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The Effects of Tourism on Culture
and the Environment in Asia and the Pacific

IMPACT



Sustainable Tourism and the Preservation
of the World Heritage Site of the

Ifugao Rice Terraces

Philippines

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Foreword

The Asia-Pacific region is replete with heritage sites worth preserving. These places help us understand our past, enrich our present lives and lay the foundation for future generations. The inhabitants continue to practice their indigenous beliefs, social practices and rituals and to use traditional management regimes to sustain the monuments and surrounding landscape that have nurtured them for generations.

However, these heritage sites are under threat from the passage of time, the forces of nature, modernization, uncontrolled development and population growth. They have also become powerful magnets for tourists who are in search of a rich cultural experience far removed from their own lives.

As one of the world's most profitable and fastest growing industries, tourism, if properly managed, can be an effective tool for the conservation of culture and environment. It offers unlimited economic benefits to communities living in or near heritage sites in terms of employment opportunities, revitalization of traditional crafts and cultural practices and opportunities for the inhabitants to express pride in their culture. However, uncontrolled tourism can also cause irreversible damage to the physical and intangible heritage resources, the very resources on which tourism is based.

This publication focuses on the impact of tourism on the rice terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras, an outstanding model of sustainable use of limited land resources using traditional knowledge-based technology that has evolved over the last two millennia. In 1995, the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List in recognition of the organically-evolved cultural landscape that has been shaped by sacred traditions and the ingenuity of the Ifugao people who have transformed the difficult terrain of the Cordillera Mountains. Their religious beliefs, customary laws and traditional practices are embodied in the Hudhud Chants of the Ifugao People which were later recognized in 2001 by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

The living rice culture that maintains the terraced fields is under grave threat from a host of powerful man-induced forces. Traditional resource management practices have been disrupted by the introduction of an open-market economy which has caused out-migration of young people and the loss of the traditional co-operative labour required to maintain the irrigation system and terrace walls. The imposition of national policies of local governance and the pressure exerted by Western religions have marginalized the traditional role of indigenous knowledge holders

in managing the daily lives of the community and the environment. The introduction of new high-yield rice varieties, non-endemic flora and fauna has disrupted the fragile ecosystem and traditional agricultural practices. Government interventions have been focused on infrastructure development that has led to site degradation.

Uncontrolled tourism has also caused irreversible damage to the cultural landscape. It has spawned urban sprawl that has encroached on the most spectacular rice terrace clusters in the main town of Banaue. The increasing demand for wood crafts by tourists and the export market has caused watershed deforestation, thus diminishing water supply to the rice fields. The economic benefits of tourism have not filtered down to the farmers who maintain the rice terraces on which tourism is based.

Experts estimate that up to 30 percent of the rice terraces have been abandoned and left to erode. As a result, the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras was added to the List of World Heritage Sites in Danger in 2001.

Local and international experts involved in the UNESCO emergency technical assistance programme to enhance the conservation and management of the World Heritage Site in Danger (2003-2004) were of one mind that to reverse site degradation, traditional resource management practices and land use systems must be revived and revitalized. Concerned professionals and local stakeholders banded together to form the Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement (SITMo), which aims is to revive traditional management practices through the transmission of indigenous knowledge systems to the younger generation and to assist ethnic communities to develop pro-poor tourism industries that benefit all stakeholders and revive disappearing cultural practices.

This publication was researched and written by SITMo so that their experience and strategies can be shared. We hope that this book will inspire readers to be more aware of the fragile ecosystem of cultural landscapes, the threats that heritage sites face, the need to empower vulnerable ethnic communities and the factors that can help sustain the environment.

