

Evaluating the Heritage Value of the Huluga Archaeological Site

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The Huluga Archaeological Site

Archaeological open site investigations have been conducted in a portion of Sitio Taguanao, Barangay Indahag, Cagayan de Oro City since the 1970s (Cabanilla 1970; Burton 1975; Bautista 1992; and Neri *et al.* 2004). The site (National Museum Site Code X-1991-Q) is undoubtedly an archaeological site, as evidenced by the many archaeological materials found and collected here. It is even vaunted to be “Huluga,” the first settlement that the Recollect missionaries encountered in 1662 at the northern coast of Mindanao (See Demetrio 1995 for a historical narrative). Thus, this site is popularly acknowledged as an important heritage site of Cagayan de Oro City, and perhaps the Philippines. That is why when the local government decided to build a highway and a bridge that would cut and eventually destroy parts of the site a local heritage advocacy group called the “Heritage Conservation Advocates” (HCA) did not hesitate to raise issues on this matter. A summary of these issues has been presented by one of the authors (Hernandez 2004).

In retrospect, a big portion of the land area of which this “early settlement” is believed to have been located had already been cut. An Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) was conducted during the later part of the construction of the highway on 2003, where its main objective for this assessment was to see if the

archaeological site “was destroyed as claimed by the HCA” (Neri 2003a: 9). The assessment concluded that the area cut by the highway (referring to the particular area that has received research attention in the last thirty years) “was indeed an archaeological site” and that the site was “partly destroyed and desecrated as claimed by the Heritage Conservation Advocates” (Neri 2003a: 10).

The popular belief that this particular area of Cagayan de Oro City was the very location of the 17th century Huluga settlement was most likely propagated in the 1970s. After the archaeological investigations in that decade on the site, historians and folklorists began attempts at making sense of these archaeological findings. Eventually it would sit on the minds of people that the area, which was then only thought to be the settlement, was in fact the very location of “Huluga.” It was only recently that this was scientifically tested.

The most recent development in the archaeology of the Huluga archaeological site is a study by Neri *et. al.* (2004, 2005) from the University of the Philippines and National Museum of the Philippines. This study concluded that the Huluga archaeological site was least likely the very location of the Huluga settlement. Instead, based on extensive trench excavations throughout the slopes of the area as well as surface surveys throughout the landscape, the site’s nature was determined as an area of ephemeral habitations or occupations. This means that the area was used as anything from a campsite/look out point for visitors and/or invaders to a tool-making workshop, or even a ritual site. Further specialized studies into the area’s archaeology were able to establish the nature of archaeological and natural deposition of sediments and artifacts excavated at the site (Eusebio 2005). It was also able to posit that the site has more likely been a prehistoric agricultural site than an ancient settlement site (Hernandez 2005).

Still, after all these systematic and scientific studies have been conducted, heritage issues continue to be argued. The HCA continues to propound that the highway was unlawfully constructed and that the site was desecrated. Now, it has even turned fiery-eyed towards the archaeological research team from the University of the Philippines, accusing the team of unethical behavior. This accusation was propounded despite the fact that the team complied with all necessary national cultural property laws and acted only in the interest of conducting archaeological research. Apparently, scientifically supported findings cannot and will not put this heritage issue to rest. Because of this, we see that it is desirable to evaluate the heritage value of the site. In this respect, understanding the implications of its value to national and international heritage may provide a proper perspective for people, especially those concerned with utilizing or managing the site, with how to proceed with future work, development, and/or management of the site and area.

Archaeological sites and Philippine legislation

An archaeological site is a cultural property, or cultural heritage, as defined by both national and international heritage laws and charters in the following:

Cultural properties are... landmarks, anthropological and historical sites, and specimens of natural history, which are of cultural, historical, anthropological, or scientific value and significance to the nation; such as physical, anthropological, archaeological, and ethnographical materials, meteorites and tektites... (Presidential Decree 374 of the Republic of the Philippines, in National Museum 1977).

And

Cultural heritage [are]...monuments, groups of buildings and sites with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological, and anthropological value (UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972).

