

# LA TRINIDAD HISTORY

## Pre-Spanish Era<sup>1</sup>

La Trinidad was well-cultivated with rice, sweet potatoes, *gabi*, and sugar cane by its original settlers.

The natives of La Trinidad were generally Ibaloys who trace their ancestry to the Kalanguya Tribe (forest people) of Tinek, Ifugao, who, due to the need to survive in a less hostile environment in different waves and paths of migration, followed mountain ranges or the course of rivers and then finding a suitable environment, usually along the river, or an open clearing, settled in Kabayan, Itogon, Tuba, Atok, Kafagway (Baguio) and La Trinidad. Finding earlier settlers in those areas these travellers then mingled with the former and through intermarriage, settled among them.

They maintained swidden farms along the hillsides, carved rice terraces along the mountain slopes along rivers, creeks and streams and rice fields in the marshy valley. The villagers' pasturelands or *estancia* were located in the hillsides where herds of cattle and horses grazed. In their backyards, the natives domesticated animals such as pigs, chicken and dogs.

As the Cordilleras was mainly left undiscovered by the Spanish colonizers, small settlements in the area were found by the Spaniards.

Highest in the social strata are the wealthy or *bacnang* and the *mambunong* (local priest). Wealth was measured by ownership of land and cattle where redistribution of wealth was done by holding prestigious feasts or *peshit*.

Religion was based on the belief in a supreme being called the *Kabunian*. Prayers were done during rituals and festivities. Rituals were based largely on agriculture. *Cañaos* or festivities were accompanied by chants (*ba-dew*) and dance with the gongs (*gansa*) and drums (*solibao*) as the basic musical instruments.

## Spanish Period

The name "**Benguet**" was once limited to the area of what is now the La Trinidad Valley. Benguet is a native term which refers to a lake where water does not drain, referring to the former swamp area here no natural drain existed. The first account of La Trinidad was when Don Q.M. Quirante saw its beautiful valley in 1624. More than a century later, in search for gold, Spanish explorers led by Galvey discovered the valley in 1829.

But the Ibalois did not receive the Spaniards gladly, they threw their spears and stood up for a battle, but they were outnumbered. It took some time, in 1846, when La Trinidad was considered pacified, as Galvey passed through the area more than 10 times, burning the natives' houses every time there was resistance. By the time, they established a Spanish government; the people had already left the valley to the outskirts of La Trinidad where they could more or less enjoy their much wanted freedom. Although the District of Benguet was established in La Trinidad by 1846, it was only in April 21, 1874, that "Valle de Benguet" was renamed "Valle de la Trinidad" (La Trinidad Valley) by then Commandant Manuel Scheidnagel. Despite popular belief that it was so named as "a fitting tribute to Galvey's wife, Doña Trinidad de Galvey", Scheidnagel is believed to have been inspired by the area's three small visible hills (in effect, a trinity: a religious icon of the Christian campaign) overlooking the Poblacion church, where the seat of the Cabecera was established.

Relatively the most developed settlement in the Benguet area, La Trinidad served as the gateway from the southern lowlands into the mountain region and the center of administration to the Spaniards. The principal vegetable produced by the people then consisted of *kamoteng kahoy*, *camote*, *gabi*, beans and tomatoes. Rice was grown only to make "*tapey*" or rice wine which was used for ceremonial purposes in the *cañao*. The Spaniards brought in corn, coffee and good tobacco. Much of its people's cultural activities were curtailed during this time even as their efforts to convert the *Igorots* to Christianity were

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<sup>1</sup> Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development Protection Plan Draft. May 2006.

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futile. The general picture during the Spanish rule was of forced labor, beatings, cruelties and exorbitant taxation.

- 1624 : Don M. Quirante, a Spanish explorer found a large and prosperous community thriving around a lake inhabited by *Ibalois*. La Trinidad Valley was originally called "*Benguet*"
- 1829 : Lt. Col. Guillermo Galvey and his men during his first expedition to Benguet were attacked by brave and armed *Igorots* from a population of 500 houses; their number was reduced to 100 due to resistance and a white pox epidemic.
- 1846 : The District of Benguet is established, paving for the actual occupation of Benguet Valley (La Trinidad).
- 1852 : Trinidad served as the capital of the administrative territory of Benguet during the Spanish Era, Galvey established the *Commandancia Politico-Militares de Benguet* composed of 31 *Commandancia*. Its headquarters was located at present-day, Puguis. Galvey notes that the "*Igorot attitude towards the European is one of reluctance such that only a few Christian Converts lived near the five Spaniards & 20 lowlanders in La Trinidad*" & many migrated into the interior.

