

The Grand Cañao: Ethnic and Ritual Dilemmas in an Upland Philippine Tourist Festival

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In 1887, in the Zoological Gardens in Madrid, an *Exposición de las Islas Filipinas* was held to showcase the peoples and material culture of Spain's only major Asian colony. One of the most popular attractions was the "Igorot Village," where eight highland Filipinos, or *Igorotes*, from Luzon's Cordillera occupied replicas of their indigenous houses, sang and ritually danced in their g-strings around sacrificed pigs, much to the amusement and wonder of the people of Madrid (SCOTT 1975, 12-13). In 1904, the Americans included a similar Igorot village in the St. Louis Exhibition, which was held to celebrate the westward expansion of the United States 100 years after the Louisiana Purchase (FRY 1983, 39-40). Four years later, the American colonial government banned the public exhibition of Philippine tribal peoples without legislative consent (SCOTT 1975, 2).

While the public display of exotic tribal dances, costumes and ritual sacrifices was deemed unseemly by the colonial government in 1908, seventy years later (in 1978) a strikingly similar exhibition was sponsored in the City of Baguio by the Ministry of Tourism and the urban commercial elite. As in the previous exhibitions during colonial times, representatives of the various highland Luzon ethno-linguistic groups were brought from their local mountain communities to present their traditional rituals and dances in front of thousands of foreign and lowland Filipino tourists.

Early world exhibitions of tribal peoples amidst exotic tropical plants and animals expressed colonial dominance over subordinated peoples as much as it did Western fascination with their unique lifestyles. In the early years of American pacification efforts in the Cordillera, it

also became a policy of Dean Worcester of the Philippine Commission to regularly sponsor rituals and athletic field days in order to both assert colonial influence over unruly headhunters and to redirect their energies toward other competitive endeavors (REPORT OF THE PHILIPPINE COMMISSION 1908, 5–6). JENISTA (1987, 101–103) documents how early American governors of Ifugao portrayed themselves as having superior “spiritual power” by co-opting local spirit effigies (*bulol*) and turning them into symbolic supporters of American authority. While Jenista portrays this policy as being very successful, BARTON (1930, 128–130) commented on how highland leaders were “forced” to attend these ceremonies—and even occasionally to present rituals for visiting influential representatives of the American regime. He also noted the reluctance of highland peoples to perform their more sacred rituals on these occasions.

While the ideological struggles of highland peoples who participated in public ritual displays to entertain American officials is impossible to recapture today, the state-sponsored cultural festival held in Baguio City in 1978 presented them with a somewhat similar dilemma. This dilemma of performing a ritual for a non-local audience arose due to the growing interest—in the Philippines and elsewhere in Southeast Asia—in showcasing minority peoples’ cultural traditions in ethnic festivals (e.g., WOOD 1984). Recent anthropological studies of tourism focus on the socio-economic causes of tourism (e.g., SMITH 1977; NASH 1981; COHEN 1984), including its tendency to increase ethnic consciousness (e.g., MCKEAN 1977; ESMAN 1982; VOLKMAN 1984; VAN DEN BERGHE and KEYES 1984; MACCANNELL 1984). Much attention also has been given to the tourist’s search for authenticity, and how local populations stage traditional displays of rituals to satisfy tourist demands (e.g., MACCANNELL 1973, 1976; SCHUDSON 1979). Such studies have tended to ignore the process, however, whereby local cultural groups grapple with the problem of determining what outsiders might view as “authentic” elements of their own culture, and of how local groups struggle to rationalize the performance of what are, or once were, sacred rituals. The initial tourist contact poses dilemmas to social or ethnic groups over how to determine what aspects of their lifestyle are most appealing to outsiders and what is unique to them as a cultural group. Such dilemmas do not occur in isolation in multi-ethnic areas, but often become part of larger, on-going struggles among minority groups to define or maintain politically or economically relevant symbols of ethnic identity.

This paper discusses the struggle that occurred between the Ibaloi and Kankana-ey of Benguet Province over whose ritual traditions were

most authentic and which ritual was most appropriate for tourist consumption. Ritual traditions play an important role in defining ethnic identity among peripheral groups in Indonesia (e.g., ATKINSON 1983; VOLKMAN 1984; HEFNER 1985; TSING 1987; RUSSELL 1989), as they do in the Cordillera. When rituals are presented to tourists, however, the performance can become a stage for the public expression of goals and objectives that are quite different from those engendered in less public and less political contexts. Traditions do not constitute a coherent rendering of custom, but exhibit qualities of reflexivity and continual modification based on a group's social experiences with the wider society (e.g., LINNEKIN 1983; HOBBSAWM 1983). It is not only the national society that structures such experiences, but as I argue here, also the local, in some cases more immediate, context of ethnic interaction among peripheral groups themselves.

