

# The Philippines:

## ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE PHILIPPINES TO 1950

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### INTRODUCTION

**T**HIS paper is designed to sketch broadly and in chronological sequence those activities undertaken by institutions and individuals, whether carried out by present scientific standards or otherwise, which contribute to our understanding of the prehistory of the Philippines; its scope is neither exhaustive nor critical. It is informative to the point of indicating where the science of archaeology stands in the Philippines at the end of the first half of the twentieth century.

The history of archaeology in the Philippines has been treated wholly or in part in previous papers. Tangco (1938) attempted to reconstruct the racial and cultural history of the Filipinos. In a subsequent article (1940) he traced the development of anthropology in general from its beginnings in the Spanish era, calling the principal investigators "lay pioneers to the assiduous and untiring investigations" of H. Otley Beyer in the early twentieth century. Tangco concluded that the science was relatively very young but firmly established, though not without problems adversely affecting rapid growth. Olov Janse (1946), in a report on his archaeological excavations in the Philippines at Calatagan, Batangas, sponsored by Harvard University, reviewed the problems related to archaeological research in the islands that "have been in bygone days one of the cultural crossroads of the Pacific." Consequently, Janse urged the creation of "an effective central organization responsible for the direction, supervision, and coordination of such research. . . ." Solheim (1952, 1953) likewise briefly enumerated the more noteworthy events and personages connected with the advancement of archaeology in the Philippines. He remarked that the outlook "is very bright for any serious student of Philippine archaeology," for "there is more work left to be done in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific than in any equal portion of the globe." Beyer (1947) published a geographical treatment of actual accomplishments in Philippine archaeological exploration. The work is

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the only one attempted so far in the Philippines but has satisfied a need for such a study. In a subsequent volume dedicated to his colleagues in the Far-Eastern Prehistory Congress, Beyer (1948) attempted "a full review of our existing knowledge and views" relative to "our common effort at reconstructing the history of man and his culture in this part of the globe"—that is, the Philippines, East Asia, and the Pacific Islands.

For convenience, we may divide the story of Philippine archaeology into eras commensurate with the periods of political administration of the islands from the advent of the Spanish colonizers in the sixteenth century through 1950. These are the Spanish period (1521–1898), the American period (1898–1946), and four years of the Philippine Republic (1946–1950). [Spanish colonization began in 1565. The United States occupied the Philippines officially On August 13, 1898, but actual administration did not begin until the following year. The islands were occupied briefly by the Japanese (1942–1945).]

### THE SPANISH PERIOD

Despite the conspicuous variety of cultural-linguistic patterns that the Spanish explorers (and later, colonizers) observed among the inhabitants of the Philippines, virtually nothing was done to trace the origins and development of these patterns. Early works were primarily ethnographic. Most of the authors were members of religious orders who came to the islands to do missionary work among the people. Their writings were mainly reports to the ruling Spanish monarch or religious superiors.

Tangco (1940) mentioned fifteen works that described in varying detail the physical appearance and life-ways of the Filipinos that the authors observed in the course of their work. For example, in 1580 Fr. Juan de Plascencia wrote a guide for dealing with the natives, entitled *Las Costumbres de los Indios*. Two other studies containing "invaluable ethnological material about the Filipinos before and during the early part of the Spanish regime" were Fr. Pedro Chirino's *Relacion de las Islas Filipinas* (1604) and Dr. Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (1609). Fr. Juan de la Concepcion's *Historia General de Philipinas* (1788–1792), a fourteen-volume edition, drew heavily from earlier works. One early non-Spanish writer was Thomas Forrest, author of *A Voyage to New Guinea and the Molucas . . . Including an Account of Maguindanao, Sooloo, and Other Islands* (1799).

The later contributors, according to Tangco, were better prepared academically, although "the analytical method of study is hardly employed, the descriptive process of the historian being the type generally preferred." Most of them were secular writers and many were not Spaniards. Moreover, many linguistic studies came out, although ethnographic ones continued to be in vogue. Selected examples for our consideration are A. Carro's *Vocabulario de la Lingua Iloco-Espanol* (1849), G. W. Earl's *The Native Races of the Indian Archipelago* (1853), A. B. Meyer's *Ueber die Negritos oder Aetas der Philippinen* (1878), and W. E. Retana's *Supersticiones de los Indios Filipinos* (1894). [A non-Spanish writer of the period, Ferdinand Blumentritt of Austria, published a formidable array of articles about the Philippines and its people. One of his more important works is *Versuch einer Ethnographie der Philippinen*, published in Gotha in 1882.]

