

## **Putting voice to the silent: researching the Cordillera photographs of Robert B. Fox, Sr. of the University of the Philippines Baguio Cordillera/Northern Luzon Historical Archives**

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### **Abstract:**

*Dr. Robert B. Fox, Sr. came to the Philippines after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. He led excavations in burial sites in Palawan; Calatagan, Batangas; and Santa Ana, Manila and studied indigenous Philippine groups such as the Pinatubo Negritos, and the Tagbanuwas of Palawan. Among his collection, however, are 93 photographs without captions and labels that depict Cordillera people, landscape, material culture and social activities. He was not known to have worked extensively on the indigenous groups of the Cordillera Region. In 2012, I had the chance to show the photographs to Dr. Analyn Salvador-Amores, an anthropology professor of UP Baguio. Her initial comments gave me the first lead as to the ethnolinguistic group of the people in the photographs. My enrollment in the UP Diliman School of Library and Information Studies in the first semester of 2013 particularly in the course, "Introduction to Archives Studies," gave me the chance to actively pursue research on 14 photographs on a full time basis and to connect the images through further interview and the use of primary sources to an Ifugao indigenous burial ritual that is slowly being forgotten. This paper is a revised version of the research paper I submitted as a course requirement. It further argues that information professionals, whether librarians or archivists, should not be content with just performing traditional roles of organizing materials but to conduct preliminary research on their collection to ensure that documents are better accessed.*

**Keywords:** University of the Philippines Baguio Cordillera/Northern Luzon Historical Archives, Robert B. Fox, Sr. papers, Archives research, Cordillera photographs, Ifugao burial ritual.

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### **I. Background**

In 2008, as I was cleaning and filing the papers of Dr. Robert B. Fox, Sr., a series of photographs in the collection caught my attention. Dr. Robert Fox, whose papers were deposited to the UP Baguio, was an anthropologist and archaeologist who excavated burial sites in Palawan; Calatagan, Batangas and Sta. Ana, Manila and who studied the Pinatubo Negritos, and the Tagbanuwas of Palawan. Most of his papers are manuscripts on his works with these areas and indigenous peoples. It was therefore, a surprise that among his papers

are photographs of Cordillera people, landscape and social activities. I have not known him to have worked among the Cordillera people. The closest he has associated himself with the Cordillera Region was when he relocated and retired in Baguio City in the early 1980s until his death in 1985. It was during this time that he taught at the Brent International School and the University of the Philippines Baguio.

Questions that were formed at the back of my mind had nagged me since then. I had the chance to show in 2012 the photographs to Dr. Analyn Salvador-Amores, an anthropology professor of the College of Social Sciences of the University of the Philippines Baguio (A. Salvador-Amores personal communication, April 2012). Her initial comments gave me the first leads as to the ethnolinguistic grouping of the people in the photographs.

My enrollment in the University of the Philippines Diliman School of Library and Information Studies in the first semester of 2013 particularly in the course, "Introduction to Archives Studies," gave me the chance to actively pursue the subject of researching the photographs on a full time basis and to finally bring voices to the otherwise silent witnesses of Cordillera culture.

## II. Research Methodology and Process

This paper is an attempt to research the content and contextual narratives behind the Cordillera photographs of Dr. Robert B. Fox, Sr. to ensure the accessibility and usability of the documents. It will try to determine the group of the indigenous people in the photographs and the social activity performed.

To answer the main problems of the research I employed the interview and photo elicitation methods as well as the use of primary and secondary sources. After I was able to determine the type of indigenous people in the photographs and to validate the earlier information acquired, I again showed the photos to another faculty member of the College of Social Sciences. The second faculty member is Dr. Leah Enkiwe-Abayao, an Ifugao-born (L.E. Abayao personal communication, September 5, 2013). She was able to positively identify that the people in the photographs are indeed Ifugaos. Information was also shared regarding the cultural materials and the cultural activity performed by the subjects in the photographs.

This is not an exhaustive ethnographic study on the death and burial rites of the Ifugaos as I am neither an anthropologist nor an expert in Ifugao culture. Furthermore, the rites and rituals that accompany this stage of Ifugao life is a complex and elaborate social and cultural activity. Specific rituals are required for a specific cause of death and for specific classes of persons (Dumia, 1979; Dulawan, 2001). The death and burial ritual for a person who died a natural death is different from somebody who died an unnatural or violent death. The social class of an individual also dictates the kind of death and burial ritual. A wealthy individual commands a series of rites that is different from those that is accorded a poor man. An adult is given a burial ritual that is different from that of a child. Material objects used in burial and funerary activities also differ based on the social status of an individual.

