His Name Was Don Francisco Muro: Reconstructing an Image of American Imperialism

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Abstract
Visual culture played a significant role in the debates surrounding American colonialism in the Philippines in the early twentieth century. One of the most important photographers working the Philippines at that time was Dean Conant Worcester, who also served as a colonial administrator. Worcester's three-part sequence of photographs supposedly showing an Igorot man becoming civilized through his contact with Americans is one of the more iconic sets of images from that time period.

In recent years, many historians have reprinted the "Igorot sequence" to illustrate American imperial ideologies. However, neither the identity of the subject, nor the circumstances surrounding the creating of the sequence has been published, and different historians have traced the sequence to different points of origin. Understanding the history of the sequence provides a way to better understand both the history of American colonialism in the Philippines and the challenges of using photographs as historical evidence.

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Mark Rice

One of the most politically charged issues in the United States in the early twentieth century was the debate over American colonialism in the Philippines. Although, on the surface, the debate focused on the contradiction between the republican values enshrined in the U.S. Constitution and the country’s imperialist policies following the Spanish-American War, it went well beyond politics and included heated arguments about race. Many anti-imperialists dreaded the prospect of the United States expanding its nonwhite population through annexation of the Philippines. In contrast, supporters of colonialism often used the Progressivist rhetoric of “racial uplift” to support white rule in the Philippines, what Peter Schmidt has recently termed “Jim Crow colonialism.” According to Schmidt, Progressivism in the early twentieth century revised “Reconstruction narratives of ‘uplift’ . . . both to justify Jim Crow at home and to persuade many skeptical Americans that the U.S. imperial destiny abroad meant the reconstruction of its newly acquired colonies.”

Visual culture played a critical role in these conversations about colonialism and race. In her essay “The Filipina’s Breast,” Nerissa S. Balce traces what she calls “the erotics of the American Empire” and points out that “illustrated travel books were popular middle-brow reading fare readily available to middle-class Americans at the turn of the twentieth century.” Those focusing their attention on the Philippines presented Filipinos as savages, thereby justifying American colonialism. Writes Balce: “In the American imperial imaginary, savage bodies were also docile bodies needing discipline and tutelage.”

Illustrated magazine articles about the Philippines were also very popular at the turn of the century. *National Geographic Magazine*, for example, published thirty articles on the Philippines between 1898 and 1908; one appearing in 1903 established the magazine’s policy of publishing photographs of bare-breasted native women. According to Balce, “the bare brown bosoms of
indigenous women were markers of savagery, colonial desire, and a justification for Western imperial rule.”

Intimately bound up in ideas of savagery, desire, and imperialism was the Progressivist theme that “Americans had a moral responsibility to bring progress, self-government, and material prosperity to the so-called weaker races of the earth.”

Scientist and colonialist Dean Conant Worcester stood at the very center of both the political debates and the visual representations of the Philippines. Worcester’s reputation as a leading expert on the Philippines was well established by 1898 through published articles, lecture tours, and a popular book, The Philippine Islands and Their People. Appointed by President William McKinley in 1899 as the sole civilian member of the Schurman Commission, Worcester was the only person to serve on both that commission and its successor, the Taft Commission. His tenure as the secretary of the interior in the Philippines from 1901 to 1913 was the longest of any colonial administrator there; through his office, he wielded immense power over the design and implementation of U.S. policies in the Philippines. A strong proponent of U.S. colonial rule, Worcester made strategic use of words and photographs to help convince many Americans of the need for a long-term U.S. presence to help the native Filipinos become “civilized.”

He supplied many of the photographs that found their way into books and magazine articles about the Philippines, including the one that established National Geographic’s policy of publishing photographs of bare-breasted native women.

Worcester was not without his critics. In a 1912 anti-imperialist book, The American Occupation of the Philippines, 1898–1912, James H. Blount called Worcester “the P. T. Barnum of the ‘non-Christian tribe’ industry.” Blount specifically mentioned Worcester’s use of photographs (he called them “Worcester kodaks”) to “humbug . . . the American people into a belief that the Islands must be retained until the three hundred thousand or so Negritos, Igorrotes, and other primitive wild peoples sprinkled throughout the archipelago are ‘reconstructed.’” Blount, notes historian Rodney Sullivan, “seized upon . . . the thousands of photographs of tribal Filipinos sprinkled throughout official reports and magazine articles as evidence of Worcester’s attempts to manipulate public opinion.” Although much of Blount’s criticism of Worcester was accurate, “his book has had little impact on American writing on the Philippines, its message largely overwhelmed in 1914 by the splash and continuing ripples of Worcester’s Philippines, Past and Present.”

Worcester’s heavily illustrated vision of the benevolence of U.S. control of the Philippines remained dominant for much of the twentieth century. His 1914 book The Philippines, Past and Present was republished in 1930 and
remained a touchstone for U.S. historical understanding of the Philippines for many decades. In 1942, the Smithsonian Institution published Herbert W. Kreiger’s *Peoples of the Philippines* as part of its “war background studies” designed to give the U.S. military crucial information about strategic parts of the world. *Peoples* presented decades-old photographs taken by Worcester as accurate reflections of current conditions in the Philippines.

Worcester’s photographs, many of which were staged or deceptively captioned, are able to mislead viewers even today, including historians whose careful scholarship has helped to restructure our understanding of the relationship between the United States and the Philippines through the twentieth century. One particular sequence of three images widely discussed by contemporary scholars and reproduced in figure 1 purports to show the transformation of a Bontoc Igorot man from abject savagery to martial civilization through enlistment in the Philippine Constabulary, a paramilitary police force organized by the U.S. colonial government. Published in 1910 in a government report, the Igorot sequence (as it will be referred to hereafter) has been reproduced or written about in more than a half dozen books and in several articles since the 1990s.9

Although contemporary historians are universally critical of the imperialist message embedded in the Igorot sequence, they have been inclined to accept it as authentic—that is, to believe that the sequence shows what Worcester said it shows. On one level, this is understandable. Because most historians are trained to privilege written texts over visual images, they tend to be more comfortable deconstructing essays, government reports, and speeches than the images that frequently accompany those documents. An unintended result of this tendency is that contemporary scholars who in no way agree with the imperialist agenda of Worcester and his political allies have ironically accepted and relayed the message of the Igorot sequence, namely, that colonial structures such as the constabulary were successful in their efforts to radically alter the cultures of the Igorots and other minority groups in the Philippines and to incorporate them into the nascent colonial order.

