

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

The Ifugao Archaeological Project

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THE IFUGAO ARE ONE OF several minority groups in the northern Philippines and one of the best documented. They are best known for their rice terraces (Figure 1), which are now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the early twentieth century, two prominent figures in Philippine anthropology conducted an intensive investigation of the Ifugao (Barton 1919, 1930; Beyer 1926, 1955). Both scholars proposed a 2,000- to 3,000-year-old origin for the Ifugao rice terraces based on their estimates of how long it would have taken to modify the rugged topography of the area. This “long history” has become received wisdom that found its way into textbooks and national histories (Jocano 2001; UNESCO 1995). Others have proposed a more recent origin of the terraces (Table 1). Using evidence from ethnohistoric documents and lexical research, these studies suggest that the terraced landscapes of the Ifugao are the end result of population expansion into the Cordillera highlands in response to Spanish colonization. Lowland–mountain contacts before and after the arrival of the Spanish may have

facilitated the movement of lowland peoples into the highlands when the Spanish settled in their locales (Keesing 1962).

The Ifugao Archaeological Project (IAP) is a collaborative research program of the Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement (SITMo), the National Museum of the Philippines, the University of the Philippines, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples–Ifugao, and UCLA. In 2012 and 2013, the IAP conducted two field seasons in Old Kiyangan Village in Kiangan, Ifugao (Figure 2), aiming to better understand highland–lowland relationships. In 2015 the IAP returned to the area to complete the first phase of its research program. Old Kiyangan Village is located near the junction of the Ibulao and the Ambangal rivers, southwest of Lagawe, the capital of Ifugao province (Figure 3). Old Kiyangan Village is thought to be the first village settled by the Tuwali-Ifugao, an Ifugao ethnolinguistic group that later settled in the current town of Kiangan, about 4 km from the archaeological site. Old Kiyangan Village is prominent in the Tuwali-Ifugao origin oral tradition, as it is considered the place where the Ifugaos first settled (Beyer 1955). The settlement is first mentioned in 1801 by Fray Molano in a letter to his superior, in which he states that the

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Figure 1. Rice terraces in Batad, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Table 1. Age Estimations Proposed for the Construction of the Ifugao Rice Terraces

AUTHOR	DATE	EVIDENCE
Barton (1919) and Beyer (1955)	2,000–3,000 YBP	Estimated how long it would have taken to construct the elaborate terrace systems that fill valley after valley of Ifugao country.
Keesing (1962) and Dozier (1966)	< 300 YBP	Movements to upper elevation of Cordillera peoples were associated with Spanish pressure.
Lambrecht (1967)	< 300 YBP	Concluded a recent origin of the terraces by using lexical and linguistic evidence from Ifugao romantic tales (hudhud) and by observing the short time necessary for terrace building.
Maher (1973:52–55)	205 ± 100 YBP 735 ± 105 YBP	Radiocarbon dates from a pond field and midden.
Acabado (2009:811)	post-1585 (expansion)	Bayesian modeling of radiocarbon dates obtained from the Bocos terrace system in Banaue, Ifugao, combined with paleoethnobotanical evidence from Old Kiyangan Village and the Hapao Terrace Cluster.



Figure 2. The location of Ifugao, Philippines.

village comprised 183 houses—a large settlement by Ifugao standards. The letter also contains the first mention of rice terracing complexes in the region. The village was abandoned during the Spanish occupation, possibly after a Spanish expeditionary party burned the village in 1832 (Jenista 1987:5). When the Americans entered the region around 1899, Old Kiyangan Village was abandoned (Figure 4); its inhabitants had relocated to the present town of Kiangan.

In Philippine history, the Ifugao are considered uncolonized, which has become one of the bases of Ifugao identity (Scott 1969). The dichotomy between highland and lowland Philippines is largely constructed within this framework, suggesting that the northern highland Philippines resisted Spanish domination. The Spanish cultural footprint is indeed limited in the province, owing to the failure of the colonial power to establish a permanent presence in the region (Scott 1970, 1982). Nevertheless, major economic and political shifts in the highlands coincided with the arrival of the Spanish in the northern Philippines. The Spanish colonization (*conquista*) and, following the reforms of 1573, the less hostile and more accommodating practices of the resettle-



Figure 3. The location of Old Kiyangan Village.



Figure 4. Buried irrigation ditch (*alak*), suggesting abandonment.

ment policy (*reduccion*) and the policy in which the Spanish Crown granted rights to control conquered lands (*encomiando*) consolidated fragmented populations into a single political entity (Ileto 1997; Krippner-Martínez 2010; Rafael 2001). In the Philippine highlands, however, a different pattern emerged, with political consolidation happening outside the colonial setting.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Our research program aims to contribute to anthropological studies on colonialism by investigating how political and economic intensification mitigated the impacts of colonialism on populations in Ifugao. These populations are in the periphery of Spanish colonialism. Our research has demonstrated that the upland rice field systems in the region were a response to social and political pressure from Spanish colonization starting around 1600 and are thus not 2,000 to 3,000 years old (Acabado 2009, 2012a, 2012b; Acabado et al. 2012).

