

Igorot European Consultation

Place: Jugengastehaus Wien-Brigittenau
Friedrich-Engels-Platz 24
Vienna, Austria

Date: 29 May-1 June 2003

Theme: Our Cordillera People's Culture: Our Heritage

Host: Igorot Organization in Austria

Summary Report

The Igorot European Consultation (Consultation) with the theme, "Our Cordillera People's Culture: Our Heritage," was held in Vienna, Austria from 29 May-1 June 2003. The host was Igorot Organization-Austria (IGO-Austria). The registered participants were 90, of which 71 were first generation and 19, second generation. There were 12 Igorot supporters who attended. The participants and supporters came from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, the Philippines, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the USA.

The objectives of the Consultation were:

- To know the current issues affecting Igorot migrants in Europe,
- To enable Igorots in Europe to have a cultural exchange, and
- To address the issues of second generation Igorots.

The Consultation began with a welcome program by the members of IGO-Austria. Then Susan Kilakil of Cordi-Bel read a paper on "How the Idea of Gathering the Igorots/Cordillerans in Europe Came About." Cordi-Bel hosted the Assembly of Cordillera of People in Europe (ACPE), the first gathering of Cordillerans in Europe, held in Gent, Belgium in April 2002.

Mr. Rex Botengan, president of the Igorot Global Organization, was the keynote speaker. However he was unable to attend upon advice of his physician. Linda Khensay, president of Igorot-UK, read his paper. Earlier, the Philippine Ambassador to Austria, His Excellency Victor G. Garcia III, gave a message.

A panel discussion on the theme followed. The panelists were: Severino Oblas, an Ibaloi based in Germany, "The Beliefs and Home Rituals of Benguet," Maria Cristina Apolinar-Abeya, of BIMAK DC, "The Role of Women Among the Igorots;" and Hilda Olat Bounggick, a second generation member of IGO-Austria, "Igorot Values." During the open forum, there was one unanswered question, "What is it in our culture that we want to pass on to our children?"

Later, there were lectures on migrant issues. Conchita Pooten, of Igorot-UK, spoke on "On Migration from the Igorotland – Past, Present and Future: An Igorot Migrant's Perspective," and Lolit Hafner-Monico, of BIBAK Switzerland, talked about "Challenges in a Bicultural Marriage."

The lectures were followed by workshops:

- 1) Cordillera migrants' situation in Europe,
- 2) Bicultural marriage,

- 3) Second generation Igorots, and
- 4) Aging migrants.

Nicole Lani Abeya-Barnabas, a second generation member of BIMAK DC, was tasked by her father, Edwin Abeya, to give the "Update on the Igorot International Consultation-5 (IIC-5)." The IIC-5 will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, USA from 1- 4 July 2004. She also read "The Story of the Igorot Global Organization" written by Rex Botengan.

Chants (oggayam), Igorot songs by the first generation Igorots, and modern dance and violin intermission by the second generation Igorots in Austria enlivened the Consultation. During the "Igorot Night" the participants, in their colorful costumes, danced to the beating of the gongs. Members of IGO-Austria presented a Kanyaw-Babayas. Babayyas is an Igorot traditional wedding ceremony.

At the closing plenary session, the group decided to have as its name "Igorot Cordillera (BIMAAK)-Europe" (ICBE). Some recommendations from the workshop reports and other points forwarded during the plenary session were:

1. Second generation Igorots

Encourage "Back to Roots" program.

Include camping during next consultation.

Deal on question of values and culture. (This was also a recommendation from the workshop on bicultural marriage)

2. Cordillera migrants' situation in Europe

Make a declaration and program of action to address the issues of Igorot migrants. The concept paper will be made; circulated to the participants, among others, for comments; and presented at the IIC-5.

3. Aging migrants

Set up a residential home for elderly Igorot migrants. This will be implemented in the United Kingdom. Igorot UK will make the concept paper, which will be presented at the IIC-5.

Venue of next consultation will be Switzerland.

4. Bicultural Marriage

The Igorot partner learns the language of the receiving country.

Victims of domestic violence be encouraged to talk about their problems. They should be advised to contact institutions that give legal advice and protection.

Encourage foreign partner to spend time in the Philippines with the in-laws to experience daily life in the "ili" (village).

Concerning children, it is best to talk to them in two languages (language of the receiving country and English).

Have a campaign to reduce the waiting for years of legalization of the Igorot partner (in some countries, this is five years; in others, three).

The participants decided to meet again in 2005 in Switzerland to conclude the discussion on the theme "Our Cordillera People's Culture: Our Heritage."

Words of thanks were expressed to:

all participants for attending the Consultation,

the speakers who came and those unable to attend,

IGO-Austria for hosting the Consultation,
the officers of IGO-Austria, and
BIBAK Switzerland for accepting to host the 2005 consultation.

The participants had a city tour, with Klemens Hruska as the guide. The Consultation ended with a Thanksgiving Party courtesy of the Olat-Bounggick family. The members of IGO-Austria prepared a surprise program on the occasion of the 50th birthday anniversary of Cristabel Olat-Bounggick, Coordinator, IGO-Austria.

The Consultation was financially self-reliant.

In the written evaluation, there was a question: "What will you remember and cherish most in our Consultation?" One answer was, "Everything will be remembered – the host, the venue, all guests and participants are worth cherishing." Another was, "The exchange of experiences among the participants and their willingness to go on and preserve their culture and adapt to the culture of their host country."

On the whole, the participants expressed much satisfaction with the Consultation and eagerly look forward to the 2005 activity in Switzerland.

Prepared by Yvonne Belen
Documentation Committee

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