

THE PHILIPPINE SPAFA SUB-CENTRE FOR PREHISTORY

Prehistoric researches have been going on in the Philippine archipelago for over half a century, but scientific investigations that is acceptable to western standards started only after the Second World War.

One important palaeolithic site providing dates that go back at least 500,000 years ago is the Cagayan Valley site in the northeast of the island of Luzon, approximately 500 km from Manila :

The entire area forms a cul-de-sac bounded by high mountain ranges on the west, south, and east. Cagayan Valley is today considered one of the important sites for the study of the evolution of Man and his culture in this part of the world and has seen intensive investigations since 1971 under the programme "Cagayan Valley Early Man Project". The area also has been the focus of several studies by other researchers from outside the region.

So far 96 caves and open sites have been explored, and of the several cave sites already located and investigated, the Allam cave site has been chosen by the Philippine Sub-Centre for the first technician training programme in prehistory or the SPAFA P-T1. This valley site of Cagayan had, in prehistoric times, contained fauna now extinct such as the *elephas*, *stegodon*, and rhinoceros. The recovery of Old Stone Age or Palaeolithic tools, in not a few instances in direct association with the extinct fauna, attest to early big-game hunting activities.

Another area providing a more continued cultural sequence are the complex of cave sites on the Lipo-on Point and Iwaig areas which, collectively, are familiarly known as the Tabon Caves site in west-central Palawan island. This site have close affinities with the Niah Caves complex in Sarawak in Malaysian Borneo. It has been possible to delineate a cultural sequence spanning a period of at least 30,000 years in the Palawan sites. The area was chosen as venue for P-T3a-the advanced SPAFA training programme in prehistory of the Philippine Sub-Centre. P-T3 is a higher level training programme than P-T1, requiring a baccalaureat degree in Anthropology or an equivalent experience. Offered for the first time on December 1979 to March 1980, this course will be repeated in January 1981. P-T3b will not be conducted in the Palawan sites this time, but in the famous prehistoric cave and open sites of Cagayan Valley. The field work requisite to the programme is more intensive, requiring among other things top grade field reports. This particular training programme is partly supervised by experts on Southeast Asian prehistory from outside the region.

P-T1 the technician level course on prehistory was started on December 11, 1978, and lasted 3 months. Actually two sites were chosen for the field training : A Cagayan Valley cave site and an open site located in Bolinao northwest of the



Trainees taking their turns at practicing an archaeological survey of a site in Bolinao, Pangasinan, on the island of Luzon, Philippines.

Trainees in Prehistory in actual field training in Allam Cave, Cagayan Valley, northeastern Luzon, Philippines.

province of Pangasinan, approximately 300 km from Manila. While the Cagayan Valley and Palawan sites are primarily Palaeolithic and Pre-Contact in context, Bolinao is already a protohistoric site. Providing an important link between the prehistoric period and the historic Spanish Era the recovered artifacts represented evidences of contacts with the Great Traditions of west and central Asia, especially India, and that of China. The P-TI trainees were exposed to two types of archaeological field training : in an open-site situation which the Bolinao site provided, and a cave-site situation when, in the later part of the training programme, the trainees were moved to the Cagayan Valley Allam cave site.

The Bolinao training centre consists of the Bolinao Regional Museum and the new field station with quarters for both the museum research staff and the SPAFA trainees, as well as a laboratory for field conservation of archaeological specimens. The Cagayan Valley facilities includes the Cagayan Valley Provincial Museum and Research Center, and the Callao Field Station which also houses laboratory facilities for field conservation of archaeological specimens, quarters for museum personnel and the SPAFA trainees, as well as storage for archaeological materials. The two new buildings put up in both sites in connection with the P-TI training programme had cost the Philippine government close to three hundred thousand pesos.

Trainees from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines at a cave site they investigated in connection with the Technician Training Course in Prehistory in Cagayan Valley, Northern Luzon, Philippines.

