

Perspectives on Social Change in the Philippines : Commodity, Politics and Social norms Elaboration

Introduction

The small municipality of Banaue, where I have spent most of my fieldwork time, isn't completely unknown outside the borders of the Philippine Central Cordillera. Its renown comes from the rice paddy sculpted terraces on its slopes that constitute its main touristic attraction. Those fields, declared a national treasure by the Marcos administration¹, were inscribed on the UNESCO's World Heritage list in 1995, after a request made by the Philippine government². Although the "unparalleled beauty"³ of the terraces is mentioned, the interest of both the UNESCO and the Philippine state for them lies elsewhere.

For the Philippine government, the acknowledgment of a cultural remarkability of the Ifugao rice paddies is an occasion for calling upon a feeling of national pride. Another goal is to include the societies of the Cordillera, composed by citizens that are officially considered as *indigenous people*, in the grand narrative of the Republic from which they would have been excluded until now⁴. Not surprisingly, the first presidential decrees that initiated this endeavor were signed by president Marcos. Under his long reign, the importance of the so-called "national integration" process relied on an ideology partly inherited from the American occupants, considered a justification for the use of coercion⁵. For UNESCO, the intrinsic value of the five sites that were classified in the Cordillera comes from their "cultural landscape"⁶. The official documents emitted by the institution reveal some cultural

¹ Presidential decree n° 260, Aug. 1, 1973; Presidential Decree n° 1505, June 11, 1978; decision was reinforced after Marcos' era, notably with R.A n°10066 on protection of National Cultural Heritage, December 16, 2009.

² UNESCO's World Heritage Committee's Nineteenth session report, Berlin 4-9 december 1995.

³ UNESCO's World Heritage Committee's web presentation of Ifugao rice terraces:
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/722/>

⁴ On that topic, cf. FRY Howard T., *A History of the Mountain Province*, New Day Publishers, Quezon City, 2006, chapter 6, about the American discourse; about the current official rhetoric, see CASUMBAL-SALAZAR Melisa S.L., « The Indeterminacy of the Philippine Indigenous Subject » in *Amerasia Journal*, n°41, 2015.

⁵ See the clear positions adopted by the president in MARCOS Ferdinand E., *The Problem of National Integration*, Bureau Of Print, Manilla, 1968 [printed version of a speech F.Marcos gave on the 11th anniversary of the Commission on National Integration on June 22, 1968].

⁶ UNESCO's World Heritage Committee's web presentation of Ifugao rice terraces.

essentialization that, entangled in a die-hard western mythology of ethnicity, tends to deny historicity to the concerned societies.

This rhetoric appears in the description of the Ifugao rice terraces on UNESCO's website. According to it, Ifugao society "occupied these mountains for thousands of years", building rice terraces "2000 years ago"⁷. This estimation, apparently reliable for UNESCO's specialists, was made by two anthropologists at the beginning of the XXth century: Otley Bayer and Roy Franklin Barton. Both built their theories according to their own evaluation of the requested time for building rice terraces, based on their personal appreciation of an Ifugao material culture they thought as unchanging through large time-periods⁸. Recently, searchers from the Ifugao Archeological Project⁹ have suggested a different theory, with much stronger supporting evidence, provided by an archeological dig next to the municipality of Kiangan, in Ifugao province. The analysis of the stratigraphy seems to indicate a more recent construction of the rice terraces, at a date posterior to the arrival of Spaniards. Due to the violent domination that the Spanish troops started to exert in the lowlands, many lowlanders ran away to the neighboring mountains, out of the invader's reach. They found shelter in existing settlements, and probably provoked a substantial growth in demography. This would have in turn provoked a wide change in agriculture practices, fueled by enhanced technical and cultural contacts between the migrants and their hosts. It is from this period (circa 1500-1600) that dates the expansion and importance, in the region, of rice-culture as we know it today¹⁰. This analysis opens new horizons for research, but doesn't go well with the institutional positions adopted by UNESCO and the government.

The perception of Ifugao society by other groups, here national and international institutions, thus reflects a delimited vision of what "ethnicity" is supposed to mean, and it may lead to flattening history's thickness. UNESCO considers that the Ifugao terraces are "an enduring illustration of an ancient civilization that surpassed various challenges and setbacks

⁷ Idem.