This study will only try to explain the death and burial rituals of the Ifugaos vis-a-vis the series of photographs in the Fox's collection. Thus, it will not describe and discuss the rituals for the other kinds of death. My primary concern is to identify the group of indigenous people shown in the photos and complement with textual data the visual images pertaining to

the death and burial activity associated with the photos. As an archivist, my primary and overarching function and role is to make documents accessible to researchers. The problem lies when documents particularly photographs donated to archives do not have labels or captions to identify the photographer, the subject or the site where the photographs were taken. The matter is complicated when donors of photographs have already died, thus, there is no way to extract information about the photographs. How then will the archivist ensure that these types of documents are accessed by researchers? What does an archivist do so that researchers will even use the documents?

The exercise in researching the group of photographs that belonged to Dr. Robert B. Fox, Sr. was a lesson in experience. I was able to study in part an indigenous group of the Cordillera considered to be highly advanced and ingenious considering the rice terraces that they constructed thousands of years ago. The exercise also raised issues regarding archival work. This brings me to point out our role as archivist. Should our work be relegated to only collecting, organizing, preserving and making documents accessible? Related to making documents accessible to researchers is making sure that documents especially photographs that do not have labels, are properly identified and the process of identifying these photographs is conducting an in depth research. For how can we label if we do not read into the literature of the photographs? Researching also involves considerable time. It is therefore, my belief that archivists should be given release time for research if we want quality archives, collections and services.

### III. Photographs as Primary Sources

Books on historical methodology classify photographs as primary sources. I would like to qualify, however, that only photographs that are unaltered are considered primary sources, given that modern technologies capable of altering photographs at the developing stage are emerging. Photographs are visual images taken with an equipment called camera, that was invented by Louise Daguerre in the late 1830s (Collier, 1986). Archivist can easily determine if a photograph is old based on its color. Old photographs are either in black and white or sepia as these was the medium first used. Colored photographs came into existence only 100 years after the invention of the camera and became popular only in the late 1960s (Burchfield, 1997). Since the invention of the camera, photographs have been regarded as a medium to capture human emotions, culture and everyday life. Today, photographs play an important role in people's lives oftentimes connecting people around the globe through social networking.

Photographs are frozen visual images created by the photographer, and the camera. Photographs have a way of memorizing reality better than human memory (Hocking, 1975; Ball, 1992). For this, photographs can be relied upon more than human memory. Human memory, due to its frailty, tends to forget after a period of time while photographs do not. It is this characteristic of photographs that makes it capable of being re-analyzed and re-evaluated as often as necessary. Oftentimes, some details that escape the viewer's eye may emerge or be observed upon further inspection at a later time. This was my experience with a detail in one of the photographs of Dr. Fox. I have inspected the photographs a number of times since 2008. It was only in September 2013 that I was able to identify the crucial image of a dead man seated under a house in one of the photographs (Fig. 6).

Mead (Hockings, 1975) encourages the use of photographs to record the many aspects of culture before these vanish into oblivion. This culture change is surely happening. Customs,

traditions, dialects, folk literature, and other indigenous knowledges which are markers of our cultural identity and which make us unique as Filipinos are slowly being forgotten, abandoned and are no longer practiced due to modernization, education, religion, migration and a host of other factors. Photographs therefore, are a means of ensuring that our cultural heritage lives on.

Ball (1992) discusses the many uses of photographs in written texts. Photographs serve as illustrations to narrative works. These are inserted to texts to give a picture image of what is being talked about and to further describe the subject matter of the texts. Another use of photographs is to serve as proof that a researcher has really travelled to the field and has mingled with the subjects. This is a means of authenticating the truthfulness of what the researcher is talking about as photos show that researchers visited the research site.

Evaluating photographs involves, according to Banks (2001) answering three sets of questions. The first set involves questions about what the image is and what are its contents. These questions can be readily answered by analyzing the image or the images presented in the photograph. One can easily look into the photo and enumerate the subjects involved. The second set of questions looks into the problem of who took the photographs, the period when the photos were taken and the reason behind why the photos were shot. This is an important component of the analysis process as it gives the viewer the motives behind why the photos were taken. Surely, photographers have a reason why they chose a particular subject. Pink (2001) strongly urge that the professional as well as the personal intentions of the photographer be known. Knowing the intentions of the photographer, the researcher will be able to know the reasons why particular shots were taken, why particular subjects were chosen and why certain images are included in the frame. The final set of questions is directed towards an explanation as to why other people came to possess the photographs, how these are viewed by others, and what do they do with the photographs. The first question in this set can be determined if one who possesses the photographs is knowledgeable of the photographer and his intentions in taking the photographs.

For my study determining the identity of the photographer and his intentions can be problematic to say the least because of the absence of the owner of the collection. I can only, therefore make assumptions here and just hope that someday in the future these questions can be resolved and the aim of the photographer be known.