### **Revolutionary Period (1899 – 1900)**

The Philippine insurrection of 1896 against the Spaniards reached Benguet by the midyear of 1899. The *Katipunans* came to Benguet, united the *Ibalois*, looted and burned Spanish buildings at the *Commandancia* and established the Benguet Province under the Government Republic of the Philippines.

- 1892 : Total population was 887 dispersed in 18 barangays of La Trinidad
- Late 1899's : Through the leadership of Juan "Ora" Cariño, Mateo Carantes and Piraso, the *Ibalois* rose at 500 strong men. With 500 other *Katipuneros*, they looted and burned the *Commandancia*. The last *Commandante* fled for Bontoc.
- 1900 : La Trinidad continued to be the seat of government. Military Government was established by virtue of Gen. Order # 43.

### **American Period (1900 – 1941)**

Several social changes occurred during the American period. Freedom of religion was granted to the indigenous *Ibaloi* people of La Trinidad. This enabled them to enjoy their old customs and traditions without any inhibitions.

They were also granted suffrage and slavery was abolished. Education was introduced. The Americans introduced both iron tools and vegetables. Private property was introduced. Political organizations among the residents began to be organized. Labour began to be paid and money became an important feature in the economic lives of the people.

- Nov. 22, 1900 : Benguet became the first Phil. Civil Government set up by virtue of Phil. Comm. Act No. 48 which provided for the Organization of the townships of Benguet making Baguio its capital. H.P. Whitmarsh was appointed Civil Governor of Benguet;
- 1903 : Population is 267 persons;
- 1903- 1927 : A series of Executive Proclamations Reserving Parcels of Land for the Trinidad Farm School. This led to the displacement of ancestral lands.
- 1905 : The Americans built a school at Poblacion made out of cogon;

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- 1910 : An experimental farm school (now the Benguet State University) was established, experimenting on the susceptibility of American vegetables such as cabbage, lettuce, & strawberry;
- 1916 : An elementary school is established for grades 1 to 4;
- 1918 : The Dangwa Family builds a small transportation enterprise. From its original Baguio – La Trinidad line, it extended to Acop, Kapangan, Bontoc, Ifugao and Tabuk by the 1930's. The population of La Trinidad is now 3,013;
- 1920's : Pres. Manuel L. Quezon proclaimed public lands as school reservations;
- Sept. 16, 1922 : The Communal Forests of La Trinidad are proclaimed by William Crosby;
- 1924 : The first school truck is available in La Trinidad with the improvement of the roads around the valley;
- 1930 : Population of La Trinidad is 6,554;

### **Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945)**

Filipinos were imprisoned and pitilessly tortured. As Japanese atrocities increased through the years, guerrilla activities intensified. After the war, La Trinidad was devastated. Roads had holes like crater, houses and forests were burned, and farms became massive burial grounds.

- Dec. 8, 1941 : Chaos breaks in La Trinidad as Camp John Hay was bombed;
- Dec. 27, 1941 : La Trinidad is declared an open city;
- Oct. 6, 1942 : The merciless execution of *Igorots* triggered the guerrilla movement named '*Bolo*' men so named because of their only weapons;
- Oct. 15, 1942 : Through the leadership of Dennis Molintas and Bado Dangwa, they joined forces with the US resistance troops and placed under the 66<sup>th</sup> infantry, USAFEE-NL with the motto, "Everywhere But Nowhere" and "Never Shall Invaders";
- May 4, 1945 : The liberation of La Trinidad occurred as the joint forces of the Americans and the 66<sup>th</sup> Infantry, USAFFE entered the valley after the brief battle.

### **Contemporary Period (Post World War II to Present Day)**

Reconstruction efforts immediately started after the war. La Trinidad started from a vegetable producer to a producer of high-value crops, strawberry and cut flowers. From a sleepy town, it has emerged as first class, urban municipality and the center for education, marketing and trading for the province of Benguet.