As a cultural property or heritage, an archaeological site is: "...any place which may be underground or on the surface, underwater, or at sea level which contains fossils, artifacts, and other cultural, geological, botanical, and zoological materials which depict and document evidence of paleontological and prehistoric events" (National Museum 1977). Thus, under national cultural property laws the site is may either be classified as a "National Cultural Treasure," or "important cultural property;" wherein by definition,

Cultural Properties which have been singled out from among the innumerable cultural properties as having exceptional historical and cultural significance to the Philippines, but are not sufficiently outstanding to merit the classification of "National Cultural Treasures" are important cultural properties (National Museum 1977).

Nonetheless, the Huluga archaeological site is not "singled out" as a "National Cultural Treasure". These "treasures" and their respective implementing bills are published and may be perused in the National Museum's (1977) monograph of cultural property laws and its subsequent revised editions. Furthermore, there is no formal declaration that the Huluga archaeological site is an "important cultural property." This adds reason for the need to establish its exceptional historical and cultural significance, ergo, its heritage value. However, though Philippine laws, especially those pertaining to the cultural properties of the land are extensively detailed, it is interesting to note that nowhere is there a provision, or criteria, to determine which sites are "National Cultural Properties" and which are "important cul-

tural properties.” International charters are being explored (Faylona and Hernandez 2006) to evaluate the heritage value of archaeological sites. It is recommended that there should be regular consultations to archaeologists involved with Cultural Resource Management (CRM) in the country so that a more standard and transparent criteria for establishing a site’s worth for management may be established. Following this recommendation, we will use the same provisions and criteria for evaluating the Huluga archaeological site’s heritage value.

The evaluative criteria for Huluga as extrapolated from the charters and documents

We had previously extrapolated from the four charters and documents these criteria that will be used to evaluate the Huluga archaeological site’s heritage value (Faylona and Hernandez 2006). These charters are the following, and are briefly discussed below:

1. The Burra Charter is one of the primary and more relevant charters for this paper’s purpose. This is known as the *Australian ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance* (1979). The Charter includes guiding documents on the identification of places of cultural significance. It puts forward the values that are necessary in identifying these culturally significant places. These values include the artistic, the historical, the scientific, and the social values of culturally significant places that represent the past, present and future achievements of a particular group of people. By incorporating the knowledge from past charters and documents the Burra Charter shows how international principles can be adapted to flesh out the heritage values and needs of a particular nation, or particular cultural group within that nation.
2. Another relevant document for this paper’s purpose is the *Nara Document 1994* (Larsen 1995). This document emphasizes the importance of the authenticity and integrity of a cultural site. The convention sets criteria for authenticity and integrity in determining whether a site is or is not an authentic heritage site that bares value to the each and every stakeholder. Because of this, two criteria extrapolated from the document will be used subsequently.
3. The *Declaration of San Antonio* (1996) is yet another document that stresses the value of authenticity. The declaration was drafted by an international and national set of experts at the “Symposium on Authenticity in the Conservation and Management of the Cultural Heritage of the Americas.” It presents a more in-depth explanation of the relationship of authenticity to

cultural identity, history, materials, social value, dynamic and static sites, stewardship, and economics. Since these explanations provide a more comprehensive understanding of authenticity it is therefore used here as an incidental support to the value judgments this paper might make.

4. The *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China* (China ICOMOS 2002) is the most recent international document that defines heritage sites as immovable physical remains that were created during the history of humankind and that have significance (Article 1). It considers the physical remains that have historical, locational and period elements, historical authenticity, inherent values, and effective conservation programs (Article 2).

The boon of these charters and documents is that all have undergone meticulous international discussion and recognition from heritage experts, national development representatives, local stakeholders, international heritage coordinators, scientists, and social scientists. As such, its merit for value judgment is, at the international, regional, and national levels, highly esteemed. Nevertheless, since we recognize here that at these different levels certain provisions and/or criteria may not always be applicable to particular situations, or sites, these are the criteria from these four charters that we have deemed relevant for our purpose:

International Charter/Document and Criteria

International Charter/Document	Criteria
<i>Borra Charter</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the site have an artistic value? 2. Does the site have an historical value? 3. Does the site have a scientific value? 4. Does the site have social value? 5. Does the site have an economic value? 6. Does the site have an educational value?
<i>Nara Document</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are sources of information regarding the site credible and truthful? 2. Has the site been authenticated according to the cultural context to which it belongs?
<i>San Antonio Declaration</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does the authenticity of the site relate to its... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Cultural identity? b. History? c. Materials? d. Social value? e. Other dynamic and static sites within the vicinity? f. Stewardship? g. Economics?