#### IV. Ifugao Province and Ifugao burial practices

Ifugao is one of the six provinces that make up the Cordillera Administrative Region located in northern Luzon, Philippines. It lies in the southern part of the Region and is bordered by the province of Nueva Vizcaya to the south, Isabela to the east, Benguet to the west and the Mountain Province to the north. Eleven municipalities make up the province namely: Aginaldo, Alfonso Lista, Asipulo, Banaue, Hingyon, Hungduan, Kiangan, Lamut, Mayoyao, and Tinoc. The capital town is Lagawe.

The word Ifugao refers to the geographical place, the dialect spoken by the people and the people who inhabit the province. The term Ifugao comes from the word *ipugo* meaning “from the hill.” The term *ipugo* is derived from the combination of the prefix *i* which means “people of,” or simply “of” and the word *pugo* meaning “hill.” Thus, Ifugao literally means “people of the hill.”

Dulawan (2001) cites three major ethnolinguistic groups that comprise Ifugao. These are the Tawali, Ayangan, and Kalanguya. The Tawali occupies the Western area of Kiangan, Lagawe and Hungduan. The Eastern area of Ifugao, namely Ayangan, Caba and parts of Lamut is occupied by the Ayangans. Kalanguya is spoken in Tinoc and Asipulo. Incidentally, the Kalanguyas also inhabit parts of Benguet, Nueva Vizcaya and Pangasinan. Other dialects spoken in the province are Mayoyao, Banawol, and Hanglulo.

The Ifugaos believe in the immortality of the soul so much so that the dead are given elaborate ceremonies consisting of daily butchering of animals until the body is buried. Burial ceremonies according to Dumia (1979) depend on age, status and nature of death. Vigil for the dead usually lasts for three to five days (Dulawan, 2001), however, for the *kadangyans* or the rich, it can last for more than five days. Gongs are played, the *hudhud* or epics are chanted and the dead are dressed in burial cloths.

Burial customs for the poor are the same for the wealthy but gongs are not played. Babies and very young infants are not usually accorded burial ceremonies. People who die an unnatural or violent death are given a different ritual. Unnatural or violent death could be due to murder or in the olden times due to head taking. Head taking, however, has been outlawed with the coming of the Americans in the early 1900s.

Persons who die an unnatural death are accorded the *munhimung* or burial ceremony for the beheaded. The *munhimung* starts as soon as the body is brought home. Close relatives prepare for the vigil and the body of the dead is prepared. The vigil is held for only three days. On the third day, as early as eight o'clock, the ceremonies on the hill or the religious ceremony is performed. At exactly twelve noon, the body is prepared for burial and the corpse is brought to its final resting place.

#### V. The Robert B. Fox, Sr. Collection of the UP Baguio Archives

The heirs of Robert B. Fox, Sr. turned over his collection to the University of the Philippines Baguio in 2007. Robert B. Fox, Sr. is an American anthropologist who came to the Philippines after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Among the positions he held in the Philippines are Chief Anthropologist of the Philippine National Museum, Presidential Assistant for National Minorities, and Presidential Adviser to President Ferdinand E. Marcos on Anthropology. Upon his retirement in the early 1980s, he taught at University of the Philippines Baguio and Brent School International Baguio.

His major researches centered on the ethnobotany and material culture of the Pinatubo Negritoes and the religion and society of the Tagbanuwas of Palawan. As an archaeologist employed with the National Museum he led excavations in burial sites located in Calatagan, Batangas; Santa Ana, Manila; and the Tabon Caves in Palawan. Excavations in the Tabon Caves revealed the fossil remains of a late Pleistocene man, called the Tabon Man believed to be the oldest man excavated in the Philippines, along with some stone implements.

The Fox collection is the biggest collection of the UP Baguio Cordillera/Northern Luzon Historical Archives. The collection measures approximately 20.2 linear feet. The collection includes field notes, notebooks, over 700 photographs, correspondences, illustrations, published works, thesis, dissertation, undergraduate as well as graduate students' papers, newspaper clippings, maps, financial records, drafts of his books and papers, conference proceedings, office memos, manuscripts, and video tapes on Philippine indigenous peoples.

Among the more than 700 photographs in the Fox collection are 93 photographs which I have earlier assumed as possessing Cordillera subjects. The images of houses are very similar to Cordillera houses I have seen in book photographs while men clad in g-string and women wearing wrap-around skirt are depicted in some of the pictures. Captured landscapes are mountainous terrains fortifying my guess that the place is somewhere in the Cordillera. Cordillera, being Spanish term which means “mountain.”

Forty seven of these are sepia and measure 5 in. x 7 in. The rest (46 pieces) measure 4 in. x 5 in. and are in black and white. The 14 images I chose to work on belong to the group of 5 in. x 7 in. sepia images. I have chosen these photos because of the similarities in the clothing and accessories of the men making me assume that these were all taken during one social activity.

