, binary markers of differences between the "occident" and the Orient, between the individual and the "native" colonized "other", are forge rounded as intrinsic, basic, generic, given-as "substance" differences or ontological differences. (Patajo-Legasto 2008, xvi)

Functioning well within orientalistic binary markers, dog-eating is now a touristic activity that still evokes a certain sense of savage-authenticity while being a new and exotic experience at the same time. As old villages become nothing more than backdrops to photo opportunities, and rituals into spectacles of paid and choreographed activity, dog-eating exists as one of the few and last bastions of what outsiders would consider an original highland act. As Cole continues:

> ...the people were friendly and hospitable. They brought all the food they had for their guests, even killing a dog as an extra delicacy. They consented to being measured and having their pictures taken. They discussed their customs, and were willing to trade off some of their possessions. (Cole 1929, 81)

Hospitality in reference to indigenous highland communities is a verbiage not considered relevant by the Spanish and the Germans. The mere idea of referring to the Igorot as being accommodating would more or less send shivers up the classical colonizer's spine (that is considering they have one). Combining hospitality with the idea of "killing dogs" and "delicacy" in one paragraph already sums up how cultural appropriation has drastically changed with the advent of American reconfigurations of the north. The authentic northern experience now became an amalgamation of experiencing cold weather, sleeping in huts, donning loin-cloths, taking a picture and, of course, eating Igorot cuisine. But as pinikpikan and etag have become nationally familiar, the need for more authentic avenues of experience became necessary. For those who dare, dog meat became a requirement in the tourist's proverbial to-do list, as with eating strawberries and riding a bike at Burnham park.

The Rite of Passage into the Canine *Karinderya*

A vast area of land surrounded by hillocks with an accessible river system as a water source would lay the foundations for an early Ibaloy market. Tradesmen and merchandisers, with products from adjoining areas, from the mountains and the lowlands, would converge on this area. Seeing the value and accessibility of such a geographic space, the American administration would expand the area further, at around 77,770 square meters, and would formally establish the Baguio City market in 1913 (Agoot 2007). With an established market and a customer base consisting of both locals and outsiders, the trade and sale of dogs, both alive and dead, became a lucrative venture. For the indigenous immigrant populations, like my grandparents and their immediate family who are now settling in Baguio, the cityscape did not

leave much room for the conveyance of traditional practices on ritual-animal treatment, as accessibility to the market would eventually reshape several traditions. The availability of butchered dog meat in the markets would pave the way for its eventual consideration as regular food stuff. In terms of the creation and recreation of societies itself, Emile Durkheim would write:

> A society can neither create nor recreate itself without at the same time creating ideals. This creation is not a sort of work of supererogation for it, by which it would complete itself, being already formed; it is the act by which it is periodically made and remade. The ideal society is not outside of the real society; it is a part of it. Although we are divided between them as between two poles which mutually repel each other, we cannot hold to one without holding to the other…. (Durkheim 1925, 603)

The recreation/creation of Cordilleran society became a product of various standards and expectations emanating not from its local inhabitants but from the designs of the outside. But such recreation requires the same structures that have primarily been used in separating us from them. In recreating the culture and rituality of dog sacrifice, a blanket of primitive secrecy and taboo would still prevail, as personally witnessed, in the back alleys of the city's market scene. Establishments that would sell dog meat dishes were placed in the peripheries, away from what people would then refer to as "regular" restaurants. Back-alley karinderya or eateries would operate under shady conditions, but with the irony of these being recognized and acknowledged by everyone. Its orientalizing value is contained within the conditions of its difficulty of access, creating a similar notion of adventure-seeking. For the outsider, the exclusivity of ritual in terms of representing dog sacrifice and dog meat consumption as an "Igorot only" act, mimics a primitive rite of passage. De Coppet writes:

> Rituals are in some way rites of passage: in other words, that they presuppose phasal movement, directionality, and positioning. Since it is through such movements and positions that participants make statements both about the world and about the ritual itself, a further implication is that there may often arise a quality which keeps the ritual going and which I will call 'agency by default.' (de Coppet 1992, 12)

As rituals shift from village to city, and from primitivity to modernity, the act of consuming dog meat does obtain what de Coppet suggests as agency by default. By any form and conveyance, the Igorot will

always address dog meat with a ritualistic connotation though in varying degrees of cognition. In a typical dog meat eatery, as personally witnessed, for example, two age groups of patrons would always be present: children and old men. Children would be fed dog meat under the cultural pretenses that consuming such becomes, somewhat, a rite of passage into being Igorot, as my uncles would have suggested, having fed me in *karinderyas* at an early age. The elderly patrons, on the other hand, provide a symbolic gesture of being catalysts of continuity and performativity of the act as a legitimized ritual regardless of it not following traditional processes. As my *Ifontok* grandfather would often say, *masapul tayu agparti ti aso nu ada iti pakan* (we need to butcher dogs if there is a feast), which receives concurrence from other elders.

Dog meat eateries, being positioned in the peripheries and back alleys, have put the act of dog eating within the same negative community space as taverns and drinking dens. These are usually frequented by Baguio's lower income, blue-collar population, but these also receive patronage from all walks of life. Under such establishments, dog meat now becomes a favorite *pulutan* (finger food?) for the local drinking population. Having been culturally and symbolically transformed as such, it is rare for highland households to consider dog meat as a family dinner option, prepared in the home kitchen. My mother would not even allow dog meat in her kitchen lest it be demanded by the elders that it be prepared for specific events, when it should be prepared away from the kitchen. Fragments of its ritualistic past still persist as some would now only eat dog meat if it was prepared and bought in bona fide dog meat *karinderyas*.

Though no research has been done concerning the consumption of dog meat and class and gender statistics, it is readily evident, a priori, that men constitute the majority of dog meat eaters in Baguio. As even in the past, ritual bearers in charge of handling and preparing the dog for ritual and sacrifice would be the men and boys of the village. In more contemporary contexts, the outsiders' query on why the Igorot eat dog meat is often met with a haphazardly made answer "pampainit ng katawan" (it warms the body). As if rhetorically trying to tie nature and the naturality of eating dog meat to mountain folk, there is no scientific evidence to back this up, except maybe in assuming that protein ingestion does produce body heat. But outsiders believe this under the pretenses that it is presumably originating from ancient indigenous knowledge. According to Julia Kristeva, "Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection" (Kristeva 1982, 2). The mere notion of putting humanity's "best friend" in one's mouth and swallowing it is indeed abhorrent, made only possible by causes of cultural intervention, exoticized value, and ethnic validity. Kristeva continues:

> When food appears as a polluting object, it does so as oral object

> only to the extent that orality signifies a boundary of the self's clean and proper body. Food becomes abject only if it is a border between two distinct entities or territories. A boundary between nature and culture, between the human and the nonhuman. (Kristeva 1982, 75)

