A Melting Pot Runneth Over? Contradictions of Heritage in Baguio City, Philippines

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The Cordillera Review: Journal of Philippine Culture and Society 14 (1–2): 195–217.
https://doi.org/10.64743/PBSU7724

ABSTRACT

This paper is a preliminary examination of the contradictions of heritage as they manifest in the City of Baguio, Philippines, particularly due to the entangled discourses of national heritage and community inheritance. Drawing on Smith's (2006) concept of the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), Robertson's (2012) idea of Heritage from Below (HFB), and Mulder's (2022) notion of the "messy spaces in between" (258), I analyze the city's engagement with heritage as borne out by its colonial past and multicultural present. Through a critical analysis of policy documents, legal texts, (social) media representations, and cultural mapping guidelines, processes, and outputs, I demonstrate how heritage in Baguio simultaneously functions as a site of contestation and creative tension. The discussion intends to contribute to the ongoing discourse of critical heritage in urban sites with heterogeneous populations.

Keywords: Baguio, Ibaloy, critical heritage, contradictions of heritage, urban heritage

Introduction

This paper came from an initial inquiry into heritage in Baguio City in 2015 which, in turn, was the result of a heightened clamor from civil society groups and peoples' organizations against the construction of a concrete fence, among others, on City Hall grounds, culminating in calls for the conservation of the city's "historic landscape" (Cabreza 2015). The general hope was that through the identification and mapping of Baguio's heritage sites, the frenzy of urban sprawl and decay could be stemmed. Eventually, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) issued a cease-and-desist order on 3 June 2015,

based on the assertion that the City Hall grounds were a Presumed Important Cultural Property (PICP) under RA 10066 or the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009. It was this incident, arguably, that set off the systematic examination and documentation of the city's heritage leading to current efforts toward the Baguio City Cultural Mapping Project.

As a settler from the lowlands, I was intrigued by how it was the threat of modifications to City Hall—a colonial building—that finally prompted this wide call for heritage conservation in Baguio. That year, I had been residing in the city for a decade, starting as a university student and continuing until I became employed as a researcher in the same university. This fascination at the furor over City Hall stemmed from a stark contrast: just a year earlier, in 2014, the local news cycle had been dominated by a different, yet kindred, conflict. The NCIP had granted a writ of possession to the heirs of one Cosen Piraso for the land on which Casa Vallejo, the city's oldest hotel, stood. The hotel's tenants (which then included Mt. Cloud Bookshop, North Haven Spa and the Film Development Council Philippines [FDCP] Cinematheque Baguio) were served a notice of eviction but responded with a sit-in on the day they were supposed to vacate the premises. Fears were raised over the possibility that the property would be sold to commercial developers, should the Ibaloy family's bid succeed (Marcelo 2014 via GMA News Online).

Both City Hall and Casa Vallejo are colonial structures—the former, a government building dating back to 1910 and erected during E.W. Reynolds' tenure as Baguio's inaugural mayor; and the latter, once a dormitory for American soldiers, neglected for a time, then revived as a hotel in 2009. Threats to both buildings were met with demands for the structures—and by extension, for the city's heritage landscape—to be "saved." At the end, the fence at City Hall did get built, albeit after much discussion, negotiation, and input from the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP). Eventually, too, the Certificate of Ancestral Land Title (CALT) issued by the NCIP to the Piraso heirs for Casa Vallejo was nullified by the Supreme Court after a protracted legal struggle. Yet, despite these outcomes, these events—their resemblances and disparities—prevail as opportunities to discuss the contradictions of heritage in a multifaceted city like Baguio. For instance, news outlets couched the conflict over Casa Vallejo as one that was between "Indigenous rights or heritage" (Tupaz 2014 via Rappler.com), and "heritage preservation [or] ancestral rights" (Marcelo 2014 via GMA News Online). Fong (2017) remarked that the Casa Vallejo case saw "an attempt to pit indigenous peoples' rights against those of the nation" (69).

The difference between my initial inquiry into Baguio heritage and the interest of this present paper is, unsurprisingly, context. That earlier work was inclined toward a cursory view of heritage in/and the city, serving only as one of many efforts to open conversations about the city's cultural legacy/ies. Back then, I was largely interested in looking for a "least common denominator" for heritage in the city, considering the many stakeholders that vie for its recognition. At the time, the purpose of such inquiry was to enable the articulation of Heritage—with a capital H—as set forth by Philippine law (i.e., RA 10066, or the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009) and international treaties (e.g. the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention). I posited then that this common ground could be the city's natural surroundings, as some "thing" that all citizens (and non-citizens) would agree was Baguio's heritage. While I remain subscribed to the idea that Baguio's natural attributes—specifically its cool climate—are a key component of Baguio's heritage (Pamintuan-Riva 2024), this present paper tackles a changed city. Baguio is now a UNESCO Creative City in the field of Crafts and Folk Arts (and has been so since 2017), having emerged on the other side of a global pandemic ever more conscious of the ways it is exceeding its urban carrying capacity (De Guzman, Cabrido, and Tabangin 2021; Tabangin 2024) and cognizant of the threat of urban sprawl and urban decay. The city's local government has since taken on the challenge of cultural mapping, identifying the tangible and intangible elements that make Baguio the city that it is. Perhaps most significantly, the Philippine Supreme Court has since made a final ruling declaring Baguio City exempt from the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 by virtue of its original Charter and status as a townsite reservation, thereby barring any ancestral land claims made by Indigenous groups. While the ruling has been deemed final by the country's judiciary, it is far from uncontested, its outcomes bearing heavily on the dynamic of urban heritage in Baguio.