One of the first books to express a renewed interest in the Igorot sequence was Benito Vergara’s *Displaying Filipinos*, published in 1995. Reproducing the Igorot sequence as it appeared in Frederick Carleton Chamberlin’s 1913 book, *The Philippine Problem, 1898–1913*, Vergara also includes Chamberlin’s original caption: “Educational Value of the Constabulary: 1. Bontoc Igorot on entering the service, 1901. 2. After a year’s service, 1902. 3. After two years’ service, 1903.”10 Vergara correctly points out that the sequence shows ‘civilization as primarily a cosmetic change. There is no real ‘educational value’
Vergara asks pointed questions of the photographs: “Why were they taken in the first place? Were they part of the standard bureaucratic procedure for the constabulary?” That said, he provides no answers. For Vergara, the Igorot sequence exemplifies a colonialist assumption about “a certain visuality in civilization that photography could unerringly reproduce on its own.”

Many other historians have since seen the Igorot sequence as a representative example of American imperialist ideas about the Philippines. Eric Breitbart included the sequence in his 1997 book, *A World on Display*, incorrectly suggesting that its images were taken at the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair: “Using techniques pioneered by the nineteenth-century French Photographer Alphonse Bertillon, many St. Louis World’s Fair photographs show front and side-view close-ups to identify ethnic groups, or, in some cases, supposedly showing the transformation of an Igorot into a civilized member of the Philippine Constabulary, to perpetuate racist stereotypes.” In *Tender Violence*, Laura Wexler repeats Breitbart’s assertion that the identity of the sequence’s photographer is unknown; she explicitly states that the sequence was “taken at the fair.” Although its message likely would have found a receptive audience
in St. Louis, given the fair’s emphasis on racial hierarchies and social evolution, neither author provides evidence that the Igorot sequence was displayed at the fair, much less that its images were taken there.15

Vicente L. Rafael also writes about the Igorot sequence in his 2000 book, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*. Like Balce, Rafael notes that “government reports, travel accounts, and historical narratives were generously illustrated with photographs of the natives’ inevitable transformation under U.S. tutelage. For example, there were pictures of savages turned into soldiers.”16 Tracing the Igorot sequence to yet a third starting point, Rafael provides a caption that differs slightly from Vergara’s—a sequence of captions, actually, with one per image. In *White Love*, the caption for the first image reads: “Evolution of a Bontoc Igorot constabulary soldier—1901, when he was a head-hunting savage.” The caption for the second reads: “Evolution of a Bontoc Igorot constabulary soldier—1902, after he had been for a year in contact with Americans.” The caption for the third image reads: “Evolution of a Bontoc Igorot constabulary soldier—1903, when he was a well disciplined and competent sergeant of a company of Philippine constabulary made up of his fellow tribesmen.”17 Rafael mistakenly states that these captions were taken from *The Philippines, Past and Present*. Although Worcester included examples of other kinds of before-and-after images in his 1914 book, the Igorot sequence was not one of them. On the other hand, Worcester did use the sequence in his 1910 report of the secretary of the interior of the Philippines Islands, which is also the source of Rafael’s captions.

By 2006, the Igorot sequence had become enough of an icon of American imperialist policies in the Philippines that it was printed twice on the front cover of Paul Kramer’s award-winning *The Blood of Government*, and a third time inside. Like Vergara, Kramer includes the caption supplied by Chamberlin in 1913. In a critical discussion of the sequence and its function in Chamberlin’s book, Kramer writes:

Narratives of upbuilding, capacity, and homogenization within Filipino military units were enfolded in a much-reproduced photographic series generated by Dean Worcester, probably in the early 1910s. Drawing on familiar before-and-after genres common to U.S. reform literature, it featured three successive shots of the same Igorot man at progressive stages. In the first, leftmost image, the man slouches shirtless, wearing only a small woven hat on the back of his head. In the second, he sits further upright, dressed in the white cotton uniform of a low-ranking Constabulary officer, ostensibly two years later. In the third, an additional two years later, he sits fully erect in a lieutenant’s uniform. The series vividly brought together in a single cartoon the overlapping definitions of imperial progress.18
Accepting the authenticity of the sequence, Kramer is willing to assume that the subject of the second photograph is wearing a “low-ranking” officer’s uniform and that he is wearing a “lieutenant’s uniform” in the third image. He also looks past the images when he writes that the subject sits the most erect in the final image. Even a casual look shows that he actually is just as erect—if not more so—in the middle image.

In his assertions, Kramer unintentionally reiterates what Worcester and Chamberlin doubtless would have agreed was the proper way to read the Igorot sequence. For Kramer, as for the other historians who have written about the sequence, a critical deconstruction of the sequence itself is of less importance than a discussion of how the sequence fits into larger narratives of American imperialist ideologies and colonialisit policies. The tendency of these historians to accept the truth of the sequence indirectly answers a question posed by Rafael: “In treating colonial photographs as historical documents, to what extent do we find ourselves sliding into the temptation of seeing them as transparent emanations of the photographer’s will?” Rafael raises an important point. Scholars all too often assume that historical photographs readily reveal their subjects. This assumption is ironic, given that contemporary responses to colonial photography are frequently opposed to the intentions of the photographs’ creators. Where ethnographic photographers, working collaboratively with colonial authorities, may have viewed their work as objective science, contemporary viewers see coercion and the objectification of human life. Where colonial photographers may have intended to show the benefits of Western-style civilization, modern viewers see the unwarranted imposition of American imperialism and the racist ideologies embedded in Progressive Era ideas about progress. Despite these profoundly different readings, both the original photographers and contemporary viewers frequently assume that the meanings of photographs are evident on their surface.