Beyer (1947: 205–206) and Solheim (1952: 62; 1953: 154) listed only one important archaeological investigation carried out in the Philippines prior to the coming of the Americans in 1898—the systematic explorations and collection of Alfred Marche, a French archaeologist who in 1881 explored two islands and collected a great number of specimens, mostly

from burial caves. The caves and an open burial site yielded earthenware, semistoneware, and glazed burial jars with human skeletal remains; carved wooden coffins; ornaments of metal, shell, and glass; wooden and metal implements; carved wooden images, and other material. Beyer (1947: 260) believed that Marche concluded on Marinduque Island the most successful Philippine archaeological expedition recorded from Spanish times. The greater part of Marche's collection is now with the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, and a few pieces are with the Museum of Madrid.

Caves and open sites were casually explored in several localities in the Philippines by Feodor Jagor in 1860, J. Montano and Paul Rey from 1878–1881, and by Jose Rizal, Filipino national hero, and his party, in 1894. However, nothing significant resulted from these investigations.

#### THE AMERICAN PERIOD

Archaeology, and in fact the whole field of anthropology, received encouragement during the administration of the United States. In his famous "Instructions" to the Schurman Commission (1899) and the Philippine Commission (1900), United States President McKinley recommended a careful study of the cultural, social and political life of the people, in order to formulate policy that would both take into account their praiseworthy traits and allow for their prejudices. (These two commissions had both executive and legislative powers.) Accordingly, the Philippine Commission created the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, with David P. Barrows as its head. The bureau changed its name several times, became a mere division of the Bureau of Education, and was eventually abolished. The first government museum was established later in 1901, designated as the "Insular Museum of Ethnology, Natural History, and Commerce," and was placed under the immediate direction of the chief of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes. (During the period of its existence, the museum also underwent several changes in name, status, substance, location, and level of vigor. It is at present a separate government bureau, carrying the official name of National Museum.) Many ethnologists and other investigators connected with these government agencies turned out excellent monographs on indigenous groups, based on actual residence among the tribes. (I need mention but a few workers and a publication of each: Albert Jenks, *The Bontok Igorot* (1905); Najeeb Saleeby, *Studies in Moro History, Law and Religion* (1905); Merton Miller, *The Bataks of Palawan* (1905); Fay-Cooper Cole, *The Tinguian* (1922); John Garvan, *The Manobos of Mindanao* (1931); William Reed, *Negritos of Zambales* (1904); Emerson Christie, *The Subanuns of Sindangan Bay* (1909); Roy Barton, *The Half-Way Sun* (1930).)

A further step toward fuller recognition of the importance of anthropology as a useful science came in 1914 when Beyer, after holding the post of ethnologist for three years at the Bureau of Science, accepted the task of founding and heading a department of anthropology at the University of the Philippines. It was during this intimate association with the state university that he pioneered researches involving the racial and cultural history of the country.

The early 1920s unfurled a significant chapter in the history of Philippine archaeology. Beyer (1955: 8) maintained that the groundwork for a new view of the geological, biological, and human history of the Philippines was laid from 1921 to 1923, during the scientific symposium held fortnightly or monthly at the Bureau of Science under the chairmanship of the late Roy E. Dickerson. Discussions centered on a general review of current knowledge of the past geologic and land connections of the Philippines, and on the origin and dissemination

of plant, animal, and human life there. The results were partially published in 1928 as Monograph No. 21 of the Bureau of Science, entitled "Distribution of Life in the Philippines," edited by Dickerson. Beyer was unable to contribute his anthropological section to the final volume, however, primarily because of a year's stay in Hawaii and, upon his return, his preoccupation with the archaeological work at Novaliches, Rizal Province.

Meanwhile, between 1922 and 1924, Carl Guthe carried out explorations in the Visayan Islands. The project started in 1921 when Dean C. Worcester returned to the United States with his private collections, consisting mainly of porcelain pieces. They aroused enough interest for the University of Michigan to send Guthe to the Philippines for three years of fieldwork. His 15,000 miles of travel on land and sea in the Philippines yielded about 31 cubic tons of archaeological specimens from 542 sites. Most of his finds are deposited at the University of Michigan Museum.

