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SPECIAL ISSUE: CURRENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:
COLLABORATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN
FIELD RESEARCH



Decolonizing the past, empowering the future: Community-led heritage conservation in Ifugao, Philippines*

Stephen Acabado ^a and Marlon Martin^b

^aDepartment of Anthropology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, USA; ^bSave the Ifugao Terraces Movement, Kiangan, Philippines

ABSTRACT

National historical narratives generally leave out local histories of groups on the periphery of society. This is accentuated in colonised settings where colonial powers promote the narratives of dominant cultures, which soon become national meta-narratives. As an example, peoples on the fringes of colonialism in the Philippines were described as remnants of the past and this exoticizes their cultures. These descriptions became the basis of their identity. We argue that vigorous community engagement provides venues for learning and unlearning histories and empowers marginalized peoples. In this paper, we present how recent archaeological data force the rethinking of history and subsequently empowering descendant communities to take control of their history and heritage. We describe the establishment of the Ifugao heritage galleries as an example of museums becoming areas of contestations and emphasize the fact that no one has the monopoly on the creation of knowledge.

KEYWORDS

Ifugao; Philippines; heritage conservation; local museums; indigenous education; indigenous archaeology

Introduction

Community archaeology and stakeholder engagement make archaeological practice more meaningful, especially when the results of the research empower descendant communities. Archaeology is in the position to change flawed histories as a discipline that has been on the forefront of highlighting the inadequacies of some historical narratives. This archaeological model also has the potential to shift public perception of the discipline, where the general public thinks of archaeology and archaeologists as esoteric entities. More importantly, it helps to decolonize archaeological practice.

Here, we highlight our work in Ifugao (the place), Philippines where misrepresentative historical narratives have relegated the Ifugao (the people) to the fringes of history. Active collaboration among community members, archaeologists, and other stakeholders has resulted in a research programme that can be described as *participative* archaeology (Reid 2012, 21). It also initiated the development of Indigenous archaeology in the region (Acabado, Martin, and Datar 2017), as demonstrated by the Ifugao Community Heritage Galleries, which also serve as the Ifugao Indigenous Peoples Education (IPED) Center.

CONTACT Stephen Acabado  acabado@anthro.ucla.edu  Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles, Box 951553, Los Angeles, CA 90095, USA

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The need for community engagement is key to an inclusive archaeological practice (McAnany and Rowe 2015; Moshenska and Dhanjal 2012; Thomas and Lea 2014). We further add that community archaeology should be a key component, and not a consequence, of archaeological investigations. Although the concept of community archaeology is complex, we and others understand that it requires a two-way engagement between archaeologists and various publics (cf. Humphris and Bradshaw 2017; Rivera-Collazo et al. 2020; Thomas 2017; van den Dries 2014). The participation of the community was the first step in the launching of the Ifugao Archaeological Project (Acabado, Martin, and Datar 2017; Martin and Acabado 2015). This has contributed to the community taking control of their heritage through the IPED Center.

This work provides an example of the positive outcomes produced by archaeologists and community stakeholders actively working together. We focus on the role of the Ifugao Community Heritage Galleries as a community museum serving as counterpoint to the national heritage agenda and local tourist-oriented private museums. These galleries are an indigenous museum functioning as a post-colonial critique to the Western notion of museum practice and as a venue to contest the UNESCO's World Conservation model.

UNESCO has recognized the rice terraces of the Ifugao as emblematic of the harmony between humanity and the landscape. As the first site to be listed in the Cultural Landscape category, UNESCO describes the rice terraces as the '... absolute blending of the physical, socio-cultural, economic, religious, and political environments ... indeed, it is a living cultural landscape of unparalleled beauty' (UNESCO N.D.). However, the listing highlights the 2,000-year origin of the terraces and does not provide for community involvement and empowerment in the conservation of the terraces.

In this case study, we describe our engagement with various community stakeholders in the development of heritage and local history curricula through the development of the Ifugao Community Heritage Galleries. The Heritage Galleries emerged from the need to revise the history learned by elementary and high school teachers, which were mostly pejorative against the Ifugao. Focusing on the dating of the terraces, we emphasize that providing a space (and voice) for local experiences empowers descendant communities who never learned about their history in a school setting.

More importantly, the Heritage Galleries serve as an alternative learning option for Ifugao students and training centre for teachers. As we discuss below, Philippine national history curricula have disregarded the importance of indigenous histories. We present our experiences working with community stakeholders, particularly elementary school teachers, in infusing Ifugao history curricula with recent archaeological and ethnographic datasets. This essay details our engagement with these publics in 2018, thus, we do not have evaluative data yet.

Ifugao historical narratives and archaeology

Recent archaeological findings from Ifugao, Philippines (Figure 1) demystify pejorative assumptions about the origins of the Ifugao rice terraces. Through our engagement with local educators in developing revised history curricula, this archaeology has begun to provide a more nuanced understanding of Ifugao's history and culture. Because local history is not yet part of the curriculum, the establishment of the IPED Center provides an alternative venue where Ifugao can learn about their heritage and history. Similar to McNeill's (2012, 88) experience in Shepperton Green, Middlesex, UK, with programmes at the IPED Center we can demonstrate that institutionalizing indigenous education is necessary to rethink dominant yet flawed historical narratives. We take the position that although institutionalizing indigenous education is part of modernity (Bhambra 2007; Clayton 1998), it remains a strategy fitting Canclini's description of *hybrid cultures* (2005, xxiv). This, in turn, can facilitate empowerment through a better understanding of the past.

Our approach to decolonization starts with active engagement with local stakeholders, who are both contributors and co-developers or co-investigators of research (Acabado, Martin, and Datar 2017). In this light, the active participation of descendant communities and other stakeholders enables the decolonization of archaeology, history, and education. It also strengthens indigenous identity.

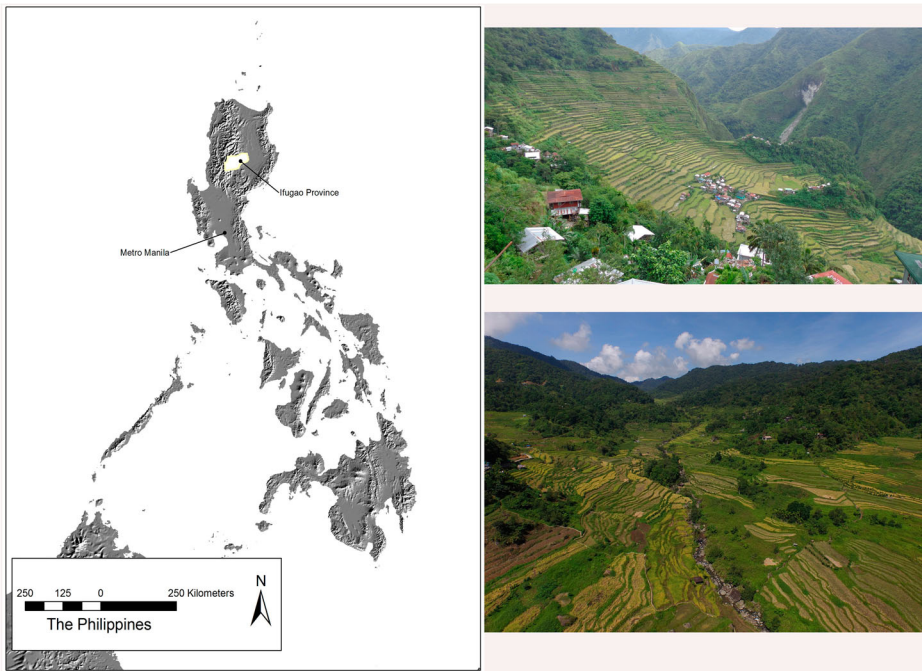


Figure 1. Rice terraces in Mayoyao, Ifugao. One of the five clusters in UNESCO's World Heritage Site, Cultural Landscape category. Photo by the Jared Koller and the Ifugao Archaeological Project

We also highlight the role of community-led museums in heritage education and how they question historical narratives. Although museums are Western in nature, Ifugao stakeholders have used the local museum that they established to learn their own histories, and in our case, unlearn flawed historical narratives. They empower communities to reclaim their past or at least influence archaeological research and heritage conservation programmes in their respective locales. The Ifugao Community Heritage Galleries are not just a repository of cultural materials. Rather, they 'harness traditional customary knowledge and practice for use in contemporary life' (Stanley 2007b, 7). It is in this context that we echo our colleagues' encouragements that museums should not be monopolized by well-funded agencies: involving constituent communities will result in a more meaningful and fruitful interpretation (e.g. Ardren 2002; Brighton 2011; Moyer 2004; Shackel 2004; Stanley 2007a).

The Ifugao of the Philippines have long been a focus of ethnographic and ecological research because of the spectacular rice terraces in the region and the rice-centred culture of the people. Dominant historical narratives describe the Ifugao as a people able to successfully resist Spanish conquest (Scott 1993; Tolentino 1994). This would become the basis of contention that they were isolated, garnering them the label of 'original Filipinos'. Coupled with the proposed 2,000-year origin of the rice terraces, this has become the foundation of Ifugao identity. These narratives, however, are founded on colonial scholarship (i.e. Barton 1919; Beyer 1948; Blumentritt 1882; Montano 1885). Recent archaeological data refute this colonial-centric narrative (Acabado 2017, 2018; Acabado et al. 2019).