"You are what you eat" and no act of cultural appropriation is more meaningful for the outsider than the literal ingestion of another culture. Kristeva's notion of food as an abjection when it becomes a boundary is indeed true, but there are certain situations when people have an incessant need to cross such boundaries, to see what is on the other side, and as curiosity would dictate, to literally taste what has not been tasted before. Comparable to dog meat, highland traditional salted meat (*etag*, *kiniing*, *inasinan*, *inasukan*) has also garnered the same renown in terms of demand due to its abhorrence. As the trope would imply, *etag* is often described by its purveyors as salted, fermented pork, left in large containers, made even more delicious when made rancid by maggots. Highland elders, on the other hand, would not readily agree with this. The process of preserving meat for all indigenous cultures is an act dictated by lengthy periods of possible hunger brought about by seasons not amenable to agriculture. *Etag* ensures that meat is readily available for a family, in times when the communal hut is impossible. Salting and curing meat in smoke are done to extend its shelf-life, à la Iberian ham and prosciutto. As my grandmother, who would regularly prepare smoked meat for our family, would strongly state, the onset of maggots or any parasite infecting the meat, greatly reduces its shelf-life and flavour. As she elaborates further, the process of making *etag* starts with a newly butchered pig. Freshly cut pork belly and more fatty parts are separated and are not even allowed to be contaminated with water. Vast quantities of salt are then used to cover the meat and are hung right above the hearth to be continually smoked. The intense heat from the hearth and smoke, cooks and cures the meat. It is important that during the process the hearth is continually lit, day in and day out. In consuming the *etag*, small bits of it would be cut and mixed with any boiling soup as a flavour additive. The remaining etag is returned to its spot above the hearth. Maggots in *etag* only mean one thing, the entire process failed. Civilizations persist because of proper maintenance and enforcement of sanitation and the same applies to the Igorot.

The idea of creating a vilifying mythos for Igorot food, be it dog meat, salted meats, or even the almighty *pinikpikan* works ironically in propelling its status as "must-try exotic experiences." Kristeva's ideals on "food loathing" appear to be debased, as notions of fear, abjection, and the unknown are what drive contemporary tourists to venture out

and leave their comfort zones. The classical notion of tourism, with its planned activities, hotel rooms, and breakfasts-in-bed, has, in a way, become routinary, as its intended and supposed separation from life at home does not serve its purpose anymore. Turning in full circle, the tourist has come back to its primordial form as the traveler, expecting no forms of leisure, duking it out with the elements, and getting away from what is normal and systematic, and experiencing the exotic.

Once upon a time, a traveler ate dog meat because it was served by the Igorot that took him in. He ate it because it was customary, he ate it because of sheer respect to his hosts, and most importantly because he was hungry. At present such factors do not seem to matter much as customs can be bypassed, respect is inconsequential, and hunger…let us just say that in Baguio alone, every street corner has either a Jollibee, McDonald's, or that back alley with a Sagada Lunch.

In Conclusion: Animal Rights and What is Left of the Animal

Igorot identities have come a long way from their primordial, colonial inception of savagery and barbarism. But even in more contemporary times, references to such antiquated colonial tropes still obtain much currency. Realizing that there is no escape from such imagined and enforced identifying stereotypes, in a decolonizing act, the Igorot have taken these tropes and made them work to their own advantage. The image of the headhunter, no matter how unvalidated it is, is now widely received and is seen as an ethnic image of bravery, power, and fearlessness. Rituality and ethnicity have been redefined to emphasize antiquity and originality, and even as a recourse for proving legitimacy, feeding a cultural audacity.

The ethnic relationship between dog and Igorot intimately exists in both the physical and spiritual plane. Even in death, the dog remains to be part of the Igorot life process. Colonial intervention has taken such a relationship and has subjected it to more Western ideals of comparison and interpretation. But the colonizer is only partly to blame, for the Igorot themselves would transform the rituality of dog sacrifice into a new culture dipped in soy sauce and chili peppers. At present, rituals still persist. Elders and ritual bearers still maintain spiritual bonds with the dog, and sacrificial rites are still carefully and meaningfully conducted, serving their rightful ethnic purpose in the community. The ritual value, symbolism, and sacrifice of the dog encompass all aspects of life in the community. At present, rituals that necessitate dog sacrifice are events that greatly affect the community as a whole, as in the case of incidents leading to a number of deaths (landslides, road accidents, typhoons, earthquakes) or even the rise of a contagion. Although there were no news articles on dog sacrifices that were conducted during the 2020 pandemic in the highlands,

it is definitely sure that dog sacrifices were conducted with utmost regard for secrecy and in concealment. Traditionally, ritual sacrifices involving dogs were conducted in private, witnessed only by the ritual bearers and several family members. It was never meant as a public spectacle as popularized by the conditions set forth by various expositions in the early 20th century.

