

Bais Anthropological Project, Phase II: A First Report

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In this report, the author describes the four sites excavated in phase 2 of the survey.

In what constitutes the second phase of field work in the long-range research program entitled "Bais Anthropological Project," an interdisciplinary team of anthropological and environmental scientists conducted a variety of investigations in Negros Oriental from May 15 through July 15, 1981. A preliminary report on Phase I by Hutterer and Macdonald was published in the *Philippine Quarterly*, 1979, vol. 7, pp. 115-140; a more extensive report is now in press with San Carlos Publications.

Project Objectives

Besides an immediate interest in enlarging our knowledge of Philippine prehistory, the primary purpose of the Bais Anthropological Project is to study the general tendencies of human social evolution under tropical environmental conditions. More specifically, the project is designed to study changes in subsistence economy over long periods of time, related changes in the larger social fabric as well as concomitant changes in social and economic interactions between groups integrated through different social forms and subsisting on different types of economies. Within this framework, and among other things, one particular interest is the role played by internal and external trade in the evolution of com-

plex social systems, in this case the Philippine lowland societies.

The ecological and evolutionary orientation of the Bais Anthropological Project demands that the research process concentrates on information that relates to the environment, economy, and social and political organization.

For the archaeological portion of the program, the Bais Project uses primarily a "subsistence-settlement pattern" approach as the methodology most appropriate for its investigations. This approach is particularly oriented toward reconstructing aspects of economic and social organization of prehistoric societies. Accordingly, the focus is not so much on individual archaeological sites, but rather on spatial configurations of sites within a larger geographical context usually a region and changes in such configurations over a period of time.

Review of Initial Work

The first phase of the project in 1979 consisted principally of an archaeological surface survey within an area of 315 km², covering, or touching, the municipalities of Bais, Tanjay, Pamplona, Amlan, and San Jose in Negros Oriental. As reported previously, a 5% stratified random sample of this area in the form of sixty-four 500 x 500 m quadrats, was systematically surveyed for indications of archaeological sites. 194 find localities (artifact clusters and finds of isolated artifacts) were recorded within the five percent sample, covering 16 km² of the

total survey area. A first analysis of this information indicated significant differences in the location and clustering of sites between upland and lowland portions of the project region (Hutterer and Macdonald 1979) and, on the basis of stratigraphic information from some test excavations in 1979, Macdonald has tentatively identified a number of sites with two distinct but successive settlement phases (Macdonald n.d.). Besides archaeological surveys and some test excavations, the 1979 season of work included also some ethnobotanical ethnozoological, and ethnoarchaeological research.

Purpose of Phase II

Phase II of the Bais Anthropological Project in 1981 concentrated on excavations for the purpose of expanding, modifying, and refining artifactual chronologies which can be used for the absolute or relative dating of sites found within the research area. A secondary purpose of the excavations was to learn more about the nature of occupation of these sites. However, primary emphasis was on discovering information on which a regional artifactual sequence (particularly a sequence of pottery types) could be based. For this reason, we favored small excavations in several sites rather than a large excavation in only one site, although this decision imposed severe limits on the information we could gather on the nature of site occupation. The present report was written immediately upon leaving the field,

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before any significant analysis had taken place, and is meant simply to announce that these field investigations have taken place. Analysis and interpretation of the recovered materials will be going on over the next two years. Any interpretive remarks made here should, for the meantime, be taken as mere suppositions.

During the 1981 season in Negros Oriental, excavations were undertaken in four sites. Three of them had been discovered in the course of the 1979 survey. The existence of the fourth site had been known previously.

The Sycip Site

The Sycip Site (Bais Survey designation A V 447F; National Museum Accession No. VIII-1981-V) is located on what appears to be an elevated beach, about one kilometer WSW from the poblacion of Tanjay, and about one kilometer inland from the present coast. Judging from the surface scatter of artifacts, the site area covers about 40 m by 40 m. A total of 64 square meters were excavated under the direction of Claire McHale, University of Michigan. The major classes of materials recovered from site include lithic artifacts (mostly flakes, a few pebble tools), earthenware pottery sherds, some late Asiatic trade wares (19th and 20th centuries), and some food remains (primarily shell fish). The soil of the site is a very shallow heavy clay loam on top of a coralline substrate. Soil depth in the excavated portion ranged from a mere 10 cm to about 40 cm below present ground surface. The site is presently planted in coconut and has previously also been used as a sugarcane field. The shallow soil deposit and agricultural disturbance render stratigraphic interpretations extremely difficult. However, the excavations did reveal at least remnants of undisturbed in situ deposits containing archaeological features, among them a few postholes and charcoal and ash concentrations. The ceramic materials from the Sycip site show clear relationships to ceramics found in a number of other sites in the Bais survey area, but these relationships need to be investigated further. Samples for carbon-14 dating of the site were collected.

