

**Introduction: Fire in the Hearth:  
Overview of Prehistoric Philippine Pottery  
with Reference to Burial Jars**

Esperanza Bunag Gatbonton

OF MAN'S earliest material culture, pottery perhaps best reflects his creative and thinking abilities. It had an early beginning in the history of man, coming after his ability to make stone tools, then essentials for survival. Pottery may be considered the first refinement introduced into this savage environment, marking man's ability to make "new substances which [did] not occur ready-made in nature" [Childe, 1952: 49]. Its development as a utilitarian vessel was strongly connected to his improving social condition.

Archaeological data and radiocarbon-14 determination on two Philippine sites have yielded early dates for pottery in this archipelago — among the oldest dates for pottery in the Asian region. Virtually situated on opposite ends of the archipelago, one site is in the northern province of Cagayan in Luzon; the other, in the remote southern island of Sanga-Sanga in Tawi-Tawi, Sulu.

The Sanga-Sanga shards excavated in Balobok Rockshelter from a midden by Alexander Spoehr in 1969 from Layer 2, 120 cm and 85 cm depth from the surface were dated  $7,945 \pm 190$  B.P. or 6,185-5,805 B.C. and  $6,650 \pm 180$  B.P. or 5,680-5,520 B.C. [Smith, 1979: 498-99]. These were fragments from domestic pots slipped with red hematite. Plain earthenware shards recovered from the upper levels of Layer 1 of Laurente Cave in the municipality of Peñablanca, Cagayan, were dated at  $7,830 \pm 170$  B.P. or 6,050 - 5,710 B.C. The cave itself had served as an habitation site since 16,000 B.C. [Peralta ms., n.d.: 57]

In 1992 a National Museum team, together with two Japanese researchers, excavated anew a still undisturbed portion of the Balobok Rockshelter. It had served as a continuous habitation site for hunters and gatherers from  $8,000 \pm 110$  B.P. (6,050 B.C.) up to  $5,140 \pm 100$  B.P. (3,190 B.C.). Layers 2 and 3, representing the middle and the later occupational phases, contained some potsherds, polished stone and shell tools. The

shards were polished, incised, inlaid with lime, slipped or cord-marked. Radiocarbon date for cultural layer II is  $7,290 \pm 120$  B.P. (5,340 B.C.); cultural layer I has a C-14 date of  $5,140 \pm 100$  B.P. (3,190 B.C.) [Ronquillo *et al.*, 1993: 8-9]. Their surface decorations and hematite paint give these Sanga-Sanga shards particular importance: intimating a measure of aesthetic refinement at that early date to enhance the purely functional role of common utilities. Hematite may have also been introduced for other purposes like waterproofing, or to signify some ritual or symbolic intention no longer apparent to us.

These very early dates approximate for the Philippines the "Neolithic revolution" that Gordon Childe associated with the growth in population, the expansion of settlement and the increase in food production in Europe [Childe: 67]. For between 13,000 B.P. and 5,000 B.C., the Asian mainland and much of Southeast Asia were moving away from "Paleolithic savagery" as well.

Agriculture had been introduced: The oldest evidence of shifting agriculture so far recorded was in Taiwan. The palynological work of Matsuo Tsukada indicates that by 12,000 B.P., clearings of vegetation and of forests were already being done to make way for fields [Chang, 1976: 82-83]. In China the Yang-shao culture covering the areas of western Honan, central eastern Shensi and southern Shansi dating back to 2,200 B.C. [Chang:121] was associated with a people who practiced shifting agriculture. Rice cultivation was already practiced in Thailand from around 3,500 B.C. to 5,000 B.C. [Bayard, 1968: 135]. A number of botanists believe that "the most important and earliest regions of the domestication of plants" were in the general area of mainland Southeast Asia and its neighboring areas [Solheim, 1970:146 (Vavilov [1951] 1-366)]. The Rice Terraces of Banaue have a radiocarbon date of  $800-1,000 \pm 250$  B.P. [Evangelista, 1981: 3].

The Philippine dates suggest the emergence or existence in the islands of a social structure already capable of exercising some control over the environment and directly responsible for the production of special goods which society needed. Within this nucleus there developed skills and industry specialization that created divisions in labor like pottery, goldsmithing, weaving, boatmaking and farming.

But despite the early inclusion of pottery among man's material culture no direct clues have ever surfaced that can indicate how, or when, or where pottery began. Given the nature of pottery, which is extremely friable, zeroing in on its exact origins is next to impossible. As Dr. Jesus

Peralta states, every potsherd found extant suggests earlier fragments no longer to be found, for, having disintegrated, its elements were reclaimed by the soil [Peralta, personal communication, 1995].