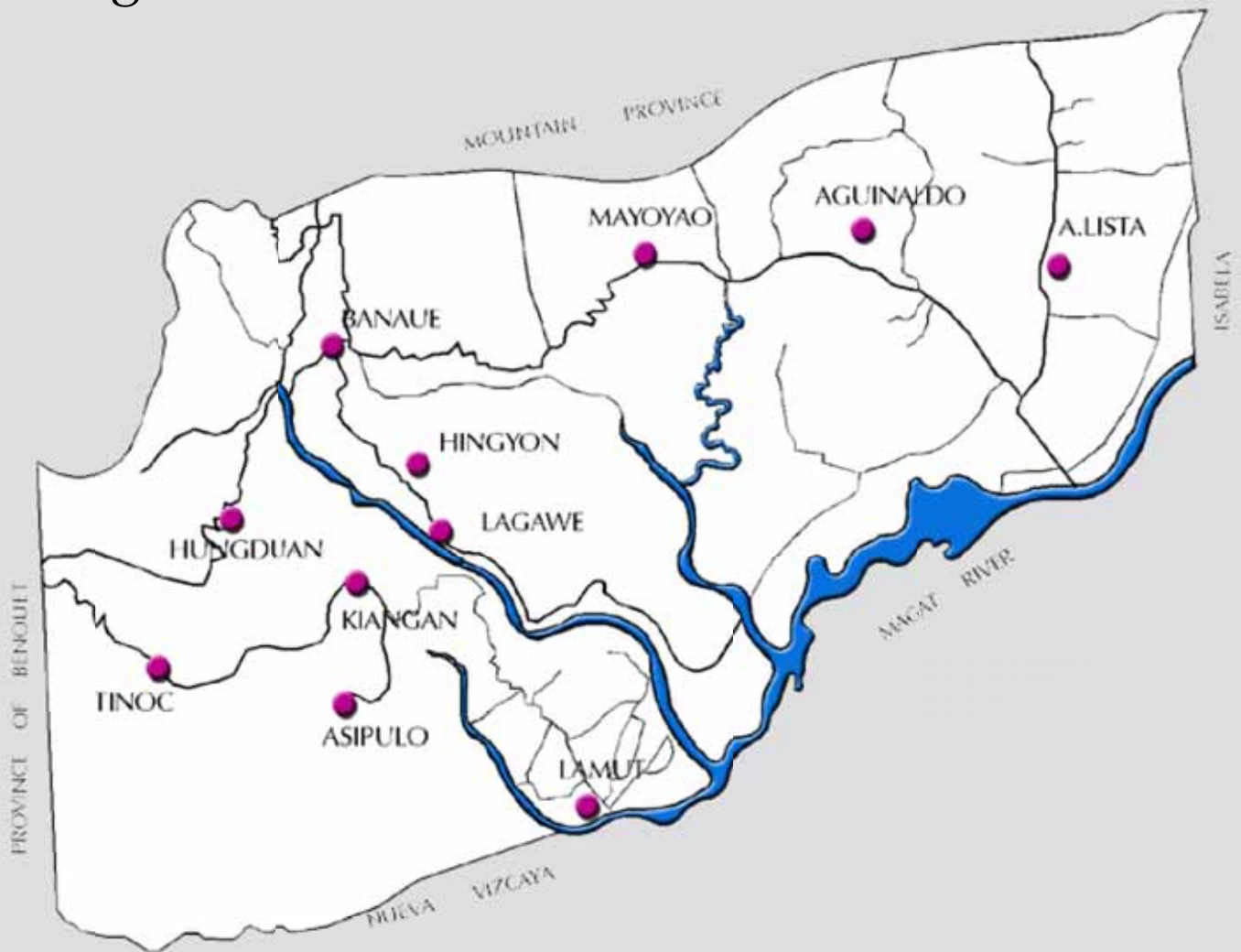


Richard A. Engelhardt
UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific

Introduction to Ifugao



Ifugao Province



- MUNICIPALITY 
- WATER BODY 
- ROAD 



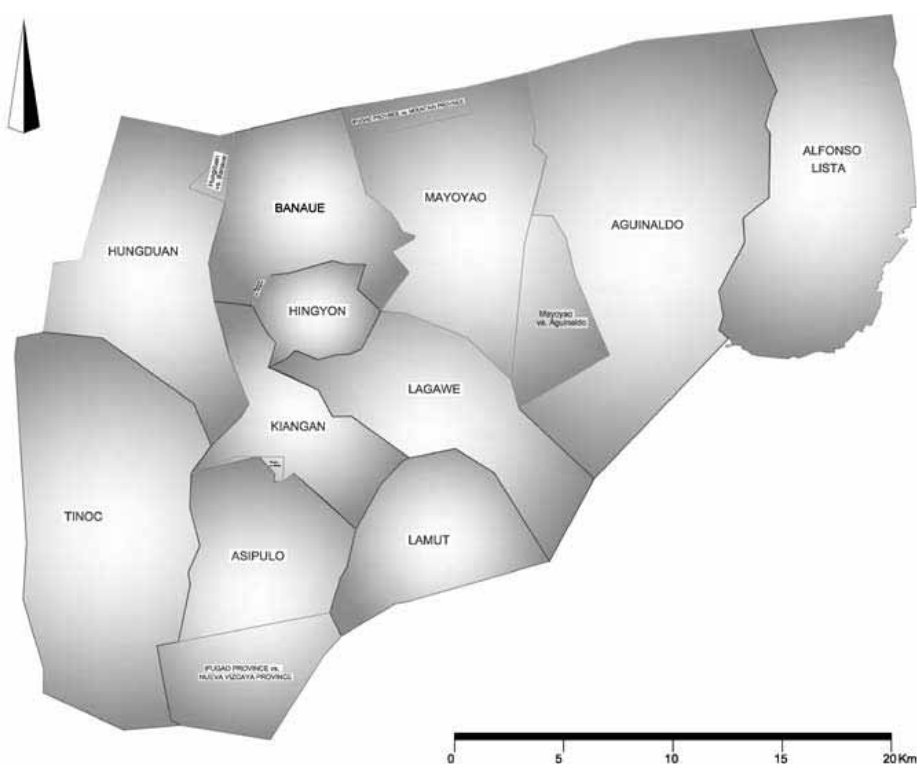
A. About Ifugao

Geographical Facts

Ifugao is one of the six provinces of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), situated in the Philippines' North Central Luzon. It is a landlocked watershed province bounded by a mountain range to the north and west that tempers into undulating hills towards the south and the east. The highest elevation is 2,523 meters above sea level (masl) with the rice terraces lying above 500 masl. The Magat River forms the south-eastern border that separates this hilly region from the lowland provinces. The climate is classified as temperate. The months of November to February are very cold. The rainy season starts in the latter part of May and ends in February the following year.

The province has a total land area of 251,778 hectares distributed in eleven municipalities. About 81.77 percent of the land has a slope of over 18 degrees. Under the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines, these areas are public forest lands, forest reserves and watershed reservations that are not disposable for agricultural use, thus placing nine municipalities under tenurial restrictions. More than three-quarters of the aggregate land area is in an environmentally critical state. The uplands are host to dipterocarp, pine and mossy

Map 1. Political Subdivision of Ifugao



forests (SEP, 2000). Thirteen of the forest areas are classified by the National Integrated Protected Areas (NIPAS) as having potential for biodiversity conservation.

The province is composed of several micro-watersheds with three major river tributaries that exit to the Magat River. About 70 percent of the Ifugao watershed flows to this river which maintains the Magat Hydro-Electric Plant (HEP) that supplies 360 MW to the national grid (Gonzales, 2000). The river also maintains the Magat Integrated Irrigation Systems which support the fishery industries in the lowland municipalities of Ifugao and the provinces of Nueva Vizcaya, Isabela and Cagayan. This Magat multi-purpose project has made these beneficiary provinces the new rice bowl of the country and a major fisheries producer.

The province is well-known for its rice terraces which are found in the nine upland municipalities. No data exists on the land area covered by these rice terraces in the province, although it has often been said that if placed end to end they would encircle half the globe. The forests and the rice terraces are the ancestral domain of the Ifugao people under the provisions of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 or R.A. 8371 and in the eyes of the Ifugaos themselves. They include two major ethnolinguistic groups: Tawali and Ayangan. The Tawali people occupy the north-western part of the province while the Ayangan people are spread on the north, east and the south-western portion of the province. A third group, Kalanguya, occupies the upper, forested region to the west.

