

# Commodifying Cultures, Negotiating Identities: The Reproduction and Performance of the Cordilleran Cultural Heritage in Tam-Awan Village

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## ABSTRACT

Tourism, as a practice, involves a projection and performance of identity in response to what the market desires. Museums convey a message through the collection, preservation, and exhibition of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. While the coverage of the two varies, their principles and operations often overlap, especially in the case of indigenous tourism and living museums. This study examines the reproductions of Cordilleran cultural heritage in Tam-awan Village, a “living museum” envisioned to preserve and promote Cordilleran culture and identity. Using ethnographic and historical data, it makes intelligible the complex connections among colonial stereotypes, the commodification of culture, negotiation of identity, and the emergence of paradoxical perspectives in a contemporary living museum. The study found that in the attempted preservation of culture and reappropriation of colonial signifiers, a new culture is generated—one in which the marginalized are simultaneously objectified, commodified, and empowered.

**Keywords:** Cordillera studies, cultural heritage, identity, indigenous tourism, living museum

## Introduction

“We are like exhibits, but we are happy with what we do and we are able to showcase our culture” (*Parang eksibit kami, pero masaya naman kami sa ginagawa namin at naishoshowcase namin ang kultura namin*). Beaming with pride, Dominique Kulallad, the Tam-awan Village In-House Performing Group leader, shared their experience as cultural performers in the museum. “It is fun to perform, especially when a

lot of people are watching. [We see that] people's perspectives about *Igorots* are changed. Before, we are just seen [as people] with tails and [as people who] are dirty" (*Masaya magperform lalo na kapag mas maraming nanonood. [Tingin namin ay] Nag-iiba yung tingin nila sa Igorot. Tingin nila dati [sa amin] may buntot, maruni*).

Every Saturday, or during special occasions, Dominique's group regularly performs traditional Cordilleran dances in Tam-awan Village, a living museum situated in the northwestern outskirts of Baguio City. The brainchild of Filipino artists and philanthropists, most notably National Artist Benedicto "BenCab" Cabrera, Tam-awan Village promotes community awareness by exhibiting indigenous Cordilleran art and traditions. As a living museum, it not only makes visitors experience sleeping in an "authentic" Cordilleran hut but also gives a picture of a "typical" highlander village. It also provides avenues for visitors to participate in different creative activities or enjoy indigenous festivities and dances. Ultimately, by showcasing Cordilleran cultural heritage, the museum hopes that the indigenous will be respected and integrated into Philippine society.

Tam-awan Village is also a haven for artists and enthusiasts, especially to those who promote indigenous culture. Appreciating Tam-awan Village, a young painter Jessie Marie Esteban expressed, "Tam-awan Village cares about their members, that is why I want to be part of it" (Dumaraos 2018). As an artist hub, the village provides a space for young and senior artists to learn from each other and share a common advocacy.

However, these positive stories about Tam-awan Village unfold against a backdrop of commodification. The reproduction and performance of Cordilleran traditions in Baguio City rest upon older practices of indigenous tourism and cultural commodification. With large-scale tourism exploiting the community's indigeneity for economic gain, it encouraged the preservation and promotion of Cordilleran cultures and identities. However, upholding indigenous symbols and traditions through tourism demonstrates curious contradictions in heritage management. First, cultures and spaces in such contexts are not necessarily preserved but instead negotiated and transformed. In other words, the commodification of culture results in the death of traditions and the birth of a new culture based on traditional icons (George and Reid 2005). Second, while seeking to preserve and promote indigenous beliefs and practices advance social inclusion and cultural awareness, the said practices also objectify and exclude those they intend to empower. This phenomenon is especially true in places with a long history of exoticization and marginalization of indigenous populations.

In this light, the study examines the negotiation of culture and identity in indigenous tourism. It delves into the interconnected nature

of colonization, exoticization, commodification, and marginalization to analyze the factors that inform the process of negotiation. Particular attention is given to the influences of historical junctures on Cordilleran culture and identity to show the pushes and pulls that led to the emergence of the "Cordilleran" that tourists commonly see and experience. The study asks the following questions: How do colonial legacies affect the alteration of the local spaces and practices in the context of tourism? What factors shape the notion and projection of "Cordilleran" and what impact do these have on the negotiation and performances of Cordilleran identity?

