

IGOROTISM AND ORIENTALISM: The Photographs of Eduardo Masferré

AARichela L. dela Cruz

Office for Strategic Communications, De La Salle University, Manila,
Philippines
aa.delacruz@dlsu.edu.ph

Abstract

This paper seeks to provide a critical reading of the photographs of photographer Eduardo Masferré. The photos reviewed were part of the collection in E. Masferré, *People of the Philippine Cordillera Photographs, 1934-1956* published in 1988. The book showcases the body of work of Masferré, a Spanish Filipino who is part of the Kankana-ey tribe through his mother. Considered as the father of Philippine photography, Masferré's photos mirror his talent as well as reflect images, life, and work of the Igorots in Cordillera.

Masferré made it his task to take hundreds of photographs of the Cordillera to document its culture and tradition, display the remarkable knowledge of the Igorots in agriculture, showcase the unique character of the area, and illustrate the humanity of his people.

Using the theory of Igorotism and theory of orientalism, Masferré's photos were analyzed to determine the Igorotist and orientalist elements in Masferré's photos and how these were formed in his art. This research studied the artist and his works while also seeking to understand the representation of the people of Cordillera in Masferré's photographs. As Masferré's body of work was explored, the researcher also looked into the life of Masferré, his influences, and the forces that shaped the Igorotist and orientalist elements in his masterpiece. The findings were interpreted to find out which of these forces prevailed – Masferré's Igorotism ideology or the invisible orientalist influence.

Keywords: Photography, Igorots, Igorotism, Orientalism, Eduardo Masferré



INTRODUCTION

“It is good he was here.” This is how Eduardo Masferré wanted other photographers to remember him by (Masferré, 1988).

Masferré, who is also known as the father of Philippine photography, is a son of a former soldier from Cataluña, España and an Igorot from Batalao, Sagada. His father served as a missionary in an Episcopal church in Baguio until he got married to a Kankana-ey from Sagada. In his younger years, he studied in Spain and was a product of American education in the Philippines. He devoted a big part of his life in studying photography and used this to document the life in Cordillera, particularly the lives of the tribes in Sagada, Bontoc, Timog Kalinga, Mountain Province, in Ifugao.

His photographs on the life of the Igorots were taken mostly in 1834-1956 or more than three decades after the American census in the Philippines and the St. Louis Exposition. This exposition brought different tribes or groups of Filipinos to St. Louis in America including the highlanders from the Cordillera. Filipinos who were part of the exposition were showcased as part of the exhibit on the Philippines and repeatedly performed their rituals to showcase their tradition and culture to exhibit visitors (Masferré, 1988).

Masferré’s passion for photography and his people led him to build a body of work about the life of the people of Cordillera. His photos show images of Igorots as well as their life, rituals, and livelihood. His photos were exhibited in different countries and published in 1988 as part of the coffee table book titled, *E. Masferré, People of the Philippine Cordillera Photographs, 1934-1956*. Through Masferré’s photos we were given a unique opportunity to view and better understand the culture in Cordillera based not only on written materials but on his photos as well.

According to an article by Jill Gale de Villa, Masferré’s book editor, his contribution is invaluable. She adds that because of Masferré’s work we now have a better sense of the Cordilleran culture, which saw drastic changes since the first time he took photos in the area (de Villa, 1995).

The first patrons of Masferré's photos were foreigners as well as the Igorots who pose as his subjects and their relatives. At first, the majority of Filipinos were skeptical of patronage because of their views that the images in the photographs were primitive. Eventually, it was given value especially in the late '80s during the surge of nationalism in the country (de Villa, 1995).

Masferré's exhibits and body of work were well-received and awarded recognition. He participated in one of the most prestigious exhibitions of photographs in the world - *Les Internationale de la Photographie Recontres* in Arles, France. More than 100 of his photographs were also put under the care of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (Masferré, 1999).

In 1999, four years after his death, Masferré received the first official recognition from the Philippines when he was awarded as one of the artists who made significant contributions to the country in the previous century. He was the only photographer among the 100 artists who was recognized (de Villa, 1995).

The Igorots who were the subject of Masferré's photos are divided into different tribes living in the mountainous province of Central Cordillera. They were among the Filipinos who resisted the Spanish occupation and did not accept the Christian religion. The Spaniards were very interested in Cordillera because of its gold mines. This resistance led to noticeable differences between the Cordillerans and Filipinos from other areas under foreign occupation. Unlike other Filipinos who were influenced by the culture and lifestyle of the Spaniards, Igorots retained their traditions and culture. The American colonists had more success in their conquest of Cordillera. During this period, the life of the Igorots gradually changed because of the influence of the new colonists (Masferré, 1988).

Masferré's upbringing in the center and periphery of the marginalized Igorots puts him and his art in an interesting locus. This paper intends to examine this unique situation using the two views of Igorotism and orientalism.

About Igorotism

Igorotism is a term used to describe the collective efforts of Igorots or those who are living in the Mountain Province. The term Igorot came from the words *Ygorote*, *Igolot* or *Igorotte*. These are the words that Spaniards used to denote people who live in the mountains of Cordillera. Igorots used to detest this term but their struggles taught them to eventually embrace the title. (Padeo, 2006).

The colonial directives imposed in the area during the American occupation first brought about this collective consciousness. Before the American occupation, the people of the Cordillera did not see themselves as one group of people. They belong to different villages and conduct their life according to village guidelines. However, the American government overseeing the area saw them as a group similar to the native Americans and implemented rules that further isolated the Igorots from the other Filipinos or lowlanders. Igorots or highlanders were gradually forced to subscribe to the new form of governance and learned to affiliate themselves according to the area boundaries imposed by the American colonists.