Dog meat eateries have become numerous as the city's geographic and influential space draws nearer. Urbanity has the effect of poorly replicating rituality and ethnicity. Although some people still manage to make ritual life as authentic as possible even in the city, modern urban conventions would emphasize performance and exhibition rather than meaning and intent. The trade of dog meat is a lucrative underground economy, with highland dog meat eateries having direct sources and networks reaching southern Luzon. Every time Philippine national news shows the seizing of unmarked cargo vans, or that ever-so-stereotypical white Mitsubishi L300 filled to the brim with tied dogs, dead or alive, a national identification already implies that such vehicles are on their way up north. The "dog-eating Igorot" has become a nationally imposed identifying trope. But comparing sidewalk drunks and people eating *azucena* that virtually exist all over the country, national consensus on the Igorot and dog meat happen to be much rooted to the very core of the indigenous genome. Rather than seeing an act as done due to the lack of a better option, as in the case of the "*Pilipinong namumulutan*," eating dog meat is believed to be an integral part of Igorotness, as if it is an act we are mandated to do as prescribed by who we are and what we believe in.

The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA or RA 8371) guarantees the use of animals "during rituals and tribal or ethnic custom of indigenous cultural communities." This mandate is also similarly stipulated in section 6 (1) of the Philippine Animal Welfare Act of 1998 (RA 8485). Both laws share the idea that dogs are considered "non-food animals" and that under "ethnic customs of indigenous cultural communities," only those who have directly participated in the ritual, are allowed to consume. This immediately implies the illegality of selling, trade, and even purchase of dogs and dog meat for purposes of general and regular consumption. Philippine law implies that a more humane method for sacrificing animals in rituals is required, which entails subjecting the animal to the least amount of pain and injury as much as possible. With pinikpikan as an exemption, traditional Igorot methods of killing a sacrificial animal always takes into consideration the most efficient of methods. The Ifugao, for example, have mastered killing large carabao with one swift blow to its nape. More skillful methods use a traditional axe point and one well-calculated hit at the middle of the animal's forehead. Smaller animals like boars, deer, and dogs do not pose much of a challenge as butchering, dressing, and preparing animals for cooking is a survival skill Igorot learn at an early age. Even at present, much embarrassment is felt by Igorot who do not know how to kill and then clean chickens.

But laws only make some folk more cunning, as lines that distinguish between secularity and rituality are blurred by the Igorot themselves. It is convenient for highland folk to play the indigenous card when necessary. The rise of the dog meat karinderya is a testament to how indigeneity can be manipulated to fit other objectives rather than what it is intended to. Police raids conducted on dog truck deliveries and dogmeat eateries, at times, are simply given a slap on the wrist, as ethnic ties prove to be of much worth than Philippine law. But there are many an Igorot who have not yet tasted dog meat nor have witnessed a ritual involving dog sacrifice. Some elders no longer even like the idea of eating dog meat, as there are other sources of meat to begin with. Conducting dog sacrifices, even in the villages, is often contested, as members of the community would even sway the ritual bearers from using dogs, convincing them to instead look for other alternatives. Such community responses are often heeded even by the ritual bearers, as it is strongly believed that community consensus is driven by the will of the ancestors. As animal rights laws and advocacies have already made their presence felt in the Cordillera, the Igorot, especially the younger generations, are keen to adjust. With the majority of households having either the beloved *askal*, or even a pedigreed canine in their households, the dog has now entered a more conventional role in highland society. But does this beckon the death of a ritual and the removal of dominions once held by the dog under ethnic contexts? The willingness to adapt is what has kept Igorot civilization intact for so long. But a transition forward does not mean leaving behind traditional conventions. Igorot indigeneity is all about making amends between past and present, that is how indigenous communities guarantee their future.

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