

**EXPERIENCING CULTURAL HERITAGE
AND INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN BANAUE**

**A SPECIAL RESEARCH PAPER
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**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ANTHROPOLOGY**

BY

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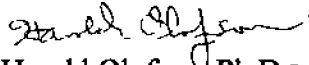
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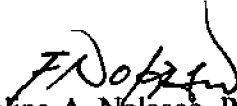
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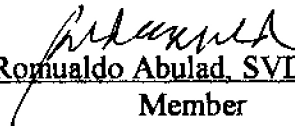
This Special Research Paper entitled "EXPERIENCING CULTURAL HERITAGE AND INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN BANAUE" prepared and submitted by CARL MILOS RUCHINA BULILAN, SVD in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN ANTHROPOLOGY has been reviewed and is recommended for acceptance and approval

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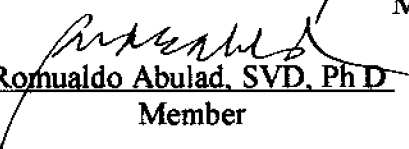
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Introduction

The Ifugao are an indigenous people of the Cordillera mountains in northern Luzon, Philippines who have been able to preserve much of their centuries-long cultural heritage, as embodied in certain rituals, wet rice terraces, woodcarving, weaving, and others. The archaeologist Robert Maher (1973, 1981) has through radiocarbon analysis been able to find a date of 2950 ± 250 B P for the lowest levels of a house terrace on the Almit River just below Banaue town. The group belongs to what the early anthropologists termed the "head hunters" of northern Philippines (Willcox 1912). The culture has largely survived the Spanish and American colonial influences, and the short Japanese occupation, partly because of its relative geographical isolation and native resistance. However in taking control of the area, the Spanish were able to construct roads, and the Americans to provide Western education through the famous "Thomasite" school teachers, and curb headtaking (Tejon 1982, Nahume 2003).

Known for their rice terraces and the technological knowledge and human effort that have gone into building them (Conklin 1980, Seavoy 1980, Medina

2003), the Ifugao are also noted for their traditional agroforestry and farming systems (Conklin 1980, for a review of Conklin on Ifugao agroforestry, see Olofson 1980) Today, the Ifugao have opened their doors to visitors Tourism has become one of its primary industries, especially in the town of Banaue The industry has affected local land use and created new business opportunities and jobs for some of the people Much has changed to accommodate the needs of the visitors

Theoretical Background

Greenwood (1977) defined culture as “an integrated system of meaning by means of which the nature of reality is established and maintained ” Greenwood gives fundamental importance to meaning in human life, and emphasizes authenticity and the moral tone it imparts to life experience Thus, anything “that falsifies, disorganizes, or challenges the participants’ belief in the authenticity of their culture threatens it with collapse ” He illustrates this by describing how tourism has led to the commoditization of a ritual in the Spanish Basque town of Fuenterrabia

McIntosh (as quoted by Smith 2001) classifies tourism as “the science, art and business of attracting and transporting visitors, accommodating them and graciously catering to their needs and wants ” It results in the encounter of the histories of two or more cultures/subcultures, thus giving rise to a touristic system

(Nash 1981) Smith (1977) describes the tourist as a temporarily leisured person who travels away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change

In its early stage, international tourism relied on cultural resources and on the “sublimity” of landscape In the last half century, the industry has become attractive, especially for many Third World countries, as an easy option for economic development It is believed to help eliminate the widening gap between developed and developing societies and contribute substantially to the social development and general progress of the latter (Crnk 1989)

The study of tourism as an anthropological subject started late Anthropologists were aware for many years of the impact of tourism on host communities, but many refrained from publishing their observations because tourism was not considered “proper” within an anthropology which had to focus on traditional societies (Nuñez 1977 207)

The interest in tourism among anthropologists began when change-sensitive researchers discovered the impact of the industry in the development of host places Valene Smith’s (1977) collection of essays opens discussion on several themes tourism as cultural commoditization (Greenwood), tourism as a form of imperialism (Nash), the impact of tourism upon indigenous art forms (Deith), and other relevant issues Nash (1996) further elaborates these themes through his three anthropological approaches tourism as acculturation or development, tourism as a personal transition, and tourism as a kind of superstructure Another issue

that has recently been explored is that of "indigenous tourism." Butler and Hinch (1996) provide a set of essays on the responses of indigenous groups to questions about the growing tourism activities in their once relatively isolated lands. Here, indigenous tourism "refers to tourism activity in which indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of attraction" (Hinch and Butler 1996: 9).

In this paper, I would like to focus on the two general themes of acculturation and commoditization of culture, particularly with respect to the desacralization of religious rituals, the development of new livelihoods, and the commercialization of cultural symbols as a means of obtaining economic gain.

The concept of cultural commoditization is based on the capitalist idea of commodity. Anything that can be produced, priced, bought, and sold is considered a commodity (Greenwood 1977: 130). Now, through touristic activities, cultural elements and practices are packaged for tourists' consumption. Social relations are shaped by market exchange. In the process, cultural meaning is altered to fit the preferences or tastes of these onlookers. In effect, local culture is expropriated and exploited.

Acculturation, on the other hand, as used by anthropologists, refers to "sociocultural change, desirable or not, that results from culture contact" (Nash 1996: 26). The tourists' contact with indigenous peoples produces varieties of cultural

and social change that are likely to affect the livelihood of individuals in the host communities (Nuñez 1977) With the coming of touristic activities, certain forces are set in motion and result in changes in the host people's way of life (Nash 1996)

With a positive light, Boissevain (1996), in a study on the commoditization of rituals in Malta, seems to argue that commoditization does not necessarily mean destroying cultural systems Rather, it only imbues new meaning into traditional practices Lewis Deith (1977) describes how the tourism industry among the Indians of the Southern United States facilitates the reawakening of cultural values and the restoration of indigenous arts and crafts that had nearly disappeared Laurence Loeb (1977), in his study of Iranian Jewish merchants, focuses on how antique trade, including the "fake art" made and marketed to tourists, has positive values supportive of an ethnic minority struggling to survive as a distinct entity in an unfavorable climate

On the issue of livelihood change, Lisa Faulkenberry *et al* (2000) investigate the impact of tourism activities especially on the local African American residents of South Carolina's Sea Island, leading to increased property taxes, potential displacement of people, change in livelihood activities, and commoditization of cultural heritage Wall and Long (1996) explore the Balinese people's response to tourism opportunities With a system of locally owned "homestay" accommodations, they are able to participate actively in the tourism industry to

the extent of modifying traditional architectural cosmology. Lastly, Gurung *et al* (1996) look into how traditional livelihood and family-life are affected by the growing importance of tourist guides in Nepal.

Methodology

As a missionary Brother, I was temporarily assigned to Banaue, Ifugao, an SVD parish. This gave me an opportunity to observe and gather data about Ifugao culture. Hiking to all the barangays of the municipality (including remote villages which only a few tourists dare to visit), I was able to gather ethnographic information mostly from informal conversations.

Interpretations and translations were made with the help of key informants. One was a lady catechist (in her mid-50's) from Barangay Ducligan. Two were former tourist guides from Barangays Anaba and Bocos, one of them was working at the parochial school (in his early 40's) and the other (in his early 30's) was a part-time tricycle driver. Other informants included ordinary village people, high school students, school teachers, church workers, and lodge owners (including the manager of the Banaue Hotel).

I lived in Banaue for ten months (from August 2005 to May 2006), and developed personal relationships in the town proper as well as in the villages (since I would usually go to the barrios together with the parish priest to conduct