Colonial photographs typically come to be known through their “public performances,” that is, as images reproduced and circulated in formats such as books, articles, government reports, slide lectures, and so on, typically with accompanying text to guide viewers into seeing the images in specific ways. It is important to keep in mind that such photographs exist prior to, and outside of, these performances. When possible, historians should examine the contexts in which the photos were originally produced, as well as their position in historical archives, to better illuminate how the images entered into their public performances. Doing so can disrupt the narrative ordering of the photographs as they are found in particular books or articles and can lead to a corresponding restructuring of their historical meaning. Images such as
those in the Igorot sequence can thus be seen not only as illustrations justifying American imperialism, but also as moments signaling the encounter—and carrying the histories—of two active agents, photographer and subject. Whenever the archives allow, historians need to remove the anonymity of the subjects in colonial photography that Balce says was instrumental in American imperialism.20

Over the course of a career lasting more than thirty years, first as a scientist, later as a colonial administrator and businessman, Worcester traveled throughout the Philippines and made several thousand photographs, ranging from landscape views to photographs of buildings to ethnographic portraits intended to reveal and represent the country’s ethno-racial and cultural diversity. His ethnographic portraits are both the most numerous and the most controversial images from his photographic career; his primary photographic focus was on non-Christian Filipinos—the Muslims of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago and various animist cultural groups found throughout the islands. Worcester was especially drawn to the Igorots of northern Luzon, both for their reputations as headhunting savages and for their physical characteristics. In a 1913 article in National Geographic Magazine, he wrote that the Igorots “are a robust and vigorous people . . . strongly muscled. . . . Many of them have beautiful eyes. . . . Both men and women are splendidly developed. I myself consider them physically superior to any other Philippine tribe except the Kalingas.”21 Such rhapsodic descriptions are common in Worcester’s writings, and he would return to the Igorot region throughout his career to photograph the people, their homes, and their daily activities.

Like many anthropologists, sociologists, and criminologists working in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Worcester used his photographs to reveal “essential facts” about race and culture as they were inscribed on the bodies of individuals in the form of hair texture, physical stature, bodily adornments, and so on. To this end, he frequently decontextualized his subjects by having them remove their clothing or having them stand in front of white backdrops so as to isolate them from their surroundings, thereby directing the viewers’ gaze to the physical characteristics of the subjects. Other times, he photographed himself alongside his subjects, using his own body as a standard against which to compare his subjects’ size, skin color, and clothing.

The largest collection of original Worcester negatives, numbering in the thousands, can be found at the University of Michigan’s Museum of Anthropology (UMMA). This collection includes the negatives for the Igorot sequence, along with other photographs of the same subject. Handwritten notes from the original negative sleeves, later transcribed onto the mount boards for
prints made from the negatives, date all three photographs in the sequence to 1901. This, of course, immediately disrupts Worcester’s assertion that the photographs were taken in three different years.

In addition, the original description of the third photograph reads “Bontoc Igorot Man, type 5. After a year in jail. 1/2 length profile. Bontoc, Bontoc. ’01.” It is important to note here that the photograph shows the subject after spending a year in jail, not after spending two years in the constabulary. Both the constabulary and the penal system were instruments of colonial authority and control and were used to impose U.S.-style discipline on Filipinos. Moreover, it would not be surprising if some constabulary soldiers had their first exposure to U.S. martial order in jail, becoming collaborators of U.S. officials upon their release from jail. Nevertheless, the function of jails is different from the function of military barracks, and the sequence likely would have been seen in a different light by Worcester’s viewers if they knew the subject of the sequence was a released (and potentially recidivist) criminal rather than a police officer gradually gaining authority and power along with civilization. The exact circumstances surrounding the change from “jail” to “Constabulary” are unclear, but by the time of his 1910 report, Worcester found it useful not to mention that the subject had been in jail.

New details from the UMMA archive help both to situate the first two photographs in alternate contexts to their public performances and to remove the veil of anonymity from the man they depict. A diary kept by Worcester in the first half of 1901 reveals the specific circumstances of how and when the first two photographs came into being. On February 6, 1901, Worcester tells about a delegation of Igorots who had traveled from Bontoc to Manila to see the city and to meet with Worcester and other members of the Philippine Commission to air their grievances about political and economic corruption taking place in Bontoc Province. Worcester writes: “Name of the old fellow who headed the party (who had been to Spain for the former Exposition), Don Francisco Muro.” In this, and in subsequent entries in Worcester’s diary, Muro comes across as a respected and politically savvy Bontoc elder who had traveled to Europe and who knew how to seek redress for the problems in Bontoc. This is a far cry from being simply a “head-hunting savage” as Worcester called him in the 1910 report, or an inexperienced recruit into the constabulary, as Chamberlin would have had his readers believe. The Spanish honorific “Don” suggests the level of esteem in which he was held. Accompanying Muro to Manila were four other Bontoc men, including Antonio Sevilla, who later traveled to St. Louis as the leader of the Igorots at the 1904 World’s Fair, and Truman K. Hunt, a gold prospector living in Bontoc, who
served as the lieutenant governor of Bontoc Province from 1902 to 1903 and as the manager of the Igorot Village at the 1904 World’s Fair.

When he wrote that Muro “had been to Spain,” Worcester likely was referring to the 1887 Exposition of the Philippines, in which eight Igorots, in addition to some thirty other members of indigenous minorities in the Philippines, were brought to Spain to illustrate “Philippine backwardness,” much to the dismay of many educated, Hispanicized Filipinos. Kramer notes that the exhibition of Igorots at the 1904 World’s Fair drew comparisons with the Madrid Exposition, particularly among Filipino critics: “Just like the Spaniards they had displaced, the Americans were using the islands’ non-Christian peoples to cynically misrepresent Filipinos on the whole as savages requiring indefinite colonial rule.” Kramer also points out the misleading representation of Igorots in 1887, quoting one observer of the exposition: “The Igorots are neither savage nor irrational, as an historian of those provinces told us. They were ‘susceptible to modern civilization,’ some being ‘somewhat enlightened’ and others ‘of notable intelligence,’ such as the party’s leader, who ‘speaks Spanish correctly, has a vast knowledge of geography and commerce, [and] knows Latin, Ilocano, and other dialects.’”

