**Was the construction diverted?** No. In June or July 2001, Montalvan saw that the bridge project contractor had built a bunkhouse at the Open Site and had marked some trees with "X", indicating that these trees would be cut down.

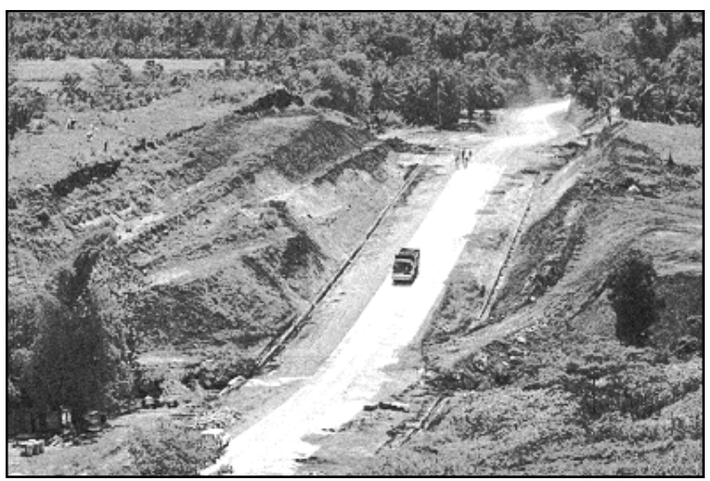
**Did you report this matter to the government agencies?** Yes. We invited several government heads to a meeting on July 12, 2001 at Xavier University to discuss ways to preserve Huluga.

**Who attended the meeting?** From our group, it was Burton, Montalvan, and Luis E. Ostique of Museo de Oro. From the government and private offices, 16 representatives attended, seven of which we consider major:

- Engr. Jorie Bingona, City Engineer's Office
- Dir. Fernando P. Quililan, Department of Environment and Natural Resource (DENR)-Region 10
- Alex D. Jimenez, Environmental Management Bureau (EMB)-Region 10
- Engr. Estevan F. Agdagdag, White Horse Trading Development & Construction
- Thaddeus A. Bautista, Historical and Cultural Commission, City Hall
- Dir. Dorothy Jean Pabayo, Department of Tourism (DOT)-Region 10
- Dir. Cynthia Viajar Abanil, Cagayan de Oro-Iligan Corridor Special Development Project

**What was agreed in the meeting?** Huluga should be preserved.

**What happened next?** On July 16, 2001, Burton, Bingona, and two companions went to Huluga. There, Burton identified the area that should be preserved. This area was the Open Site and caves. During





that visit, **Bingona assured Burton that the Huluga Open Site and caves would be preserved.** Also, Burton and Bingona agreed that the 2000-meter radius originally recommended by Burton in 1999 need not be followed as long as the bridge is diverted so as to preserve the Huluga Open Site and caves.

**Did the mayor issue any statement regarding Huluga after that visit?** Yes. In an article by Butch Enerio of the national newspaper *Today* (July 17, 2001) Emano is quoted as saying, "I give you my assurance that no historical or archaeological site will be destroyed as we implement the infrastructure projects, because I myself am very concerned about these sites."

**Was this promised fulfilled?** No, because the contractor continued to work at the Open Site.

**What was your response?** We organized the Heritage Conservation Advocates (HCA). On September 8, 2001, we issued a **Manifesto of Protest to Mayor Vicente Y. Emano Against the Planned Destruction of Huluga** .The Manifesto was signed by several individuals representing different organizations. The National Museum also wrote a letter to the mayor, urging him to protect the heritage site. The media published reports about the issue.

**What was contained in the Manifesto of Protest?** A description of the problem, and the following proposals:

- Postpone the construction of the road and bridge.
- Consult the National Museum regarding the placement of the road and bridge so that they will not destroy the Huluga Site.
- Consult the National Museum in the production of a map showing the revised location of the road and bridge.
- Publish the revised map in our local papers so that the public may know the circumstances and consequences of the project.

**Where these proposals implemented?** No.

**Were there other recommendations by your group?** When consulted by the DOT, Burton suggested that the village of Huluga be reconstructed for education and tourism.



**What was the result of your protest?** The DENR issued a cease-and-desist order in 2001.

**Was the project stopped?** Apparently, only for about a year. On June 7, 2003, we discovered to our horror that a huge portion of the Open Site was already demolished. A road now cuts through it, leading to a bridge that is still being constructed.

**Why did you not know about the construction earlier?** There was no news about it, no announcement from City Hall. The whole activity was done secretly and quickly.

**Does the project have an Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC)?** Yes, but its authors violated several legal provisions and requirements. The claimed ECC does not have an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA). There are other anomalies about it.

**Are you going to file legal charges?** Yes. On July 16, 2003, we filed an administrative case against Emano and the contractor UKC Builders before the DENR. We requested the DENR to issue a cease-and-desist order. In August, Senator Loren Legarda also filed a resolution seeking Senate investigation on the destruction of Huluga.

**Any other plans of the HCA?** We shall reveal specific plans as we move on. But generally, we are determined to remain vigilant to save what remains of our heritage, which is also the heritage of all humanity.

We must remember. We must know who we are. We have blossomed today not because we are separated from the past, but because we are connected to our roots. ■

*Whale harpoon found at Huluga Open Site*

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Published by the Heritage Conservation Advocates and Nazca Graphic Design & Photography, Cagayan de Oro, September 3, 2003. For updates, see our website: http://heritage.sni.ph