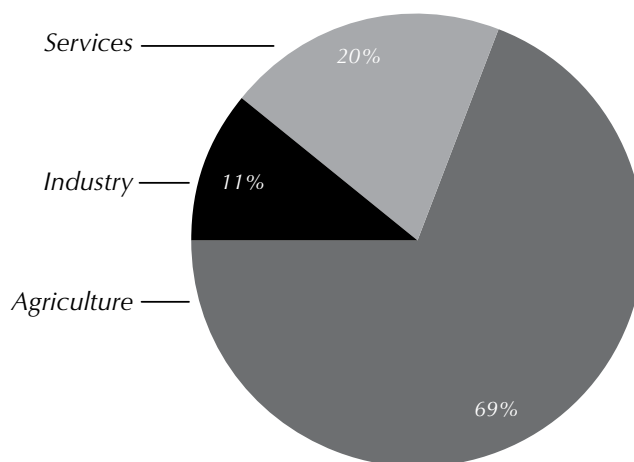
Economic Base

The traditional economy was characterized by terrace agriculture, woodlot maintenance and swidden farming which developed in response to the natural landscape and have given it its distinctive character over the centuries. However, these systems are now placed under intense pressure by both subsistence and market demands. As a result, the traditional forms of subsistence are being eaten away by changing cultural values and the pressing economic needs of the local population.

Ifugao today is one of the poorest provinces in the country. More than 90 percent of its income comes from its share of the Internal Revenue Allotment, while less than 10 percent is generated from local sources. Its total income in year 2000 was PHP 201,218,543.90 or roughly US\$5 million.

About 69 percent of the labour force is involved in agriculture. Rice produced by the terraced paddies can only feed a regular family for a little over five months.

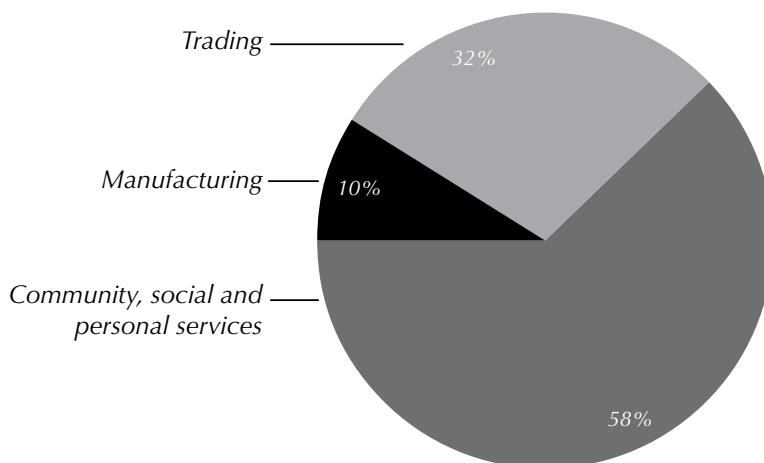
Figure 1. Distribution of Labour Force (2003)



Because of increasing needs, some have ventured into producing fruit and vegetables while others are involved with industries like handicrafts, construction and quarrying. In areas where the rice terrace walls are earthen, such as those found in Kiangan and Asipulo, some portions are converted into vegetable gardens.

The income from trade and industry comes from the manufacture of gifts, toys and houseware, inclusive of woodcarving, basketry, novelties and fashion accessories. Other manufacturing industries include furniture, concrete hollow block and garments. There is also a thriving number of wholesale and retail establishments that are found in the municipalities of Lagawe and Banaue. Community, social and personal services comprise the highest investment in the province (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Investment by Sector (1998-2000)



Source: Ifugao Socio-Economic Profile (2003)

The People

They call themselves Ipugo, meaning “from the earth”. The Spaniards changed the name to “Ifugaw” and the Americans revised it to “Ifugao”. An intransigent people, they are among the communities who refused to be subjugated when the country was colonized by Spain for almost four centuries. In this regard, they were able to retain patrimony over the land that they inherited, according to custom. However, a long history of assimilation and integration into the dominant culture which started during the American occupation has left indelible marks on the political, economic and cultural landscape.

