



Department of Anthropology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
香港中文大學人類學系

Spring
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Friday Seminar

Indigenous Archaeology: Decolonizing Ifugao History

Date: 4 March 2022

Time: 1:00 - 2:30 pm



Meeting ID: 941 3214 8253

Passcode: 270287

Nationalist historical and archaeological narratives tend to leave out local histories of groups on the margins of society. This is accentuated in colonized settings where colonial powers promote assimilation and forefront narratives of dominant cultures. In the case of the Philippines, peoples on the fringes of colonialism were described as remnants of the past, thus, exoticizing their cultures. This results in the arbitrary cultural differences defined by historical and colonial experiences. In this presentation, I underscore how a nuanced understanding of the responses of the Ifugao, an indigenous group in the Philippines, to the Spanish conquest provide the venue for breaking historical myths. As the dominant historical descriptions became the basis of Filipino identity, I argue that vigorous community engagement provides venues for learning and unlearning histories and empowers marginalized peoples. The findings of the Ifugao Archaeological Project go against the grain of popular narratives that describe the Ifugao as “uncolonized” and are representatives of “original Filipinos”. I present how recent archaeological data force the rethinking of history and subsequently empowering descendant communities to take control of their history and heritage.

Stephen Acabado, Department of Anthropology, UCLA

Stephen Acabado is associate professor of anthropology and the director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at UCLA. He received his PhD and MA in Anthropology from the University of Hawai‘i-Mānoa and his BA in Anthropology from the University of the Philippines-Diliman. 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 community-led research program through the Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement, Inc (SITMo). Dr. Acabado’s work revolves around agricultural systems, indigenous responses to colonialism, subsistence shifts, landscape archaeology, and heritage conservation. He is a strong advocate of an engaged archaeology where descendant communities are involved in the research process. He also directs the Bicol Archaeological Project, which looks at Iberian colonialism in the Philippines. More recently, he has embarked on a project to engage indigenous Taiwanese groups through the Indigenous Taiwan History and Landscape Project.

ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME!