

SOUTHEAST ASIAN PREHISTORY IN RELATION TO THE PHILIPPINES†

Wilhelm G. Solheim II, Ph.D.‡

TO SCOTTY

This being the first of a proposed series of memorial lectures in memory of William Henry Scott I would like to start my talk with a bit of information on my relationship with “Scotty”. I do not have the date here to be certain of my first meeting with Scotty, but I do remember enough to say that it was either his first day or his second day after arrival in Sagada. This was not planned. I was on my way to Ifugao and decided to stop over in Sagada to look up an elderly ethnographer who was said to be living in Sagada. I did not find him, but Scotty and I found each other. We became immediate friends, I might even say “close friends” though we seldom had time together. This was because it was near the end of my first stay in the Philippines and when I was here on further short or longer trips I was usually working towards the south and/or west rather than in Manila or to the north in and out of Vigan and we seldom had time together.

He presumably had little personal knowledge of the Philippines, or possibly even of his job responsibilities, as yet but he committed himself to things I doubted he could fulfill. He told me that he had no plan or desire to become an academic, to work for any advance degrees, or to do any research on his own, but that he did want to help others with their research programs in the Mountain Province. He seemed to be sure that he would be able to travel there. He said that if a request were to put him for information from any portion of the Mountain Province, he would, in a relatively short time, be able to go there and come up with the data needed.

I put him to a test fairly soon thereafter. I had become interested in the current methods of pottery manufacture of the different ethnic groups in the Philippines. Though H. Otley Beyer, with whom I had been studying, had lived and worked for a considerable time in Ifugao he did not have detailed information on Ifugao pottery manufacture. I asked Scotty if he could get data on Ifugao pottery manufacture and included a questionnaire so that I could have the information I wanted. He replied quickly that this would be no problem. I don't recall how soon thereafter it was that I received the requested information from him, but it was not a matter of years but only a few months.

Right away his data created a bit of a bombshell. It turned out that there were two very different methods of pottery manufacture in use in Ifugao. Almost everywhere in Southeast Asia it is only the women who are the traditional potters. He discovered that in a portion of Ifugao the women were the potters, using relatively expected methods of paddle-and-anvil manufacture. The bombshell was that in another portion of Ifugao it was the men who were the potters and their basic method was coiling, which had been previously unknown in the Philippines and both male potters and coiling were extremely rare anywhere in Southeast Asia (Solheim and Shuler 1963).

Later I discovered that there was one, small, ethnic group in Taiwan with male potters who used the coiling method of manufacture. Later still I accidentally discovered that there was at least one small ethnic group in Kyushu, Japan where the males were the potters, using coiling for manufacture. Latter still I made a study on the distribution of methods of pottery manufacture in eastern Asia and the Pacific (Solheim 1964a and 1968). My statistical analysis of these methods suggested clearly that the use of coiling in manufacture had come into Melanesia - the islands relatively close to and east of New Guinea - probably from Japan. This movement would have come south either through the western Micronesian islands or along the eastern sides of Taiwan and the Philippines, or both. Thus Scotty's first task that he completed for me became involved in several different facets of my later research.

‡ Visiting Professor at the Archaeological Studies Program, University of the Philippines, Diliman.

I was very pleased latter when I found out that he had changed his mind about becoming involved in academic research. In spite of his doing his own research on the early history and late prehistory of the Philippines he still took time out to answer the rather few questions I sent him latter. Also at times we both asked the other for opinions and suggestions on specific points in our own research. Scotty was always quickly forthcoming and I hope that he felt I was the same.

While Scotty had great insight into the local development of the Philippine culture and cultures he was not always fully correct. While he was fully correct in denigrating Beyer's wave theory of the populating of the Philippines, usually in kindly language (Scott: 1994:10-11), at time he overdid this.

