

HISTORY OF BENGUET

Benguet, together with Abra, Apayao, Baguio City, Ifugao, Kalinga, and Mountain Province comprise the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) in Northern Luzon. It has a Mountainous terrain of peaks, ridges, and canyons; and a temperate and generally pleasant climate.

Benguet lies southernmost in the Cordillera Administrative Region. It is geographically located between 16°33" north latitude and 120°34" to 120°52" east longitude. On the north, it is bounded by Mountain Province, on the south by Pangasinan, on the east by Ifugao and Nueva Viscaya and on the west by La Union and Ilocos Sur.



The province comprises one (1) congressional district, two (2) provincial board district, thirteen (13) municipalities and one hundred forty (140) barangays. It has three major ethnolinguistic groups: the Kankanaeys, Ibalois and Kalanguya and other minor groups with distinct cultures and histories of their own.

EARLY SETTLEMENTS AND TRADE MOVEMENTS

Long before the coming of the Spanish colonizers to the Philippines, the people of Benguet walked and lived on the land, mountain and valleys of the southern Cordillera mountain range down to the sea coasts of Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, and La Union to as far as the ancient trading enters of Ituy in the northern plain of Luzon. There were no political subdivisions or subjugations. Movements and settlements were in search of rich hunting grounds, fertile valleys and abundant resources of the earth, rivers and seas, and places of barter and trade. Thus, the book "A People's History of Benguet" states:

"A RECONSTRUCTION OF BENGUET HISTORY, THEREFORE, ENCOMPASSES PRESENT-DAY BENGUET AND INCLUDES THE WESTERN COASTAL PROVINCE OF PANGASINAN, LA UNION, AND ILOCOS SUR FROM SOUTHERN LINGAYEN GULF TO THE OUTLET OF AMBURAYAN RIVER IN THE NORTHERN TOWN OF TAGUDIN. REMEMBRANCES OF TIMES LONG PAST ARE TIED TO THE RIVER SYSTEM OF THE AGNO, ANGALACAN-BUED, ARINGAY-GALIANO, NAGUILIAN AND AMBURAYAN, ALL IN NORTHERN LUZON. THE MOSSY FOREST HEIGHTS OF THE SOUTHERN CORDILLERA MOUNTAIN RANGE CONSTITUTE A NATURAL EAST AND SOUTHEAST BOUNDARY."



The earliest known settlement as recounted in genealogical histories were the following twin settlement: Chuyo and Tonglo in Baguio- Tuba; Darew and Palaypay in Kapangan-Tublay; Imbose and Amlimay in Kabayan-Bugias; and Namiligan and Palatang in Mankayan- Bakun. The gold and copper settlement working sites were at Pancutcutan, Acupan, Apaiao, Penas and Locjo, all over Benguet.

Centers of barter and trade between the highlanders and lowlanders of the northern Luzon were at Ituy now known as Aritao in Nueva Viscaya, Tagudin and Vigan in the Ilocos, and Lingayen in Pangasinan. Benguet products such as gold, copper, iron, honey, bees wax were traded in exchange for lowland products such as salt, livestock, cotton or blankets, and wares from foreign shores such as beads, plates and jars. Slaves from the highlands and lowlands were also items of trade.

HOW BENGUET GOT ITS NAME

The name Benguet was first pronounced in La Trinidad, a thriving settlement at the crossroads to the lowland trading sites during the period of Spanish expeditions. La Trinidad then was a settlement around a lake alive with wildlife, wallowing carabaos dotted with patches of taro, rice, gabi and camote. In one expedition, a curious Spanish conquistador who saw this settlement noted that the people wore cloth coverings wrapped around their head several times. When he



inquired about it, the native explained that the heavy head covering which the people wore as protection from the searing cold and winds is termed "benget". With the western accent of the colonizers "benget" was mispronounced as "benguet". In time, it eventually become a general reference to the territories of the Igorotes peopled by the Ibaloi, Kankanaey, Kalangoya, and other minor tribes.

THE SEARCH FOR GOLD AND THE TOBACCO MONOPOLY

It was in search of copper and gold then being traded and said to be from the interior highland regions that Spanish explorers first ventured into the mountain vastness of Benguet in 1572 led by the Spanish conquistador, General Juan de Salcedo.

From then on, for half a century, expeditions were dispatched in an attempt to subjugate the lands, gold and people of Benguet. Spanish missionaries likewise came into the



mountains either with the expeditions or by themselves. In 1664, the fierce and relentless resistance of the Benguet people made the Spanish rulers decide to withdraw attempts at subjugation as well as the pursuit of Benguet gold.

