

***The Power of the Image: Photographs in the University of the Philippines Baguio  
Cordillera Archives***

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**Abstract**

Photographs played a major role, sometimes more than the written text, in American colonial efforts in the Philippines at the turn and well into the early years of the 1900s. Dean C. Worcester, who was appointed Secretary of the Interior of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Philippine Commission, collected over 16,000 still photographs on the Philippines. His interest in documenting the Philippine indigenous people did not only consist of visiting the places where the “tribes” or “savages” lived but also taking photographs. These images convinced Americans that the inhabitants of the Philippines were not ready to govern themselves.

This paper briefly discusses the role photographs have played in the history and ethnography of the Cordillera Region in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It will then talk about the University of the Philippines Baguio Cordillera/Northern Luzon Historical Archives and its objective of collecting, cataloging, preserving and making documents available to the public. Selected photograph collections of the Archives particularly those of Laurence Lee Wilson, Robert B. Fox, Sr., The Suyoc People Who Went to the 1904 Fair, and the Kalinga Tattooing photographs will be presented and broadly described. It will then examine problems encountered in preserving and making the photographs accessible. Finally, preservation strategies in efforts to prolong the life of these important primary sources by the UP Baguio C/NLH Archives are enumerated.

**Keywords:** Cordillera Region, University of the Philippines Baguio, Cordillera Northern Luzon Historical Archives, Photographs, Preservation of photographs, American colonial period

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## **Background**

Photographs played an important role in shaping Cordillera identity, history and culture in the early 1900s. When the Americans won the Spanish-American War in the Philippines that resulted in the purchase of the Philippines from Spain, the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes was established to look into the condition of the pagan and Mohammedan tribes and to suggest laws in their behalf (Barrows, 1901). An approach employed to survey the pagans of northern Luzon was the use of the camera. The Americans, specifically Dean C. Worcester went around the Cordillera photographing the landscape, the people, and their rituals. The captured images convinced the people of the United States and the world that Filipinos were not ready for self- government. Furthermore, the photographs aroused the curiosity of the Americans. This resulted in a number of American anthropologists coming to the Philippines purposely to study the people who looked and acted peculiarly different. Albert E. Jenks, Roy F. Barton, and Faye Cooper Cole to name a few, documented the way of life of the pagans. Belgian missionaries like Francis Lambrecht, and Morice Vanoverbergh were posted in the Cordilleras to study the people and convert them to Christianity. Documenting the Cordillera and its people persisted into the 1960s. Following Jenks, Barton, and Cole other anthropologists and historians like Fred Eggan, Laurence Wilson, Robert Fox, Sr., Felix Keesing, and William Henry Scott came soon after. After their short stay in the Philippines, some of these anthropologists went home carrying with them documents they have accumulated and depositing these in libraries, archives and museums around the world.

My paper will discuss the Wilson, Fox and selected photograph collections that have been deposited and are available at the University of the Philippines Baguio Cordillera/Northern Luzon Historical Archives. The physical condition of the images, the problems encountered in preserving and making the images accessible to researchers will be presented. It is not the purpose of the paper to give opinions regarding the intents of the photographers or the owners of the images. Neither will this paper be a contextual analysis of the images as I am not an anthropologist. Its purpose is to detail the importance of preserving and making these images accessible parallel to the objectives of the archives—to preserve documents and make these available to the wider public for as long as possible.

## **The Cordillera Region and its people**

The Cordillera Region is located in northern Luzon, the biggest island of the Philippines. It is bounded on the north and east by Cagayan Region, on the west and south by the Ilocos Region. Six provinces and 2 cities make up the Region: Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Baguio City and Tabuk City.

The mountain chain called *Gran Cordillera*, from the Spanish term which means mountain, rises from the Cagayan Valley and traverses the Region until it tapers down towards the Pangasinan plains. This mountain range has served as protection and refuge for the Igorot people from Spanish aggressors and conquerors (Scott, 1975).

The Region is home to 7 major ethnolinguistic groups namely: Tinggian of Abra, Isneg of Apayao, Kalinga, Kankana-ey of southern Mountain Province, Ibaloy of Benguet, Ifugao and Bontok of northern Mountain Province. Next to Mindanao, it has

the second largest concentration of indigenous people. Under these major ethnolinguistic groups are several sub-ethnolinguistic groupings. The geographic terrain earned the inhabitants the collective albeit derogatory name *Igorots* from the Tagalog word *Igolot* (Scott, 1993). *Igolot* comes from *golot* or *golod* meaning “mountain chain,” and the prefix *i* meaning “people of.” Thus, *igolot* means “of the hill or mountain.”

