Europe-based researchers have a long tradition of Southeast Asian archaeological scholarship. A great deal has changed since our community last met in 2017 at EurASEAA in Poznan, Poland—both in Europe and in Southeast Asia, in academic and political spheres, and with global cultural shifts. We believe that it is essential that our community continues to meet to promote scientific exchanges and discuss thematic developments and prospects for the discipline and students. Our Parisian meeting is open thematically and the geographical coverage includes all ASEAN nations, as well as interactions with neighbouring regions and peoples. The chronological span of focus for this roundtable is later prehistory and protohistory, which we consider to possibly range from c. mid-Holocene to c. first millennium AD/CE, depending on location. Research discussed here may be field-based, analytical, ethnoarchaeological, experimental and/or theoretical. The aim of the meeting is to learn what everyone has been up to since 3 BC (Before Covid), and whether any new scholars have joined our ranks.

The 8th and morning of the 9th will be devoted to presentations of current research projects. On the afternoon of the 9th we will hold a round-table discussion on developments in the discipline, training, themes, and future plans, including the dates and organisation of future meetings. We plan to publish a special issue, a state-of-the-art of European collaborative archaeological research in Southeast Asia.
Meeting schedule

July 8, 2024

10:00-13:00 Welcome and morning session:

*Prehistoric Island Southeast Asian occupations*

1. Shell middens, post(?)-pits, feasting, cremation: mid-Holocene ritual space at the rockshelter of Ille Cave, El Nido, Palawan, Philippines
   Helen Lewis, Victor Paz et al. (TBA)

2. Recent research at Guri Cave
   Hermine Xhaouflair (presented by Aude Favereau)

3. Lepu Kina: a glimpse into the Neolithic of the Sunda Islands
   Jean-Christophe Galipaud and Mélanie Ligot

*Austronesian and Austroasiatic expansions*

4. The Austronesian expanding colonisation in Batanes and Lallo, Cagayan Valley, Philippines
   Kazuhiko Tanaka, Ame Garong, Kaishi Yamagiwa, Eusebio Z. Dizon and Okuno Mitsuru

5. A new model of the origin and spread of the Austroasiatic languages and peoples
   Roger Blench (recorded presentation)

13:00-14:00 Lunch at INHA

14:00-17:00 Afternoon session:

*Ethnographic approaches and archaeological methods in Island Southeast Asia*

6. What do locals know, think they know, and what does it teach us? The case of caves-related knowledge in a rural community
   Sébastien Plutniak

7. A critical look at ethnographic and archaeological survey methods. The case study of Linapacan heritage (Palawan, Philippines)
   Zuzanna Kowalczyk

8. Cosmology, burials and social representations among the Austronesian Lebbo’ in Berau, East Kalimantan, Indonesia
   Antonio Guerreiro

9. Archaeobotany in Southeast Asia: an overview
   Cristina Castillo

Dinner
July 9, 2024

10:00-13:00 Morning session:

Late prehistoric and early historic exchanges

10. Exchange of copper-base metals and glass beads in southern Sumatra since the end of prehistoric times and into the first millennium
Harry Octavianus, Bérénice Bellina, Laure Dussubieux, Thomas Oliver Pryce, and Mélissa Cadet

11. Maritime networks in light of a comparative study of Roman and Roman-inspired materials in South and Southeast Asia and China
Krisztina Hoppál, Bérénice Bellina, Ariane De Saxcé and Laure Dussubieux

12. Metal connections across the South China, Sulu and Celebes Seas, based on eleven new copper-base samples from Palawan, Philippines
Thomas Oliver Pryce

13. Were the early cosmopolitan ports of the Thai-Malay peninsula really places of cultural exchange? A review of twenty years of research into ornaments and ceramics from the first ports of Southeast Asia
Bérénice Bellina and Aude Favereau

13:00-14:00 Lunch at INHA

14:00-17:00 Afternoon session:

Roundtable discussion
Abstracts

Shell middens, post(?)-pits, feasting, cremation: mid-Holocene ritual space at the rockshelter of Ille Cave, El Nido, Palawan, Philippines

Helen Lewis¹, Victor Paz², et al. (PIPRP team members TBA)