This analysis concentrates on the background and behind-the-scenes organization of the Grand Caño (or the "grand ritual") in Baguio City rather than on the usual performative aspects described in the anthropology of tourism literature. In the first part of this paper, I briefly outline the historical changes in inter-group relationships among the Ibaloi and Kankana-ey peoples. In the second part, I briefly describe the current context of ritual performance and belief in Benguet. The final part of the paper discusses the struggle between the political and religious leadership over how to present, for the first time, a ritual for tourists.

HISTORICAL CHANGES IN ECONOMIC AND ETHNIC RELATIONSHIPS

At the time of Spanish penetration, the primary unit of identification was the village or hamlet. There were no larger regional confederations, although the prestige rituals (*peshit* in Ibaloi; *pedit* in Kankana-ey) of the wealthy elite often drew large numbers of people from neighboring communities to attend the feasts. Benguet communities had an economy based on the swidden cultivation of root crops and pig husbandry. Wet rice agriculture was practiced in river valleys, particularly along the Agno River in eastern Benguet. Wet rice agriculture did not become widespread until the mid to late 1800s. In the communities that were heavily engaged in wet rice agriculture, socio-economic differentiation was marked between elites (*baknang*) and commoners (*abiteg*). Slaves (*baga-en*) existed in the mining communities and in the households of the wealthy aristocrats, who often controlled a large portion of the most fertile rice fields. Members of the elite maintained their wealth through intermarriage and their claim to high status and power through competitive ritual feasts.

Spanish missionaries referred to the inhabitants of Benguet as *Igorotes*, a term that early in the 20th century became inclusive of all Cordillera peoples. Ethnographers (e.g., BARROWS 1902; MOSS 1920; KEESING 1962) distinguished two major ethno-linguistic groupings in Benguet: the Ibaloi who live in the southern part of the province, and the Kankana-ey who occupy the northern region.

There are no major cultural distinctions, other than language, which differentiate Ibaloi and Kankana-ey. In the absence of meaningful overt distinctions, then, Ibaloi and Kankana-ey often resort to ethnic imagery when drawing intergroup comparisons (RUSSELL 1983). Most local ethnic stereotypes focus on perceived personality characteristics of ethnic groups or on selective interpretations of cultural history. These ethnic images are cultural constructions that have been invented in part to provide an appropriate content for what early American ethnographers ordained to be relevant ethno-linguistic groupings in Benguet. Contemporary Ibaloi along the Agno River Valley, for example, point particularly to the prestige feasts and great wealth of prominent members of their traditional elite (*baknang*) and to their presumably greater wealth in cattle herds, rice and gold up until the 1930s.¹ The emphasis on Ibaloi wealth in the past is more than simply a mnemonic device, as such emphases are precisely those contrasted with their remembrance of Kankana-ey.² Ibaloi elders today along the Agno River point out that the Kankana-ey were frequent cattle thieves and sometimes came to Kabayan to trade for rice.³ Such comparisons underscore the greater material wealth of Ibaloi in the past (e.g., MOSS 1920, 214).

What is intriguing about contemporary Ibaloi images of their past are their selective distortion of what were actually very diversified forms of production throughout both southern and northern Benguet. The Kankana-ey of northern Benguet, for example, have long been involved in the mining and trade of copper and gold to the lowlands. Although rice production may have developed first in the Agno River Valley area, rice producing communities were and are today still thriving along smaller river valleys throughout both Ibaloi and Kankana-ey regions. While the gold Ibaloi traded for cattle stimulated ritual status competition among their elite, the ritual basis of status competition (based on redistribution of meat in return for prestige) was equally well-developed and pervasive among both Ibaloi and Kankana-ey.