Gerard Finin asserts in his book that the American colonial rule led to the development of a distinctive pan-Cordillera Igorot ethno-regional consciousness. With the establishment of Mountain Province in the early 1900s and the imposition of direct American rule highlanders-lowlanders relations was impeded, while the idea of highlander connectedness was reinforced (Finin, 2005).

However, for Marian Caampued, Igorotism was born even before the arrival of the Americans. She proposes two bases for the birth of Igorotism. First, is the Igorots continuing resistance in protecting their culture and ancestral lands and secondly, their autonomy during the later years of the 1980s (Caampued, 2012).

She defines Igorotism as an ideology that speaks about Igorots, their resistance and struggles, insights and techniques, response to changes, goals, identity, and how all of them are interconnected (Caampued, 2012).

About Orientalism

Orientalism, on the other hand, is a theory by Palestinian philosopher Edward Said. According to the discourse of orientalism, the development of Western history and ideology of the East created false representations of the East. Westerners shaped Orientalism where colonized countries are viewed as inferior, justifying their imperialist domination and controlling not only the economic and political but also the arts and intellectual aspects.

This biased view was used during the era of colonization. Westerners used their perspective of the East as a cause to colonize them to provide what they lack and change their supposed primitive culture and lifestyle (Edward Said on Orientalism, 2006).

In studying “the Orient,” Said stated that the scholar or researcher should be aware that the Westerners are viewed with bias and prejudice. The examination according to orientalism does not discredit cultural differences but aims for a critical and objective analysis by using the narrative and putting oneself in the subject’s position (Edward Said on Orientalism, 2006).

Using Foucault’s theory of discourse, Said shows how the process of orientalism spreads. According to him, the discourse is a system of generating knowledge that observes certain principles. It is impossible to think or move out of the system because there is no knowledge of the East that does not favor the system of orientalism (Edward Said on Orientalism, 2006).

However, it should not be regarded as criticism against the West but with regard to Said’s purpose of destroying the concept of orientalism that divides countries (Ghazoul, 2004). Based on the idea of Gramsci, Said proposed that there should be a written historical inventory that not only seek to see yourself in relation to others but also to see others as you look at yourself (Edward Said on Orientalism, 2006).

In the video, *Edward Said in Orientalism*, two reasons were discussed that led Said to study orientalism. One is the war between Arab and Israeli in 1973, which received negative images and discussions from the media. Another reason is his own experience as an Arab that dismisses false representations of Arabs in the arts. Based

on the video, Said wanted orientalism to clarify the fixed notion of the Orient. An example would be the negative perceptions of Westerners on Arabs even when the former have not even set foot in their country or do not personally know an Arab. Said emphasized that the creation of representations instigates damage to the one being represented.

In his essay, Patrick Williams states that because of the power of an ideology and system of discourse, Said's views regarding orientalism such as media representations of ethnic groups, Muslims, Arabs, and those on the margins of society are continuously being discussed. He mentioned that if intellectuals continue to study the subject based on the studies made by Westerners and accept these representations, a biased and wrong understanding of the real life, customs, and culture of people from the East, also called "the other", will not change. In the same essay, Williams discussed two important things involved in orientalism: 1) the pro-Western representations of the Orient, whether it be in history, science, linguistics, literature or anthropology – all demonstrate that the East is inferior to the West and 2) the role of orientalist representations and knowledge, and its effects. Williams added that it reflects the relations between representations and power. The perception of the East as inferior helps justify the colonial actions of the West including their interventions on political and military affairs in Eastern countries. (Williams, 2002)

According to Ferial Ghazoul, orientalism and the subsequent study by Said have opened discussions on cultures, religions, beliefs, and literature. Barriers preventing intelligent cultural dialogues have been demolished since the emergence of discourse in orientalism. Ghazoul pointed out that it was erroneous to keep the notion that the West is far superior than the East. He criticized the orientalist notion that differences between the West and the East are not merely caused by lack of education but because of genetics; Westerners are born intelligent while people from the East are born lacking. This biased notion became widespread that pervaded even in the Orient's culture in literature, arts, and music. For Ghazoul, Said successfully challenged the destructive monopoly of studies about the Orient and paved the way for a fair, unbiased, and more open discussions and studies on the culture of the East. (Ghazoul, 2004)

About the Research

Looking at Masferré's photographs through the lenses of Igorotism and orientalism is a critical view on the indigenous and marginalized Igorots and intends to uncover the latent images and representations present in them. This paper's examination covers the Cordillera photos of Masferré particularly the images included in his book "*E. Masferré, People of the Philippine Cordillera Photographs, 1934-1956*".

This research hopes to answer the questions: What are the Igorotist and oriental elements present in the photographs taken by Masferré and how were these formed in his art? Moreover, it hopes to shed light on which of these opposing ideologies prevailed in his photos.

This paper intends to provide an analysis of Masferré's photographs and the representation of the people of Cordillera in his work. By studying his photographs, a deeper understanding of Masferré and his contribution to both photography in the Philippines and study of the Igorot culture can be achieved. This will be accomplished through decoding whether the photographs of Masferré show indications of orientalism and how his works shaped the image and opinion towards the people of Cordillera. This study also aims to offer an understanding on how factors of orientalism exist even to those who are not Westerners. Although there are several studies on Orientalism, only a few focused on examining the concept based on the culture and history of the Philippines.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF MASFERRÉ

Masferré's collection consists of black and white photographs that show the life and culture of the people of Cordillera. His work was mostly taken between 1934 and 1956. His photographs show images of Igorots, their daily life, and rituals. His collection was published in a book that became part of various exhibitions overseas and in the Philippines. To meet the objective of this research, 94 photographs from the book "*E. Masferré, People of the Philippine Cordillera Photographs, 1934-1956*" published in 1988 were examined.

In his interview, Masferré shares that his purpose for taking the photos was to show the culture of the people of Cordillera before it begins to change because of the influence of the American occupation. His photographs show his technical knowledge in photography and his talent in good composition.

