

[ZOO]MING IN: REPRESENTATION AND RESISTANCE
AN ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF AETAS IN ZOOBIC SAFARI AND
BUHAY AETA

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Camille spent six years in university and doesn't regret a minute of it. Her passion for writing was excruciatingly challenged in the creation of this study, but her thirst for learning will never be quenched.

She is relentlessly frustrated about the state of her motherland, but firmly believes that once its people become unafraid of change, they can transform the nation.

She finds inspiration in books and music, and often gets lost in them. She smugly thinks of herself as the epitome of a Scorpio.

When she's not busy dreaming, she dances.

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 my brother Aetas,
 my alma mater,
 my beloved country

 For you.

ABSTRACT

HIMALA, A.C. (2012). *[Zoo]ming In: An Analysis of the Representation of Aetas in Zoobic Safari and Buhay Aeta*. Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis, University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication.

This study seeks to analyze the representation of Aetas in two texts: their performance in Zoobic Safari as a product of negotiation and means of resistance, and in *Buhay Aeta*, a television documentary that continues to exoticize indigenous culture.

It is guided by the postcolonial notions of Edward Said's Orientalism, particularly the concepts of othering and exoticization, as well as a discussion by Rey Chow about resistance within postcolonial discourse. This study primarily employs textual analysis, along with ethnography as a secondary method, in order to examine the representation of Aetas in Zoobic.

This thesis provides a background of Zoobic Safari and the Aeta program it exhibits. It traces how indigenous identity has been represented in the context of our colonial past. This maps out the tradition of indigenous identity we inherited from our colonial experience. It then analyzes the representation of Aetas in Zoobic, and explains how their performance is a means of resistance against oppression. This study then looks into *Buhay Aeta*, a broadcast text, and explores the exoticized representation of indigenous identity within the show. Finally, it aims to provide a criticism of how the broadcast industry manufactures truth claims about our indigenous people.

Keywords: Aeta, Zoobic Safari, *Buhay Aeta*, indigenous identity, representation, resistance

ABSTRAKT

HIMALA, A.C. (2012). *[Zoo]mng In: An Analysis of the Representation of Aetas in Zoobic Safari and Buhay Aeta*. Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis, University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication.

Sinusuri ng pag-aaral na ito ang representasyon ng mga Aeta sa dalawang teksto: ang kanilang palabas sa Zoobic Safari bilang produkto ng negosasyon ng identidad at pamamaraan ng pagtutol, at ang *Buhay Aeta*, isang dokumentaryong tuluyang nagpapakita ng exoticization ng katutubong identidad.

Ang konsepto ng othering at exoticization ayon sa Orientalism ni Edward Said ay sentral na gabay sa pag-aaral na ito. Sumasangguni rin ito sa postcolonial na diskurso ni Rey Chow tungkol sa pagtutol. Ginagamit ng aking pag-aaral ang metodo ng textual analysis at ethnography upang maintindihan ang representasyon ng mga Aeta sa dalawang napiling teksto.

Tinatalakay ng pag-aaral ang representasyon ng katutubong identidad sa konteksto ng ating kasaysayan, upang maipakitang ang tradisyon ng representasyon ng katutubo ay namana natin mula sa ating karanasang kolonyal. Inilalarawan nito ang representasyon ng mga Aeta sa Zoobic, at ipinahihiwatig na ito ay paraan ng pagtutol sa pang-aapi. Sinusuri rin ng aking pag-aaral ang *Buhay Aeta*, isang brodcast text, at ipakikita ang mapang-aping representasyon ng katutubong identidad sa programang ito.

Sa kabuuan, nais kong magbigay ng kritisismo sa industriya ng brodcast sa kanilang paglikha ng mapanlait na ‘truth’ claims tungkol sa katutubong identidad.

Keywords: Aeta, Zoobic Safari, *Buhay Aeta*, katutubong identidad, representasyon, pagtutol

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CHAPTER I

INQUIRING INDIGENOUS IDENTITY: REPRESENTING AETAS

This study seeks to analyze the representation of Aetas in two texts: their performance in Zoobic Safari as a product of negotiation and means of resistance, and in *Buhay Aeta*, a television documentary that continues to exoticize indigenous culture.

Zoobic Safari is one of several existing parks owned by the Philippines' leading theme park operator, the Zoomanity Group. This organization is part of the Yupangco Group of Companies, a conglomerate of various industries ranging from furniture to insurance to travel and leisure. Zoomanity Group aims to turn the country into "one green theme park" based on visions of conservation, education, and excitement (Requintina, 2010). The theme park developer believes that the Philippine tourism industry can grow extensively as a destination for park centers, in a tourism environment currently dominated by our neighboring countries. Zoomanity President Robert Yupangco states that our country is presently dominated by malls and lacking in parks (Castro, 2010). He aspires to change this deficiency by building parks that will improve tourist arrivals in the Philippines, as well as educate the public on biodiversity (Castro, 2010; Requintina, 2010).

Zoomanity Group has several ventures lined up in other provinces, while their existing theme parks are located in Metro Manila and its regional peripheries. These include Zoocology Bone and Skin Museum (Manila Ocean Park), Animal Wonderland (Star City), Zoori's Adventure (Enchanted Kingdom), Paradizoo (Tagaytay), and Zoocobia Fun Zoo (Clark). The theme parks are driven by Zoomanity's goal to promote wildlife and ecotourism in the country, and combine tourist entertainment with animal welfare, preservation, and education (Zoomanity, 2010; Castro, 2010).

This thesis zeroes in on the Zoobic Safari, located at the heart of the Subic Bay Freeport Zone in Subic, Zambales. Zoobic offers its visitors a variety of attractions for entertainment and educational purposes. It boasts of the only *Tiger Safari* in the

Philippines, a semi-natural habitat where full-sized Siberian tigers roam and frolic. The *Zoobic Park* is a special petting zoo where visitors can interact and observe animals, some of which can roam freely around the park. Meanwhile, wild ostriches, potbelly pigs, and wild boars run around the *Savannah*, where tourists can observe them in their own vehicles, or on trams provided by the Zoo. *Rodent World* gives the visitors an idea of how many different kinds of rodents actually exist, while snakes, lizards, and other cold-blooded creatures are available for viewing at the dark and dank *Serpentarium*. In *Croco Loco*, tourists can walk over a steel-grated bridge, beneath which dwell more than 200 crocodiles. Each tour concludes with the Animal Show, where various animals parade and flaunt their exotic beauty (Zoobic Safari, 2009).

The opening act in the Animal Show in the day safari is a performance by the Aetas, who perform their cultural dance. Wearing the *bahag* or loincloth and a headdress as their native costume, the Aetas showcase samples of their traditional dances while a voiceover narrates the meaning of each dance. In Zoobic's night safari, the Aetas present a different performance altogether. They exhibit their skills in poi dancing and fire breathing to the surprise and astonishment of the audience.

Zoobic says it contributes to the local community by supporting the indigenous Aetas in the area and employing them in the park. Apart from their cultural performance, the Aetas also help in taking care of and tending to the animals. The park believes that Aetas are the most in tune with nature; therefore, they are able to work more closely with the animals. The Aetas are also given other tasks related to the maintenance of the park, as well as the accommodation of the tourists.

I explore how the representation of Aetas in Zoobic transpires within the frame of colonialism; where indigenous discourse is still perceived as representations of the universal primitive mind, where the construction of third world is still contributed to or supplied by the first world (Del Rosario, 2003). Exoticizing the Aetas – that is, representing them as different by means of distancing them and casting them out as

foreign – implies objectifying them; making them things, not people. I will explore the nature of these representations of the Aetas in Zoobic Safari.

This thesis also adheres to the notion that the construction of representations involves the negotiation of identity. This produces and reproduces relations of power as well as resistance. In this case, the Aetas in Zoobic negotiate a market-mediated identity in their performances. They incorporate only certain aspects of their culture and traditions in order to construct a representation of their market identity – an identity they want to sell to the audience. While the Philippines' colonial past has witnessed a long tradition of oppressive representations as regards our indigenous community, this study asserts that the Aetas in Zoobic have taken up an active role in representing themselves.

On the other hand, the broadcast industry has long been culpable for perpetuating a representation of indigenous people that demonstrates their weakness or inadequacy because of their 'backwards' or 'primitive' culture. I explore how these notions are present in a television documentary called *Buhay Aeta*, and how it solely takes upon the role of representing indigenous identity.

Thus, this paper aims to study the representation of Aetas in *Buhay Aeta*, as well as in their performance in Zoobic Safari. It looks at how their representation facilitates the negotiation of identity, as well as serves as a means of resistance.

Objectives

On the whole, my thesis aims to address the general query of how the discourses of representation and resistance construct indigenous identity. I have outlined a set of specific objectives in order to tackle this question.

First, this study aims to trace how indigenous identity has been represented in the context of our colonial past. This is important in order to show that the prejudice against our indigenous people has predecessors in Philippine colonial history. Our Spanish and American colonizers have asserted their role in understanding and representing non-west

cultures. By looking back at these representations, I hope to illustrate that remnants of this colonial tradition can still be seen in society today, but that there are also ways by which the indigenous community can resist it.

Second, I analyze the representation of Aetas in Zoobic. The Aeta performances are my primary points of analysis to illustrate the nature of their representation, and the process undertaken by the Aetas to construct it. Moreover, this will provide a context for their representation, and will explain how the performances function as a way to demonstrate the negotiations of multiple market-informed identities.

Third, this thesis evaluates *Buhay Aeta*, a local television documentary that represents an Aeta community in Zambales. It studies how this documentary propagates an oppressive view on the Aetas, and manufactures truth claims about their indigenous identity. This study compares the representation of Aetas in Zoobic with that seen in the selected broadcast text. This is significant because the representation of indigenous identity is translated into media products that we create as well as consume.

Scope and Limitations

This study of the Zoobic Safari is limited to a textual analysis of the cultural performance of the Aetas during the day safari and night safari at Zoobic, guided by Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, specifically the concept of exoticization as a process of othering, and supplemented by an excerpt from Rey Chow's postcolonial discourse. I also employ the method of ethnography in order to get to know more about the culture of Aetas within Zoobic. These methods enable me to analyze and understand the circumstances of their representation, as well as propose that there are ways by which the Aetas negotiate their identity as performers.

This study also relies on a textual analysis of the locally produced television documentary, *Buhay Aeta*. This draws a parallel between the exoticization of Aetas in Zoobic and in *Buhay Aeta*, but also illustrates the difference of these two representations by highlighting how the broadcast text serves an oppressive representation of the Aetas.

Ultimately, this study offers a criticism of representation in broadcast media that perpetuate inadequate truth claims about indigenous identity.

Theoretical Framework

My study is largely guided by postcolonial theory, specifically Edward Said's highly influential work on Orientalism (1978). Although Orientalism mainly focuses on the western representation of Arab and Islamic culture, it provides a framework of othering and exoticization that is equally applicable to other nations that have been colonized by the west. Said contends that Orientalism is founded upon exteriority or the text's surface, the principal product of which is representation. These concepts are central to my study and are discussed more thoroughly in this chapter. Said's work is regarded as an illustration of the strength of Western ideology - a cautionary remark, especially to formerly colonized peoples, against employing the dangers of cultural domination upon themselves or other people. As a supplement to Said's postcolonial discourse, Rey Chow provides a perspective on the aspect of resistance for my study.

Edward Said's Orientalism

The origins of Orientalism are closely related to the expansion of European colonialism. The Orient is not only a neighbour to Europe, but the site of its oldest and richest colonies and source of its civilization. The Orient "was almost a European invention" (Said, 1978, p. 1) and is one of the most enduring images of the Other.

Othering, or the creation of the Other, is a process of defining oneself by stigmatizing a marginalized group. It emphasizes the position of dominance of those in power by highlighting perceived weaknesses and inadequacies of the Other. Othering became a means of rationalizing the domination of one culture that assumes the responsibility of civilizing a subordinate group. As the object of the study, the Orient is customarily "passive, non-participating... above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself" (Said, 1978, p. 79). The Other is transfixed in time and place, and is not defined outside of this temporal and spatial designation.

Exoticization is a process involved in producing the Other. It entails simultaneously comparing and distancing oneself from another, identifying and stressing what makes them dissimilar. Basically, exoticization depicts the Other as categorically and intrinsically different. As the Other,

the Orient is *watched* [emphasis in original]; since its almost (but never quite) offensive behaviour issues out of a reservoir of infinite peculiarity; the European...is a watcher, never involved, always detached... The Orient becomes a living tableau of queerness (Said, 1978, p. 103).

The Other manifests an inherent sense of eccentricity, and this oddness is studied, displayed, and even enjoyed for its own sake. This is valuable to my study in demonstrating how the Aetas in Zoobic are portrayed very similarly to the peculiar and queer Orient that Said describes. As the Other, the Aetas are characterized by that which makes them different from their observer, and ultimately resulting in their exoticization.

Orientalism must be examined as a discourse in order to understand the elaborate means by which Europe was able to manage *and* produce the Orient in multiple ways – politically, ideologically, and so on. Thus, Orientalism

can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authoring views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it; in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said, 1978, p. 3).

