

ASIAN PALEOPRIMATOLOGY

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Preface

Eight years have already passed since we began our cooperative research project with Myanmar researchers in Pondaung area of Myanmar in 1998. Our work has been very successful, and we have obtained some rewarding results, which made important contributions to the study of primate evolution in East Asia.

We have discovered a number of new primate fossils, including the ones belonging to new genera or taxa. We have also found maxillae and maxillary teeth of species that have previously only been reported by finds of mandibles and mandibular teeth. These results proved that various primate species had already existed in Southeast Asia during the middle Eocene, and revised the scenario of primate evolution in this part of the world. Our findings also include many non-primate mammal fossils, including several new species. By comparing these mammal fossils with the previously reported fossils in other parts of Asia, we have established the importance of Myanmar in the Paleontological research in Asia.

During the period of our project, we have invited two young scholars from Myanmar to the Asian Science Seminar (Asian Science Seminar on Biodiversity: messages from Primatology) held at Primate Research Institute in 1999. We have also hosted an international symposium entitled "Evolution of the Tertiary Primates in Asia" in 2003. Many scholars were invited to the symposium from abroad, including two paleontologists from Myanmar, and the meeting was a great success. We have also accepted two graduate students from Myanmar, as a part of our efforts to improve research environment in this field both in Japan and Myanmar.

We are determined to further develop our joint project, hoping to discover more fossils. By continuing our research, we intend to investigate the important role of fossil primates from Myanmar in the evolutionary history of primates in Southeast Asia.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to many people and institutions that have supported our project. We could not have carried out the research without help of researchers and other collaborators in Myanmar universities, National Museum of Myanmar, Myanmar governments, Embassy of Myanmar in Japan, the Japanese Embassy in Myanmar, and the villages near the expedition areas. Special thanks are due to the following personnel (not in a particular order): Ms. Yumi Kaneko (Embassy of Myanmar in Japan), Ambassador Odano and Counselor Osugi (the Japanese Embassy in Myanmar), Ms. Thida Tun and Mr. Kyaw Thiha (Ministry of Culuture), Mr. Nyunt Han, Mr. Kyaw Win, Mr. Myo Nyunt Aung, Mr. Win Kyaing, Mr. Min Swe, and Mr. Aung Aung Kyaw (Department of Archaeology, Ministry of Culture), Maj. Bo Bo (Ministry of Defence), Ms. Nu Mya Zan, Ms. Mi Mi Thet Nwe, Ms. Htay Htay Swe, and Ms. Thin Thin Aye (National Museum of Myanmar), Dr. Tin

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Nobuo Shigehara

Leader of the Myanmar-Japan Joint Paleontological Expedition Teams, 1998-2005



On the ferry boat of Irrawaddy River.

Cover photo: Pagoda with liclined gurdien lions in Bahin village.

Back cover photo: Distant view of Bagan from Irrawaddy River.