- 1948 : Population is now 7,994;
- June 16, 1950 : La Trinidad is a regular municipality by virtue of RA #531. The seat of the Municipal Government is the present-day Justice Hill at Poblacion;
- 1960 : Population is now 12,415. Large- scale vegetable farming became evident. La Trinidad became one of the leading vegetable-producing municipalities in the entire country. Community Development efforts started;
- June 18, 1966 : La Trinidad is made Provincial Capital of Benguet (RA # 4695, s .2, HB # 1526);
- July 1, 1966 : La Trinidad ranked as a fourth class municipality as per Finance Dept. Order # 140. The average annual income for 1963 to 1966 was ₱64,876.97;
- April 1969 : The construction of the La Trinidad Municipal Hall started and inaugurated in October 10, 1970;

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- 1970's : La Trinidad became known as the "Salad Bowl of the Philippines";
- 1980 : Population is 28,713;
- 1980's : Diversification from vegetable production to strawberry and cut flower production started; Health, Population, and Rural Development Programs are initiated;
- 1981 : La Trinidad became a third class municipality;
- March 18, 1981 : The first joint La Trinidad Patronal Town Fiesta and Strawberry Festival are celebrated;
- 1982 : A one-storey public market is constructed, replacing the dilapidated one;
- July 13, 1984 : La Trinidad Vegetable Trading Post construction is completed;
- 1986 – 1987 : The EDSA Revolution shakes the La Trinidad political scene with several Officers-in-Charge placed in key political positions. Several development projects lined up were scrapped;
- July 1, 1986 : La Trinidad becomes a first class-C Municipality;
- July 1, 1987 : Reclassification of La Trinidad to fifth class municipality as per Finance Department Order 51 - 88. The average annual income from 1983-1986 was P2,180,174.86;
- 1989 : Pres. Corazon Aquino proclaims June 16, 1989 as the "Municipality of La Trinidad Day" under Proclamation No. 394;
- 1989 : Construction work for the Highland Integrated Rural Development Project (HIRDP) started in November. The project is funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The aim of the project is to promote and develop highland agriculture and to improve the living standards in the rural areas in and around La Trinidad through the provision of basic agricultural support infrastructures necessary for increased productivity and stable, strong rural life, which would serve as a pilot model integrated project in the development of rural areas in the Philippines.
- July 16, 1990 : La Trinidad Valley is devastated by an earthquake;
- 1990's : La Trinidad is tagged as the "Strawberry Fields of the Philippines" and "Rose Capital of the Philippines", La Trinidad serves as the Trading Center for Benguet, Education Center for Benguet and Seat of several Regional Offices,
- 1991 : The JICA-funded Highland Integrated Rural Development Project is completed in November. The project consisted of irrigation facilities, rural roads, post-harvest facilities, domestic water supply and village sewage facilities.
- July 1, 1991 : La Trinidad is reclassified as a fourth class municipality. Average income from 1983 to 1986 was P 4,558,389.46;
- Sept. 6, 1991 : Construction starts for the new 2–storey public market building and is completed in 1993 as part of the earthquake rehabilitation fund;
- April 1993 : La Trinidad *Panaspulan tan Pandansahan* Summer Festival is launched. This continued until 1997;
- July 1, 1993 : La Trinidad is classified to a third class municipality as per Finance Department Order 35-93. Average Annual Income from 1989-1992 was P 8,036,000.00;