Partly due to the Region’s rugged terrain and largely to their resistance, the *Igorots* were not easily subdued by the Spanish *conquistadores*. It was only towards the end of the Spanish colonial rule that politico-military *commandancias* were established in some parts of the Region. Because of the *Igorots*’ continued struggle for independence they were labeled uncivilized, *infieles* (pagans), fierce and barbaric.

### **Photographs in early Cordillera history**

The *Igorots* were extensively photographed during the American period. The Americans believed that not many accounts were written of the people of northern Luzon and there is a need to study them further. Dean C. Worcester, an American zoologist who first came to the Philippines in 1887, decided to document these lesser known inhabitants of northern and southern Philippines. He was appointed to head the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, which was later renamed Bureau of Ethnological Survey. The Bureau was tasked to survey and look into the conditions of the lesser known tribes of the Philippines. Worcester was appointed to this Bureau because of his extensive knowledge and experience accumulated during his 1887 and 1890 visits to the Islands (Hutterer, 1978). Charles Martin, the government photographer accompanied him during his trips around the country. Together they took photographs of the people and places they visited. These photographs were instrumental in shaping American opinions, views and beliefs about the backwardness and primitiveness of the Philippine people (Rice, 2011).

From 1890 to 1913, over 16,000 still photographs on the Philippines were taken by Worcester. Four thousand seven hundred are of ethnographic subjects. The favorite subjects of Worcester were the *Igorots*’ physical make-up, manner of dressing, tattoos, headhunting practices, their dog eating habits, material culture, “odd” customs, and rituals. His immense interest in the appearance of the natives compared to the civilized Westerners showed when he would pose beside them. The captured images highlighted the natives’ need for guidance and education. For these, Worcester became controversial and unpopular because the entire Philippines and the Filipinos were generalized as primitive and savages.

### **The UP Baguio Cordillera/Northern Luzon Historical Archives**

The UP Baguio C/NLH Archives as established in 2008. Specifically, it aims to strengthen historical research in UP Baguio and the Cordillera Region; to forge linkages with local, national and international archives and; to collect, catalog and preserve archival materials. It is the first regional archives in the Cordillera and Northern Luzon that acquires and makes accessible to scholars historical documents, i.e., mission reports, government records, memoirs, maps, photographs, correspondences, and personal papers of prominent individuals of the Cordillera in particular and Northern Luzon in general. The Archives’ mission, aside from being a

repository of primary sources on the Cordillera, aims to collect as humanly possible all known written as well as visual sources on the Cordillera.

To date the Archives has collected an extensive collection of Cordillera photographs: the Laurence L. Wilson photographs; the Robert B. Fox, Sr. photographs; the Suyoc people who went to the Fair photographs; the Kalinga tattooing photographs; Baguio City circa 1900s to 1940s photographs; the Cordillera Mass Movement photographs; and the Jules de Raedt photograph collections.

### **The Cordillera photograph collections of the UP Baguio Archives**

The photograph collection of the Archives is a treasure trove of Cordillera history, heritage and culture that warrants preservation and access. Cordillera life is memorialized in each of the individual images. These are rare photographs that shaped Cordillera identity and will continue to serve as collective memory and evidence of the unique culture of the Cordillera Region. All of the photographs were donated to the Archives. The photograph collections of Laurence Lee Wilson, Robert B. Fox, Sr., Jules de Raedt form part of their papers donated by their heirs. The other collections like the Baguio circa 1900s to the 1940s photographs, the Kalinga Tattooing photographs, and the St. Louis Fair photograph collection were donated by private individuals who were generous enough to part away with these collections.

### **Laurence L. Wilson Photograph Collection**

Laurence Lee Wilson is an American mining prospector, anthropologist, and folklorist. Following his mother's death in 1930, he decided to come to the Philippines. In the Philippines, he entered into mining activities, prospecting and development work. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, Wilson became more active as a folklorist recording Cordillera oral traditions and publishing them first in the local paper, *Baguio Midland Courier*, and later in book form.