⁸ BEYER, H. O, *Recent Discoveries in Philippine Archaeology*, Proceedings of the Third Pan-Pacific Science Congress 2469–2491, Tokyo, 1926; BEYER H.O, 1955. *The Origins and History of the Philippine Rice Terraces*, in Proceedings of the Eight Pacific Science Congress, Quezon City: National Research Council of the Philippines, 1953 ; BARTON Roy F., *Ifugao Law*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1919.

⁹ IAP is an international research program including the NGO Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement, Inc., the National Museum of the Philippines, the University of the Philippines, and the University of California, Los Angeles. For more information, see <http://www.ifugao-archaeological-project.org/>

¹⁰ ACABADO S.B., MARTIN M.,and LAUER A.. 2015. "The Ifugao Archeological Project", in Backdirt: Annual Review of the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA, pp. 54-61.

posed by modernization”¹¹. Here appears a classical ideological setup where “modernity” is considered as a threat to societies (considered in their immobile grandeur, as “civilizations”) supposedly “traditional” in their essence. The link between *indigenous people* and an imagined genuinely Philippine past remains well-established in the government’s discourses about *indigenous communities* in the archipelago¹².

This essentialist approach that is criticized here was not built from nothing, however. There are strong dynamics revolving around the changing of norms in Ifugao society, and those dynamics can indeed be traced from the rice domain. As the center of a normative system, that tends to be changing rapidly due to enhanced contacts with exterior norms, the rice culture (and the practices and representations edified around it) offers a way into analyzing some aspects of the social change in Ifugao. The heuristic value of the commodity entry for analyzing social relationships, first demonstrated under the impulsion of A. Appadurai¹³, seems intact to many a researcher. Let’s mention the current work of the French ANR (Agence Nationale pour la Recherche) VIPOMAR (Vie Politique des Marchandises)¹⁴. Coupled with the emphasis on the dynamic nature of human societies, forwarded by the Manchester School and authors such as G. Balandier, it can give way to a different perspective on social change in the Philippines.

This paper will start with an ethnographical example, dedicated to showing how social problematics linked to the rice question interfere with politics in Banaue, Ifugao. This first part will lead to presenting the problematics of commercializing Ifugao’s endemic rice. The debates around the proposition of selling an essentially social commodity show a process of dealing with shifting norms, and elaborating new ones, as I will suggest.

The Parking building project

In 2015, Banaue’s mayor launched an important real estate project for the construction of a multi-storey car park. The operation was validated by the municipal council on September 2014, and announced to Banaue citizens around May 2015. Oppositions to the project quickly arose, which can be divided into three main types:

¹¹ UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee’s web presentation of Ifugao rice terraces.

¹² Cf. CASUMBAL Salazar Melissa, *op.cit.*

¹³ APPADURAI Arjun (ed.), *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

¹⁴ For more information see <http://www.agence-nationale-recherche.fr/?Projet=ANR-14-CE29-0006>.

- financial: the overall cost of the operation, 55 million of Philippine pesos, suggested a possible raise of municipal taxes
- democratic: according to some citizens, the decision was not made following the legal procedure
- patrimonial: the large parking building, located in the very center of the town (the market district), would announce an unhealthy architectural mess, coming from lowlands cities, and threatening a certain “authenticity” of Banaue.

This last opinion was the most successful. From June 2016, a group was formed, around this patrimonial contestation, to oppose the project. It was articulated around a few personalities well implicated in politics. Among them, a former mayor of Banaue and a local official (a *punong barangay*¹⁵), leading the group. Both had been active in various political projects centered on the highlighting of rice culture as a symbol of Ifugao or Cordillera cultural unicity. The former mayor, member of a network including the district Representative of Ifugao T. Baguilat, has led with him some operations of world acknowledgment of Banaue rice terraces, with the NGO Greenpeace for instance¹⁶. His associate in the anti-parking group, the beforementioned *barangay punong*, is a well-known partisan of Cordillera autonomy, and can be considered an institutional actor in this matter, for he was member of commissions in charge of preparing the eventuality of autonomy¹⁷. His discourses at the NOPARA (National Commission etc...) insist on cultural differences between the inhabitants of the Cordillera, who were “not occupied”, and those of lowlands, whose culture would have been mixed, somehow diluted by the Spanish domination. This vision was shared among the members of the anti-parking building group. One of them told me :

“In the lowlands, they were conquered by Spaniards. When did that happen to us? Never. [...]

In the lowlands, they don't have a true culture [...] it's all mixed already”¹⁸.