Isabelo de los Reyes was obviously a hero to Scotty, and from his presentation of much of his hero's life and work I would agree with him. He quotes de los Reyes on the origin of the Filipinos (Scott 1982:273-275) as all Filipinos being of one "race" and that "... there is no definite proof that the Aetas were the Aborigines of the Archipelago, though it is possible that they were...". Both of these statements are more correct than incorrect in today's understanding, in that anthropologists no longer accept the concept of "race" and the qualification that the Aetas may have been the aborigines in the Philippines is not necessary. Scotty (1982:275-276) then points out correctly that Montano and Blumentritt had proposed this long before Beyer and goes on to say: "But Montano and Blumentritt won out in the end. A new colonial regime not only revived their racist theory but expanded it into a full dozen waves washing migrants up on Philippine shores, each one superior to the one that preceded it. Accepted as comforting fact by the American authorities, it was incorporated into the Philippine school system where it has been lovingly preserved by Filipino educators who are persuaded their own ancestors came in the last wave". Scotty does not mention Beyer's name here, but is obviously referring to Beyer's presentation of this theory.

Neither Beyer nor the 'new colonial regime' revived this 'racist theory'. I would like to emphasize that Beyer was not the first to present this with reference to the Philippine population. Further he was only repeating the generally accepted theory of culture change at the time he was studying anthropology at Harvard in 1909 that all culture change was due to either diffusion or migration. Virtually every educated person at that time, and for quite some time thereafter anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians as well, accepted that "waves of migration" were of major importance in bringing about the many different cultures, often considered as distinct ethnic groups, for the world as a whole (Trigger 1989:124, 150-151). This was not a conspiracy on the part of Beyer and the American regime, it was the educators and the Philippine school system that continues this fallacy long after it had been discredited by archaeologists working in the Philippines.

My wife Ludy and I visited him in either 1982 or 1983 in Sagada. We were in the Philippines both years for several months but I do not recall which year we visited Sagada and Banaue. I was impressed with the pleasant arrangements he had been able to make to continue his research there during his retirement.

I realize that all of the papers being presented at this conference are dedicated to William Henry Scott, but even so I would like to make the statement that "I dedicate this endeavor to his memory".

INTRODUCTION

The request given to me by the organizing committee of this lecture was for a paper on the Prehistory of Southeast Asia. Trying to cover this vast area in an hour, a day, or even a week is just too much. Perhaps I should first define what I consider Southeast Asia for purposes of prehistory. Southeast Asia includes the Yangtze Valley of South China on the north. It includes much of eastern India previous to say 500 B.C., but certainly the old state called Assam in the northeast of India to Viet Nam on the east, and all of the islands off the coast of this area including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on the west and Hainan in China, Taiwan and the

Philippines on the east. This large area I divide into two regions, Mainland Southeast Asia and Island Southeast Asia. I capitalize all the words in these two titles as “Mainland” and “Island” are not used as adjectives but are part of the titles for real, cultural, prehistoric regions, not imaginary or artificial. I will focus primarily on the prehistory of the Philippines in relationships to that of Taiwan, South China, Viet Nam and Indonesia. This does not mean that there was no contact with the other countries of Southeast Asia, but that these neighboring countries were the ones most closely involved with the Philippines in their shared prehistory.

THE PREHISTORY OF EASTERN SOUTHEAST ASIA

There were hominids, *Homo erectus* (the ancestors of *Homo sapiens*), in central Java over one million six hundred thousand years ago. They did not evolve there, but must have come there by way of Thailand and/or Burma, India and ultimately from Africa if the present theories of physical anthropologists are correct. While skeletal material has not been found, hominid made stone artifacts have been found in northern Thailand that are about 600,000 years old so *Homo erectus* must have been there also.

During several portions of the Pleistocene, with much water tied up in the ice of the great glaciers the sea levels were as much as 200 meters lower than today. When this was the case the Indonesian islands from Borneo and Bali to the west were joined with Mainland Southeast Asia and Palawan and the Calamianes Islands were joined together with Borneo. The geologists say that at no time were Taiwan and the Philippines joined by a land bridge. Their adjoining islands, however, were larger and the water space between them considerably less than today so that it was possible for large animals, like stegodon, large deer and possibly hominoids, to swim the necessary distances to move from one area to the other. It is possible that southeastern Mindanao was joined by land bridge with Sulawesi. If not the situation was similar to that between Taiwan and Luzon with islands close together allowing larger animals to cross over. Thus it could be possible that *Homo erectus* forms were present in the Philippines. This is doubtful, however.

