Robert F. Maher 1922–1987

WILHELM G. SOLHEIM II

Robert Maher, born in Eldora, Iowa, on 14 July 1922, died of cancer on 26 March 1987. Bob was the founder and first chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Western Michigan University and would have retired in June 1987 after 30 years of service. Besides research on American Indian archaeology in the U.S. central states, he did ethnographic research in New Guinea and archaeological and ethnographic research in Ifugao Province, Philippines.

Bob received his professional degrees in anthropology from the University of Wisconsin at Madison—B.S., 1948; M.S., 1950; Ph.D., 1958. He was the Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Western Michigan University from 1967 to 1971 and again from 1973 to 1974. Before that he had been the Assistant Director of the Institute of International and Area Studies (1960–1961) and the Associate Director from 1963 to 1967. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the Central States Anthropological Society from 1972 to 1976 and again from 1980 to 1981. He was the Vice President of this organization from 1977 to 1979 and President in 1979–1980. He was an associate editor of the periodical Current Issues in Anthropology from 1979 to 1984 and of The Proceedings of the Central States Anthropological Society from 1976 to 1979.

Bob started his work in our area in 1954 when, as a Research Associate of the Australian National Museum, he did his Ph.D. research on the Tom Kabu Movement in the delta region of the Puraru River of Papua New Guinea. Among other publications resulting from this first research in New Guinea, he produced New Men of Papua: A Study in Cultural Change (University of Wisconsin Press, 1961) for which he received the Genevieve Gorst Herfurth Award for outstanding social science. He continued doing ethnographic research in this general area in 1973, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1982, and 1983 for one or two months each time.

With a Senior Fulbright Research Grant at the University of the Philippines in 1960–1961, he began his Ifugao research, conceived as a combined ethnographic and archaeological project to reconstruct the evolution of Ifugao culture. Eleven villages in four agricultural districts were selected for a study of contemporary cultural conditions; four archaeological sites were excavated in two of these agricultural districts. For four months in early 1973 he returned to restudy the villages first investigated and made excavations in two new agricultural districts. From April to June in 1975 he was again in Ifugao, making excavations in the Banaue district and in two village sites in the Burnay district to the southeast, continuing his ethnographic study of technology at the same time. During April to June 1978 he did his final excavations in the Kiangan district of southeastern Ifugao, the work reported on in
this issue of *Asian Perspectives*. Except for one summary article (1978), all his reports on Ifugao archaeological research have appeared in *AP*. His final return to Ifugao, from April to June in 1982, was limited to ethnographic research. The research done during these last four seasons was under the auspices of the National Museum as a research associate.

I would like to quote from an unpublished statement of his research plans for the future, made in late 1984:

(1) I have decided to place Ifugao culture in its regional context by opening with a comparative study of the many non-Christian, preliterate societies located in the mountainous areas from the border between India and Burma through Mainland Southeast Asia to the islands of the Philippines. I have been working on this rather ambitious expansion of the project during the year past.

(2) Although it is less a problem now than in the past, too often anthropological descriptions and analyses of a particular culture present the norms of behavior and fail to give an account which shows the range of variation which actually exists. Among other things, variation indicates where the culture is flexible and where it is not and identifies experimental behavior from which future norms may be chosen. I have substantial information on variation in cultural behavior within and between localities, for example, pottery manufacture and religious rituals, but I need further data to make my presentation more systematic. Toward that end, and for some other reasons, I will return to Ifugao Province in January of 1988.

(3) My analysis of the contemporary phase of Ifugao life will contrast the traditional village ways with those of the "modern" market town of Banaue. I find that the latter has expanded since my last survey of it in 1982. Consequently, I have been bringing my notes up to date through a collaboration by mail with my long time assistant, Mr. Emilio Pagado, who is an Ifugao and a college educated teacher in the Banaue Public School.

I have never made a prediction as to when the project will be completed. It has already been productive in articles published and papers delivered at professional meetings. I regard the proposed book as the capstone of more than twenty-five years of labor upon which a good part of my professional reputation will rest, and I will not hurry it.

I knew Bob primarily through our correspondence in connection with the articles he contributed to *Asian Perspectives*. I was a guest in his home during a brief stay in Kalamazoo and can affirm that he and his wife Lee were gracious hosts. I would like to thank Lee for providing the information for this brief look at Bob's life, with my particular emphasis on his archaeological research in the Philippines.

It is most unfortunate that he did not have the long life needed to fulfill his wish to write, unhurriedly, his *magnum opus*. His Ifugao research, to date, is the only archaeological research that has been done in that province. His research indicated that H. Otley Beyer's dating of the beginning of the famous Ifugao rice terraces around 1000 B.C. may well be correct. At least we can be certain that the construction of these terraces did not result from the movement of non-terrace people into the area after the first arrival of the Spanish, but started long before Spanish presence. Among others, the Ifugao should be pleased with the results of his archaeological research in their homeland.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Citations are limited to Maher's archaeological and ethnographic publications dealing with Ifugao and Southeast Asia.


1979 Review of *Man's Conquest of the Pacific: The Prehistory of Southeast Asia and Oceania* by Peter Bellwood. *Choice* 16:713.