The series of photographs don't have captions or labels. I can only make assumptions here as there is no information where these were taken, who captured the images, and what was the purpose of the photographer in taking the photographs. There is a big possibility that Dr. Fox himself took the photos when he visited the Cordillera. Becker (Pink, 2001) calls this type of photographs vacation photos as these are shot as a travel remembrance when one visits a place or when one goes on vacation. It could also be possible that the photos may have been given or “lent” to Dr. Fox by a fellow anthropologist who is working on the Cordillera. Dr. Leah Abayao, my second informant, gave her opinion on the provenance of the photos. She surmised that it is possible that these could have come from Dr. Henry Otley Beyer, a good friend of Dr. Fox and a fellow anthropologist who has extensively researched and written about the Ifugaos.

## VI. The Ifugao Death and Burial Ritual as Seen in the Photographs

My initial informant, Dr. Analyn Salvador-Amores opined, back in 2012, that the people in the photos are Ifugaos and the dead man they are about to bury died a violent death. Using these 2 preliminary information, I then tried to interview my second informant, Dr. Leah Abayao of the College of Social Sciences. Dr. Abayao is a history professor from Mayoyao, a municipality of Ifugao. Her field of expertise is Mayoyao indigenous death, burial and health practices. She confirmed that the people in the photos are indeed Ifugaos. She placed the date of the photos to have been taken in the 1960s because of the kind of textile used by the men. My initial guess about the age of the photos was placed in the 1950s because this was the time when Dr. Fox began writing and publishing his researches. She also confirmed that the dead man died an unnatural death. She also offered that the photos could have been taken in Kiangan or Banaue. I have earlier read Fr. Francis Lambrecht's article, “The Mayawyaw ritual : death and death ritual,” (1941) but I haven't come across any similarities with the death rituals described in the article with those images seen in the photographs. However, after hearing these information from Dr. Abayao, I read Barton's, “The religion of the Ifugaos,” (1947) and Beyer and Barton's, “An Ifugao Burial Ceremony” (1911), which is my principal source in describing the images and activities in the photographs. The death and burial rituals described in these primary sources are similar to those found in the photos which made me conclude that the photos could have been taken in Kiangan.

Beyer (1911) describes in the article the death and burial rituals that he and Barton attended of three beheaded individuals killed by enemies. He predicts in the article that with the outlawing of the practice of head hunting the death and burial rituals associated with this

kind of deaths will no longer be practiced, thus will be forgotten. According to him, it is thus desirable that he document the details of the rituals.

Based on the images in the photographs and the information gathered from the informants, the social activity being performed is a death ritual for an individual who died an unnatural death. Unnatural death is a violent death so unlike death caused by old age or sickness. One example of unnatural death is death by head taking, however, this practice has been outlawed during the American colonial regime in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, so my assumption is the individual has been murdered. Burial ritual for persons who died an unnatural death is called *munhimung*.



Fig. 1. Photograph 1

This photograph is taken on a small level plateau or hill where ceremonies are conducted prior to the burial of the dead man's corpse. The ceremonies on the hill are done on the third day from the death of the person as the corpse of individuals who died unnaturally is kept for only three days. The ceremonies are carried out early in the morning on a plateau not far from the dead man's house and where tall grasses called *runo* are cut to make way for a clearing.

The headdresses of the men are made of white bark band made of the leaf petiole of a betel nut tree which holds the leaves of the *dongla* plant. The *dongla* (L. *Cordyline fruticosa* or *Cordyline terminalis* Kunth) or tungkod-pare in Tagalog, is a shrub with red or purple leaves. Beyer and Barton did not mention the reason for using the headdress but according to

Prof. Abayao and Co (2011), “the plant is believed to have protective powers in warding-off evil spirits.” For this, the *dongla* plant is planted around the Ifugao *payaw* or rice terraces.

Conspicuously tied around the men’s wrists are white mourning bands made from strips of the petiole of the betel nut tree. The mourning bands are also tied around the feet. On the wrist of one man in the center of the photo is a band which Beyer describes as woven rattan. The woven rattan according to Beyer is a mourning band which is worn by the close relatives of the dead.



Fig. 2. Photograph 2

This photograph is taken on the hill clearing for the hill ceremonies. Beyer (1911) mentions in his article that priests take their place in the *runo*-enclosed shelter. The men near the food offerings could well be priests as they are older than the men on the background. The priests are gathered around 4 *hu-up* or square lidded baskets of cooked rice, 2 *pamahaan* or wooden bowls with what appears to be meat, a pile of what appears to be pig or chicken bones and another *pamahaan* or wooden bowl of *bubud* or rice wine. This time there are more men, around 11, seated in the clearing. Farther away on the upper right of the photograph, a woman and another group of men are seated.

This is the religious part of the hill ceremonies as rice, *bubud* or rice wine, chicken and pig’s meat are offered as sacrifices. Prayers to the ancestors are recited and the different deities are invoked. In the hill ceremonies, only the men who are to be part in the funeral procession participate in the religious ceremonies on the hill while those who are not are seated away from the ceremonial clearing.