The study's data were collected during the author's field research in Baguio City from November 2016 to April 2017 and July to August 2017. It involved semi-structured individual and group interviews (23 individual interviews and five group interviews) and ethnographic observations. Everyone interviewed was informed of the author's intentions. The current president of Chanum Foundation Inc. and one of the founders of Tam-awan Village, Jordan Mang-osan, also granted the author permission to conduct the study in the museum and use the information gathered for research purposes.

The discussion is divided into four sections. The first part paints in broad strokes the discourse of the living museum and indigenous tourism, which guides the examination of the author's field site, Tam-awan Village. The second section unpacks the collective name "Cordilleran" and briefly narrates the group's experience under U.S. colonial rule in the earlier half of the twentieth century. Providing details about Tam-awan Village, the third part explains the paradox of culture preservation and production. The final part establishes the connection between the previous sections. It locates the intersection of colonial legacies, the practice of culture and identity, and indigenous tourism, and explains how the country's colonial past continues to influence the commodification, negotiation, and performances of indigenous culture and identity in the operations of Cordillera tourism. It also illustrates how exoticization and marginalization enable commodification and vice versa.

### **Living Museums, Simulating Traditions: Remembering the Past, Producing the Present**

The notion of the living museum is commonly associated with living history and the living history museum, defined by Jay Anderson (1982) as an "attempt to simulate life in another time" (291). Space and human experience connect museums to histories, with living museums acting as sites where history and culture (tangible and intangible) are interpreted, expressed, and relived. These activities intend to reproduce and perform both past and everyday life. They are often

“theatrical,” employing “creative and symbolic forms” such as drama, ritual, pageantry, and play (ibid.). For these reasons, authenticity has been the dominant preoccupation of the earlier works that problematized said terms (Anderson 1982; Handler and Saxton 1988; Bruner 1994; Crang 1996; Soneji 2004; Hart 2007). Previous literature regarded authenticity as a perfect simulation—an “isomorphism between a living-history activity or event, and that piece of the past it is meant to recreate” (Handler and Saxton 1988, 242). Others noted the impossibility of accurate historic reproduction, emphasizing the different meanings of authenticity found in the discourse of authority, representations, expectations, and negotiations (Bruner 1994; Soneji 2004). David Lowenthal’s research (1985), meanwhile, discussed people’s fascination with retrieving and reliving the past—an obsession motivated, at least in part, by nostalgia and profit.

Later works (Kleinert 2012; Ryan and Aicken 2005) examined living museums in the contexts of tourism, postcoloniality, and capitalism, veering away from the issues of authenticity and the museum-goer’s experience. Zeroing in on indigenous peoples’ circumstances, Chris Ryan and Michelle Aicken (2005) discussed how a population that has been socially marginalized and economically dislodged by colonialism promoted their cultural heritage through indigenous tourism. Their work emphasized the significance of culture commodification to the indigenous group’s survival in the modern capitalist system (6). Sylvia Kleinert (2012) tackled indigenous tourism in a similar vein. Assimilation through tourism, she argued, became the means for the survival of Aboriginal Australian culture. She explained how their tourism signified the “encounter with a ‘primitive’ other” and the “keeping up the culture” for the aborigines (86). A common thread that these works sought to explore was the survival of the marginalized culture—hence, the focus on the indigenous people’s recognition, representation, and assimilation in modern society. Their framework serves as an anchor to this study’s analysis of tourism practices in Tam-awan Village.

