Modeling Panay Bukidnon Settlement Patterns

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PURPOSE
To compare present Panay Bukidnon material culture with examples of what is preserved in the archaeological record of similar societies in order to make hypotheses concerning historical Panay Bukidnon settlement patterns. Additionally, by looking at 16th and 17th century sites from Cebu and comparing this with what we know of Panay Bukidnon material culture, I will propose a model for what a hypothetical archaeological survey would recover at Panay Bukidnon sites.

The Panay Bukidnon are a tribal agricultural society in the Philippines, specifically the last remaining indigenous group in the Visayas region. This poster aims to give a brief overview of their historical and contemporary material culture as a basis for comparison with that of pre-Hispanic Visayan peoples. Demonstrating Panay Bukidnon cultural distinction from non-indigenous Filipino groups is important for three main reasons:

1. establishing their status as indigenous peoples
2. leaving a cultural record for future generations of tribal members
3. increasing awareness of prolific Panay Bukidnon epic chanting tradition [sugidanon]

CONTEMPORARY MATERIAL CULTURE
Music is an important part of Panay Bukidnon life, whether related to their epic chants collectively called the sugidanon or other songs and dances. A typical ensemble for performing the traditional binangol (hawk-style) dance includes at least a hide and wood drum [tambar], a bamboo flute [tsit], and a copper gong [agung] (Jocano 2009).

Clothing also serves ritual and musical functions. A Panay Bukidnon woman dressed for a formal occasion would wear a red headscarf with coins sewn onto it [pudung], an intricately embroidered camisa [blouse], and a plaid patterned patadyong [barrel skirt] (Jocano 2009:46).

REFERENCES

TWO CEBU-BASED MODELS

In his review of Laura Junker's Cebuan archaeological model presented in Raiding, Trading, and Feasting: The Political Economy of Philippine Chieftains, Peterson critiques her team’s methods heavily while also suggesting how an adaptation of her team’s model could be used more effectively in the future. I propose that his insights would be valuable for a hypothetical survey team working on Panay Island because of the similarities between Cebu and Panay in terms of archaeological data or lack thereof.

As with Junker’s survey, previous teams had most of their success along rivers. Using systematic stratified surficial surveys, they found a number of multi-component sites dating from the prehistoric era to the Spanish occupation, which they grouped into four rough categories ranging from “primary regional centers of from 30-50 hectares in size” to sites “below one hectare in size, including isolated lowland homesteads, lowland hunting/trading camps, upland villages and homesteads, upland hunting/collecting camps, litchen production sites, and ‘other special activity sites’ with very small low density artifact scatters.” These were ranked based on several factors, including evidence of elite burials, relative frequencies of Asian export ceramics to local earthenware, and population density (Peterson 2003:72-74).

Several of the issues that Peterson points out are relevant to Panay-based archaeology. For instance, settlements along rivers were populous at times but shifted due to weather and raiding, and lacked what the Spanish thought of as hierarchical architecture, namely temples, palaces and megalithic structures. He also notes that “Visayans at contact with the Spanish appear to have moved from place to place like nomadic desert Bedouins, and occupied a complex mosaic environment that offered a diversity of resources, but there were few concentrations of productivity that might have fueled urban centers (53-56).” While river mouths were best suited to larger populations, settlements were still mostly scattered and mountain peoples in other regions were known to have migrated down into the lowlands and become Christianized, something that cannot be ruled out in investigating Panay Bukidnon settlement patterns (63).

COMPLICATIONS OF VISAYAN ARCHAEOLOGY

• Most settlements were loosely aligned hamlets that shifted due to weather, crop failure and raiding by other groups
• Spanish sources noted a lack of hierarchical architecture like megalithic temples found elsewhere in SE Asia or chiefly dwellings (Peterson 53-55)
• Western understandings of social hierarchy are problematic when mapped onto Visayan societies and lifeways
• Modeling past Visayan behaviors on the present requires looking through lenses of Indonesian, Muslim Malaysian, Chinese, Spanish, American and Japanese colonialism (62)
• Lack of completed regional earthenware sequences (65)
• Inherent bias favoring recently inhabited multi-component sites due to use of surface surveys over excavation or other belowground survey methods like proton magnetometry and ground-penetrating radar (74-86)
• Semi-tropical climate is not conducive to long-term preservation of bamboo artifacts

Figure 1. Physical map of the Philippines.
Figure 2. Political map of Panay Island.

Figure 6. Iron spear points from Cebu.

Figure 5. 15th Century Chinese porcelain bowl recovered in the Philippines. Similar pieces have been found throughout the country and still function as prestige items among the Panay Bukidnon (Jocano 2009:47).

Figure 7. Earthenware jars and bowls from Gigantes Island, Iloilo.

Figure 8. Map illustrating Indian Ocean trade networks used by Indonesian, Indian, Chinese and Arabic merchants.

Data presented in this poster is part of a paper to be presented by the author at the Conference on the Sugidanon in Iloilo City, Philippines (Contextualizing the Sugidanon: Proposing a Framework for Inquiry n.p.).