Photographs make up the majority of the Laurence Lee Wilson papers. The 162 black and white photographs were organized by Prof. Analyn Salvador-Amores, a faculty of the College of Social Sciences, sometime in early 2000. She notes that the images were in the possession of the UP Baguio Cordillera Studies Center since the early 1980s. Salvador-Amores decided to arrange, catalogue, and file the images in plastic casings bound in ring-bind folders. A short introduction to the collection gives the brief history, description of the photos, and their condition before she worked on the images. She admits that when the collection was discovered in a pile of old documents at the CSC Library, the photos were stapled together, pasted on ordinary bond paper, mislabeled, and in a state of deterioration. She adds that in describing the images, she copied the annotations and captions scribbled at the back of the images.

Many of the images were taken in the Cordillera region in the mid-1900s. The subjects covered by the photos are landscapes; indigenous peoples' material culture; portraits of indigenous peoples; rituals; social and political institutions; American officials of the Cordillera; mining processes; family; and self-portraits. Notable among the collection are images of bare breasted women, men in loincloth, tattooed women, and naked children. The images of men and women in traditional attires and accessories give the viewers a glimpse of the natives' manner of dressing in the early

1900s. These images are now only a reminder of the costumes that the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera wore. Snapshots were taken of old Baguio, the Mountain Trail when it was still a narrow trail, the Banaue terraces, the Zigzag Road, the Binga dams and different places of the Cordillera in the early 1900s. Salvador Amores notes that these photographs, “engage the viewers in a period of history” (2001, 5). Also captured by the cameras are the indigenous peoples’ rituals as well as social institutions like head hunting, the Ibaloi *peshit*, and *mamaka* dances, and the Bontoc *papatay*. Pictures of Cordillera material culture like *kayabangs*, bow and arrow, houses, spears, musical instruments and agricultural implements that are slowly becoming a thing of the past are framed as well. As Salvador-Amores wrote (2001, 3), the aim of making these photographs available to researchers is to provide knowledge of the culture of the Cordillera.



Figure 1: Lady of Elongot, Mt. Prov. P.I., “Pines Studio” Baguio  
(Wilson collection)



Figure 2: Mt. Data Road, Km. 103. Photo by Kip Moore  
(Wilson collection)

### **Robert B. Fox, Sr. Photograph Collection**

The photographs of Robert B. Fox, Sr. total approximately 1,000 pieces, making it the biggest collection of images. The Fox papers were donated by his heirs in 2007.

Robert Bradford Fox, Sr. was born Galveston, Texas. He received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Chicago. He was a distinguished American anthropologist who made substantive and enduring contributions to Philippine anthropology through his research, publications, teaching, and public service. He was appointed the Chief Anthropologist of the Philippine National Museum. Besides his service with the National Museum, Dr. Fox taught at the University of the Philippines and served as Presidential Assistant for National Minorities and Presidential Adviser on Anthropology under the late Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos. Fox excavated the Tabon caves in Palawan that led to the discovery of the “*Tabon Man*,” the earliest known *homo sapiens* to have existed in the Philippines.

The mostly black and white photographs are of various subjects. Majority of the pictures are images of Palawan, his field site. Some of the photos were used to illustrate his book, *The Tabon Caves*. A group of the photograph collection is on ceramic wares.