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- July 26, 1993 : RA 7672 declares June 16 as a special non-working holiday in La Trinidad;
- May 13, 1997 : Reclassification of La Trinidad to a second class municipality as per Finance Department MC-97-3 (13). Average annual income from 1992 – 1995 was P18,805,161.61;
- 1998 : The JICA-funded new Benguet General Hospital is completed.
- July 1998 : “*Dugad Mo, Shalosim*” starts a drive to clean Balili River and La Trinidad’s burgeoning garbage problem. Development programs focuses on the efficient and effective delivery of economic and social services;
- March 18, 1999 : The La Trinidad Patronal Town Fiesta and Strawberry Festival are revived;
- 2000’s : Population reaches 67,963 with a very high average growth rate of 4.4%. The vegetable industry feels the ill-effects of the opening up of the country’s economy to open trade. Efforts are focused on exposing farmers to technologies to gain competency in the local market.
- 2001 : A new two–storey market starts construction; Annual Budget is now P 70,375,000.
- Jan.28, 2002 : The Municipality of La Trinidad becomes a first class municipality by virtue of DOF MC1- M13 based on its average income of P36M from CY 1996-1999;
- March 18, 2002 : La Trinidad gets country-wide praises for baking a 5ft high, 6ft wide & 7ft long Giant Strawberry Cake;
- August 2002 : Smuggling of imported vegetable threatens the Benguet Vegetable Industry; Farmers are protected as they are unable to compete with open trade agreements by the World Trade Organization.
- March 18, 2003 : The Strawberry Festival marks the agri-tourism event with a Twin Giant Strawberry Cake.
- March 18, 2004 : La Trinidad enters a larger Giant Strawberry Cake into the Guinness Book of World Records. A year later, the record is confirmed with the title “Largest Fruit Shortcake”. It weighed 9,622.29 Kg, served 42,082 slices, with a height of 8.42 ft., length of 12.32 ft. and width of 8.68 ft. A month afterwards, this was also entered in Ripley’s “Believe it or Not!”
- August 23, 2004: Environmental Management Bureau-DENR issues permit to start the construction of a Controlled Disposal Facility at Alno. La Trinidad is the first local government unit in the Cordilleras to comply with the Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.
- May 28, 2005 : Judge F. Cabato cancels and reverts back to public domain, a nine-hectare title located within the Puguis Communal Forest to the government;
- June 16, 2005 : Marking its 55<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day, the 3-storey public market building is inaugurated. A year later, the one-storey market was demolished to give way to a future plaza.
- 2005 : Average income of the municipal government from 2000 to 2005 drastically increased to P 85.95 M.
- May 2006 : The metes and bounds of the Puguis Communal Forest are final after conduct of a joint survey with DENR. The other communal forests and Busol watershed are expected to shall follow suit.
- 2007 : Census population is 97,810, with a growth rate of 5.1%. The municipal revenue generated is P110 M. The Municipal Gymnasium is constructed.

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- 2009 : Continuous rains of typhoon Ondoy and Pepeng brought about the worst disaster ever since the 1991 earthquake. Both typhoons caused two major landslides in the valley and brought about the highest number of damage and death: 115 deaths were reported, 21 from Western Buyagan and 77 from Little Kibungan, Puguis were buried alive.
- 2010 : The municipal annual budget is Php 155 M. Census population is 107,188 at a growth rate of 3.09%. Plans for cityhood are laid.
- 2011 : The regulation of garbage segregation is placed in the hands of the barangay government and the Ecological Solid Waste Management Landfill Facility is finally in use. But the landfill will not last long, so a P58 M “black hole” waste management Japanese technology is being put in place through a Public-Private Partnership scheme.
- Several studies are prepared for a new Trading Post at the Strawberry Fields road, and an Adventure-Eco Park at Shilan Communal Forest. Funding for the Trading Post will be made possible through national agricultural funds.
- Ease of traffic is experienced through a number-coding scheme.
- 2012 : The courts decided in favour of mediaman, Jimmy Laking, suspending the whole Sanggunian Bayan for using government funds in a paid newspaper advertisement declaring him *persona non grata* for his comments on the proposed mall at the public market area.
- 2013 : Hon. Edna C. Tabanda makes a comeback as mayor, emphasizing on the principles of good governance: transparency, accountability, and honesty. She pledged to give focus on the peace and order situation, traffic problem, and school dropouts.
- 2015 : The P650m Benguet Agri-Pinoy Trading Center (BAPTC), the biggest trading facility in the country was inaugurated and opened for use in October 26. The project was funded under the Department of Agriculture. It came about with Dr. Violeta Salda, as the proponent.
- : Population reached to 129,133 with 34,157 households growing at a rate of 4.09 annually.