Highlighting such a shift in the field of living history museums does not necessarily mean the absolute disappearance of authenticity issues. Authenticity would reappear in Ruth Ellen Gruber’s (2009) *Beyond Virtually Jewish: New Authenticities and Real Imaginary Spaces in Europe*. Gruber proposed a notion of “new authenticity” as an outcome of cultural transformations in spaces that simulate an imagined past environment. According to Gruber, new authenticities are “real” experiences modeled after a reality they attempt to evoke. In recreating the past, a new set of stereotypes, behavior, and traditions are created (Gruber 2009). This approach settles the concerns surrounding authenticity, for it implies that any reconstruction, in its own right, is authentic.

To go beyond the issues of authenticity and cultural and economic survival, this study navigates the connections between living museums and indigenous tourism and underscores the roles of history and politics in their formation and operations. Whereas the performance of culture and negotiation of identity in such spaces are influenced by the desire to preserve and promote a culture and the need to survive and adapt to the modern capitalist system, the study posits that living museums and indigenous tourism, in general, are shaped by, and are continuously shaping, the tradition of cultural commodification and ethnic marginalization. The next section briefly outlines the history of colonization, exoticization, and commodification of Cordilleran cultures and identities.

### Colonizing an Identity, Selling the Exotic: A Brief History of the Cordilleran Experience

Cordilleran is a collective name for all people belonging to different ethnic groups in the Cordillera Administrative Region. The *Itnegs* of Abra, *Isnags* of Apayao, the *Ibalois*, *Kankanaeys*, and *Kalanguya* of Benguet, the *Ifugaos* of Ifugao, the *Kalingas* of Kalinga, and the *Kankanaeys*, *Aplai*, *Balangao*, and *Bontoks* of the Mountain Province live in this region (Belen 1990, 7). Western colonizers coined the term Cordilleran (as well as other names such as *Ygollotes* or *Igorots*, which they used to pertain to those who live in the mountains or highlands). Following the country’s long history of exoticism and orientalism under Western colonial rule, the term carried with it several stereotypes such as being primitive, backward, unhygienic, barbaric, and savage. Curiously, the term Cordilleran continues to carry with it the colonial stereotypes among Filipinos decades after the granting of Philippine independence.

The Philippines’s colonial past shaped the general perception of Cordilleran cultures and identities. In the early 1900s, the U.S. colonial government juxtaposed the modern and superior Western civilization with what they perceived as the primitive and inferior Filipino cultures. What followed was the creation of an othered image of the indigenous population. As the script of U.S. colonialism revolved around the ideas of American greatness, superiority, and benevolence, the projected backwardness of the other justified the “necessity” to colonize (Vergara 1995, 3). The Americans took it upon themselves to guide Filipinos to civilization by changing their perceived backward norms and lifeways (Talamayan 2019).

This political and cultural othering involved the exoticization of the Filipinos, especially the Cordillerans. Carbonell (2000) defined exoticism as the displacement or the strangeness enacted by the difference that stands as a representation for the whole. Photography in the early 1900s, for instance, stereotyped Filipinos as the “exotic

unknown” (Vergara 1995, 3). The United States standardized this representation by distorting, recontextualizing, and decontextualizing Filipino objects in photographs (10–11). Vergara argued that the photograph’s large-scale reproducibility helped shape the stereotyped images of Filipinos and Cordillerans: a group of brown-skinned, primitive, and uncivilized Pacific half-naked men and women. This phenomenon also marked the advent of their commodification, as the photographs of these “exotic unknown[s]” were duplicated and circulated in advertisements and postcards (25).

Another commonly cited example for the production of such stereotypes is the exhibition of the Cordillerans in the St. Louis World Fair in Missouri in 1904. The Cordillerans, who in the exhibit were sensationally described as the “dog-eating Igorots,” performed rituals and other aspects of their culture for curious fairgoers. In staging their customs and beliefs, the fair organizers portrayed them as Filipino (Clevenger 2000). While the United States’s intention in hosting the exhibit was to show the world that they had become an imperial power, the Filipino and Cordilleran stereotypes deployed to rationalize the American colonization of the Philippines were augmented and reproduced according to the spectacular and sensationalized displays of the Cordilleran performers (Sit 2008).