This study then seeks to make sense of heritage as it manifests in the contradictions of Baguio as a Philippine city, borne out by its colonial past and multicultural present. As it stands today, Baguio offers a compelling case study for the interplay of Indigenous, colonial, and contemporary urban dynamics. Through critical engagement with the discourses surrounding the city and its heritage, I consider the following questions: How does the concept of heritage in Baguio reflect the contradictions inherent in the heritage discourse itself? How do conflicts over sites like Casa Vallejo and City Hall illustrate the dissonant nature of heritage in the city? Given the complexities of diverse societies, how can heritage work and workers proceed toward a more just conception of heritage, apropos Lefebvre's ([1968] 1996) call for the "right to the city"?

Metholodogy

This article approaches these questions from the vantage point of cultural studies, where the question of "Whose heritage?" has been central in the discussion of which narratives (and the corresponding objects, tangible and/or intangible, that represent them) from the past deserve to be preserved in the present for the use of future generations (Hall 1999; Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2000; Smith 2022; Ashley and Stone 2023). This standpoint examines the structures of power that underpin the notion that heritage is neutral or natural, or that it represents a uniform and common good, especially in postcolonial or multicultural societies where hegemony is most obstinate, but also most open to critique. Thus, to address these questions I have taken a qualitative cultural studies methodology characterized by "an interest in the interplay between lived experience, texts or discourses, and the social context" (Saukko 2003, 11) through the analysis of critical heritage discourses in Baguio. The primary data sources for this analysis include policy documents, legal texts, (social) media representations, and cultural mapping guidelines, processes, and outputs which, together, provide a sense of how Baguio captures and expresses heritage. Some readings of historical narratives supplement the discussion by providing context to the past (often considered—and challenged—as the territory of heritage), especially regarding the city's early peopling.

Heritage, Framed

Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000) pose that "heritage is that part of the past which we select in the present for contemporary purposes, be they economic, cultural or political" (17). That is, what we choose to preserve, celebrate, and transmit as "heritage" reveals more about our contemporary values, anxieties, and aspirations than about historical reality itself. In fact, Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000) aver that "the debate concerning the existence of the past as an objective reality is not a precondition for the creation of heritage" (2). What heritage is concerned with, however, is how the past *can be* utilized as a resource, with critical heritage being particularly interested in examining how it *is* utilized for certain purposes in certain power structures (Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2000; Smith 2022). As Mulder (2022) writes on the place of urban Māori heritage in the Aotearoa capital of Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington), "how the past figures in the present is key to unlocking the potential of heritage in sustainable urban planning for the future. It is also a way to reckon with inherent power imbalances within government structures that inform engagement strategies with *iwi*"[1] (217). Thus, this paper understands heritage as an exercise in present-tense meaning-making, a social practice, and discourse which "not only organizes the way concepts…are understood, but the way

we act, the social and technical practices we act out, and the way knowledge is constructed and reproduced" (Smith 2006, 4). The study also, ultimately, takes to heart Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge's (2000) precept that "the study of heritage must address the questions as to why certain knowledges are privileged while others are suppressed" (29).

Underpinning these understandings is the notion that heritage is replete with contradictions and that these contradictions are writ especially large in Baguio. Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000) put forward that "contestation—conceptualized as dissonance—is an intrinsic quality of heritage" and pose that this is due to its "multiple uses and roles and the variety of scales implicated in the definition and meaning of heritage" (6). Robertson ([2012] 2016) articulates this as the "polyvocality of heritage" where "At the most basic level dissonance is equated with the recognition of conflict and contestation within every heritage representation; between and within all spatial scales and collective identities" (5). Aside from the earlier mentioned temporal contradiction of heritage (that is, that while its province is often situated in the past, its making occurs in the present), contradictions also emerge in the determination of heritage following guidelines set by international, national or even academic bodies. Langfield, Logan, and Craith (2010) again note that "tensions between indigenous groups and settler groups in the development of a national narrative" where "the national heritage is greater than any local—even indigenous—narrative" and where "settler groups may endeavor to rewrite the indigenous culture to fit the 'national story'" (13). It is important to note here that the idea of heritage as "any sort of intergenerational exchange or relationship" and not just a "precise legal term" meant to pertain to objects passed down to heirs emerged only recently, specifically at the advent of modernity and the concept of national identity (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000, 1). While there are competing claims regarding when nationalism emerged especially in the Western world (sometime between the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries), in the Philippine context, the idea of the "nation" is typically linked to the 1896 Revolution as three centuries of Spanish colonial rule culminated, among others, in the notion of a Filipino nation.