Intermittent incursions into the Benguet Mountains and the unceasing resistance of the people by shrewdness and the spear were recorded in military and religious journals. One such invasion was the battle at Tonglo in 1759. Tonglo, a settlement between present day Baguio City and Tuba, was subjected to five hours of heavy artillery fire then destroyed after a fierce struggle. Although Tonglo was destroyed, the Spaniards withdrew.

The people of Benguet called Igorrotes by the Spanish colonizers remained free and independent until the decree on tobacco monopoly.

A lucrative production and trade of tobacco was then undertaken by the Igorrotes outside Spanish government control, which was not subject to tax. Also, reports of raids of the mountain people on the lowlands and the flight of fugitives to the mountain areas caught once again the attention of the Spanish colonizers. Punitive expeditions into the Benguet lands were then organized in 1829 to 1833 led by Commandante Guillermo Galvey, which resulted in the burning of villages and settlements.

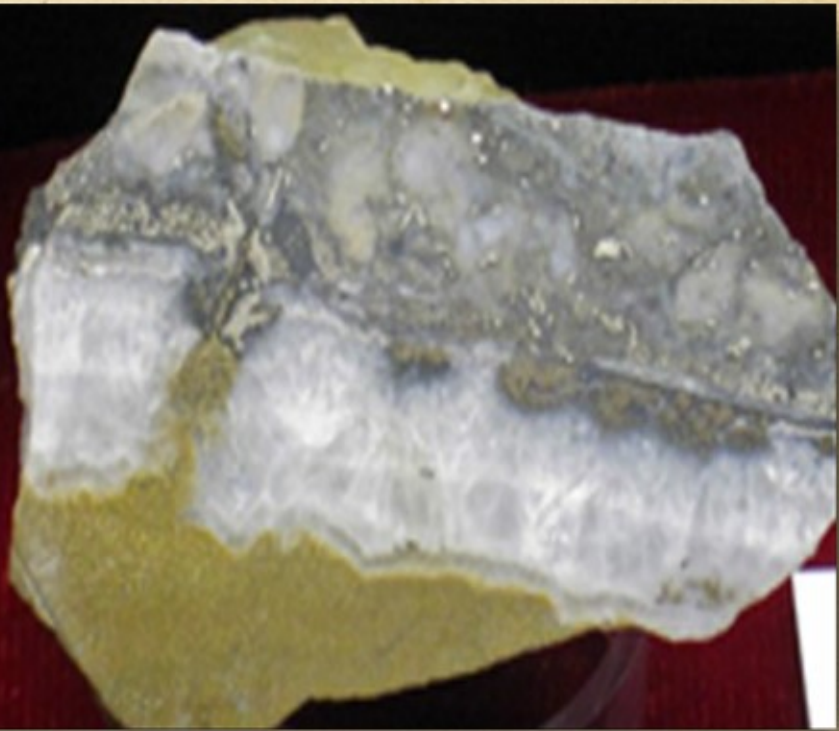
In 1852 in an effort to map out the mountain territories and contain the illegal trade of tobacco, the "Pais de Igorrotes y Partidas del Norte Pangasinan" was established. This was later divided into four military districts of Benguet, Yamcayan, Abra and Ifugao. Later in 1846, the *Distrito de Benguet* as a *Commandancia*.



Politico Militar was instituted under the military jurisdiction of the lowland provinces.

In 1854, the *Distrito de Benguet* became a regular *Commandancia Politico Militar*. La Trinidad was named the capital of the *Distrito de Benguet*. The *Rancherias* comprising Benguet were Baguio, Sablan, Galiano, Ambulao, Daclan, Bocot, Adaoay, Cabayan, Loo, Tublay, Capangan, Balacbac, Quibungan, Palina, Ampusongan, Ytogon and Atoc. Spanish authority and presence in the *Pais de Igorrotes commandancias*, however, were intermittent and limited to the capital *rancherias*.

Subsequently established in 1847, 1852, and 1890, were the *Commandancias Politico Militar* of Lepanto-Bontoc, Tiangan and Amburayan. Included in the territories of these *commandancias* were portions of the present-day municipalities of Bakun, Mankayan and Buguias.