Revealing these elements of Muro’s past—that he may have spent time in jail, that he had traveled to Spain and may have spoken Spanish, his Spanish name, and the political astuteness that led him to seek out Worcester on the behalf of his people—would have disrupted the simple transformation that Worcester and Chamberlin wanted their readers to see. As Balce suggests, the power of the Igorot sequence resides in the apparent transparency about what is going on in these three photographs: an anonymous “head-hunting savage,” a metonym for all his kind visibly rises out of his primitive nature, pulls on clothes, and becomes a civilized man that Americans could be proud of. Complexity interferes with propaganda, and the Igorot sequence was constructed as propaganda for the apologists of American imperialism in the Philippines.

In addition to his Spanish name, other evidence within the photographs suggests that Muro had adopted some Western customs, further disrupting any reading of him as a symbol of primitive backwardness. Although U.S. viewers in the early twentieth century may well have read the clean-shaven face in the third image of the sequence as an indication of the success of civilizing the Igorots, the mustache seen in the first two photographs of the sequence was not the norm for the Bontocs. Very few mustaches are seen on men in any of the other photographs of Bontocs in the UMMA collection, and a 1905 anthropological study of the Bontocs notes: “The scanty growth of hair on
the face of the Bontoc man is pulled out. A small pebble and the thumb nail or the blade of the battle-ax and the bulb of the thumb are frequently used as forceps; they never cut the hair of the face.”28 The fact that Muro both grew his mustache and apparently trimmed and groomed it suggests that he had already become somewhat acculturated to Western bodily aesthetics before his encounter with Worcester that February.

On the morning of February 6, Worcester arranged for the Bontoc delegation “to meet the Commission informally” before a more official meeting with his fellow commissioners the next day.

Took the Igorrotes home, fed them up and photographed them. The tattoo marks barely visible in best negatives and quite invisible in the prints when negatives are made without ray filter. Experimented with rapid plates, wide-open diaphragm and with ray filter and got results sufficient to convince me that the tattooing can be photographed in this way. Gave nine second exposure with wide-open diaphragm and still had under-exposure, using ray filter, when one-half second with the same plates and 32 diaphragm was ample time without ray filter.29

This entry makes clear that Worcester was a skilled photographer who knew how to manipulate his materials and subjects to achieve desired results. Moreover, the entry is important for its mention of what is not seen in either the first photograph of the Igorot sequence or the photo shown in figure 2: tattoos.

A frontal portrait of Muro, taken during the same sitting as the first photograph in the Igorot sequence, the photo in figure 2 is cataloged sequentially with it in the UMMA archive. Given Worcester’s difficulties in capturing tattoos in his first attempt at photographing the Bontocs, Muro’s tattoos may not have been recorded in the first photograph. On the other hand, Muro may simply not have had tattoos, a possibility supported by the fact that Worcester eventually was able to create negatives and prints that showed tattoos when they were present. In fact, tattoos are visible in most of the UMMA photographs of the members of the Bontoc delegation, all five of whom were photographed on February 6, standing, sitting, in profile, or looking straight into the camera. In some of the photographs, piles of clothing can be seen at the edge of the frame, a detail that is particularly revealing. The Bontoc men had traveled to Manila clothed, aware of, and respecting Western conventions of attire while on their political mission.

Figure 2.
On February 7, Worcester wrote: “Made one print from each negative before breakfast in order to show them to the Igorotes.” Later that morning, Worcester met with the other commissioners “in regard to matters in Bontoc and Lepanto.” Then: “Spent most of the afternoon getting pictures with an extremely trying light, which changed constantly. Finally succeeded in getting some especially fine negatives, which I developed as I went along.” Presumably, those pictures were additional photographs of the Igorots. The entry for February 8 reads: “Made prints of negatives before breakfast, so as to give them to the Igorotes, who were much pleased with them.” Later that afternoon, Worcester “made memorandum as to selling of Government property by the ex-Presidente of Bontoc and gave the Igorotes all canes and Francisco an army blanket. Brought them all down to the Ayuntamiento [city hall], where I got from Branagan twenty-five dollars gold to turn over to Hunt for the purchase of arms and other products of the Igorotes.” Having completed their business in Manila, Muro and his companions returned to Bontoc.

Muro encountered Worcester again in June 1901, and it is almost certain that the second photo in the Igorot sequence was made during this meeting. On June 6, Worcester embarked on a trip from Manila to northern Luzon, what Worcester referred to in his diary as the “Igorrote trip.” Worcester’s June 11 entry notes that a group of Igorot men had met their party to carry Worcester’s photography supplies—cameras, negative plates, and so on. On June 17, while in the Benguet region, “the forenoon was spent in looking about the Agno valley . . . seeing how the Igorotes live in this town, in photographing them, their houses, their methods of cultivation, the town, the valley, etc.” Worcester next traveled from Benguet to Lepanto, where he met with local Igorot leaders to discuss the possibility of forming a provincial government in the area. He noted that “most of the Igorrote headmen had coats of white or blue or other color (frequently a khaki coat they had got off a soldier) and some of them also wore trousers of remarkable patterns.”