Being an "imagined community" (Benedict Anderson 1983), the nation then requires a national heritage for the "consolidation of this national identification" which necessitates "absorbing or neutralizing potentially competing heritages of social-cultural groups or regions" (12). This brings us to Laurajane Smith's (2006) articulation of the Authorized Heritage Discourse (hereafter AHD) as a discursive mechanism through which the imagined nation can organize and secure itself against (perceived) threats. After all, a national heritage, once solidified, would make it more difficult for external agents to

lay claim on the newly formed nation. Yet, it is also the resistance of dominant national (authorized) heritage discourses that facilitates its incompatibility with internal regional interests and identities. Smith's (2006) articulation of AHD pertains particularly to a dominant discourse borne out by official policy on heritage and kept alive through the "privileg[ing] monumentality and grand scale, innate artefact/site significance tied to time depth, scientific/aesthetic expert judgement, social consensus and nation building" (11). These criteria, in turn, produce a set of dominant, socially constructed meanings and values attached to objects of the past (i.e. grandness, longevity) that serve to validate and qualify a way of living in the present (i.e. that anything that is monumental and old holds great value), in the interest of preserving these values for the future. It is a discourse that "simultaneously draws on and naturalizes certain narratives and cultural and social experiences" connected to ideas of nationhood, immutable and innate cultural values, social consensus and the cult of the expert (4). As a discourse that is submerged in the "negotiation and regulation of social meanings and practices associated with the creation and recreation of identity," however, Smith argues that heritage should not be seen as an end but a means for more equitable representation (4).

Held in contrast to the AHD is "heritage from below" (hereafter HFB), articulated by Iain Robertson ([2012] 2016) as "a sense of inheritance that does not seek to attract an audience" (2). I have mentioned earlier that the notion of a "heritage" as differentiated from an "inheritance" is thought to have emerged alongside notions of nationalism and national identity. Nevertheless, as per Robertson, it would be a mistake to assume that this rise meant the extinction of all the quotidian and mundane ways that people in the present engage with the past, such as through the remembrance of ordinary peoples' lives—whether they be American steel workers or the "shackies" (coastal campers) of Western Australia—or through obscure disaster memorials hidden in unexpected places like Gloucestershire's Forest of Dean. As opposed to the monumental and momentous sites and objects favored by the AHD, vernacular heritage "offer 'ordinary people now' the chance to encounter 'ordinary people then'" (Dicks 2000, 37) through acts and objects with little to no promise of economic gain. Thus, Robertson ([2012] 2016) poses, HFB emerges as "both a means and manifestation of counter hegemonic practices" (7).

Notwithstanding the appeal of "AHD versus HFB" as a framework, recent scholarship has gone even further in articulating the nuances of heritage, both in theory and in practice. Muzaini and Minca (2018) suggest that it is time to rethink the "overtly simplistic binary of 'AHD-evil'-'HFB-good'" as "every form of heritage valorization, from the 'top-down' to the 'bottom-up', is inherently selective and responds, in various degrees, to the position of the[ir] respective promoters and

advocates" (3). Despite its function as counterpoint to AHD and its potential for a more democratized heritage practice, Muzaini and Minca (2018) warn against the tendency to romanticize HFB and remind that there is ultimately "no neutral ground out there to stage an apolitical and objective actualization of history" (3). Instead, they suggest that these two concepts are "different elements of a whole" that entangle and complement just as much as they oppose each other. Building on their work, Mulder (2022) proposes to move beyond the dualism of AHD and HFB, looking more closely instead at "the productive zone of insurgence that is opened up" in the "messy spaces between" AHD and HFB (254–55; 258). Thus, in making sense of the "messy spaces" of heritage in Baguio City, I favor a more contingent approach (inspired by Saukko 2003), considering the many actors in the city and looking at the interplay of their interests in the heritage project.

As a non-Indigenous Filipino who has settled in Baguio, and who has spent a majority of their young adult and academic life in the city, I approach the problematique of Baguio heritage with both an outsider's perspective and an insider's concern. While this position allows for an extensive view of the issue, it brings with it an awareness of that view's limitations especially in fully comprehending the emotional and spiritual dimensions of ancestral connections to the land. It also compels me to acknowledge the layers of privilege and responsibility attached to research in and on a place where competing heritage narratives intersect, and to appreciate that my own perspectives and interests are inevitably entangled in these contradictions of heritage, even as I attempt to analyze them. The aim of this paper, then, is not to pose a resolution to these tensions but to contribute to an ongoing conversation.

But First, How Did We Get Here?

Wodak (2001) writes that "texts are often sites of struggle…show[ing] traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance" (11). I consider Baguio as a text in the sense of its layered landscapes and in alignment with Fraser's (2015) notion that "the city is not a simple object but instead a subjective experience of flows and sensations" (3) and that "the city is an image and idea, as well as physical reality […] reflected and expressed in, mediated by and historically shaped through material conditions and cultural production" (6).

Baguio City is situated in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), some 1,400 meters above sea level, on the northern part of Luzon Island. Owing to a perfect storm of elevation, location and certain quirks of climate, the weather is colder by several degrees compared to the rest of the Philippines. Over the years, the city has taken on many roles,

from being the Summer Capital to developing into a university town and a UNESCO Creative City. As the region's urban center, Baguio has had its fair share of academic and industry interest. However, limited attention has been directed towards the question of heritage in the city, especially considering its metropolitan and syncretic character.