The Turco Site

The Turco Site (Bais Survey designation M VII 74B; National Museum Accession No. VII-1981-W) is located in the interior portion of our survey area, about 15 km from the nearest coast and about 18 km from the town of Tanjay. The site is situated on a light ridge which trails off into a gentle slope about 440 m above mean sea level, in the locality of Nasindan, Barangay Pal-ew, municipality of Tanjay. Surface collections indicate a minimal site size of about 130 x 70 m; our excavation, directed by Masao Nishimura, University of Michigan, covered an area of 34m².

The site and the surrounding area were covered by tropical rain forest until about 30 years ago, when commercial logging operations resulted in whole-sale forest clearance and subsequent colonization by lowland farmers. Prior to that time, small groups of Bukidnon (swidden farmers) and Ata (hunter-gatherers) were present in the area.

Phase II activities were concentrated on four sites: Sycip, Turco, Solamillo and Osmeña Park

Today, the site is utilized for permanent field agriculture, which involves fallow periods and kaingin (clearance of the field with fire after fallowing). The major crop is corn.

The soil of the Turco Site is heavy, shallow clay loam, derived from a coralline substrate which, itself, caps an igneous formation. Again, shallowness of the deposit, erosion since forest clearance, and recent agricultural disturbance made stratigraphic observations difficult. The site yielded primarily earthenware sherds, lithic artifacts, and some late Asiatic trade ceramics. In spite of some problems with the stratigraphy, it was possible to establish that both earthenware pottery and lithic artifacts occur in undisturbed context, and it appears that the site contains, in its lowest portion, a non-ceramic phase yielding only stone artifacts. However, the latter observation calls for further assessment of the recovered materials, soil samples, and excavation notes.

The artifactual assemblages of the Sycip and Turco sites seem to differ in several respects. The Turco site yielded a much higher percentage of lithic artifacts than the Sycip site, but no pebble tools. There is some apparent overlap between the two sites in pottery wares, but the Turco site contains wares which do not appear at the Sycip site and, indeed, seem to be absent generally in the coastal reaches of the Bais project area. It is quite clear that the Turco site reflects several phases or events of occupation. Material for carbon-14 dating was collected, but, given the stratigraphic nature of the site, it is doubtful that we will, at this time, be able to establish complete chronological control over the site.

The Solamillo Site

The Solamillo Site (National Museum Accession No. VII-1981-H²) is located in Barangay Magsuhot, municipality of Bacong, about seven kilometers from the coast. This site was not located through the 1979 survey and is, in fact, situated outside the Bais project area. The existence of the site has been known since archaeological excavations were carried out there by Lionel Chiong in 1972 and Rosa Tenazas in 1973 (Tenazas 1974). The site was of interest to us because earthenware pottery closely related to pottery found in the Magsuhot area is found in many sites through the Bais region. We were, therefore, anxious to learn more about the nature of this site and to attempt to date it both in absolute terms and in relative terms with regard to the Bais sequence. The Solamillo excavation was directed by Ma. Lorenza Dalupan, Ateneo de Manila University.

Strictly speaking, it is not quite correct to designate the area of our excavation as a "site," since a surface scatter of similar pottery occurs over an extremely large area, the boundaries of which are presently unknown. The term Solamillo Site, then, is simply a convenient label for our excavation, which was done on a field owned by a Mr. Leon Solamillo. The field is part of a broad, gently sloping area below the volcanic Mt. Talinis, which is dissected by a number of very steeply and deeply cut creeks. The elevation of the Solamillo Site is about 200 m AMSL. The natural