In all probability, the appearance and development of pottery from place to place may have occurred independently of each other. Specific needs at specific times appear to precipitate inventions; and technology developed toward such a direction only, blind to side issues. For instance in the Near East where cob (a mixture of clay and straw) was extensively used for building material, terra cotta for tiling houses was developed earlier. Tiles were already in use for three millennia and an oven for drying cereal grains and baking bread had already been invented before its first pottery was fired [Beazley, ed. 1985: 170].

In Asia, pottery was in use at a much earlier period than in the Near East. The oldest recorded habitation site containing pottery in Asia is Myanmar (Burma) dated 13,400 B.P.  $\pm$  200 years or 11,650 B.C. to 11,250 B.C. Pottery shards were excavated at the deepest layer of Padah-Lin Cave [Peralta ms.: 41. (See Appendix 4)]. What is distinctive of this early period is that all were cave sites and pottery samples were plain, or bore cord marks, or were painted.

In the absence of actual knowledge on how pottery originated, opinions generally attribute the introduction of this technology to accident rather than design. Renfrew states that accidental firing of clay occurred in hearths, where the ground surface hardened [Renfrew and Bahn, 1994: 293]. Early Man may have drawn some conclusions from this phenomenon. The warming effect of fire kindling the hearth gave man a certain understanding of its effect: Fire produces heat and warmth; heat has a drying effect and causes the evaporation of moisture. Fire transforms matter from one state to another. Forest fire or even charred food might have taught man how to control and temper fire. Armed with such empirical knowledge and continuous experimentation, he eventually mastered fire. The invention of an oven in the Near East was one such attempt [Beazley: 170]. It represented the first "deliberate facility to control the conditions under which the temperature was raised" [Renfrew and Bahn: 292].

The ever changing environment during the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods, which marked the fall and rise of sea levels that radically changed landscapes and climate, gave Early Man the stimulus to adapt faster. By the early Neolithic period, physical changes within his own makeup so altered his characteristics; a new lifestyle gradually evolved for him, triggering more changes in the environment, this time with intervention from

man himself.

Acquiring familiarity with the vegetation and fauna of his habitat, he eventually learned to cultivate and domesticate them, ensuring a variety of food resources for his consumption. In time his resourcefulness caused new discoveries in food preparation. Instead of eating raw or constantly broiling food over fire or charcoal, he may have wanted to boil his meat. And how to eat the cereal grains? For Southeast Asia before the introduction of pottery, the ubiquitous bamboo appears to have provided the solution some of the time. Excavations at Spirit Cave in North Thailand show that bamboo segments were used to boil meat. [Gorman 1972: 102.] Grains might well have been cooked in this same manner. Rice, in fact, continues to be cooked in this way in several areas of the Philippines.

But though bamboo might have been plentiful, supplies closer to habitat might not have been inexhaustible; and the daily cutting of fresh bamboo might have proved impractical and time-consuming, taking away much needed time for new concerns like farming. At about this time some form of commercial barter had been initiated into Early Man's society, which led to craft specialization. A person or a group of persons undertook to perform certain skilled tasks in exchange for materials which his community lacked [Evangelista 1966:23]. Potting was one of the earliest forms of craft specialization.

As demonstrated in the example above, initial observation does not turn into instant cognition and resolution. Though sun-dried vessels were used as receptacles for dried goods as exemplified in archaeology in the Near East, the next step was not thrusting it into the fire in order to produce pottery. Clay that would hold shape when sun-dried will not necessarily keep its form when fired. Not only firing conditions needed mastering but tempering the clay as well, if it would not collapse or break. What type of fuel would burn efficiently and give enough heat; how much kneading and how much water to make the clay more plastic—such conditions were to be learned, the differences noted, absorbed by the mind and repeated over and over again until by rote man could tell on sight what clay and temper would be suitable for making pots, what fuel would burn and heat well to transform raw clay into hardened terra cotta. From plain kneading and shaping with his hands, he introduced innovations: The use of anvil and paddle to smooth out the pot's body and perfect its form; the use of shell to make incisions, or cordage for enhancing its texture and appearance; the use of hematite to paint and glaze its body.

One can safely surmise that the first clay pots were meant for cook-

ing. Diagnostic shards found in Philippine archaeological sites show the persistence of globular pots in all sizes [Peralta ms.: 125]. This form was probably preferred because its shape was easier to fashion by hand and proved to be the most functional as a receptacle and to place over stone hearths.