The group was not only a citizen's union against the parking-building project, but a political gathering as well. Another of its members, a lawyer residing in Banaue, was indeed the main opponent to the incumbent mayor in the 2016 elections. Supported by the members

¹⁵ The *barangay* is the smallest administrative division on Philippine territory. It is led by an elected *punong barangay* or *barangay kapitan(a)*, assisted by elected *kagawads*.

¹⁶ <http://www.greenpeace.org/seasia/ph/News/news-stories/ifugao-rice-terraces-declared/>

¹⁷ RDC-CAR, *White Papers on Advancing the Cordillera for Regional Autonomy*, publié par la National Economic and Development Authority, 2007; National Economic and Development Authority, rapport, *Cordillera Autonomy : Looking Around and Farther Back. Paper presented during the Development and Autonomy Forum held at the University of the Cordilleras, Baguio City, on July 23, 2008* by Fernando D Bahatan Jr, avril 2009.

¹⁸ Interview with two members of candidate W's political entourage, April 23, 2016.

of the opposition group, and their respective networks, the candidate based his campaign on the parking building affair. The incumbent mayor told everyone who would listen that the entire operation was a political assault aiming at replacing him in the city hall. The political link made between the project and his managing of the rice terraces was a particularly unpleasing topic for him. Indeed, a very strong position was taken by his opponents on this matter. They insisted on the fact that the parking-building, once finished, would be blocking the view onto rice terraces, and therefore declared that it was the whole attitude of the current mayor towards rice terraces that was problematic. For them, the parking building was a symptom of an abandonment of Ifugao's emblematic rice terraces, that is, the abandonment of that "culture" the lowlanders had already-lost.

Questioned on the subject by a national newspaper, the Mayor and a member of his political network, then Ifugao governor D.Habawel, considered those accusations preposterous. The patrimonial plea doesn't stand, for them, because of its incompatibility with needed improvements. In the interview, they brought up the UNESCO's presence in Banaue, arguing that it made it difficult for some farmers to make the slightest modification to their own fields. The governor added "The Ifugao rice terraces are not museum pieces. The rice terraces should change through time [...] Where could locals park their vehicles? Can they hang them on trees?"¹⁹.

The incumbent mayor minimized the ideological reach of the contestation that was carried along by the anti-parking building group. The members of the latter presented it as their main preoccupation. It doesn't belong to the anthropologist to decide who's right and who isn't. I simply go with the principle that the people I have been interviewing or talking to ~~did~~ gave me their opinion in *bona fide*. However, this example displays the complex composition of politics in Banaue. The bibliography about local politics in the Philippines has insisted on the mobilization of vertical clientelist networks as the main, almost exclusive, mode of distributing power. The so-called *factional theory*, best represented by Carl Landé or Masataka Kimura, is advocating such a vision²⁰. Different approaches do exist, such as Yuko Kasuya's work. Her studies of the party instability in the Philippines led her to the elaboration

¹⁹ BURGOS Nestor P. Jr, "UN rules on rice terraces hampers Ifugao growth, says gov" in Philippine Daily Inquirer, April 18, 2016, p.A18.

²⁰ LANDÉ Carl H., *Leaders, Factions and Parties : The Structure of Philippine Politics*, New Haven, Yale University Southeast Asian Studies Program, Monograph Series n°6, 1965; KIMURA Masataka, "Philippine Political Parties and the Party System in Transistion : Leaders, Factions and Blocs", in *Pilipinas* n°18, Manilla, 1992, pp.43-65.

of a very interesting analytical frame, representing a more diffuse construction of clientelism²¹. But Kasuya is a political scientist, and accordingly inquires mainly about national institutions and official functions (such as Senators or Representatives). Anthropology could bring complementary analysis of how politics are built at the level of the actors. For example, in this case, we can see how the political cliques were installed around contestation, and neatly built upon ideological discourses. Clientelism cannot be taken out of the picture, as it certainly participated in the building of the candidates' networks, and in their campaigning strategies. But neither can the ideology be discarded. The *faction theory* proves unable to discern this complex configuration where alliances are not only due to strategic choices, but also to ideas about the way society should be defined.