<i>China Documents</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the site have an historical element? 2. Does the site have a locational element? 3. Does the site have a period element? 4. Is the site historically authentic? 5. Is the site effectively conserved?
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Discussing the Huluga archaeological open site's heritage value

Undoubtedly, the Huluga archaeological open site is a heritage site as defined by both international convention (1972 UNESCO *Convention on the Preservation and Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage*) and national cultural properties law (Presidential Decree 374). But as stated above regarding what is a "national treasure": "*Cultural properties which have been singled out from among the innumerable cultural properties as having exceptional historical and cultural significance to the Philippines, but are not sufficiently outstanding to merit the classification of "National Cultural Treasures" are important cultural properties.*" At a national level, can the Huluga archaeological open site be considered a "National Cultural Treasure" or just an important cultural property of the land? At the local level have the actions and sentiments of the people towards the site reflected an important local heritage to them? Internationally, can Huluga be lined up with the many sterling archaeological sites considered "World Heritage Sites"? We think that with satisfying the criteria that we have fleshed out from these charters and documents the Huluga archaeological open site as a heritage site can be clearly defined within these different levels of heritage: local/national, regional and international. Hence, a clear knowledge of its heritage value can lead to better management of decisions and working relations between different concerned sectors and stakeholders regarding the site and area.

The site and the Burra Charter

Of the six criteria extrapolated from the Burra Charter only three can be unequivocally satisfied. As an archaeological site Huluga does have an historical, scientific, and educational value. As archaeology is by nature an historical science two criteria are satisfied. Thus, its educational value, especially to those interested in the science, history, and culture behind the site is also unquestionably valuable. For now, it cannot be immediately determined whether the site has any artistic value. Such value is clearly seen in the likes of the Angono Petroglyphs, in the Philippines, which has been nominated to the World Heritage Watchlist, or the Borobudur Temple in Indonesia, which is a World Heritage Site. As the site is located in a relatively underdeveloped portion of present day Cagayan de Oro City there is no glaring social value that can be extrapolated from the site, unless a more meticulous survey/study is conducted to determine this. Since we have

been limited only to an understanding and view of the archaeology and history references this cannot now be determined. Apart from the fact that portions of land are used for agriculture and recreational tourism areas as resort areas, there is no other economic value for the site that can readily be determined in terms of its archaeology, history, or wildlife. The Banawe Rice Terraces, Philippines which is one of the World Heritage Sites is an example – an almost perfect one – as a point of contrast, comparison, and reflection to better understand these values required for a heritage site. It undoubtedly has an artistic value as it showcases the craftsmanship of the people who created it. It has an historical value since it is not only an ancient living heritage, but it has also documented many events in the life of the Ifugao people. It has scientific value, especially at an indigenous level, as it provides a wealth of data and knowledge of the environment and landscape of which the Ifugao live and make a living out of. It has a social value for it is within the terraces that the people have formed their own distinct culture from the rest of the Filipinos, especially lowlanders. Its economic value lie mainly in the fact that people did not only use it as a manufacture zone for their staple diet of rice, but continue to use it and now even go further by promoting their heritage as an eco-tourism zone. Its educational value lie mainly in what it teaches locals about their lifeways and environment, and what Filipinos all over learn from a heritage they can be proud of. If all such values are emulated or seen at the Huluga archaeological site then certainly its significance is unquestionable, whether nationally, regionally, or internationally.

The site and the Narra Document

As regards the Narra Documents and the site, there are two sources of information used. These are the historical sources and the archaeological sources. However, as seen through the research development in the area there is a move to verify whether the historical sources do actually apply to this particular site. And though received wisdom has made popular the belief that the site is the very settlement of Huluga, recent archaeological findings have proven otherwise.

This paper will not contend the truthfulness and integrity of the historical documents used as they are for a more historical discourse. However, certainly no one may contend the fact that before Cagayan de Oro became the present population center in this region, there were earlier population centers, and Huluga may have been one of it.