Worcester intended to continue on to Bontoc, but pressing government matters forced a change of plans and he had to return to Manila. Before he did, he met with Muro, who had traveled to Lepanto to escort Worcester to Bontoc. “Dr. Hunt,” reads Worcester’s diary entry for June 21, had brought with him from Bontoc the day before the Igorrote Francisco and the President of Bontoc, the former having been one of the Bontoc Igorotes who visited Manila last February. They had come to escort the Commissioners back to their country, where the people were all being assembled and headmen had proclaimed a holiday. Francisco had on a full rig of cloths—white coat, trousers made out of a pair of miner’s Alaska drawers, army leggings and American shoes.
His entry goes on to note Muro’s disappointment at the change of plans. In his 1914 book *The Philippines Past and Present*, Worcester also briefly mentions this episode, this time aggrandizing his own importance for his readers: “At Cervantes we were met by a delegation of Bontoc Igorots, who begged us to visit their country, and we were just preparing to do so when we received a telegram recalling us to Manila to present at the inauguration of Mr. Taft as civil governor.” In sharp contrast, his diary reveals that Worcester had every intention of traveling to Bontoc, not that the Bontocs “begged” him to grace them with his presence.

Although the diary does not specifically mention photographing Muro while in Cervantes, later entries written when Worcester returned to Manila record the developing of negatives and the making of prints from exposures made during his trip. Moreover, the description of Muro’s clothing in the June 21 diary entry matches both the clothing seen in the middle image of the Igorot sequence and the clothing seen in figure 3, a frontal portrait of Muro made at the same sitting. In addition, information from the negative sleeves in the UMMA archive for both images notes that the photographs were made in 1901 in Cervantes. Viewed in the context both of Worcester’s other meeting with Igorot leaders who wore jackets and trousers and of the clothing seen in the photographs taken in February 1901, the clothing Muro wears in the second photograph of the Igorot sequence clearly had nothing to do with the constabulary and was only incidentally connected to his having come into contact with Americans. Worcester’s photographs and diary entries reveal that many Igorots, including Muro, owned Western-style clothes and wore them when the situation warranted it. Thus, although the Igorot sequence asks viewers to see the clothing as evidence of the civilizing effects of the U.S. presence, it is more accurate to say that Muro is unclothed in the first photograph at the behest of Worcester. Which is to say, Worcester himself created the “savage body” of the first photograph in the sequence and later contrasted it with the “civilized body” seen in the other photographs of the sequence.

There can be little doubt that the first two photographs in the sequence are of Don Francisco Muro, that both photographs were taken in 1901, and that the second photograph has nothing to do with Muro serving in the constabulary. It is important also to stress that Muro was an active agent in the making of the first two photographs. Had Muro not initiated their first meeting in February 1901 and not traveled to meet Worcester in June of that year, Worcester would not have been able to construct the Igorot sequence in later years. Beyond these facts, things become more problematic, particularly in regard to the identity of the individual in the third photograph of the
sequence. Worcester and Chamberlin would have us believe that the third photograph also shows Muro, but if the captions supplied by both authors were fabrications, and if Worcester intentionally misled his viewers in the making of the first two photographs, then it is also possible the assertion that the third photograph shows the same man is also a fabrication.

Close analysis of the third photograph is inconclusive as to the identity of its subject. To be sure, the man depicted bears some resemblance to Muro. On the other hand, he also appears more youthful (recall that Worcester’s diary entry of February 6, 1901, called Muro an “old fellow”) and certain details easily seen in the first two photographs—lines by his eye, a small scar on his upper cheek—are not visible in the third photograph. Although the vagaries of lighting and camera angle may account for these differences and the photograph may, in fact, show Muro, it is also possible that Worcester selected a photograph of a similar-looking individual in order to complete his visual argument about the benefits of American colonialism in the Philippines. With the third photograph, a story of transformation could easily be read into the images. Without it, the transformation is incomplete.

In addition to discrepancies in key details between the first two and third photographs, the attribution of the third photograph in the UMMA archive also raises questions about the identity of its subject. As with the other two photographs, the original negative sleeve stated that the third photograph was taken in 1901 in Bontoc. But Worcester did not travel to Bontoc until 1903, although, following his aborted June 1901 trip to Benguet and Lepanto, he did travel north again, by sea: “In August, 1901, the commission sailed on a tour of the remaining northern provinces . . . and establish[ed] a government in each.” Moreover, none of his other Bontoc photographs in the UMMA collection is dated before 1903.

Given these facts, the origin of the third photograph is unclear. Perhaps it is actually a photograph of a Bontoc constabulary soldier taken in 1903. His uniform matches those worn by constabulary soldiers in other photographs taken in that year. Figures 4 and 5 show photos of a Bontoc member of the constabulary taken by Worcester in 1903 with the captions as they appear in the UMMA archive. These photographs reveal that, several years before the Igorot sequence was published, Worcester was interested in creating before-and-after sequences showing—at the very minimum—the sartorial transformation of Igorots when they put on their constabulary uniforms. The
photos were part of a sequence that also shows groups of Bontoc Igorots in constabulary uniforms and in traditional clothing, what Worcester termed “warriors of the new school” and “warriors of the old school.” It is altogether plausible that the third photograph of the Igorot sequence was taken at the same time. Significantly, the photos in this 1903 series do not attempt to argue that, by joining the constabulary, Igorots have become more civilized. Viewers can readily see that the postures are the same in both the “old school” and the “new school” photographs, and the individual seen in figures 4 and 5 presumably has the same haircut in both photographs, though the hat hides his long bangs in the second. Such photos, then, would not have been very effective in arguing for the civilizing effects of the constabulary. After all, these constabulary soldiers could—and likely did—take off their uniforms as easily as they put them on.

Given the evidence that Muro was a respected Bontoc leader with a long history of interactions with Western imperial powers, it seems reasonable that he might have joined the constabulary to adjust his leadership to new political realities, one of his final acts as a Bontoc leader. Whatever reasons Muro may have had for doing so were not recorded by Worcester, who had other stories to tell, stories embedded in political debates about the future of the United States in the Philippines. What mattered to Worcester and Chamberlin was that their viewers believed that the sequence was a coherent visual representation of one man’s transformation under the guidance of U.S. colonial authority. As long as they believed that all three photographs were of the same person, and as long as they accepted what the captions told them, the sequence could effectively convey the message Worcester intended.