Excavations in 1998-2000 under the direction of the National Museum of the Philippines at Ille Cave revealed an extensive, thick layer of shells interpreted as a shell midden and dated to c. 6000 ya. Subsequent research by the Palawan Island Palaeohistory Research Project (PIPRP) found that this shell midden comprised two thick layers of mostly freshwater bivalves and snails, separated by a layer of silt. The shell midden is an extensive set of deposits spread across both the East and West Mouths of the cave platform. This was originally interpreted as probably having developed through annual accumulation, such as through a seasonal round of mollusc harvesting followed by eating at the cave. The time span needed to create the midden layers would depend on the numbers of people involved, but we imagined it could have been over several hundred years. A claim that a human inhumation burial had been found between the two main layers of the shell midden deposits was made in 2006, but no subsequent documentation has been found to substantiate this, and this was for many years just a side note in our site story. In 2017, however, we began to find substantial evidence that these shell layers do have a more complex history. A large, smoothed and deliberately broken stone was found angled into a pit cut into the uppermost shell midden layer, covered with wood ash, bone ash and burnt bone, and charred Conus sp. shell disc beads of a type associated in the area with the ‘Early Neolithic’ (after Fox 1970). This turned out to be a late cremation burial for this site: Ille was already known as the site of a late Palaeolithic cremation burial cemetery (dating c. 8500-9500 BP), but all burials from later periods found before 2017 were inhumations.

Further excavations in this area of the site revealed multiple possible post-pits cutting into both the upper shell midden layer (B912) and the lower shell midden layer (B913). These pits have stone packing and contain burnt and unburnt animal bones representing different animals. For example, a typical pit might contain one juvenile pig tooth, one adult pig toe bone, a bird long bone, one turtle bone, and one oyster shell, in addition to numerous Batissa clam shells. Another might have a snake vertebra, a bird long bone, part of an adult pig jaw, a juvenile pig tooth, a fish bone, and many clam shells. Each pit appears to represent a ‘meal’ with a number of types of meats. The repetitive nature of creating these pits in the same location over and over again, and the similar patterns of deposition in each, suggest to us that the thick shell midden layers may actually date to a much shorter time period – and even, theoretically, to just two major episodes of feasting. We discuss these interesting ritual deposits regarding aspects of types of feasting, and our changing thoughts on the interpretation of the time phase and activities involved in the creation of the Ille shell midden layers.

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Recent research at Guri Cave

Hermine Xhauflair¹ (in absentia; presented by Aude Favereau)

Abstract forthcoming.

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Lepu Kina: a Neolithic shelter in Atauro. A glimpse into the Neolithic of the Sunda Islands

Jean-Christophe Galipaud¹ and Mélanie Ligot²

Well-preserved Neolithic sites are difficult to find in the Sunda Islands and the search for very ancient traces of the first humans on their way to Sahul has often taken precedence over the history of these later periods. The Sunda Islands, between Bali and Timor, are at the margins of Island Southeast Asia, far away from Chinese and Taiwanese Neolithic influences and close to the Papua New Guinea cultural sphere. This original situation certainly influenced the process of neolithisation here. In this presentation we will describe the Neolithic site of Lepu Kina in Arlo (Atauro Island) and open discussion on the triggers, actors and transformations that led to the neolithisation of these islands some 3000 years ago.

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The Austronesian expanding colonization in Batanes and Lallo, Cagayan Valley, Philippines

Kazuhiko Tanaka¹, Ame Garong², Kaishi Yamagiwa³, Eusebio Z Dizon⁴, Okuno Mitsuru⁵