POLITICAL HISTORY: THE EARLY BEGINNINGS

During the Philippine revolution of 1898 against Spain led by General Emilio Aguinaldo and Andres Bonifacio, the Benguet people rallied forth under the leadership of Juan Oraa Cariño, Mateo Carantes, Magastino Laruan and Piraso. Benguet was established as a Province in 1899 under the First Philippine Republic with Juan Oraa "Ahino" Cariño appointed as Governor and President of the Board. The seat of the provincial government was in Tuel, Tublay. One of the bastions of the First Philippine Republic was in Benguet where the President of the Philippine Congress, Mr. Vicente Paterno, Sr. took refuge and protection.

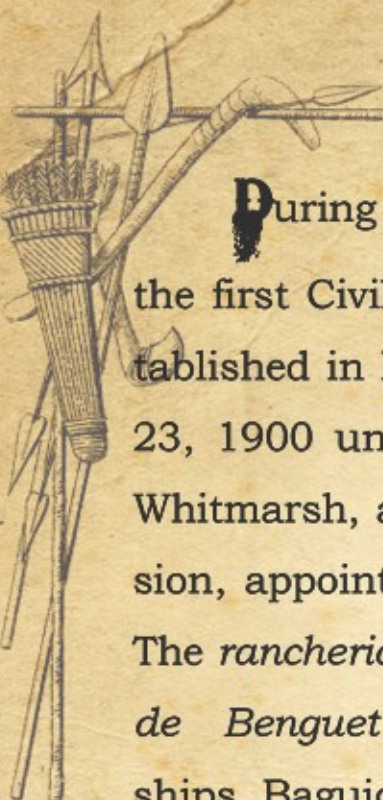
During the American Period, the first Civil Government was established in Benguet on November 23, 1900 under Act 49 with H.P. Whitmarsh, a journalist by profession, appointed as Civil Governor. The *rancherias* under the *Distrito de Benguet* were termed townships. Baguio was named the capital of Benguet.

On September 1, 1909, Benguet's capital town, Baguio was established as a chartered city and its stead, the township of Tuba, was created. Baguio remained the

capital of Benguet until 1916. After 1916, La Trinidad became the capital of Benguet.

On August 13, 1908 under Act 1876, Mountain Province was created consolidating the then Province of Benguet, the *Commandancia* of Quiangan, the sub-province of Kalinga and Apayao, the province of Lepanto-Bontoc and the sub-province of Amburayan. Benguet became a sub-province of Mountain Province headed by a deputy governor.

On February 4, 1920 under Act 2877, the sub-province of Lepanto and Amburayan were abolished. The territories of Lepanto and Amburayan were divided and placed under the provinces of Ilocos Sur, La Union and the sub-provinces of Benguet and Bontoc.



With Act 2877 and executive orders issued by the Governor General, the nineteen original townships of Benguet were consolidated into 13 namely: Atok, Bakun, Bokod, Buguias, Itogon, La Trinidad, Kabayan, Kibungan, Kapangan, Mankayan, Sablan, Tuba, and Tublay. The 13 townships were now termed municipalities. This number as well as the boundaries defined under the act and executive orders have remained so.



From 1920 to 1966, Benguet remained a sub-province of Mountain Province with other sub-provinces of Bontoc, Ifugao and Kalinga-Apayao.

On June 18, 1966 by virtue of Republic Act 4695 Mountain Province was divided into four provinces namely Benguet, Mountain Province, Ifugao and Kalinga-Apayao. Once again, Benguet became a distinct and regular province.

THE BENGUET EMBLEM

On July 22, 1968, the Provincial Board of Benguet, under Resolution No. 894, approved the provincial seal or coat of arms.



Pepicted are Benguet's rich natural resources - water, mineral deposits, lands, mountains and forests which are harnessed for economic development. The mining industry is represented by a miner's pick and headgear, energy is represented by Ambuklao spillway, agriculture is represented by the terraced gardens and vegetable produce, indigenous handicraft as represented by the "kayabang", and eco-tourism as the pine trees and mountains. At the center is the "gangsa" representing the distinct indigenous culture of its people. Beneath the symbolisms is the enduring guiding dictum for all times and generations, "Unity, Industry, Prosperity".

The Provincial Board through Resolution No. 16 on January 7, 1969 adopted everlasting as the provincial flower. Similarly, under Resolution No. 368 on May 15, 1987, adopted the “ayosip” (Ibaloi) or “gotmo” or “alumani” (Kankana-ey), native blueberry and indigenous to the province, as the provincial fruit.



Provincial Flower

EVERLASTING
(*Helicrysum Bracteatum*)



Provincial Fruit

AYOSIP
(*Vaccinium angustifolium*)