A popular aphorism in the Cordillera about three hungry tribal folk who got lost and wanted to eat in a lone hinterland house goes like this:

The Ibaloi stood from a distance but left after his shyness overcame him. The Kalinga did not eat as water was not offered to him. But the Kankanaey made himself at home. He went straight to the kitchen, served himself with food, proceeded to sit on the host's favorite armchair, and crossed his legs with a cup of steaming hot coffee in his hand.

Notions about Cordillera folk, right or wrong, still persist to this day. Tourists or lowlanders who visit the region may find themselves in situations or cultures they may find strange but actually mirror a tribe's peculiar traits.

In the tourist town of Banaue in Ifugao, site of the famed rice terraces, a sign in a roadside comfort room goes like this: "He or She But Not Together."

The Ifugaos, particularly from Kiangan town, are popular in the region for their irreverent jokes and humor.

If one is traveling in Kalinga, the first thing he should ask for is a glass of water if he does not want to be harmed, according to Gus Saboy, a Kalinga native and former director of the Cordilleras Executive Board.

"This signifies that the host family has accepted the responsibility of protecting the visitor who drank the water while he is still in his place. This means, he won't be harmed by tribesmen," Saboy said.

Wild West

Kalinga, known as the "Wild West" of the Cordillera, could be dangerous to travelers when tribal wars are ongoing, Saboy said. Most residents reportedly own firearms for self-preservation.

For the Kankanaeys and Applais of Sagada, Mt. Province, old-timers say it is considered a good trait if a visitor does not wait for the host to serve him. They say if the visitor finds out that food hasn't been cooked yet, then he should do it himself. He should also wash the dishes.

Residents, however, said this cultural trait is not being practiced much by educated folk. They don't just barge inside a house and eat a family's food. They also now serve their visitors like lowlanders do.

The "Westernization" of Sagada started when American Anglican missionaries converted the Sagada pagans to the Christian faith in the early part of this century, anthropological accounts say. Christian influence was reportedly responsible for the adulteration of culture.

These times, one wouldn't be surprised to see an Anglican church wedding with a babayas or tribal wedding following shortly, complete with gongs, dancing and butchering of animals.

Tribal rites in Sagada are also performed in dap-ays. It is a sort of a male clubhouse and the young boy already knows it well for it is here that he comes in short-lived fascination to hear a few moments of adult legal talk so complicated he soon scurries again to play.

But whatever the dap-ay may have meant in his life in the past or will mean in the future, at the moment, it seems foremost in his mind as his new sleeping place, for the dap-ay is the dormitory for unmarried males.

As a young Sagada boy, this writer spent countless times in the dap-ay scratching the foot soles of older men with two sticks, a mandatory form of ritual for the kids called dagdagay.

The dap-ay does not have any window. And keeping the fire alive during the night is assigned to the smallest boys, who are called mama-o. The older boys are called the mangmong as it is their job to collect firewood for the early morning dap-ay fires in the center of the stone platform around which the men warm themselves on waking.
Obscene

According to old folk, most Mt. Province residents consider it obscene for an innocent child to be present during the conception of his younger brothers and sisters so they are sent to sleep in the *dap-ays*.

This is the case even in Benguet where unmarried family members may sleep in the same small house, anthropologists say. But their parents wait until they are all asleep before indulging in the kind of pleasure meant to make the family still larger.

Such unions have produced outstanding locals like former Mt. Province Rep. Alfredo Lam-en who took the Igorot's cause against discrimination in style to the shame of his detractors.

The flamboyant and good-looking Lam-en delivered a privilege speech in Congress while wearing a g-string. He berated former Foreign Minister Carlos P. Romulo for saying that "Igorots are not Filipinos."

"The only difference between me and Romulo is that he wears his tie on his neck while I wear mine below," he said. His peers and admirers have nicknamed him "John Wayne of the Cordillera" for his similarity to the hero of western movies.

In Bauko, Mt. Province, it was believed that a child watching his parents engage in sexual intercourse will get sick and die.

Nowadays, most modern Sagada families do not force their children to sleep in the *dap-ay*. In the past, the offending boy who wouldn't want to sleep in the *dap-ay* would be taunted at daybreak by his peers who sing "Sot, sot, ak, ak, sot." One of the words is an obscene term for copulation and the other an onomatopoeic term for the accompanying sound.

These times, Sagada kids or adult men particularly in the poblacion don't sleep in *dap-ays* anymore. They prefer watching television.

Adulteration

Sagada old-timers admit that tourism, television and modernization of the town have resulted in the deterioration or adulteration of the people's culture.

Even in music, teenagers now sing reggae during their countless drunken nights in local stores and pubs.

So who is an Igorot? The generic name Ygolote, Igolot or Igorotte, according to historian William Henry Scott, was used by the Spanish conquistadors and missionaries to describe the Cordillera natives.

Fr. Casimiro Diaz, a Spanish friar who accompanied the first Spanish expedition to the Cordillera, had this to say:

"The Igorots are a barbaric people, and of little intelligence, being so because, they are born in a cooler climate, they are deceitful, cunning and cruel, they practice bigamy, marrying many women, very superstitious and believe in divinations" (Igorots, Rev. Father Fray Angel Perez, 1988).