We can detect polarities, in the debate, built around questions of “authenticity” and “culture”, but it would be a mistake to take those representations for what they seem to be. What is discussed here is not whether the Ifugao society should “remain” or “become” (which is the main idea in UNESCO’s texts, mentioned earlier) one way or the other. What is debated are the ways of establishing a consensus about what minimal definition can be given of a society. We know too well, nowadays, that a “society” cannot be fully described, nor considered a truly delimited, concrete ensemble. Competing, opposing representations, carried by its members, do compose a large part of what a society is, and the importance of an “imagined community”²² is not to be underestimated. Ifugao has recently entered a context of strong extraversion, in which social standards of wealth, power, and political representation, among others, undergo unpredictable changes. Confronted by this situation, some people or groups of people propose a shift in the norms. The debates that follow would constitute one of the driving forces of social change. This hypothesis is not fully constructed yet, for I am still working on it. The next part of the paper will present some crucial social elaborations that are to be found in the frame of a larger debate concerning the commercialization of Ifugao’s endemic rice.

Commercialization of the *Tinawon* rice

²¹ KASUYA Yuko, *Presidential Bandwagon. Parties and Party System in the Philippines*, Anvil publishing, Manilla, 2008.

²² ANDERSON Benedict, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983.

Why is rice particularly important in understanding some aspects of social change in Banaue? To answer, it may be necessary to shed some light on the specific position of the cereal in Ifugao society. Once more, Banaue will be taken as an example. Some minor elements change from a municipality to another, and even from a *barangay* to another, but the general principles remain the same.

We can evoke two systems of social eminence in Banaue. One is centered on the possession of rice fields, theoretically acquired hereditarily, by a certain social group of people called *kadangyan*. Another one is constituted of persons who gathered a lot of money by participating in activities located at the interface between the Ifugao social world and outside spaces: jobs in the city, emigration, access to a well-paid position thanks to a diploma from a university in Manila, tourism businesses etcetera.

The high position of the *kadangyan* can certainly be explained historically. They were the producers of the most important resource of the area, and in charge of the distribution of the precious staple food. Thus, they had responsibilities and prerogatives. They had the right to perform the most valued and important religious rites, during the harvesting period. During these occasions, they had to offer cooked rice and meat to any person passing by. They also distributed their rice as a salary to individuals from the lower classes who worked for them. Around the 1950s, according to my interviews and the few archives I found, the newly established marketplace allowed Ifugao to buy rice from retailers. The rice came from various places, mainly the surrounding lowlands of Nueva Vizcaya and the Ilocos regions, but also from other countries, through the NFA (National Food Association) programs of import for instance. This change in the rice distribution circuit weakened the position of *kadangyan*, and initiated a new social configuration.

The preeminence of the *kadangyan* group does exist today in Banaue, tightly linked to the production of a specific array of rice species, generally called *tinawon* or *ipugo*, referred to as *native rice* in English. This kind of rice can rarely be found at the marketplace, and when it is sold, it isn't the best quality. The reason for this is that the *tinawon* remains primarily a commodity dedicated to social exchanges. Religious ceremonies of any kind are the occasion for distributing cooked rice to any visitor, but *kadangyan* must distribute *tinawon* to keep their status intact. *Tinawon* is also given to neighbors and friends as a token of friendship, sealing alliances. In the interviews, when evoking practices or representations considered as genuinely Ifugao, *Tinawon* is always mentioned. It is also linked, in the *emic* discourse, to the ethnic history *par excellence*. However, cultivating the *Tinawon* is a hard task. The native

species are sensitive to pest, and yield fewer grains than other cultivars developed elsewhere. Rice culture brings little money in Banaue. Economic opportunities coming from outside the municipality look more attractive to a large number of Ifugaos. Furthermore, while being a *kadangyan* is described as a condition *sine qua non* for accessing the higher spheres of power before the 1940s²³, entering the political world in the context of the Republic is not possible without knowing its rules, which is studied at the university, and without having a personal fortune²⁴. If being a *kadangyan* is recognized as belonging to a distinctive group, it is not enough to achieve social eminence. Participation in economic and political activities that cross territories and societies is requested. Hence, the reduction of the rice production in Banaue. As of today, 330 hectares²⁵ of terraces have been abandoned in Banaue, which may represent close to half the total number of fields. Because the culture of *tinawon* is associated with an eminently Ifugao way of life, this reduction evokes a strong change in the social norms for the actors.