According to Rodney Sullivan, Worcester’s 1910 report, the first known publication of the Igorot sequence, was “one of the most divisive and impolitic public documents in the history of colonial administration.” Although it included the activities of various bureaus within the Department of Interior, at its heart, the report was an appeal to the Taft administration not to hand over control of the Philippine tribal regions to the Philippine Assembly, which had been established in 1907. This appeal appeared in two sections of the report: “Work for the Non-Christian Tribes” and “Control of the Non-Christian Tribes,” the second of which began: “The demand of certain persons that the Filipinos, by which term I mean to designate the civilized and Christianized native inhabitants of those islands, be given control of the non-Christian
tribes has been made so publicly and so persistently as practically to force its consideration at this time.” “At the outset,” Worcester went on, “it should be clearly understood that the question involved is not one of the fitness of the Filipinos to govern themselves, but is one of their ability and fitness to dominate, justly control, and wisely guide along the pathway of civilization alien peoples, some of whom are warlike.”

This quote vividly illustrates a central thesis of Schmidt’s: “Jim Crow colonial policies stressed the strategic use of both violence and other forms of punishment and narratives of patient nurturing that presented U.S. goals as being altruistic and innocent as well as pragmatic.” Framing these policies in terms of Progressivist arguments in favor of U.S. colonial rule in the Philippines, Schmidt writes: “One way to think of Progressivism was as a discourse of social engineering helping different groups progress at different rates determined by their inner destiny.” In his 1910 report, Worcester clearly revealed his bifurcated view of the Philippines, with “non-Christian” Filipinos in need of stronger, steadier (i.e., U.S.) control than what the Christian Filipinos could provide in order to help them become civilized. According to Worcester, ongoing U.S. control of the non-Christian tribes was an act of benevolence.

Immediately following the above passage, a series of photographs showed the current conditions of life in the Igorot region. Worcester drew from his extensive archive of photographs to create a visual argument for the positive effects of U.S. colonial authority. In this context, the images from the Igorot sequence—taken almost a decade earlier—were repackaged and printed as though part of a deliberate bureaucratic practice of photographing recruits as they appeared first when they joined the constabulary and then after the constabulary worked its transformative magic on them. Muro, whom Worcester singled out nine years earlier as the acknowledged leader of a political delegation from Bontoc to Manila, was reduced to the role of an example—a nameless “savage” who needed the “uplift” Americans could provide and who should not be left to the Filipinos.

The Igorot sequence was not presented in isolation in the 1910 report, nor was it even highlighted. The report’s first photograph showed two Benguet Igorot girls weaving on a loom. The second photograph showed a group of Bontoc Igorot constabulary soldiers standing in formation. It was followed

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Figure 5. “A Bontoc Igorot Constabulary Soldier in Uniform” (1903). Reprinted with permission of University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology, Worcester Collection, 08A055.
by the Igorot sequence, printed one image per page. The report’s first series of photographs concluded with one of a new schoolhouse built in Kabayan, Benguet. Following the series, Worcester resumed his argument for why the Filipinos ought not to have control over the non-Christian tribes and why the United States should continue to administer those regions. He interspersed his writing with additional images, some of which seem intended to reveal the effects of U.S. control and others that seem intended to reveal what “typical” members of the non-Christian tribes looked like. In his discussion “Practical Results of American Rule of Non-Christians,” Worcester reported that where the U.S. colonial government was able to assert effective control, “a good state of public order has been established. Head-hunting, slavery, and piracy are now very rare. . . . In many instances the wild men are being successfully used to police their own country.”43 In this context, Worcester used the Igorot sequence as part of a larger one intended to visually demonstrate the success of the U.S. presence in civilizing non-Christian, headhunting Igorots.

Advancing the same political agenda as Worcester, Chamberlin’s book was written to impress upon readers the necessity of the United States continuing to govern the Philippines. As one reviewer observed: “Mr. Chamberlin writes in a spirit of approval of American methods and of admiration for the results of the American administration.”44 With photographs by Worcester and others, Chamberlin took his readers on a tour through the Philippines, contrasting the current situation with the one in 1898. In addition to the Igorot sequence, Chamberlin included other before-and-after photographic juxtapositions, illustrating, for example, improved sanitation and rice-threshing techniques. Bringing the Igorot sequence to a wider readership than that of Worcester’s 1910 report, Chamberlin presented it in a more cinematic format: seeing the sequence’s images on a single page over a single caption, viewers seemed to witness Muro actually pulling himself upward into a civilized posture because of the U.S. presence in the Philippines. Chamberlin also modified the caption, adapting it from Worcester’s 1910 report. Where Worcester mentions the constabulary only in the third photograph of the sequence, Chamberlin states explicitly that all three photographs show Muro in his capacity as a constabulary recruit. They immediately follow his discussion about the role of the constabulary: “The establishment of the Philippine Constabulary has been one of the most potent innovations of our work out there. . . . Next to baseball, many are inclined to believe that the constabulary is the most active single civilizing agent in our administration.”45

Although his book received favorable reviews, Chamberlin did not have as large an impact as Worcester did on U.S. ideas and attitudes about the
Philippines. In addition to publishing his photographs in official reports, Worcester used them in a variety of other venues, including his 1914 book, *The Philippines, Past and Present*, magazine and journal articles, and public lectures, as well as in congressional testimony given after retiring as secretary of the interior in 1913. Even then, Worcester’s burgeoning commercial interests compelled him to continue pushing for U.S. control in the Philippines, to provide stability and open access to resources and markets. To that end, he embarked on a lecture tour through the United States from late 1913 to 1915 under the auspices of the Philippine Lyceum Bureau.

Worcester cloaked his commercial interests in the same rhetoric of racial uplift that colored his government reports. In a 1913 letter to M. Douglas Flattery, he described the goal of his lecture series: “I want to get to the people who really count and try so to influence public sentiment that it will not be possible for the succeeding administration to drop the work for the non-Christian tribes which has already attained so large a degree of success.” He began his tour with two lectures in New York’s Carnegie Hall, “Wild Tribes of the Philippines,” on December 30, 1913, and “The Picturesque Philippines,” on January 6, 1914. According to the *New York Times*, both lectures were to be “illustrated with lantern pictures from photographs taken by the lecturer in his extended official tours and founded on the closest observation of the people of varied races and ethical ideals whose relations with us are now so generally discussed.”