Beyer (1947: 206) stated that while many accidental finds had been recorded from time to time and a few burial caves and other sites had been casually explored by European or local scientists, no thoroughly systematic work had been done anywhere in the Philippines other than that of Marche and Guthe. Beyer also mentioned that ethnologists, government officials, miners, missionaries, farmers, and hunters had undertaken exploration and collection of artifacts, but that "none of this work was very scientifically done . . . and the chief results were miscellaneous collections of ceramics and skeletal materials."

Beyer further stated that in 1923-1924 he attempted a compilation of all known data on true Philippine stone-age finds, and after a diligent search through the literature, as well as an examination of all rumored finds, he was able finally to accumulate data on some sixty implements that seemed to be genuine prehistoric stone-age artifacts. Of these, he acquired or personally examined about thirty real neolithic implements, scattered over a wide geographic range from Davao to northern Luzon. Most of these tools were obviously middle or late neolithic in type, but they were sufficient to show that the Philippines had a true late stone-age population here, even if the remains were scarce and widely scattered.

Such was the atmosphere, according to Walter Miles (1952: 41), when a turning point came toward the end of 1925. Construction work had already begun on the Novaliches Dam in Rizal Province, and the Novaliches site, that started the Rizal-Bulacan Archaeological Survey, was discovered by accident. Early in 1926 workmen erecting a house found a glass bracelet and a few beads. Not long afterwards, when ground was being levelled for a garage shed, a nest of iron weapons was uncovered containing a considerable quantity of pottery sherds and several dozen beads. It was then that W. S. Boston, general foreman of the dam project, notified the Bureau of Science and Beyer of the University of the Philippines. Subsequent investigation and reconnaissance of the site confirmed the find of ancient burials and habitations.

Small test excavations were undertaken during a period of one month to determine the area of the general site. Areas of productivity had been demarcated in two ridges, designated by the excavators as Hill 1 and Hill 2. The limited diggings yielded some 1,250 specimens—stone and metal artifacts, beads, glass and pottery bracelets, mammalian fossils, and hundreds of potsherds.

The regular work on the dam plus Boston's severing of connections with the contractors at first threatened to disrupt the archaeological work. A timely solution, however, was an agreement by Boston and Beyer to carry on the survey at private expense. Work was accelerated after the team obtained permission from the Metropolitan Water District. The number of

men employed varied from half a dozen up to as many as sixty or seventy a day, so at the end of six months, work at the site had assumed huge proportions. Tons of earth had been removed and 18,000 specimens recovered. Work was extended to other areas in an effort to trace the source of the stone artifacts. The basalt deposits along the eastern shore of Laguna de Bay were also explored, bringing to light additional sites. Sites such as those in the Pililla-Tanay area and Santa Ana added more than 1,000 specimens to the Novaliches collections.

Further excavations were carried out intermittently until the middle of 1930 to include a narrow strip inside Bulacan Province. Actually, the collecting activities by Beyer's field assistants continued beyond this year. Altogether, a total of 120 sites was surveyed, and in five years of work the collection totalled nearly half a million specimens (Beyer 1947: 231). The magnitude of the survey was highlighted by the fact that it disclosed relics from all the horizons of the prehistoric ages of man.

In 1932, the Batangas Archaeological Survey was begun, and it continued actively until the outbreak of World War II. The first Batangas site, containing a neolithic assemblage, was discovered by F. G. Roth in 1932 in the municipality of Cuenca. With Beyer's help, the survey was extended gradually southward through the municipalities of Alitagtag and ". . . by 1935 we had a full Stone-Age series from Early Palaeolithic to the latest Neolithic and Bronze Age. True pre-historic Iron Age and early Porcelain Age remains are very scarce—absent in fact, from most of the systematic area, and where found are confined within very limited and definite boundaries. The true modern period begins only in the 14th or 15th century, from which time the population was continuous and gradually multiplying down to the Spanish occupation and after" (Beyer 1947: 246). Beyer goes on to say that the late neolithic horizon was the most widespread and basically characterized the largest and most widely distributed population.