We present our collaborative archaeological research in the Batanes Islands and Lallo, Cagayan Valley, northern Luzon, Philippines from before Covid 19 (BC) and the post-Covid era 2023-4. After a long silence on archaeological research in Batanes (Bellwood and Dizon 2013), follow-up research proposals were approved by the Japanese Foundations to continue archaeological and geological research in Batanes, particularly Batan and Sabtang Islands. The fieldwork activities started in 2018 and 2019 but due to the pandemic everything stopped. The Japanese research grants were cancelled. We reapplied again with a new process, received new grants and had to renew everything that previously accomplished. Two Japan Society for Promotion of Sciences (JSPS) grant projects were approved for implementation for 2024-6. The first, entitled The eruptive history of Iraya Volcano and the exchange history between Taiwan and Luzon viewed from archaeological sites in Batan Island in the Philippines (23KK0017) is a collaborative project between Japanese and Philippine volcanologists (headed by Okuno Okuno) and archaeologists (Kazuhiko Tanaka, Ame Garong, Eusebio Dizon, Kaishi Yamagiwa) on disaster management in prehistoric times. The second JSPS grant, Archaeological investigation on the utilization of plants and detailed stratigraphic sequences of pottery during prehistoric times in northern Luzon (19KK01101, 2019-23), along with another JSPS grant entitled Archaeological investigation on the utilization of plants and comparative chronology of pottery during prehistoric times in the middle and lower reaches of the Cagayan River, northern Luzon (24KK04341, 2024-6), is the continuation of archaeological research in Lallo, Cagayan Valley, at the Marcelina Dumbrique Site in Barangay Catugan, which is less than a kilometer away from the now-famous Nagsabaran Site (Piper et al. 2009; Hung et al. 2011).

A new site, where a double headed or bicephallus lingling-o was discovered in 2023, was investigated initially in 2024. Series of tephra sediments were found above where the lingling-o was located and a black paleosol was observed. Earthenware sherds of possible utilitarian pots were present in the black layer, which is about 1.5 m from the existing surface. At the Marcelina Dumbrique Site, it was observed that the shell midden layers (Layers II-IV), with a thickness of about 1 m, date from the Metal Ages in the deepest part, then protohistoric and historic material remains going to the top. There was a gap of brown clay about 1 m thick and then a Neolithic layer (Layer V) with red-slipped earthenware sherds and fragments of stone adzes. This project is the collaborative work of Kazuhiko Tanaka, Ame Garong, Eusebio Dizon, Kaishi Yamagiwa and Takeji Toizumi. These new archaeological and geological research projects will show the later colonization and expanding settlements of the Austronesians in Batanes and Lallo, Cagayan Valley.

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Double-headed lingling-o found at the Cabison Site, Diptan, Basco, Batan Island, Philippines—the first nephrite artifact found on Batan Island. Most nephrite materials were found in Anaro sites, Itbayat Island, and at the Sand Dunes sites in Sabtang Island. Images: Eusebio Z Dizon

Marcelina Dumbrique Property Site, Barangay Catugan, Lallo Cagayan Valley, Philippines. Stone adze in situ below the thick shell midden deposit with Metal Age artifacts and remains of human burials. Images: Eusebio Z Dizon

A new model of the origin and spread of the Austroasiatic languages and peoples

Roger Blench

The dating and homeland of Austroasiatic has been the subject of much debate, in particular the opposition between models which propose a West to East direction and those which espouse the contrary view. These proposals have been made on rather general linguistic grounds. The last decade has seen a major expansion of our understanding of the Southeast Asian Neolithic, as well as improved reconstructions of proto-languages for most Austroasiatic subgroups. This paper presents a new model for Austroasiatic expansion, in particular looking at the evidence for groups which may have originally had agriculture reverting to farming, and the role of the Austronesians in facilitating maritime movement in the Bay of Bengal. It now appears the Munda peoples reached the east coast of India by sea rather than a land route and the Nicobarese certainly arrived in their present homeland by sea. The absence of maritime culture in both these groups strongly suggests the ships which carried them were commanded by non-Austroasiatic speakers, presumably Austronesians. The overall picture is of a mosaic of farmers and foragers expanding rapidly some four thousand years ago, and considerable fluidity in subsistence strategies.

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What do locals know, think they know, and what does it teach us? The case of caves-related knowledge in a rural community, northern New Guinea

Sébastien Plutniak¹

Since the 19th century and the development of scientific anthropology, rock art has been a continuous source of fascination and rumination about the possible thoughts and cognitive capacities of past humans. Because in some regions of the world people still live around rock art locations—or create rock art—attempts at relating past and current practices and people were continuously reinvented in multiple forms. In this perspective, recent literature published in English called to “bridge the gap” between rock art studies and ethnoarchaeology. I propose a radical answer to this call from the case of a rural community in the Sepik region, northern New Guinea, where multiple caves (adorned or not) exist. This study, focusing on the distribution of knowledge about these caves in the social structure, addresses issues related to the anthropology of archaeological knowledge, of ownership, and to the local consequences of anthropological research.