It must be noted that some Filipino elite politicians protested the exoticization of Filipinos in the St. Louis World Fair. However, their disapproval of the portrayal, as Gideon Lasco (2018) observed, did not necessarily argue against the notion of “savagery” of the indigenous peoples (386). For instance, Vicente Nepomuceno (*St. Louis-Dispatch*, 1904) maintained that “the *Moros*, *Negritos* and *Igorrotes* no more represent the people of the Philippines than the dying Indian represents the American people, and the Americans would resent such an exhibition for [sic] more vigorously than we have.” Maximo Kalaw (1916) added that the exhibit created an “indelible impression that the Filipinos have not yet emerged from savagery” (160). According to Lasco, these attempts of some Filipino elite personalities to “distance themselves from the ‘savages’” replicated “the same racial vocabulary of the Americans” (386). These pronouncements ratified and recapitulated the same exoticization of the othered ethnicities.

Although the examples of exoticization and othering of the indigenous peoples referred to in this section happened at a time when the fascination for expeditions to discover the “exotic unknown” was the trend, the thirst for the exotic unknown persisted a century hence. Only this time, it is indigenous tourism and living museums that allow for the fulfillment of these fantasies. Drawing the bigger picture, Leiper (1990) proposed that tourist demands are generated and supplied by a tourism system. With indigenous tourism stimulating demand for the

exotic unknown, living museums act as receiving locations (supply) and meet the demand by creating familiarity with the unfamiliar.

Despite a sense of continuity, as evidence presented in this study later shows, the continuation of exoticization in living museums does not necessarily replicate imperialist messages. Living museums may use the same images and artifacts used by colonial governments for their propaganda, but many of them, like Tam-awan Village, reappropriate colonial signifiers to empower the marginalized. By becoming embedded in a different discourse, and with the artists’ stroke of creativity, colonial images can serve a different purpose.

To explain further, the subsequent sections introduce the Tam-awan Village, the study’s field-site. Empirical evidence shows the continuation of exoticization in the performance of culture in a living museum such as the Tam-awan Village. However, it also offers a nuanced understanding of their exhibition, as the study spotlights the museum’s role in supporting Cordillerans and upholding their traditions and identities. The analysis of the effects of colonialism, culture commodification, and marginalization on the negotiation of Cordilleran identity are also discussed in the next sections.

### Recreating and Imagining the Cordilleran Way of Life

The Tam-awan Village was established in 1998 through the leadership of Chanum Foundation’s Chit Asignacion, National Artist Bencab, Jordan Mang-osan, Atty. Nestor Mondok, Anne Camdas-Michael, and Jackson Bryan III (Hernandez 2018). Known for its advocacy for indigenous arts, culture, and heritage, the foundation initiated the project by installing “authentic” Cordilleran houses on land that was once used as pasture. They transported three Cordilleran huts from Bangaan, Ifugao to Tam-awan Village and reconstructed them using original materials and design with the vision of creating a typical Cordilleran village accessible to “lowlanders who have yet to visit the interiors of the Cordillera” (Kasilag 1996, 1). Presently, the museum houses nine Cordilleran huts, all of which are named for their areas of origin: the *Bangaan* hut, *Anaba* hut, *Batad* hut, *Dukligan* hut, *Kinakina* hut, and *Nagor* hut from the Ifugao province; the *Luccong* (Figure 1) and *Bugnay* huts from Kalinga province. Those who wish to experience living in these huts are accommodated by the museum for PHP 500 (approximately USD 10) per night per person. The only exception is the *Bugnay* hut, which serves as one of the museum galleries (Tam-awan Village n.d.).

The village also features a *Dap-ay* (Figure 2), a stone-paved gathering place where elders from the Cordilleras commonly discuss village concerns (Kasilag 1996). It also has the following: art gallery and crafts shop, coffee shop, fishpond, ecotours for trekkers,



**Figure 1.** The *Luccong* hut (ca. 1923), classified as a *binayon* hut (traditional octagonal hut), is one of the three surviving *binayon* houses in the *Butbut* area of the Cordilleras. According to a plaque displayed in front, the hut was a dwelling place for the wealthy *Kalingas*, one of the ethnic groups who live in the region. Photo taken by the author in 2017.