Fig. 3. Photograph 3

According to Beyer the parties who will take part in the burial ceremony have first to perform a ceremony called *munubub*, which is to seek vengeance for the dead man. This is performed in the plateau clearing where the parties who are to take part in the burial procession converge. The sacrificial offerings are displayed and watched over by the priests. If a bird called *pitpit* which is a manifestation of an omen spirit called *idu*, comes to eat or drink the offerings then it is considered a favorable sign and the party would have proceeded for a vengeance war to the village of the enemy who killed the dead man. Otherwise, the non appearance of omen signs is taken to mean that it is not yet time for a vengeance war.

Another important feature of the ceremonies on the hill is the non-participation of women and children in the ceremonies. As people from the village approaches the plateau, the women and children drop out of the procession allowing only the men to proceed to the clearing. Barton (1911) mentions that only the old men are allowed to gather around the offerings on the plateau clearing. This would explain why only the priests and some men could be seen gathered around the food offerings.



Fig. 4. Photograph 4

This photograph is still taken on the ceremonial hill clearing where rice, rice wine, and meat are sacrificed. Prayers to the ancestors are recited and invocations to the deities are made by priests. The offerings are watched over for ominous signs signifying the holding of vengeance war with the tribe responsible for the death of their village member.

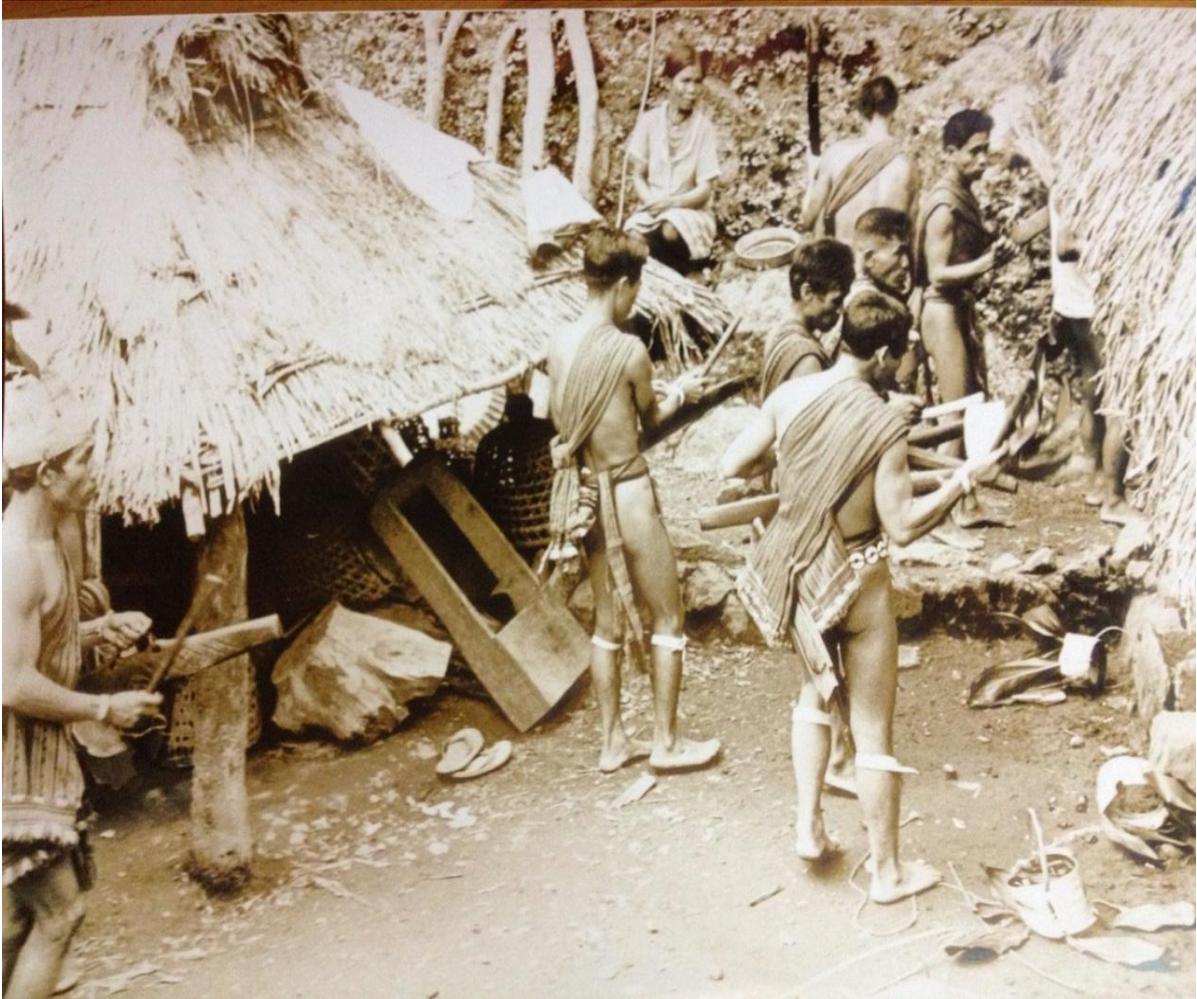


Fig. 5. Photograph 5

In this photograph, the men are now in the village. Ifugao houses are made of *cogon*, a kind of grass used to construct roof structures. As soon as the hill ceremonies are done, the men proceed to the village and prepare for the burial. The burial always starts at exactly 12 o'clock noon. The corpse is then prepared for the burial.