The Ifugao Archaeological Project (IAP) has worked with Ifugao communities since 2012. One of the many goals of the IAP is to address archaeological questions, such as landscape and community formation. Issues surrounding the colonial legacies of knowledge construction, the dissemination of archaeological and ethnographic knowledge, and the identification of ways to combat the continuing circulation of inaccurate historical information are at the forefront of the IAP.

The long history and isolation models are deeply rooted in Philippine narratives. Such narratives continue to be sustained on various iterations of Philippine history curricula that were developed more than a hundred years ago that introduce Filipinos to the flawed origin models of Waves of Migration (see Beyer 1955; Blumentritt 1882; Montano 1885). The articulation of the Spanish-era model into anthropological theories in the early 1900s meant that the colonial strategy to dichotomize the colonised and the uncolonised (or Christianized and non-Christianized) groups was institutionalized by the educational system. Breaking and demystifying this impression requires radical changes in social studies and history curricula.

The Philippines is not unique in these colonial narratives. Salih (1998) has examined the works of influential Sudanese authors that have constructed and deconstructed Sudan history that impacted how Sudanese defined their national identity. Additionally, Näser and Tully (2019, 157) in a self-reflexive rumination, acknowledged that archaeologists (mainly Western) who worked in Sudan could have contributed to how Sudanese communities develop notions of the past. Similarly, the post-Derg Ethiopian state has used heritage and historical narratives to advance nationalistic fervour, often ignoring or obfuscating indigenous histories (Dunnivant 2017). In Southeast Asia, Cambodia has been known to highlight national identity around Angkor (Stark and Griffin 2004) while overlooking minorities.

On the other hand, top-down, state-sponsored projects can also advance the interests of minorities, especially when anthropologists and museologists work hand in hand with local communities. For example, Bodemer's (2010) work in Vietnam has demonstrated that museum narratives enlisting the participation of ethnic minority (or indigenous) communities can be used to encourage cultural inclusivity, for both domestic and international audiences. Anthropologists (referred to as ethnologists in Vietnam) created the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology (VME) in 1995 (after a long period of discussion, study, and debate) to both celebrate the heritage of ethnic minorities and to educate the broader Vietnamese public about them as fellow Vietnamese, with a culture equal to that of the Vietnamese. This was done in contrast to the official state projects, which sought to include ethnic minorities (what we would call indigenous in the West) for more political reasons, such as the famous ethnological projects to count the minority groups in the 1950s–70s. The VME was founded by ethnologists who sought to enlist ethnic minorities' participation in telling their own stories, and thus recruited ethnic minorities to become ethnologists and museologists.

Education clearly plays a central role in shaping the identity and self-concept of a people (Elder and Shanahan 2007; Hitlin and Elder Jr 2007). As such, national education curricula provide a key component to peoples' awareness of their history and heritage. This change entails a long-term investment in local history and engagement with teachers on learning new historical findings and unlearning the flawed narratives fed to them by their training.

Community engagement

Archaeologists have long called for public engagement to foster awareness of the profession and to facilitate heritage conservation (Ascher 1960; Davis 1978; Fagan 1984, 1977; Feder 1995; McManamon 1991). More recently, this has increased (e.g. Acabado, Martin, and Datar 2017; Atalay 2006; Martin and Acabado 2015; McAnany and Rowe 2015; Thomas and Lea 2014). Smith and Waterton (2009, 81–87) describe this approach as understanding *what is at stake*, defining what could be a decolonizing archaeology practice. One of these approaches is community archaeology, where community members participate in and take partial control of archaeological projects (Marshall 2002, 212). This work has since emphasized that public or community archaeology is practiced differently in various contexts (Moshenska and Dhanjal 2012; Thomas and Lea 2014). Thomas (2012, 42–43) illustrated that working with a special interest group (in her case, a metal detecting community in England) is an example of community archaeology. In any event, whatever the specific focus, it is now clear that community engagement can empower primary stakeholders to have a voice in archaeological practice.

This participation should not be limited to consultations, since positive impacts of archaeological research cannot be achieved without the contributions of community members (Moser et al. 2002, 220–221). Of course, collaboration with local and/or descendant communities does not solve the power dynamics between and among archaeologists and community members. It does, however, provide a venue where we are able to ‘work through the ethical, political, and social quandaries raised by the admirable goal of transforming archaeology into a science that is driven by an ethical engagement with key publics who are invested in the interpretation and management of the material past’ (Colwell 2016, 119).

Engagement with Ifugao stakeholders

The Ifugao Archaeological Project (IAP) started as part of Acabado’s Ph.D. research in 2007 that focused on understanding the landscape of the Ifugao. As an offshoot of this initial research, he established that the Ifugao rice terraces were constructed much later than previously thought (Acabado 2009, 2010, 2015; Acabado et al. 2019). In 2011, Acabado met with Marlon Martin, an Ifugao and the Chief Operating Officer of the Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement (SITMo), to discuss the collaborative research that eventually became the IAP. It was a perfect fit, as SITMo is the leading grassroots NGO in the region, which has a mandate to develop and implement heritage conservation programmes for the then-UNESCO World Heritage Site in Danger. The IAP soon became a community-led project and the first of its kind in the Philippines.