Regarding the authenticity of the site as the very settlement that is Huluga, even the most recent archaeological study cannot be so conclusive. Only when explicitly proven by obvious archaeological settlement features, like postholes – the most convincing of features, but none has yet been found in the area – or by

well-founded scientific investigation can any final statement as to the exact location of Huluga be made. As such, if it is maintained and persistently pushed and argued that this is the very site of that settlement called Huluga, and if this is used to contend the heritage significance of the Huluga archaeological open site then the Narra Document puts a lid on this and suggests that the site may not be that significant after all.

The site and the San Antonio Declaration

There is no contention that the site is authentically an archaeological site. However, its authenticity as an archaeological site does not at the particular moment impinge on cultural identity issues of the present day inhabitants, or shed light on the cultural identity of prehistoric inhabitants. The archaeological findings cannot yet directly connect the relationship of the excavated culture with the ancestry of the present inhabitants, however, the efforts of historians and folklorists to propound the ancestry (See Madigan 1995). Because of a lack of settlement features and good archaeological context current archaeology cannot finally conclude the existence of the actual location of the Huluga site. Archaeological findings show that the area was more likely an ephemeral occupation site rather than a permanent settlement (Neri *et al* 2005). The materials support the sites authenticity as an archaeological site. Again, however, in connection to it being the actual Huluga settlement is inconclusive since disclaimers to this popular notion are more natural than cultural. Though it may be easy to dismiss archaeological interpretation as flawed and historical documentation as biased, the same cannot be said for the natural features that suggest a disturbed context of material culture. And while its relationship to other static and dynamic sites cannot be readily determined, it is obvious that there is a lack of relationship regarding stewardship and authenticity. The local heritage advocacy group brashly claims that this is the very location of the Huluga settlement, and it is right to say that it is an archaeological site. Protesting the construction of the highway should be considered moot and academic as action to preserve and protect the area and barring the development of several subdivisions and resorts should have been done ages ago. This bears the rather painful reality that the site is, in fact, not truly acknowledged as significant to the heritage of the people. If it were, much of the landscape would have been, at least, nominated as a protected area, similar to the archaeological cave sites in Peñablanca, Cagayan Valley, Northern Luzon, Philippines, which is considered an important archaeological and natural reserve in the country.

The site and the China Document

In accordance with the principles set in the China Document, the site does have a very clear historical element supported by the archaeology. This element though cannot yet be directly related to the very Huluga settlement. The site's locational element is hazy. This has been questioned and debated both in archaeology and by the public (Hernandez 2005). As an archaeological site, it has a period element. However, a review of the archaeology of Misamis Oriental puts the site within a time frame of human occupation that dates back to the Paleolithic (Neri 2004). As with the historical authenticity much is yet to be done to relate the site to the history of the Huluga settlement. This paper is confident in the initial findings of the most recent scientific investigation in the area. Clearly it cannot be said that the site has been effectively conserved for the mere reason that no conservation efforts have ever been initiated.

Lacking heritage value: settlement matters and the people's initiative

From what we have surmised from the different charters, we see that there are two imperative points that contend the Huluga archaeological open site's lack of heritage significance: First, the nature of its archaeology; and, second, the lack of a real effort and/or consciousness from the people to care for the site. Primarily, the main line of reasoning of local heritage advocates is that the area documented as an archaeological site also called the Huluga archaeological open site was the location of the settlement known as Huluga. This is the same settlement that Recollect missionaries encountered in 1662, and the same settlement acknowledged as the predecessor settlement of present day Cagayan de Oro. For this reason the site should, in essence, be an important cultural property and heritage of the nation. However, as archaeological studies have presented in the last few years, the archaeological site was, in fact, most likely NOT the location of the Huluga settlement. Thus, we strongly suspect that its authenticity in relation to an historical and material element has, for so long, only been a conjured reality. But, since it is most likely so that the area is, in fact, not the location of the settlement of Huluga then it loses much of its historical significance to the present-day Cagayan de Oro, unless later further shown otherwise. In effect, it also further dampens any possible attempt at directly relating the site with the cultural identity of the people. Nevertheless, its value to regional archaeology is not froth. In 2003, Neri studied the obsidian materials excavated from the Huluga archaeological open site. His findings were quite interesting as the source of the obsidian materials excavated from the site could not be located within the area of Mindanao, or other known obsidian source sites in the Philippines. Thus, this brought him to suggest that trading, most likely on a regional