Some anthropologists like Scott went on to debunk some biased notions against Igorots. But according to government officials like those of the Cordillera Regional Assembly and the Cordillera Regional Board, discrimination and ignorance about the Igorots, their customs and traditions were responsible for the misinformation against them.

Sagada old-timers still recount with glee the story in the 1960s of a Manila lady who asked a male resident in the town to show her his tail.

In perfect English, the young man deadpanned: "Pardon me lady, but I cannot show you my front tail unless you marry me."

There are at least eight major ethnolinguistic tribes in the Cordillera based on studies by the Cordillera Schools Group. The CSG is composed of private schools in the region.
Cordillera tribes

The tribes include the Ifugaos, Bontocs, Kankanaeys, Ibaloiis, Ikalahans, Isnegs, Kalingas and Isnegs.

Ifugao is derived from the word "Ipugo" which means "people from the earth." They are the ones with some of the most magnificent rice terraces in the region like the ones in Banaue.

According to the CSG study, most Ifugaos don't want to be called Igorots; they simply want to be called Ifugaos.

The basic Ifugao male attire is the wanoh or loin cloth for the men and ampuyo (general name for skirt) for the women. The men are muscular while the women are proportionately beautiful.

Manny Ngitit, an Ifugao native and staff member of the provincial Philippine Information Agency, said they did not practice the bodong (peace pact) system to engage in war or settle conflicts unlike some tribes in Mt. Province and Kalinga. In a gathering, chances are the life of the party is an Ifugao who never tires of telling jokes.

The Bontoks are found in Mt. Province. According to accounts made by Spanish friars based on Scott's writings, they were "aggressive, warlike and quick and rough" when provoked.

They have larger and more muscular bodies, fair or dark in complexion and shorter height unlike the Kalinga males who are tall, dark and have slender bodies.

In earlier days, the Bontok males courted the women in the ulog, some sort of a dormitory for women. The men and women may sleep together and engage in sex even without getting married. If they feel they are sexually compatible and they love each other, they may get married.

Benguet is home to the Ibaloiis. They are the butt of jokes among the more aggressive tribes for their perceived timidity and shyness, according to observers. Some Ibaloiis dispute these attributions and some stabbings and maulings have resulted in pub drinking bouts even in Baguio City due to taunting.

Ibaloiis like Ceferino Willy, Baguio station manager of PTV 4, who is half Kankanaey and half Ibaloi, say the Ibaloiis' timidity is apparent in weddings or wakes.

"The one who is usually at the background is an Ibaloi and you may quote me on this," he said.

Willy said the perceived timidity or shyness was acquired by the poorer Ibaloiis due to the past feudal setup between the rich and the poor.

"Attend any Ibaloi wedding or wake and the ones who are seated at the best tables and given the best wine or food are the rich. The poorer ones are those in the inconspicuous places," he said.

Morr Pungayan, one of the more recent Cordillera historians, however, said the Ibaloiis now are not really that timid as they have acquired education or become rich.

Some Ibaloi tribes have reportedly engaged in headhunting forays in the past and have distinguished themselves for gallantry and valor during wars like the Japanese occupation.

'Gentle people'

The Ikalahans or Kalangoyas, known as the "gentle people" of the region, inhabit the eastern side of the Cordillera mountain range particularly those near the Sierra Madre.

According to the CSG study, the word Kalangoya is not only derogatory but also implies ludicrous connotations.

When spoken in full, Kalangoya would be "Kelay ngoy ya!" which is literally translated as "What in the world is that?" or "What the hell is the matter?"--expressions maliciously uttered by non-tribal members.

Where in the world indeed can one find the Kalangoya's monkey dance, except when they gather wherein dancers mimic the face or actuations of a monkey.
The Isnegs are slash-and-burn farmers who inhabit the interior ranges of Apayao. They are the last tribal group among the Cordillerans to be conquered by the Americans.

They build their dwellings along major river systems and tributaries. Some Isnegs told the Inquirer during a recent visit to Apayao that they practice wife-swapping, even for short or longer periods, although anthropologists have to corroborate this.

**Warlike**

The Kalingas are considered one of the most warlike tribes in the region due to proliferation of tribal wars and revenge vendettas. Inter-tribal relations are still extremely hostile when a bodong (peace pact) is broken. In the past, headtaking was a highly noble thing to do.

Kalinga folk said that for a young man to go on a kayao (headhunting foray) in the past, coming back with a human head was proof of his bravery. The head is his ticket to getting tattooed, and with it, he gains the respect of the menfolk and admiration of the women.

These times, warriors reportedly do not bring home heads but just kill their enemies for crimes or wrongdoing. A growing number of educated Kalingas have recently called for a stop to the bodong, saying it creates a neverending cycle of violence. They, however, admit that this cannot be done in the near future.

The Tingguians hale from Abra. One of Tingguians who became famous or infamous depending on which ideological side of the fence, is former rebel priest Conrado Balweg, chief of the Cordillera People’s Liberation Army.

Observers say Tingguians talk like birds in a sing-song manner and have learned not to isolate themselves from outsiders and have integrated well with other tribes or lowlanders who migrated to Abra.

The Kankanaeys are considered one of the aggressive tribes in the region. They live in western Mt. Province. They are the travelers or migrants always in search of better livelihood opportunities. They are now not only in different parts of the country but also the world.