Many theories abound on their origin. The first American anthropologist to set foot on Philippine soil and in Ifugao, H. Otley Beyer, popularized the “three-wave migration” theory which posited that three groups of peoples populated the Philippines in successive waves. First to arrive were the Negritos with their dark constitution, curly hair and short stature. They were pushed inland by the tall and lean Indonesians. Third were the stocky Malays who in turn pushed the Indonesians into the mountains. Beyer believed that the Ifugaos descended from the Malays and theoretically pegged the age of their rice terraces at three to five thousand years.

Another theory advanced by Henry Keesing (1962) states that the Ifugaos were pushed by the Spanish in the seventeenth century from their original dwellings along the banks of the Magat River to their present location. Thus the rice terraces would never have been built before their exodus. Extant archaeological evidence puts the age of the rice terraces somewhere in between Beyer’s and Keesing’s proposals (Maher, 1972).



Ritual paraphernalia must be laid out before prayers begin
(Photo: Rachel Guimbatan)

When the pioneer Western explorers, particularly the Spanish, stumbled into Ifugao land, there was no centralized political organization. The Ifugaos were organized in village-level kinship groups. Each household was a socio-political force to reckon with, counting on close relatives and cousins as allies. Disputes were settled with a go-between, the *munkalun*, who with his oral prowess exerted all efforts towards their peaceful resolution (Barton, 1969).

In the census year 2000, the province registered a total population of 161,623 persons with an average household size of six. It is believed, however, that more than half of the actual population of Ifugaos is found outside the province, which means that they number more than 300,000 in total. Due to the demands of formal education and limited economic opportunities, residents have migrated to urban areas and other parts of the globe. Most of the rice terraces are now managed by family members who are employed in the province or who have no other livelihood options but to cultivate the land.

Ifugaos have an oral literature. For countless generations, experts have transferred and transmitted indigenous knowledge, cultural practices, and historical events. These advanced oral practices facilitated the recording of Ifugao lore in modern times. The *mumbaki* or native priests, with their specializations in genealogy and folk traditions, are the main repositories of indigenous knowledge and culture.

B. History and Tourism

Forbidding and wild, pre-colonial Ifugao land had no material value for foreign interests except for the man-made terraces hand-carved out of the harsh landscape. This drew both scholars and missionaries to begin a history of visits that continue to this day.

The arrival of the first Westerners in the eighteenth century, the entry of Americans in the early 1900s, the panoply of nationalities who came to proselytize Christianity and even the brief stay of the Japanese during World War II marked periods that influenced the development of tourism in Ifugao.

One of the earliest foreign impressions of the rice terraces revealed a deep respect for this human achievement that effectively modified plans to integrate the unhispanized Ifugaos as mandated by a policy known as the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes Act No. 253 in 1903. The purpose of this policy was to ensure “their advancement in civilization and prosperity” by assimilating them into the dominant culture. Its strict enforcement could have changed Ifugao history. However, in his reconnaissance report, the bureau chief David P. Barrows stressed:

“ . . . They do not like the plains, and they have utilized, and by very laborious labor developed the productive capacity of the mountains to a degree which I fancy cannot be equalled anywhere else in the world [. . .] to bring him down to the plains is simply to depopulate those wonderful hills and to press him toward inevitable extinction.” (Jenista, 1987)

Over the centuries, as Ifugao was opened to foreign culture, tourism developed as a consequence from this foreign exposure.



The Ifugao rice terraces follow the contours of land
(Photo courtesy of the Ethnographic Atlas of Ifugao by Harold Conklin)

The Spanish Period

The Spanish colonial rule did not directly impact on the future of tourism in Ifugao. However, indirectly, colonial rule opened Ifugao up to both foreign and Filipino curiosity as the Dominican missionaries wrote the first articles and books on Ifugao, its people, customs and traditions (Antolin, 1837). In the *El Correo Sino-Anamita*, journal of the Dominican Order, Fr. Juan Villaverde, founder of the Kiangang mission, wrote at least 73 “official mission” letters with 32 replies from superiors and other people. He also produced ten reports which ranged in topic from local geography, mountain tribes and way of life to comments on the Spanish government policy of hamletting, missions, politico-military organizations, communications, commerce and trade, among others. Villaverde’s charismatic appeal and prestige among the locals enabled him to chronicle legends and myths of the Kiangang Ifugaos. Additionally, Villaverde also drew some Ifugao maps (Tejon, 1982). His pioneering role in the documentation and study of Ifugao mythology has earned him accolades from later scholars like Ferdinand Blumentritt (1895), H. Otley Beyer (1918), and William Scott (1974).