Individual descriptions of the 94 photographs from the book were provided. In generating descriptions, the first two levels of significance were used: the denotation and connotation. Masferré's photographs can be categorized into three groups: (1) lifestyle, (2) portrait, and (3) children.

From the 94 pictures included in the scope of the study, 61 are part of the first category. The pictures about the lifestyle of the people of Cordillera display their livelihood, rituals, and traditions. There are photographs about farming and agriculture, which is the main livelihood of the Igorots and the different Igorot rituals such as the ones performed during planting through harvesting season. Other photos show their different livelihood including making baskets, weaving, and pottery making. There are also photos that show the daily life of the community in Cordillera while others demonstrate their numerous traditions and beliefs such as wedding rituals and rituals for the good of the community. The roles of men, women, and children in the community were also shown in some of the photos.

The second category includes portraits of some of the members of the community. The photographs in this group have been treated with classic and good composition using the rule of thirds and effective contrast. Photos of the subjects were taken from angles that emphasize parts of their body and the body décor or ornaments that the subjects are wearing. Nine out of 29 portraits show pictures of Igorot women.

There are only a handful of pictures of children included in Masferré's book. Only four pictures are part of the third category. The photographs describe the image and role of children in the community of Igorots. Two of the four pictures show children smoking tobacco similar to their parents. Several pictures from the first category also include images of the children. However, they were only elements in either the foreground or background and not the main focus or subject.

The photography and documentation conducted by Masferré focused on the group of Filipino people living in Cordillera, particularly those in Sagada, Bontoc, Timog Kalinga, Mountain Province, and Ifugao. The photographs demonstrate the culture and livelihood of the community of Igorot known to have resisted the colonization of the Spaniards.

About the Igorot Community

As mentioned previously, the term Igorot came from the words *Ygorote*, *Igolot* or *Igorotte*, which are the words the Spaniards used to denote people who live in the mountains of Cordillera. A large part of the inhabitants of Mountain Province are the Bontoks. Others are the Kankana-ey, Gaddang, and Balangaos. Some Bontoks reside in Bontoc while many of the Kankana-ey live in Sagada. The ways of living and the culture of the peoples of Cordillera are similar and only differ in terms of what and how they call things. (Ethnography of the Major Groups in Cordillera, 2003)

The community of Igorot believes that they came from one or more deities. The rituals that they practice are part of their belief that every aspect of life is subject to the will and blessings of their deities headed by *Kabunian*. The world of the gods also consists of spirits and fairies. For the Igorots, all significant things in their lives should have the blessing of their gods, which they ask for through praying and performing rituals. They believe that if their gods are pleased with their offers and rituals, they will have a prosperous harvest, marriage of couples will be blessed, the sick will be healed, and they will be protected against evil spirits. The opposite will happen if their gods are not pleased (Masferré, 1988).

A big part of their livelihood is spent in agriculture, their main source of food apart from hunting, fishing, and collecting snails or crabs from the rivers (Masferré, 1988). At the center of the Igorot agriculture are the rice terraces built by their ancestors. On several occasions, they still practice "uma" or a way of farming where they cut down and burn trees in some areas of the forest in order to cultivate and plant in the area. They also keep buffaloes, chickens, pigs, and dogs for their rituals. The choice of animal to be used is dependent on how big the occasion is. The bigger animals such as the buffaloes or pigs are reserved for larger

rituals or celebration while chickens are used for smaller rituals. The dogs serve as companions for the men while they hunt. From Masferré's pictures of the Igorots, the "*Gaddang*" who live in lower areas do not harvest in the terraces but plant rice, vegetables, and root crops in their fields (Masferré, 1988). Each stage of farming is accompanied by rituals conducted within a year to ask for a bountiful harvest, protection from pests or evil spirits, and to bless the harvest to be good, to feed them well and for a long time (Dulawan, 2006).

The planting of seeds is appointed to a woman who has a reputation of having bountiful harvests whenever she leads the planting of the seeds. The men firmly safeguard the irrigation on the planted areas. Others also use buffaloes to harvest rice (Masferré, 1988).

Each member of the family has a role in farming. The men are in charge of plowing while women remove the grass then clean and plant seeds. Both men and women help each other in harvesting, repairing damaged areas of the rice fields, and doing household chores. To some groups, although men do not do household chores, they are expected to be always alert to safeguard their environment. Children, on the other hand, help by getting water, collecting firewood, and watching over their younger siblings (Ethnography of the Major Groups in Cordillera of the Major Groups in Cordillera, 2003).

Members of the community help each other when a family could not handle the workload in their rice terraces. The Ifugaos, for example, all work together first to finish an area of a certain family before they start to work on another rice field. They take turns in doing chores in their fields at various stages of farming; from preparation of the land, planting of seeds, harvesting, and carrying the harvest to storage (Dulawan, 2006).

The family is the smallest unit of the Igorot community. Usually, only a family consisting of a husband, wife, and their children live in a home. For Kalinga, there may be a relative such as in-laws or grandparents. For wealthy families, a housemaid also lives with them. Once children marry, they are expected to move into their own houses. They can only stay in their parents' house for a short period or until their own house is completely built (Ethnography of the Major Groups in the Cordillera of the Major Groups in Cordillera, 2003).

Young children are taught to respect the elders. To avoid jealousy among siblings, the younger ones are taught to obey their older sibling while the eldest are reminded to always protect the welfare of one's younger sibling. Children over ten years old stay and sleep in the community dormitory. Dormitories for men are called "*dap-ay*" while those for women are called "*u-log*". *Agaman* is the term used by Ifugao for the dormitories for men or women. The children only return to their houses to eat and do household chores. The mothers teach their daughters how to manage a home, take care of children, weave, and do other tasks assigned to women. Fathers, on the other hand, teach their sons how to hunt, fight, build, and do other activities for men. Knowledge on culture and roles in the community are taught in the village dormitories while the children serve and listen to community elders who are part of their dormitory. Serving the elders and doing their duties are all part of the process of becoming a true member of the community. The progress of an individual is decided based on his knowledge rather than his age (Ethnography of the Major Groups in Cordillera, 2003; Masferré, 1988).