Homo sapiens was here, with the Tabon Man, a partial skull of a teenager recovered from the Tabon Cave on Palawan, dating to before 20,000 years ago. A partial skull recovered from the Great Cave at Niah, Sarawak has been dated to about 40,000 years ago. There is a good chance that humans were earlier in the Cagayan Valley of northern Luzon where a fossil stegodon has been found with a stone spear point possibly imbedded in a bone. The geology of the Cagayan Valley is so complicated the dating of this fossil is uncertain, as is the association of the spear point with the fossil. Whatever these people were, they were not Negritos.

Skeletal remains of Negritos not only have never been found in the Philippines, they have never been found in Southeast Asia. Genetic studies of the different Negrito groups found in the Philippines today have shown that they are neither closely related to each other nor to other Negrito groups in Malaysia or Thailand. Usually they are more closely related genetically to the people living closest to them. I have hypothesized that all of the ethnic groups of Southeast Asia, and of Australia and Melanesia, shared common ancestors around 60,000 years ago and that the many different varieties of people found in these areas today have

evolved, to a large extent, locally during this time span (Solheim 1980a). We know from archaeology that Australia and New Guinea were first occupied by humans some 50,000 year ago, moving from eastern Indonesia. This suggests the dating for the possible common ancestry of all these peoples. It also tells us that these Southeast Asians were already good sailors. The closest distance between islands in Indonesia and islands connected with New Guinea and Australia - which were connected together at that time - was such that for a time while sailing directly between them the sailors would have been out of sight of land in both directions.

The first widespread early archaeological culture to be discovered in Southeast Asia was the Hoabinhian. Named after that area of its first discovery in Viet Nam (Colani 1927), sites with very similar artifacts have been reported from South China, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra in Indonesia, Burma and Assam in northeastern India. The people producing the Hoabinhian artifacts were hunters and gatherers, living in caves and rock shelters and eating a great variety of foods, animals from the tree tops, lower levels in the trees, the ground, and turtles, fish and shellfish from the streams and rivers. They also collected a wide variety of plant foods and may have started to domesticate some of them (Gorman 1969 and 1970; Solheim 1970). Recent archaeological research in Viet Nam has pushed back the dating of the Hoabinhian in Viet Nam to around 16,000 years ago and has reported a culture ancestral to the Hoabinhian going back close to 30,000 years ago (Ha Van Tan 1971; Ha Van Tan and Nguyen Khac Su 1978; Solheim 1980b). This culture they have called the Son Vi Culture. Sites of both cultures have been found in shell mounds, close to the sea level of that time and in the interior. No doubt many of their seacoast sites are now underwater, having been used in the late Pleistocene at the time of lower sea levels. At the first regional seminar in archaeology, sponsored by ASEAN in the Philippines in 1972, I presented a paper comparing the Hoabinhian Culture with cultures in Island Southeast Asia of the same time (Solheim 1974). At the international Hoabinhian conference held in Ha Noi in late 1993 many important papers were presented on the Hoabinhian and the Son Vi and my paper (N.D.) modified my 1974 paper by proposing that the early flake tool cultures I had talked about in the Philippines (Fox 1970:24-37) and the flake tools of the Changpinian in Taiwan (Sung 1981) were closely related to the Son Vi Culture of Viet Nam and indicated the route that the bearers of that culture took to reach Okinawa and then Japan in the late Pleistocene. This was followed by the Hoabinhian to Japan, with its genetically Southeast Asian bearers who were instrumental in founding the Jomon Culture of Japan, the Japanese culture of the Holocene, lasting from around 10,000 B.C. until the middle of the 1st millenium B.C.

I have written two general articles on the prehistory of the Philippines, one very short (1992 and 1993) and the other with considerably more detail than this paper. As the first listed of these is probably only available in the Philippines in less than a dozen copies and the longer one no longer in print (Solheim 1981) and not widely available in the Philippines I take the liberty here of quoting extensively from both of these. I also have been the sole or the primary author of two books on the archaeology of portions of the central Philippines and Mindanao, both of which were published in the Philippines (Solheim 1964b; Solheim *et. al.* 1979).