In Ifugao burial ceremony, people who take part in the burial are dressed in g-string called *wano*. Notice the white mourning leg and wrist bands made of the petiole of a betel nut tree.



Fig. 6. Photograph 6

Depicted in this photograph is the corpse of the dead man which can be seen seated under the house. One has to look very closely though to identify the image. The dead man is seen between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> men on the left side of the photograph. The dead man is made to seat with his back against the post of the house. People who die unnaturally are not dressed in funerary textiles instead in the clothes they wore when they are killed.

Men gathered around the corpse are beating the *bangibang*, a musical instrument made of hard resonant wood that is used only for healing ceremonies and for this kind of burial ceremony. Brass gongs are never played in death and burial ritual where the dead met an unnatural death. The leaders of the funeral procession hold spears.



Fig. 7. Photograph 7

The 7<sup>th</sup> photograph shows the corpse being tied to two poles and covered with an ordinary blanket. Dumia (2001) and Dulawan (1979) mention that when somebody who dies a natural death is buried, the corpse is carried on the back of the dead man's relative to show respect. The dead man is also wrapped in a death blanket or textile. However, for a victim of a violent death, the dead man is tied to a pole and is carried by 4 men to the burial ground. Accordingly, tying a dead man to a pole and wrapping him in ordinary blanket is disrespectful. These practices are done to incite the dead man to seek revenge.