“A brilliant audience listened to the [first] lecture,” enthused the *Times* reviewer, “which was illustrated by some of the most wonderful moving pictures ever seen in New York. Each picture told a story of the marvelous progress made by Americans in teaching civilization to the savage tribes of the Philippines. . . . The savage, naked, dirty, and unkempt, was shown in still photographs, while that same one-time savage, clothed, intelligent in appearance, and clean, later was shown in moving pictures.” The *New York World* presented a similarly glowing review: “Motion pictures showed the head hunters during the earlier days of American occupation and as they are now. The one portrayed life in its most savage form . . . the other showed a transformation almost unbelievable, uniformed soldiery maneuvering with precision.” Although neither of these reviews specifically mentioned the Igorot sequence, it neatly summed up the message Worcester was promoting to his audiences: “We have set the feet of these backward wards of the United States firmly on the road that leads onward and upward, and they are traveling it much faster than are their Filipino neighbors.”
On December 30, 1914, Worcester brought his lecture to Capitol Hill, appearing before the U.S. Senate's Committee on the Philippines to testify against Philippine independence. Nebraska Senator Gilbert Hitchcock introduced him: “Dr. Worcester offered to bring his lantern slides and illustrate his lecture. His offer was accepted; and he will now proceed to make his statement in a continuous form, probably without interruptions of any sort . . . and he will illustrate what he has to say by views taken in the Philippine Islands.”

Many of the slides that Worcester used in his testimony were before-and-after sequences that showed improvements in housing, roads, health care, and so on. He also showed the 1903 photographs of “warriors of the old school” and “warriors of the new school”: “There [indicating a row of armed savages] is the old fighting line, which was always out on mischief except when it was necessary to work in the field. And that [indicating a company of Bontoc soldiers] is the one which has replaced it. We have never had a case of disloyalty or disobedience to orders among those soldiers.” Worcester failed to tell his viewers that the photographs showed some of the same individuals. Just before these two slides, he showed the Igorot sequence to the committee to demonstrate the success of the constabulary for transforming Igorot warriors into efficient, loyal, Americanized soldiers:

I will show you the evolution of the first Bontoc soldier who ever enlisted. It was difficult to get them, at the beginning, to join the constabulary, because the old “guardia civil” had perpetrated many abuses. This man is a chief named “Francisco,” dressed as he was when I first saw him [indicating]. This slide shows how he looked a year later, after he had been in contact with the Americans [indicating]. He was the first man who enlisted in the hills, and this is the way he looked after one more year. In other words, in the short space of two years, having been under discipline one year, he changed from a long-haired savage to the very efficient sergeant of infantry whom you see on the screen.

In effect, Worcester was asking the committee to accept that his slides actually showed what he said they showed, and that the change in appearance should be read as a change in attitudes, beliefs, and culture. Although some members of the committee likely were skeptical, no one challenged him on what the slides revealed.

Worcester’s testimony before the Senate was punctuated with laughter and applause, but not everyone bought into his message. As noted above, James Blount criticized Worcester’s use of photographs to “humbug” his audiences and readers. Worcester was just as aware as Blount about the impact his photographs had on political debates surrounding the Philippines, and he repeatedly used his position of authority and his abundant collection of
photographs to sway U.S. public opinion. Moreover, he had few qualms about reframing photographs for different audiences. From 1911 to 1913, Worcester published four articles in *National Geographic*. Two of these articles, “Head-Hunters of Northern Luzon,” published in 1912, and “The Non-Christian Peoples of the Philippine Islands,” published in 1913, filled entire issues of the magazine. Heavily illustrated with photographs from his collection, such articles were “intended to manipulate public opinion in favor of indefinite retention of the colony.”

In these articles, Worcester recycled photographs from other publications to persuade U.S. readers that the Philippines still desperately needed the guiding hand of the United States to continue up the path of social and cultural evolution. Take, for example, the photographs in figure 6. In 1906, Worcester published the left-hand photograph in an article in the *Philippine Journal of Science*, a professional, scholarly journal read by scientists working on topics pertaining to Southeast Asia. Included in his wide-ranging discussion “The Non-Christian Tribes of Northern Luzon,” the photograph appeared as part of a series that showed different kinds of ornamentation commonly worn by Ilongot and Kalinga women. The caption read: “Ilongot woman of Dumabato, Isabela, showing physical characteristics and typical ornaments. Note especially the shell girdle, the heavy wire ornament on the left forearm, and the fine, braided rattan cord about the neck.” Although this caption, and the photograph itself, can justly be criticized as another example of the objectification typical of ethnographic photography from that era, Worcester does not specifically ask readers to view the woman disparagingly.

Worcester’s use of this photograph changed markedly in his 1913 *National Geographic* article, where it was transformed into the “before” image of a before-and-after sequence titled “The Effect of a Little Schooling.” Here the caption reads: “The picture to the left shows a typical Ilongot girl as we found her. The picture to the right shows an Ilongot girl who has attended school for a time.” Worcester has transformed the identity of the subject from “woman” to “girl” to emphasize that unschooled Ilongots (and, by extension, all non-Christian minorities in the Philippines) were childlike savages. Although Worcester does not explicitly state that the photographs show the same individual, casual readers might assume that they do. At a minimum, readers were confronted with a stark contrast between the two women. The juxtaposition works through posture and clothing, with the “before” image showing the woman bare-breasted and slightly hunched, her arm held awkwardly in front of her, her face cast down as she rolls her eyes up to look at the camera. The “after” photograph shows another young woman standing erect,
fully clothed, her arms held straight down at her sides. She appears both self-confident and modest, the implied result of enrolling in a school established by the U.S. colonial government.