The people of Cordillera also place great importance to being part of a clan. The clan with the eldest male member is in-charge of the protection of their wealth and also leads discussions on marriage. Marrying a close relative is not accepted by the people of Cordillera thus young men are not allowed to visit the dormitory of their sisters. There are cases, however, that marriage between cousins are allowed especially if the families are rich and want to protect their wealth or if the union will be beneficial to both parties. All members of the clans are expected to join and help perform rituals. Part of these rituals can be fighting for a mistreated relative, paying for something that a relative destroyed, or offering contributions like wine, rice, and animals to be used for rituals in times of death, birth, or marriage. The leader of a clan also serves as the mediator during disagreements or misunderstanding within members of the clan. (Ethnography of the Major Groups in Cordillera, 2003)

Marriage in the culture of Igorot also follows rituals that seek blessings for the couple. In some cases, families marry their children to strengthen the relations between families or between communities. Children are also given freedom to choose who to marry and may opt to reject an arranged marriage but the parents of the child who rejects

will have to pay a damage fee to the other family. Inheritance is given to children once they marry. This is a way for the parents to *care for their child's welfare*. (Ethnography of the Major Groups in Cordillera, 2003; Masferré, 1988).

It is possible for a marriage to be postponed or withdrawn if rituals performed do not convey good signs. Rituals can be performed again until positive signs appear. In their culture, it is relevant for a married couple to have children. Couples separate or divorce if they fail to produce a child. (Ethnography of the Major Groups in Cordillera, 2003; Masferré, 1988)

Igorots also conduct rituals for the welfare and safety of the whole community. These rituals have stages and are performed throughout the year. It usually begins before the start of the planting season. Some of the rituals include *begnas* and *dangtey* which are both subjects of Masferré's photos. *Begnas* is performed before the harvest season or if the community is experiencing drought. This ritual also includes asking for good crops and thanking the gods after the harvest. Another ritual is called *cañao* which is held to celebrate a marriage of two families or communities and to ask for blessings during significant events. Rich families usually sponsor this ritual and prepare the food and livestock offering (Masferré, 1988).

Music and dance are also part of the rituals of the Cordillera people. The main instrument of the Igorot is called a *gangsa*. These instruments were passed on from ancestors who got the instrument from trading with the Chinese. Typically, the handles are made of the jaws of enemies that they killed. They also have drums made of wood or bamboo, *solibao* made of wood and skins of animals, *tongali* (nose flute) made of bamboo, and *labil* or violin also made from bamboo. The men play the *gangsa* with a splinter or with their hands. *Patlong* is a popular Bontok war dance that involves men walking in circles while the *gangsa* is being played. The women will then follow and dance inside or outside the circle of men. Other ritual dances include themes on courtship and marriage (Ethnography of the Major Groups in Cordillera, 2003).

After farming, the Igorots use their time for activities that contribute to their livelihood. Part of their culture consists of knowledge and skills in weaving, creation of vessels made of bamboo or rattan, sculpting, pottery making, tattooing, and making wine from rice (*tap-*

uy) and sugarcane. Aside from its use in some rituals, drinking *tap-uy* is also a tool for socialization among men (Ethnography of the Major Groups in Cordillera, 2003; Masferré, 1988).

The production of bags and baskets is assigned to men while cloth weaving is delegated to women. Baskets are used as containers of rice and food and bags are used to store tools for traveling or checking the rice terraces. The clothing of Igorot men is called *bahag* while the women wear *saya*. Sometimes women wear a blouse but most of the time Igorots do not wear a top. There are various designs for a woman's *saya* which are worn with a thick belt. Men also wear a cloth around their head where their pipe and tobacco are placed. Others wear hats and *tapis* or a cloth used as a wrap to protect them from the cold weather (Ethnography of the Major Groups in Cordillera, 2003; Masferré, 1988).

Tattoos on men and women have different meanings. Women have tattoos for beautification while men's tattoos symbolize strength and reputation. Some tattoos on men signify that they have killed an enemy. Aside from tattoos, Igorots also wear body ornaments like earrings, bracelets, headband, and necklaces made of gold, beads, cloth, bones, or animal skin. Other body ornaments are worn only during certain rituals (Ethnography of the Major Groups in Cordillera, 2003; Masferré, 1988).

The *bulol* is a significant sculpture representing the god of rice. The sculpture is carved in the likeness of a man and a woman. People of Cordillera also sculpt and make food containers, decors, and shields. Shields are covered with rattan to make it more durable (Ethnography of the Major Groups in Cordillera, 2003; Masferré, 1988).

ORIENTALIST INTERPRETATION OF MASFERRÉ

Masferré was a prolific photographer who took beautiful photographs of the Igorots and the Cordillera. He aimed to show the culture of the Cordillera and its people before they transform due to foreign occupation. His works demonstrate his technical knowledge in photography and good composition skills.

His process of documentation can be compared to the census conducted in the Philippines by the Americans thirty years before

Masferré started taking pictures using the camera as a tool to convey representations. As the subjects are bounded by the frame, this results in an incomplete piece of information. The viewer is given room to provide his own interpretation of the subject being viewed. The real message may be distorted or completely lost from its true intention especially since the observer subscribes to different social constructs.

Masferré, a son of a foreigner, grew up and studied in a foreign lifestyle and education. Although he was the son of an Igorot, he did not fully experience the Igorot culture until he began to take photographs of the Cordillera. Growing up, he was exposed to Western concepts and similar perspectives governed his views on the Igorots.