Market penetration throughout the Cordillera in the last sixty years, particularly in the forms of agribusiness, tourism, extractive mining and timber industries, has led to increasing movements of highland and lowland Filipinos throughout this region. Baguio City is the focus

of a lowland Philippine elite who dominate the political hierarchy and large-scale commerce, together with the Chinese and Indians. Most highland Filipino migrants remain largely confined to small-scale trade and depressed residential neighborhoods surrounding the city. In contrast to Baguio City, La Trinidad valley, the capital of Benguet Province, has become a center of primarily small-scale trade where highland Filipino culture and peoples predominate.

Ethnic participation in cash cropping and small-scale entrepreneurship has not been uniform. Ibaloi who farm wet rice paddies have been less interested in cash cropping compared to the Kankana-ey, who traditionally have occupied a larger percentage of land inappropriate for wet rice production. As EPSTEIN (1973, 245) has observed, alternative income opportunities tend to be perceived more positively and attractively by people depending on non-irrigated agriculture in a region where dry land farming co-exists with irrigated farming. This factor largely accounts for the dispersion of cash cropping and wet rice agriculture in Benguet today, although the extent of infrastructural development also is an important constraint on commercial cropping in many areas. The larger number of Kankana-ey involved in cash cropping has also stimulated their greater entry into non-farm employment and small business compared to Ibaloi (RUSSELL 1987).

The increased economic and political visibility of the Kankana-ey brought about by market integration form the basis of their current ethnic imagery. Just as the Ibaloi emphasize the prominence and wealth of their traditional leaders of the past, Kankana-ey selectively construe their image of the present by focusing on their prominent commercial leaders of more recent years when distinguishing themselves from Ibaloi. Their version, too, however, draws on their past by emphasizing how their current attitudes toward hard work and cooperation are a product of their more difficult and demanding environment. Kankana-ey consider themselves out-going, willing to take risks, and quick to seize on opportunities to make a profit in business. These distinctions emerge in conversations when Kankana-ey explain their greater commercial involvement compared to Ibaloi. They claim that Ibaloi resist greater commercial participation due to their feelings of superiority and a less progressive attitude. Again, such distinctions ignore that the same environmental constraints characterized many Ibaloi settlements outside the Agno River Valley region. They also downplay the fact that Ibaloi are very active in commercial agriculture in areas where wet rice was not well-developed or possible, and overlook the significant role of Ibaloi in local marketplace trade.

In sum, inter-ethnic imagery in Benguet selectively emphasizes

different periods of the past that are characterized by each group's comparative claims to economic and political prominence. The period of prominence in the memory of Ibaloi informants today is one which flourished particularly during the early decades of the 20th century. For the Kankana-ey, intergroup comparisons focus on the much more recent period since World War II—a period marked by their increasing economic and consequently political leverage in provincial affairs.

THE RITUAL CONTEXT TODAY

Most Benguet villages do not have a church, although most people have been baptized as Roman Catholic and consider themselves Christian. Catholic priests in La Trinidad, where I conducted fieldwork in 1978–1980, are very tolerant of indigenous ritual practices. Christian ritual activities are geographically separated from indigenous village rituals, which today are usually sponsored by households. In general, nominal belief in Christianity is not viewed by Ibaloi or Kankana-ey villagers as contradictory with continued participation in what they separately categorize as “our traditions” (*ugali*).

Ibaloi mortuary and curing rituals in the rural areas surrounding the City of Baguio and provincial capital of La Trinidad are regular occurrences and attract large numbers of nearby residents, but they have never caught the notice of lowland tourists or tourist promoters, nor have villagers ever aimed them at that audience. The huge, competitive prestige rituals (*peshit*) have declined along with the decreasing power of the traditional elite in recent years. While Benguet politicians often host feasts in order to attract or maintain a loyal following, such events are not considered to be prestige feasts.

Ritual traditions have become salient markers of ethnic identity in Benguet, particularly in multi-ethnic areas such as La Trinidad and Baguio City (RUSSELL 1984; 1989). Most highland in-migrants return to their home communities to conduct or participate in village rituals. Since the rural areas near the city are farmed by Ibaloi, their village rituals are by far the largest ceremonies performed within view of other highlanders. Differences in ritual tradition, and especially the economic burden that different ritual requirements engender, are frequent topics of discussion, debate, and even ideological competition. Such debate focuses on whose ritual traditions have been the most affected by Christian influence, which ethnic group sponsors the most expensive rituals, and which ethnic group continues to uphold the widest range of traditional religious beliefs.