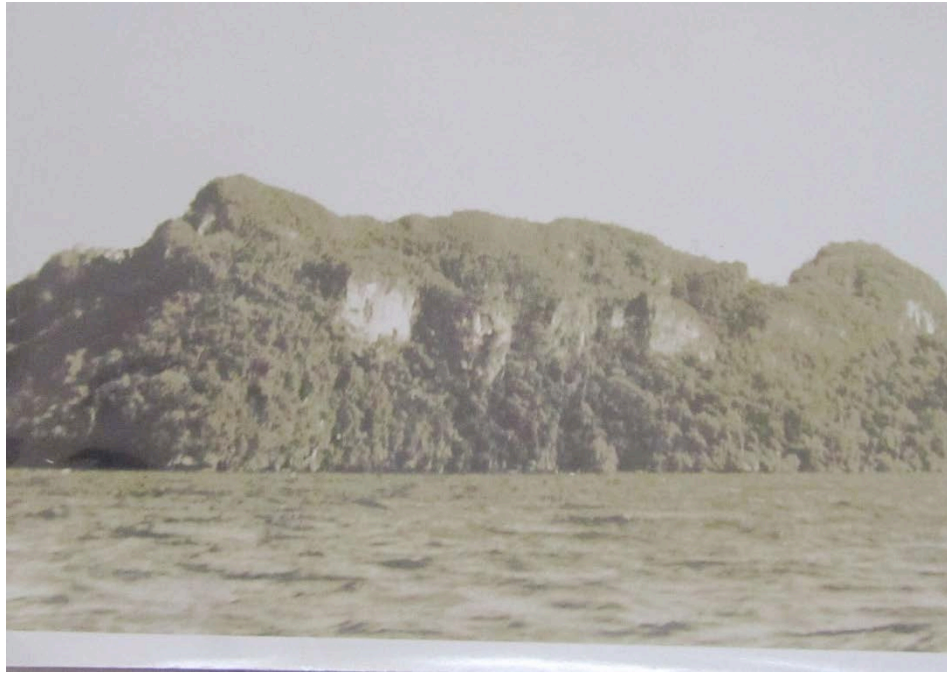


Figure 3: Towering limestone cliffs on China Sea side of Lipuun Point (Fox collection)

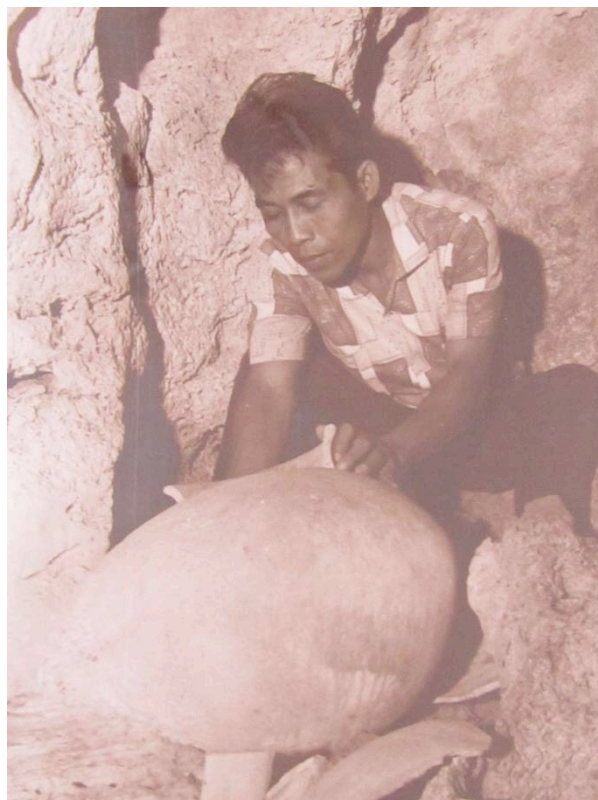


Figure 4: Two burial jars embedded in limestone in Guri Cave (Fox collection)

Interestingly, a number of images in this collection are from the Wilson collection as the hand writing on the underside of the pictures are Wilson's and are duplicates of the photos in the Wilson collection. Depicted in the images are Tasaday, Dumagat and

Negrito people. A number of photographs are Cordillera themed. The subjects of the Cordillera photos are indigenous peoples, landscape, Ifugao rituals, and material culture. The landscape depicts the condition of the Cordillera during the early American colonization period. The indigenous peoples are shown bare breasted, tattooed, wearing traditional accessories and performing agricultural and economic activities.

In 2013, I conducted research on 14 Cordillera photographs of the Fox collection (Villanueva, 2014). The photos are on an Ifugao burial ceremony called *munhimung*, which is accorded for individuals who die an unnatural death. The photographs engage the viewers on a ritual that is on the verge of being forgotten.



Figure 5: Photo of men in loin cloth (Fox collection)

### **The Suyoc People Who Went to the St. Louis Fair Photograph Collection**

Twenty five black and white images, illustrating the Suyoc people of northern Benguet who were exhibited in the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri, were donated to the Archives by Antonio Buangan. Buangan is a descendant of a participant to the Fair. He narrates (2004) that his quest for information about his ancestors who were exhibited in the Fair brought him to different libraries, archives and museums in the United States as there was a dearth of archival sources in the Philippines. The photographs are reproductions of the original shots from the Missouri Historical Society Museum and from the American Museum of Natural History. The photographs offer illustrations of the Suyoc people and the Tinguians who were transported and exhibited in the 1904 Fair. Researchers give a glimpse of the individuals who were part of the biggest display of "exotic people" from the colonial possessions of the United States in the early 1900s.