From the perspective of orientalism, the photos taken by Masferré showed signs of orientalist ideologies. The photographs indicate various conflicting messages. Some photos display the Igorots in their natural environment as if they were not aware that someone is documenting them. Some photos, on the other hand, appear to be staged, as elements in the photos seem to be well organized. This way of manipulation indicates that the photographer already had a preconceived image of how he wanted to show or describe the subject.

The descriptions of the 94 photographs were already presented in the previous chapter using the first two levels in the process of giving meanings based on semiotics - denotation and connotation. In this part of the study, photos will be interpreted using the third level of giving meaning – myth. Specifically, the discussion will focus on the myth of mountain people or *taong-bundok*, a construct in the orientalism ideology.

Based on the studies mentioned, it can be said that colonists during that period perceive that the lack of education or knowledge from the West have caused the Igorots to have an uncivilized way of living. Representations of the Igorot as savage people were then formed.

The pictures on the daily life of the Cordillera people consist of their livelihood, day-to-day rituals, and traditions. The photos showed the full cycle of rice planting. Masferré also presented the rituals performed from planting to harvesting season. Some of the pictures show men and women plowing and preparing the rice fields for planting. They are bent and their backs are exposed to the heat of the sun. It can be observed

that the images presented the manual and hard agricultural methods of the Igorots. This intensified the view that Igorots lack education, as they do not have knowledge of modern agricultural methods. The images do not show the presence of new technology but it is conversed by the fact that the photos were created using the technology of photography.

The photos demonstrate that the Igorots rely mostly on farming and hunting for sustenance. For Westerners, hunting is a sign of being uncivilized because based on their culture, hunting is an ancient way of living and presently done as a hobby. Some photos emphasized images of men and their spears. These were taken as symbols of aggressiveness. There are even photos with the sole purpose of giving focus to the weapons of men. Highlighting these shows spectators that the subjects in the photos are uncivilized. These photos have captions that state the handle of an instrument called *gangsá* which was made out of the jaw of an enemy and that an enemy's head is buried in their place of gathering.

Also, the repeated display of rituals emphasizing the superstitions of the people of Cordillera strengthened the view that they subscribe to an ancient lifestyle and belief system. The picture showing a son looking at his father's head with a caption that the son is taking out lice from his father indicates poor hygiene. The image generated perceptions that the behavior of families can be compared to monkeys.

Masferré mentioned that in taking the photos, he wanted to make it look like he only passed by the scene. However, some of his photos look very organized and were taken to make it seem like the Igorots are just doing their normal activities. It is also noticeable that some of the subjects are aware that they were being photographed and are even looking at the camera.

Moreover, Masferré also mentioned in his book that he refused to assist the Igorots in changing the materials of their roof because it will damage the pictures. This only shows that he had an image of what he wanted before taking the photo as well as expresses his desire to display the old architectural techniques.

Masferré's photos also show that their lives only revolve around their ways of living and it is difficult for them to prosper and increase their status. They do all their rituals and daily activities for a successful

planting and harvesting. Their simple life was used to support the myth that they are incapable of taking on modern approaches in life.

The portraits in the book were taken using classical composition such as the rule of thirds and effective contrast. The subject was taken from angles that emphasized certain parts of the body and ornaments worn by the subjects.

Looking at the portraits of women and men, it can be seen that Masferré also focused on the naked female breast. In framing the picture, breasts of women who were not wearing a top were included. While women who were wearing a cloak or blouse were photographed only from the shoulder up.

Portraits of women and men emphasized their nude bodies and stretched ears caused by wearing heavy earrings. These signs were viewed as a form of a backward culture and were used to convey the image of Igorots as uncivilized. The way Igorots dress were also used as a symbol of being primitive as the culture of the West accepts being naked as obscene and unacceptable. Because the Igorots do not follow the way the Westerners dress, it was perceived as an indication of their lack of education.

Another example is a photo of a man wearing a loincloth intended for his funeral. This image appears to mock the Igorot tradition as it ruined the sanctity of their ritual. The beliefs, superstitions, and the rituals of the Igorots were taken as symbols of being uncivilized. Based on the orientalist perspective, the religion from the West is the only right form of faith. The rituals and superstitions do not align with it and were considered to be wrong and is a false religion.

The photos of children in Masferré's collection show images of young Igorots and their roles in the community. Young girls are expected to help in the household chores and tasks of older women such as pounding rice and taking care of younger members of the family. The collection also only shows images of young boys playing.

The collection also demonstrated young men not wearing shirts or even a loincloth. Their images were taken while they were playing where the photographer manipulated light to show the kids' skin and hair. The photographs intended to show a young Igorot stereotype of dirty children.

Representations and images formed in Masferré's pictures became symbols of the Igorot because these are the only photos seen by people outside of the Cordilleran culture and lifestyle. Some of his photographs show a resemblance to pictures taken by the American colonists.

As illustrated above, it can be said that Masferré took the photos not only for himself but more for people outside the community for them to have a glimpse of the culture and lifestyle of the people of Cordillera and observe the changes in their community. He intended to preserve the culture and ways of living of the Igorots but it inadvertently led to the perpetuation of stereotypes against the Cordillera people.

In taking their photos, Masferré was able to give representations of the people of Cordillera. In this instance, he separated himself from the subjects and appeared like he owned them. He photographed the subjects in their natural state but framed them with his own views, perceptions influenced by the predominant colonial and orientalist perspective. Also, as the owner of the photos, he had the ability to pass ownership by selling his works and publishing a book.

While he was documenting the life of the Igorots, Masferré also became a curious spectator of his subjects. Looking back to his reasons for embarking in this endeavor, it can be observed that there is an apparent comparison between the Igorots and the Americans that are generating the change in their life.