Such controversies are not surprising, given the diverse array of motivations underlying ritual sponsorship in Benguet today. The act

of sacrifice is a visible, obligatory exchange between the living community and ancestral spirits that many villagers confirm. The status engendered by investing one's wealth in such publicly acclaimed channels, however, is partly diluted by frequent doubts that such acts will necessarily give rise to greater household wealth in the future. Economic uncertainties and increased consumer desires for the material symbols of a modernizing society conflict with popular support for the conspicuous manifestations of cultural identity. An individual's status no longer is figured simply by the number of rituals he has sponsored, but by the modern standard of living he can maintain.

It was in this context that the Grand Cañao was organized.

THE GRAND CAÑAO

In 1978, the Minister of Tourism in the Philippines urged the civic leaders of Baguio City to join forces with the private sector in order to highlight the cultures of the mountain peoples. Although tourism during Holy Week, Christmas, and throughout the warmest months sustains much of Baguio's economy, the Minister cautioned the city elite against complacency. He pointed out that much more remote parts of the Philippines have been far more successful in showcasing their unique cultural traditions than has Baguio, which until recently relied solely on its cool mountain climate and proximity to Manila to attract tourists.

After much discussion over the financing and form of such an endeavor, the city officials and commercial elite proposed an "intertribal cultural display." This multi-ethnic festival, partly funded by the Ministry of Tourism, was to present traditional dances and rituals of all the major highland ethnolinguistic groups in what was hoped would become an annual affair to attract large crowds of tourists during the off-season.

Initially, the sponsors proposed hiring highland city residents to perform the rituals, but the city elite objected that the performances would then be less "traditional." So instead, each highland province in the Cordillera was asked to send a delegation to Baguio City—with all expenses paid for by city entrepreneurs and national tourist promotion funds. All delegations were to parade in traditional attire through the streets of Baguio and then proceed to separate areas of the local park to perform their rituals and dances.

A variety of difficulties faced Benguet provincial leaders when they debated whether to accept this invitation. While they felt a certain pride in being asked by the national and city lowland elite to display the unique cultural traditions of their peoples, they were well aware that

the primary beneficiaries of the Grand Cañao would be the lowland merchants of Baguio City. The irony of performing highland cultural displays in a city that had once belonged only to highland peoples, who now occupy marginal urban roles at best, also was not lost on the provincial leaders. Their attempts to have the proposed location of the festival moved to La Trinidad, a primarily highland town, nonetheless failed owing to the lack of parking space for the anticipated large crowds and resistance by the city sponsors.

Eventually, provincial leaders decided to accept the invitation on the grounds that their people were proud of their cultural traditions and that it would allow Cordillera inhabitants to present a united stance toward the national government. Some pointed out that participation might yield future economic benefits in the form of increased development aid and political recognition. Others also noted that it would be good for the younger generation, some of whom are skeptical of the financial practicality of upholding the more expensive ritual traditions, to see the national attention devoted toward the visible symbols of their unique cultural heritage.

Following acceptance of the invitation, local delegations in all of the Cordillera provinces had to decide on the type of ritual that each major group would perform. The organizers unanimously objected to performing any ritual explicitly connected to illness, misfortune, or death. Such occurrences are signs of displeasure on the part of ancestors and spirits. Performing such rituals outside the community for non-religious reasons, especially for the benefit of lowland commercial interests in Baguio, was deemed to be highly dangerous. Even the officials admitted that it was quite possible that the offended spirits and ancestors would seek retribution on the performers.

The Benguet delegation decided to perform the *peshit*, or traditional prestige ritual of the elite. It was, the delegates noted, an appropriate ritual to perform since its primary goal is status enhancement—and therefore, although not a secular performance, at least not as sacred in intent as many other Benguet rituals. The secular aspects of the *peshit*, which is similar to the feasts of merit among hill peoples in mainland Southeast Asia (e.g., LEACH 1954; LEHMAN 1963), derive from the fact that it is primarily performed simply because the host can afford it and wants to demonstrate political power. More than simply a show of wealth, it is also a feast of gratitude to the spirits for one's good fortune and a plea for future prosperity. The deities and ancestral spirits are called to join in the feast and dancing, and so it is also considered a sacred ritual since their continued good will is solicited. Such rituals are graded in size and prestige, beginning with five pigs and

increasing at each level until twenty-five pigs are sacrificed. Among Ibaloi, each stage is performed twice prior to proceeding to the next highest level. Kankana-ey status rituals do not require repetition.