**Figure 2.** A copy of a *Dap-ay*. Visitors are allowed to build a bonfire in this area for PHP 120 (approximately USD 2.40). Photo taken by the author in 2017.

martial arts demonstrations, art workshops, livelihood and crafts demonstrations such as weaving, papermaking, woodcarving, printmaking, bamboo crafts, rice wine making, solar drawing, and batik printing. The management also allows tourists to interact with their in-house Cordillera performers and artists. At the time of field research, entrance fees were PHP 50 (USD 1) for adults and PHP 30 and PHP 20 for students and children, respectively. For the workshops, the museum charges PHP 450 (USD 9) per participant.

At the village entrance, tourists are welcomed by artworks such as the *Gecko over Tam-awan* and *Pat-ong*. *Gecko over Tam-awan* is a relief with the Tam-awan logo flanked by two lizards (symbols of prosperity and good fortune) while *Pat-ong* is a relief of a Cordilleran dance performed with a gang-za or gong (Figure 3). These pieces set the mood and expectations for tourists. Upon entering the premises, visitors follow a path to the cultural show area and café. Along the way, visitors are encouraged to borrow Cordilleran traditional clothes, in exchange for some donations (Figure 4). A souvenir shop sells Cordilleran clothes and linen, Cordilleran musical instruments, key chains, and refrigerator magnets. These items feature reliefs of Cordilleran people, huts, and gods (Figures 5 and 6). Miniature replicas of their gods and deities are also sold (Figure 7). Art galleries (see figure 8) that house Cordilleran themed paintings are located adjacent to the shop. The artworks are priced from PHP 6,000 (USD 120) to PHP 50,000 (USD 1,000).



**Figure 3.** The *Gecko over Tam-awan* (bottom left) and *Pat-ong* (bottom right). Photo taken by the author in 2017.



Figure 4. Tourists are expected to donate money when they borrow traditional clothes in the village. Similarly, in other tourist destinations in Baguio City (such as the Mines View Park and Botanical Garden), interested people pay at least PHP 50 (approximately USD 1) to wear them. Photo taken by the author in 2017.



Figure 6. Refrigerator magnets with reliefs of several representations of the Cordilleras. Photo taken by the author in 2017.



Figure 5. Tam-awan Village's souvenir shop. Photo taken by the author in 2017.



Figure 7. A miniature reproduction of the Ifugao rice god, *Bul-ul*. Photo taken by the author in 2017.



Figure 8. Inside the *Bugnay* Gallery. Photo taken by the author in 2017.

After walking past the souvenir shop and art galleries, the tourists are welcomed by performances by the Tam-awan Village In-House Performing Group in the cultural show area (Figure 9). Those who choose to witness the performance of the young Cordillerans often sit at the *Ugnayan* Gallery (literally translated as the gallery for connection, Figure 10), conveniently located in front of the cultural show area. The performers stay in one corner for almost the entire duration of the museum hours, waiting for visitors to gather around them. Once a large enough group has formed, they would begin playing traditional instruments and perform segments of their ceremonial dances. During the encounter, tourists are encouraged to surround the performers.



Figure 9. The Tam-awan Village In-House Performing Group. Photo taken by the author in 2017.



Figure 10. The *Ugnayan* Gallery. Photo taken by the author in 2017.

The Tam-awan Village In-House Performing Group performs three to four dances each time a crowd gathers. They usually perform Kalinga's *Sakpaya*, Ifugao's *Dinuy-a*, Tinguian's *Tadek*, and Mountain Province's *Ballangbang*. *Sakpaya* is a thanksgiving dance that mimics *sakpaya* birds that fly over the rice terraces (Namiki 2016). *Dinuy-a*, meanwhile, is a ceremonial and festival dance performed during planting or harvest seasons or significant life events such as weddings, births, funerals, and burials (Lumba 2018b). *Tadek* or *Tadek inlaud* is a courtship dance that uses *salukisit*, an upturned hand-held bronze gong hit with a stick, as its main musical instrument (Lumba 2018c). Lastly, a ritual dance that reenacts a tribal war, *Ballangbang* is performed during marriage ceremonies and before planting and harvesting seasons (Lumba 2018a). It is in the performance of *Ballangbang* that the audience members are invited to participate and dance. The male gong players move in a circular direction as each participant synchronizes their steps with other dancers. Female dancers follow the male leader, but if the females have their female leader, they are expected to follow the female one. After the dance, the performers would welcome the tourists to have pictures taken with them (Figures 11 and 12).



