

## THE BURIAL SITES OF SALANGSANG, SALAMAN-LEBAK, SULTAN KUDARAT

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Salangsang, a reservation for the Manobo and Tiruray, sprawls on 10,000 hectares of cogonal and forested, craggy slopes 2,500 feet above sea level. It is predominantly inhabited by about 500 Manobo families in scattered seasonal hamlets.

A large number of Tiruray and lowland families live in the Centro and within two kilometers periphery. The Manobos call the Centro *Bakbak'en* (frog), a settlement they had established long before they were driven away by the Tiruray from Upi (Cotabato) and the lowlanders from Luzon. Their experience of having been driven away has developed into mistrust toward outside groups. They have settled into the forest so that they would be out of reach to outsiders, remaining largely hunters, gatherers and swidden agriculturalists.

### Cave sites, Rock-shelters

There are 15 caves and rock-shelters in Salangsang. I was not able to visit five of these sites but pottery samples from each site were brought by two Manobo men during the exploration.<sup>1</sup> Among the popular sites are: Caves-Ugong-ugong, Malunao-Lange and Inatao; Rock-shelters – Bale's Usa A and B, Amfayag and Semenoho.

### Methodology

The initial explorations were followed by a series of visits. The system used in identification was that of the National Museum. In this system, both the urn and its cover were labelled with letters that indicate the site, the date found, and the artifact number.

A chart with 1:10 scale was drawn to show the exact position of the urns and covers. The location of artifacts proved an important key to historical interpretation. Drawing of the urns, covers and pottery was also done. The measurement, photographing, examination, recording and the selection of representative samples from each site completed the procedure.<sup>2</sup>

### Caves

**Ugong-ugong Cave (Upper-Lower).**<sup>3</sup> This cave is about six kilometers west of the Centro. It contained not only the most number but also the biggest and most intact burial jars and a wide variety of pottery vessels and clay figurines (Fig. 1). The cave entrance is almost ovate like a winnowing basket. To enter it, one has to crawl from the outside ledge to the first chamber which contained 117 urns, all circular and fluted at the sides. The chamber's ceiling is about five feet from the ground. Its left side facing east, leads to a small chamber which yielded nothing save for a huge but shattered earthenware jar. The third chamber, is on the first chamber's right side and is slightly bigger than the second, measuring 20 m long and 3 m wide from wall to wall. There were 79 urns found in this chamber. The tapered end of this chamber leads to a passageway into another chamber which is directly above the first chamber. This chamber which could be the real opening of the whole cave had 44 urns. In one of the jars inspected was an arrowhead still attached to its rotten wooden shaft. Along with it were four rusty and eroded brass arm bands. Two eight-shaped pottery vessels and two quadrilateral ones with cord impressions on both the body and lid were also found in this chamber. The lid of potwares is like the curved ends of a Chinese pagoda roof, the shape of many urn covers. The urns in this site are homogeneously circular.

**Inatao Cave.**<sup>4</sup> This site is in sitio Toked about three kilometers north of the Centro. The cave's entrance is on a slope, some 70 meters above Makin River. The cave has three chambers that contained 344 urns with a variety of designs. Aside from the urns, there were bracelets, shell earrings, pottery beads and three miniature earthenware vessels. Two forms — quadrilateral and circular — were im-