Masferré was born and grew up during the Philippine conquest by two colonial empires from the West – Spain and America. This and other events in his life were considered to show the influences that shaped Masferré's concept of orientalism.

During the era of colonialism, Westerners used the concept of orientalism to seize the Orient. They perpetuated false representations of the people of the East as inferior to justify their conquest. It became prevalent as scholars studying East published writings under the orientalist perspective. Benito Vergara provides an example of this in his book, where he shares that travelogues and census reports on the Philippines were published in the US during American occupation. (Vergara, 1995) Five years later, Masferré was born. Like what Said mentioned, orientalism is a discourse or a system of knowledge that

follows certain principles and it would be impossible not to think or move according to this system, as there is no knowledge about the East that was not based on the system of orientalism (Edward Said on Orientalism, 2006).

Masferré's life is an example of this. Being a son of a Spanish colonial, and a colonized native put him in a rare position - at the center and periphery of the marginalized groups. The latter enabled him to accomplish his work. In the book *The Sacred Tree of Sagada*, Masferré experienced a connection to his subjects that no other photographer was able to achieve (Seles, 2008). However, being a Spaniard and growing up in the Western way of life enabled him to develop an orientalist perspective. Masferré first studied in Spain and was a product of the system of education carried by the Americans to the Philippines. He was also part of a religion that aims to change the beliefs and faith of the people in Cordillera.

Even the life of Masferré's family demonstrates signs that their views were influenced by orientalism. Although Masferré's mother is an Igorot, he was reared outside the Igorot culture. Masferré shares in his autobiography that they did not have much contact with tribal traditions and were taught in their mission school that all those things were wrong.

The education of Masferré emphasized that the Igorot culture is flawed compared to the foreign culture. The same autobiography mentions that although his parents taught him the importance of the Cordilleran culture, there are some instances in Masferré's story that contradicts the teachings of his parents. This includes his mother's preference to be called by her Christian name rather than her indigenous name *Cunyap*. Another case is that they do not participate in the rituals of the Igorots. The life of Masferré's family and their close relatives revolve around their Episcopal missionary, an area governed by Westerners (Masferré, 1988).

Masferré's objective of documenting the culture of Cordillera and its people before it changed also demonstrates a view that the photographer was superior to that of his subjects and that he was a spectator from the outside. It was like saying that he knew what was going to happen and how this will affect the Igorots.

Furthermore, his upbringing in an environment where western perspectives prevailed might also influenced how Masferré chose his subjects. A view that is based on what he thinks will be interesting or different from his Western way of living. Consequently, Masferré's background, whether he was aware of it or not, contributed to his orientalist perspective.

Through his documentation, Masferré captured the image of Igorots and ascribed representations in a manner that the Cordillerans would not be able to do. According to the discourse of orientalism, Masferré's creation of representation of the Igorots is also a method of presenting them to the Western gaze. De Villa mentions in her essay that foreigners or tourists were the early patrons of Masferré's work. This indicates a possible tension between the viewer and the subject where the viewer thinks with an orientalist perspective while the viewed/subject is not aware of this perspective.

Many have acknowledged that Masferré's photos provided an opportunity for others to see the life of the people in Cordillera. The photos allowed the viewer to see and observe the life of the people of Cordillera but the Igorots were not able to interact or see the viewers. Neither were they given the opportunity to represent themselves as the photos were bounded and limited by what the photographer desired to include in the frame.

Moreover, his refusal to assist the Igorots to change their roof because it will damage the pictures not only shows that he had a vision of what he wanted to capture but also expresses his desire to display the old architectural techniques. According to orientalism, the view that something represented remains in its state and does not have the capacity to change is a characteristic within the orientalist perspective. (Said, 1979). Additionally, based on the discourse of orientalism, even if Masferré created representations of the Igorots, he still remained outside the life and culture of his subjects while the Igorots remained different from him and the viewer of his photos.

IGOROTIST INTERPRETATION OF MASFERRÉ

At first, Filipinos did not patronize Masferré's photographs because they portray life in the Cordillera as primitive, which might

have affected how other countries view the Philippines and Filipinos in general. This attitude is inevitable due to the western influences in our country. For example, people might get uneasy seeing a photo of an Igorot who is so amazed to see a camera, an apparatus not common in their area. People saw it as an image of an uncivilized society. However, with the lens of Igorotism we can look and translate Masferré's photos in a different light.

Igorotism is a term used to describe the collective efforts of Igorots or those who are living or from the Mountain Province. The colonial directives imposed in the area during the American occupation first brought about this collective consciousness. Before the American occupation, the people of the Cordillera did not see themselves as one group of people. They belong to different villages and conduct their life according to village guidelines. However, the American government overseeing the area saw them as a group similar to the native Americans and implemented rules that further isolated the Igorots from the other Filipinos or lowlanders. Igorots or highlanders were gradually forced to subscribe to the new form of governance and learned to affiliate themselves according to the area boundaries imposed by the American colonists.

Finin discussed this development in his book *The Making of the Igorot*. He provided an in-depth look on how the American colonial rule transformed social and spatial relations across the Cordillera that resulted in a distinctive pan-Cordillera Igorot ethno-regional consciousness. With the establishment of Mountain Province in the early 1900s and the imposition of direct American rule highlanders-lowlanders relations was impeded, while the idea of highlander connectedness was reinforced (Finin, 2005).

Later generations of highlanders embraced the social and spatial bonds associated with "Igorot-ism" and "Igorot-land" (Finin, 2005) As illustrated by Finin, Igorots expressed this ideology of solidarity in resisting the Marcos regime's dam and logging projects, and in subsequent calls for a Cordillera autonomous region similar to Mindanao.