Figure 11. Tourists taking a photo with the Tam-awan Village In-House Performing Group. Photo taken by the author in 2017.



Figure 12. The cultural show area and the Ugnayan Gallery are more crowded during peak hours (10:00 to 14:00 and 16:00 to 18:30). Photo taken by the author in 2017.

Many tourists who were interviewed by the author visited the village to satisfy their thirst for adventure. Some professed that they were in search of “contrast from the modern” and “authentic Cordilleran culture.” Some went to the village thinking that the place was “hip”

and “cool.” Those who did their research before visiting the village said that they came to witness Cordillera rituals and dance.

Meanwhile, observing the map of the Tam-awan Village (Figure 13), profit-generation mostly happens in spaces near the entrance and exit (lower right part of the map). Activities and material culture that are commodified are strategically located in the said area since foot traffic is directed there.

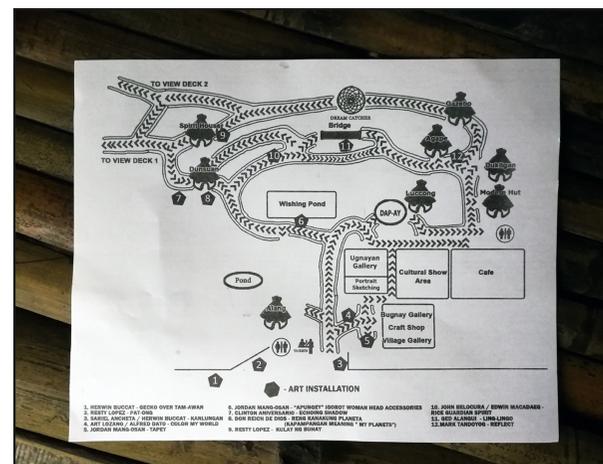


Figure 13. The map of the Tam-awan Village given to visitors. Photo taken by the author in 2017.

### Negotiating Identity, Dismantling Subjectivities, Celebrating Indigeneity

A more obvious effect of commodification on cultural heritage is the transformation of the purpose and meanings of several symbols and material culture; for instance, the repurposing of traditional huts or production and the purchase of keychains and refrigerator magnets that reappropriate sacred icons. While the symbols and images refer to or hint at their source cultures, the utility and significance of the material culture were refunckioned during commodification and consumption. However, to make the connections among colonial legacies, culture commodification, and living museums apparent, this section will focus more on Cordilleran negotiations of their identity and the sense of empowerment that Tam-awan Village seems to catalyze for Cordillerans.

Identity is both personal and social; it is an individual’s source of self-respect and dignity and reference to a social category (Fearon

1999). It is also performative (Goffman 1956). Considering the lasting impact of colonialism on the indigenous peoples' identity, museums such as the Tam-awan Village could function as one of the common sites where the colonized could break free from a colonial past and celebrate their indigeneity. Indeed, as the Chanum Foundation clearly states on Tam-awan Village's website, the museum was intended to:

Promote community awareness on the intergenerational responsibility of the people to preserve and conserve our patrimony, the environment, and our cultural heritage;

Promote awareness and respect and sustain various indigenous customs, cultural heritage, and the arts in the Philippines particularly the Cordillera;

Use the foundation as a catalyst in promoting awareness, respect and pride on (sic) our customs, traditional and cultural heritage.