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A critical look at ethnographic and archaeological survey methods. The case study of Linapacan (Palawan, Philippines) heritage

Zuzanna Kowalczyk¹

This study critically examines the research methods employed on the island of Linapacan (Palawan, Philippines) during the period from 2022-4. The research encompassed ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and archaeological surveys, with the primary objective of discovering and identifying sites associated with the Spanish colonial era and potential pre-Hispanic sites on the island. The project underscored the significance of engaging with and interviewing local community members, highlighting the limitations of non-invasive archaeological methods for site identification. Establishing trust and involving local communities emerged as pivotal elements of the research. The paper delves into the discourse on definitions of tangible heritage, offering a potential starting point for discussions on preconceptions in archaeological practices.

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Cosmology, burials and social representations among the Austronesian Lebbo’ in Berau, East Kalimantan, Indonesia

Antonio J. Guerreiro¹

The peoples of the Karstic range of East Kalimantan comprises several sub-groups, namely the Lebbo’ and Ulun Darat. They affirm that they are the first inhabitants of the inland area and its surroundings; this large region showing a rugged terrain forms a reserve of forest products, especially bird nests. The Lebbo’ people are one section of the former Basap hunters-gatherers—a derogatory exonym made up of combined Malay words—living in the Lesan River basin in Berau who settled down at the turn of the twentieth century (c. 1890–1910). There are about seven localised groups belonging to the same ethno-linguistic complex of peoples (Baram Rejang) spread across Eastern Kutai and Berau Regencies in Kaltim, up to Bulungan (Sajau group; Guerreiro 2013, 2014, 2015). Baram-Rejang speakers are established from coast to coast in Borneo, from Sarawak to East Kalimantan. In the process of settling down, the Lebbo’ (lit. ‘house’) developed the swidden cultivation of padi and other activities, under both Dayak and Malay influences. The Lesan River Lebbo’ had exchanges with
their Dayak neighbours as well as with the Berau Malays, with whom they have traded forest products for a long time in the border areas between the two sultanates. They had a ritual tradition based on shamanism, expressed by the Tuak Harvest Festival as well as the Nobèt curing and purification rituals carried out by shamans/adat leaders. However, their cosmology and eschatological beliefs differ sharply from those of the neighbouring Dayak peoples (Kayanic, Kenyahic) as well as former Punan foragers (P. Kelai). The Lebbo’ traditionally practiced cave burials, but in the second half of the twentieth century they evolved different burial modes. This talk provides an outline of Lebbo’ beliefs, myths, and social representations.

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Archaeobotany in Southeast Asia: an overview
Cristina Castillo¹

This presentation is an overview of archaeobotanical work conducted in mainland Southeast Asia. Sites where archaeobotanical studies were conducted belong to different periods and the aims of the archaeological projects are wide-ranging. I will discuss a few of these sites and their significance, for example: 1) Archaeobotanical work in northeast Thailand has yielded results which have furthered our understanding of rice agriculture in the region; 2) Plant remains from peninsular sites in Thailand and Myanmar found within the context of the Maritime Silk Route provide evidence of the arrival of non-native crops; and 3) Neolithic sites in Vietnam and Thailand support the idea that small-grained grasses, such as foxtail millet, were as important as rice in their diets. Although we have seen a rise in publications over the past fifteen years on the plants used and consumed in Southeast Asia, there are still many gaps to fill geographically and chronologically. It is hoped that archaeologists working in Southeast Asia continue to integrate traditional flotation techniques in their fieldwork to obtain the botanical remains necessary to answer questions on diet, farming and ecology.