What should be done with the rice, then? Answering this proved challenging, and generated a debate in Banaue. This paper will try to understand it by looking at the positions of two institutions. One is the Municipality, made up of the mayor and the office of agriculture. The other is the Rice Farmers Terraces' Cooperative (RFTC), a recently formed agricultural cooperative. Both institutions follow the same idea: selling the native rice by insisting on its origin. Banaue rice can be presented as the strongest symbolic representation of an imagined, well-circumscribed and sellable "Ifugao culture"²⁶. It could then become an ethnicized commodity, and it would not be an unprecedented phenomenon²⁷.

There is a change in the exchange value of rice. This assertion is inspired by Appadurai's idea of *diversion of commodities*, according to which some social, economic, or political dynamics bring a commodity from a set context of exchange to another. In the case of Ifugao rice, the cereal is passing from a context of a restrained, controlled, circumscribed exchange to a circulation with less rules and restrictions, and less direct social reciprocity. The aim of that system is to offer a solution to the visible decaying of the terraces, as declared

²³ Cf. CONKLIN Harold C., *Ethnographic Atlas of Ifugao: A Study of Environment, Culture, and Society in Northern Luzon*, Yale University Press, 1981.

²⁴ Cf. KASUYA Yuko, op.cit.

²⁵ According to the Municipal Office. The estimation is also given in PALANGCHAO Harley F., "Baguio Midland Courier June 5, 2016, "Banaue eyes P100 m profit in fixed terraces", in *Baguio Midland Courier*, June 5, 2016.

²⁶ Cf. DRUGUET Aurélie, « Les productions locales : une alternative au productivisme mondialisé ? Le cas de la valorisation du riz tinawon dans la province Ifugao (Philippines) », in *L'Homme et la société*, 1/2012 (n° 183-184), pp. 97-124.

²⁷ See for example relevant observations about that phenomenon in APPADURAI Arjun, op.cit.

by the RFTC and in the City Hall. More precisely, *Tinawon* rice is theoretically a commodity dedicated to social spheres of exchange. The abundance of commercial rice, the complete monetarization of economic transactions, have changed the crucial position of the native rice. Conserving it, is henceforth intimately associated with the preservation of a set of norms described as an endangered heirloom, described as representing Ifugao specificity. For the partisans of commercialization, changing the status of the rice is a means of saving it from complete abandonment.

The idea of selling the *Tinawon* generates some contradictory discourses in Banaue. Even more so since the RFTC is commercializing it in the U.S.A. As a Western country, they show an increasing demand for products that can be identified as exotics and/or produced in a “fair trade” perspective²⁸. Originally a personal, hierarchizing commodity, the rice suddenly becomes worldwide, impersonal when it is transferred abroad. It then escapes the circuit of social accountabilities. Hence, the shadow of economic exploitation and unethical enrichment appears. Amongst rice producers, opinions can vary as well. The RFTC possesses its own facilities for preparing and packing the *Tinawon*. Farmers bring their production, and get paid a fixed rate for every kilogram of rice they sell. A recurrent remark is that the farmers would be somehow forced, by the humility of their condition, to sell all of their rice production, and would then buy lower quality rice to eat and fulfill social requirements such as rites and everyday transactions. The RFTC manager denied it firmly. According to him, selling the rice is enhancing its production, allowing more terraces to be rehabilitated, notably through funding programs organized by the RFTC, and insuring the continuity of tradition, not erasing it.

Up to 2016, the Municipal administration has repeatedly refused to work with the RFTC. People in the City Hall do not seem to be yet convinced of the pertinence of the cooperative’s strategy. However, selling the *Tinawon* appeared to the mayor, and the municipal administration, as a viable solution for stopping the rice terraces abandonment. From 2013 to 2016, the *barangay* administrations was in charge of managing an institutional adaptation of an Ifugao practice called *chawwa*. The *chawwa* is a system of land-tenure in which a rice-field owner concedes an abandoned field to someone for a fixed period, most generally three years. During the first two years, the temporary owner can use the field, thus rehabilitating it, and keep the integrity of the harvest. The third year, the field being

²⁸ DRAGUSANU Raluca, GIOVANNUCCI Daniele et NUNN Nathan, « The Economics of Fair Trade » in The Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 28, No. 3, American Economic Association, 2014, pp. 217-236.

supposedly completely productive again, the harvest may be shared between the caretaker and the legal owner of the land. Then, a new *chawwa* can be started again, if the legal owner does not want to work on his field but would not like it to be destroyed by long inactivity. The municipal adaptation of the *chawwa* functioned similarly. Owners had the opportunity to let the *barangay* team organize the rehabilitation and cultivation of their deserted fields. The harvest was then stocked and sold by the municipality, the money from the sales covering the expenses. Planned for a three-year period, the *chawwa* was not renewed. During summer 2016, a contract was signed between the town of Banaue and an industrial company of agricultural products, Universal Harvesters Incorporation (UHI). The company will cover the rehabilitation of untended paddies. What it will gain in exchange is not quite clear now, and is still being discussed between the mayor's office and UHI. Moreover, the municipality signed an agreement with the Philippine restaurant chain Max's, that proposed to acquire monthly stocks of *Tinawon* to compose an "ethnic menu" in some of its franchises.

