

Anarchy as an Act of Care

Anarchy is opposition to authority. However, it is often defined as the loss of societal order by means of vigilantism, and characterized by chaos. In the case of the Pilopine's oppression by colonial powers it is a form of resistance that places emphasis on egalitarianism, mutual aid, and non-conformity. When the Spanish invaded the Pilopines, many fled into the mountains, known as the Ifugao region. Cut off from their main food source taro, which grows on the coast the Pilopinos lived to continue their customs separate from the Spanish. Once the United States took power over the Pilopines they aimed not to just prostelytize the indigenous people but westernize the entirety of the country. Roy Franklin Barton documented acts of resistance in the Ifugao region to capture what he called a "a burning house".



A pact-holder from Eastern Kalinga, presenting his wife with beads. Ca 1918
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Communal policing was upheld by pact-holders. When there is a dispute the resolution is guaranteed by an appointed pact-holder. The position is honored by each village because he puts himself in danger to maintain peace. Though it is a form of vigilantism justice is the goal of each community separate from the central authority of the United States government.



Ifugao man successfully arguing his case in a dispute with a neighbor. Ca
1918

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The Ifugaos present an anarchical form of self governance. Because all people share equal rights they represent themselves in disputes without court-rooms or government interference. It is not a system of chaos but a civilized demonstration of mutual respect and egalitarianism.



Ifugao man showing tattoo; the following designs may be distinguished: dancing man, dog, shield, eagle, centipede, scorpion, thunderbolt, star. Ca. 1918

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Anarchical behavior is heightened in the wake of the colonial goal to proselytize the Ifugao. Nudity, divorce, and sexual expression are commonly practiced and became acts of resistance to colonial efforts. Tattooing is another custom that the Americans worked to oppress by enforcing clothing to cover up tattooed skin and preached against it. The tattoos show the Ifugao's values and past. They demonstrate the Ifugao belief in how the past and metaphor permeate the present and symbolize a resilient history. At the end of a recitation by Ifugaoan religious leaders, or tulud recitations, there is a final, clinching phrase. In Kiangan this follows the formula: "Be it not then, but now; not there but here". The phrase demonstrates the Ifugaoan efforts to hold onto their freedom and pass their way of life to future generations through anarchy.

The Ifugao man pictured left was named Kuyapi. He suffered from not being able to avenge his family due to the United States interference in his village. It is customary that he not cut his hair until he has. Kuyapi demonstrates that he still intends to act outside the authority of the government through a small but meaningful act of caring for his customs.



Ifugao of Pinduangan Village According to Ifugao custom, Kuyapi must wear his hair long because he has not avenged the death of his father. Ca 1918

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Ifugaon Rice Terraces

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A final and tremendous example of the capabilities of the Ifugaon way of life is the communal maintenance of their rice terraces. The engineering of a successful and sustainable food supply was a way of resisting Spanish control. When the Pilipino people fled to the mountains they had to work as a community to adapt the landscape of the country. Anarchy as an act of care and resistance "prevails in a technologically sophisticated society whose rice terraces on the rugged mountainsides of Luzon evoke expressions of awe from outside visitors. Further they have developed through the ages a most elaborate system of substantive property law and personal law - a system that operates almost entirely without benefit of government. The Ifugaos are the star example of how far a system of private law can go. *They demonstrate that anarchy is not necessarily synonymous with disorder.*" R. K. Barton