The American Regime

The Americans had a larger impact on tourism in Ifugao. When Lt. Levi Case opened up his headquarters in Banaue in 1902, it also opened the way for American soldiers and lowland Filipino conscripts, scholars and academicians, mercenaries and adventurers. These people influenced the physical, socio-cultural and economic way of life of the locals.

Anthropological Studies and Ethnographies

Otley H. Beyer (1911, 1918), Roy F. Barton (1919, 1922, 1930, 1946, 1963), Henry Conklin (1967, 1980), Fr. Francis Lambrecht, the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM) (1929, 1941, 1957, 1967, 2001), Leonard Newell (1956) undertook investigations and studies that popularized the Ifugao and their way of life. Through them, the existence of the rice terraces and their uniqueness was revealed to the outside world. Barton writes in *The Halfway Sun* (1930): “Descending through terracing far grander than any I had yet seen [...] some terraces are sixty feet high”. In *Ifugao Economics* (1922), Barton states that “Ifugao rice fields are worthy of high rank among the wonders of the world”. The theories these scholars postulated on the Ifugaos brought Ifugao studies to the attention of other social scientists and their students, the media, business entrepreneurs and culture enthusiasts.

The St. Louis World's Fair of 1904

This fair included the display of “primitive societies” in human zoos. For a fee, the interested and the curious visited the human circus which displayed tribespeople living in “real” villages showcasing their songs and dances, displaying traditional wares, crafts and gastronomy.

While this was exploitative, the exposition may also have aroused greater curiosity among the American people and other foreigners, some of whom later visited the Philippines.

The Belgian CICM Missionaries

The pacification work carried out by the Americans paved the way for other foreigners of varying interests and persuasion to come to Ifugao and establish themselves. One such group was the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM), a Roman Catholic Order composed of priests, nuns and “brothers” (volunteer lay workers) from Belgium. One of the Order’s most famous priests was Fr. Francis Lambrecht who conducted many studies on the Ifugao *hud-hud* and the Ifugao dialects, and wrote many articles and books on Ifugao cultural practices and traditions. Apart from studying the Ifugao, which drew the attention of foreign scholars and cultural voyeurs, the CICM also channelled the entry and stay of Belgians in the villages which created a lasting relationship between the two sides.

The Adventurers and Cowboys

The Cordilleras, including Ifugao, offered a way for adventurous Americans to relive or reconstruct their memories of the Native Americans. Enlisted servicemen and former soldiers conducted forays into local territory either as neutral, passive spectators or as active participants in the affairs of the natives. The power of the gun over the more primitive bladed weapons drew the respect of the locals who endeavoured to have these free-wheeling Americans on their side. Samuel Kane, a colonel in the U.S. Army, and his party once assisted the Sabangan people of Mountain Province in their age-old conflict against the Hapao people in Ifugao. Various villages, always in a state of belligerence because of head-hunting, thus began to send requests of aid to Kane for military assistance against their enemies. Kane later wrote a book which described his adventures in the highlands of Cordillera which would have sparked the interest and curiosity of people in the West.



The Banaue Rice Terraces in the early 1900s
(Photo: H. Otley Beyer
courtesy of Beyer Family Museum)

The Pensionados and Pensionadas

Some Ifugao village leaders and their sons were sent to the United States to study in its universities. Upon returning back home, they would have brought home tales of Western living, resulting in increased openness and acceptance of American culture. Moreover, these Ifugao scholars would have gone to great lengths in aiding and sponsoring Americans in their studies and visits to Ifugao.