Aside from contributing to the body of knowledge in Philippine archaeology, our project also promotes community participation by actively involving descendant communities in the research process. The project

emphasizes the role of indigenous populations in confronting the impacts of colonialism (Wolf 1997) and addresses wider issues in the anthropological studies of colonialism, such as resistance, identity formation, ethnogenesis, linking contemporary cultures with pre-Hispanic cultures, and community archaeology (Acabado et al. 2014). In addition, the research program utilizes practice theory to interpret material manifestation of highland responses to culture contact and colonialism.

The findings of the IAP indicate that landscape modification and terraced wet-rice cultivation intensified between 1600 and 1800, suggesting increased demand for food and a settlement pattern shift to more densely populated villages. Research in 2012 and 2013 showed that 70 percent of the protein requirement of Old Kiyangan Village was based on hunted Philippine deer (*Rusa mariannus*) until right before the arrival of the Spanish, when a shift to domesticated pig as the primary source of protein occurred. Old Kiyangan Village appears to have been settled before 1150, with its inhabitants subsisting on taro (*Colocasia esculenta*). The material remains from this time period suggest a hamlet-type settlement, with limited intra-group interaction. By 1650

wet-rice cultivation had emerged, and expansion of the village ensued. We argue that this subsistence shift and subsequent settlement expansion were a result of lowland groups evading the Spanish. Preliminary data indicate an increase of exotic goods, suggesting greater social differentiation (Acabado 2013). It can be hypothesized that the Ifugao responded to the imminent infiltration of the Spanish colonizers and their lowland mercenaries by consolidating political control and intensifying rice production. Our work provides evidence that indigenous populations on the fringes of the Spanish colonial reach had complex political systems that were meant to deal with community power relationships and other indigenous groups.

The IAP's discoveries support the idea that Old Kiyangan Village predated the arrival of the Spanish in northern Luzon. Trench 3, a unit in what is believed to be an area where a house (*bale*) once stood, provided three occupational layers and three distinct pottery frequencies: cooking jars in the upper layers; cooking and water jars and tradeware ceramics in the middle occupational layers; and only water jars in the lower layers. The prevalence of cooking jar sherds in the upper levels suggests that the area was used as a rice field, with cooking jars used to hold cooked rice for the farmers, while the prevalence of water jars in the lower levels indicates that the area

was once a house. The excavations also yielded thin earthenware (1 to 3 mm thick) and bowl-shaped pottery (Figure 5), types that were previously undocumented in the Philippines.

The complete absence of tradeware ceramics (stoneware and porcelain) in the lower levels indicates that earlier occupational layers predated the arrival of the Spanish in northern Luzon. Radiocarbon dates (Figure 6) support the pre-Hispanic origins of the settlement. Pollen, phytolith, and starch analysis confirms that taro was the primary crop cultivated in the region. GIS modeling suggests the manipulation of the river route for taro cultivation, initiating the agricultural system in Ifugao and facilitating the shift to rice production.

A MODEL FOR COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY

UNESCO describes the Ifugao rice terraces as a living and dynamic cultural landscape (UNESCO 1995). The IAP's objectives were primarily born out of the need to date the Ifugao rice terraces, to once and for all settle divergent academic discourses on the antiquity of these cultural monuments. Unlike most archaeological projects, the IAP works in areas where descendant communities are still actively using the landscape. Since its inception, the IAP has

Figure 5. Bowl-shaped earthenware ceramic recovered from Old Kiyangan Village.



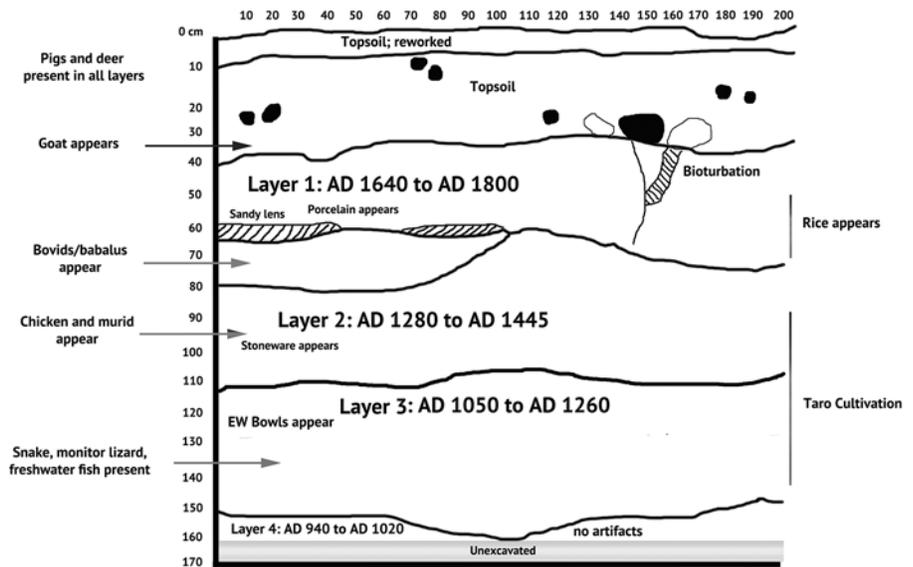
solicited the participation of descendant communities in the research process and involved them in the identification of project objectives. Consultations with community members brought out several new issues that demanded inclusion in the research if the results were to be of any significance to the Ifugaos. Community archaeology entails a partnership between local people and trained archaeologists in archaeological investigations. The community's participation aims to make archaeology and the past meaningful to descendant communities. The collaboration also limits the control that "colonial archaeology" has over the interpretation of the material past. In the IAP, local stakeholders' participation serves as a catalyst for renewed interest in their nearly forgotten past and encourages them to play an active role in the conservation of their heritage.