Extant pieces of Philippine pottery recovered are generally associated with funerary ware, either as ritual vessels or as burial jars. We meet up with the prehistoric "artists" and "technicians" through these wares that excelled in refinement and artistry [Fox: 96]. We arrive at an understanding of their social milieu — at an appreciation of their deep-seated spirituality, belief in the afterlife and the strong values they placed on kinship. Considerable time and material resources were used to observe these rituals, which could have been channeled to existing needs of the living. Iron tools for instance were scarce but these were occasionally found among the paraphernalia of the dead.

The late Dr. Otley Beyer had attributed the introduction of jar burial practice to Chinese migration from South China (Fukien) to northern Philippines, i.e., Batanes and the Babuyan Islands, where he placed "the oldest jar burial type in the Philippines—going back to the early centuries of the Christian era" [Solheim 1960: 131]. Beyer theorized that the practice spread downward to other regions of the archipelago: Tayabas, Quezon; to Mindoro; the provinces of Camarines Sur; Sorsogon, Camarines Norte; Masbate; Marinduque; to Samar and Negros; Zamboanga and Basilan. But later scholars, notably Dr. Robert Fox, Prof. Alfredo Evangelista and Dr. Wilhelm Solheim, attribute the practice of jar burial as part of the cultural diffusion which entered the Philippines from Borneo, the Malay Peninsula, Thailand and Indochina. They all noted similarities in the shapes and decorative elements of the jars and associated pots and other cultural materials like earrings and beads and metal implements to those found in archaeological digs in the places cited above [Evangelista 1966: 24; Fox 1970: 163; Solheim 1970: 52-56].

Separate archaeological excavations conducted by Fox, Evangelista and Solheim in various areas of the country show that an older tradition of jar burial in caves had entered the Philippines from the south at a much earlier date than those of Batanes and Babuyan. Jar burial sites on Babuyan are mostly in cairns and open sites and contain trade porcelain surmised to be from the Sung [11th century-10th century A.D.] [Fox :158-59 (Solheim 1960)]. Of course, one cannot altogether discount the possibility that some future archaeological explorations on the Batanes Islands may yet un-

cover jar burial sites of comparable age as those of Palawan and elsewhere, which should support Dr. Beyer's hypothesis. However, it is not altogether untenable to think of the possibility of this tradition entering the country from other points of the archipelago.

Fox himself points out that though data indicate that the practice of jar burial entered Palawan through the actual migration of people from northern Indochina (Vietnam) and South China around the margins of the South China basin, "[t]he great variation in the practice of jar burial in the Philippines from Late Neolithic times to the present, as well as its association with very different pottery complexes and other artifacts would indicate that jar burial came into the Philippines from different directions and at different times" [Fox 1979: 235]. Even in the relatively younger jar burials excavated on the Babuyan Islands, Solheim observed variations "in the kind and size of the jars and in the sites" [Solheim: 127]. Fox also notes that its practice here was "more highly developed . . . than elsewhere in South East Asia; an example of area specialization which was related to the treatment of the dead and a highly developed cult of the dead" [Fox 1970: 166].

Alfredo Evangelista, who had worked at the Nueva Ecija site in 1957 and the cave sites in Bato, Sorsogon, in 1956, also expresses concern about the widely held precept that the Batanes-Babuyan sites typified the oldest jar burial in the country. For other jar burial sites in the country like Nueva Ecija, Sorsogon, Samar and Palawan prove atypical vis-à-vis the Batanes and Babuyan finds. Their associated pottery points to a more ancient time. Similarly the absence of metal (iron) in these places may indicate that the practice of jar burial was introduced into the Philippines before the Christian era began. Evangelista points out that studies outside the Philippines like those from Japan and Formosa suggest that "a jar burial culture or cultures or, as likely, the idea of a jar burial (that is, stimulus diffusion) entered the Philippines at an earlier date, before the birth of Christ, and if so, these sites may pre-date the appearance of iron anywhere in the Philippines." Again this means that the early people of the archipelago themselves elaborated on the practice and ritual, which better explains "the great variation [existing] in the type of pottery and associated materials found in the many burial sites. They do not appear to be the product of a single tradition" [Evangelista 1981: n.p.].

Though caves continued to be used for burial they were seldom used as habitation sites after A.D. 200. But with the move of habitation to open sites, along coastal areas, sheltered bays or around lakes or mouth of

rivers, it was possible that burial in open sites took place [Evangelista, 1966: 22]. However, few sites have been encountered in open fields. Their rarity has been attributed to farming or even mining activities, which might have mindlessly destroyed such sites. In 1957 laborers prospecting for manganese ore in Sitio Butaling in Carranglan, Nueva Ecija, came across several large jars associated with a few stone tools, one of which was turned over to the National Museum [Evangelista, 1957: n.p.]. The accidental discovery was later confirmed by Evangelista as a jar burial site of great antiquity associated with lithic tools.