The early periodization of Southeast Asian prehistory was that made for European and Middle Eastern prehistory many years ago. Those of us working in

Southeast Asian prehistory long ago realized that this system did not fit for Southeast Asia. I suggested a new system in 1969. I modified this in the 1981 article to be specific to the Philippines: I have called this earliest period of human occupation of the Philippines the *Archaic Period*, from perhaps as early as 200,000 years ago to 7000 years ago (Solheim 1981:22-25).

About 8000 years ago, a way of life oriented to the sea began to develop in southern Mindanao and northeastern Indonesia. The people who developed this culture, whom I have called the *Nusantao*, gradually explored the tides, currents, and coastlines to the north and extended their explorations to Taiwan, coastal South China and northern Viet Nam by around 7000 years ago. This moving around by sea brought to an end the practically complete isolation of the earlier Philippine groups from each other and from outside the Philippines. From this time on there was contact among the peoples of the different Philippine islands, with neighboring islands in Indonesia and, to a lesser extent, with Taiwan.

I have called this time in the Philippines, the *Incipient Filipino Period* and dated it from 7000 to 3000 years ago (Solheim 1981:25-37). I have divided the *Incipient Filipino Period* into three parts (Solheim 1992:6). Early Incipient from 5000 to 3000 B.C., Middle Incipient from 3000 to 2000 B.C. and Late Incipient from 2000 to 1000 B.C.. In [my] opinion the changes and additions to culture, during these subperiods, did not occur at the same time in all areas, but started at different times in different places and spread along the developing routes of communication and, probably, trade. In some areas, more remote from the more heavily used sailing routes, there was a time lag in development so that, for example, a method that first appeared in one area in Palawan may not have come into use in eastern Samar for a thousand years or more. While our interest is in the development of Filipino culture, these subdivisions are based on elements of culture that came from outside or began in a margin of the Philippines because these are easier to recognize archaeologically than the more important general development of culture. No doubt internal cultural development led to land-oriented, island interior cultures and coastal, water-oriented cultures. But this development is not noticeable as yet. The changes interpreted as marking the subdivisions made here are: for *Early Incipient*, the blade and small flake tool traditions and flake shell tool tradition spreading from the south; for *Middle Incipient*, the spread of ground and polished shell and early forms of polished stone tools and plain, red-slipped and paddle-marked pottery [from north, south, and west]; and for *Late Incipient*, the further spread of pottery manufacture, the beginning of elaborately decorated pottery, and more types of stone tools [from Palawan and the Calamianes to the east]. The subdivisions do not necessarily correlate with major social or cultural changes in the lives of the People (Solheim 1981:126).

Many cultures of coastal Mainland Southeast Asia and Island Southeast Asia are, to varying degrees maritime oriented. I have coined the term “Nusantao” for these maritime oriented people (1975a-b), and have hypothesized that this culture originated in southern Mindanao and eastern Indonesia a bit before 5000 B.C. and developed a maritime trading and communication network. I hypothesized that they first expanded to the north through the Philippines to Taiwan and the southeast coast of China around 5000 B.C. and continued expanding to the north and south along the China coast, continuing developing their network between all of the coastal areas where they had covered in their explorations.

The Nusantao developed a maritime trading and communication network through out the Philippine islands, along the coast of China and Viet Nam, extending north to include Korea and Japan probably by 3000 B.C., east from eastern Indonesia and Mindanao into the Pacific by 2000 B.C., and west to India by 1000 B.C. Through this network the Philippines came into indirect contact with the peoples and cultures of much of the southern and eastern world and into direct contact with the peoples of coastal Viet Nam and South China. Coastal living Filipinos made up an integral part of the Nusantao.

By 3000 B.C. people of the Cagayan Valley may have been practicing horticulture and were making sophisticated pottery sharing numerous elements of form and decoration with people of Taiwan, South China, Viet Nam, [eastern Indonesia and western Micronesia]. Around 2000 B.C. similar cultural elements were appearing in western Palawan and later in the Visayan Islands, southern Luzon and coastal Mindanao with close similarities to coastal Viet Nam. Major migrations were not involved in these developing Filipino cultures but were brought about through the information/communication networks of the Nusantao, and intermarriage between related Nusantao people who traded into the Philippines from outside and coastal Nusantao of the Philippines (Solheim 1992:7).