The modern city of Baguio was created officially on 1 September 1909, its charter declared by the American colonial government through its Philippine Commission. It is the Philippines' second-oldest city after the official capital, Manila, and served as the country's "Summer Capital" until 1976. Prior to that, expeditions by the Spanish, the island archipelago's former colonial rulers, had been sporadic beginning with *Comandante* Guillermo Galvey's expedition to Benguet in 1829, which he recorded in his diaries. These scattered Spanish accounts were enough to pique the interest of Dean C. Worcester, who in 1900 led the first Philippine Commission to Kafagway, the Ibaloy name for the area now occupied by City Hall (Florendo 2010).

"Discovering" a temperate climate in stark contrast to the searing heat of the lowlands, the American colonial government set out to build its own imperial hill station, for the rest and recuperation of soldiers and government officials. Citing the spirited defense of American officials for the development of Baguio to stem the tide of neurasthenia and Philippinitis among the white population, Florendo (2010) notes that "the development of Baguio as a colonial hill station was relentlessly pursued" (352). Perhaps more than this, Alcantara (2022) highlights the lure of gold and the prospect of expansion into the Benguet mines as a motivation for the city's establishment. Thus, "the transformation of Baguio into a semblance of a small American city proceeded apace" and that "the development of the city of Baguio was rapid and extensive" (Prill-Brett 2015, 280). Fong summarizes thus that "the city of Baguio is therefore an American construct" (2017, 60).[2]

Even so, the Americans were not the first to settle in Baguio. The Ibaloy people had migrated via river systems from west and southwestern Pangasinan prior to Spanish colonization in the 16th century (Prill-Brett 2015, 262; Keesing 1962, 152). Prill-Brett (2009; 2015) describes the Ibaloy livelihood activities prior to colonial expansion as diverse, ranging from the cultivation of swidden farms (*uma*) to hunting, foraging and fishing, gold-mining, animal husbandry and lowland trade. These last two activities are especially significant in tracing changes not only in Ibaloy economic systems but also in their general way of life. For instance, gold that was mined in the areas of Galan (Tublay), Ambuklao (below Kabayan), Antamog (Antamok), and Conag (Balatoc) was traded downwards for goods such as gongs, blankets and textiles, salt, beads, slaves and later, in the 1700s, cattle. Consequently, the ownership of cattle then led to the procurement of vast pasturelands to separate smaller herds, thereby avoiding outbreaks of disease and pestilence (Tapang 1985; 1999).

At the institution of the city's charter, a "petty plutocracy" (Scott 1979, 139) of prominent Ibaloys such as Juan Ora Cariño, Sioco Cariño, Mateo Cariño, Daroan Pucay, Molintas and Cuidno Carantes were engaged by the colonial government as a consultative committee on matters regarding the Indigenous residents (Prill-Brett 2015, 278). However, these *baknang* (the cattle-owning—and therefore rich—class) were "gradually but permanently replaced" by American administrators (i.e. Worcester, Gov. William Pack, John C. Early, and Eusebius Halsema) because of the latter's "easy access and capacity to deal with the growing needs and anxieties of residents with authority and dispatch" (Prill-Brett 2015, 278).

Migration to Baguio had been happening long before colonization (case in point: the German merchant-turned-linguist Otto Scheerer, who moved to Kafagway around the time of the Philippine Revolution and who played an important role as liaison and guide for the American colonial government). Still, it is difficult to deny that American interventions facilitated the influx of newcomers at a scale not seen in the highland city before then. The excavation of the Benguet Road (now Kennon Road) from the mountainsides is perhaps the most critical of these interventions. Construction began in 1900 and was completed five years later by Major L.W. Kennon (the road's eventual namesake). According to Major Kennon's correspondences, considerable difficulties were wrought by the constant scarcity of labor for the road. It is said that local Igorots mainly refused to work on this road, which provided the impetus for the more rapid and substantial influx of migrants like the Chinese, Japanese, Ilokano, Kapampangan, and more, to the city. Some 200 prisoners from the Manila Bilibid were also recruited to work on the road (Florendo 1994, 70). Asis and Follosco (2020) credit this time as the beginning of steady Cordilleran migration to Baguio, resulting in the city's substantial Kankanaey population and the "Bontoc Villages" and "Ifugao Villages" long-established today.

Florendo (1994, 70) posits that this phenomenon would best be described as the "migrant superordination" of Baguio, where "immigrant groups [are introduced] to fill the niches created in the revised economy of the area" (Lieberson 1961, 902) especially during this time of rapid transition in the city's economy. Prill-Brett (2015) relays that during the city's early years, the Ibaloy participated mostly in unskilled labor while migrants took up most of the skilled labor. This was short-lived, however, as Prill-Brett (2015) also notes that the Ibaloy quickly caught on to the economic and social advancement to be gained by entering the system of formal schooling introduced by the Americans. While the *baknang* led the charge on this front, the *abiteg* (poor) also recognized the upward mobility—or at least, equal footing—they could access through formal education. Through education, Ibaloys became teachers, nurses, lawyers, medical doctors, and military personnel

not only in the Philippines but also in the United States, where these professionals migrated. In contrast to the colonial policy of Spain, the Americans made good on their policy of "benevolent assimilation" and appeared to the local populace as friends, all while gradually supplanting the *baknang* in politics and governance.