In San Narciso, Quezon Province (formerly Tayabas), prewar excavations had unearthed jar burial sites, one of which had "a heavily grooved stone cover" [Evangelista, 1969: 102]. Solheim had reworked this site in the early fifties and found cylindrical burial jars with round bottoms and high straight necks. Those used for infant secondary burial were globular. Associated materials were shells and beads and a few intrusive ceramics. Another prewar exploration site was Pilar, Sorsogon, where three sites uncovered 24 burial jars with bone fragments, glass and paste beads, and iron implements [Evangelista, 1969:102].

Dr. Beyer reported many other sites where prehistoric burial jars and stone tools have been found including the Metro Manila districts of Santa Mesa, Cubao and Santa Ana and the outlying provinces of Bulacan and Rizal.

Stone covers appear to be a common feature of burial jars, likewise, the practice of putting one jar over the other sealed with lime. In Samar stone covers have circular grooves carved to fit the jar. In open fields the jars were lowered into a deep hole reaching up to their rims. They were sealed with another jar or with heavy covers made out of limestone, then covered with earth. Cairns found on the Babuyan Islands were artificially made coral enclosures measuring some eight to fifteen feet in diameter and reaching four feet in height. The jars were lowered into the structure up to their rims and topped with another inverted jar, sometimes of the same make. In this region, burial jars were found embedded on coral outcroppings in the coastal areas [Solheim, 1960: 136, 118-119].

The prehistoric funerary jars and their associated pottery excavated in Luzon were mostly plain: cylindrical, round bottom, high neck with narrow rounded shoulder. Large ones were used for primary burial; smaller and more rotund ones, for bone burial. Sophisticated and finely potted, highly burnished and painted grave offerings and ritual vessels like chalices, bowls, carinate pots and tall footed trays with decorated stems have

also been found in Luzon, but these were mostly associated with inhumation.

The earthenware jars and associated pottery found in cave explorations and excavations in Central Visayas, Mindanao and Palawan of the Neolithic and Early Metal periods are in comparison more varied and marked with such refinement and creative imagination. The Late Neolithic Period in Palawan appears to have spawned a nascent pottery tradition, which produced the five extant earthenware vessels from Leta Leta Cave in El Nido, northern Palawan, one of which was an anthropomorphic vessel, its mouth agape into a wide yawn. Together with this was a high-stemmed dish with scoring along the lip, its stand ornamented with triangular cut-outs forming a complex design of interconnecting trapezoids and Xes. (This particular design is one on a list of diagnostic traits attributed to the early phase of pottery development during the Late Neolithic [1,000 B.C.-A.D. 300].) [Plate 8]. Another is a finely shaped stem cup with thick appliquéd lip and appliquéd ring on the base of its stem — approximating the contemporary design concept of a wine or sherry glass. A smaller version has a shorter stem with flared foot and mouth. All are finely potted [Plate 10].

Twenty-nine of the Tabon Caves complex explored and excavated in the mid sixties yielded a wide range of burial jars and other earthenware vessels dating from 500 B.C. to 300 B.C. (Uyaw Cave associated with bronze adzes and spear, iron and glass beads and bracelets) to the youngest, probably Kabuwan found with Sung-Yuan ceramic [Fox, 1970: 8-10]. Elsewhere in Iwahig, still in the Quezon area of central Palawan, Duyong Cave proved to be another jar burial site, associated with bronze and iron tools and jade with an estimated date of 300 B.C. to 500 B.C. Pilanduk Cave dated 3,500 B.C.-4,500 B.C or earlier by cultural comparison, contained jar burials with flake tools and Neolithic edge-ground ax [Fox: 65-66].

The burial jars found within the Tabon Cave complex are elaborately designed. The now famous Manunggul Jar from Chamber A from the Late Neolithic Age yielded a carbon date of 710-890 B.C. [Fox, 1970: 94; 1979: 233]. This unique jar had been used for secondary burial. Its shoulder and lid cover are decorated by scrolls, defined by incised lines filled in with hematite paint. They resemble much the tips of tendrils but symbolize perhaps the crest of waves of parting water as the ship cuts through. Punctuated dots fill in the ground of the design. The seated figures on the ship have bulbous noses, wide but thin lips and large staring eyes. The same blanklike stare is matched by the carved eyes on the prow. Both seem intent on the journey ahead even as the rower appears to be mouthing



words as he steers his ship: the eternal guide to the life beyond [Plate 1].

The pottery that came out of the Tabon Cave complex exhibits a variety of designs from whorls that radiate into sinuous lines; or tightly coiled lines; S-scroll motifs with punctuated cuts or dots; interlocking diaper pattern; more scrolls but sloping and meandering through the surface of a jar; or wavy combed pattern; or slanting S-scrolls, a combination of combed lines curving at both ends, where they disappear beneath another set of curved lines. There are nests of inverted Vees combining with combed designs bending at the center and interspersed with wavy patterns in short bursts.

One unique pot, with a round body and wide-stem base with molded ring, has a rooflike cover open on one end. On the cover is a "stirrup design" set off by bands of herringbone pattern and topped with a row of triangles [Fox: 115]. Other distinctive traits of this cave complex are the tronconical covers similar to those of Sa-Huynh in Vietnam. The associated grave offerings were also similar, consisting of bracelets and earrings and tools.

The explorations undertaken by Solheim in the fifties of Kalanay Cave in Masbate, Central Visayas, have resulted in the grouping of a pottery complex that has become known as "Kalanay." Solheim used characteristic designs and their elements as diagnostics for linking the pottery tradition of one site to another. Some of the most common designs belonging to this complex are paired diagonals and borders; curvilinear scrolls and triangles; rectangular scrolls; carved cutouts in ring stands; crenelated scallops and lenticular cuts or notches in carinate pots [Solheim, 1964: 13]. Some zoomorphic designs have appeared in shards found in this cave. Many of these designs are found in the potteries of other excavation sites but stylistic execution varies. The potting methods, as well as the type of clay and temper used, also differ but the similarities of their decorative elements suggest a confluence of cultural interaction, diffused over a long period of time allowing for local stylization and variation.

In this context, intrusive pottery traditions entered the south through contact or brought in by migrants at different times in prehistory; not from a single entry point nor from one source or pottery tradition.

Similarities have been noted in the forms and designs of the pottery from Sa-Huynh, Vietnam; Gua cha, Malaysia and Niah Cave in Borneo—countries bordering the South China Sea basin—and the potteries found within the archipelago, particularly, Palawan, Mindanao, Kalanay and Negros Oriental [Fig. 1].

But similarities as such do not presuppose the direct linkage or lineage of one pottery tradition to another. For instance, the potteries found in Chamber A of Manunggul Cave, a Neolithic site (890 B.C.-710 B. C.), bear several diagnostic traits typically found in the pottery of Sa-Huynh, and Kalanay [ca. 200 B.C.], which are both Iron Age sites [Fox 1970: 163 (Finn [1958]156)]. However, the absence from Kalanay of carved paddle impressions and cord markings, the stock trademarks of the Neolithic Period, and other designs unique only to Tabon make the relationship tenuous. Fox observes that carved paddle impression and cord marking survived up to the Developed Metal Age in Palawan but disappeared from jar burial sites with iron. He also thinks that the carved paddle decoration entered the Philippines from the southwest and "may have faded out as a major type of surface treatment while diffusing to the central and northern Philippines during the Metal Age" [Fox: 161].

The shared motifs between Kalanay and Bacong in Negros like the lenticular cuts and notches on the vessels, as well as the fluted trimmings on jar covers and angular forms of pots with tall necks and everted rims suggest some kind of affinity. But again there are many distinctive features and forms exclusive to Bacong like the use of cock's head as trimmings for jar covers and the open-ended cylinders and colander-type pots not found in Kalanay. Contact between Masbate and Negros Oriental is highly probable, in fact may be presumed because of their proximity. Both are Iron Age sites and their pottery dates back to circa 200 B.C. Tenazas attributes the "differential distribution of the Magsuhot pottery complex outside its centre" to trade and the intermarriage of women members outside its group [Tenazas, 1982: 7]. This may explain why the more esoteric ritual vessels of Bacong, whose manufacture was exclusively a male area, according to Tenazas, appeared not to have spread farther.