European colonialism, then, afforded the West its power to construct notions of European superiority through the idea of Oriental backwardness. The ontological and epistemological distinction between the East and the West instituted numerous social descriptions and political accounts concerning the Orient. As the Other to its binary opposite, the Occident, the Orient helps define the West as its contrasting image, perception, and experience. To some degree, the Orient is what the Occident is not. The Orient is the weak, passive, and inferior counterpart to the aggressive, knowledgeable, and civilized Occident.

This affair of power and dominance between the Orient and the Occident has put the West in a series of relationships in which it always has the relative upper hand. At the end of the eighteenth century, a complex Orient emerged – one that was suitable for study, display, reconstruction, exhibition. Thus, there arose an Oriental world that was born out of Western construction, and almost exclusively based upon Western consciousness.

Orientalism, then, is not a mere political subject matter. “It is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different world” (Said, 1978, p. 12). Orientalism is engaged in the construction of a world separate from the norms of the West. It is born out of unbalanced exchanges of power, whether political, cultural, intellectual or moral. The colonization of the Orient equated power to the acquisition of knowledge about the Other, and consequently, the power to represent them as well.

Representation is by no means a natural depiction. In fact, representation can conceal the highly artificial enactment that produces it. Again, according to Said:

There is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a *re-presence* [emphasis in original], or a representation... And these representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects, not upon the distant and amorphous Orient (Said, 1978, pp. 21-22).

This is to say that since the Orient cannot represent itself, the West does the representing for them. What is important to note is that the commonly circulated ‘truth’ in cultural discourse is not truth in itself, but rather, a representation.

As a nation with a thick colonial history, these notions are not new to the Philippines. Our Spanish colonizers asserted their superiority over our alleged backwardness. They, as well as the Americans, adopted the role of constructing the Filipino identity vis-a-vis the Western culture of civilization. Our colonizers delineated the difference between ‘them’ and ‘us.’ Our indigenous folk were represented as barbaric, uncivilized people, befitting for study and exhibition. As such,

misrepresentation of indigenous identity is deeply rooted in our colonial experience. Thus, it is no phenomenon that these representations persist until today. The exoticization of Aetas in Zoobic illustrates the kind of indigenous representation that we uphold, even outside of our consciousness. This thesis aims to explore these representations and the conventions of power that make it possible.

Rey Chow's *Where Have All the Natives Gone?*

At this point, I wish to augment Said's discourse by drawing a parallel between the Other and Rey Chow's "native." Chow (1993) describes the native as a "symbol for the oppressed, the marginalized, the wronged" (p. 326). She proceeds to state that "the space occupied by the native in postcolonial discourses is the space of error, illusion, deception, and filth" (p. 326). This assertion is easily comparable to our previous discussion of the Other.

With this in mind, it is disconcerting for the West to see natives become 'civilized' and step out of the stereotype that frame them otherwise. The image of the native, or the Other – whether positive or negative - is still constructed through "a process in which 'our' own identity is measured in terms of the degrees to which we resemble her and to which she resembles us" (Chow, 1993, p. 329). She links this process to the act of watching, which is theoretically defined as "the primary agency of violence, an act that pierces the other, who inhabits the place of the passive victim on display" (pp. 325-326).

However, Chow also argues that this image or representation can also be the site of possible change. "In many critical discourses, the image is implicitly the place where battles are fought and strategies of resistance negotiated" (1993, p. 326). Although the stereotypical image of the Aeta does not completely recede from view, the representation still manages to provide a site of resistance from oppression to attest that they are not victims after all.

Review of Related Literature

Displaying Filipinos: Photography and Colonialism in Early 20th century Philippines by Benito Vergara

In *Displaying Filipinos* (1995), Benito Vergara states that photography was used to legitimize the American colonial enterprise in the Philippines. He studied photography as a medium that provided meaningful insights about the representation of Filipinos during the American colonization.

Vergara points out that the colonial process as executed in the Philippines already had a historical forerunner. The racist attitudes toward Native Americans provided a template upon which colonial policy was based. Both Native Americans and Filipinos were regarded as “obstacles to expansion and/or objects of study” (Vergara, 1995, p. 20). The intent to civilize was ultimately justified by the argument that Filipinos were incapable of self-government. Vergara notes that the civilizing process itself was affirmed by the

very notion that something was lacking in the colonial subjects (maturity, education, technology, salvation, and more) that only the colonizers could provide, because of their superiority. Whatever the characteristics of the constructed image, the colonial narrative would have to make it conform to the restrictions of the plot: the colonized had to be inferior (Vergara, 1995, p. 23).

He then proceeds to describe photography as an instrument for manipulating meanings and perpetuating this perception of colonial subjects:

Photography removes subjects from their contexts and places them under the viewer’s gaze. They are symbolically immobilized by the camera, transformed from subjects into objects... Stripped of spatial and temporal specificity, the object is frozen for the viewer to look at for her or his pleasure (Vergara, 1995, p. 23).

The manifestation of the notion of othering as described earlier in this chapter is seen here. America rationalizes its domination over colonial subjects by stigmatizing them. Moreover, photography is shown as a means of exoticizing the colonized by turning them

into objects transfixed in time and place, and displaying their foreignness for the viewer's enjoyment.

Vergara also discusses a monumental example of Filipino representation: "the greatest and best Exposition in the history of the world" (1995, p. 11), the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Held in St. Louis, Missouri, the Exposition featured the achievements and discoveries in various fields by different nations of the world. Its centrepiece was the Philippine Reservation which covered more than 47 acres and cost over 1 million dollars to create (Vergara, 1995). It had "75,000 catalogued exhibits and 1,100 representatives of the different peoples of the archipelago" (p. 112). It might have been the ultimate act of representation of the Philippines by America, at the same time, one of America's most definitive acts of self-representation.

The different groups of Filipinos on exhibit were required to follow a strict daily schedule. The two lowest tiers on the hierarchy of 'civilization' were the Negritos and Igorots. The Negritos had to perform ancestor memorials, election of chief, and marriage on a daily basis, even if these special rituals were done infrequently. The Igorot village featured hourly dances, spear throwing, and other native ceremonies. The Visayan village, considered to be the most cultured and civilized of the Filipino delegation, had a theatre with music and dance performances done every hour until six in the evening. The Philippine scout battalion performed parades and drills thrice a day. In contrast to the uncivilized communities, the battalion exemplified discipline, productivity, and order – a feat made possible by the colonizers (Vergara, 1995).

The difference between the Filipinos on exhibit and the spectators is so deeply inscribed that it no longer merely familiarizes, it exoticizes otherwise ordinary activities. The mundane becomes a spectacle of peculiarity.

As regards the arrangement of the exhibit, Vergara describes it as follows:

These were broken down into villages, each surrounding the replica of Manila (complete with a landscaped plaza, "the ancient walls of Manila," and even the Puente de España).

But the objective of the Reservation's physical layout was quite obvious: to contrast the more civilized city in the centre with the primitive villages at the periphery (Vergara, 1995, p. 120).

This juxtaposition serves to reiterate that America assumed the responsibility of civilizing Filipinos; a means of justifying their colonization. Vergara also notes that this process of representation involved a sense of detemporalization; that is, "removing time from its flux, [turning] it into an empty form" (Widder, 1970, p. 6), or detaching these representations from a particular period in historical time. Moreover, it also entailed a compression of space where replicas of villages all over the Philippines (the world, even) were laid out in one encompassing space (Vergara, 1995).

Vergara's study is a necessary precursor to mine in that there are clear parallels between the display of Filipinos by our colonizers and the exhibition of Aetas in Zoobic today. Indigenous people have been and continue to be stigmatized and represented as categorically different; thus, implicating them as suitable objects of scrutiny. Whereas the image of an inferior Filipino was manipulated to justify American colonial domination in 1904, what rationalizes this same representation of indigenous identity in our society today?

Voyage to the Self via the Other by Arnold Azurin

During the era of European expansion, there arose a desire to create a worldview that predicated the racial superiority of the expansive colonizing nations. This motivation required of them a deeper knowledge of the 'inferior' races they conquered. It compelled them to forge a consciousness of the Self by being aware of their differences with the Other. This gave birth to a myriad of descriptions about the Other, made up of fanciful and out-of-context accounts mixed up with facts. One such example is that of French explorer, Gironiere, who visited the Cordilleras in the 1800s, and fascinated the European public with the Igorot custom of taking heads. He concluded that the head-hunters "excised brain tissues to be mixed into ritual potion" that they would drink to make them more valorous (Gironiere's *Twenty Years in the Philippines* as cited in Azurin, 1995a, p. 22).

European, and later on, American social scientists came into the country and depicted indigenous groups with sweeping racist attitudes. The 1887 exhibit in Madrid billed as *Rancheria de los Igorrotes* made a carnival display of nearly nude Igorots. It focused on the primitive way of life ‘typical’ of the inhabitants of the Philippines. The St. Louis Exposition of 1904 is once again cited for demonstrating our supposed backward culture. This racist standpoint was prevalent in academic and social institutions (Azurin, 1995a). Anthropologist Arnold Azurin describes their involvement as

a mere craving for entertaining exotica, or a zoological sideshow of primitive folkways. For it was then the task of the social researcher to discover and display the Other – specifically the other souls supposedly outside the grace of salvation and civilization, as seen by the colonizing and Christianizing nations who must come to the rescue of the bedevilled and benighted aborigines (Azurin, 1995a, p. 31).

The overall agenda of these representations was to propagate the primitiveness of Filipinos in the minds of the colonizers, so as to show that their ‘civilizing’ work was necessary.

Azurin points out that we have inherited these prejudices from our colonial experience, and thus they have become embedded in Filipino heritage. He argues that parts of the mass media and Philippine academe are responsible for propagating this pedigree of misrepresentation. It only shows that

the legacy of cultural disparities...that has been handed over to the local academic community by the colonial anthropologists could still be a persistent prism in viewing our national and ethnic heritage, if unchecked (Azurin, 1995a, p. 36).

This highlights the influential position of the academe and mass media in the continuing dissemination of representations that shape (or misshape) our identity. As future broadcast practitioners, it also alerts us of our role in legitimizing the ongoing marginalization of indigenous communities. Hence, he poses to us researchers and producers of texts the challenge of putting together the diverse parts of our heritage in a more authentic and dynamic manner.

The City Versus Ethnicity by Arnold Azurin

In a separate essay, *The City Versus Ethnicity*, Arnold Azurin (1995b) also discusses how ethnicity should be in unity with nationality. To avoid misconceptions, we define ethnicity here in its classic sense of “belonging to a common heritage and domain, language and belief system, consensual identity and sense of destiny” (Azurin, 1995b, p. 68). We must understand that ethnicity is not anathema to modern civilization, nor should it be equated to oppressive backwardness. This perception of ethnicity was propagated by our colonizers for their benefit; as a means of more easily controlling the ‘native’ mind and imposing their culture upon us.

He traces this world view, once again, back to our colonial history. During the Spanish colonization, Manila and Vigan were the peripheries of Madrid, while simultaneously serving as the Philippines’ center of colonial territory, from which colonial ideology radiates. The effects of this colonial experience still thrive until today. Manila is often accused of ‘internal colonialism,’ in that it “imposes its will and worldview upon other regions, in much the same way the conquerors had imposed their might and culture” (Azurin, 1995b, p. 67). Our government, which is mostly comprised of the Christian majority elite, holds hegemonic power over national consciousness as well. This hierarchy of power includes the Filipino intellectuals who were educated, if not in the West, in westernized capitals and urban centres. Thus, they focus mainly on western cultures and leave the indigenous knowledge systems at the periphery of their ‘nationalist’ cause. Many of our anthropologists have served up stale and out-of-context ethnographies of indigenous cultures that ensnare the Filipino in a framework that manipulates the consciousness of students and researchers.

Here we see that the concept of internal colonialism has been formed through the texts of Philippine history and anthropology. The elitist notion of nationhood perpetuates the marginalization of ethnic groups. Again, Azurin faults the non-thinking sectors of the mass media and academic institutions for allowing the proliferation of this outdated world view. Using this as a springboard, my study aims to shed light upon a concrete example of internal colonialism that continues to represent indigenous people as

backward and primitive, and as a result, relegates them to the fringes of nation building. It urges us to take steps towards enlightening the public about indigenous identity by transforming the academe, broadcast media, and even the tourism sector into responsible and conscientious institutions.

Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Other by Timothy Mitchell

The image of the Orient was constructed not only in Oriental studies, but also through new procedures of organizing the representation of the world. This included museums, world exhibitions, architecture, and the commodification of everyday life. The economic and political hegemony of the West is related not only to the image of the Orient it constructed, but to the machineries it used to lay out the meanings of the world. Timothy Mitchell (2002) explores this notion by studying accounts of non-Westerners about their visit to nineteenth-century Europe.