level, may have been a major economic activity in the area's past (Neri 2003b). If this is so, then on a regional level, it may be said that there is somewhat more archaeological value extracted from the site than there is for local/national level heritage issues. However, let us not mistake this as the sole criterion for branding the site as either a National Cultural Treasure or an important cultural property, as this value cannot solely rest the fate of the site. Much of its fate is held at the hands of all stakeholders. In fact, we only suppose that there will be a great need for many more researches and salvage archaeology work for the area if anything more substantial is to prove that this site is of national – and regional – value.

Since the post-war economic boom in the Philippines there have been an increasing number of development projects in the general area of which the archaeological site is part. In fact, as mentioned earlier, it has been an ongoing dispute about what area the archaeological site covers. Though it is a well-presented finding that the specific area, which has received research attention in the last thirty years, is most likely not the settlement location, the adjacent lands might be it (Neri *et al.* 2005; Hernandez 2005). And if so, then the very location of the Huluga settlement might have been forever lost some time ago with the construction of several subdivisions, where deep trenches were excavated to install water pipes, and the large resort area where deep holes were excavated to accommodate meters-wide pools. Had the whole landscape of rolling hills, open plateaus, and cave sites been formally recognized ages ago as an important cultural, historical, and archaeological heritage of Cagayan de Oro and the Philippines development projects, particularly infrastructure development, would have been comprehensively managed with support from national and international governing bodies for the preservation and protection of cultural heritage.

Lack of stewardship cannot be accused on the local government, as in finality the initiative rests on the people, needless to say all stakeholders of Philippine heritage. Considering the detail of national cultural properties laws, we are sure that if the qualities and values were sterling and evident enough, the area would have long ago been considered an important cultural property of the country. Take for example the case of the Angono petroglyphs in Rizal Province, Philippines. In the last five years scientists have reviewed and questioned the site's authenticity (Bautista 1998; Barreto 2000). However, as the site evokes much pride in the people of Angono, who consider their community a breeding ground for Filipino artists, the site has received much people support – and eventually local government support – to nominate this site under the World Heritage Watchlist showcasing the “artistic heritage from prehistory” of the area to the rest of the world. Disregarding the questions of authenticity, we see the definition of heritage as a “dynamic process involving the declaration of faith in pasts that have been uncritically

refashioned for present-day purposes: such as the husbanding of feelings of ancestry, continuity, identity, and community; and the legitimization of systems of power and authority” (Lowenthal 1998) working in a site like Angono. And because it is considered an important cultural property, not just of the Philippines but the world, for its artistic, economic and social value to the people – more than its archaeological and scientific value, we think – any activity on the site is carefully considered lest damage or harm may befall it. What lies behind the tuffaceous outcrop where you find the petroglyphs are a stone quarry and an ever-growing residential area. In the end it is the “meaning, value, and claim placed on a material, particularly as an “inheritance” (Hodder 1993: 17) that will eventually be considered in future decisions of what to do with, or on the site.

Conclusion: More work for the heritage stand

As per the criteria for evaluating the site’s heritage value it is rather clear that its value to national heritage is wanting. And though at the moment this might pass as a minor detail, archaeological research has shown that the site may be regionally valuable with the implications of the results on the site’s obsidian studies.

First of all, the site has not yet been classified as an important cultural property, National Cultural Treasure, or even a regional or world heritage site. In reviewing the national cultural properties laws of the Philippines no standard was set to determine the heritage value of a cultural property – in this case, an archaeological site – and to differentiate an important cultural property from a National Cultural Treasure. Second, the issues that have beleaguered the site have kept it wanting for respite. In this sense, it might be concluded that there is an apparent disparity between scientific, historical, and heritage research development, and infrastructure development. The highway was already constructed even before environmental and cultural heritage workers could determine a site’s heritage value and do their jobs.