The delegates also observed that although prestige feasts are still occasionally performed among a few wealthy families in Benguet, the ritual has undergone modifications already owing to the huge expense it traditionally entailed. Finally, the delegates felt that it was an appropriate ritual for Benguet, since it was their opinion that this tradition had always been the most expensive ritual of any Cordillera peoples. Performing such a ritual in the context of other ethnic presentations would highlight unique symbols of traditional prestige in Benguet.

Additional problems soon arose over the issues of authenticity (e.g., whose prestige rituals are more "traditional?") and authentication (e.g., who is appropriate to sponsor the ritual and to perform the role of ritual priest?). In a meeting of the municipal mayors in the province, even before their ideas were presented to their constituents, struggles broke out between the Ibaloi and Kankana-ey representatives over who would lead in organizing the presentation.

The Kankana-ey mayors quickly attempted to assume control over deciding the details of the presentation. They argued that currently there were more Kankana-ey performing prestige rituals than there were Ibaloi, and hence there were more Kankana-ey ritual priests (*mambunong*) capable of conducting the ceremony. These points could not be denied by the Ibaloi mayors, who were thereby reminded that the wealth, and therefore ability to sponsor a prestige ritual, of the Kankana-ey elite today on average surpasses that of the Ibaloi.

Whereas the Ibaloi leadership in Benguet has been somewhat passive politically in recent years due to the greater economic influence of the Kankana-ey in commercial production, some of the oldest and most reticent Ibaloi mayors forcefully presented counter-arguments to those of the Kankana-ey. They pointed out that Ibaloi prestige rituals traditionally had been more elaborate than those of the Kankana-ey, and therefore an Ibaloi family should sponsor the ritual. By emphasizing the largesse of their past rituals, the Ibaloi delegates presented arguments that the Kankana-ey have often publicly acknowledged. When the Kankana-ey then weakly tried to insist that the ritual be performed by a Kankana-ey ritual priest, the Ibaloi rejected the idea on the grounds that the performance was to be in Baguio—which prior to the American colonial period had been strictly an Ibaloi territory. Since the details of ritual performance vary somewhat from one locale to another, they also predicted that less public criticism would be engendered if the ritual priest came from the immediate region and was fa-

miliar with local ritual procedures. After much discussion, the Kankana-ey mayors conceded.

In this context, the Ibaloi leadership justified their rights to control the entire performance by reference not only to their selective cultural image of the past, but also to the maintenance of "traditional" procedures—procedures that in recent years have been less rigidly upheld. It is not uncommon, for example, for a Kankana-ey ritual priest to perform an Ibaloi ritual in bordering residential areas, particularly near the City of Baguio. This situation often arises owing to the fewer number of Ibaloi ritual priests today, whose services are in high demand. Often during the dry season, Ibaloi must reserve a particular priest well in advance of a ritual, or take their chances with whoever is available on that day. The only requirement is that the priest have performed the ceremony before in the locale and be relatively familiar with local procedures. Other elders attending the ritual also are constant sources of advice and information—regardless of whether the ritual priest is Ibaloi or Kankana-ey.

In the context of the Grand Cañao, however, all mayors agreed that the authenticity of the ritual would be a major source of contention among their constituents. Hence, presentday traditions had to become even more "traditional" not only to appease local elders, but to serve as a source of pride. It was this emphasis on authenticity in the upholding of ritual traditions, a point publicly announced, which then led to a series of further disputes over who was to perform the presentation.

The mayors decided that whoever should sponsor the ceremony should conform as much as possible to a traditional elite person. He should, they noted, be a politically well-known person with the capital and ability to command enough followers to provide the labor needed at such a ritual. He should also not be too old to participate in a physically active manner, particularly in the extensive dancing, and he should be engaged primarily in farming rather than business.

The Ibaloi mayors felt that the sponsor should ideally be from a traditional elite family in Baguio. No one could be found, however, who fit the above criteria. The mayors then tried to persuade the mayor of La Trinidad, which borders Baguio, but he refused on the grounds that he would then have to repeat the ritual at his own expense within a year after the performance in Baguio. As La Trinidad is known to be one of the most conservative preservers of ritual traditions, he thereby refused to participate on the grounds that both he and his constituents were "too traditional" to make his participation economically feasible.