The construction of otherness is important to the colonial project because it facilitates the manufacturing of identities. World exhibitions, in particular, were instruments of representation that gave a central place to the representation of the Orient. Mitchell argues that the West did not only create exhibitions and representations of the world,

but the world itself being ordered up as an endless exhibition... It is not the artificiality of the exhibitionary order that matters, however, so much as the contrasting effect of an external reality that the artificial and the model create – a reality characterized, like Orientalism's Orient, by essentialism, otherness, and absence (Mitchell, 2002, p. 496).

World exhibitions provided the direct experience of a colonized object-world, complete with natives and their artefacts. This object-world set up places and people as objects to be viewed - rendered up as spectacle. Their 'objectness' demanded the curiosity of the observer. They were put up as objects of display to be experienced and scrutinized by the dominating European gaze. While Europe grew as a colonial power, non-Europeans "found themselves continually being placed on exhibit or made the careful object of European curiosity" (Mitchell, 2002, p. 497).

Mitchell explains that by the last decade of the nineteenth century, Arab accounts of the modern West described the peculiar order and technique of these world exhibitions – “the curious crowds of spectators, the organization of panoramas and perspectives, the arrangement of natives in mock colonial villages... – in short, the entire method of organization that we think of as representation” (Mitchell, 2002, p. 499).

The effect of objectness was a matter of representation. The careful organization of objects always stood for something larger, evoking some “larger meaning, such as History or Empire or Progress” (Mitchell, 2002, p. 500). This machinery of representation was not exclusive to world exhibitions. Objects in museums were arranged in order of their evolution, perhaps to evoke Progress. Europeans represented themselves in theatre, evoking History. “The representation of reality was always an exhibit set up for an observer in its midst, an observing European gaze surrounded by and yet excluded from the exhibition’s careful order” (Mitchell, 1995, p. 501).

Timothy Mitchell demonstrates how world exhibitions represented the Orient such that it is constructed as the Other, providing an experience of the colonized world while simultaneously delineating the observer as separate from the people and things as objects. In many ways, this object-world is not unlike the Aeta exhibition in Zoobic. Thus, Mitchell offers an insight as to how Zoobic renders up the Aetas as a curious spectacle to be gazed at, and consequently characterizing them as the Other.

Edifice Complex by Gerard Lico

Gerard Lico (2003), in his book *Edifice Complex*, explains that the importance of space, particularly in architecture, is that it inevitably affects the kind of people we become. As Winston Churchill once said, “We shape our buildings, they shape us” (Lico, 2003, p. 12). However, we easily acknowledge our control over the built environment while its power over us is not as readily perceived. Although Lico’s study is concerned with Marcos state architecture, my focus here is his elaboration on space and architecture in the context of Philippine colonial history.

Space is never neutral; however, it is not inherently powerful. It is the politics of utilizing that space that serves power and ideology (Lico, 2003). Space used in architecture can even be an instrument of hegemony, or acquiring mass approval through non-coercive means:

Architecture enables selective forms and practices while sanctioning others with exhibition or concealment through walls, enclosures, and partitions... Architecture's enclosures and bounding surfaces reconsolidate power by monitoring the flow of people and the distribution of human beings within a given space... Architecture creates an arena where the power of the "dominant" is habitually invoked and ingrained in the subconscious of the "dominated" to ensure the operation of social control and perpetuate existing social distinctions (Lico, 2003, pp. 9-10).

This goes to show that the limits imposed by spatial articulations condition our thoughts and actions. The power of spaces is sustained, knowingly or otherwise, by its subjects through the constant repetition of culturally prescribed codes. Thus, the dialogue between space and its occupants is dynamic, subtle, and complex. It is also important to point out that the link between architecture and power is "regulated by those who possess the economic power to control the resources" (Lico, 2003, p. 10).

To put the notions of power and space in architecture into perspective, Lico refers us back to our history. During the Spanish colonization, Intramuros was Manila's walled colonial city built exclusively for the Spanish elite. *Cuadricula* or gridiron walls were used for fear that the natives might start a revolt. *Garitas* or watch towers were erected so that the colonized people would be under constant surveillance. The very character of the Walled City was an observance of othering and a practise of ethnic segregation. Those in the interior of Intramuros were culturally superior; while the indios, Chinese, and Japanese were relegated outside the walls so as to protect the purity of Spanish culture (Lico, 2003).

The American colonizers put up public school buildings, universities, and municipal hospitals in an "official architectural style" under the guise that it would prepare the Filipino people for self-governance. However, these buildings served two

ideological functions: first, as a testimony of the American empire's greatness; and second, to give the impression of democracy and social order in the colony. These buildings were used as "metaphors for power, colonial omnipresence, cultural supremacy, and democracy" (Lico, 2003, p. 28).

Even President Manuel L. Quezon brandished his power spatially with the desire of building a new capital city (now Quezon City) in 1939. Diliman ended up as the chosen site for Quezon's version of Washington, D.C., but plans were cut short with the outbreak of World War II. Subsequent to the war, Manila was rendered the second most devastated city in the world. The period after the war was a key era in Philippine architecture. For the first time in four hundred years, Filipinos were free to rebuild and restructure their architectural product as reinventions and interpretations of their identity (Lico, 2003).

Gerard Lico establishes the foundation upon which one of my main arguments is built: that space is a dynamic instrument for both power and resistance. The space of Zoobic conditions the thoughts and actions of its occupants. It can simultaneously appear to concretize the misrepresentation of the Aetas, while serving as a space for negotiating these representations.

Method

The primary method employed in this study is textual analysis. It is a data-gathering process that allows the researcher to understand how other human beings make sense of who they are, and how they fit into the world. It allows us to see the different ways in which it is possible to interpret reality. An important point about textual analysis is that it does not confine 'texts' plainly as written word. Anything can be treated as a text when we try to *interpret* its meaning (McKee, 2002).

In this thesis, I use textual analysis to analyze the Aeta performances in Zoobic, and the broadcast documentary, *Buhay Aeta*. My goal is to understand the ways by which the representations in these texts take place.

Finally, McKee points out that there is no single text that depicts an accurate representation of reality. “No text is the *only* accurate, true, unbiased, realistic representation of any part of the world; there are always alternative representations that are equally accurate, true, unbiased and realistic” (McKee, 2003, p. 29).

In addition to textual analysis, this study also uses the method of ethnography to analyze Zoobic. Ethnography is important to my study so that I can gather qualitative data about the Aetas, and Zoobic as the site of representation. My initial visit to Zoobic Safari was on January 5, 2011, where I first had a feel of the place and witnessed the day safari. In consequent visits on February 19, 20, 26, and 27, 2011, I filmed a documentary about the Aetas’ performance entitled *ZOOMing In*. From November 25-27, 2011, I participated in the day safari and walked through Zoobic’s *Aeta’s Trail* for the first time during the tour, where the Aetas hold a more intimate display of their traditional dances, as well as other exhibits relating to their culture. On December 10, 11, and 12, 2011, I attended Zoobic’s night safari and watched the Aetas’ perform the fire poi dancing and fire breathing as a culmination for the tour. On January 7 and 8, 2012, I met Jessie Soria and the other Aetas, who allowed me to spend time with them and observe the course of their tasks and performances from behind the scenes. From January 14-16, 2012, I was able to interact further with the Aetas, and have a significant discussion with Ric Cabalic, the leader of the Aeta group in Zoobic.

Writing an ethnography involves the creation of something “worth reading for more than literary pleasure” (Hastrup, 1992, p. 116). It entails writing culture such that it reflects the way the culture invents itself. There are various aspects to be aware of in writing ethnographies. The first is fieldwork, the realm situated between autobiography and anthropology. Anthropologists are linked with the space they constitute, thus making fieldwork a connection between important personal experience and a general field of knowledge. It must be noted that the field is not “the unmediated world of the ‘others,’ but the world *between* ourselves and the others” (Hastrup, 1992, p. 117). Self and other are categories of thought that are always involved in a dialectical process (Hastrup, 1992).

According to Hastrup, fieldwork, then, is inherently confrontational and only outwardly observational. That being said, the dialogue between two parties is a joint creation of otherness and selfness. Because confrontation – that is, interpersonal and cross-cultural encounters – is necessary in acquiring knowledge about a different world, fieldwork cannot be conducted from a safe distance or “from the door of one’s tent” (Hastrup, 1992, p. 118). A reality begins to emerge in the continuous interaction of subject and object, definer and defined.

The ethnographer is always a positioned subject, defined by age, status, and lived experience. Thus, she can never be external to the object of her study. The ethnographer is also a “*named* person to the people involved,” and her self is blurred as she is repositioned in the field. Identities, after all, are always relational and inventive. As such, we must also acknowledge that although the ‘other’ as a speaking subject has been absent in anthropology, the informants as the ‘other’ do have their own self-referential discourse. We must be aware, however, that when we listen to the informants speak for themselves, they do not speak cultural truths; rather, they give circumstantial responses to our presence (Hastrup, 1992, p. 119).

The relationship between ethnographer and informant, however friendly or affectionate, always involves a form of violence in that the ethnographer exerts pressure on the informants in order to acquire necessary information for their research. Although fieldwork is ideally fashioned through dialogue, the ethnographic process “implies intrusion, and, possibly, pain” (Hastrup, 1992, p. 123). Thus, ethnographers must always remember to respect their informants’ right to fall silent, or even to withdraw themselves at any time from participation without bearing any negative impact on the research. Bearing these ethical considerations in mind, I sought to obtain consent for my research from the Aetas, as well as the management of Zoobic Safari. I explained to them the purpose of my study, and acquired written consent from the Aetas’ leader, Ric Cabalic, and Zoobic’s general manager, Delia de Jesus [Appendices A and B]. In using ethnography, my objective is to map out Zoobic as the space in which the Aetas are

represented, as well as experience and gain insight about their life as performers and employees of Zoobic.

Textualization, or the process of creating the text, involves the transposition of reality into writing. Although the ethnographers and informants are equals on the field, there is a hierarchy when it comes to anthropological discourse. However polyphonic or multivocal the ethnographic experience is at the immediate level, textualization implies an authority that selects, edits, and puts order to those experiences. The author must not renege from this task, as well as from the responsibility of subsisting in the text just as she was present in the field (Hastrup, 1992). As the sole author of the text, it is then imperative for me as the researcher to be careful in keeping myself present throughout the process of textualization. It is important not to detach myself from my experiences with the Aetas in Zoobic as I transpose these into writing.

Significance of the Study

This study is one of the first in the Broadcast Communication Department to employ an interdisciplinary approach using postcolonial theory to analyze broadcast texts. It makes use of textual analysis and ethnography for a more meaningful and in depth study of the subject matter. It also contributes to the broadening of research within my course by examining a tourism product. This study will help in making us aware of the diversity of cultures, and of the western ideologies that may still be present in underlining the representation of indigenous identity. Furthermore, it emphasizes negotiation as an important yet frequently overlooked aspect in resisting oppressive colonial tradition.

My thesis also illustrates the continuing dominance of colonial perspectives in the broadcast industry. It presents a criticism of the ways by which media manufacture truth claims, which bear implications on the public's consciousness and perception of indigenous people.

Thus, my study is important in making us more critical of indigenous representations in the media. It aims to contribute in the effort to transform the underlying prejudices against indigenous people; to remove, as Arnold Azurin (1995b) calls them, the “colonial blinders” about our indigenous legacy, and help in forming a progressive sense of self as a nation.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 gives a brief background on the Aetas and the colonial history of Subic Bay. This is to provide an informed understanding of the nature and context of this study.

Chapter 3 explains and analyzes the representation of Aetas by describing their performances in Zoobic. It elaborates on how the Aetas transform the potential site of exoticization into one of resistance.

Chapter 4 explores a broadcast text, specifically the television documentary *Buhay Aeta*, and how it represents their identity. I evaluate the nature of these representations and illustrate how it exoticizes, and subsequently produces an oppressive representation of the Aetas.

The final chapter summarizes and consolidates my analyses in order to provide a criticism of how the broadcast industry, deliberately or not, perpetuates truth claims about indigenous identity that informs public opinion and shapes perspectives about indigenous people.

CHAPTER II: AETAS IN RETROSPECT

Our Brother Aetas

The Aetas are indigenous people that form part of the so-called “Negritos,” one of the aboriginal populations of the Philippines. They are generally characterized by curly hair, moderate to dark brown complexion, and small stature. The Negritos of Mount Pinatubo are specifically called Aeta or Ayta by their neighbors. They also frequently speak of themselves as *katutubo*, meaning “the ones from this land” (Seitz, 2004, p. 2; Barrato, 1978).

The Aetas inhabit the mountainous area of Zambales. They refer to one of the highest peaks in the province, Mount Pinatubo, as their homeland. They possess an amazing knowledge of the flora and fauna of the forest, and can identify more than 500 species of plants with ease. They even developed ways of getting rid of the toxins of poisonous plants. These skills equip them with an uncanny ability to survive in the wilderness. The Aetas even trained American military personnel in jungle survival at the onset of the Vietnam War (Barrato, 1978).