The Suyoc people together with other tribes from the Cordillera were collectively called Philippine *Igorots* who were made to live in an *Igorrote* Village that was recreated to simulate life "back home." Buangan's intention was to name the faces in portraits kept in U.S. archives and museums. He did not fail as he able to establish



who were Tugmina, Buli-e, Sendican, Kinay, Pongcoy, Bayongasan, Demeyna, Singwa, and Oblika.

The photos show the Suyoc people in their native dress of loin cloths, native skirts and adornments like tattoos, beads necklaces, and head dresses. The images also show the Suyoc people dancing, weaving, and spinning thread.



Figure 6: Photo from the Suyoc People who went to the St. Louis Fair Collection

The Igorots at the Fair became a spectacle especially with their dog eating habits and their reference as headhunters. As a result of the exhibit, a general impression conceived among the Americans is the dog eating and headhunting characteristics of Filipino people. Unfortunately, this impression persists up to today. The photographs, although reproductions of the original, was used to symbolize American hegemony and to reinforce the necessary role of America in civilizing and educating the Filipinos.

### **Kalinga Tattooing Photograph Collection**

The 23 black and white photographs on Kalinga tattooing were donated to the Archives in 2008 by Prof. Analyn Salvador-Amores. Some of the 13 x 18 inches black and white photographs were taken during her field work in Lubo, Tanudan, Kalinga. Admittedly, Salvador-Amores' work on this extant practice has inspired a revival of Kalinga tattooing.

The images depict the different tattoo designs which according to Salvador-Amores are "best understood within the context of headhunting (2009, 61)." Kalinga *maingor* or warriors are tattooed after a successful head hunting expedition. For other warrior groups of the Cordillera, tattoos are marked after men have successfully won a battle. Tattooing, however is not solely done on men. Women are also tattooed symbols of rites of passage. This can be seen in a number of photos that show women and girls

marked on the face and arms. Also pictured in the collection are revered warriors, *manbatek* (tattoo practitioner), the tattooing process and implements.



Figure 7: Photo from the Kalinga Tattooing collection

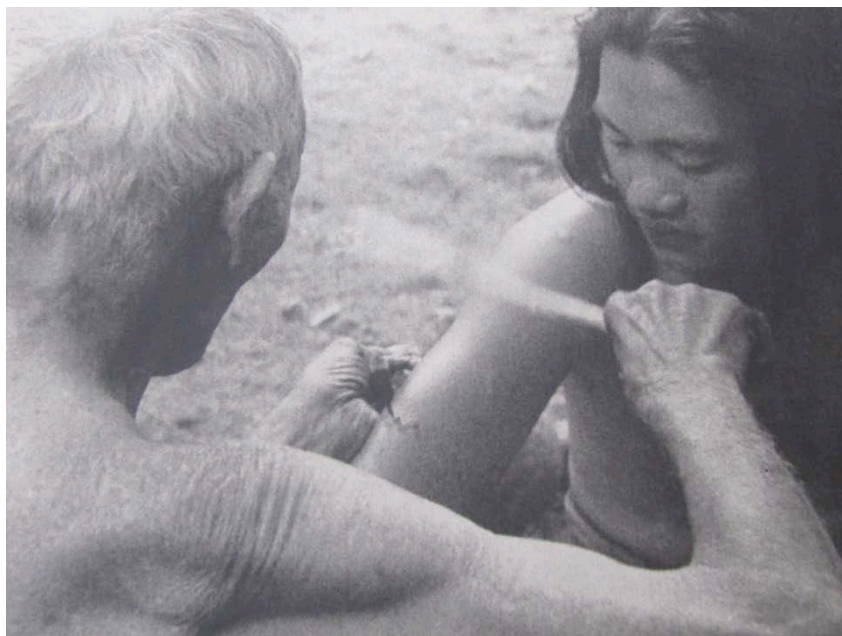


Figure 8: Photo from the Kalinga Tattooing collection

Salvador-Amores concludes that Kalinga tattooing and tattoos are markers of Kalinga beauty, otherness and distinction dictated by rituals that were once held sacred in the olden times. And with the decline and demise of headhunting, the body specifically the skin has become an archive of Kalinga culture (Salvador-Amores, 2002, 128).

These images have, thus, become memories of Kalinga tattooing because as soon as the tattooed individual dies, the skin canvass disappears as well.