However, for Caampued, Igorotism was born even before the arrival of the Americans. She proposes two bases for the birth of Igorotism. First, is the Igorot's continuing resistance that began during

the Spanish colonial period and continued beyond the period of the Chico Dam controversy. Second, is their autonomy during the later years of the 1980s (Caampued, 2012).

She defines Igorotism as an ideology that speaks about Igorots, their resistance and struggle, insight and techniques, response to changes, goals, identity and how all of them are interconnected and advances the well-being of Igorots (Caampued, 2012).

It is within the landscape of Igorotism that Masferré's passion for his people was formed. This is where his art is rooted from. An examination of its origin is needed to have a deeper understanding of his photos. It can be observed that his works come from a desire to return to his roots. Masferré's intention of taking the pictures of Cordillera is to preserve their culture; showcase their incredible knowledge of agriculture, introduce the unique nature of the community, pay tribute to his mother, create art, and show humanity of the Igorots. It cannot be denied that Masferré is knowledgeable and familiar with the culture; he married Nena, an Ibaloi. This supports his identification as a Filipino who loves the Philippines. According to the foreword by Felice Sta. Maria, President and Trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, in Masferré's first book, *"Masferré made a creative record of the life around him, realizing its importance. He is a Filipino who loved Filipinos in their everyday, ordinary setting. This is evident in his photographs, which are intensely felt and imbued with the spiritual element of creativity. The world's way of gauging civilization and the value placed on Filipino Ethnic heritage have only recently caught up with the vision Masferré had fifty years ago. Masferré reminds us that culture does not exist only where there are museums and theaters. People make and remake culture every day, everywhere: culture celebrates how the soul copes nobly with living."* (Masferré, 1988).

While the theme of everyday life is very evident in his pictures, it is also clear that Masferré intended to introduce different aspects of life in the Cordillera. De Villa mentions that besides the need to provide a caption on each photo, how they are grouped is also important. Masferré carefully compiled his photographs to serve as documentation of life in Cordillera, an overview to the reality of life in the area.

Masferré was conscious of the changes occurring in his environment. The people of Cordillera are known to be resistant to

change and modernization, but that does not mean they would not be open to it ever. Masferré saw that photography is not just art. It is a vehicle that can be used to preserve a culture. During his stay and visit in the area, he was sensitive to the changes that were gradually developing. These changes began in small phases, and saw that it was an inevitable transformation. Masferré said, *“I could see there would be a time when the life would disappear...Almost everything was changing ... More people were moving to large towns to look for jobs...they were beginning to adapt.”* (Masferré, 1988).

Although change is not necessarily a bad thing, it may pose a risk to the centuries-old culture of Cordillera. Little by little, the western influences are being introduced in the communities in the area. A clear example would be the changes in their curriculum and introducing western religions to the natives. According to Masferré, *“There were more children in school and going to church. I knew that the children will not be taught to follow their customs”* (Masferré, “People of the Philippine Cordillera”). It became a mark to act on the preservation of the Cordillera culture.

The implications Masferré observed were noteworthy. For example, it is normal and practical to wear pants with pockets but the photographer saw something deeper. The presence of the pocket is not only a sign of practical thought, it has a profound impact on the way of life or “lifestyle.” It’s a sign of the presence of a new way of life and concepts that might threaten the traditions of indigenous communities like in the Cordillera. Even though these changes are bringing positive effects to the lives of the Cordillera people, it poses a challenge to preserving the culture.

Traditions and rituals are some of the main factors that keep a certain culture alive. With the advent of change, although accepted gradually, it cannot be averted that parts or even the culture may change and disappear altogether.

Masferré saw what might become of the Cordilleran culture. With the advent of change, the Igorot identity is also threatened. Masferré’s awareness of this reality is one of the reasons he captured these images. He used photography as an instrument to preserve the culture of the area. Through the lens of his camera, he paved the way in showing life in Cordillera before it became tainted with Western

influences. This is what he wants to show viewers of his art. A beauty of photography is the permanent exposition of the image, even after generations have passed, and Masferré understood this importance.

Masferré also showcased the unquestionable beauty of the rice terraces in Cordillera. The terraces do not only serve as a beautiful backdrop but also shows the extensive knowledge of Igorots in terms of agriculture. Although its beauty is always the first thing to be noticed, like what is being shown in the photo *“Young man checking the water level in his terraces. Tanulong, Sagada Mountain Province 1951,”* (Photo 12), Masferré’s photos show images beyond. Masferré’s photos highlighted the unique skills of natives in agriculture as well as reveal the charming beauty of the area. As de Villa mentioned in the book, *“When selecting land suitable for terracing, the mountain people first considered that it had to be somewhere below a good water source”* (Masferré, 41, 1995). This proficiency is displayed through Masferré’s photos where the beauty and significance of the rice terraces are evident.

Apart from the knowledge in agriculture, the photos also show how the natives in Cordillera have their own method of farming, an important aspect of their livelihood. Even though the main objective of their farming is simple (a need for food), the process is complex and systematic. It also acts as a testament to the good traits of the natives such as being diligent. It is featured in some of Masferré’s photos like *“Turning the soil by hand. Women wear banana leaf skirts to protect their clothes.” The woman in the foreground wears a fern sun shade and has a snail basket on her hip. Guinaang, Bontok, Mountain Province. 1954,”* (Photo 5) and *“Transplanting rice seedlings. Tingalayan, Kalinga, 1950,”* (Photo 9). As shared by Mariano Dumia, an Ifugao native, their agricultural method is a validation of personal initiative and community teamwork, both important to the livelihood of the Igorots (Masferré, 1988). Masferré shares these amazing characteristics to the world through his photographs.

It is also important to note how Masferré strictly observes being specific about the images in his photos. He did not want his photos to look generic instead Masferré wanted to deliver something unusual. His aim was for his photographs to clearly convey and show the identity of Cordillera and its people.