Traditionally, the Aetas’ main sources of livelihood are hunting, foraging and swidden agriculture. They plant rootcrops, corn, and various fruits, some of which are sold to lowlanders. During the wait for harvest, they hunt using weapons that they themselves make. The bow and arrow were their most important weapons. The Aetas knew of at least fifty different types of arrows and arrow points, and possess “the most sophisticated bow and arrow complex” of the many groups in the Philippines (Brosius as cited in Seitz, 2004, p. 77). The Aetas of Mount Pinatubo still view themselves first and foremost as hunters, despite their agricultural activities (Barrato, 1978; Seitz, 2004).

Their traditional attire is the *bahag* or loin cloth for males, and a long wrap around for the females. They acquired modern dress styles through regular interaction with people from the lowlands, with whom they exchanged their goods and products. The use

of loincloths made of beaten bark cloth was revived for some time due to the turmoil caused by World War II (Barrato, 1978).

Music and dance are integral to the Aeta community's cultural life (Barrato, 1978). Their rituals and ceremonies are laden with traditional songs, dances and prayers. These are closely tied with the way of life they have held in relative isolation from other cultural groups (Jocano as cited in Barrato, 1978). The Aetas have managed to assimilate some external influences while remaining quite resilient to the acculturation process (Seitz, 2004).

Prior to the colossal eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991, the Aetas "could hardly be viewed as a group living in poverty" (Seitz, 2004, p. 7). They assessed themselves as self-sufficient and reasonably secure both economically and as a community, a view also shared by lowland residents (Seitz, 2004).

It has been all too common to describe them as 'primitive,' when nothing can be farther from the truth. The Aetas are able to modify external influences to befit their "own ways of doing, believing, and thinking" (Barrato, 1978). They redefine new ideas to strengthen their traditional practices, which illustrates that their longstanding legacy is not diminished by new innovations.

Subic Bay: A History Lesson

Upon the arrival of the first colonizers began the minorization of several ethno-linguistic groups. The tribes who were assimilated to the mainstream comprised the "majority," while those who withdrew further into the mountains to successfully stand their ground against the colonizers became known as Tribal Indigenous or Indigenous People (Cabalic, n.d.). Subic Bay in Zambales has played a strategic role throughout the centuries-long colonial history of the Philippines.

It was 1521 when the Spanish first set foot on Philippine soil, specifically in the central islands of the Visayas. However, it was not until fifty years later that their

expedition reached the island of Luzon. In 1570, Miguel Lopez de Legaspi attacked the flourishing town of Manila, and secured a foothold in the Philippines by proclaiming it his capital. De Legaspi sent his grandson, Captain Juan de Salcedo, to explore the rest of the region north of Manila. One of the places Salcedo visited during his exploration was Subic Bay. He returned to Manila reporting that the bay was a strategic location. However, they could not take advantage of it during this time as they were having difficulty defending Manila (Anderson, 2006, p. 11).

In 1868, the Spaniards began noting the drawbacks of what had become their naval stronghold in Sangley Point, Cavite. Recalling Captain Salcedo's account of Subic Bay, they surveyed it and concluded that its deep waters and healthy environment were ideal for a naval base. Sixteen years later, King Alphonso XII issued a Royal Decree that set aside Subic Bay for Spain's naval purposes (Anderson, 2006, p. 15). The Spanish built their naval station and turned the village of Olongapo into a *pueblo*. It eventually "conformed to the pattern prescribed by the Spanish *Laws of the Indies* – a central plaza, surrounded by a church, school, government buildings and homes of the most prominent citizens and local officials" (Anderson, 2006, p. 18).

When the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898, Commodore George Dewey, Commander of the US Asiatic Squadron, was given orders to leave Hong Kong immediately to attack the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay. While waiting for departure, however, he was informed that Spanish Rear Admiral Don Patricio Montojo had moved his fleet to Subic Bay and planned to fight the battle there. Meanwhile, Montojo was disappointed to learn that Subic Bay had not been fortified against any attack. Moreover, guns that had been shipped there from Sangley Point had not yet been installed and no reliable mines were laid in the water. Consequently, American warships destroyed Montojo's fleet. The Treaty of Paris ended the war between Spain and the United States, and colonial power over the Philippines shifted to American hands (Anderson, 2006).

In 1899, American authorities began patrolling Subic Bay. After several encounters with Filipino insurgents, the Americans captured and took full possession of

the naval yard. In the same year, the US Marines found the highest flagpole in the area and raised the American flag. They took over the naval station while the US Army set up their headquarters in Subic Town, and assumed administrative and operational control of the area (Anderson, 2006).

When news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor arrived, the US Marines built beach defences in Subic Bay as a response to rumours of Japanese approach. However, Japanese bombers executed devastating attacks over the bay, and by December 24, 1941, the Americans had been given orders to destroy the naval station and withdraw (Anderson, 2006).

The Japanese occupation in the Philippines ended after four years. In 1945, American engineers began to reactivate the naval station and repair bridges and buildings in Subic. Olongapo was re-established and patterned after American towns of the time. Even after Philippine independence was granted in 1946, “Olongapo remained under the administration of the US Naval Reservation” (Anderson, 2006, p. 130). Furthermore, the Military Bases Agreement was signed in 1947 “granting the United States the right to retain use of 16 bases or military reservations in the Philippines including Subic Bay and the administration of the town of Olongapo” (p. 130). Upon its approval, the Philippines became an essential part of the United States’ emerging security arrangements in the Pacific. The US retained full jurisdiction over Philippine territories covered by the military installations, including over collecting taxes and trying offenders (Anderson, 2006).

It was as recent as only 1959 that Olongapo was turned over to the Philippines due to the clamor of the Filipino people. The RP-US Bases Treaty Agreement paved the way for the lowering of the American and Philippine flags, followed by the raising of the Philippine flag alone (Anderson, 2006).

When the Military Bases Agreement of 1947 expired in 1991, intense negotiations between the Philippine and American governments resulted in the Treaty of Friendship,

Peace, and Cooperation. In accordance with the sentiment of “throwing off the ‘last vestige of American colonialism,’” the Philippine government “notified the United States that their military forces must be withdrawn from the Subic Naval Base by the end of 1992” (Anderson, 2006, p. 180).

On November 24, 1992, the *USS Belleau Wood*, the last American ship and helicopter carrier, left the Base. This marked the end of ninety-four years of American military presence in the country. In the same year, Subic Bay Freeport was created under the provisions of Republic Act 7227. Then Mayor of Olongapo City, Richard “Dick” Gordon became the first Chairman of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) (Anderson, 2006).

Throughout the hundreds of years of occupation in Subic, the Aetas remained in the mountains as a form of resistance against the colonizers. They refused to be assimilated into the mainstream culture that colonization had imposed upon the country. The Aetas of Zambales remained in the mountains and continued to preserve their ancestors’ culture. This is not to say that they avoided all contact with the lowlanders. On the contrary, regular interactions with them resulted into the incorporation of external influences into Aeta culture as they deemed fit and acceptable.

The eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991, which is discussed in detail in the next chapter, compelled the Aetas to retreat from the mountains into safety. Prior to the disaster, no one had really taken notice of them. Suddenly, they were thrust into the centre of media attention. The representations of the Aetas following the eruption kept them at the fringes of contemporary society.

Many groups that organized relief efforts did so with ridiculous conditions such as obliging the Aetas to dance or sing for them before goods were released (Fondevilla, 1991). This is glaringly reminiscent of how colonizers had made a display out of our indigenous peoples in order to assert their superiority over us, and emphasize that we needed their help because we were inferior.

This prejudiced view that we inherited from our colonizers still exists until today. As such, I consider the unfolding history of Subic Bay as a microcosm of Philippine society now. Even as the relics of military presence were removed from Subic, the struggle for liberation from oppressive colonial traditions and perspectives continues to persist.

Now, the Subic free port zone is home to many Aeta tribes who have strong claims on ancestral lands in the region. In the midst of SBMA's activities towards its goal of making Subic a world-class hub for trade and tourism, it also claims to support and promote the Aetas' rights to build their own lives. While Subic develops into a choice investment site for both local and international companies, it also claims to implement livelihood projects for the Aetas to help boost their income and promote economic development among the indigenous community. An article in the Subic Times quotes Knette Fernando, SBMA deputy administrator for corporate communications, stating that, "We hold the Aeta people in high regard. They are the guardians of our forests and the stewards of the land. We base our knowledge about the forests on their natural skills to protect the land" ("SBMA sets more", 2011, n.p.). In the same article, Armie Llamas, SBMA public relations manager, maintains that they respect the Aetas' authority over their ancestral lands located within the free port zone. She asserts that, "The SBMA is just the manager of the land, but the IP's are the ones who own them. Even if the (SBMA) board had approved a project, but when the Aetas say no, then it won't materialize. That's how important they are to us" ("SBMA sets more", 2011, n.p.).

Although the potential for oppression still exists, the Aetas have the opportunity to unhinge the traditions we inherited from our colonizers. They can resist the structures that have subjugated them as inferior and break free from being marginalized by the rest of society. Unlike during our colonization, their resistance is no longer shown just by withdrawing from mainstream culture, but by taking up the role of representing and sharing their own identity to society.

CHAPTER III: **AETAS IN THE WILDLIFE**

Zoobic Safari in Subic is a premier attraction for both foreign tourists as well as weekend adventurers as it is only a few hours away from Manila by car. It does not disappoint with the wide range of natural habitats present in the forest terrain, allowing guests to observe the zoo's assortment of exotic animals.

The Zoomanity Group, a member of the Yupangco Group of Companies, partnered up with the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority to develop a fifteen-hectare land in the heart of the forest into an animal kingdom. Zoobic Safari opened its gates to the public on November 2004 (Javier, 2007).

As an attempt to put the Philippines on the map of wildlife and ecotourism, Zoobic boasts of the country's first Tiger Safari, among its other attractions. Some of their tour guides are well-trained Aetas who expertly manoeuvre the guests in a safari ride through the expansive theme park. Zoobic caters to educational trips, group outings, and even company gatherings. The park averages 1,500 guests on weekends and holidays, and 500 visitors a day during the off season (Javier, 2004).

The Aetas in Zoobic

Based on all my personal experiences at Zoobic Safari, visitors are organized into clusters of about twenty people upon arriving at the theme park. Each cluster is led by its own tour guide. The Day Safari, which was the focus of my fieldwork on February 2011, begins with a brief orientation to acquaint us with the course of the tour, as well as remind us of the do's and don'ts in observing and interacting with the animals. The guides direct their respective clusters through the myriad attractions and readily answer any of our questions throughout the duration of the tour. It is apparent that the tour guides are not only well-trained but also passionate about their work. After navigating the sprawling park, the tour culminates with the Animal Show held at 3:00 and 5:00 in the afternoon.

The guides gather all their tour groups in the parade area, where we are seated on bleachers waiting for the show to start. Of my several trips to Zoobic, the audience always consisted mostly of students on a school-sponsored field trip. The Animal Show features many of Zoobic's trained animals that parade in front of the crowd. The opening act for this program is a cultural show by the Aetas, in which they perform some of their traditional dances. The performances in the day safari are documented in a video I produced in 2011 entitled *ZOOMing In*.

As the crowd grows restless while waiting, a woman's voice blasts through the speakers. She introduces the performers as "our native Aeta brothers." The voiceover briefly narrates how they were here long before the colonizers arrived, and that "their culture has been passed on from generation to generation." It proudly announces that Zoobic Safari "highly regards the Aetas as the true owners of the forest," and acknowledges that they are indeed the "true owners of this ancestral land."

The audience welcomes this with cheers and hearty applause, as the voiceover speaks over the canned music and introduces "our native Aeta brothers, and their queen, Joy." Wrapped in a red sarong and wearing a headdress, Joy dances by herself into the centre of the floor. She is then followed by ten male Aetas wearing their traditional *bahag* or loincloth. They are divided into two groups – one wearing red, and the other wearing blue - presumably to represent Aetas from two different tribes.

They dance into a clean formation with notable synchronicity. Their first dance is the *sayaw ng tutubi* or dance of the dragonfly. The Aetas sway their upper bodies in waving motions and move their arms to mimic dragonfly wings. The voiceover narrates that it is "performed at the onset of the rainy season, because along with [this] comes the planting season. This is also their way of warning other tribes about sudden changes in the weather."

Suddenly, the Aetas jump from their formation for the monkey dance or *sayaw ng unggoy*. They imitate the sound and movements of monkeys, jump on each other, and

even appear to taunt the audience (Fig. 1). According the narrator, the Aetas believe that no other animal but the monkey “can match their skill in hunting and foraging.” They perform the monkey dance in front of their tribe to let them know that they have successfully hunted an animal.

The next dance is the war dance or *sayaw ng pagbabayani*. The Aetas wearing the blue bahag form one line, while the ones wearing red form another. The two lines face each other as one Aeta from each tribe comes forward, and they appear to challenge one another with long wooden sticks fashioned as their weapon (Fig. 2). Again, the host narrates that for the Aetas, “the best dancer will be the best fighter or warrior of the tribe.”

Finally, they perform the courtship dance (Fig. 3). Their queen, Joy, takes the centre once again as one member from each tribe dances around her. Here, two young men from rival tribes are trying to compete for a young woman’s heart in the form of dance. The narrator declares that they “display different varieties of movement that portray love, beauty, and bravery.” The man who is given a handkerchief is the lucky one to win over the young lady’s heart. This culminates in the two tribes deciding to unite as one (Fig. 4).