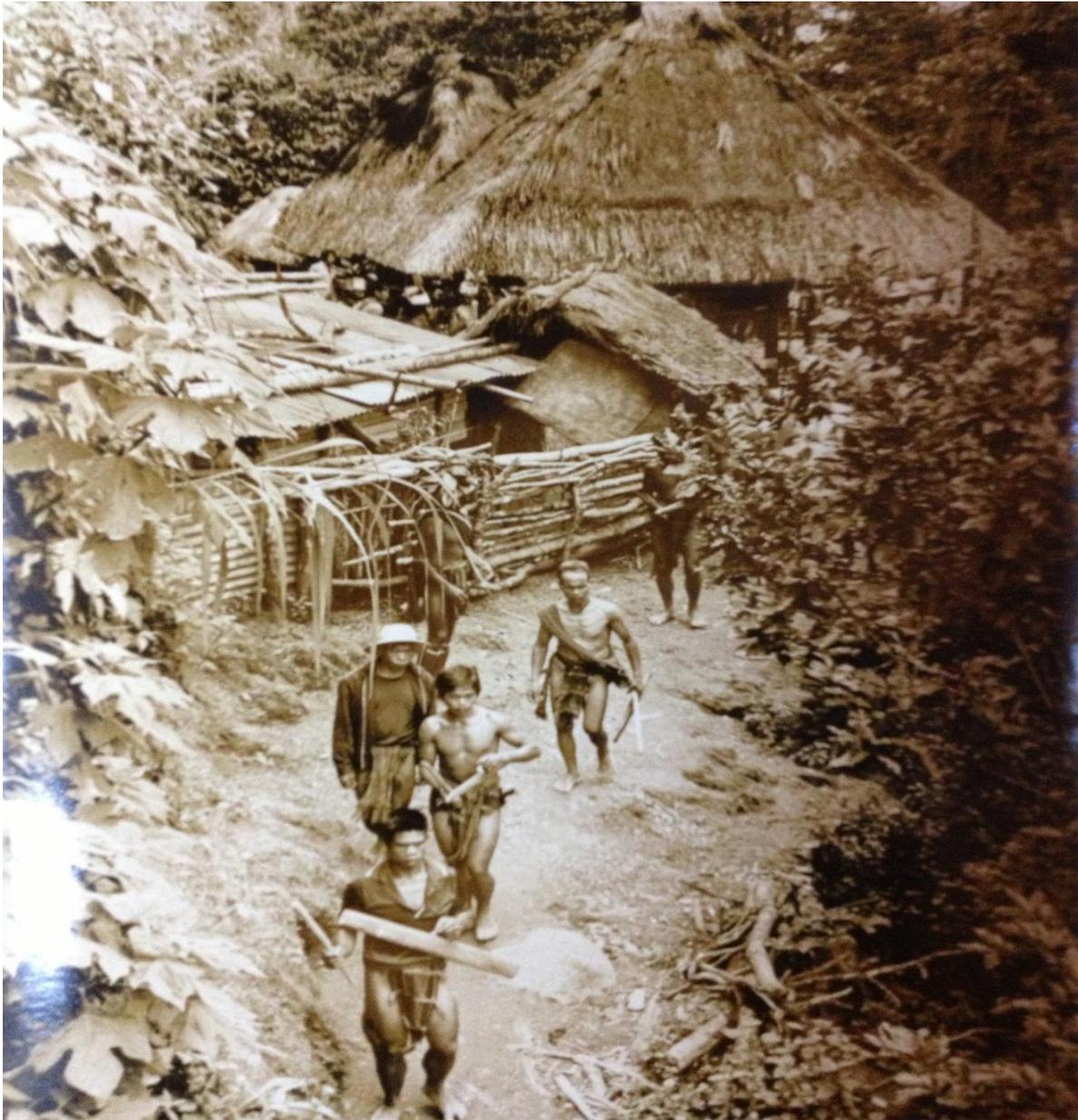


Fig. 8. Photograph 8

The men who are to take part in the procession are seen moving out of the dead man's house and yard, which can be seen in the background. The men carry with them the musical instrument called *bangibang* which is struck continuously for the duration of the funeral procession until the party reaches the burial ground.



Fig. 9. Photograph 9

Presented in this photograph is the funeral procession which shows four men carrying the corpse tied to two poles.

The photograph depicts two women facing the corpse. The first woman seems to be wailing directly at the dead man's corpse. In the funeral and burial ritual of individuals who die a violent death a lot of wailing, shouting and cursing are done and these are directed at the corpse. It is believed that the wailing, cursing and at times slapping and poking at the dead man's body will cause and urge the dead man to seek revenge.



Fig. 10. Photograph 10

The scene in this photograph depicts a terraced terrain leading to the burial place. Only men who are part of the funeral procession accompany the dead to the burial ground, those who are not part of the procession witness the ongoing activity on the hillsides. A woman is part of the party and she might well be a close relative of the dead as only the wife or mother is allowed to follow the funeral procession.

In Ifugao culture, the dead are buried in the mountains. Only the rich or the so called *kadangyans* have burial grounds near their homes. According to Beyer (1911),

*“Men for whom the munhimung ceremony is performed are not buried in ordinary graves, but in large tombs called gungat, hollowed out in the mountain-side.”*



Fig. 11. Photograph 11

The image shows the funeral party composed of men dressed in g-string called *wano* and burial ritual accessories like *dongla* headdress, mourning bands, spears and *bangibangs*. The lead man is wearing a *ginutu*, a belt made from shells and bones of animals. This belt is worn by *kadangyans* and is a prized possession. The funeral procession is headed by 2 men who carry a spear in each hand while the rest of the men carry a *bangibang*. The funeral procession for somebody who dies an unnatural death is participated in by only a few men, in this case by no more than twenty people. The lone woman in the party may well be the mother or the wife of the dead man.



Fig. 12. Photograph 12

Photograph 12 illustrates members of the party climbing a mountainous and grassy terrain as the burial place for persons who die an unnatural death are hollowed out in the mountain-side. It can be observed that the men are striking their *bangibangs* while scaling the mountain.



Fig. 13. Photograph 13

This picture portrays a close-up image of two men in dance pose while holding the *bangibang* or wooden musical instrument used in burial ritual for individuals who die a violent death. These two men are part of the procession advancing to the plateau clearing for the hill ceremonies and for the burial procession. The men who proceed to gather at the plateau clearing (photos 1 to 4) trots in swinging dance steps. According to Beyer (1911), the men with the *bangibang* would come from different directions of the village and with them beating the *bangibang* the sound could be heard for miles. The *bangibangs* are also beaten as soon as the procession leaves the house of the dead until the party reaches the burial place. During the burial procession the men proceed very slowly to the burial ground while dancing a dance that resembles a fight or war dance.

The men in the photo are clad in g-strings or *wano* and a cloth or textile that is diagonally slung across the body. The men's headdress is of *dongla* leaves held in place by a betel nut leaf petiole. Mourning bands tied around the wrists and legs just below the knees adorn the men. Hanging on each man's waist is a big cutting knife or *bolo*.