### **Issues in preserving and providing access to the photograph collection**

Working with photographs can be problematic since the medium is totally different from books and other print materials. Because of their nature—paper coated with light sensitive chemicals—photographs easily lend themselves to deterioration when not properly preserved. Temperature and relative humidity are environmental conditions that are to be closely monitored as these can greatly affect the lifespan of photographs. Although Baguio City has a cool climate, the temperature is not always ideal for preserving photographs as temperatures fluctuates throughout the year. Temperature ranges from 18°C-25°C during the summer months of March to June while it can range from 10°C to 13°C during the months of December to February. Although Baguio has a cool climate its temperature is not ideal for preserving documents. This is a commonly held misconception which is erroneous since temperature during summer can reach more than 20°C which is not recommended for photographs. Another aggravating environmental condition is relative humidity. In tropical countries such as the Philippines relative humidity is high. Baguio City's relative humidity can reach up to 75% during the rainy season. High relative humidity and high temperature can be disastrous to documents especially photographs.

The problem of pollution along UP Baguio has been a long standing concern brought about by the traffic rerouting scheme of the city government. The road along the Archives is a major thoroughfare and the increased number of vehicles plying this route has created pollution problem. Gas particulates from automobile exhaust get deposited in boxes, documents, furniture and fixtures. Because these particulates are harmful to documents, deterioration is expected.

Deterioration of material is also attributed to the quality of print photographs. There are photographs in the Fox collection that can be easily erased. The color and image for some are fading. This is also observed of the Suyoc People photograph collection. The images have turned blue, which I surmise is a result of the quality of the ink used.

Access issues should also be looked into. Cataloging or indexing photographs can be a challenge especially if photographs do not have captions and the archivist is not familiar with the subject of the images. Photographs without captions can be very problematic. Most of the Archives photograph donations have no annotations. Only the Wilson photographs have captions although there are some that do not have. These images will never be accessed and used if interventions are not done. Researching the images' content and context is the only viable solution since inadequate, inaccurate and incomplete identification of the images can render the images inaccessible or worse can give the wrong information to researchers.

In 2014, as a requirement for a course, I decided to research the content and contextual narratives behind 14 Fox photographs on Ifugao burial ceremony. The images were part of the less than 100 photos that have Cordillera theme. After conducting interviews and reading primary sources, I was able to conclude that these pictures depict an Ifugao burial ceremony called *munhimung*. In the early years, the ceremony was performed for violent deaths like head hunting. However, with the

outlawing of head hunting during the American period, the burial ceremony was performed for unnatural deaths like murder. The ritual has in time gradually been discontinued. These photographs are the third of its kind that I have come across. The first photographs are those of Henry Otley Beyer's and Roy F. Barton's in the 1911 article, "An Ifugao Burial Ceremony." The second is Roger Duff's, "An Ethnographic Excursion to the Mountain Province of Luzon, Philippines," published in 1954. My research on these images is by no means complete as I intend to pursue researching other details in the photos.

Research is another issue raised with regards to accessing photographs of the Archives. The conduct of research can be tedious and time consuming. With my full time work of maintaining the collection and assisting researchers, researching the collection can be very taxing. To ensure quality archives and services therefore, release time is needed for archivists to conduct research.

A number of Fox's photographs on Palawan have been described and provided with captions using available publications on the Tabon Caves. Given the less than a thousand images in the Fox collection, there are still quite a number that needs to be described and provided with captions.

Providing access to the photos, however, does not end with providing captions. Information and captions should be validated and revalidated given that the photographers and owners are no longer around to describe their collection. For collections that are open to interpretations, information can be misrepresented. This has happened to a number of photos in the Wilson collection. Photos of tattooed women were described by Wilson as "Ifugao women," but were later on identified as "Kalinga women." The image can be misleading and confusing. One has to be cautious in using the captions as it could lead to erroneous interpretation. Validation through research using print sources is therefore, needed to establish the correct description. It is thus important that the archivist is knowledgeable about Cordillera culture and history to be able to describe, explain and attach captions to photographs.

Another problem encountered with the captions of the Wilson collection is the difficulty in deciphering handwriting. In one photo, the image was described by Wilson as, "vigorous *mamaka* dance to the rhythmic cadence of the *ganzas*," however, because Wilson has a style in writing the letter "z," and "a," the caption was interpreted as, "vigorous *mamaka* dance to the rhythmic cadence of the *gawes*." In yet another photo, the image of Jose Fianza photo was also erroneously described as "Jose Fielwho."

