



the Solheim Foundation Bulletin

The Official Publication of the Wilhelm G. Solheim II Foundation for Philippine

Research Work at Palawan: Ille Rockshelter and the Dewil Valley

The Solheim foundation took part in a major research effort this year. Initiatives from various groups were coordinated to help push the research agenda at an archaeological site close to the heart of the foundation: the Ille rockshelter. Aside from our foundation, there was the strong presence of the ASP-based “Palawan Island Palaeohistoric Project”, together with parallel projects by founding member Dr. Helen Lewis of Oxford University and Professor Michael Bird of St. Andrews University in Scotland. Jonathan Kress, who is also a founding member of our foundation, continued his support in terms of finances, but more importantly through his participation in the excavation of Ille for most of the season.

For this year, the research season started in mid-May and ended in mid-July. Our honorary president, Bill Solheim, and his wife, Nene, headed the advance team that reestablished the social network at New Ibajay for our research group. They supervised the fixing of the pathway and the construction of a nipa hut to hold the research team for the duration of the season. In this research season, excavation at Ille rockshelter was continued, excavation at Makangit central tower was initiated, an off-site excavation was done on the rice field near Ille tower, and surveys of the landscape were pursued. The project had the general objective of improving our baseline data on the palaeohistory of northern Palawan, which would then be linked with the base line data currently generated from the rest of the island. It is also envisioned that the improvement of our knowledge of Palawan palaeohistory will eventually boost our understanding of the palaeohistory of the Philippine islands.

At Ille rockshelter, the tragic actions of treasure hunters were apparent this year with two gaping trenches left at their wake. They dug inside the cave and at previously excavated areas at the east mouth. But at the face of this odious action of treasure hunters, exciting results came out of this

season’s excavation. The previous excavation areas were uncovered and expanded. We have managed to establish several ancient surfaces at the site and a sequence of burials. More importantly, below the known 10,000 bp layer established in 2002, we uncovered three surfaces with hearths that definitely belong to pre-pottery periods. The deepest uncovered surface is definitely palaeolithic, complete with flake tools, charred animal bone fragments, heating stones and the remains of a

deer’s antler. The deer has long been extinct in the island. There are also surfaces exposed with hearths, established to belong to periods associated with the introduction of tradeware pottery. Several new burials were also uncovered and studied; most had a north-south orientation, they seem to be buried facing the mouths of the cave.

West of the Ille limestone tower are the Makangit towers. High above the base of the central Makangit tower

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UPDATE:

WILHELM G. SOLHEIM II FOUNDATION HOLDS GENERAL MEETING AND ELECTIONS

The Solheim Foundation’s Annual General Meeting and Elections were held at the Balay Kalinaw, UP Diliman last March 18, 2004. The new set of officers for the foundation are:

President: Victor Paz
Vice President: Cynthia Valdes
Secretary: Pamela Faylona
Treasurer: Danilo Galang
Assistant Treasurer: Lee Neri

Mrs. Valdes also volunteered to take charge of the Foundation’s newsletter, while Mr. Neri is also tasked with overseeing the Foundation’s membership.

The *despedida* for DAAD Visiting Professor and Lecturer Dr. Alfred F. Pawlik was also held at the same venue. ☺

**Don ENRIQUE ZOBEL
1927-2004**

Industrialist Enrique Zobel passed away last May 17 after a lingering illness at the Asian Hospital in Alabang. He was 77.

Though better known as a business tycoon and tough-minded entrepreneur, Zobel was also a tireless supporter of archaeological research in the Philippines. He was also a founding member of the Solheim Foundation, Inc. His contributions to the discipline through the decades will always be remembered. ☺

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is a well-lit chamber. In this chamber a small scatter of lithics and bones was systematically investigated. It was established that the site was used for a short period of time to fashion tools made out of chert. A few bone tools, flake tools and deer antler remains were also recovered. The antler with some of the bone fragments found at the site had undergone fossilization.

Not far from the base camp and under the shadow of the Ille tower, an off-site excavation was initiated at the rice field owned by the Libudan family. The purpose of this excavation was to investigate the nature of the matrix underneath the rice field for possible insight on the nature of the landscape before agriculture set in. The excavation was also used as control for the mollusk study initiated at Ille.

In the effort to further understand the landscape, a survey of the Dewil riverbanks from the national highway near Ille to the end of the New Ibajay settlement was done. It was also a conscious objective to look for possible sites along the river, and to look for possible sources of raw material for the stone tools recovered at Ille and Makangit. While no new sites or raw material source were found, the survey gave us a better handle to understand the landscape of our research area.

This year's research initiative at Dewil valley especially at Ille convinced the entire archaeology community in the Philippines of the importance of northern Palawan archaeology. The Solheim Foundation has

API GRANTS DR. SOLHEIM SENIOR FELLOWSHIP

Dr. Wilhelm G. Solheim II has been named an Asian Public Intellectual Fellow for the fellowship period of 2004-2005. The API Executive Committee has recently approved his project entitled the *Gua Sirih (Sarawak, Malaysia) Archaeological Report*. He has left for Malaysia earlier this month and is set to stay there until January of next year to finish his report for the API. Accompanying him is his wife, Nene.

With the granting of this senior fellowship, Dr. Solheim will finally get to finish the archaeological endeavor he started almost fifty years ago. He was the first person to excavate Gua Sirih cave in Southern Sarawak, recovering decorated potsherds and identifying cave drawings. However, events that were beyond his control made him lose hold and access to the collection after his excavation. For many years since then Dr. Solheim had been unable to write anything further about this site that was later confirmed to be highly important.

Excavations during the 1990's unearthed the earliest specimen of rice in Island Southeast Asia, dating back to around 4500 years ago. This places the site of Gua Sirih at the forefront of Southeast Asian prehistoric research. Fortunately, Dr. Solheim has been able to retrace his lost materials, allowing him to return to Sarawak and pick up where he left off nearly half a century ago – this time in the light of new information and with an API senior fellowship.

The Asian Public Intellectuals Fellowship is an initiative of the Nippon Foundation to create a pool of intellectuals in Asia and provide opportunities for learning and exchange between countries in the region. ☺

stepped-up its commitment to protect the Ille site by hiring Mr. Danilo Libudan (owner of the land around Ille) and Mr. George Danay, two respected members of the New Ibajay community to safeguard the site. We are hopeful that there will be no more new episodes of site destruction due to treasure hunting or vandalism in the future. We are also eager to return in the coming year to Dewil valley to continue our research work. Ille, as predicted by Bill Solheim, is fast becoming one of the most important archaeological sites in the Philippines. ☺

**The Solheim Foundation Bulletin
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