A Melting Pot Runneth Over

The previous section sought to present a brief introduction to Baguio City as well as a crudely drawn account of its past and development from an Ibaloy *rancheria* to an American colonial hill station and to a city of migrants. More detailed accounts on Baguio's peopling and development may be found in the writings of social scientists already mentioned such as Prill Brett (2015), Florendo (1994; 2010), Tapang (1985; 1999) and Boquiren (2015). Boquiren (2015; 2018), in particular, has written particularly about Baguio history as it relates to heritage and intersects with the city's perennial urban land problem and was instrumental in the subsequent activities for Baguio heritage mapping. Rebecca Tinio McKenna's 2017 book is especially noteworthy in its discussion of Baguio's design and development, particularly the role that it played in the American colonial/imperial project. Considering the present, this portion of the discussion examines the city's contemporary cast of actors, their use of the past, and their stake in the city's heritage project.

Among these stakeholders, the state constitutes a dominant presence, bound as it is by law to identify and preserve heritage resources. While the City of Baguio now currently leads its own multi-phase Cultural Mapping project, this was preceded by multiple efforts from private and civil society. In 2017, the Baguio Heritage Foundation, Inc. (BHFI) and the University of the Philippines College Baguio Educational Foundation, Inc. (UPCBEFI) in cooperation with Pine Cone Movement, Inc. (PCMI) initiated an early Baguio Heritage Mapping Project which produced, among others, an updated electronic map of heritage and historical sites that was published through the Google Maps platform in the same year. This was accompanied by a Technical Assistance Report made by Henares, Portem, and Go (2017).

The city's ongoing Cultural Mapping project was formally initiated in 2021, launched by the City Planning, Development and Sustainability Office (CPSDO) through a city-wide call for participation. With a clarion call of "*Makinayon*!" (Participate!/Join!),[3] the City's cultural mapping project's initial salvo featured a video where Mayor Benjamin Magalong, CPDSO Coordinator Architect Donna Rillera-Tabangin and National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) Cultural Mapping Consultant Arvin Manuel Villalon enjoined citizens to share stories and information about heritage resources in the city.

Fading into a scene of foggy mountaintops and an Ibaloy prayer led by the Onjon ni Ivadoy, Villalon informs viewers that the cultural mapping project is initiated by the NCCA in line with RA 10066 or the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, which directs local governments to "protect, conserve or safeguard our natural resources" and that the identification and mapping of these resources is one way of doing so (00:00:44–00:01:21). This is echoed by Mayor Magalong, who stresses the importance of data gathering to facilitate strategic programs lest historical sites fall into neglect, leaving future generations without a past to learn from. Tabangin also touches on this sense of intergenerational responsibility, emphasizing the value of cultural mapping in finding "common stories to tell from the same history, from the same narrative" (00:04:33–00:04:41) and reflecting these in the city's development plans. This use of heritage for development emerges as another important rationale for the cultural mapping project, with Villalon explaining that through mapping, localities will be able to know and utilize their resources to "build communities" (00:00:33), and Mayor Magalong remarking on the value of looking back, learning from and caring for historical sites to "create a roadmap of where we're heading" (00:03:40–00:03:43).

These framings relate to a common theme found in Philippine heritage literature concerned with the relationship of heritage to economic development. Specifically, how heritage conservation can be a "driver" for sustainable development and urban regeneration instead of being viewed as antithetical (or even an obstacle to) economic progress (Zerrudo 2008; Cruz 2017; Hosagrahar et al. 2021; Cruz 2022; Cruz 2024). Key to this perspective is Zerrudo's 2008 paper on the cultural mapping project in Vigan City, Ilocos Sur, a World Heritage site proclaimed by UNESCO and often cited as a success story for the integration of development and heritage conservation. Having worked as a cultural mapping consultant in Vigan, Zerrudo presents a Conceptual Framework for Heritage and Development which sees heritage conservation as moving through the phases of awareness, appreciation, protection and utilization.

As for the results of the Baguio cultural mapping project, the first book was released in 2023, documenting 216 of the city's 600 identified cultural properties. The initial categories used include: significant tangible immovable structures; schools, hospitals and churches; monuments and markers, sites, and heritage houses; ethnographic objects; industrial and commercial arts, artwork and archival holdings; natural history specimen; geological and physiographical heritage areas; knowledge and practices concerning nature, and products of traditional craftsmanship and processes for their manufacturing. A news article published by the Philippine News Agency in 2023 noted that this initial output was presented and validated by the Ibaloy

community of Happy Hallow (the city's only declared ancestral domain) prior to its acceptance and endorsement by the Baguio City Council and submission to the NCCA. Nonetheless, it should be stressed that the Cultural Mapping project in Baguio is still ongoing at the time of this writing and a full discussion of the project must be reserved for its conclusion. For the time being, it is important to note that there remains great potential for developments and innovations to implementation at this still-dynamic juncture of heritage work in the city.