**Table 1: Municipal District Presidents / Mayors of La Trinidad from 1899 to Present**

Year	Name of Leader	Origin	Position
1899-1900	Hon. Miguel Picart	Poblacion	Municipal District President
1900-1901	Hon. Clemente Laoyan	Pico	Municipal District President
1901-1902	Hon. Clemente Valdez	Poblacion	Municipal District President
1902-1903	Hon. Clemente Laoyan	Pico	Municipal District President
1903-1904	Hon. Clemente Laoyan	Pico	Municipal District President
1904-1905	Hon. Alivio Opicena	Pico	Municipal District President
1905-1906	Hon. Vicente Sales	Poblacion	Municipal District President
1906-1907	Hon. Baniwas (one name)	Shilan	Municipal District President
1907-1908	Hon. Baniwas (one name)	Shilan	Municipal District President
1908-1909	Hon. Clemente Laoyan	Pico	Municipal District President
1909-1910	Hon. Clemente Laoyan	Pico	Municipal District President
1910-1911	Hon. Palacsá (one name)	Pico	Municipal District President
1912-1913	Hon. Pil-o Yatyatan	Alno	Municipal District President
1913-1914	Hon. Pil-o Yatyatan	Alno	Municipal District President
1914-1915	Hon. Juan P. Leygo	Poblacion	Municipal District President

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1915-1916	Hon. Juan P. Leygo	Poblacion	Municipal District President
1916-1917	Hon. Anno Morales	Shilan	Municipal District President
1917-1918	Hon. Anno Morales	Shilan	Municipal District President
1918-1919	Hon. Baldomero Namoso	Bineng	Municipal District President
1919-1920	Hon. Baldomero Namoso	Bineng	Municipal District President
1920-1921	Hon. Clemente Laoyan	Pico	Municipal District President
1921-1924	Hon. Clemente Laoyan	Pico	Municipal District Mayor
1924-1926	Hon. Adriano Balancio	Pico	Municipal District Mayor
1926-1929	Hon. Dalmacio Lubos	Pico	Municipal District President
1929-1931	Hon. Abela Binayan	Shilan	Municipal District President
1931-1934	Hon. Herman Chamus	Pico	Municipal District President
1934-1935	Hon. Duna Nabus	Pico	Municipal District President
1935-1937	Hon. Duna Nabus	Pico	Municipal District President
1937-1941	Hon. Antero Alumit	Alapang	Municipal District President
1941-1944	Hon. Herman Chamus	Pico	Municipal District President
1945-1946	Hon. Antero Alumit	Alapang	Municipal District President
1946-1949	Hon. Cipriano Abalos	Alapang	Municipal District Mayor
1949-1952	Hon. Ezra Nabus	Pico	Municipal District Mayor
1952-1955	Hon. Larry Ogas	Pico	Municipal Mayor
1956-1959	Hon. Larry Ogas	Pico	Municipal Mayor
1959-1963	Hon. Larry Ogas	Pico	Municipal Mayor
1964-1967	Hon. Cipriano Abalos	Alapang	Municipal Mayor
1968-1971	Hon. Cipriano Abalos	Alapang	Municipal Mayor
1972-1979	Hon. Cipriano Abalos	Alapang	Municipal Mayor
1980-1986	Hon. Hilarion A. L. Pawid	Betag	Municipal Mayor
1986-12/1/87	Hon. Cecil Digman	Shilan	OIC, Municipal Mayor
12/2/87-12/21/87	Hon. Filomena Balingoay		OIC, Office of the Mayor
12/22/87-1/31/88	Hon. Teodoro Oway	Balili	OIC, Office of the Mayor
2/3/88-1998	Hon. Edna C. Tabanda	Alapang	Municipal Mayor
Mar 1998-Jun 1998	Hon. James S. Chanfing	Betag	Municipal Mayor
July 1998-June 2007	Hon. Nestor B. Fongwan	Puguis	Municipal Mayor
July 2007-June 2010	Hon. Artemio A. Galwan	Bineng	Municipal Mayor
July 10 - June 2013	Hon. Gregorio T. Abalos, Jr.	Betag	Municipal Mayor
July 2013-June 2016	Hon. Edna C. Tabanda	Balili	Municipal mayor
July 2016-June 2019	Hon. Romeo K. Salda	Pico	Municipal Mayor
July 2019-June 2022	Hon. Romeo K. Salda	Pico	Municipal Mayor