The next period in the Philippines I have called the *Formative Filipino Period* and I have dated this from 1000 B.C. to A.D. 500: Development trends started during the *Incipient Period* continued during the *Formative Period*, but at an increasingly more rapid rate. Regional differences within the islands became more distinct, yet at the same time there were some widespread similarities that began to suggest a unity in the Philippines. These similarities do not stop at the borders of the present-day Philippines; they occur in much of eastern Indonesia as well. Southern portions of Mindanao, for example, were culturally more similar to Borneo and Sulawesi than to the northern portions of Luzon. The more noticeable change archaeologically during this period was the rapidly increasing variety and quality of personal ornament and pottery decoration. This suggests increasing ceremonial (at least in connection with the dead), increasing wealth, and possibly a more variable distribution of this wealth. Some wealth items were undoubtedly imported, for they were made from materials that were not locally available. Some items may have come from as far as the east coast of India. A major weakness in the archaeological data from this period, and for that matter from all periods from the *Late Incipient* on, is that virtually all sites excavated have been burial sites; consequently, extremely little is known about the social organization and day-to-day life of the people. [This could in part be because many of the people along the coast lived on their boats or in pile dwellings over the water.]. In spite of this lack of information, it seems likely that during this period the cultures of the Philippines reached their zenith as Southeast Asian cultures, virtually unaffected by influence from outside Southeast Asia. At the same time they had become sufficiently distinct from most of the rest of Southeast Asia to allow us to speak of the Filipino peoples. The foundation of Filipino culture was in place by the end of this period.

The *Formative Period* is also divided into three parts: *Early Formative*, from 1000 to 500 B.C.; *Middle Formative*, from 500 B.C. to A.D. 100; and *Late Formative*, from A.D. 100 to 500. Changes in the *Early Formative* appear to have been the most radical, and the period was characterized by the rapid development of jar burial, the

proliferation of styles of forming and decorating pottery associated with burials, the use and manufacture of bronze artifacts, and the presence of an increasing number of jade, carnelian, and gold ornaments. All these developments occurred in Palawan and have been, to a lesser extent, noted in the Cagayan Valley of northern Luzon and central Luzon in the provinces near Manila. [The apparent fact that there is not a continuous distribution of these elements and that they are always found near the sea suggests to me that their spread was associated with the trading patterns of the Nusantao Maritime Trading Network].

The *Middle Formative* saw the first use of iron artifacts in the Philippines; but there is nothing to indicate that iron was locally manufactured at this time, and iron objects are rare until early in the *Established Period*. While there were not as many changes evident in the Palawan sites during the *Middle Formative*, new knowledge spread from Palawan to the central Philippines. During the *Middle Formative* in the Philippines the Nusantao sailing-traders probably attained their greatest [area of contact]; and there is very suggestive evidence supporting this connection in Southeast Asia, southern Japan, southeastern India, and probably in Sri Lanka. While changes in the *Late Formative* are not yet noticeable in the Philippines, probably partially because of the lack of excavations, [further excavation will probably] show that some changes did occur.

During the *Late Formative* the major influence on all Southeast Asian cultures, particularly those oriented towards the sea and trade, changes from internal (i.e. Southeast Asia as the moving force) to external (China, India, and Europe [becoming] the determining powers). The Roman Empire learned of the wealth of the [far] east; and beginning approximately two thousand years ago, trade between the eastern Mediterranean and China, which had started by overland routes, shifted to the sea and included India as well. Around A.D. 100 the route from southern China to southeastern India was first used. As this route developed the Nusantao sailor-traders became an important part of the system, extending their activities into the western Indian Ocean and along the east coast of Africa. Southeast Asian products and status items, such as fine woods, rhinoceros horn and hornbill horn, etc., were [traded] to China; but Southeast Asia was no longer the center or focus of its own destiny. Economically, the Philippines suffered from this change, not because their economy deteriorated, but because western Indonesia and coastal Mainland Southeast Asia took over the central position which the Philippines may well have held during the *Middle Formative*.

No doubt during the *Formative Period* there was development of island interior, land oriented cultures, but very little is known about these developments because very few sites that date from this period have been excavated in interior areas. We can, however, be reasonably sure that there was some communication between interior and coastal peoples because trade items, such as salt, iron, and beads, found their way inland (Solheim 1981:37-59).