In addition to the extensive surveys mentioned above, Beyer carried out collecting activities in other Philippine areas, briefly enumerated as follows (Beyer 1947: 207): (1) Visayan Islands collection, 1929–1930, 1936–1939, 1941, especially; (2) special Pugad-Babuy (Bulacan) collection, 1933–1938; (3) special Sta. Mesa and Cubao collections, Rizal Province, 1935–1940; (4) several other collections at intermediate intervals, particularly Pampanga, Camarines Norte, Cavite, Zambales, Sulu, and other places.

Three meetings of the Far-Eastern Prehistory Congress held in Hanoi (1932), Manila (1935), and Singapore (1938) provided useful comparative data and material. Major sites worked by Beyer were also visited by foreign scientists. These visits and congresses, according to Beyer, brought out the importance of correlating Philippine archaeological data with those of South China, Hong Kong, Formosa, Indo-China, the Pacific Islands, Indonesia, and the Malay Peninsula.

In an area as rich in traces of man's past activities as is the Philippines, yet equally lacking in individuals trained to undertake archaeological research work, it is inevitable that not all sites reported could be visited by trained researchers, let alone be systematically excavated. As a result, many amateur archaeologists built collections of their own, particularly of the more attractive porcelains and stonewares of Chinese, Annamese, and Siamese provenience.

I need mention only one collection—that accumulated by E. D. Hester. Between 1930 and 1940, Hester, at the suggestion of and with help from Beyer, made a large collection (approximately 1,000 whole pieces) of oriental wares recovered mostly from the Visayas, Palawan, and Sulu. The collection is abundant in whole Chinese pieces of Sung, Yüan, and early Ming date and in Siamese wares. The various potteries, forms, glazes, and types of

decoration were represented by a number of pieces that allowed division into two collections. Roughly one-half of the Hester collection was donated to the Chicago (now Field) Museum of Natural History and the remainder was in part donated and in part sold to the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology. A few pieces of exceptional artistic merit were placed on loan at the Speed Museum of Art at Louisville, Kentucky.

Meanwhile, explorations continued, some of which were carried out by personnel of the National Museum. During July and August 1938, the late Ricardo G. Galang investigated a reported jar-burial site at San Narciso, Tayabas (now Quezon) Province. He came across some interesting jar-burial types, one of which had a heavily grooved stone cover. Six other jar-burial and midden sites were found in the vicinity. Associated cultural materials included shell bracelets, beads, and several pieces of intrusive ceramics. At about the same time, another National Museum staff member, the late Generoso Maceda, explored another jar-burial site in Pilar, Sorsogon Province. A total of 24 jars were excavated in three different sites; most of them contained bone fragments, glass and paste beads, iron implements, and "some evidence of cloth and other articles. . . ." Beyer dates the site between A.D. 300 and 800. In 1940 Janse spent a few months in the Philippines and excavated a few fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sites on the peninsula of Calatagan, Batangas. He published the results in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (1941, 1944) and in the *Annual Report* of the Smithsonian Institution (1946).

War broke out in the Philippines in 1941, and was swiftly followed by the Japanese occupation until the end of the conflict. As far as I know, no archaeological fieldwork was undertaken during the occupation, despite the fact that the National Museum was functioning. At the time, Beyer was under conditional internment and was allowed by the Japanese to continue working at the University of the Philippines Museum and Institute of Ethnology and Archaeology. This gave him opportunity to finish the final sections of a major postwar publication (Beyer 1947).

Late in 1945, H. R. van Heekeren, a noted Dutch archaeologist sojourning in the Philippines briefly on his way home from a Japanese prison camp, found some 25 to 30 flaked obsidian and flint semimicroliths on a cultivated foothill of Mount Makiling in Laguna Province.

#### FIRST YEARS OF THE PHILIPPINE REPUBLIC (1946–1950)

Following Beyer's release from internment in 1945 his attention was focused on salvage and rehabilitation work, and later on the preparation of his "Outline Review . . .," which was published in 1947. Subsequently, he revised manuscripts he had been working on during the war years and produced *Philippine and East Asian Archaeology* . . ., which was published in 1948.