Aside from being specific, he also took time to gather information on a location first. He repeatedly visited the places in Cordillera in various times, seasons, and months in order to see the different characters and angles of the place and its people. This resulted in photos having the unique stamp of where it was taken - the Cordillera. This allows the viewer to have a deeper look at Cordillera and its culture that otherwise would not be possible if Masferré's intentions were not specific.

Although Masferré's aim is to showcase to the world the culture of Cordillera and its people, he also had his personal motivation. Since his mother is a native of Cordillera, he chose the place and its inhabitants to pay tribute to his mother. This act of acknowledgment, through a tribute, also looked back at the history and culture he grew up with. Besides being proud of his mother, it can also be seen that he was proud of his cultural heritage.

Apart from the cultural importance of Masferré's photos, their aesthetic value cannot be denied as well. Though he did not receive formal education on photography, Masferré became accustomed and mastered the art of taking pictures. Masferré referred to his own personal standards in creating his art. He criticized his own work and saw the importance of being true to the subject in order to maintain its integrity. His honest views on the subjects made it possible for viewers of the photos to know the environment and culture of the people of Cordillera.

Moreover, Masferré also acknowledged the importance of visual elements to attract the viewers. He followed his intuition in taking photographs. For example, he captured an image because he was attracted to a light reflected on the hands of an Igorot who was making pots. This type of detail helped him present a truthful documentation of the Cordillera culture in his art.

The process of orientalism had undeniable negative effects. A prime example of this in our history is the St. Louis Exposition in 1903. The people of the Cordillera, along with other groups of Filipinos, were exhibited in St. Louis. Though the natives were in the west, they were forced to dress in indigenous clothes, which was inappropriate given the harsh climate of the place. They were objectified as well - they were given number tags that served as their identification. In this regard, Masferré's photos were able to provide a contrasting image to what

were showcased in the St. Louis Exposition. The value and beauty of the Igorot culture were showcased in his photographs.

Another related theme in Masferré's photos is the image of the empowered women. Women were portrayed to have important roles in family and livelihood. Women in the Igorot society are regarded with the same respect as men. According to de Villa, "*Kinship was reckoned through both parents. Men and women had equal rights to property but sometimes overlapping fields of activity. The individual's primary responsibility remained to his or her natal family, even after marriage* (Masferré, 1988).

The work of women in agriculture is significant. The photograph "*The woman wears an Ilocano hat and basket to collect molluscs [sic]. Sagada, Mountain Province 1934*" (Photo 10), and "*Pounding removes the husks from the rice. Lubuagan 1949,*" (Photo 37) shows the contribution of women in every aspect of their agricultural livelihood.

The power and influence of women in society seen in the photos of Masferré cannot be denied. The photos described the women as important members of their society. This portrayal reminds Filipino women that they should be equal to men in all aspects and their rights observed and respected.

CONCLUSION

Masferré used the camera as a tool to capture and represent the Igorots and their culture. He grew up and studied in a foreign lifestyle and education. Though a child of an Igorot, he did not fully experience their culture until he began to take photographs of the people in Cordillera. Masferré was exposed to Western concepts and similar perspectives governed his views on the Igorots. However, Masferré was also a prolific photographer who took beautiful photographs of the Igorots and the Cordillera. With his technical skills, he showcased their unique culture, knowledge of agriculture and humanity. Consequently, we see two conflicting awarenesses in his images – orientalism and Igorotism.

His orientalist perspective stems from growing up in an environment influenced by western perspectives. This may have also influenced his choice of subjects which is based on what he thinks is

interesting or different from his Western ways of living. This is evident in some photos which seemed to be staged and tried to appeal to a particular audience. As previously mentioned, initially it was the foreign tourists visiting Cordillera who showed interest in Masferré's photos. The tourists bought his postcards that feature the Igorots. His photographs became a source of income with foreign tourists as buyers. Masferré unconsciously made his art and his subjects a commodity and perhaps the way he captured the images were dictated by the preferences of his consumers. Other Filipinos did not want to patronize or even be associated with his works as it portrays the savage man (Masferré, 1999). According to the myth of the savage man, the lack of Western education caused the people in Cordillera to remain violent, with a poor system of personal hygiene, primitive, and lacking in terms of modern ways of living. Although positive things were demonstrated in the photos others still saw these images as an indication that the people of Cordillera were primitive.

However, Masferré also grew up in an era that saw the resurgence and reinforcement of the Igorot ideology. It is within this landscape that Masferré's passion for his people was formed. He was conscious of the changes occurring in his environment and saw this as an inevitable transformation. Masferré saw what might become of the Cordilleran culture. With the advent of change, the Igorot identity is also threatened. This awareness led him to capture these images. He used photography as an instrument to preserve the Igorot culture. Through the lens of his camera, he paved the way in showing life in Cordillera before it became tinted with Western influences. This is what he wanted to show the viewers of his art. Through photography, a permanent exposition of an image, he showcased the diversity and wealth of the Igorot culture even after generations have passed. Western views might have influenced Masferré's perspective but his Igorotism prevailed in his images.

Although there are varied principles present in the photographs taken by Masferré, one cannot deny its importance and contribution in the field of cultural heritage and arts. His photos served as our window to the beautiful culture of the Igorot people. Every Filipino must remember that the people of the Cordillera are part of the Filipino heritage. This research is only a small aspect of the overall problem surrounding the cultural heritage of the Filipinos. Groups in the Cordillera and other

indigenous people served as guardians of the Filipino culture. Their contribution to the Filipino ideology of not being simply influenced by others should be emulated.

Ultimately, it is important that we examine various works of art and analyze them in the context of the culture or group of people being represented. This will allow for a true appreciation of the subject being represented and a better understanding of how perspectives and images were formed.

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