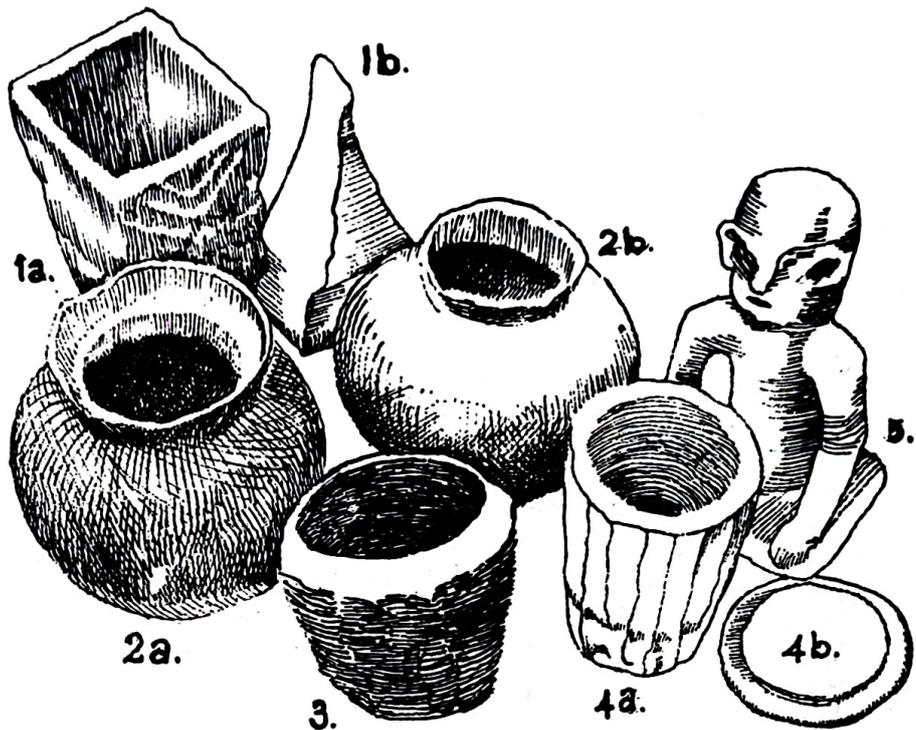


Fig. 1. Surface finds from Ugong-Ugong cave samples: (1a) a small quadrilateral limestone jar with "V" shaped fluting design on the body beside its (1b) pyramidal lid; (2a, 2b) clay potwares with heavy-sloped rims; (3) a quadrilateral clay jarlet with matted impressions; (4a) a circular limestone jar with vertical fluting beside its (4b) lid; (5) a limestone anthropomorphic figure of a lid of a quadrilateral jar.

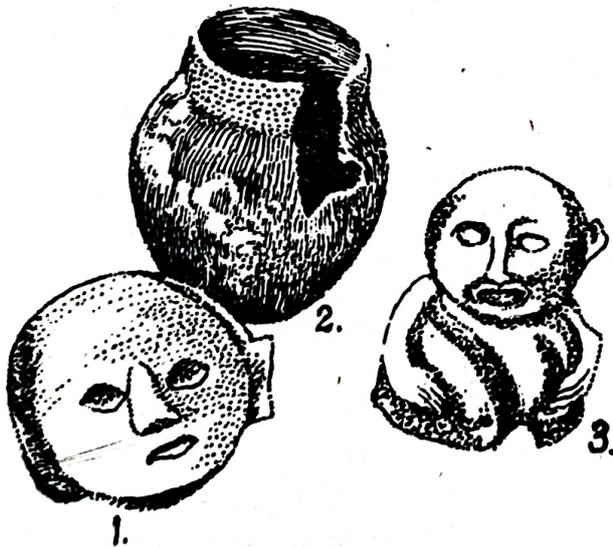


Fig. 2 Samples from Semeno-ho rock-shelter: (1) clay anthropomorphic head as a portion of a lid of a pottery vessel; (2) a clay jarlet; (3) still another clay figurine used as a cover of the jarlet



Fig. 3a. A quadrilateral limestone jar showing vertical "V" design. No basal flange.

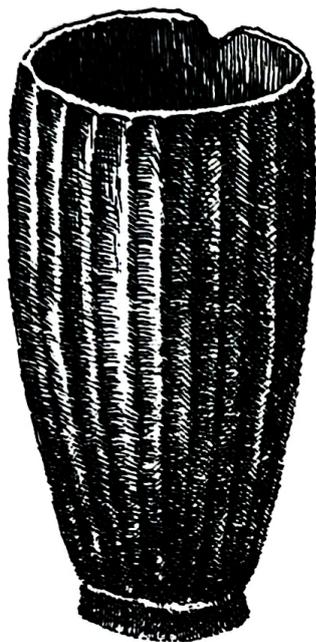


Fig. 3b. A circular limestone urn showing a combined circular fluting and vertical fluted "V" design all around.

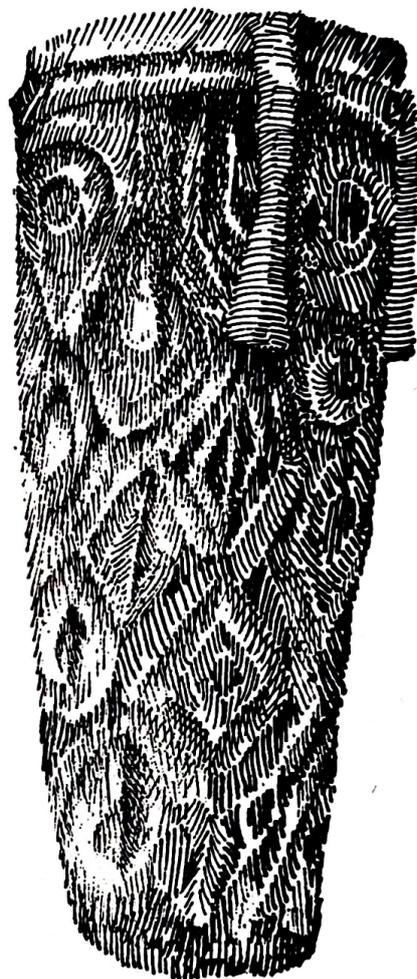


Fig. 4. A circular limestone urn showing a combined circular fluting and vertical fluted "V" design all around. The two carved-out projections are supposed to be "legs" of an anthropomorphic figure whose body serves as a cover that fits into the rim. The urn has a basal flange which was knocked off due to brittleness.

