

Native House Restorations and Rituals Toward Community-Based Tourism in the UNESCO World Heritage Batad Rice Terrace Cultural Landscape

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Abstract

In light of contemporary threats to the living cultural landscape of the UNESCO World Heritage Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras, steps have to be taken in order to safeguard the indigenous heritage of this area while ensuring the socio-economic development of the peoples living therein. This project aims to fulfill both needs through a community-based tourism endeavor anchored on the tangible and intangible cultural heritage resources of the UNESCO-inscribed Batad Rice Terrace Cultural Landscape. Through a participatory approach and employing local craftsmen, baluys (traditional Ifugao houses) were adaptively restored and outfitted for use as tourist lodging. These houses would serve as the centerpiece of an indigenous eco-cultural tourism experience run by local families. This gives locals a chance to participate in the tourist economy, while helping safeguard their heritage. For the inauguration of the houses, a “housewarming” ritual led by the last remaining mumbaki (shamans) of Batad was performed, with members of the community in attendance. Initial reviews from foreign and local tourists have been mostly positive, and more local families have shown interest in setting up their own homestays. The early successes of this project pave the way for tourism ventures that bring development to the grassroots.