

ANNUAL REPORT: IFUGAO, PHILIPPINES 2014 FIELD SCHOOL

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Ifugao Rice Terraces

The Ifugao Rice Terraces are UNESCO World Heritage monuments that attest to the ingenuity and communitarian management of Cordilleran people of Luzon in the Philippines. Once thought to be over 2,000 years old, our recent work has demonstrated that the upland rice field systems in the region were responses to the social and political pressure from intrusive Spanish colonization into the region starting at c. AD 1600. Shortly after the arrival of the Spanish in the northern Philippines, we see the emergence and rapid expansion of wet-rice cultivation in the highlands. The shallow time-depth of the origins of the highland agricultural terraces provides interesting questions for anthropologists, particularly on the impacts of colonialism to populations who did not have direct and/or intense interaction with the colonizing power. This research program aims to provide another dimension in the study of Spanish colonialism, as this will be the first intensive research program that looks at Spanish colonialism in Asia. Our work contributes to anthropology and archaeology by investigating the economic and political options available to indigenous peoples impacted by powerful colonial forces. The project emphasizes the observation that indigenous minorities were not passive spectators during the colonization process. To determine the impacts of Spanish colonialism on Philippine highland populations, the 2015 and 2016 field seasons of the Ifugao Archaeological Project (IAP) focuses on the *Old Kiyangan Village*, an abandoned settlement in the town of Kiangan, Ifugao. The IAP's primary

research goals are: 1) to document highland political and economic responses to colonialism by looking at the development and expansion of the *Old Kiyangan Village*; 2) to determine subsistence shifts and health and diet by examining botanical, faunal, and human skeletal remains; 3) to investigate the process of increasing social differentiation through the examination of exotic goods; and, 4) to understand how the Philippine highlands resisted Spanish colonialism by exploring settlement patterns in Ifugao.

The 2014 field season of the Ifugao Archaeological Project (IAP) focused on the Hamlet of Bokoh in the Hapao Cluster of the Ifugao rice terraces (Municipality of Hungduan, Province of Ifugao). The site was selected as the excavation site of the 2014 field season of the Ifugao Archaeological Project based on oral historical account that the hamlet is the first settlement in Hapao. Hapao is a barangay located in the municipality of Hungduan in the province of Ifugao in the Philippines. Hapao is also a *dupag* or agricultural district (also known as *himpuntunaan* in Banaue) that encompasses the barangays of Hapao, Baang, and Nunggulunan. During the period between July 1 and July 24, the IAP excavated 5 archaeological units in the site to address project research questions. The archaeologically retrieved materials were limited (numbering to about 75 artifacts) all recovered from the upper layers of the excavation units. Environmental information gleaned from the excavations though, were useful in determining the land use patterns of the site.

The excavations in Bokoh provided valuable information regarding the use-life of rice terraces. They also confirm the ethnographic description of land use patterns in Ifugao: after forest plot is cleared, it is used as a swidden field, then as water source becomes stable, the swidden field is then converted into a rice field. Some of the rice fields are then transformed into house platforms, as the excavations at Bokoh. Artifacts recovered from the site also support the “short history” model of the construction of the terraces. Although bulk soil dates (radiocarbon dating) are still being processed, the artifacts that were recovered in the occupational layers of the excavation units suggest a late 1800s to early 1900s settlement. Analysis of artifacts and ecofacts is ongoing, but we are confident to argue that land use changes in Hapao, as supported by the excavations and ethnographic, are influenced by responses to environmental and political perturbations. As a case in point, the conversion of a rice terrace to a hamlet indicates shifting subsistence strategies.

Although the archaeological findings – artifact-wise – of the 2014 field season were limited, the Hapao excavations provide another piece to the puzzle of culture history and culture process of the Ifugao rice terraces. The findings also support the later dating of the origins of the terraces. We need to celebrate the ingenuity and sophistication of the people who constructed the terraces; they were able to fill valley-after-valley of the north central Cordillera with the agricultural monuments within two hundred years. A shorter history of the terraces does not diminish their value in being recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site; rather, it reinforces the awareness of the technological and cultural sophistication of the people who constructed the terraces. We should lay to rest the antiquity debates. They only exoticize highland peoples. The differences that we see today between highland inhabitants and lowland populations are products of history and colonialism as well as adaptation to diverse environments. It is more important for us that we acknowledge that we are in danger of losing these historical and cultural monuments and that we have a responsibility to take part in preserving our heritage.