

Preface

This monograph contains a series of archaeological reports on investigations undertaken between 2002 and 2007 in the Batanes Islands, located in the northern Philippines, half-way between Taiwan and Luzon. Because of this location, the Batanes Islands occupied a strategic position for all prehistoric human migration from southern China, through Taiwan, into Luzon and the Philippines, and sometimes possibly in the other direction as well (e.g. from the Batanes to Lanyu Island). The prehistory of these islands reflects very greatly on the early migrations of the Austronesian-speaking peoples, a phenomenon dating between 4500 and 3000 years ago for its earliest Malayo-Polynesian manifestations beyond Taiwan, as inferred from current investigations in comparative linguistics, archaeology, and biological anthropology (Blust 2013; Bellwood 2013; Cox 2013).

The bulk of this monograph presents archaeological data as its primary purpose. It is not intended to serve as a commentary on the Austronesian origins debate, or even to provide a firm statement on this issue, although the issue of links between Taiwan and the northern Philippines is necessarily an ever-present topic of discussion in the text. The first chapter introduces the project and the islands themselves. Three chapters then cover excavations and other investigations on the islands of Itbayat, Batan and Sabtang. The remainder of the volume deals with various categories of material culture and subsistence through time, particularly pottery, lithic and nephrite items, animal (including fish) bones, and marine shells.

The Batanes research project was designed originally in 2001 by Atholl Anderson, Peter Bellwood and Eusebio Dizon to throw light on the migrations of Neolithic populations from Taiwan to Luzon, or perhaps vice versa (depending on one's point of view on Austronesian prehistory), between about 4500 and 3000 years ago. The results, however, date not only from this time period, but cover all of Batanes prehistory right down to the arrival of Japanese and European seafarers in the late 17th century. During this 4000 year time span, the people of the Batanes Islands forged a unique island-based culture, while remaining in fairly continuous contact with their contemporaries in Taiwan to the north (a major source of nephrite, as well as other aspects of Neolithic material culture), and Luzon to the south.

The field teams comprised the following individuals, in alphabetical order of surname:

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The following graduate student theses have been completed within the bounds of this project:

Shawna Hsiu-Ying Yang, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, ANU: Fishing Sinkers in the Batanes Islands (Philippines) and Taiwan, and Further Relationships with East Asia. MA 2006.

Armand Mijares, Department of Archaeology and Natural History, ANU: Unravelling Prehistory: The Archaeology of North-eastern Luzon. PhD 2006.

Alexandra De Leon, Archaeological Studies Program, University of the Philippines: Pottery and Cultural Interaction from 3000 to 600 BP, Batanes, Northern Philippines. MSc 2008.

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