From the University of California, where he received his master's degree in anthropology, Wilhelm G. Solheim II came to the Philippines to take additional courses at the University of the Philippines. Concurrently, he held the posts of Lecturer in Anthropology at the University of the East and Librarian-Curator of the American Historical Collection at the American Embassy. Solheim worked closely with Beyer, who supported two archaeological expeditions headed by Solheim. The first expedition concerned a jar-burial site in San Narciso, on Bondoc Peninsula, Quezon Province. Accompanied by E. Arsenio Manuel of the University of the Philippines, Department of Anthropology, Solheim excavated 13 jars

and 2 primary extended burials. Associated with the burials were iron implements, cowrie shells, shell ornaments, glass and paste beads, glass bracelets, and angle pots with perforated ring stands. (Solheim led another expedition in 1951 on the island of Masbate. [I was one of the students who accompanied him.] Caves and an open site were excavated in three localities. Significant for Philippine [hence, Southeast Asian and Pacific] archaeology is the radiocarbon date (756 B.C.  $\pm$  100 years) for the caves at Batungan (Solheim 1968) reported in 1921 as "Batwaan" by Warren D. Smith.)

The aforementioned archaeological activities have brought to light an appreciable body of information clearly establishing the fact that man is ancient in the Philippines. Evidence has been accumulated that points to cultural stages or horizons extending from mid-Pleistocene times (some 250,000 years ago) to the arrival of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. Acknowledgment must be made to the patient workers in the disciplines of geology, zoology, and palaeontology. It was, for example, the diligent researches by Ralph von Koenigswald on pleistocene man and mammalian fauna in Java that brought him to the Philippines. At the sites worked by Beyer in Rizal and Bulacan, Koenigswald recognized certain implements similar both in material and workmanship to the Java (Sangiran) types. These finds were closely associated with mid-pleistocene stegodon fossils and a number of whole tektites—"curious black balls, cylinders, and fragments of a strange natural glass. . ." Until this discovery, naturalists and writers had assumed that the larger Asiatic mammals never reached these shores and that this fact argued strongly against there having been any land bridges connecting the Philippines with the continent during Late Tertiary and Pleistocene times (Beyer 1955: 3).

The current theories widely quoted in explaining the racial and cultural history of the Philippines are primarily those of Beyer. He has worked out a comprehensive chronology—oversimplified according to some anthropologists—correlated with another made for Southeast Asia and Indonesia. According to Beyer, the Philippines in precontact times passed through at least three distinct general stages: the Stone, the Metal, and the Porcelain ages.

In Beyer's view (1947: 208), the Philippine Stone Age consists of two general periods: a long earlier phase, the Palaeolithic (250,000–50,000 B.C.), and a later phase, the Neolithic (5,000–200 B.C.). A transitional period, the Mesolithic (20,000–8,000 B.C.) is also recognized and said to be coterminous with the Hoabinhian tradition of Indo-China. Diagnostic tool types convinced Beyer that the Neolithic ought to be divided into early, middle and late phases. It must be noted, however, that the usage of terms such as "Mesolithic" and "Neolithic" for the chronology of Philippine archaeology implies no time or cultural relations with a similar usage of these terms in European archaeology.

The Metal Age is in turn divided into two distinct phases, namely, a Copper-Bronze Age and a true Iron Age, the latter between 500 B.C. and A.D. 1200. Tango (1938: 20) hesitates "to say definitely whether or not the Philippines has passed through a Bronze period," noting the lack of evidence establishing it. Fox (1959: 21) believes that "the basic transition was from stone tools (to iron tools), except perhaps in northern Luzon where copper was extensively mined and worked, possibly before the appearance of iron."

The first ten centuries of the Christian era roughly embrace the Philippine Iron Age, and there was ever increasing contact between the Philippines and the "Great Traditions" of Asia, such as Indo-Malayan, Chinese, Indo-Chinese, and Hindu-Indonesian (Fox 1959: 25). These brought further changes in the social, religious, and economic life of the early Filipinos. Adventurers and traders reached the islands as early as the tenth century A.D. in

search of produce and markets. First the Arabs, then the Chinese brought in mainland products, most of which were ceramic wares from the provincial kilns of China. These trade wares have been found in considerable quantity in widely scattered Philippine habitation and burial sites. Most of these wares (porcelains and stonewares) belong to the Sung and Ming dynasties of China.

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