In Tam-awan Village, the promotion of "deeper understanding, respect, and pride in the cultural heritage of the Cordillera people" happens through its exhibition of what has been historically othered (Tam-awan Village n.d.). Although it appears self-defeating to reproduce colonial signifiers, some Cordillerans perceived the exoticization of their identity as an opportunity to reverse the negative impact of colonialism. During the field research, the author observed that the curiosity about Cordilleran performers' otherness consistently drew crowds inside the museum. People would approach or stop at the *Ugnayan* Gallery when cultural performers play the gongs. The study also found that this curiosity about cultural otherness even motivated some tourists to visit Tam-awan Village. As demands for the exotic and unfamiliar create opportunities for encounters across differences, such encounters provide a platform for the exoticized and marginalized to dismantle crystallized subjectivities and promote their culture, identity, and welfare.

To understand how the paradox described here works, and how the setup benefits indigenous peoples, it is important to first look at how cultural identities are negotiated in such environments. According to Tim Winter (2012), identity is negotiated with the identities ascribed by others to it across time. Following this definition, the colonial legacies' continuation in the presentation and performance of cultural heritage may be understood in the context of the indigenous peoples' negotiation of their identity with the one ascribed to them by their audience. The negotiation of identity happens when individuals are "in the immediate presence of others," especially when it is beneficial for them to convey a desirable image (Goffman 1956, 2-3). In such instances, the indigenous peoples who perform rituals and dances in

museums must project an image that meets the expectations of the tourists because when expectations and perspectives of "authentic" indigenous culture and identity are not met, tourists become unconvinced of the authenticity of the performance they witness. Since indigenous tourism is motivated not only by the promotion of culture but also by profit, indigenous identity is negotiated in cultural performances to be convincing and marketable.

The Tam-awan Village In-House Performing Group's live exhibition of their rituals and dance in the museum manifests such negotiation. In negotiating their tradition and identity, hour-long rituals are reduced to a few minutes to introduce a variety of dances to their audience. The community dance *Ballangbang*, for instance, traditionally lasts for several minutes for as long as the gong players play music, making it a perfect dance for mass participation since anyone can join or exit the performance anytime. In the exhibition, it is reduced to just almost two minutes. Meanwhile, indigeneity is performed by wearing traditional clothes that they do not normally wear outside the museum. At the very least, the cultural performers' use of past gestures and symbols helps meet what the people expect as authentic.

Capitalizing on their otherness, the cultural performers are able to connect with their audience as they satisfy the audience's curiosity about the exotic and unfamiliar. Once expectations of authentic indigenous culture are met, members of the crowd express their appreciation by applauding the performance, taking pictures with the performers, or even donating money to the group. But beyond these manifestations of satisfaction, for the performers, the connection they made with the audience is deemed most crucial. A meaningful encounter allows them to introduce their culture and decolonize their image simultaneously. Bea, one of the viewers interviewed by the author, shared that the encounter with the cultural performers not only made her appreciate Cordilleran's otherness but also gave her a sense of national pride. In her words, it made her feel "proud" (*nakakaproud*) about being a Filipino. This statement tells us that through such acts, the image of otherness may transcend its colonial meanings and may enable a collective spirit and shared identification/s.

Apart from the particular transformative function so described, such performances reflect the continuous transformation of cultures and identities, or the "ongoing interpretation of the past" (Handler and Linnekin 1984, 274; see also Salvador-Amores 2013). Indigenous tourism detaches rituals from their original contexts (courtship, weddings, thanksgiving, funerals) and seamlessly attaches them to the museum's discourse. In the process of recontextualization, specific elements particular to the ritual's source culture are consciously maintained to manifest the ritual's "Cordilleraness" (Talamayan

2021). But while the rituals' meanings change, their celebratory nature remains; only this time, they no longer celebrate significant life events but their culture and identity.