With this, the Aetas all stand, raise both hands, and shout as one. They take a bow to a very receptive audience, and the program transitions into the animal show. Jessie, one of the Aetas, starts it off as he comes out dancing with a flock of geese that follows him around the stage. Other animals are brought out one after the other, with an Aeta to direct them through the show. The birds and greyhounds and miniature horses make their rounds and soon, the parade comes to a close. As the crowd thins out, many of the guests approach the Aetas and ask to have pictures taken with them, to which the Aetas willingly oblige.

Fig. 1 Dance of the Monkey
(Himala, 2012)



The Aetas jump on top of each other and make silly faces in the dance of the monkey or *sayaw ng unggoy*.

Fig. 2 Warrior Dance
(Himala, 2012)



Depicting members of rival tribes, two Aetas 'battle' each other in the warrior dance or *sayaw ng pagbabayani*.

Fig. 3 Courtship Dance
(Himala, 2012)



Two Aeta males dance for the heart of a woman in the courtship dance.

Fig. 4 Two Tribes Become One
(Himala, 2012)



The performance ends with the two tribes uniting as one.

During my fieldwork on November 2011, I observed the part of Zoobic Safari called the Aeta's Trail. Lining the trail are sculptures inspired by Aeta tradition. There is also a stopover where some Aetas show how well they handle a bow and arrow. Here, the guests may choose to try their hand at archery with the guidance of the Aetas. Those who take up this opportunity wonder at the ease and accuracy with which the Aetas shoot their arrows. Along the trail, there is a small space where the visitors assemble and watch the Aetas perform a mini show. It is a much more intimate program, as they perform only three dances in front of a small tour group who gather around in a circle. An Aeta provides the music by playing his acoustic guitar, not unlike how they do it within their tribe. The first dance is the *sayaw ng tutubi*, where only one Aeta takes the centre of the circle to perform (Fig. 5). He is replaced by another Aeta for the next dance, *ang sayaw ng unggoy* (Fig. 6). Being that this show is held in the middle of the forest, he not only imitates a monkey's sound and movements through dance, he is also able to show how fast and agile he is in climbing a tree (Fig. 7). Finally, two Aetas come forward to perform the war dance and close the show (Fig. 8).

Fig. 5 Aeta's Trail: Dance of the Dragonfly
(Himala, 2012)



An Aeta dancer performs the *sayaw ng tutubi* or dance of the dragonfly by himself.

Fig. 6 Aeta's Trail: Dance of the Monkey
(Himala, 2012)



Another performance at the Aeta's Trail in Zoobic Safari shows one Aeta doing the dance of the monkey.

Fig. 7 Aeta Climbs Tree
(Himala, 2012)



The dancer shows off by swiftly climbing up and moving from tree to tree.

Fig. 8 Aeta's Trail: Warrior Dance
(Himala, 2012)



The warrior dance is performed by these two dancers with the Aetas' traditional weapon of choice, their bow and arrow.

On weekends, Zoobic also has a night safari. I took part in this tour during my fieldwork on December 2011. It proceeds much like the day safari, but with a heightened focus on the zoo's nocturnal animals. At 8:00 pm, the night safari also concludes with the animal show. However, the night parade does not feature the Aetas' cultural performance. Also, the animals in the show are no longer escorted by Aetas, but by other Zoobic personnel.

After the animal parade, the Aetas come out to conclude the show with an unexpected performance. Donning their traditional *bahag*, they enter the stage and engage the audience with an impressive performance of fire poi dancing (Fig. 9), a tribal dance originating from New Zealand. More Aetas come out with a jaw-dropping show of fire breathing that all at once surprises and astounds the crowd (Fig. 10). Finally, a woman whom I recognized as the “queen Aeta” from the day safari stands centre stage and addresses the crowd in English, saying that we are stewards of nature and reminding

us that we must strive to take care of Mother Earth. With that, a voiceover thanks the crowd for visiting Zoobic and concludes the show.

Fig. 9 Aetas Fire Poi Dancing
(Dizon, 2010)



The Aetas show off an exhilarating exhibition of fire poi dancing in the Night Safari.

Fig. 10 Aetas Breathing Fire
(Dizon, 2010)



The Aetas come out bearing torches and entertain the audience with a fire-breathing show.

The Management Perspective

The performance of the Aetas was not initially a part of Zoobic's attractions. In a personal interview with Marja Corcuera (personal communication, January 4, 2012), Zoomanity Group's Director for Innovation, she explains that the Aetas were given priority for employment at the zoo regardless of their educational attainment. They were employed as maintenance staff or tour guides at Zoobic. The Aetas also helped greatly with the setting up of the zoo, remarking upon good and bad areas of the forest and trying to preserve the dignity of their land. “They would tell us *na huwag magtayo diyan dahil maraming ahas, or mas maganda dito kasi hindi mabato,*” [Don’t put anything up there because there are a lot of snakes, or it would be better here because it’s not very rocky.] says Corcuera. Zoobic management experienced firsthand how well the Aetas knew and respected their land.

As Zoobic attracted more and more tourists, its management noticed that the guests were very curious about the Aeta employees. Many people would approach the Aetas and ask for photographs with them. This is what led them to create a program that featured the Aetas and their culture. Zoobic spoke with the Aetas about this idea, to which they gamely agreed. “*Natuwa sila* because they finally get to be the star of the show. When they perform, *sila ang bida,*” states Corcuera. The Aetas choreographed their routine and initially performed it accompanied by a live acoustic guitar. Though the content of the program is made by the Aetas themselves, the management offers some input so as to “keep the show entertaining.”

There are many ways one can contend that these performances exoticize the Aetas or construct them as the Other. Photographs were taken of them and with them, much like what is seen with the Aetas in Zoobic. In fact, this heightened curiosity and interest in the spectacle of indigenous people drove the creation of the Aeta program in Zoobic. It sharply recalls various incidents in our colonial history wherein Filipino indigenous peoples were put on exhibit in what has been coined as a ‘human zoo.’

During the American colonial period, native Filipinos were an obscure subject of scrutiny and exhibition. They were catalogued by tribe and photographed in mock settings with artificial backdrops to recall their ‘natural habitats.’ “Negrito Hunters” (Fig. 11) are shown posing half-naked, with one of them aiming at an unknown target that is not included in the frame. A photograph of the “Philippine Malays” (Fig. 12) portrays a sexual slant as one of the women has her hand on the sheath of the young man’s knife, when there is no clear reason for her to be holding it. In the same studio setting, Gaddane the Head-Hunter (Fig. 13) is pictured carrying two weapons and musingly posing with his wife (Vergara, 1995).

Fig. 11 “Negrito Hunters, Father and Son”
(Hannaford as cited in Vergara, 1995, p. 93)

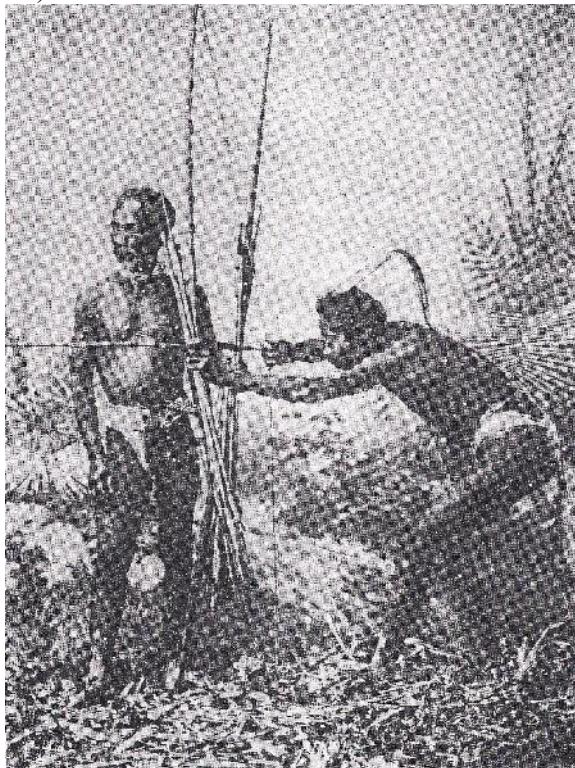


Fig. 12 “Philippine Malays”
(Hannaford as cited in Vergara, 1995, p. 96)

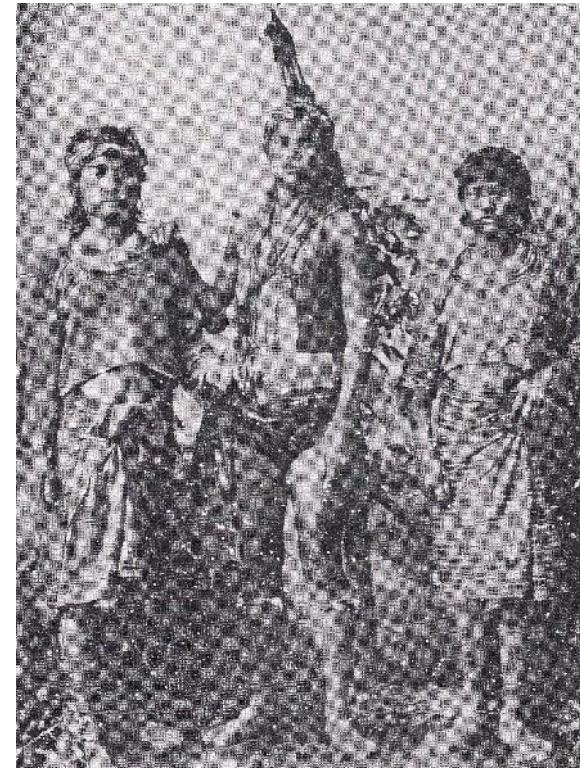


Fig. 13 “Head-Hunting Gaddane and Wife”
(Hannaford as cited in Vergara, 1995, p. 94)



Other Filipino groups were also put on display in the famous St. Louis Exposition of 1904. They were depicted as the Americans' conquest for civilization and a curious spectacle to behold. In an attitude of attack, the “Bontoc Head-Hunters” (Fig. 14) perform a war-like pantomime of posing and thrusting using their shield and spear. The caption for the photo “Group of the Better Class of Filipino Women” (Fig. 15) is decidedly racist as it owes the pleasant countenance of the *mestizas* to their Spanish roots, while the predominantly Malay women wear displeasing scowls on their faces. In Fig. 16, the Moros are clumped together and generally identified as the representatives of the Malay race. The Igorot tribe (Fig. 17) was an immensely popular attraction at the Universal Exposition because they were portrayed as “uncivilized people” about which visitors were very curious (Vergara, 1995).

These representations occur out of their context, and are manipulated such that the indigenous Filipinos are perceived as primitive, barbaric, uncivilized, or at the very least,

different. These manifest how Filipinos have been exoticized by our colonizers throughout the course of history. Our indigenous groups were served up as if they were from a different world. They were made into a spectacle to be gazed at.

Fig. 14 “The Bontoc Head-Hunters”
(The World’s Fair as cited in Vergara, 1995, p. 125)