There are questions to ask about space-time relationships — at what point did one pottery complex acquire the shared characteristics and from where? In cases where affinities appear strong, which is the parent tradition? In cases where similarities are limited, were their pottery traditions at all related? This predicament can be illustrated in the case of the excavations at the Kulaman Plateau where one of its caves yielded a radiocarbon 14 date of A.D. 585 ± 85 years from a collagen sample taken from a human bone. The pottery recovered from the Kulaman Plateau was identified as being "distinctly related to both Kalanay and Bau [in Sarawak] assemblages" because of their shapes and surface treatment [Kurjack 1971: 127]. Yet according to Solheim, these influences were brought in with the

migration of the Bau-Malay from Borneo to Mindanao in A.D. 1,000. [Kurjack, 1970: 18]. Thus Fox argues for establishing a "historical typology," by means of "systematic archaeology" [Fox: 100]. Typology classifies attributes like make, form, size and ornaments to determine a "type series" which then provides the basis if types are related whether closely or distantly [Joukowsky 1980: 281]. "Continued emphasis on pottery traditions and broad relationships," according to Fox, "tends to disguise the highly complex local ceramic development, as is found in the Philippines where local pottery complexes may or may not have recognizable genetic ties with a single pottery tradition" [Fox, 1979: 233].

All archaeological excavations reach to us from the past, bridging the thousands of years separating us from our origins. People's lifestyle, their technology, their beliefs are reflected in the wares they left behind and in the way they buried their dead. Sifting through all these, one strains to catch at clues that can show more of their personal traits, even a mere glimpse, to affirm genetic ties. Hence anthropomorphic motifs are doubly welcome because they afford us that glimpse, as if "through a glass, darkly."

Anthropomorphic motifs, however, are seldom encountered in archaeological sites. From the many caves of Palawan only one has emerged—the Manunggul Jar. Sketchy faces appear on pots from the Calatagan sites in Batangas (Developed Metal Age) which resemble those later purportedly found in Candelaria, Quezon Province. A tiny head featuring enormous eyes emerged from Camalaniugan in Cagayan. Another has been recorded in Tayawan, Bayawan in Dumaguete, Negros Oriental. The head measures 19 cm high with very defined facial features. In Huyop-hoyopan Cave in Camalig, Albay, another head was found measuring 4.3 cm x 3.5 cm. A few figurines were also encountered here—one is a seated figure with a drumlike object on his lap; another head has three protuberances on the head; two are headless torsos, and another is a zoomorphic figure. These, too, date back to the Late Metal Age ca. 190 B.C. [Peralta Files 1985]. Earthenware jar covers with anthropomorphic motifs were also recovered from the Inatao Cave in Barrio Salangsang, South Cotabato, not to mention those on carved limestone jars [Kurjack, 1971: 133].

The San Carlos University excavation of Bacong in Magsuhot, Negros Oriental, contributed a few more, adding some of the more fascinating grave furniture of the Metal Age Period not duplicated in other known sites. One shows lizards with humanoid features. The vessel bears the typical lenticular cuts and notches associated with the Magsuhot site. But most unusual of all is an earthenware vessel with seated figures. Shaped

like a cylinder that rounds off at the shoulder and bottom with a short flared base, it has a shoulder that is formed by the intertwined legs of figures seated astride the vessel, its stubby neck between them. The rather pregnant figure with heavy breasts sits with hands on the vessel's neck. On her forearms rest the extended hands of the other. In another version, both figures are standing with their legs wrapped around the lower portion of the vessel, their arms encircling its neck. [Plate 13]. This type of pottery has no known prototype, but treatment of subject matter finds affinity in a metal object found by fishermen on the beach in far-off Flores, an Indonesian island. However, no similar pottery has been found in Indonesia to date [Plate 9].

Two other terra-cotta female figures have been separately found on this site. Both have bloated bellies and pendant breasts. Their faces are crudely fashioned and they have enlarged earholes. One wears a beaded necklace, arms akimbo, hands supporting her belly. The rib cage sticks out of the other's upper chest, the hands clutching at a swollen belly with the navel bulging out. Because the figures obviously represent pregnant women, Tenazas advances the idea that these vessels were used for fertility rites.

With the Ayub Cave providing many more anthropomorphic jars, the blurred images on the glass become more focused and clear. The faces on the burial jars, each uniquely precious, are like portraits meant to perpetuate the likeness of the dead. They detail age, sex and appearance—even such peculiarity as how hair was parted—and with such poignancy, varied human emotions: outright grief, elation, sadness. It is in this respect where the Maitum potters show exceptional sensitivity—in their ability to empathize with human emotions. One wonders if the grieving faces were meant to signify pain felt by the mourners for their loss. For that matter, the rendering of physiological aging suggested on the faces with shrunken mouths or receding chins has not been seen in other anthropomorphic representations. (There is, of course, the *Manunggul Jar* where the fixed stares of the boatman and the passenger (soul) transport us to the spiritual plane.) Moreover, the protrusion on the neck of some pots may be read as Adam's apple but in some of the pots, there is a hollow instead. Would this be an indication of old age or gender? By particularizing details the Maitum potters have kept alive the social mores of their times.

Enlarged earholes must have been fashionable then. Several ears have exceptionally large earholes. The Jesuit historian Ignacio Alcina, who recorded the customs of the Visayans of the late seventeenth century, writes

that bamboo sticks then, earplugs made out of tightly rolled leaves were inserted into the pierced earlobes. The rolled leaves uncoil once fitted into the earholes, providing the tension that stretches the flesh. Overtime, rolled leaves of varying thicknesses were introduced into the holes. When the desired size is reached, earplugs made of carabao horn or shells were fitted into the holes [Martin-Meras and Higuera de Marina, 1974: 7] Had the people of Maitum also practiced such a custom and worn golden or bone earplugs like those found in other archaeological sites? One jar shows a torso with painted motifs on the chest [C. Plate 4]. Was this a form of ceremonial painting predating the tattoo? Clay beads adorn one figure and some arms already detached from torsos have bracelets. The bracelets are similar to the glass and shell bracelets found on the site. Another type of bracelet resembles woven *nito* commonly recorded in ethnographic accounts. They also resemble the *inahas* or *kairél*, spun gold necklaces found in Mindanao and Samar diggings. Though no gold has been found on the site, could these people have worn such ornaments?

The potteries of Maitum are generally low-fired. Many potsherds have black core and fireclouds appear on some of the jars. Dr. Eusebio Dizon, the archaeologist who worked the site, noted that the shapes used for the heads were the same ones used for making standard pots, but embellished with ears, eyes and mouth (Dizon, personal conversations, 1995). The horizontal ovoids are generally remodeled from the mouth down to shape jaws and chins. This was brilliantly done in one jar cover [C. Plate 2] where the head is slightly tipped upward, foreshortening the facial contour with the forehead almost disappearing. This is effectively balanced by the strong accent on the jawline. The facial features are seen from an overhead perspective, bringing out salient details like the deepset eyes, nostrils and mouth. This rendering projects the sadness welling out from the eyes and articulates the cry of grief escaping from the mouth.

Another factor that makes Maitum pottery distinctive is the frequent use of red and black paint—from hematite and organic material—on the face and head. A few heads have eyes ringed with black paint. (Again, Dr. Dizon suggests that the painted faces may be an indication of status.) One painted torso and burial jar with truncated lid have freehand painting of curvilinear scrolls contrasting those from Tabon, where the painting was used to fill in incised borders or patterns [Plate 1; C. Plates 4 and 33].

Freehand painting is a pottery characteristic that was first found in earthenware vessels excavated in Asin, Davao del Sur (Solheim 1979: 43). The painting on the Asin jar cover is of curvilinear scrolls drawn equidis-

tant from the other and interconnected by common stems. The painting on Jar No.18 from Maitum is suggestive of the tree of life, the curlicues originating from a single trunk. Its pattern-element resembles the cloud motif common to Asian art. This becomes more apparent on the fragments of the earthenware vessels which show beading along the side of the scroll. These specimens may be considered early prototypes of the foliated scroll [C. Plates 28, 29, 32 and 33].

Within the Maitum tradition, a change had come which resulted in a break from the usual norm, recorded only in a few jars with lids that appear highly stylized and abstracted, so drastically removed from the realism of what are presumably earlier pieces [C. Plate 30]. Perhaps, future excavations in nearby sites might shed light on what had precipitated such a change.

Through the entire span of more than two thousand years the practice of jar burial has been a source of expressiveness for the ancient Filipinos. Death in the context of their ancient ways did not sever earthly ties; human obligations to the dead continued while the dead went on assisting the living through their intercession with the spiritual world. And Maitum has shown that their reverence for life here and the hereafter extended to all: man, woman and child, the young and the aged. Though no extant jar in the form of a female survived, the archaeological inventory includes many pottery shards of female breasts indicating that women were equally honored in this burial complex. □

## REFERENCES

### **Bayard, Donn T.**

- 1972 "Excavation at Non Nok Tha, Northeastern Thailand, 1968. An Interim Report" in *Asian Perspectives*. Vol. XIII. Great Britain: University of Hawaii, pp. 109-143.

### **Beazley, Mitchell, ed.**

- 1985 *The World Atlas of Archaeology*. English ed. Massachusetts: Mitchell Beazley Publishers.

### **Chang, Kwang-Chih**

- 1968 *The Archaeology of Ancient China*. rev. ed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

### **Childe, Gordon**

- 1952 *What Happened in History*. reprint ed. Great Britain: Penguin Books, Ltd.

### **Evangelista, Alfredo**

- 1957 "Report on an Investigation and Exploration of a Jar Burial Site in the Sitio of Butaling, Carranglan, Nueva Ecija from June 4-8, 1957. A Field Report. The National Museum of the Philippines.
- 1966 "The Incipient and Emergent Periods in Philippine Culture-History." F. Landa Jocano, ed. Filipino Cultural Lecture Series No. 1. Manila: The Philippine Women's University, pp. 15-33
- 1969 "The Philippines: Archaeology in the Philippines to 1950" in *Asian Perspectives* XII. Great Britain: The University of Hawaii. pp. 97-104
- 1972 "H.O. Beyer's Philippine Neolithic in the Context of Postwar Discoveries in Local Archaeology" in *Studies in Philippine Archaeology [In Honor of H. Otley Beyer]*. Quezon City: Alemars-Phoenix Publishers.

*Fire in the Hearth*

- 1981 "Introduction: Archaeology in the Philippines" in *Explorations in Philippine Prehistory* (A Sourcebook). F. Landa Jocano and Alfredo Evangelista, eds. Quezon City: The Asian Study Center.

**Fox, Robert**

- 1970 *The Tabon Caves*. Monograph of the National Museum No.1. Manila: The National Museum of the Philippines.
- 1979 "The Philippines During the First Millennium B.C." in *Early South East Asia*. R. B Smith and W. Watson, eds. New York and Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ and Evangelista, Alfredo.

- 1981 "The Cave Archaeology of Cagraray Island, Albay Province, Philippines." A Preliminary Report of *Explorations Philippine Prehistory* (A Source Book). F. Landa Jocano and Alfredo Evangelista, eds. Diliman, Quezon City: Asian Center.

**Gorman, Chester**

- 1972 "Excavations at Spirit Cave, North Thailand: Some Interim Interpretations" in *Asian Perspectives*. Vol. XIII. Wilhelm Solheim, ed. Great Britain: University of Hawaii, pp.79-107

**Kurjack, Edward B. and Sheldon, Craig T.**

- 1970 The Archaeology of Seminoho Cave in Lebak, Cotobato. *Silliman Journal*. Vol. XVII, No.1, pp. 5-18.

**Kurjack, Edward B., Sheldon, Craig T. and Keller Maria B.**

- 1971 The Urn Burial Caves of Southern Cotabato. *Silliman Journal*, Vol. 18, pp. 127-153.

**Mascuñana, Rolando**

- 1986 *The Bacong Artifacts in the Silliman Anthropology Museum Collection. A Morphological Analysis of Displayed Material Culture*. Silliman University.

**Martin-Meras, Maria Luisa and Higuera de Marina, Maria Dolores, eds.**

- 1974 *La Historia de las Islas E Indios Visayas del Padre [Ignacio] Alcina 1668*. Madrid: Instituto Historico.

**The National Museum**

- n.d. *The Philippines from the Paleolithic to the Age of Contact*. Manila: The National Museum.



**Peralta, Jesus**

(n.d.) *Kudon: The Ancient Pottery Art of the Philippines*. MS.

1995 *The Alicia Laya Collection of Earthenware at the De La Salle Museum*. Manila: De La Salle University, 1954.

**Renfrew, Colin and Bahn, Paul**

1994 *Archaeology. Theories, Methods and Practice*. Reprint ed. London: Thames and Hudson.

**Ronquillo, Wilfredo P., et al.**

1993 *The 1992 Archaeological Reexcavation of the Balobok Rockshelter, Sanga-Sanga, Tawi Tawi Province, Philippines: A Preliminary Report*. Reprint from the *Journal of Historical Institute*, Okinawa Prefectural Library No. 18, March 1993. Okinawa, Japan.

**Smith, R.B.**

1979 "Appendix I. A Check-list of Published Carbon-14 Datings from South East Asia (c. 5000 B.C.-1,000 A.D.)" in *Early South East Asia*. R.B. Smith and W. Watson, eds. New York and Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

**Solheim II, Wilhem G.**

1964 *The Archaeology of Central Philippines. A Study Chiefly of the Iron Age and Its Relationships*. Manila: Bureau of Printing.

———. "Further Relationships of the Sahuynh-Kalanay Pottery 1964 Tradition" in *Asian Perspectives*. Vol. 8.

———. 1960 "Jar Burial in the Babuyan and Batanes Island and in Central Philippines, and Its Relationship to Jar Burial Elsewhere in the East" in *Philippine Journal of Science*. Vol. 89, No. 1).

**Tenazas, Rosa, C.P.**

1982 "Evidences of Cultural Patterning As Seen Through Pottery: The Philippine Situation". *SPAFA Digest*. Vol 3, No. 1.