Noting the birth of a culture in a living museum, another outcome of the negotiation of identity and commodification of culture is the fusion of performances, icons, and deities of various ethnic groups into a single entity, the Cordilleran. Even though the Tam-awan Village In-House Performing Group mentions the source cultures of the dances they perform, the author gathered from various interviews with museumgoers that all performances are perceived as either Cordilleran or *Igorot*. While it appears paradoxical in terms of helping the indigenous population promote and preserve their cultures and identities, Dominique Kulalad, the leader of cultural performers' leader, explains (pers. comm, 12 August 2017):

Tam-awan [Village] is a big help because it merges diverse communities that are apart from each other. The place has become a natural reserve. Every aspect of our way of living in the past can still be experienced. The trend here [in the museum] is like how life was before. It adds to [the museumgoers'] knowledge.

*(Malaki ang tulong ng Tam-awan [Village] dahil [yung] parang diverse na community namin sa magkakalayong lugar, parang pinag-iisa dito. Parang naging natural reserve na rin yung lugar dito. Parang lahat naexperience pa rin yung buhay noon. Talagang yung trend dito, yung parang buhay dati talaga. Nakakadagdag ng knowledge.)*

It can be understood from Dominique that the merging of cultures is a non-issue, especially to those who perform their culture for tourism and commodification.

Further, cultural performances in a living museum transform traditional rituals and dances into an alternative form of entertainment. However, Ryan (2005) posits that there is danger in perceiving cultural performances as entertainment. He warned that those who perform a culture, when perceived as entertainers, become "captives of the impresarios" (6). Contrarily, the cultural performers in Tam-awan Village expressed no animosity on how the museum exhibits them. Learning from the performers, the museum provides a space for the indigenous peoples to not only reintroduce their culture to others but also enshrine their Cordilleran identity. Performers recognize that they "are like exhibits," but as culture bearers, they appreciate the chance to influence people's perspectives about them. These statements echo the shift in viewing indigenous tourism—that it no longer creates stereotypes of the marginalized but rather provides "a means by which those peoples aspire to economic and political power

for self-advancement" and "a place of dialogue between and within differing world views" (Ryan 2005, 4).

These experiences create contradictory perceptions on performances of culture and identity in a living museum. On the one hand, the spectacularization, which creates new traditions based on older traditions, reproduces colonial signifiers to elicit an experience that matches the tourists' expectations. On the other hand, the performances also provide a source of joy, and pride, or even empowerment to those who embody an imagined Cordilleran past. That said, the celebration of Cordilleran cultural heritage in Tam-awan Village is, at the same time, objectifying and empowering. The environment stimulates objectification, and yet it makes the unseen visible. The phenomenon results in the emergence of a peculiar Cordilleran culture in the living museum.

## Conclusion

Traditionally, museums are created to display a collection of things, capture and portray certain events, or convey messages to a group of people. It could exhibit a people's way of living, as well as collect, preserve, or interpret both their material culture and intangible heritage. In producing a narrative from these collections, museums decide whose and which artworks, sculptures, rituals, songs, or dances it will include. As such, it naturally produces boundaries and borders by silencing or creating an "other." Historically, museums have also played a vital role in creating racial hierarchies (like in the case of colonial exhibitions) or normalizing "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) to promote the "superiority" of a particular population.

In recent years, the creation of living museums opened up opportunities for the reclamation of self-respect and dignity for those who have been historically marginalized. An example of such is the Tam-awan Village. While people are drawn to such museums through sheer curiosity about the exotic and the unfamiliar, the resulting encounter with the indigenous helps promote indigenous culture and welfare. However, to make every encounter productive, culture bearers willingly perform their identity. Their performance involves negotiating their identity, hence reconfiguring their older traditions and creating new rituals and artifacts based on past symbols and icons. By incorporating Cordilleran elements familiar to their audience, the performance of their negotiated culture becomes convincing.

Although Tam-awan Village objectifies those it exhibits, this objectification did not prevent the museum from empowering and capacitating some members of the indigenous communities in the

Philippines. As the museum encourages modifications of rituals and dances, it makes the formerly invisible visible. Also, apart from promoting indigenous culture, the museum provides livelihood to the least privileged members of these minority groups. What this study found is a paradoxical phenomenon—the creation and reproduction of a negotiated culture and identity based on older traditions, colonial images, and cultural upliftment.

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