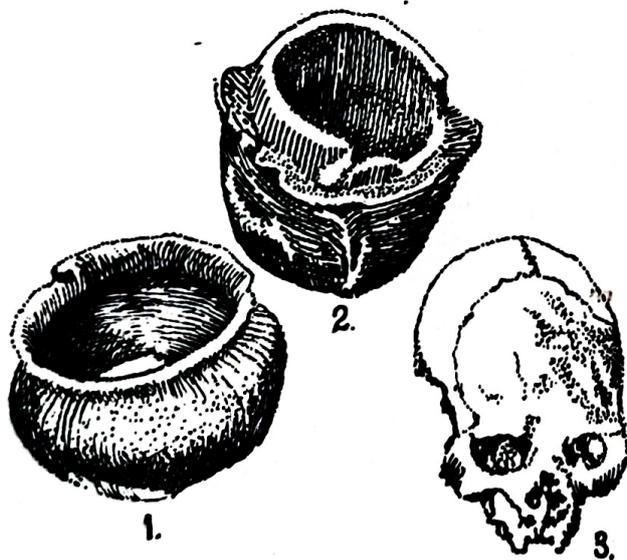


Fig. 5. Samples from Malunao-Lange Cave: (1) a clay cooking pot; (2) a semi-quadrilateral jarlet with four cleats and lateral projections; (3) the only human skull found on the ledge of the cave.

Illustrations by Noriel Alfonso

mediately noticeable about the urns (Fig. 3a, 3b). The urns have fluted designs on the body and the lids. A common feature of the jar are its basal flange. Flute patterns are varied: there are horizontal, vertical, diagonal and diamond-shaped flutes on the lateral edge and on the cover (Fig. 4). Flutes also vary in size, but the common size is about an inch. Other designs are deeply impressed and incised (more so engraved) in a very minute and intricate pattern of geometrical lines.

Kurjack and Sheldon (1971) classified different urns according to the basal flange and body designs: narrow excised based, narrow excised baseless, gauged or fluted based, fluted baseless, plain based and plain baseless. There were also a wide variety of earthenware vessels with anthropomorphic figures on covers, large and cylindrical pots, hemispherical bowls, carinated and global bowls which probably were utilized as burial urns.<sup>5</sup>

**Malunao-Lange Cave.** The cave is in sitio Baraguiran, about 1.5 km. northwest of Centro. Its entrance measures 5 meters from overhang to drip line and 3 meters from wall to wall. The floor gradually drops two meters below the cave's entrance and is uneven in most places. One chamber measures 145 sq m. Finds were meager: an earthenware urn, a reddish-brown clay receptacle with four projecting sides from rim to bottom, a small black clay pot, a brittle but intact skull and a few skeletal remains of a body (Fig. 5). The skeletal remains were found on a shelf at the left wall, with north-south orientation. The meager finds tended to show that only a small group of inhabitants made use of this small-sized habitational and burial site.

### Rock-Shelters

**Amfayag Rock-shelter.** This site in sitio Lem, about 8.5 kilometers east of Centro, was called the secret cave by the Manobo *kafuduan* (headman) of Lem, *Dalu Apang Ulo*. The shelter is atop a ledge about 1000 feet high.

The shelter is relatively small, with 15 limestone urns arranged in compact – four large sizes, eight medium sizes, and three small sizes. No evidence of pottery vessels was found in this site. All urns

are quadrilateral dimension and are without designs and flutes. Urn covers are simple and plain. After a jar nearest the shelter's opening was investigated, the reason for the *kafuduan's* hesitance in revealing the site dawned on me: the urns were re-used for present-day burial. One urn that was opened exposed a decomposed corpse. That was the secret of this site.

**Bale't Usa Rock-shelter (A and B).** There are two sites in sitio Bale't Usa. 1.5 kilometers northeast of the Centro. They are designated as BURS-A and BURS-B contained 39 urns while BURS-B had 30 urns. BURS-A and BURS-B are approximately 150 meters apart, east to west.

The finds were as varied as those found in Inatao except for a piece of small pottery. The urns are strong and sturdy in contrast to the brittle and very fragile urns found in caves. Exposure to sun, rain and wind seemed to have made the difference in the solidity of the urns.

BURS-A is near a *kaingin* and its urns were more orderly arranged than those in BURS-B where all the urns were already covered by thick foliage.

**Semenoho rock-shelter.**<sup>6</sup> The site is in sitio Miga'ga' about four kilometers southwest of the Centro. In this site were 28 relatively intact urns and about 23 broken urns that must have fallen into a deep depression. Of the urns, 26 urns were round while 10 were quadrilateral. There were fewer covers than the urns (Fig. 6).

There were 25 covers for circular urns and 8 covers for quadrilateral urns. A skull, sans skeleton, was found firmly embedded upon a rock. It was chiseled out and taken as sample. Orientation based on the skull formation was still north-south like that of the skull found in Malunao-Lange Cave. Describing the Semenoho urns, Kurjack and Sheldon said:

Seventeen of the urns form a distinct type, for they exhibit a similar form and decoration style. They also have the following characteristics: (1) a round (roughly cylindrical) shape with a protruding pedestal or base (a basal flange) at the bottom; (2) decoration executed by gouging parallel vertical grooves of "flutes" measuring 2-4 centimeters wide on the sides of the urns; and (3) a combination of one or two such flutes circling the rim of the urn and either

a plain basal protrusion (or flange) or one decorated with one or two flutes circling the basal flange. The remaining round urns found at the site shared at least some of these characteristics: all of the urns for example, were decorated with vertical flutes. Only four of the round urns had no basal projection at the bottom, and in one of these four a basal area was distinctly designated by two flutes circling the bottom of the urns. Thus, the round urns appeared to be quite uniform in assemblage.<sup>7</sup>

The only objects in the urns were some iron bracelets and pottery vessels.

### Chronological Considerations

Radiocarbon dating puts the date of 585 A.D.  $\pm$  85 years.<sup>8</sup> The radiocarbon assessment was made from collagen extracted from a human bone found in an urn. It has been theorized by Kurjack and Sheldon that the earliest urns are quadrilateral, with basal flanges and excised decoration; later urns were fluted and circular. Circular urns with bases, according to Kurjack-Sheldon, are earlier than baseless urns. Urns from the various sites form a typological series but they cannot yet be oriented. Another series is expected to come out with the Inatao Cave samples which can give an overview of the whole chronology.<sup>9</sup>

### Implications

The implications of the finds are that urn burials and earthenware seem to be a part of a long cultural tradition. The finds, which are entirely surface materials, included a variety of designs, shapes and techniques which could suggest cultural continuity.

The culture history of Southeast Asia has long been viewed in terms of a series of migrations as proven or theorized by Heine-Geldern<sup>10</sup> and shared by Beyer.<sup>11</sup>

Pottery from the various sites seems related to both Kalanay and Bau Complex, both in form and surface treatment. No Chinese porcelain is associated with the sites but the materials found suggest that the same process for the Kalanay Complex also occurred. Kurjack, *et. al.* think that the Bau feature of uniformity of shape is probably

related to the late temporal portion of the Bau sites, thus far examined in Mindanao. It therefore could follow that the pottery is an early manifestation of Solheim's Bau-Malay Tradition. This temporal control view is presented with the awareness that these could serve as an alternative or might explain the materials' chronological formulations.<sup>12</sup>

Because the samples taken were all of surface materials, there is no way of knowing the temporal or cultural relationship between the individual pieces of earthenware and carved limestone urns.<sup>13</sup> It is suggested that the original definitions of Bau and Kalanay embody an important spatial contrast in the pre-history of the Philippines.<sup>14</sup> Inasmuch as the data gathered were very scant, it is also suggested that increased fieldwork be done in order to gain more insights.

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#### NOTES

1. This exploration was done in three periods — January-June 1966; November 1967; and May-July 1968. It was sponsored by Silliman University, National Science Development Board, Miami University, (Ohio), University of Oregon and the Explorer's Club, U.S.A. and directed by Prof. Edward B. Kurjack (Miami University) and Prof. Craig T. Sheldon (University of Oregon).

2. Edward B. Kurjack and Craig T. Sheldon, "The Urn Burial Caves of Southern Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines," *Silliman Journal*, vol. XVIII, No. 2 (1971), pp. 127-153. Southern Cotabato became Sultan Kudarat when the Cotabato provinces were redivided into four provinces by legislative fiat in 1972.

3. A detailed description of the site appears in my monograph I deposited at the Cultural Research Center, Silliman University, 1968.

4. For more detailed analysis of this site, cf. Kurjack and Sheldon, pp. 135-145.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

6. For a lengthier discussion on this site, cf. Kurjack and Sheldon, "The Archaeology of Semenoho Cave in Lebak, Cotabato," *Silliman Journal*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1970), pp. 5-18.

7. Cf. Kurjack and Sheldon, "The Urn Burial of Southern Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines," *Silliman Journal*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (197 ), p. 130.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

10. Robert von Heine-Geldern, "Urheimat und fruehste wanderungen der Austronesier," *Anthropos*, Vol. 27 (1932), pp. 543-619.
11. Otley H. Beyer, "Outline of Philippine Archaeology by Islands and Provinces," *Philippine Journal of Science*, Vol. 77 (1947), pp. 205-374.
12. Kurjack and Sheldon, *Silliman Journal*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, p. 151.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 152.