By 2000 years ago there were many different cultures in the various Philippine islands differing from each other but sharing many elements of Southeast Asian Culture in social organization, art style, and languages. All of the languages were [Malayo-Polynesian], closely related to the languages of Indonesia, [many] of the

Pacific Islands, Malaysia, and eastern Cambodia, and ...more distantly related to the languages of Taiwan (Solheim 1992:8).

It is a mistake to call the people of the Philippines “Malay”. While there were numerous cultural elements that no doubt came into [and were adapted into Philippine cultures] from the south that was before the people in the south could be called Malay. There were also no doubt many elements of Southeast Asian culture that come directly from Viet Nam and from South China. Filipinos are genetically no doubt closely related to the Malay through the widespread activities of the Nusantao Maritime Trading and Communication Network throughout the islands of Southeast Asia. While the Philippine languages are closely related to Malay, both of them being classified as Western Malayo-Polynesian, many if not most of the Philippine languages were being used in the Philippines before Malay developed. There are those of us who feel that Malay was developed as a trade language and if this so it would probably have started to develop around A.D. 500, long after most of the Philippine languages had become distinct languages.

The *Established Filipino Period* I have dated as A.D. 500 to 1521. By the beginning of this period the many different Filipino cultures, with their distinct though related languages, were probably roughly in the areas where they were first noted historically. The population of the Philippines was no doubt still small. While there are no indications of an unusual increase in population during this period there was probably some redistribution of population. By A.D. 1000, for example, there were several concentrations of population near the mouths of major rivers. These would have been trading towns and, as hypothesized by Hutterer (1977 [Bronson 1977]), would be gateway locations to their hinterlands up river in the interior... He felt that before trade with China started, the interior population consisted of either hunters and gatherers or swidden (slash and burn) farmers who had relatively little contact with the neighboring groups or with the coastal people. The primary products wanted by the traders for the Chinese market were jungle products such as rattan, special kinds of wood, beeswax, medicinal plants, different kinds of resin, etc...” (Solheim 1981:59-78). [This has been demonstrated archaeologically through the program started by Hutterer (Hutterer and Macdonald 1979 and 1982) in the late 1970’s and in particular through numerous papers by Junker (1996) in the Bais area north of Dumaguete, Negros Oriental, and by Bacus (1996) in the Dumaguete/Bacong area south of Dumaguete.]

Coastal-dwelling Filipino have been an integral part of the international Nusantao maritime trading/communications network for more than [5000] years and the interior living Filipinos, through their trade with coastal Filipinos, were to a somewhat lesser degree a part of this international information sharing network.

I should mention that there has been a popular reconstruction in the Philippines of a Filipino code of laws and a history of royal immigrants and their retainers, from Brunei to Panay, several centuries before the coming of the Spanish. This reconstruction was based on several manuscripts written in Spanish, which were in turn said to be translations of much earlier manuscripts. It has been established, without question, that these manuscripts were not translations of earlier manuscripts but were made up by the author, based on his own ideas of what might have happened (Scott 1968). There is no archaeological evidence to support a movement of people,

in any quantity, from Brunei to Panay (Solheim 1992:8). If there had been a considerable party of aristocrats and their families come to Panay around A.D. 1200 they would have brought with them a number of their retainers. They certainly would have brought with them their needed living equipment which would have included a fair bit of earthenware for cooking and storage. The common earthenware pottery in Brunei at that time was made using carved paddles which left a distinctive pattern on the surface of the vessels (Solheim 1959; Omar 1981). Peter Coutts (Coutts and Wesson 1978) an Australian archaeologist, in the 1970's did a considerable amount of archaeological survey and excavation in many different areas of Panay. In his several reports on this research he did not mention a single sherd of this distinctive pottery. All of the earthenware that he recovered that was distinctive enough to be identified was what Beyer had called Philippine Iron Age pottery, which was very different.

There are many myths about Philippine prehistory, some reasonably correct, others false. We need more trained Philippine archaeologists to do first rate archaeology and publication of their results to put Philippine prehistory on solid ground.

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Cecilio Salcedo

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