Involving local people in the archaeological investigation included encouraging their participation in excavations. Site visits by local students and interested members of the community provided oppor-

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tunities for on-site instruction in local history and provoked a deeper understanding of their heritage. Public education on the processes of archaeology and participatory analysis of resulting discoveries served to involve the local community as active partners and not merely as objects of research. Free access to the project site also considerably helped in dispelling the seemingly cursed reputation of archaeological digs as treasure quests.

Figure 6. South wall profile of Trench 3, with radiocarbon determination and soil analyses results.



Community involvement can generate proactive measures, especially from local government units in Ifugao that contend with ambiguous and ill-informed guidelines on cultural resources management, complicated by the opposing forces of the need for heritage conservation, the demands of mass tourism, and the World Heritage status of the Ifugao rice terraces. Participatory archaeology in the Ifugao rice terraces should give foremost advantage to local decision makers in coming up with innovative and sustainable responses to this culturally evolving landscape and its dynamically changing social context.

Because the project's plans and subsequent implementation were conceptualized in collaboration with local government units, national conservation agencies, and SITMo, a grassroots conservation NGO, both legal and customary consent processes were obtained without significant opposition from local communities. Consultations with descendant communities and current project site inhabitants were conducted to get legal consent as mandated by the Free and Prior Informed Consent guidelines of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples for research being done in indigenous peoples' ancestral domains.

Our commitment to the training of the next generation of archaeologists is also realized through the research project. Since 2012 an archaeological field school has been an integral part of the IAP (Figure 7). Several junior archaeologists from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand have participated in the project to build capacity in the region. Student train-

ing combined with active community participation allows for engagement opportunities that enlighten and inform both students and community members. These interactions allow students to better grasp the tenets and ideas of anthropological archaeology. In 2014 and 2015 (Figure 8), we partnered with the Institute for Field Research, while the 2015 and 2016 field seasons are supported by National Science Foundation-Research Experiences for Undergraduates grant no. 1460665.

CONTRIBUTION TO ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY AND THE DISCIPLINE

Our research has the ability to make important contributions to anthropological theory and the discipline as a whole. Anthropological archaeology can expand colonialism research in anthropology by utilizing a combination of critical analysis of documentary sources, rigorous data gathering, and active involvement of descendant communities in the research process (Acabado et al. 2014; Martin and Acabado, in press). The focus on a highland group, which seems to have intensified social differentiation soon after contact with the Spanish, provides a unique contribu-



Figure 7. Field school participants and crew members at work.

tion to the development of theories on colonialism. In addition, as most studies on culture contact and subsequent colonization focus on groups with intensive (and later permanent) interaction with the colonizers, this work expands the literature by investigating an “uncolonized” group. Furthermore, this is the first archaeological investigation that looks at the impact of Spanish colonialism in Asia and the western Pacific.

This research project contributes to anthropology in two ways. First, the project provides empirical evidence that highlights the ability of indigenous populations to confront colonization on their own terms. We view the migration to the interior of the Philippine



Figure 8. The 2015 crew and field school participants.

Cordillera as an act of active resistance to Western power. The act was successful, as the Spanish failed to colonize the Ifugao. The successful resistance to Spanish colonialism had social consequences—namely, political consolidation, increased social differentiation, and agricultural intensification. More importantly, Ifugao descendant communities are actively involved in the whole research process of the IAP. From planning to fieldwork to academic and popular publications and presentations, the community partners of the IAP are actively engaged. This involvement contributes substantially to community-based conservation and educational programs that incorporate archaeological and ethnographic information obtained by the IAP. The community's involvement also resulted in the Ifugao taking ownership of their past and celebration of the younger, but rapid, construction of the terraces. The realization that the “long history” of the Ifugao terraces implies an unchanging culture for 2,000 years was an outcome of the community's participation and regular public presentations of the IAP.

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