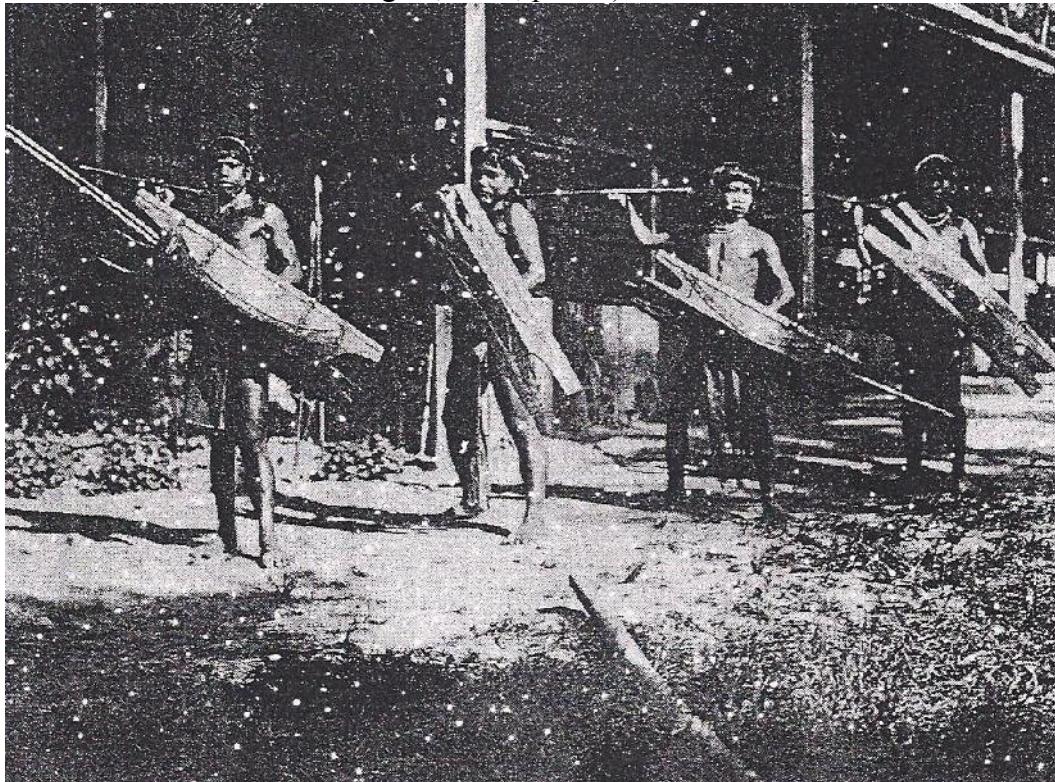
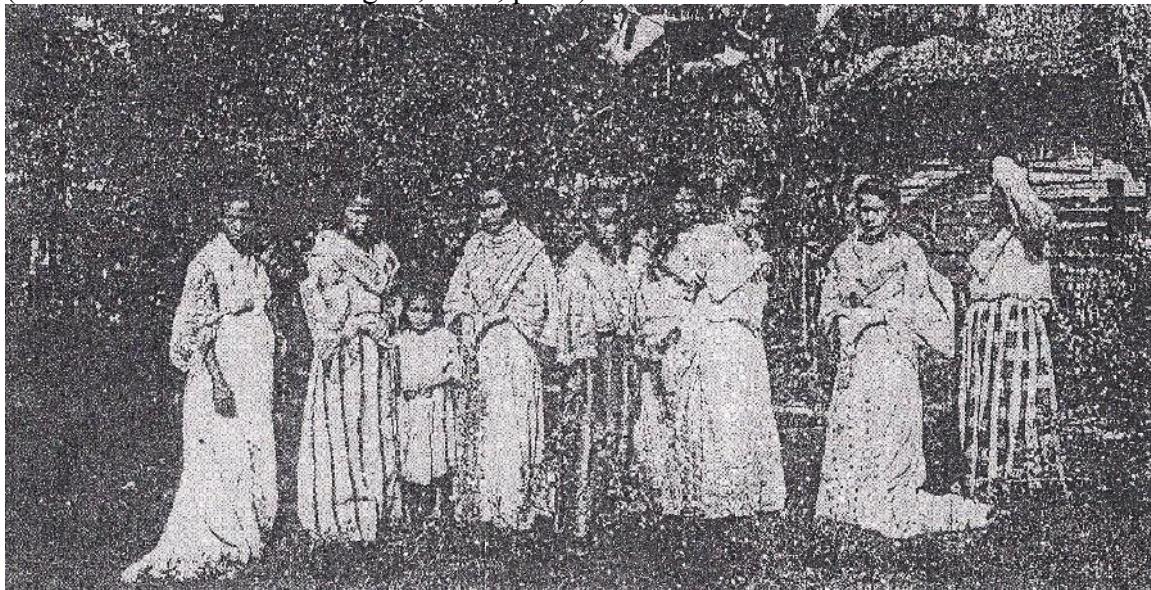


Fig. 15 “Group of the Better Class of Filipino Women, Suburbs of Manila”
(De Olivares as cited in Vergara, 1995, p. 97)



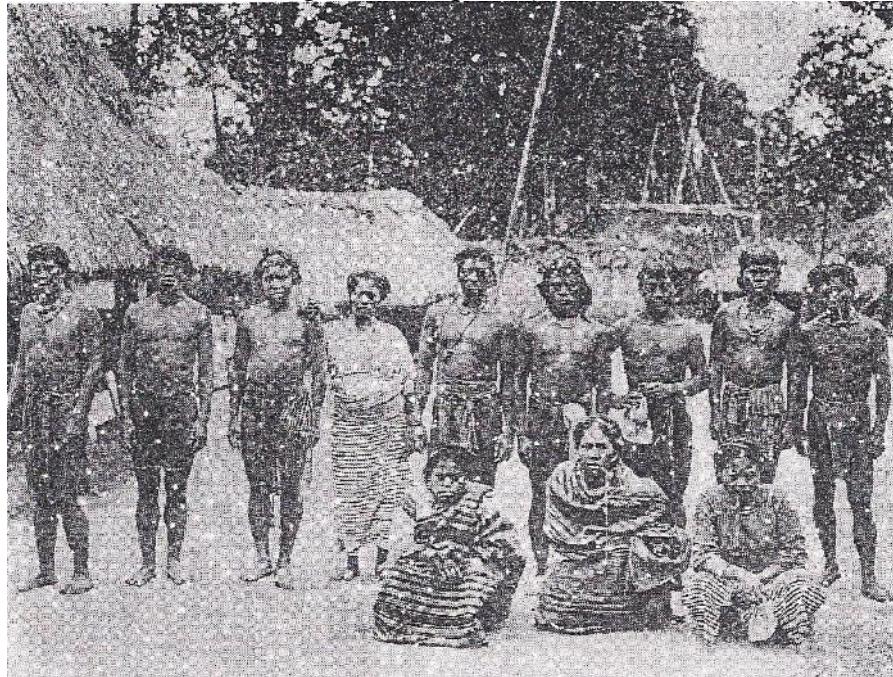
“The two women standing second and third on the right of the group are Mestizos, and their more agreeable cast of countenance is inherited from their Spanish father. The Malay predominates in the others, and shows plainly in the rather unpleasant scowl of their faces” (De Olivares as cited in Vergara, 1995, p. 97).

Fig. 16 “Filipino Representatives of the Malay Race”
(The World’s Fair as cited in Vegara, 1995, p. 129)



The Moros of the Malay race from the Philippines were “exclusive people” and depicted as the “most civilized of the non-Christian inhabitants” of the islands (Vergara, 1995).

Fig. 17 “The Igorot as an Exhibit”
 (The World’s Fair as cited in Vergara, 1995, p. 127)



The Aetas in Zoobic, being that they are performers, are also put on display. As members of the audience, it is inherent that we are distanced or set apart from the spectacle of the Aetas. We are watching, and the Aetas are being watched. Second, it stresses what makes them different. One can easily define himself as the counterpart to the Aetas’ ‘primitiveness.’ They wear clothes different from ours. They imitate movements of animals, and perform rituals that, although pertaining to concepts not unfamiliar to us such as war and courtship, are still portrayed as stemming from “a reservoir of infinite peculiarity” (Said, 1978, p. 103).

This process of Othering is not alien to us because our colonizers have portrayed us this way on very similar terms – ‘inferior’ counterparts to their ‘civilized’ image. As such, it is easy for one to say that the process of exoticization has been carried over to the Aeta performance in Zoobic. However, herein lies the difference: the Other is “customarily passive, non-participating, above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself” (Said, 1978, p. 79). Additionally, it cannot represent itself, so the West does the representing for them. Here, the Aetas are assuming the role

of representing themselves – a process of which they are conscious involves the negotiation of their identity. The Aetas are not only involved, but active in the construction of these representations. They are aware that the identity they construct through their performances in Zoobic is a market identity, a product for consumption. Instead of playing victim to a culture of colonization that perpetuates oppressive indigenous representation, I argue that they use this to resist it by negotiating a market-informed Aeta identity.

The Aetas: Behind the Curtains

The negotiation of their identity did not seem to bother Ric Cabalic, the assumed leader of the Aetas in Zoobic. Jessie, one of the performers in the Aeta program, led me to their *tambayan* and introduced me to Ric during my visit on January 7, 2012. Here, I met the other Aetas who would hang out during downtime from their duties around the zoo. Some of them would talk and smoke cigarettes, while others would sit and text or play games on their cell phones. Joy and the other boys practiced their shooting with a bow and arrow, hardly ever missing the target several meters away.

Ric and I had struck up a conversation, and upon learning that I was a student, Ric asked if I was from UP, Ateneo, or La Salle. When I answered that I was from UP Diliman, he asked if I knew Sir Arnold. I later found out that he was referring to Arnold Azurin, one of my references for this study. Ric, who obtained his bachelor's degree in Political Science, asserts that for many of the Aetas, "*kahit nakapag-aral na, bumabalik pa rin sa kultura*" [Even if they have finished their studies, they still return to their culture]. This is why they agreed to creating the Aeta program for Zoobic: "*Yung mga pumupunta dito, 'yung iba tinatawanan pa rin kami. Gusto naming ipakita na hindi kami ginagawang laruhan. Hindi namin kinakahiya ang aming kasuotan. Binabalik pa rin namin sa kultura para sa ganoon, familiar na kami sa kanila, at familiar na sila sa amin*" [Some of the people who come here still laugh at us. We want to show them that we are not treated as toys. We aren't ashamed of our clothing. We still go back to our culture so that we are not only familiar with them, they also become familiar with us] (R. Cabalic, personal communication, January 14, 2012).

This recalls a particular experience in my earlier visit to Zoobic in 2011, which is shown in the last scene of my documentary *ZOOMing In*. While they were on break, a group of Aetas was dancing to the music of Akon, an American hiphop artist. I approached them and asked if it was okay for me to take their video, when one of them quips, “*Gusto mo magpalit kami ng bahag?*” [Do you want us to change into our bahag?] (Himala, 2011). This strikes me as an indication that they are certainly not oblivious to the outsider’s stereotypical perceptions of who Aetas are supposed to be and how they are supposed to act. There are certain aspects of their life and identity that they choose not to portray or exhibit as a spectacle in Zoobic. They know what the audience expects to see in their performances, and this is the identity they produce for them.

Ric also acquaints me with Republic Act 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA). RA 8371 is especially significant to them because it finally strengthened their claim on their ancestral land, and provided a legitimate venue to fight for their rights. Ric says that the Aetas had to be consulted before Zoobic was established. Thus, the Aetas were given priority employment even if some of them had not finished high school. Moreover, he reminded me that no one is allowed to own land in Subic, and only the Aetas are allowed permanent residency there.

Pinatubo: The Cataclysm of their Life

Cited as one of the most devastating disasters of the 20th century, the Mt. Pinatubo eruption of 1991 displaced the Aetas from their home. Pinatubo had been dormant for 600 years, and thus, was not on the list of active volcanoes that PHIVOLCS (Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology) regularly monitored. The Aetas first witnessed several hydrothermal explosions and slight ash fall before any clear signs that Pinatubo had been awakened. The Aetas of Yamot, who at the time were working with the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, urged one of the sisters to go to Manila and report these events. It was only then that PHIVOLCS was alerted of an impending eruption (Seitz, 2004).

As it became apparent that a colossal eruption was drawing near, many Aetas fled to the base of the mountain. However, some of them, particularly the older ones, refused to leave their homes. Latundan, an elderly Aeta, renounced leaving his place in the mountain even during the evacuation. He threatened to shoot anyone who tried to stop him from going home. Leaders of their tribe gave him provisions to last for some weeks, and recalled an emotional departure of Pinatubo as Latundan went back deep into the forest (Fondevilla, 1991). This is an illustration of how violently they longed for their home. Although they were not so much attached to a particular geographical locus so much as a certain environment, they had and continue to hold an intense emotional bond to their homeland (Seitz, 2004).

For the Aetas, evacuating Mt. Pinatubo due to the eruption was not just a flight towards safety; “it is an uprooting, a painful tearing apart from the land they love, from the land that held literally and spiritually their lifeline and life blood” (Fondevilla, 1991, p. 30). The Aetas were moved to numerous resettlement sites, but always preferred to relocate to a place where they could still see Mt. Pinatubo. The proximity appears to comfort them that they would someday go back to their home.

The elderly Aetas expressed their apprehensions upon withdrawing from the abode of their ancestors. Years from now, they worry whether their children will still dance their dances, sing their songs, and dream their dreams (Fondevilla, 1991, p. 3). PHIVOLCS estimates that it might take fifty years before they can go back to their beloved land, and the elders know well that they may not live to see that day. They think of what their grandchildren’s culture will be in the future:

Would they still love our Mother Pinatubo as we love her?
 Would they still fight for our ancestral land as we now struggle against the land grabbers? Would they defend our land against the tourists who might desecrate our land by making it a place of leisure? Would they still be proud of our indigenous clothing, dances, songs, prayers, and other traditions? (Fondevilla, 1991, n.p.).

For the Aetas, the eruption awakened the swift development of a hitherto unknown sense of ethnic awareness and unity among their people (Seitz, 2004). The shared experience

of disaster evoked an inwards look at their identity as a people, a fortification of an identity that will enable them to return to their ‘land of promise.’ This is why they put such grave importance in continuing to teach and cherish their culture, as they look forward to someday returning home.

LAKAS: The Aeta Stronghold

During our conversation, Ric remarks that he has something to share with me. He goes into a small hut and returns carrying a hardbound book called “Empowerment of Indigenous People towards Solidarity” by Ric Cabalic. It is a compilation of his many experiences centred on their culture. He spent 27 months travelling the Philippines from north to south, as well as several other countries, to see how different communities live, and to share his experiences with them. He attributes these enriching events to an organization called LAKAS or Lubos na Alyansa ng mga Katutubong Ayta ng Sambales (Negrito People’s Alliance of Zambales).