After this pronouncement, it then became a matter of facesaving for all other mayors who otherwise qualified to refuse for similar reasons. To do otherwise would be tantamount to admitting that they themselves were neglectful in upholding local ritual traditions. Also, most mayors were personally concerned about the reaction of their more conservative supporters to their overt sponsorship of such a ceremony in Baguio. Eventually, it was decided to ask the only living son of a former headman (from a leading family) in southern Benguet to sponsor the affair. The individual (and area) chosen, however, were in some ways candidates of last resort. Objections were raised that the rituals in that area were some of the least traditional in the province. The prestige rituals performed there in recent years, some mayors noted, were very modernized. Not as many ritual prayers were involved, a brass band was often present, and worse yet, a local Catholic priest often gave his blessing during the ritual. Nevertheless, in the absence of a more appropriate choice, the mayors extended the invitation.

The next difficulty centered on finding a ritual priest to perform the ceremony. Again, the mayors decided that since La Trinidad was the most conservative in its ritual traditions, one of their priests should participate. The priests in La Trinidad, however, also proved to be the most inflexible; in fact, they refused to participate. It was finally decided to use the usual ritual priest of the selected sponsor. The mayors insisted, however, that they first obtain permission to sponsor the ceremony from the senior ritual priest in La Trinidad, who at the time was already very old and bed-ridden. At first, she refused to condone the presentation since the sponsor had not passed through all the necessary preceding stages of the ritual—the cost of which would easily surpass the entire amount of funds offered to the provincial delegation. Eventually, however, she gave her permission when persuaded that, after all, the ceremony was a ritual of the province and not of a family.

By construing the ritual presentation as a “ritual of the province,” the Benguet delegation effectively rechanneled the deliberations from a concern over authenticity to one of authentication—a decidedly more secular controversy. The deliberations then increasingly became imbued with ethnically competitive overtones. Whereas the organizers had intended there to be equal participation between both Ibaloi and Kankana-ey, they overlooked the vitality of the role that ritual traditions, especially those associated with prestige, play in cultural identity in Benguet. The marginal position accorded to the Kankana-ey leaders in determining the authenticity and sponsorship of the performance eventually led them to all but withdraw from further deliberations.

As a result, the presentation came to assume a number of features that further enhanced Ibaloi prominence at the expense of the Kankana-ey.⁴

Prestige rituals always have been occasions when different localities in the region are invited to send representatives to participate in the feast. The presence of a large number of invited guests, especially influential people from nearby areas, is required to mark the legitimacy of a major status-enhancing feast. It is a matter of pride if the sponsor is able to attract people also from distant areas. In order to group the people attending the provincial presentation in Baguio it was decided to divide the thirteen municipalities of Benguet into a smaller number of groupings for purposes of distributing their meat shares.

This division was done on the basis of "original occupants" of each municipality. All mayors were asked to declare whether their constituents should be considered Ibaloi or Kankana-ey. Owing to the movements of people into different areas during the last century, many municipalities have a mixed ethnic constituency. In 1978, three mayors of what were once primarily Ibaloi areas were Kankana-ey—a fact which attests to the more vocal and politically active role assumed by Kankana-ey commercial producers in this region. Yet when municipalities were divided according to the ethnicity of the original occupants, all but four of the thirteen municipalities of Benguet were deemed to be Ibaoi areas.

This division left the Kankana-ey so disgruntled that their mayors refused to march with the Ibaloi mayors on the day of the celebration. Instead, the Kankana-ey delegation marched as a unit in the parade, both in protest to their marginal role in the affair and to achieve some form of separate recognition. Their determination to set themselves off in some distinctive fashion was also displayed by their wearing of the traditional g-string (albeit with jockey shorts underneath for modesty's sake) throughout the Grand Cañao, in contrast to the fully clothed Ibaloi participants.

In the city park itself, the pandemonium created by the simultaneous performance of a number of rituals by different provincial delegations ironically served to isolate each individual ceremony from the others. So many Ibaloi and Kankana-ey residents of the city and nearby rural villages attended and crowded around the ritual sponsors, for example, that it was impossible for tourists to participate or even obtain a full view of the proceedings. Most tourists remained on the outskirts of the congested park and contented themselves with asking questions of highlanders entering or leaving the area.

After the Grand Cañao, both city and provincial leaders decided against repeating the festival. In the future, owing to the excessive

cost required to organize this celebration and the divisiveness it caused among the sponsoring groups, it was deemed preferable to hire urban residents simply to perform local dances.