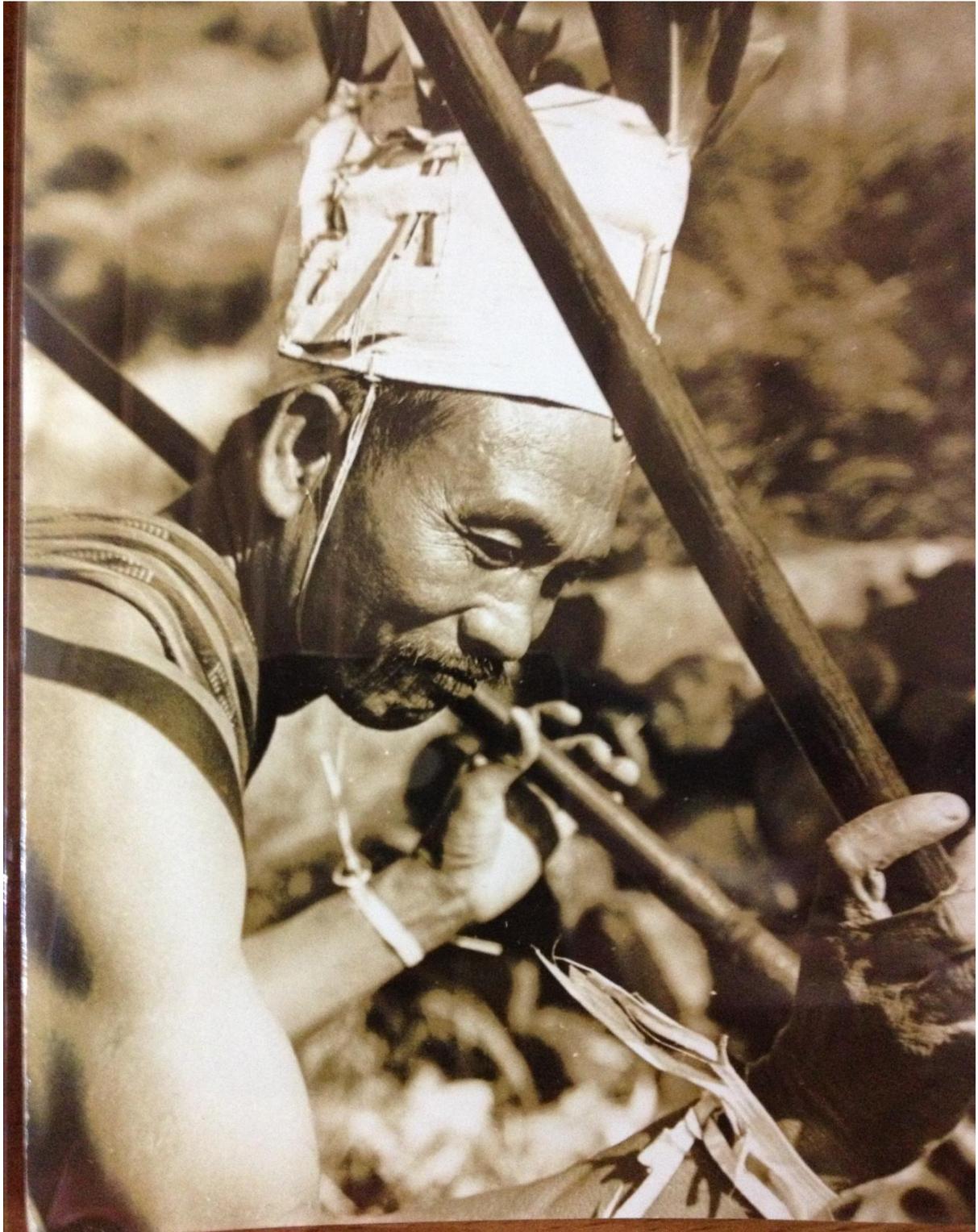


Fig. 14. Photograph 14

This is a close-up portrait of a man holding 2 *tukab* or wooden spears. In the *munhimung* ceremony the leader of the burial procession carries wooden spears. The leader is dressed in traditional cloth and noticeable are the mourning bands on his wrists and the head accessory made of *dongla* leaves.

## VII. Conclusion

The role of photographs as a cultural medium rests on its unique ability to freeze and depict images. Images that portray the country's people, landscape, cultural practices, traditions, and history are powerful instruments that preserve the cultural heritage of the country. This is especially true of photographs that frame the country's customs and traditions that are on the verge of being lost because of the effects of modernization, education, religion, and migration. The 14 images in the Robert B. Fox's papers clearly exemplify this reality. The *munhimung* ritual for violent death is seldom if not no longer performed today. We are left with nothing to remember this ritual if not for these photographs. Photographs in archives therefore, play an important role in the preservation of indigenous customs and traditions and ultimately the nation's culture. A problem arises if photographs have no captions or labels. These silent cultural markers can forever remain mute if no interventions by archivists and researchers are done.

Archivists as guardians and preservers of these cultural materials are faced with the challenge of discharging functions that may not be well within their required duties. But to ensure that documents serve the purpose by which these were created, we as archivists need to do something. We need to tread into uncharted territories so to speak. Archivists can do preliminary researches on their photograph collections that do not have labels and captions. Archivists should take the challenge to conduct researches on their collection to be able to put voices to their silent collections. This way, documents can be accessed, put to good use and better understood. These small steps and processes can enrich our and the next generation's understanding of the rich indigenous Filipino culture and heritage.

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