American Education

The building of schools, the use of American English as the medium of instruction replacing Spanish and a conscious effort to expose the natives to American culture and history led to lasting legacies among the Ifugaos. Of greatest importance was the mastery of the English language which facilitated easier communication between Western travellers and natives. Secondly, it produced the perception of a relationship between the American public, government and the natives. Though largely mythical, this facilitated visits of foreigners to villages, which continues to this day.

Masferre: Father of Philippine Photography

Eduardo Masferre played a big role in the popularization of the Ifugao rice terraces through his photographs. A Spanish soldier-turned-photographer, he married a Kankanai woman and devoted his life to capturing the beauty of the Cordilleras. From 1937 to 1955, he produced portraits, both magnificent and faithful to the rugged Cordilleran landscape, its colourful people and the grand rice terraces.

At first, only foreigners appreciated his work as the lowland Filipinos, because of their Spanish and American colonial upbringing, disdained association with the “uncivilized” and “pagan” peoples of the mountains. It was not until in the late 1980s, after a series of exhibitions in Europe and the Philippines, that the Filipino lowlanders began to take pride in his photographic endeavours.

Japanese Ancestor Worship and the Search for Hidden Treasures

The outbreak of World War II ushered in another era in Ifugao history, which would later have reverberating effects on tourism. For more than three years, from 1942 to 1945, Japanese soldiers, engineers, scholars, government officials and nurses, among others, cohabitated and interacted with the native villagers peacefully. Like the historic colonizers, they introduced their own language, culture and history via formal education, sometimes using force to compel the young natives to attend classes. While their occupation was cut short by an Allied victory and their local legacies were largely negative, they had forged a lasting link to Ifugao. At least two decades after the war and continuing well until the 1990s, Japanese veterans and their families came in droves to visit their former territory, pray on the burial grounds of their fallen comrades, dig for their bones and, according to native accounts, hunt for treasures of gold and precious stones looted in mainland South-East Asia which they left behind in their hasty retreat. For at least thirty years, native Ifugaos grew accustomed to these Japanese tourists who gave away used clothes, trinkets, candy and 10-peso bills when they visited. They still come today, but in lesser numbers than they did in the 1970s to the 1990s.

The Philippine Government's Attempts at Tourism Development in the IRT

While foreign scholars and enthusiasts made extensive forays into Ifugao to see its people and rice terraces before and after the war, lowland Filipinos shunned them. When the Filipinos were granted their independence in 1946, these new rulers continued colonial policies towards the un-Christianized peoples.

It was only in 1973, after more than two decades of independence, that the Ifugao rice terraces (IRT) was given due recognition by then President, Ferdinand Marcos. He issued Presidential Decree (PD) No. 260 declaring the rice terraces as a “national landmark having a high value of world culture and are considered irreplaceable treasures of the country”. Five years later in 1978, PD No. 1501 strengthened PD 260 with an inserted provision that “penalizes the modification, alteration, repair or destruction of the original features of the national landmark”.

This declaration led to the construction of the Banaue Hotel and Youth Hostel in the municipality of Banaue, a government-owned and managed establishment which aimed to serve tourists visiting the rice terraces. It is the opinion of people from Banaue that the building of the hotel was a major breakthrough in tourism, not only



The Banaan rice terraces in Banaue, with its iconic village in the middle
(Photo: SITMo)

for their municipality, but for the whole of Ifugao as well (FGD, 2007). Conscious of the attention given by foreigners to the IRT because of the presidential mandate, the government celebrated in 1979 the first Banaue Imbayah festival which has been held every two years since then.

Banaue eventually emerged as the tourism centre of the province in the late 1980s as tourism-related construction, which included accommodation facilities, rose sharply. The initial physical infrastructure was supplied by the private sector following the popularization of the area by Americans which led to an influx of tourists. The Banaue rice terraces became the most popular rice terrace cluster in Ifugao even though similar terraces can also be found across nine of the eleven municipalities of the province. Aside from Banaue, the municipalities of Hungduan, Kiangan and Mayoyao, where other rice terrace clusters were inscribed by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites, are currently emerging as tourist destinations in the province.