Thus, community engagement is an important component of our research design. Although both of us are Filipino, Acabado is not Ifugao. However, as a product of the Philippine educational system, Martin is familiar with how historical narratives depict the Ifugao. At the very start of the IAP, Acabado solicited the active participation of potential community partners. Martin agreed to invest his time in the project, which resulted in a productive partnership. Through our collaborations, an Ifugao Indigenous archaeology approach emerged as a powerful tool in heritage conservation in the region (Acabado, Martin, and Datar 2017).

It took three years of engagement for the community to buy into the project. The community did this only after multiple meetings and discussions that emphasized that ‘... it is no longer acceptable for archaeologists to reap the material and intellectual benefits of another society’s heritage without the society being able to benefit equally from the endeavour’ (Moser et al. 2002, 221).

The collaboration inspired the development of Indigenous archaeology in Ifugao. We credit this swift development to the recognition that communities are made up of individuals that have diverse interests. Working with descendant communities means that consensus might not be possible. The challenge then is gaining the trust of as many community stakeholders as possible. In our case, we initially collaborated with an established grassroots organization with a province-wide network (Acabado, Martin, and Datar 2017).

Representation and empowerment: Community museums and UNESCO designation

The Ifugao Community Heritage Galleries were established with the local Ifugao as the primary audience, and were founded through the efforts of local groups headed by (co-author) Marlon Martin. Martin, as an Ifugao, felt it necessary to provide a venue where Ifugao communities would be able to learn about their history and heritage. The establishment of the community heritage galleries was a direct effort of the community and an unexpected offshoot of the collaborative archaeological research conducted in the locality.

The establishment of the Ifugao Heritage Galleries also underscored the absence of a solid repatriation policy for Philippine indigenous groups. Under the Philippine Constitution, the National Museum has sole authority to curate archaeological materials (RA 10066 20096), although the

Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (RA 8371 1987) stipulates that Indigenous peoples should have control over their heritage. It is worth noting that the National Museum has been engaged in bringing back Philippine cultural materials from the United States, Europe, and Japan, and we hope there will be a similar effort for Philippine indigenous groups.

While the concept of museums is a western construct, the widely educated Ifugao use the tools of the colonisers to their advantage. In fact, the galleries now serve as part of the IPED Center, the community's counterpart to the nationwide implementation of indigenous peoples' education in the formal school curricula. Now in its third year, this centre has laid the foundation for several local organizations, including groups on intangible heritage and the performing arts, farmers, and traditional weavers. It also serves as the seat of the newly created municipal culture and arts council, a local body that initiates legislative measures on matters concerning Ifugao heritage.

The Heritage Galleries were established without professional assistance from trained museologists. Rather, archaeologists and community members collaborated to decide how to present materials and ideas. Such an approach strengthens local voices in the stories and exhibits.

On the other hand, the National Museum of the Philippines Branch in Ifugao and other privately-run museums in the region focus on different clientele and, therefore, do not have the need for local engagement. The National Museum's charter is to lead in the reconstruction and rebuilding of the nation's past, so it is understandable that its educational programmes (exhibits and research) focus on this agenda. Private museums, on the other hand, cater mainly to tourists. We have not encountered any local Ifugao who have visited a private museum in the area, unless they are accompanying a visitor.

We see community museums as valuable both for knowledge production and to contest national narratives. They disseminate knowledge to challenge authoritative accounts (Singh 1994) that are promoted by national agencies. They can also facilitate community cohesion – for example, the IPED Center serves as a venue for rituals that bring together community members. This observation echoes Krep's argument that museums do not exist in isolation (2007a, 227). The top-down focus of national museums and the profit agendas of private museums are counteracted by community-run museums/centres, since local stakeholders need to feel a sense of ownership and involvement in their development for them to be sustainable in the long run (Kreps 2007a, 226).

The UNESCO designation had serious ramifications in terms of presenting the Ifugao as a static and unchanging people. Since UNESCO's focus is on conservation for tourism purposes, the cultural and historical contexts of sites have been largely ignored (Meskell 2018). This is illustrated in Ifugao through the emphasis on the 'long history' (Acabado 2009, 802) perspective central in the nomination dossier. Conservation programmes soon after the UNESCO designation were generally focused on infrastructure reinforcement (i.e. concreting of irrigation channels; repair of terrace walls) and nothing on the intangible aspect of the rice terraces. The cultural context is largely overlooked, even when it is widely known that the production and consumption of rice is central to Ifugao culture (Acabado and Martin 2015).

