



# THE SOLHEIM FOUNDATION BULLETIN

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## HOW THE DISCIPLINE OF ARCHAEOLOGY CAN HELP THE PHILIPPINES by Cynthia O. Valdes

We are a fractured Nation. Our present is a commingling of many voices, images, material culture...Our history is somewhat confused but struggling to straighten itself out. We need to go back to Basics (to borrow a somewhat-used phrase) in order "to find ourselves". Hopefully digging up our past does not take forever.

But are we there yet?...Umph, not quite, but are we still on the right path? Has there actually been progress? Perhaps. The adzes are now no longer just plain. They are stepped, shouldered, and as we would like to find out, how are they "hafted". Ah, use-wear analysis again. Is it even important, really? Well, it's a "step". And one must go through all of the steps. To get somewhere.

I was at a Conference of archaeologists some years back. Our Main Speaker, a respected political leader admonished the archaeologists present, "Do not just write reports that only you among yourselves can understand". Sir, with all due respect, may I explain the role of the archaeologist?

An artifact, or those things that archaeologists find, may be the littlest bead. We said that already. It is also the shell bracelet, the fragment of a nephrite bracelet with an incised design, the earthenware jarlet, the worked shell "scoop" (used perhaps to hold a drink? What kind of drink?), stone adzes (okay we know they are made of basalt, that's a type of stone), representing ancient tools. If we had the numbers, we would go into "use-wear analysis" too. But it's taking too long. The fact is, we do NOT have the numbers. It takes time, effort, and resources to build anything, anything at all that is certain to remain strong, sturdy, and able to withstand the forces of nature and passage of time (weathering) and the somewhat destructive hands of humans/humanoids.

What the archaeologists do best, Sir, is "Dig." They "Dig up the past." They literally dig, or plumb the ocean's bed in order to retrieve and recover artifacts. Initially, they take an aerial photograph in order to survey the project area. Our project area is the Ille Rockshelter Site, Dewil Valley, in particular.

Why don't we just build the infrastructure first. The infrastructure is not just roads and bridges. It is also the layer that has already been done by serious scholars. Perhaps they were not without flaw but the fact is, they are written down somewhere. Written records need to be carefully done because they are the bridges upon which future works will be based.

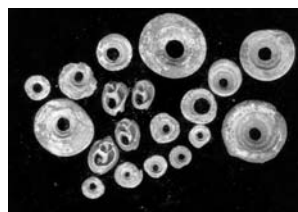


Dr. Bill Solheim, in his dreams and peregrinations, saw the potential of this site. It will yield major finds bound to make an impact on WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY.

While we're at it, the artifacts need to be safeguarded too. Especially if they have been retrieved through funding support based on people's trust. Without that TRUST, we're lost. The birds have eaten up the bread we used as markers. There was no Ariadne to lend Theseus a ball of thread, to lead him out of the maze.



Museum officials' most common complaint is, "there's no funding". Why? Could it be we've lost track of our roles, our purposes? What is the meaning, the

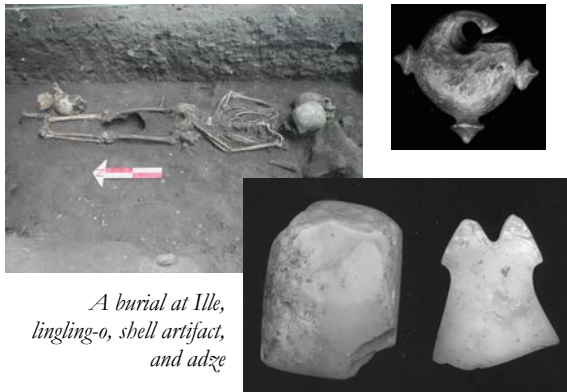


**Clockwise from top:** *Shell T-section bracelet, excavation at West Month, shell beads, earthenware jarlet, Ille Rockshelter base camp*

significance of this work we're laboring on? The answer my dear, is "blowing in the wind"....

The archaeologist Dr. Robert Fox with the help of associates (not just colleagues; one such is Hans Kasten, an unsung hero, the U.S. Peace Corp and a volunteer, Ms. Dorothy Main) led us to the Tabon Caves. The Tabon Cave Complex is a LIVING LEGACY. It is so solid because beneath it lies good infrastructure: the labor of human hands, the realized dreams of dedicated pioneers/professionals such as Prof H. Otley Beyer, Carl Guthe, and Olaf Janse before Fox. Even the efforts of E.D. Hester, Dean Worcester, and others, all toted up spell: yes we have managed to get somewhere.

The earliest of the Filipinos were Ricardo Galang, Fred Evangelista, Jesus T. Peralta, Willie Ronquillo, Rey Santiago and Eusebio Dizon; also, Amalia de la Torre, Nida Cuevas, and Sandy Santiago. Up and coming at the Archaeological Studies Program are Victor Paz, Armand Mijares, Alfred F. Pawlik, and their students.



A burial at Ille, lingling-o, shell artifact, and adze

It was PUBLIC TRUST that led us to the Tabon Caves, with Filipinos and foreign professionals working hand in hand. Does it still exist? Is that trust still there? Is it now deteriorated/depreciated, from "use-wear"? Is it now just a "statistic", the "anachronism" we have been talking about? We need to know.

Dr. Bill Solheim has seen the potential of the Ille Rockshelter Site. He is now leading us to explore the surrounding Dewil Valley and eventually, more of the Island of Palawan.

Therefore, in order to recover public trust, we need to communicate. We have defined it, we have mentioned some of its contributions to civilization. We now have to show/tell/communicate to the public what the archaeologist/scholar/researcher is up to and doing/and up against.

Camaraderie and booze, (even love?) are part of the game. "The anthropologists are restless tonight".... remember? It releases stress, it allows us to function. In due time, however, we need to present to the public our work, the fruit of our labors. At that time, we will demonstrate that up against all odds, we are indeed worthy of being called "professionals".

Lectures, if aided by the right visuals, can be effective, educative and communicative. Film, for the hip, young and restless, is there too. The internet has become the faster, more effective way to communicate. But it will reach only the "wired" sector. Is it permanent? The beauty of it is, it can be the stepping stone, the Foundation, the basis/Basic structure upon which future research/scientific work can evolve/develop.

But still and all what really lasts, keeps going, getting stronger yet, is the written record. Still and all, it's the written word that will outlast/outstay, outlive us all when we, mere mortals indeed become the "statistic" we are heading to. "Roses, when the rose is dead, are heaped on the beloved's bed". And may it last more than one brief generation.

*Ut ergo plus maneat perenne seculo*, uttered the poet Catullus who served in the Roman court of Julius Caesar and that was more than two thousand years ago. That which was "lost" has been found. And it is still beautiful, ageless, useful....It will endure.  
Filipino mabuhay ka!

Cynthia O. Valdes  
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**ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Memory, Images and Material Culture: Filipino-Chinese Culture Bond** – The Solheim Foundation cordially invites everyone this event to be held on March 1, 2007, 4:00 pm, at the Dalisay Aldaba Hall at the University of the Philippines. Mrs. Cynthia O. Valdes and Mr. Charlson Ong will give talks, and there will be a showing of Peter Chua's award-winning short film "The Last Parian." Admission is free and refreshments will be served. For inquiries, please call the ASP at (02) 9241836 or e-mail the secretariat at [andrea\\_malaya.ragragio@up.edu.ph](mailto:andrea_malaya.ragragio@up.edu.ph).

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