The involvement of Indigenous communities is a key aspect to the city's cultural mapping project, which adds both complexity and depth to heritage in the city. It is worth emphasizing here that the purpose of scrutinizing existing laws, policies and charters is not to judge them as wholly good or wholly bad. Rather, it is to understand how official frameworks serve to organize and create meaning in an otherwise dissonant field. In the case of RA 10066 and its resulting cultural mapping guidelines implemented by the NCCA and followed by local governments, it is of note that at least some effort has been taken to mention Indigenous peoples and how to approach their heritage. Article V, Section 21 of RA 10066 (2009) declares that cultural agencies must confer with the NCIP regarding programs and regulations "to assist Indigenous peoples in preserving their particular cultural and historical properties" (15). Further along, the law also provides that "Anthropological research by Philippine nationals, especially members of indigenous communities, shall be encouraged" (19). Elsewhere, the NCIP is identified as the key institutional linkage for cultural agencies in matters relating to cultural properties and natural resources, acting "in behalf of the country's indigenous cultural communities" (22). The law's 2012 Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) mention the 1987 Philippine Constitution's provision to "recognize, respect, and protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions, and institutions" (Sec. 17) and establishes permit exemptions for intangible cultural properties of Indigenous design being transported outside the country. The *NCCA Cultural Mapping Toolkit* (2019) used by the Baguio Cultural Mapping Project also dedicates a short chapter on undertaking cultural mapping activities in Indigenous peoples' territories. This chapter affirms that these activities must be responsive to the community's needs and that, in principle:

> The diversity of the Filipino nation is characterized by the presence of various indigenous communities, cultures, religions, and languages. Some researches imply that even as we share some elements of a common heritage, the phenomenon of cultural pluralism in the country makes national unity and inclusive development urgent, although considered as a complex issue. (NCCA 2019, 150)

Mulder (2022) contends that "Indigenous urban heritage remains a virtual lacuna in heritage studies" (27) and that this is primarily a function of "our cities' foundational myths, insidious extinction narratives that position Indigenous people outside of cityspace, indeed outside of time itself" (28). This is particularly salient to my current discussion, as Baguio has been declared categorically exempt from IPRA (and, logic dictates, not to be considered Indigenous peoples' territory). At this juncture, I find it necessary to clarify that looking back at the city's Ibaloy history does not serve to confine their existence to Baguio or to deny the fact of their mobility. Prill-Brett (2015), in fact, provides a list of reasons culled from oral history to explain early Ibaloy movement from Baguio–Tuba, which included epidemics, trade, intermarriage, resistance to Spanish advances and *reduccion*, and to evade their enemies. During the American period, movement was due to many reasons, which included the development of the area into a hill station (Bagamaspad and Hamada-Pawid 1985; Florendo 2010) which facilitated the dispossession of land (McKenna 2017), and "dislocation […] among the schooled individuals who found themselves alienated from active participation in their communities" (Prill-Brett 2015, 286). Despite this, it is a reality that Ibaloy families continue to live in the city. Not only that, they are engaged as steadfast members of the community, participating actively in Baguio's social, political, economic and cultural life. In the Baguio cultural mapping project, members of the community took part not only as key informants but as mappers as well. A cursory view of Book 1 of the project shows a majority of the intangible natural heritage listed were from Ibaloy culture, though they were conspicuously absent from the list of tangible immovable heritage (i.e., structures and places).

Over the past two decades, Ibaloy scholars have grappled with the city and their sense of place in it not only through their written work but also in efforts within their community. Through organizations like Onjon ni Ivadoy (Unity/Union of the Ibaloys) and Chiva ni Doakan (Center for Ibaloi Heritage and Loakan History, founded by Ibaloy scholar Rosella Camte-Bahni), the Ibaloy of Baguio have consolidated ranks and made visible their stake in the city. In 2010, the first Ibaloy Day was celebrated on February 23, while a portion of Burnham Park customarily known as Apni was designated as the Ibaloy Heritage Garden on August 16. Alongside their presence in Baguio Day celebrations on the first of September, the Ibaloy have also held their own month-long Ibaloy Festival every February since 2014.

Reflecting on the Casa Vallejo episode and the nature of this increased visibility, Fong (2017) has asked: "Have the Ibaloy, historically the 'first nation' in Bagiw, come back to reclaim Baguio?" Eventually, he infers that the "Ibaloy reclamation of Baguio can only happen at the realm of the symbolic," especially under the leadership of intellectuals

(68). In retrospect, these words appear prescient following the 11 July 2023 Supreme Court decision that ruled Baguio City as exempt from the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) by virtue of its 1909 Charter and designation as a Townsite Reservation, as stated in Section 78 of the law. Through this decision, all claims for ancestral land in Baguio City—such as those by the Piraso heirs for Casa Vallejo—were effectively nullified. As I've mentioned earlier, however, this ruling has been far from unchallenged, with at least one city councilor calling Section 78 a "historical injustice" (as reported by Habbiling in 2024 on the Baguio City Sangguniang Panlungsod's social media page). This begs the question, however, of whether the desire to repeal this section of the IPRA also points to more favorable prospects for future Indigenous land claims, and whether heritage discourse would work for (via the acknowledgment of their ancestral heritage) or against (via the argument that certain areas are of value to the national heritage) the Ibaloy.