In short, the colonial experience, national policies, and the UNESCO listing have contributed to disempowering the Ifugao in taking control of their heritage. Even though scholars have discredited dominant historical narratives that describe indigenous peoples as mere observers in history (e.g. Aguilar 2005; Paredes 2013), they have not forced the changing of historical narratives.

Historical narratives

Nationalist sentiments promote the long-held assumptions about the age of the Ifugao rice terraces, espoused by pioneer anthropologists of the Philippines, Roy F. Barton (1919) and Henry Otley Beyer (1955). The long-history argument has also influenced local sentiments, so fervently that it has reached a myth-like status, despite the dearth of archaeological data to support it. New archaeological findings (Acabado 2009, 2010, 2015; Acabado et al. 2019), however, has led us to rethink the proposed 2,000-year origin of the terraces. Evidence now points to a more recent history of Cordillera rice

terracing tradition: a short-history model supported by ethnographic, ethnohistoric, archaeological, and paleoenvironmental datasets.

The long-history model is partly a product of the now widely rejected 'Waves of Migration' theory of the peopling of the Philippines (Beyer 1948) – yet both the long-history model and the out-dated 'Waves of Migration' theory are still taught in Philippine elementary and public high schools (e.g. Anda 2010; Rama et al. 2006). These models assume that the builders of the terraces – in this case, the Ifugao – were unchanging for 2,000 years.

The Waves of Migration Theory, initially introduced by Spanish friars in the sixteenth century, was refined in 1882 by the Austrian scholar Ferdinand Blumentritt (Scott 1994), and popularized in the early twentieth century by H.O. Beyer (the founder of Philippine Anthropology). Beyer's model (1948) was the first developed to explain the origins of peoples who settled the islands that now comprise the Philippines. Beyer (1948) assigned a racial typology to each successive migrant wave, with each group possessing lighter skin pigmentation and greater social complexity than the previous group. This model posits that the first people to inhabit the islands were the dark-skinned pygmies, classified as Negritos. Today, they inhabit interior mountain ranges across the Philippine archipelago. According to Beyer's model, their contemporary occupation of interior highland Philippines was a result of their 'inferior culture.' The arrival of a second migratory group, identified by Beyer as Indonesian A and B, pushed the Negritos into the mountains upon their arrival. The last group, the Malays, arrived in three waves with the last group appearing just before contact with Europeans. The last wave was eventually Islamized and Christianized. The third wave of Malays settled the lowlands, pushing the Indonesians and the first two waves of Malays to the mountains. Unlike the final wave of Malays, the first two waves did not convert to Islam or Christianity.

A Living Exhibit at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis actualized Americans' idea of primitive peoples and further strengthened this model. In this exhibit, Christianized lowlanders recruited to the Philippine Constabulary Band were juxtaposed with the Igorots (an exonym for most highland Cordillera groups) as a way of showcasing the 'civilising efforts' of the United States in the Philippines (Rydell 1984). Such spectacularising of the differences between the 'civilised' and the 'indigenous' has had a long-lasting impact on the production of historical narratives in the Philippines.

Interestingly, the dating of the construction of the Cordillera terraces was also based on this flawed model – where the Ifugao were considered as the second wave of Malays pushed up to the mountains when the final, third wave of Malays settled in the lowlands. This model may have been used as a colonial strategy to indoctrinate Filipinos as peace-loving people who would avoid confrontation when a new group arrives. Not only does this model propagate the idea that Filipinos peacefully moved out of the way of newcomers, but it also says that nothing new ever developed or innovated in the Philippines. Filipinos were just passive observers, waiting for someone from the outside to bring innovations.

This experience is not unique to the Philippines. For example, Stein (2012) has written about how French colonialism in Algeria resulted in arbitrary ethnic divisions among Algerian Jews, through the naturalization of northern Algerian Jews and the classification of southern Algerian Jews as *indigenes* (indigenous subjects). Stein (2012, 784) argues that this was a colonial strategy meant to protect French interests, which resulted in the French labelling southern Algerian Jews as 'prehistorical remnants living in a modern world'.

Uncolonised and 'original Filipinos'

Historical narratives of the Cordillera assume that highland peoples were isolated and 'untainted' by European, or even by lowland, hegemonic culture. The highland peoples became emblematic stereotypes of 'original Filipinos,' a label that is ethnocentric as it denotes unchanging culture through centuries of existence. IAP findings revealed that the Ifugao of the Old Kiyangan Village had active and intense contacts with lowland and other highland groups, especially during the Spanish colonial period. In fact, rapid social differentiation coincided with the arrival of the Spanish in northern

Luzon. Archaeological findings in Ifugao indicated patterns comparable to how events unfolded in the Americas upon European arrival (Acabado 2017). We also observed that once the lowlands of the Philippines were firmly Hispanicized, Filipino lowland traders became de facto colonizers of the highlands, a pattern that continues (Acabado 2018).