Short conclusion: perspectives and analyses

The debates I presented here are the symptoms, in my opinion, of a larger set of discourses reflecting a wide uncertainty. It is manifest when rice is evoked because in the confrontation of norms that Ifugao faces, characterized by recent ways of social elevation that cross the limits of the province, and even the country, rice is associated with one ensemble of social prescriptions. It is linked, in *emic* representations, to what is *purely* Ifugao. The contestations about selling the rice and changing its status are not to be considered as a mere economical problem. What is at stake here is the efficiency of the Ifugao norm system.

The notion of uncertainty as I use it is an exploratory concept²⁹. Laurent Dousset, from the CREDO (Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur l'Océanie, Marseilles, France), is currently working on the scientific possibilities of the notion in anthropology today, and his preliminary thoughts did inspire me³⁰. I present here some of my own uses of the concept. I must insist on the fact that this paper represents an ongoing work.

By individual societal uncertainty, I refer to a situation in which members of a society, confronting a situation that requires an active reaction from them, can't find clues about what

²⁹ See an interesting point of view on the question in BRONNER Gérald, *L'Incertitude*, PUF, collection "Que-sais-je", Paris, 1997.

³⁰ Cf. DOUSSET Laurent, *Mythes, missiles et cannibals, le récit d'un premier contact en Australie*, Société des Océanistes, Paris, 2011 ; DOUSSET Laurent, « La sorcellerie en Mélanésie. Élicitation de l'inacceptable », in *L'Homme* (N° 218), 2016 pp. 85-115.

attitude to adopt in the norms and practices inscribed in their cultural and social paradigm. More simply, it describes a situation where a person does not know what is socially relevant to do in his situation. Uncertainty is happening at the individual level. When uncertainty is shared, it becomes a cultural material (a shared representation), and turns into a crisis. A quick example: let us imagine a society without unemployment. The first member of this society without a job (other determinants aside) would be the victim of a personal societal uncertainty: nothing in the shared norms predicts the correct behavior in such a situation. While more people would become unemployed, the uncertainty of each person would be debated, shared, and become a crisis. Of course, it remains a highly ethereal example.

In the context of a crisis provoked by shared societal uncertainty, individuals, or groups of individuals, propose a solution that seem suitable in their opinion, with the social and cultural material they have at hand. In the case studied in this paper, Ifugao society faces uncertainties due to the confrontation of a rather endemic system of norms and the participation of the society to norms from other social groups : the imagined community of Philippine Nations, the economic principles of worldwide liberalism, the patrimonial standpoints of international institutions such as UNESCO and so on. Some actors see the definition of a regional specificity as a way of organizing those confronting norms into a new paradigm, namely the anti-parking building group and their followers. Some other actors propose a change in the social status of the essential resource, as RFTC and the City Hall do. Debates growing from those propositions constitute a way of social change.

A caveat should be made: I do not intend to say that the social change is solely achieved through discourses and through individual calculations. Social change is obviously a multi-factorial process, that cannot be simply described with what actors do. The goal of this theory is to open a way out from the overused dichotomy of tradition/modernity that depicts southern societies as passive and suffering groups, losing their identity in the process of globalization. Violence from the outside does exist, and symbolic domination is part of the equation. However, the agency of the Ifugao should not be considered as nonexistent. Finally, it seems clear to me that the Ifugao society has not waited thousands of years to see its world change. I would rather suggest, although I have no proof of it, that the arrival of lowland refugees in the fifteenth century, for instance, could have generated a similar situation of societal uncertainty. The following adaptations of norms, due to the arrival of members of outside social groups, may have been part of the edification of the rice terraces, and of the

birth of the rice-centered Ifugao culture. All societies know social change through their histories, and there are no such things as the “eternal indigenous”.

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