While the Ibaloy navigate these legal frameworks, they do so in a city that has become home to a great many migrants who have conferred upon the city a multi-layered urban identity. It is curious to me that scholars have used the word "migrants" to refer to people who have relocated to Baguio City, regardless of whether they are from overseas, from the lowlands, or Indigenous peoples themselves from other Cordillera provinces (Florendo 1994; Prill-Brett 2015; Asis and Follosco 2020; Luga 2022). In other heritage literature, the word "migrants" tends to be used solely when speaking about foreigners (Pugliese 2002; Mason 2010; Nikielska-Sekuła 2019; Desille and Nikielska-Sekuła 2024) and the mobility of their heritage. In any case, scholarship from and on migrant groups to Baguio have also made way in documenting their entry and subsequent contributions to the city. Perhaps most notable of these would be Afable (2004a; 2004b, 2008) and Hayase (2022) on the ethnic Japanese, and Bagamaspad (1997) and Cheng and Bersamira (1997) on the ethnic Chinese. In the CPDSO's social media posts for "*Makinayon*!", one commenter enquired about whether the city considered looking at the cultural influence of other migrant groups in Baguio, such as the Indians, British and French.

Tourists constitute a fourth, perhaps even larger demographic. Despite the transient nature of their participation in the city and being a significant driver for the economy, the influx of tourists has drawn concern from researchers, civil society groups and even local government, who have called attention to the strain this has placed on Baguio's limited space and resources as well as the need for a more sustainable approach to tourism (Yeoh 2017; Asis and Follosco 2020; De Guzman, Cabrido and Tabangin 2021). A study commissioned by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) in 2019 and presented by the CPDSO in 2024 found that the city had long outrun its

urban carrying capacity in terms of urban road area (exceeded in 1988), open spaces (exceeded in 2008), and land for development (exceeded in 2010), among other indicators. Further, even though Baguio holds a relatively low vehicle density on regular weekdays—at least when compared to international standards—the city's roads surpass their carrying capacity during weekends, holidays and peak months (i.e., the annual Panagbenga Flower Festival in February) due to the incursion of tourists (De Guzman, Cabrido and Tabangin 2021). While the usual entry of tourists was restricted by the COVID-19 pandemic for a few years, travelers are now returning to the highland city in overwhelming numbers, leading not only to an increased demand for resources but also to a certain heightened "local irritability" (Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong as quoted by Cabreza in a news article on *Inquirer.net* in January 2024).

Yeoh (2017) avers that "notwithstanding the spectacular magnetism of Panagbenga, the primary draw of Baguio City remains its 'air-conditioned' weather all year round" (13) and contextualizes this through an analysis of tourism development in the city, which he traces from the early marketing of Baguio as a colonial hill station and health resort. Interestingly, this perception endures despite an observed rise in the city's annual temperature (Chepelianskaia 2023). Take for example the city launching the #breatheBaguio tourism and branding campaign as it was recovered from the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, evoking the city's historic past as a place for rest, recuperation and relaxation. At the campaign's unveiling during the city's 112th Charter Anniversary, City Tourism Officer Aloysius Mapalo stated that the slogan was chosen over alternatives like "Walk in Baguio" and "Baguio Life in Color" because it called to mind a "sentimentality over old Baguio" (Cabreza 2021). Whether a sign of its success, a consequence of post-pandemic "revenge tourism,"[4] or a combination of both, the city's Public Information Office (PIO) reported that in the year 2023, 1.31 million tourists made their way to Baguio (99.36 percent of which are domestic visitors), staying at least overnight in accredited establishments and spending an average of Php2,000–4,000 per head per day (Refuerzo n.d.).

Who Has a Right to What's Left of the City?

Having considered the players in Baguio's present, my discussion now turns to how their interests interplay in the heritage project—which is, ultimately, concerned with the future. At this juncture I find it necessary to state that the groupings I have used in the previous section are certainly facile and serve only to expedite analysis. Identities and roles in the city are complex and overlapping, and membership in the same group does not guarantee unity or uniformity. It is in this context

that the question of "Whose heritage?" re-emerges as a central bone of contention.