deposit of the site consists of an extremely heavy and very deep sandy loam to loamy clay, which is derived from volcanic parent materials and is very acidic. The excavations by both Chiong and Tenazas recovered highly elaborate jar burials associated with iron, glass beads, and a very distinctive earthenware pottery. Our own excavations took place about 200 m to the east of Tenazas' trenches and covered an area of 65m². However, we did not encounter any jar burials but found instead reasonably good evidence of habitation. This evidence consists of an extensive soil layer that is characterized by a dark organic stain, some apparent post holes, and pottery that is different in form, size, and breakage patterns from that recovered in association with the jar burials. Unfortunately, the acidity of the soil has destroyed virtually all organic remains, which usually characterize habitation contexts, such as food refuse in the form of bone and shell. Two clusters of complete, albeit crushed, pots were found in our excavation, which may have been deposited with primary inhumation burials. Unfortunately, no traces of any skeletons were left.

The Osmeña Park Site

Also the fourth site excavated in 1981, the Osmeña Park Site (Bais Survey designation TV 120A; National Museum Accession No. VII-1981-X), does not constitute an archaeological site in the strict sense. Rather, it is only a part of a much larger, and apparently continuous, archaeological area of occupation that stretches from the mouth of the Tanjay River about 1.5 km upstream along both banks. Similarly, the Edjek Site, in which test excavations were conducted in 1979 (Hutterer n.d.), is part of the same archaeological complex. The term Osmeña Park Site, then, designates an excavation locale within the poblacion of Tanjay, namely Osmeña Park, for excavations occasioned by the fact that all other open areas around the present town of Tanjay have been looted within the past five years, while the rest of the complex is inaccessible because of contemporary occupation.

A total of 28M² were opened up under the direction of Nguyen ba

The results of Phase II work could explain the relationship between subsistence/settlement patterns and social and economic change.

Khach, University of Hawaii. The natural stratigraphy revealed an alluviating estuarine site which, in more recent time, saw some deliberate modifications of its surface, particularly in the form of filling in of some low areas. The cultural stratigraphy can be divided into three phases: a historic phase, a porcelain phase, and a pre-porcelain phase. For the sake of brevity, I will disregard here the historic phase. The porcelain phase was characterized by the presence of sherds of Asiatic trade ceramics, predominantly late 15th and 16th century blue-and-white wares, many of them of the "Swatow" type, although there were also some sherds of Early Ming wares and even a few Sung Yuan pieces. There was ample evidence of habitation in the form of midden areas yielding shell, animal bone, and charcoal; broken earthenware pottery; a few bone tools; and several post holes and other features. Of particular interest in the upper portion of the porcelain level are two highly formalized hearths situated in the ground, and sherds of an elaborately stamped and red-slipped earthenware pottery very similar to that found by Spoehr at Fort Pilar, Zamboanga (Spoehr 1973). As is usual with coastal sites of that period, two burials were found within the habitation context; the lower burial was of an extended adult female, accompanied by a very poorly made gray ware bowl covering her head and small paste beads around her neck. The younger burial, associated with the upper portion of the porcelain level, was of a tightly flexed adult, probably also female, without any apparent associations.

The pre-porcelain level was characterized primarily by several kinds of very distinctive earthenware pottery, which set it clearly apart from the porcelain level. Organic remains, particularly shell lenses and pig mandibles, were found predominantly in the interphase between porcelain and pre-porcelain

levels. No clear features were found in the pre-porcelain levels except for those that intruded into it from the porcelain level above. Similar to Edjek Phase I, (Hutterer n.d.) it appeared that the archaeological materials were deposited in an environment that was subject to repeated gentle flooding. There was, however, very little overlap between the pottery found in Edjek Phase I and that recovered from the pre-porcelain level of Osmeña Park.

Beside the archaeological excavations, a variety of other investigations were conducted during the 1981 season of the Bais Anthropological Project. The collecting of botanical and zoological reference material was continued; ethnoarchaeological investigations were undertaken, particularly an excavation of a homestead and swidden site near Lake Balinsasayao, which had been occupied in recent historic times; investigations were conducted of contemporary pottery manufacture and distribution; and extensive geological studies were made toward an understanding of changes in landform and the formation (and natural obliteration) of archaeological sites.

It is not expected that the results of the second phase of the Bais Anthropological Project will answer all the questions around which the research program has been designed. However, the information collected through the excavations in 1981 will surely contribute toward an understanding of the regional prehistoric cultural sequence of Negros Oriental and thus, toward an interpretation of subsistence/settlement patterns in terms of social and economic change.

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