Though the four used international charters did much to help define the value of the site, we think in hindsight that other international heritage charters and protocols, as well as current national cultural property laws should still be further reviewed. The International Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM) has several charters from which we can be guided as to how we define the value of sites. By doing this, we can hopefully flesh out the essentials in determining what proper and comprehensive actions might be taken in the management – conservation, preservation, and protection – of an archaeological site, especially one that faces imminent destruction. For now, we see that by using these charters and protocols the public, as well as heritage

specialists, might easily gather the imperative data and juxtapose it against what is sought in defining heritage value

Though partially destroyed, the area surrounding the site still has potential to be nominated as an important cultural property of the country. It further needs a thorough assessment and evaluation using the international charters and principles presented in this paper. More importantly, it further needs scientific investigations. These may lead to the identification of its outstanding universal values that may represent Cagayan de Oro's culture, history and heritage.

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Abstract

The heritage value of the Huluga archaeological site is evaluated. A dispute involving issues of site preservation and infrastructure development calls for a rationale to show the heritage value of the site if the place is to be maintained. National cultural properties laws and international heritage charters are the frameworks for evaluation. Results of archaeological investigations made in the area have been incongruent with what is being told in history and folklore, and this has resulted in debates regarding the national heritage value of Huluga. Our evaluation shows that its heritage value may be more apparent in the regional and international level.

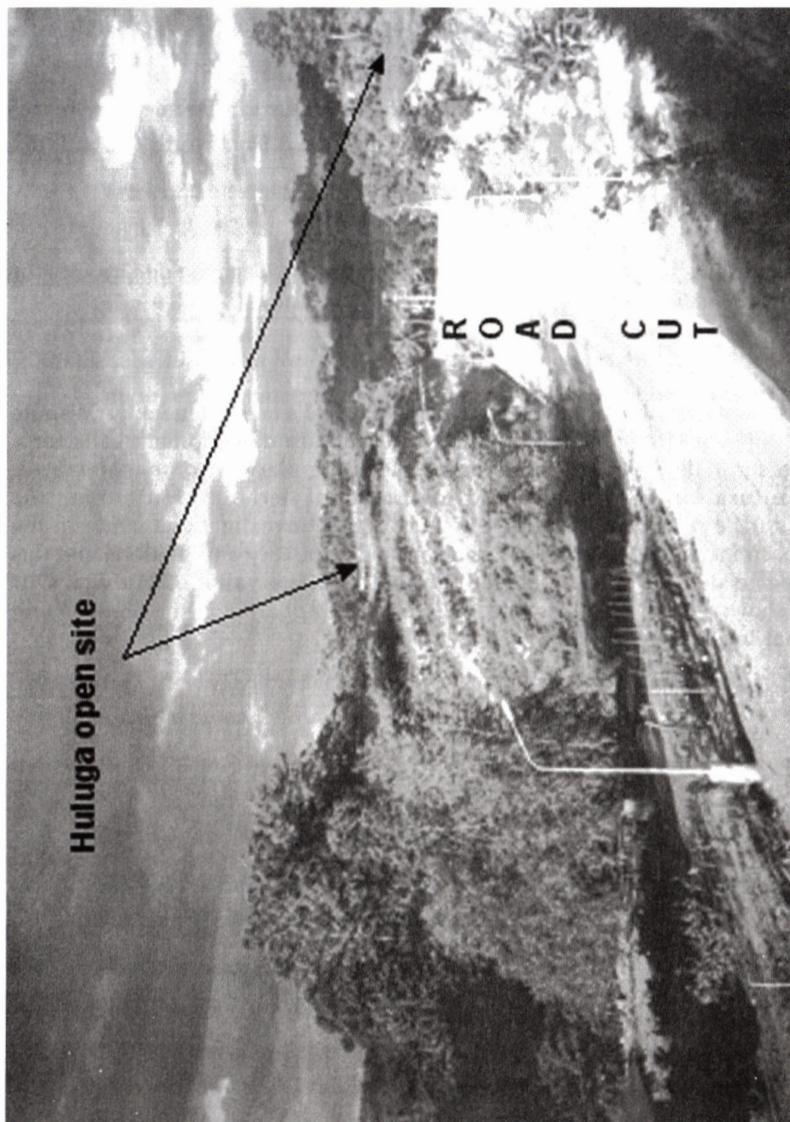


Figure 1: The Huluga archaeological open site. The newly constructed highway cuts through it.
(photo by Vito Hernandez)