

Davis's Comment, formerly published in Positively Filipino:

Thank you for publishing Professor Michael Gonzalez's review of my video documentary, *Headhunting William Jones*. I was pleased to read that Gonzalez described my investigation as a "CSI-type simulation of the crime scene" as I tried to reconstruct what happened March 28, 1909, which also happened to be William Jones's 38th birthday.

I truly appreciated Prof Gonzalez's thorough historical background to help the reader understand the social and political context of that turn-of-the-century era in which a scramble for colonies all over the world took place.

The following comments of mine have been sequenced in the same order of the review text.

Prof. Gonzalez observed that "While it (animation of the assault on Jones) adds drama, it does not explain the Ilongot behavior or the verbal exchange that might have occurred between Jones and the perpetrators." Taking the latter remark first, there's no way I could have found any record of the verbal exchange that transpired between Jones and the Ilongots, principally, Palidat. The Ilongot behavior, on the other hand, was explained by the dispute regarding their failure to deliver all 6 balsas (rafts) Jones requested. What angered the Ilongots was Jones's threat to take the Chief Takadan hostage 20-kilometers downstream to Dumabato (Maddela today) as a way of black mailing the Ilongots into delivering the balance of two rafts. The film makes clear that the night before that fateful day, Jones prevented Takadan from returning to his village by being compelled to stay overnight against his will with Jones.

"Davis was able to track down and gain an interview with Pepito, a great grandson of Dumaliang, who at that time was Jones' teenage guide and assistant." This is incorrect; Pepito was the son of Romano.

"Something must have disturbed the Ilongot's sense of self to trigger a violent act on Jones." Yes, the answer is that the young warriors were fearful for Takadan's welfare if taken hostage. Even the Supreme Court of the Philippine Islands, in reviewing the death sentences of the court of first instance, begrudgingly recognized this Ilongot response as to be expected by any people seeing their leader threatened in this way.

Prof Gonzalez noted that "At times the narration is stretched, including a silly graphic trope of a halo-halo (the concoction of sugary fruit and beans mixed in ice shaving) to describe the mixed ethnicities of the U.S. expatriates interred in the North Cemetery where Jones remains were eventually laid to rest." In answering the first criticism, I am not quite sure what Gonzalez was referring to when he said ... the narration is stretched. My guess is that the 95-minute version he reviewed seemed long. Since then, I have cut 5-minutes from the video, principally material found in the Apayao and Mormon Family History Center sequences which tended to slow down the film's momentum.

As for the image of a halo-halo used in conjunction with the Echague cemetery custodian's reference to the neighboring "municipal" cemetery, I disagree that it was silly; to the contrary, it was funny but also instructive as non-Filipino audiences would have had no clue as to the meaning of that word in that context. The halo-halo term was a reference only to the municipal cemetery of Echague which buried everybody, meaning all non-Catholics, not U.S. expatriates in North Cemetery. Besides, a film of this seriousness needs some kind of comic relief, don't you agree?

Gonzalez deftly observed that "Neither does it (the film) expound much on Jones' reflection on 'wild' peoples being himself a Fox Indian." Yes, this is an important insight by the reviewer and one that I have been ever-mindful of in thinking about the irony that Jones himself is an aboriginal who lost sight of his origins as a Native American. To further address your question, there are no writings of Jones in either his diaries or letters about this self-reflection. But I would not rule out such introspection in his letters to fiancée Caroline Andrus, all of which she burned in 1948.

According to Gonzalez's citation of Renato and Michelle Rosaldo's research that headhunting "was an extraordinary resolution to the emotional state of "grief" that the person was experiencing. Killing happens because of "heavy" emotions that weigh and oppress "saddened hearts" and become expressed as "rage." This finding definitely applied to the story of an anthropologist stationed in Cambodia that the Late Prof. Solheim made reference to in this film. With respect to Jones, it would be a stretch to believe that the 20-Ilongots to have met Jones and Romano at Pung-Gu Rapids were in any state of "grief" with "saddened hearts". This sweeping statement fails to take into account that headhunting occurs for many other reasons such as revenge, rites of passage into adulthood and territorial disputes.

Interestingly, the Ilongot mayor of Nagtipunan, Quirino, Rosario K. Camma, wrote me in June of this year in conjunction to my proposal to erect a national historical marker in his town regarding this incident and said, "Perhaps, both parties may have fallen prey over their miscalculations over each other, particularly so on the side of the Ilongot tribe who are uncompromising on their ground, especially in situations under pressure."

In his closing remarks of the review, Prof. Gonzalez noted that "Romano's later reflection (re the story he told his children) of the incident that Jones was killed because he was going to "leave" the Ilongot reveals the notion Jones departure was a source of Ilongot grief and sadness. The Ilongot acted in accordance with their grief." I am sorry, I strongly disagree for the reasons I have stated above. This incident cannot be explained in such simplistic terms as it ignores other salient facts such as the Ilongot's fore-knowledge of Jones's eventual departure due his request for balsas and the fact he was leaving the area, in this case, to escape from the Ilongots intent on killing and beheading him. If the Ilongots didn't want Jones to leave, they would have killed him much sooner and not made any balsas for him. Yes, they were angry that Jones was intent on taking their chief hostage, but this doesn't apply to the "grief" and "saddened hearts" theory Gonzalez attempts to impose on a proper understanding of the motivation of the 20-warriors.

It should be said that the Ilongot's resentment of William Jones didn't begin overnight either, but had been developing for some time principally due to Jones's use of shaming techniques to motivate Ilongots into undertaking projects for him, so Jones's threat to take Takadan hostage was the last straw as far as the Ilongots were concerned.

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