

Subject: AGREEN Report for the Month of October 2020
Date: December 8, 2020
Site: Philippines, Cordillera Administrative Region, Province of Ifugao
Title: Traditional Blacksmithing: Attached in Ifugao Natural Resource Management

Traditional farming is still widely practiced in the Ifugao Rice Terraces amidst the introduction of modern and mechanized agriculture. Most villagers are dependent on the rice terraces applying manual labor with the aid of agricultural tools. These tools vary from wood to metal that are designed and crafted by the older Ifugao generation and are evolving depending on its usage. A manifestation of these craft and usage is the Ifugao Rice Terraces where Ifugao forefathers carved the mountains into terraces from 400-600 years ago. The riraps are river stones where metal tools were used to break and shape them.



Gamulang. An Ifugao harvesting tool for heirloom rice. A sharp metal attached to a wood. ↓



Ifugao heirloom rice are harvested through the use of *gamulang*. The rice panicle are harvested one by one to create a bundle. Modern rice harvesting are done by harvesting per plant, others are mechanized. ↑

Rice bundles harvested through the use of *gamulang*. At present, this harvesting tool is becoming antique due to lesser production. Also, the use of other non-indigenous tools are introduced which are not applicable in harvesting heirloom rice. →



Hence, blacksmithing is one of the most integral skills in Ifugao culture alongside with carpentry, weaving, sculpture, woodcarving, and other handicrafts. It defines the ingenuity of the Ifugaos in molding natural resources into technology or equipment that are essential in the daily rice terracing and agricultural works. These are contributory to the cultural and natural resources management in Ifugao communities.

However, blacksmithing is one of the indigenous crafts that is now diminishing due to the introduction of mechanized agriculture and the disinterest of the younger generation in indigenous arts and crafts. In a research-project on traditional blacksmithing in Ifugao that was completed on November 27, 2020 and was assisted by the Ifugao Team, it revealed that blacksmith workshops in Ifugao are being unattended due to the lack of blacksmiths and decreasing demands of metal work outputs worsened by the pandemic restrictions. Traditional blacksmithing are now shifting to mechanized methods. Market demands are mostly contemporary metal tools that are not necessarily for agricultural and cultural related use.



One of the remaining traditional blacksmiths for agricultural and forestry tools in Hungduan, Ifugao. 📍

The remaining blacksmiths who are also farmers are concerned as they observe the deterioration of the promotion in reviving the interest of the Ifugao youth in blacksmithing as an indigenous knowledge and skill. The study also affirms that blacksmithing is still vital in sustaining the Ifugao Rice Terraces as it uses tools in the daily agricultural works from land preparation to harvesting. Mechanized agricultural machines are least applicable in the rice terraces because of the terrain where these equipment are difficult to transport from one paddy to another. This remains the demand of handy and portable tools in farming.

Moreover, metal tools that are fashioned in Ifugao cultural usage are still being used yet production is less obliging the people to buy other alternative tools from nearby lowland markets. Ifugao, being one of the best woodcarvers in the Philippines requires all sorts of carving tools. Hunting spears are also needed during hunting season and during rituals and festivals that requires the staging of these tools. Also, forest management system in Ifugao involves cutting and planting tools that are designed from the indigenous knowledge and manners in natural resource management.

Hunting tools such as spears are used during hunting season and during festivals which are staged in cultural dances and other performances. However, the production is deteriorating because of lesser demand. ➡



Evidently, the decline of culture goes along with the disregard for traditional blacksmithing in Ifugao as an indigenous skill. Sustaining this traditional knowledge entails the conservation and sustainable development of Ifugao natural resources to revitalize the demand and use of traditional metal tools in farming, forest management, arts and crafts, hunting, among others.

In order to support the sustainability of the blacksmith industry in Ifugao and to promote and conserve this indigenous knowledge and skill, the younger generation particularly the out-of-school youths will be organized for a training program in blacksmithing.

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