The dichotomy between highland and lowland Philippines is also largely constructed in the isolation and resistance narratives. Even though Spanish cultural footprints in the province are scant, owing to the failure of the colonial power to establish a permanent presence in the region, there are major economic and political shifts in the highlands that coincided with the arrival of the Spanish in the northern Philippines. The recent findings of the IAP indicate that landscape modification (terraced wet-rice cultivation) intensified between c. AD 1600 and AD 1800, suggesting increased demand for food associated with population growth. This period also shows increased social differentiation and apparent elite formation. Although the Spanish colonial government never controlled the interior of the Philippine Cordillera, the economic and political transformations in the region were dramatic and this was likely due to the Spanish presence in the lowlands. Excavations from the Old Kiyangan Village (Kiangang, Ifugao) also imply that the settlement had continuous contact/interaction with lowland groups and other highland groups between c. AD 1600 and late AD 1800, refuting the idea of isolation. Recovered imported glass beads and tradeware ceramics from the site show the global connection of the region despite the idea of isolation.

As exemplified by our work in the IAP, archaeological data help us rethink dominant historical narratives that indigenous populations were mere observers of history. Our investigations among the Ifugao suggest active and conscious decisions to resist conquest. An example of these momentous actions is the decision to regroup in the highlands to avoid Spanish conquest in the early 1600s and the adoption of wet-rice varieties in the highlands (Acabado 2017, 2018; Acabado et al. 2019).

Ifugao and the world

Local ethnic communities in the Philippines have a critical need for the indigenous education, using indigenous epistemologies, that led to the Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPED) Center. Urban pressures and modernity are eroding traditional cultures, village lifeways, and traditions (Canclini 2005). The Ifugao are also in danger of losing the unique agro-ecological system, weaving, and rituals needed to maintain their identity – trends that globalization has mirrored across the globe. Tattooing, for instance, vanished more than three decades ago. These changes may also lead to the deterioration of their built heritage, particularly the rice terraces, a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site, if the lack of community support further erodes the traditions and knowledge required for their maintenance (Acabado and Martin 2015).

The national government compounds this with its current pedagogy, which lacks indigenous knowledge and local history components. A recent national policy shift in K-12 education mandates that the Department of Education must contextualize history curricula in local realities (Republic Act 10533 2013). However, teachers are underequipped to carry out this directive since there are no government initiatives to properly train teachers in indigenous history and heritage. More importantly, Ifugao teachers have no access to recent resources that allow them to learn about indigenous peoples' history and heritage other than those developed over 100 years ago.

The Ifugao heritage galleries and teacher workshops

Community museums and/or heritage galleries are great ways to link community archaeology and museology, and they do provide venues for the presentation of research results (Peers and Brown 2003, 1). However, as areas of representation, or venues for discussing heritage, they should not be seen as neutral. As venues for the discussion of heritage, museum exhibits have bearing on national, moral, historical, and ethical considerations (Tully 2007, 158). These include local



Figure 2. Participants of the pilot IPED teacher-workshop; the archaeology gallery of the Heritage Galleries; and grade five students completing one of the IPED heritage learning modules developed within the IAP initiative. Photo by Marlon Martin.

communities' access to, interpretation of, and ownership of exhibited information that concerns them (Herle 2000, 258).

The Ifugao Community Heritage Galleries (Figure 2) are hosted within the IPED Center Building in Kiangon, Ifugao. The Galleries provide the Center with a showcase of material culture information gathered by the IAP over the last five years. For example, the Weaving Room on the first floor highlights weaving equipment and implements, and provides a venue for weavers (the last who hold this knowledge) to produce their craft and train others in traditional Ifugao weaving. On the second floor, there are separate rooms for the precontact and material culture exhibit and the textile exhibit.

Museums act as agents for social change (see Nicks 2003, 27; Sandell 2002, 3–5), while also serving as venues for political action (McGuire 2008). Moser (2006, 2) argues that museums craft knowledge about the past. As such, the Galleries/IPED Center in Ifugao is an excellent setting for heritage education.

There are multiple parallels of this movement elsewhere. In Malaysia, for example, Yunci (2017) clearly showed that the community-run Orang Seletar Cultural Centre facilitated full community control of representation of their cultural heritage, comparing this to the state-sponsored cultural village of another Orang Asli group. Yunci argued (2017, 133) that the former group was more

successful in reasserting their identity and self-determination because they had a higher level of agency and authority in handling their own heritage programmes.

Jonathan (1982), writing almost four decades ago, has pointed out that museums can publicize the plight of indigenous peoples. Because museums are educational centres, they have the responsibility to empower indigenous peoples through their exhibits and programmes. Doing this has helped transform museum practice and change educational curricula.