CONCLUSION

The refashioning or transformation of meanings within ritual events that occurred in the folklorization of this ritual festival does *not* necessarily entail desacralization. While an analysis of the performative aspect of rituals often stresses the relationship between intention, knowledge and emotional attitudes, this paper argues for renewed attention to the background and politics of the behind-the-scenes organizing of such events. Who is involved, who constructs events, and who determines form and meaning are equally important parameters to investigate. This paper argues in part that to ignore these issues is to deny the nature of local politics as an on-going process and to deny the history embedded in the dilemmas that often arise.

RAFAEL (1986, 68) has observed the tendency of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos to present themselves as public guardians of the national heritage by promoting images of "cultural unity," such as the Nayong Pilipino exhibit near Manila's International Airport. Such exhibits, especially ethnic festivals like the Grand Cañao, betray the vigor and cultural resistance of the lifestyles so represented in two ways. First, the overwhelming image projected to outsiders in these exhibits is of unchanging and "traditional" cultures, or even living "museums," brokered by an external definition of what is authentic custom and lifestyle. It is precisely such images that deny the highly variable local histories that minority groups in the Philippines have experienced in their struggle to preserve relevant symbols of cultural identity. Secondly, tourist contexts may place people in the position of presenting themselves as they think (or, indeed, know) the powers in the larger nation state find more acceptable, e.g., an image of what they used to be, do or believe. In the case of Benguet, the result of the Grand Cañao was to reinforce a static, external image of their highland culture and exacerbate existing ethnic cleavages and insularity.

From the beginning, Cordillera provincial leaders intended that their ritual presentation in the Grand Cañao would communicate messages on several levels. To the state and lowland Filipino peoples, it was hoped the celebration would communicate the political unity of upland peoples and their desire for greater economic and cultural recognition within the Philippine nation. Such a stance, however, presupposes a unity that has never existed among Cordillera peoples.⁵ Hence it is not surprising that the organization of the performance became

directed to a more locally relevant audience—the other ethnolinguistic groups in the highlands.

In their attempts to define ethnically distinct ritual traditions, however, Benguet leaders faced the inevitable difficulty of how to present a traditional rendering of what is a very flexible religious and ritual complex in a contemporary setting that is far from traditional. The dilemma was resolved by inventing a ritual of the “province” so as to avoid directly violating still existing ritual traditions that have vigorously resisted cultural homogenization. After all, there was no real precedent for such an event in either the past or current context. Also, the type of ritual model chosen, e.g., a highly competitive prestige ritual that has lost most of its former value, helped focus people’s attention on the authenticity of the presentation and the supporting political claim it gave to local, and highly selective ethnic images.

Rituals in the generally fragmented social structure in Benguet remain a surprisingly viable and locally recognized vehicle for communicating intergroup status. While the practical relevance of the prestige ritual performed in Baguio has all but disappeared in the contemporary setting, this state-sponsored tourist festival provided a rare opportunity for the Ibaloi leadership to publicly institutionalize what they view as a salient marker of ethnic identity. It also provided them with an opportunity to publicly assert an image of superior traditional status in contrast to the current Kankana-ey political and economic dominance in the province. That the Ibaloi were successful in obtaining control of most of the proceedings attests to the way that such images can become reified and heighten ethnic competition under the influence of external interest in promoting tourism.

NOTES

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1. KEESING and KEESING (1934, 189) remarked that although Ibaloi society had marked socio-economic differentiation, they were on the whole “. . . better off than the Kankanai of northern Benguet as a result both of environmental and of historical causes.” The Baguio-Benguet area today consistently ranks as one of the highest producing districts of precious metals in the Philippines.

2. The prominent role of the elite in Ibaloi remembrances of the past has been

noted by BAGAMASPAD and HAMADA-PAWID (1985, 38–39), who observed that the Kankana-ey place much more emphasis on community, rather than elite, experiences when they recount family oral histories.

3. The problems of cattle theft in Benguet also were noted by KEESING and KEESING (1934, 156–157).

4. Such features included, for example, arrangements for municipal mayors to arrive on horseback—in the typical style of Ibaloi elite in the past.

5. The current in-fighting among different political segments of highland groups (and among the different provinces themselves) in their negotiations with the Aquino government for Cordillera political autonomy reflects this lack of historical unity.

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