‘Lakas’ literally means power, and it reinforces what the group stands for: people empowerment. LAKAS refers to itself as a grassroot organization that focuses towards self-determination, ancestral domain, human rights and sovereignty (Fondevilla, 1991).

LAKAS was founded in 1987 under the auspices of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary or FMM, in the village of Yamot, one of the most isolated of all the Aeta communities. The FMM gradually gained the Aetas’ trust by simply living and sharing with them. Most importantly, the sisters of FMM did not try to Christianize them unlike the missionaries that the Aetas had met before. Eventually, the Aetas were able to share their problems with the sisters, and they soon realized that illiteracy was one of their main problems: they were being deceived by middlemen and abused by the military; they had no control over the prices of their products. Thus, it was a joint effort between the Aetas and the Franciscan sisters to develop a literacy program tailored for their culture, a program guided by one principle: “Oppress no one and let no one oppress you” (Fondevilla, 1991).

Sister Menggay, a member of the FMM who had been doing work with the Aetas since before the Pinatubo eruption, learned why clothing became a top priority for the Aetas. During Martial Law in the mid 1970s, “a government official categorically told them that G-strings have no place in the New Society” or Bagong Lipunan of the Marcos regime. They were actually being forced to wear pants (Fondevilla, 1991, p. 11). Thus, clothing became an important symbol of their ‘emancipation’ (Seitz, 2004). Through the work of LAKAS, the Aetas began to realize that their pride must be rooted in their culture. Thus, the use of their *bahag* is a symbol that they are proud of – a symbol of true emancipation.

Ric shares that it was Paulo Freire’s methodology of teaching that demonstrated how literacy can be used to enhance their self-confidence and liberate them from oppressive social structures. Thus, education must be modern in that it is not simply a supplement to the culture of the oppressors. This enables the Aetas to “walk tall and look straight into the eyes of others” (Fondevilla, 1991, n.p.).

In 1993, the PBAZ or Paaralang Bayan ng mga Ayta sa Zambales (Folk School of the Aetas of Zambales) was founded. Here, their children learn their culture and traditions; their songs, dances and prayers, and why it is so important to keep them alive. They learn not only how to read and write, but also how to speak their mind. Their education is used to preserve their identity and cultural heritage, and it looks towards the day that they can return to Mt. Pinatubo once again. According to Ric, “*masarap talagang makita ang mga batang mag-graduate*” [It’s a good feeling to see the children graduate].

The Aetas have taken on the challenge of handling the courses in PBAZ by themselves. They have also expanded the system to take care of basic education for their out-of-school youth and adults. This learning system

seeks to codify and systematize their indigenous knowledge system, and combine it with the knowledge and skills that they need to interact with the more dominant economic, political, and cultural system (Wall, n.d.).

What makes their literacy program different is that it stems from their cultural and linguistic background, as well as from a holistic context, which incorporates an “understanding of the socio-economic environment in which they live” (Wall, n.d.). It encourages them to not merely learn but to live their culture, so that their children and grandchildren will return to Pinatubo with the same love and respect their ancestors had before them. They are emboldened to interact with others, while still drawing their pride from their cultural identity.

Performance as Resistance

Paylot Cabalic, one of the leaders of LAKAS, says that

We have learned to take pride in our cultural heritage and we have committed ourselves to the service of our people. We are moving towards the enhancement and the promotion of our culture. We also share our culture to other peoples for mutual enrichment (Fondevilla, 1991, p. 19).

This is a resounding sentiment of the Aetas of LAKAS who work in Zoobic. Their performance is a means of negotiating their identity, not only with their audience, but also amongst themselves. Moreover, we cannot discount that the Aetas are aware of the ways by which they are represented by other people, especially by the media. Ben Jugalan, secretary of LAKAS, says in a letter that

Nalulungkot kami dahil maraming nagsusulat tungkol sa amin at pinag-uusapan kami ng mga radyo, diyaryo, tilibisyon at iba pa at kadalasan ang mga pinagsasabi ay malayo sa katotohanan at minamaliit ang aming buhay at kultura. Masakit sa amin na kami ay pinagtatawanan at bigyan ng mababang pagtingin sa lipunan [We are saddened because many people write about us, and we are being talked about on the radio, in newspapers, and on television; but what they say is far from the truth and belittles our life and culture. It is painful for us that we are laughed at and looked down on in society] (Fondevilla, 1991, n.p.).

Hence, their performances can also be seen as a site of resistance. Whereas in history, resistance was made apparent by their refusal to be acculturated; now, they employ new means of resisting. We must take note that their performances do not resist the representations that they feel portray them in false light, nor are they resisting the wrong perceptions of who they are. The Aetas are conscious of what the audience and maybe even the management expects from a ‘cultural’ performance. They utilize this as an

opportunity to create an Aeta identity that is informed by these expectations. This market-mediated identity is a construct that remains out of context, but it is still an identity that the Aetas engage themselves in as part of their performance. They are aware that this identity is part of the spectacle. They manifest their resistance by constructing this representation themselves, and by catering to the market's expectations through negotiating an Aeta identity specific to their performances in Zoobic.

As performers, the Aetas have chosen to show the audience only certain parts of their culture. In the case of Zoobic, they decided that dance is the potential space in which they can project their desired identity. Likewise, of the numerous traditional dances in their culture, they only wish to demonstrate four of them during the program: the dance of the dragonfly, the monkey dance, the war dance, and the courtship dance. Ric shares that they have many other dances for various occasions, but that it is not possible to show them all. Although it could be based on practical grounds such as space and time limitations, it could also be a selective process that involves the identity they want to project, or an identity they want the audience to consume. This is a demonstration of how identity is negotiated, precisely because it is situational – it is informed by the context in which it is found.

It is also interesting to note their performance of fire poi dancing and fire breathing in Zoobic's night safari. It is an unexpected yet patent display of resistance to the cultural conventions in which they are confined. They go beyond showing off their traditional dances by showcasing a set of skills that they have learned and mastered as performers in Zoobic.

In summary, the Aetas in Zoobic resist the exoticization of their identity by being active in the construction of these representations. In the aftermath of the Mt. Pinatubo eruption, the “collective experience of disaster [gave rise] to a process of identity development for the Aetas” (Seitz, 2004: 12). They took initiatives towards establishing a literacy program suited to them. They learned to take pride in their heritage and

consequently, fortified their cultural identity by “promoting it and sharing it with others for mutual enrichment” (Fondevilla, 1991: p. 19).

Pile (1997) says that in occupying space, we change that space. Here, we see that what could have been a potential site of oppression, the Aetas have turned into a site of resistance; that is, a space where they can negotiate an Aeta identity suited for their audience. More than that, they claim it as a space where they can assert and draw pride from their cultural identity.

CHAPTER IV: **AETAS THROUGH THE LENS**

Buhay Aeta

Whereas the previous chapter discussed the representation of Aetas in Zoobic, this one explores the representation of Aetas in a broadcast text, a documentary called *Buhay Aeta*. Produced by ABS-CBN Regional Network Group, *Buhay Aeta* is an episode of the Filipino magazine television show, *Mag TV Na! Atin 'To!* (Ofilas, Copyright 2008). This 40-minute episode was nominated for Best Adult Educational/Cultural Program in the 33rd Catholic Mass Media Awards in 2011.

The episode begins with various scenes of Aetas doing different activities: tilling soil, cooking over a wood fire, and eating from banana leaves. After the show's opening billboard, it enumerates some of the different names by which the Aetas are called – Ayta, Agta, Ata, Ati, Pugot and Baluga. The narrator-host says that these are names that are already linked to a set of beliefs about the people they refer to. Quick interviews from ordinary people reveal what comes to mind when they think of 'Aeta.' A tricycle driver responds: "*Mga maliliit na tao. Mga katutubo natin.* [Small people. Our natives.]" A girl on the street says: "*Maganda din silang mga kaibigan.* [They could be good friends.]" A policeman simply quips: "*Mga nakabahag.* [Those who wear bahag.]" Another man responds: "*Mga Pinoy na itim.* [Filipinos who are black.]" The narration picks up from this last remark: many legends have it that those who are dark-skinned are shunned because it is supposedly a punishment for being disobedient to their gods. To this, they attribute why having dark skin elicits discrimination from others.

From here, it describes the Aetas as being known for their moderate to dark complexion, round eyes, curly hair, and small stature but agile bodies. They live simple lives and make a livelihood through agriculture, hunting and fishing. They provide for their needs through sheer hard work and perseverance.

It then goes to a video of an Aeta man, woman, and child dancing, all wearing their native clothing. The man carries with him a bow and arrow. It describes music and dance as integral to their culture, and inextricable from their rituals and ceremonies. Through dance, they believe they become closer to good spirits. Through dance, they are able to express such feelings as gratitude and repentance. Through dance, they maintain close ties with their community and heritage.

The Aetas have kept their culture intact because it is the legacy they wish to impart with future generations. But the show raises this question: What happens when environment dictates change and fate decides to step in? This is a transition to the second part of the show, a discussion on the aftermath of Mt. Pinatubo's eruption. It shows the specific setting of the program, an Aeta resettlement village in Iba, Zambales called Lupang Pangako [Promise Land]. They explain that life here is simple and peaceful. It is not very different from life in the city in that families have homes, people busy themselves with different activities, and children play freely in the community.

The documentary also shows the Lupang Pangako Resettlement School, where the children attend classes as a means of uplifting their status in life in the future. However, they still face many problems because of the challenges in their community.

In an interview, Chieftain Rudy Cabali talks about what life has been like since their resettlement in this village: "*Mahirap talaga, Ale ko. Lalo na kung ganitong wala kaming hanapbuhay. Minsan meron kami. Minsan, wala.* [It's really difficult, my friend. Especially when we don't have livelihood. Sometimes, we have. Other times, there's nothing.]" He adds, "*Ang palay namin, ang bukid, mga kalabaw – lahat natabunan ng lahar. Kaya nahirapan kaming magtrabaho ngayon, dahil 'yong una ay nawala.* [Our grains, our fields, our carabaos were all covered in lahar. We have a hard time working now because we lost everything we had before.]"

The narrator explains that the Aetas' life prior to the eruption was much better than what they have now. Twenty to thirty years ago, they already had their own land

which provided their main sources of livelihood. Paniong Cabali, the village's councillor, shares: “*Sa amin noon dati, malawak ang lupain. Kahit saan pumunta, walang magbabawal sa amin. Ngayon, may limitasyon ‘yong pagtatrabaho namin. Kaya masasabi ko na mahirap kasi may limitasyon. Kumbaga, dito lang ‘yong area namin, dito lang kami dapat magtrabaho. Dati, kahit umaalis ‘yong mga lider, malaya kaming makakaalis kahit wala kaming iiwan sa pamilya namin. Punta lang sila sa bundok, makakakuha na sila ng wild banana. Kung ulam, pupunta lang sila sa sapa, may makukuha na silang hipon. May pagkain na sila. Sa ngayon, kapag umaalis kami, wala talaga.* [Before, our land was vast. No one will prohibit you from going anywhere. Now, I can say that it is difficult because our work has limitations. Our area is only this big, and we can only work here. Before, our leaders can leave without worrying about their families. They can go to the forest and get wild bananas, or go to the water, and get shrimp. They already have their food. Now, when the leaders leave, there's really nothing.]”

Sixta Bangug from the Municipal Social Welfare Development conveys why she thinks the Aetas have not been able to fully rise up from the disaster: “*Dahil sa kultura nila. Mas gusto pa rin nila sa bundok nakatira. ‘Yon ang nakagisnan nila mula sa kanilang mga ninuno... Mas satisfied sila sa isang damit lang, nakapaa. Mas gusto nila sa bundok.* [It's because of their culture. They still prefer to live in the mountains because that's what they have known from their ancestors... They are more satisfied with only one piece of clothing, with being barefoot. They like it more in the mountains.]”

It goes on to say that the Aetas have not lost hope, as long as there are institutions that continue to help and care for them. Ms. Bangug states that: “*Dito sa local government unit, napakarami na naming programang ibinigay sa kanila kasi maraming problema ang nakita namin. Wala silang pinag-aralan. Hindi marunong sumulat at bumasa. Nagkaroon kami ng literacy class at day care. Binigyan namin sila ng hanapbuhay, self-employment assistance, at food for work.* [In our local government unit, we have given them so many programs because we saw that they had many

problems. They haven't gone to school and don't know how to read and write. We gave them literacy classes, day care, livelihood, self-employment assistance, and food for work.]” She also says that what the Aetas can do is to participate and become more active in these programs, and to look for other agencies that can help them improve their lives.

Another break in the program signals the third and final part of the show. One of the hosts, Kiko, is visiting an Aeta family whom he says he has known for quite some time. Ariel and Mary Canduli welcome Kiko to their home, and introduce him to their son Jayson. Jayson is a 17-year-old sophomore in high school who loves to draw, much to the ire of his mother. “*Gusto kong maging artist balang-araw*, [I want to be an artist someday],” he shares with Kiko. Mary Canduli tells Jayson that he must not waste his time drawing because it will not make him money. There is even a re-enactment of a scene where Mary reprimands Jayson and tells him to stop drawing because it only wastes money. Little does she know that Jayson makes a little cash from his illustrations, and also teaches art to the other Aeta children.