In Ifugao, there is a need for a strong Ifugao IPED, which will only be possible with Ifugao-centric curricula in elementary and high school education. As such, we have engaged elementary and high school teachers in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge needed to develop local history and heritage curricula and to develop the Ifugao IPED Center as the venue for decolonizing history and empowering indigenous peoples. As part of this engagement, we have organized a series of workshops for teachers on Indigenous knowledge where Ifugao elders served as the primary resource speakers. These workshops provided about 200 elementary and high school teachers needed information to infuse the curricula with Indigenous practices as well as more recent archaeological, historical, and ethnographic studies.

We believe that teachers are the best individuals to initially engage in this endeavour, expanding the reach of the project's agenda. Their students will then be able to extend newly acquired knowledge to their respective families. Even though it will take a while to update textbooks, engagement with teachers offers a huge leap in communicating local realities.

The Department of Education controls (and via a bidding process contracts for) textbook design and content development. Curriculum design also follows a national standard that leaves out significant local histories that are meaningful to descendant communities. Teacher training and college-level history curricula also adhere to the national standard. As such, most teachers are not exposed to recent archaeological, historic, and ethnographic models.

Teachers do not have the necessary knowledge about local historical realities because they were trained in standardized curricula focused on the history of the lowland Philippines. Thus, Ifugao students learn the same flawed historical narratives that their teachers learned. The IAP hopes to break this cycle by facilitating the development of tools to disseminate corrective knowledge. Workshops for elementary school teachers were met with enthusiasm, and participants were surprised that the workshops positively changed how they think of themselves in relation to dominant cultures.

A paradigm shift

Undeniably, the local community's participation and ownership of their heritage facilitates the decolonization of history and empowerment of descendant communities. Successful programmes that we have seen globally are usually bottom-up (Kreps 2007b; Labrador 2010; Silverman 2014; Yunci 2017), involve some form of community heritage centres and alternative education (McNeill 2012; Wei 2015) or feature strong collaboration among the archaeologists and community stakeholders (Lorenzon and Zermani 2016). Even when national policies and state interests are involved, anthropologists are often able to co-opt these policies under the notions of advancing the welfares of indigenous groups (Bodemer 2010; Labrador and Santos 2020).

These trends highlight the importance of local history in enhancing public perceptions of the past and of archaeology. In Ifugao, as mentioned above, elementary, and high school teachers require retraining in how to teach history. We addressed this need through several teachers' workshops on IPED, which were oriented primarily on the scope and essence of IPED as the new format in the education of children in indigenous people's areas. IPED intends to localize and contextualize, i.e. integrate local culture in all teaching competencies in all subjects from Kindergarten to grade 12. K to 12, therefore, in indigenous peoples' areas is IPED. Lesson plans, learning resources and textbooks need to be localized and contextualized to meet the objectives of IP education, as illustrated by a teaching module developed through IAP's efforts (Dulnuan and Ledesma 2020).

The difficulty of shifting an entire educational curriculum from a hundred-year-old nationally standardized format to a more localized one is complicated by the fact that the teachers are all products of the former educational system. For instance, Ifugao school children are all too familiar with the heroism of the Rizals and Bonifacios, martyrs of the so-called Philippine Revolution; yet there is neither pride nor consciousness of their own ancestors who stood gallantly victorious against the onslaught of Spanish impunity. Philippine Independence Day is, ironically, celebrated in the province of Ifugao where not a few Spaniards and their lowland allies lost their heads to fiercely independent warrior villages who refused to be subjugated by any foreign god or government. As one would say, the more educated an Ifugao becomes, the more ignorant they become of their own culture. An IPED curriculum implies not mere knowledge of the technicalities of IPED as pedagogy, but includes the more important substance of local history, traditional knowledge, spirituality, community values, the arts, and indigenous philosophy.

Teachers rarely discuss these concepts because most of them are trained to work strictly within the boundaries and standards provided by the Department of Education. The new IPED curriculum is a radical deviation from the old system, a paradigm shift. During the workshops, teachers learn how to look at their own culture from a different light. The excitement and doubt that comes from devising story books and learning modules using local stories and their own immediate environments may seem overwhelming for most. Where is mathematics in the rice terraces, or the social science in terrace formation, or the science in forest management? The workshops conducted by community members and culture bearers equip the teachers with the necessary cultural knowledge. The process of re-learning and unlearning will take time, because traditional knowledge is not a four-year university course. But the important initial steps have been taken to ensure that the lessons of the Ifugao will be passed on to the next generations. These small steps will gain momentum, resulting in meaningful curricula and an empowered people.

After assessing the low levels of competency of teachers in local history and indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSP), the facilitators, who included SITMo staff and culture bearers in the community, decided to conduct regular IKSP lessons for teachers. These IKSP lessons involved classroom settings and on-field experiential learning. As teachers learned more about the assimilationist policies and colonial discourses embedded in standardized learning materials for children, they started to realize the implications of using the new materials.

