

ANNUAL REPORT: PHILIPPINES IFUGAO 2015 FIELD SCHOOL

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Ifugao Rice Terraces

The Ifugao Archaeological Project (IAP), with the primary aim to fill the gap in Philippine highland archaeology and contribute to a better understanding of highland-lowland relationships in Southeast Asia, conducted its first two field seasons (2012 and 2013) at the Old Kiyangan Village, Kiangan, Ifugao. In the summer of 2015, the IAP returned to the Old Kiyangan Village to complete the first phase of the research program. Kiyangan plays a prominent role in the Tawali-Ifugao origin myth and is considered by the Tawali-Ifugao as the site where the first Ifugaos settled.

Aside from the project's goal to contribute to the body of knowledge in Philippine archaeology, it also promotes community participation by actively engaging descendant communities to be involved in the research process. The project emphasizes the role of indigenous populations in confronting the impacts of colonialism and addresses wider issues in the anthropological studies of colonialism, such as resistance, identity formation, ethnogenesis, linking the contemporary cultures with prehispanic cultures, and community archaeology. In addition, the research program utilizes practice theory to interpret material manifestation of highland responses to culture contact and colonialism. It does so by investigating how indigenous populations responded to Spanish colonialism, particularly populations that did not have direct and/or intensive interaction with the colonizing power. The program argues that the Ifugao of the Philippine Cordillera moved to the mountains as a means of political consolidation at c. AD 1600

to counter the threat of the Spanish expansion to the northern Philippines and act in response to the policy of *reduccion* and *encomiando*.

Dominant narratives in Philippine history consider the Ifugao as “uncolonized,” which has become one of the bases of Ifugao identity. The dichotomy between highland and lowland Philippines is also largely constructed in this historical footnote, suggesting that the northern highland Philippines resisted Spanish domination. Indeed, Spanish cultural footprints in the province are scant, owing to the failure of the colonial power to establish a permanent presence in the region. Nevertheless, major economic and political shifts in the highlands coincided with the arrival of the Spanish in the northern Philippines. The Spanish colonial *conquista*, and, following the reforms of 1573, the less hostile and more accommodating practices of *reduccion* and *encomiando*, in most cases consolidated fragmented populations into a single political entity. In the Americas and lowland Philippines, ample data point to political consolidation under the control of colonialism. In the Philippine highlands however, a different pattern emerged where political consolidation happened outside of the colonial setting.

Undergraduate students who participated in the 8-week field season of the IAP learned how to conduct archaeological field research; share the results of their studies by writing research papers and doing public presentations; and, by involvement in public outreach activities. The field season was divided into blocks of activities, geared toward achieving the goals of the project. Activities include participation in surface mapping, archaeological excavations to learn the methods and processes involved in archaeological field research, processing of artifacts while in the field, ethnographic interviews, and laboratory analyses. More importantly, students participating in this field school program received intensive training in archaeological science. At the end of each field season, students were able to: 1) obtain botanical samples through flotation and soil micromorphology and identify acquired samples through laboratory analysis; 2) identify and classify faunal remains; 3) identify and analyze human osteological remains; and 4) be familiar with spatial analyses through the use of GIS.

Student Research Papers

One of the goals of the Ifugao field school is to provide students an opportunity to develop research skills, with guidance from the PI, senior personnel, and international collaborators. Students who participated in the field school had the opportunity to initiate a graduate level research topic based on their work on the IAP. In fact, papers developed by the students in this field school will be published by the Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society, a Philippine-based journal with a long history of publishing quality archaeology articles.

Student research papers included:

- 1) **Ethnographic field interviews to document indigenous agricultural knowledge:** The execution of ethnographic interviews with Ifugao farmers to document their perspectives on the construction and maintenance of their fields will provide students an opportunity to document indigenous knowledge that is in danger of losing out to pressures of economic and political transformations in the province. Students can pursue specific topics that relate to agricultural production.
- 2) **Culture-historical reconstructions.** The archaeology and prehistory of the region is still virtually unknown. Archaeological excavations and soil-augering offers students an avenue to determine the age of the agricultural terraces and population movements, as well as the effects of Spanish colonialism in the local population in the 1600s.
- 3) **Landscape analyses and settlement patterns.** In addition to the available GIS database

and new sets of information that will be obtained by the project, students would be able to pursue themes that explore the relationships between humans and the environment. The success of the agricultural terraces and the sustainability of the Ifugao agricultural system provides students with research topics that are globally relevant and useful if they pursue graduate studies. Furthermore, students will also be able to seek topics that will shed light on the settlement patterns in a rugged terrain.

- 4) **Diet, Nutrition, and Subsistence:** Information from paleobotanical and faunal analysis provides students with enough data to pursue topics in subsistence change, diet, and nutrition.
- 5) **Colonialism and Ifugao Settlement Pattern:** The IAP promises to provide a deeper understanding of the impacts of colonialism to indigenous communities in Southeast Asia. Since the Ifugaos were not formally colonized by the Spanish, the project should be able to investigate the impacts of the Spanish push to the interior of the Cordillera (i.e. the burning of the *Old Kiyangan Village* in AD 1832 and the subsequent establishment of Kiangang Poblacion).
- 6) **Sweet Potato and the Intensification debate:** The PI argues that the impact of the introduction of sweet potato in the Philippine Cordillera constituted the main factor for the increases of the population in the region which was facilitated by the influx of upward migration of refugees avoiding the Spanish subjugation. Since rice production in Ifugao is related to prestige, this theme would be a great addition to scholarship on agricultural intensification.
- 7) **Pottery Typology:** The absence of studies to develop pottery types in the Philippine Cordillera is critical and students pursued pottery analysis that ranged from functional, technological, or typological studies.