Salvador-Amores laments in her introduction to the album of the Wilson collection that information written on the underside of some of the photos were lost when the photos were pasted on paper. Although I do not wish to generalize about this unfortunate incident which detrimentally affected precious information, I have observed that library science graduates of some schools are not taught working knowledge on preservation despite them taking archives administration courses. The destruction of precious information and at times the document itself reflects the lack of knowledge of some library personnel about basic preservation techniques.

I assume that the Archives photographs taken by Americans during the early part of the 1900s constitute only a small percentage of all the images taken during this period. I believe a lot more equally rare and valuable photographs are in the possession of private individuals. Private individuals, however, would not want to part away with these images as these are considered their prized possession. This attitude can have adverse effect on photograph collections since private individuals may not have the capability and knowledge to preserve and conserve these materials. People may not be aware of the interplay of the various environmental factors that contribute to the deterioration of sensitive photographic materials.

The photograph collections of the Archives are unique and invaluable reminders of Cordillera heritage. Many of the images are the only remaining images of the Cordillera in the mid-1900s. These are considered rare and hard to find. This is especially true of the photograph collections of Laurence Wilson and Robert Fox, Sr. There is thus, an urgent need to preserve the images considering their present condition and value to Cordillera ethnicity and identity. It is therefore important that these be preserved for posterity.

### **Preservation strategies of the Archives**

Aware of the numerous issues regarding preserving photographs, the UP Baguio Archives has made efforts to safeguard these documents. High on the list is encapsulating the documents in acid free mylar or melinex plastic. This method prevents rapid deterioration from constant handling by researchers as people are oftentimes considered the primary cause of document destruction. Filing photographs in archival boxes is done to keep away dust particles and pollutants from being deposited on documents. Maintaining the overall humidity of the Archives room is an important measure to ensure optimum humidity level. Finally, although not the least is educating users on proper handling. Reader education is important in preventing damage to materials in as much as preservation does not solely rest with the Archives staff. Impressing on researchers an awareness of their share in the responsibility of taking care of documents is educating them of their duty and role as partners in efforts to prolong the life of primary sources.

Cognizant of the fact that no matter how ideal the environmental conditions are and how meticulous our efforts in preservation are, paper documents will eventually deteriorate. Because of this the Archives has embarked on a digitization project which is currently underway. The Archives is in the process of purchasing a planetary book scanner that will digitize documents. The procedure aims to preserve original documents including photographs which are in danger of deterioration while making the digitized copy accessible to researchers. The original documents will then be kept for posterity. The use of digital copies will prevent the original documents from being constantly handled by researchers thereby preventing further damage through wear and tear. Digitization, therefore, prolongs the life of the original documents as well as the information contained in them.

Majority of the Wilson and Fox photographs are over 50 years old and are slowly deteriorating. The fragile nature of the materials can no longer sustain continued use and handling by researchers. At the same time, we do not want that these documents be kept off limits to researchers as this will only defeat the purpose of acquiring the

materials. Digitization will greatly improve the way primary sources will be made accessible as these will now be presented in computer format that can be shared over the Internet. With just a few computer keyboard strokes documents will be made available to researchers.

## **Conclusion**

Photographs taken in the early 1900s have been powerful instruments, oftentimes more powerful than the written word, in the political as well as colonizing efforts of the Americans. These have shaped how the Americans view the Philippines. These have also directed the course of Philippine history as we were placed under American rule partly due to these images that reinforced that we were not capable of self-government.

The fascination and interest of the Americans in our unique and “different” way of life, rituals, and traditions, however, persisted long into and after the mid-1900s as evidenced by the anthropologists and historians who came to the Philippines. They documented every aspect of the *Igorot's* life and these were captured on photographs and written down on paper. The photographs that they took have become silent witnesses of rituals, customs and traditions that are on the verge of being forgotten, altered and abandoned. These sources are now deposited in different libraries and archives around the world. The University of the Philippines Baguio Archives is fortunate to have in its collection the papers including the photographs of some of these renowned individuals who have contributed to Cordillera history and heritage.

The photograph collections of the Archives, considered a treasure, are priceless reminders of Cordillera history, ethnicity and identity. Most of the images are the only remaining images of the Cordillera in the mid-1900s. There is therefore, an urgent need to preserve these images and make these accessible to researchers.



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