Cultural lectures, workshops on indigenized learning materials, and on-site observations of cultural activities opened floodgates of memories as teachers started rekindling childhood experiences of what most of them would call, 'the old ways.' The success of the programme is predicated on how teachers acquire the needed knowledge. As the workshops showed, individual self-doubts because of individual cultural illiteracy hindered workshop activities. Because school textbooks in the Philippines are written mainly from a mainstream perspective, there are only trivial mentions of minority cultures. Formal education in Ifugao, which started with the American colonial era, was focused on 'taming the savages' and making them more like their Christianized lowland counterparts. This system demonized Ifugao culture in general, relegated indigenous practices to mere superstitions, and presented Ifugao technologies as inferior to the lowlanders. This forced educated Ifugaos to shun 'the old ways' and made them openly embrace the ways of the outside world.

Aside from local history, indigenous knowledge systems and practices or traditional knowledge needs to be a central point in IP education for school children. Sustainable agriculture, practical environmental practices and natural resource management are strong points of the Ifugao way of life, yet these are absent in any formal education textbooks. While most general education subjects mention the rice terraces repeatedly, they are presented merely as places exhibiting indigenous aesthetics and, worse, as romanticized spaces for tourism. Formal education does not appreciate rice terraces as an indigenous conservation system or as the foundation of indigenous culture, which in turn impedes efforts to preserve the Ifugao rice terraces as rich cultural heritage, worthy of continuity. Work in the terraces is reserved for those who did not go to school, resulting in a lack of appreciation of Ifugao youth for their own culture.

Conclusion

To decolonize the past, descendant communities should be empowered through knowledge production involving local realities. This can be approached through the galvanization of heritage conservation through curricular change, which has the potential to facilitate community engagement. We, however, realize that the institutionalization of indigenous realities is a hallmark of modernity; the sort of thing that we are attempting to temper in the region. Nevertheless, this shift is needed since teachers are trained in history curricula based on flawed premises. As mentioned above, focusing our engagement on select segments of the Ifugao community is important because we are aware of differential power dynamics in the region. There is no way to stop the assimilation of the Ifugao to the wider Philippine political and economic realm, but we can tap the institutions provided by the new system to empower Ifugao descendant communities; a strategy that Canclini calls *hybrid cultures* (2005, xxiv).

Collaborating with teachers expands the reach of our advocacy. We also encourage the teachers to invest in heritage conservation, because through it they can go beyond mere pedagogical themes and learn about their past. In this case, Ifugao teachers can base their lesson plans on discussions with elders and fellow teachers, not regulations from the centralized Department of Education.

The community museum described here has become the venue to contest dominant but pejorative historical narratives. Although Phillips (2003, 166) writes that collaborative museum processes illustrate negotiations of new languages through which the colonized have been forced to speak, our Ifugao experience suggests that community members decided that they would be the interlocutors of their own heritage.

This is also the community's response to the designation of the Ifugao rice terraces as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, which superficially appears to be a great advantage for Ifugao heritage conservation. However, the nomination process and the subsequent recognition ignored local communities. Waterton and Smith (2010, 13) were correct to point out that '... communities of expertise have been placed in a position that regulates and assesses the relative worth of other communities of interest, both in terms of their aspirations and their identities. "Other" communities, therefore, have endured a less than equal footing from which to make claims about their past, their heritage and their self-image.'

A shorter history of the terraces does not diminish their value as a UNESCO World Heritage Site; rather, it reinforces the awareness of the technological and cultural sophistication of the people who constructed the terraces. This sophistication allowed the Ifugao to rapidly modify their landscape to fill valley after valley with terraced rice fields within 200 years. It is now time to lay the antiquity debates to rest. They only serve to exoticise highland peoples. Moreover, the differences that we see today between highland inhabitants and lowland populations are products of history and colonialism. It is more important for us to 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. Most importantly, we have to acknowledge the value of community involvement in our scholarly research and conservation and development programmes.

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Disclosure statement

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Notes on Contributors

Stephen Acabado is associate professor of anthropology at UCLA. His archaeological investigations in Ifugao, northern Philippines, have established the recent origins of the Cordillera Rice Terraces, which were once known to be at least 2,000 years old. Dr. Acabado directs the Ifugao Archaeological Project, a collaborative research programme between the University of the Philippines-Archaeological Studies Program, the National Museum of the Philippines, the University of California-Los Angeles, and the Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement, Inc (SITMo). He is a strong advocate of an engaged archaeology where descendant communities are involved in the research process.

Marlon Martin is an Ifugao who heads a non-profit heritage conservation organization in his home province in Ifugao, Philippines. He actively works with various academic and conservation organizations both locally and internationally in the pursuit of indigenous studies integration and inclusion in the formal schools curricula. Along with Acabado, he established the first community-led Ifugao Indigenous Peoples Education Center, the first in the region.

ORCID

Stephen Acabado  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4428-1719>

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