Kiko accompanies Jayson to the school where he sometimes teaches art classes. Kiko remarks that “*Marami sa atin ang nakakaalam na ang mga Aeta ay walang alam at mahirap. Pero hindi. Sa mga nakikita ko ngayon, sila ay bayani.*” [Many of us think that the Aetas are ignorant and poor, but they are not. From what I can see, they are heroes.]

The Candulis are portrayed as a normal Filipino family. They are shown praying before eating a meal, which they even share with Kiko. The next day, he offers to take Jayson with him on a trek to Mount Pinatubo. Before he leaves, there is a seemingly scripted scene where Jayson catches his mother looking at one of his drawings depicting their family. Without words, mother and son come together in a warm embrace.

On the way to the trek, Jayson shares his excitement because it is his first time to see Mount Pinatubo. They take the tourist trail to the crater of the volcano. Kiko

narrates that before, he could not help but think of the Aetas who were affected by the volcano. Now, it has become a paradise that our country prides itself in. Upon reaching the summit, Kiko remarks that Jayson could hardly contain the excitement in his face. All Jayson says is, “*Gustong gusto ko talaga makita ang Pinatubo. Gusto kong makita ‘yong shape.* [I really wanted to see Pinatubo. I wanted to see its shape.]”

Finally, they go back to the Candulis’ house where the show is concluded. Not surprisingly, it ends with the hosts surprising Jayson’s family with food, groceries, and ABS-CBN t-shirts. Jayson also receives a special gift of art supplies. He seems genuinely grateful as he gives Kiko a tight hug.

A Deeper Look at *Buhay Aeta*

Buhay Aeta is a documentary that is meant to entertain as well as educate the viewers on the cultural diversity among communities. I can attest that on some grounds, it certainly attempted to avoid the prejudice in representing the indigenous community. It constantly referred to them using ABS-CBN’s tagline “*Kapamilya.*” “*Kapamilyang Aetas*” or brother Aetas attempts to show that they are equally members of our society as any other community. When they showed the Canduli family saying grace before sharing a meal together, it tried to show that the Aetas practice the same customs as the typical Filipino family. The narration also frequently reiterated the richness of their culture, and the longstanding heritage that they were able to keep intact over the centuries. However, it is not enough for the narration to declare that the Aeta culture is rich, when the visuals of the program did little to demonstrate this. Majority of the time, the shots simply featured the landscape of the area, or Aeta children either playing with each other or engaging the camera. Other than that, the Aeta community was mostly shown sitting and talking with one another.

There are also ways that the Aetas were exoticized in the show. First, they are still set up as a spectacle for the viewers. This was seen in the only part of the program that provided a look into their culture: the Aetas dancing. Dance is a very communal ritual for the Aetas. In the program, this dance is not performed in the presence of the

Aeta community, but merely for the camera. Thus, they are once again made into a spectacle. Moreover, the re-enactment of Mary Canduli reprimanding her son Jayson for his art, is another instance of presenting them as performers.

Next, they are still portrayed as inherently different because of their culture. It still plays to the typical representation of the Aetas: Filipinos who are short and dark; natives defined by what they wear. The viewers are then permitted to define themselves as civilized, as opposed to the Aetas' primitiveness. They are still represented as illiterate or uneducated. One can gather from the show that their capabilities are limited to just tending to their land.

At this point, I would like to illustrate how the exoticization of Aetas in the program gives way to oppressive representations of them. It failed to contextualize the Aetas' situation after the Mt. Pinatubo eruption. It did not provide a sound contextualization that could have explained the difficulties the Aetas encountered as regards the work and education they had to cope with after their evacuation of Mt. Pinatubo. The program neglected to merit the significance of Mt. Pinatubo in Aeta culture, and why it possesses such great weight over the way they live and rebuild their lives. Although this may not have been one of the aims of the documentary, it is a crucial part of Aeta history that should not be taken merely at surface level.

Sixta Bangug categorically states that the reason why Aetas have not been able to recover from the disaster of Mt. Pinatubo is because their culture thwarts them from improving their lives. According to her, they only know one way of life - that which they led in the mountains - and thus, they are incapable of adapting to the conditions in the resettlement village. The program also gives the message that different institutions are the ones responsible for the Aetas' survival. The reason why the Aetas get by is principally because of the help they receive from the government, or other organizations that are kind enough to extend their support. It seems to say that the Aetas had no part in building their lives after the disaster; that they are exceedingly dependent on the help of others to survive. Thus, they are represented as victims: weak, vulnerable, and helpless.

In addition, this program does not deviate from the common practice of the broadcast industry to represent a marginalized group – in this case, the Aetas – as a charity case, while portraying themselves as some sort of saving grace.

This leads to my next point: the program communicates that the Aetas are incapable of sustaining themselves; thus, they are certainly incapable of representing themselves, too. The assumed essentials in life such as livelihood, education, medicine, and even water are provided for them by the government and various organizations. As such, the representation of their identity is supplied for them as well. Ultimately, *Buhay Aeta* reinforces the inferior representation of Aetas that have become commonplace in our society. Furthermore, I consider the task of bringing Jayson to Mt. Pinatubo as an act that shows how the program took it upon itself to represent an Aeta to himself. Having never been to Mt. Pinatubo at 17 years old, Jayson was reduced to being a tourist at the place his ancestors called home since time immemorial. He is represented as only a visitor, or worse, a stranger to his hometown. He had to rely on the program to bring him to this place that is inextricably tied to his identity.

My claim is that *Buhay Aeta* takes the representation of Aeta identity further by representing them as disabled *and* incapable. The eruption of Mt. Pinatubo has disabled them from rebuilding the life they had before because they have already experienced losing everything they had. Their resettlement site has disabled them from working to their full potential because of the limitations it imposes upon them. By ‘incapable,’ I do not only mean their inability to represent themselves; rather, ‘incapable’ in its basest sense: incapable of coping in a different environment, incapable of surviving without external assistance, and certainly incapable of showing resistance against oppressive structures and representations. The program represents the Aetas as incapable because they have been and continue to be chained by poverty. Moreover, it sends the message that they lack the means to unshackle themselves from this structure because they are highly reliant upon other institutions for their survival.

CHAPTER V:

CRITIQUING CONSTRUCTIONS, CHANNELING CHANGE

From the previous discussions, we can draw a parallel between the representations of Aetas in Zoobic Safari and in the program, *Buhay Aeta*. In both cases, one can argue that the Aetas are produced as the Other through the process of exoticization. That is, first, they are set up as a spectacle to be watched or observed by outsiders. Second, they are represented as having an intrinsic sense of eccentricity which makes them peculiar, and inherently different from the observers.

However, the difference between the two representations lies in resistance, in the active or passive involvement of the Aetas in constructing representations of themselves. I contend that the Aetas in Zoobic manifest their resistance in different ways. First, their performances in Zoobic emphasize two things about them: pride in their cultural heritage, and the ability to adapt and redefine new innovations. In the day safari, they feature their traditional dances, while in the night safari, they demonstrate new skills that they have learned, modified, and mastered. By sharing their culture with the visitors and showing that they are proud of their heritage, the Aetas are resisting the oppressive representations that scoff or laugh at their identity. In performing new and different routines like poi dance and fire breathing, they are resisting the conventions in which their identity is confined.

Second, the Aetas in Zoobic are active in the construction of these representations. They are involved in and conscious of the negotiation of identity entailed in creating representations of themselves. Thus, they are able to shape the identity that they project in Zoobic. In other words, the Aetas assume the task of representing themselves. What is more is that they take on this role with a clear aspiration in mind. They are driven by the goal of preserving their culture so that they can look forward to returning to Mt. Pinatubo armed with a strong sense of identity and an enduring legacy intact.

Finally, the Aetas in Zoobic ultimately represent themselves as empowered and enabled. They are able to build their lives even after the disaster of Mt. Pinatubo. Hence, they are able to resist oppressive representations and stand tall on their own.

In contrast, *Buhay Aeta* maintains the typical representation of Aetas as different, inferior, almost archaic. It does not provide a new insight to the Aetas' life and culture. The program even faults their culture for the Aetas' alleged inability to improve their lives after the disaster. The representations in the program perpetuate the notion that the Aetas are not only primitive, they are also unable to adapt to the changing ways of the world.

In overlooking the context of the Mt. Pinatubo aftermath, *Buhay Aeta* presents the indigenous community as resigned to their current situation. As if to show that the Aetas have no goal or aspiration, the representations in the program seem to say that they are not doing anything to change or improve the conditions of their life simply because they are incapable, and not because of the difficulties brought about by the sudden uprooting from the life they had always known. *Buhay Aeta* shows that they merely rely on other institutions to provide for them, as well as identify and address the problems of their community such as literacy and employment. This brings to mind the process by which the Orient is produced as the Other: the West obtains knowledge about the Orient in order to acquire the power to represent them. In the case of *Buhay Aeta*, the power to know and represent the indigenous community is afforded to the powerful institutions that help them in the guise of charitable works.

This is the striking representation of Aetas that I gathered from the program: the Aetas as a charity case, victims who are helpless and vulnerable. In stark contrast to the Aetas in Zoobic who take the initiative to be seen and heard, *Buhay Aeta* shows that the Aetas are bound by the limitations of their resettlement site. While the Aetas in Zoobic show resistance to oppression in different ways, *Buhay Aeta* displays them as dependent on the structures that chain them to poverty. Whereas the Aetas in Zoobic represent

themselves as an empowered people, *Buhay Aeta* perpetuates the oppression of the indigenous community by representing the Aetas as disabled and incapable.

Conclusion

“To view the Aeta as a particularly vulnerable group was and still is inaccurate (vulnerability as an inherent inability to react accordingly with or without outside support in a confrontation with external risks)” (Seitz, 2004: p. 8). To represent them as such is an even bigger transgression. Prejudiced views of our indigenous people have pervaded national consciousness since and because of our colonial past. This makes it difficult and yet more imperative to break this oppressive tradition.

The Aetas in Zoobic show that they need not be assimilated into mainstream culture in order to avoid being marginalized. On the contrary, they show pride in their culture by authoring the representation of their own identity. Although existing structures make oppression possible, the Aetas demonstrate that they can resist and overcome it. The Aetas in Zoobic show that they can preserve their culture and not be estranged from the rest of society. Instead of falling victim, the Aetas emerge as an empowered people.

On the other hand, the television documentary *Buhay Aeta* maintains the view that our indigenous people are inferior and primitive. This is problematic because as a product of the broadcast industry, it possesses an undeniable role in influencing public opinion and shaping world views. Whether to entertain or educate, a constant stream of information from broadcast media is consumed and interpreted by the people. Thus, propagating a representation of the Aetas as vulnerable and helpless further legitimizes the already existing inadequate notions about them.

The challenge then remains to be critical of the representations given by broadcast media, not only on the matters of indigenous identity. Manufactured ‘truths,’ regardless of its accuracy, can easily acquire reality when depicted by an institution as powerful as the broadcast industry. As future practitioners in the field, it is important to be aware of

the crucial role we play in molding the perspectives of the people. Thus, we must endeavor to enlighten the public about indigenous identity instead of continuing to shroud them with existing false representations. We must answer the call to incorporate the diverse parts of our culture in an authentic, conscientious and dynamic manner. This is not only a challenge to transform the broadcast industry, but a step towards truly building a nation that liberates from oppression.

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Consent Form to Participate in the Study

Citing Space, Site-ing Identity: A Study on the Representation of Aetas in Zoobic

This is to state that I fully consent to participate in a study being conducted by Anna Camille Himala, an undergraduate student at the University of the Philippines, about the representation of Aetas at the Zoobic Safari. I am willing to participate in this research study that may include interviews, journal notes, photographs, or video footage. This study is undertaken under the supervision of Prof. Eulalio Guieb III, Department of Broadcast Communication, University of the Philippines Diliman.

Purpose of the Study

The study attempts to analyze and understand how Aetas are represented in Zoobic. It also looks into how the concept of space actualizes the representation of their identity. This study aims to provide insight into how the representation of indigenous identity is transposed to other broadcast texts.

Procedures

The study will involve the observation of my informants' activities related to his work and life within Zoobic. The interviews will not be video taped and an audio recording device may be used only with the permission of the participant. If the participant should choose to opt for complete anonymity, an alias will be adopted to refer to him throughout this study. Any future use of the information will not be used without the participant's written consent.

Conditions of Participation

I understand that my participation in this study is **CONFIDENTIAL** (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity).

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequence.

I understand that the data from this study may or may not be published without prior consent from myself in the form of a written statement.

I understand the purpose of this study and know that there is no hidden motive of which I have not been informed.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) Ric Cabahic

SIGNATURE Ric Cabahic

WITNESS SIGNATURE JESSIE SORIA

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**I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS
AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS
STUDY.**

NAME (please print) DELIA C. DE JESUS 1/14/12

SIGNATURE hilday

WITNESS SIGNATURE