In sequences such as those of the Ilongot girl and Muro, Worcester helped promote the idea that a strong U.S. hand was necessary for the racial uplift of Filipinos, that indigenous groups had the potential to become civilized, but at a rate slower than lowland Filipinos. In addition to the criticisms voiced by Blount and other U.S. anti-imperialists, these photographs sparked outrage in the Philippines. In 1914, Manuel Quezon, then serving as one of the Philippine Assembly’s two resident commis-
sioners to Congress, derided the imperialist ideological message of Worcester’s photographs with heavy sarcasm: “Behold the ‘moving’ and ‘nonmoving’ pictures of naked natives armed with bows and arrows and spears. It would be a pity to see this people adrift. The Government of the United States alone can civilize them, and it must, for the sake of humanity, undertake and carry to its successful termination this altruistic work.”

That same year, Quezon’s allies in the Philippine Assembly “passed a bill outlawing the taking, exhibiting, or possession of photographs of ‘naked’ Filipinos. . . . Such pictures, it was argued, ‘tended to make it appear that the Filipinos were inhabited by people in the nude.’” This effort on the part of the assembly was an understandable reaction against the perpetuation of stereotypes about Filipinos. In a vivid illustration of Balce’s arguments about the symbolic power of unclothed native bodies, Filipino political elites wanted to put a stop to the circulation of such images in order to advance an alternative vision of Filipinos as educated and properly clothed—hence, civilized.

In his 1914 testimony before the Senate, Worcester spoke about what the banning of such photographs would mean: “We have twice had bills passed by the lower house intended to make it a criminal offense for any person to take a photograph of those fellows up in the hills. The Filipinos want to conceal the very fact of the existence of such people. [T]here has been agitation in favor of the destruction of the whole series of Government negatives showing the customs of the non-Christian people, the conditions which we found among them and the conditions which prevail today.” The committee members expressed their shock that such an effort was afoot, but Worcester assured them that it was true and that it was “a perfectly natural attitude on [the Filipinos’] part.” He was determined to use his lecture tour and publications to keep his photographic vision of the Philippines in the public eye. Worcester’s later decision to donate his negatives to the American Museum of Natural History (they were later transferred to the University of Michigan) underscores his desire to make sure that his photographs and, through them, his vision of the Philippines would be preserved.

By 1914, the Igorot sequence’s first set of public performances was nearing an end. The passage of the Jones Act in 1916 gave legislative control of the Philippines to the Philippine Assembly and the newly created Philippine Senate, which replaced the Philippine Commission, although “jurisdiction over non-Christians was not handed over to the new bicameral Philippine legislature but was retained by the American governor-general,” a reflection of the persistence of the Progressivist ideology that different groups would become civilized at different rates. By the time the Jones Act was signed,
Worcester had returned to the Philippines, settling in Cebu, where he prospered in business until his death in 1924.

Worcester’s influence on U.S. thinking about the Philippines continued well beyond his death. Through much of the twentieth century, photographs initially published in *National Geographic* and other magazines, as well as in his books and government reports, were recycled and reprinted in new publications that reiterated Worcester’s vision of the Philippines while moving further and further from their original contexts. These contexts—the circumstances under which the photographs were made, the individuals involved, and the motivations for making them—are critical for understanding the U.S. imperial vision of the Philippines. What Worcester withheld, and what recent scholars have only partly recognized, is the degree of fabrication in his photographs of the Philippines. In the case of the Igorot sequence, these include lies both of omission (failing to name the photographs’ subjects) and of commission (fabricating the narrative implied by the sequence).

Rafael says that one of the most problematic aspects of photography is “its ability to provide an alibi of objectivity so that a photograph seems only to record what is in front of it while masking intentions, concealing selections, and rendering invisible the various frames that determine what is seen, how it is seen, and by whom.”61 Once made invisible, the contours of those frames are difficult if not impossible to reveal. By returning to the archives and tracing colonial photographs as close as possible to their original moments of creation—the encounter between photographer and subject—historians can disrupt the aura of objectivity those photographs take on in their public performances. At the same time, they can help restore the voices of colonial subjects like Don Francisco Muro, men and women who, for too long, have been seen only as examples, not as individuals.

**Notes**

9. Although I have not seen evidence of any publication of the Igorot sequence prior to 1910, the sequence itself was organized by 1905 and may have been exhibited at the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair.
10. Frederick Chamberlin, The Philippine Problem, 1898–1913 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1913), opposite page 160. In Chamberlin’s book, the left and right sides of the photographs are slightly cropped in order to fit all three onto a single page.
12. Ibid., 106.
15. Because Breitbart and Wexler each reproduced the Igorot sequence from the National Archives, where the folder in which the sequence is filed directly follows a folder of photos of Igorots at the St. Louis World’s Fair, they may each have believed that the photos in both folders showed Igorots at the fair.
17. Ibid., 84.
22. Photograph 8-a-29, Dean C. Worcester Collection, University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology.
23. At the time, Bontoc was a province, later a subprovince of Lepanto-Bontoc. It is currently a municipality in Mountain Province.
27. Ibid., 72.
30. Ibid., 107.
31. Ibid., 108.
32. Ibid., 416.
33. Ibid., 451.
34. Ibid., 462.
35. Ibid., 466.
37. Ibid., 282.
38. In an index included in the Ayer Collection of Philippine Photographs at the Newberry Library, Worcester notes that by 1905 Muro had “retired from public life.” Index to Philippine Photographs, vol. 2, 184.
41. Schmidt, Sitting in Darkness, 110.
42. Ibid., 118.
45. Chamberlin, The Philippine Problem, 159.
46. Ibid., 368.
51. Worcester, as quoted in “Calls Wild Men.”
52. Senator Gilbert Hitchcock, as quoted in Senate Committee on the Philippines, Hearings on H.R. 18459, 63rd Cong., 3rd sess., 1914, 269.
53. Ibid., 292.
54. Sullivan, Exemplar of Americanism, 156.
57. Manuel Quezon, as quoted in Sullivan, Exemplar of Americanism, 156.
59. Worcester, as quoted in Senate Hearings, 350.