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July 9, 2024 morning session

Exchange of copper-base metals and glass beads in southern Sumatra since the end of prehistoric times and into the first millennium
Harry Octavianus Sofian¹, Bérénice Bellina², Laure Dussubieux³, Thomas Oliver Pryce⁴, Mélissa Cadet⁵

Historically, Sumatra is the place of origin of a large regional lowland trading kingdom: Srivijaya, mainly a redistributive type of kingdom. The model developed for the historical period describes a system whereby the highlands provided valuable raw materials that were brought by river to the exchange centres in the lowlands, which acted as international markets. There, valuable objects such as metals, beads and other materials were obtained in exchange for upland products. Is this upland-lowland model of exchange valid both for the late prehistoric and early historical period? We also want to study the external connections of Sumatra throughout this period. With metallographic, XRF and lead isotope analyses on metals and LA-ICP-MS analyses on glass beads from Sumatra, we wish to understand better the exchange networks of Sumatra through time.

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Maritime networks in the light of a comparative study of Roman and Roman-inspired materials in South and Southeast Asia and China

Krisztina Hoppál¹, Bérénice Bellina-Pryce², Ariane De Saxcé³, Laure Dussubieux⁴

In recent years, increasing excavations of late first millennium BC and early first millennium AD ports in Asia combined with provenance analysis of materials (glass, stone, etc.) have revealed a growing number of Roman artefacts. These foreign objects, imported from afar, are seemingly easily identifiable even to an untrained eye and thus—along with written records—are often used to reconstruct direct maritime trade and diplomatic contacts between the Roman Empire and regions east of India. While such direct contacts existed with certain regions of South Asia, this is not the case with Southeast Asia and China. Here, these non-local objects mostly arrived indirectly via a series of mediators. Interrelation between these transferring regions has not, however, been fully explored. It is also less emphasised that besides objects of Roman origin, a number of Asia-produced artefacts that integrate Roman elements to varying degrees (style, morphology, techniques), hereafter referred to as ‘Roman-inspired’, have been discovered in these regions. Even though these Roman-inspired objects were typically made by local Asian communities residing outside of the Roman Empire, they are often incorrectly referred to as Roman in the literature. Locally-produced Roman-inspired objects provide unique insights on specific connections, trade and craft organisation, and on cultural reception. In this presentation, Roman and Roman-inspired objects from South and Southeast Asia and China will be compared by date and distribution to trace possible links between these regions, or to show their absence. In addition, these sets of data will be interpreted using the theoretical model of reception studies. The aims are to examine transregional connectivity in light of Roman and Roman-inspired objects and to reveal more about interaction patterns of ancient maritime networks. This study also looks at the social dimension of trade, attempting to comprehend the implication of these finds within local communities and interrogating why certain communities in different regions of South and Southeast Asia and China preferred different types of Roman and related objects.

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Metal connections across the South China, Sulu and Celebes Seas, based on eleven new copper-base samples from Palawan

Thomas Oliver Pryce¹

Archaeometallurgical analysis of eleven late prehistoric and early historic copper-base artefacts from Palawan offers our first insights into ancient Filipino nonferrous base metal exchange networks; adding to the single sample of bronze casting spillage from Savidug, Batanes, that has stood alone for fifteen years. The new samples are from Nakangef Makit, Makanait Maliit, Ille Cave and Idulot Cave, and comprise bangle, ring, bell and possible socketed tool typologies. Detected alloys include bronze, brass, leaded brass and leaded gunmetal (this does not mean it is a gun!), which are regionally unusual in their incorporating zinc as an alloying component. In this presentation I will offer preliminary interpretations of metal exchange patterns with reference to Mainland Southeast Asia and Indonesia, while full interpretation is prepared with colleagues from the National Museum of the Philippines and the University of the Philippines.

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Were the early cosmopolitan ports of the Thai-Malay peninsula really places of cultural exchange? A review of twenty years of research into ornaments and ceramics from the first ports of Southeast Asia

Bérénice Bellina¹ and Aude Favereau²

Twenty years of excavations and technological analyses of the ornament and ceramic industries of the early ports of the Isthmus of Kra have provided us with a complex palaeo-sociological landscape of these places and the exchanges that did or did not take place there. We return to the importance that should be attached to imports, but also and above all to the various local productions that involved exogenous traits or foreigners. We will show the diversity of cultural responses within various South and Southeast Asian communities, and how they have evolved over time.

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