As the city's Indigenous inhabitants, it is logical for the Ibaloy to hold a central presence in the heritage project. However, several external and internal factors complicate the straightforward implementation of this idea. As seen in the Casa Vallejo case and similar disputes, some Ibaloy families have sought legal and economic redress by reclaiming land and land rights as part of an inheritance. At the same time, other families have maintained that they "do not intend to remove, or fight with, actual occupants in [their] pursuit for recognition as original claimants to the land" (a Cariño heir quoted by Ramo in her 2008 article published by the local newspaper, *Northern Dispatch*) but that "efforts to right the wrong should start with the recognition that an injustice has been committed against Mateo Cariño" (Joanna K. Cariño, a great granddaughter of Mateo Cariño, also quoted in Ramo's 2008 article). This suggests a more reconciliatory approach characterized by a focus on "restoring and rebuilding relationships" which begins with the acknowledgment that a certain harm had been done that warrants reconciliation (Short 2005, 268). These also indicate an alignment with Robertson's (2016) notion of heritage from below being

> about more than visitors, audience and consumption […] more than access to economic resources. It is about people, collectivity and individuals, and about their sense of inheritance from the past and the uses to which this sense of inheritance is put. It is about the possibilities that result from the deployment of the past. (Robertson 2016, 1)

Though these manifestations are inevitably context- and time-bound, they more importantly suggest the opportunity to articulate a range (implying a minimum and a maximum) of possible ways forward rather than a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

This contingent approach may be incongruous to a unifying nationalist heritage agenda, which requires the subsumption of regional heritages into a definitive Heritage with a capital H for its functioning and survival. For instance, it is plain to see how the local government's efforts fall squarely within the AHD framework, aiming to create a cultural inventory of "heritage resources" and submit this to the *Talapamana ng Pilipinas* or Philippine Registry of Cultural Property (PRECUP) as mandated by RA 10066. However, looking closely at the guidelines and toolkits also shows that, to a limited extent, the legal structures that support heritage also appear to make space for Indigenous participation in their methodologies, albeit within a "framework of national unity and development" (Philippine Constitution 1987, Sec. 22). While on one hand, this lays important groundwork for inclusive implementation, this also raises fundamental questions about how Indigenous peoples

fit within national narratives and whether these spaces allow for a multiplicity of Indigenous identities and by extension, a multiplicity of Baguio identities. Where does Baguio figure in the national story when Baguio can no longer play the part of a cool weather sanctuary as it struggles with the challenges of climate change and an overextended carrying capacity?

I have previously mentioned the notion that Baguio's climate itself may very well be the key to its heritage (Pamintuan-Riva 2024), especially held against Smith's (2006) proposition that heritage is "a cultural process that engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present" (44). In other words, the cold weather of Baguio (and the sensory phenomena that accompany it or are a result of it) is its heritage because it helps us remember the Baguio that was—or at least, Baguio as we would like to remember it—before the untenable onrush of tourists and urban development. Now is perhaps an opportune moment to ask, for whom has this development been for? In preserving elements of its past, whose presents and futures are being prioritized? For the moment, the city has articulated a clear, reinvigorated vision, "Baguio 2043: A Livable, Inclusive and Creative City," and it is equally clear that the cultural mapping project is part of a concerted effort by local government to work toward that vision. This calls to mind the idea that heritage itself is part and parcel of the right to the city (per Lefebvre [1968] 1996), and what Harvey further articulated as being "far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources" but "a right to change ourselves by changing the city" (2008, 23).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The discourse of heritage in Baguio is complex, but its complications bring multiple opportunities and possibilities for productive and critical engagement. The discussion above may be viewed as an exercise of this critical engagement, where rather than accomplishing what is easy (i.e., the monolithic determination of an authorized heritage discourse), we lay out the difficult and sometimes messy entanglements of our pasts for the benefit of the future. Rather than avoidance, it is crucial to work out the dissonant nature of our heritage, examining its tensions and multiplicities. This paper has suggested that the contradictions of heritage are especially noticeable in Baguio but should not necessarily be viewed as a problem to solve but rather as a springboard for productive tension that more accurately reflects the city's multilayered identity. Moving forward, the challenge for Baguio lies not in resolving heritage contradictions into a singular narrative but in creating frameworks that acknowledge contestation as constitutive of the city's character.

Conflicts such as Casa Vallejo and City Hall herald larger struggles within the work of decolonization and highlight the importance of reconciliation as a necessary step toward a just articulation of our urban heritage. Considering the very hybrid character of the city in the present, and its concern with urban decay and relentless flows of tourism, being able to learn from the city's past will be instrumental in Baguio's advance into the future.

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Notes

1. *Iwi* is the Māori word for "people" or "nation."
2. Curiously, one could argue that the story of Baguio is one that resounds with the spirit of American exceptionalism, that rugged belief that "If it [the United States] was an empire at all, it was a special one" Go (2003), 2. Its terrain, its weather, its inhabitants who took to the Americans so much more diplomatically than their insurrectionist lowland counterparts, everything about Baguio was different from the rest of the Philippine Islands, and it was developed as a hill station precisely because it was so. McKenna (2017), writing on the creation of the city along the vision of an American imperial pastoral, articulates it succinctly: "This enclave of America was defined by its difference: it was unrepresentative of the archipelago in its natural and built environments" (15).
3. "Participate!/Join!" is only a rough translation for "*Makinayon*!" as this Ilokano word carries nuance as a call for unity or community contribution toward an end goal.
4. Although the origin of the phrase is unclear, it is generally agreed that "revenge tourism" emerged as a phenomenon in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (Abdullah 2021; Meenakshi et al. 2024). The phrase is typically used to describe the upsurge in travel and tourism as borders became more open after a long global lockdown which severely limited people's ability to travel outside of their homes.

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