EVIDENCES OF CULTURAL PATTERNING AS SEEN THROUGH POTTERY : THE PHILIPPINE SITUATION

by Rosa C.P. Tenazas

Philippine archaeological researches are undergoing two major shifts in orientation from the traditional approach of mere recording of artifacts. These changes are seen in the incorporation of archaeology in palaeoanthropological studies and a shift in focus from the artifact to include ecology, i.e., the environment as part of the ancient setting. In other words, archaeological studies are no longer confined to just a giving of description of recovered artifacts but rather are increasingly utilizing sophisticated means of analyses. They include a reconstruction of ancient lifeways of a people, specifically their subsistence strategies and their socio-religious life expressed in the rituals connected with burials and in the type and quality of funerary goods that accompany these burials.

The present paper attempts to show examples of cultural patterning in archaeological context utilizing data from excavations with particular emphasis on an important category of artifact – pottery. Data have primarily been derived from excavations and subsequent comparative studies by this writer of two Iron Age sites in the Philippines. These sites are the early Iron Age jar-burial culture of Magsuhot in the municipality of Bacong, Negros Oriental[1] and the lakeside Iron Age Settlements of Pila, Laguna, island of Luzon.[2]

The Magsuhot Site

A jar-burial site that was excavated by this writer in the island of Negros in 1974-75 is located in the barrio of Magsuhot, approximately 8 kilometers in the upland interior of the coastal town of Bacong, the first municipality south of Dumaguete City, the

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MAP OF PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

The excavation sites

capital of the province of the Negros Oriental. This province is characterized by low, rugged and serrated chain of mountains which in most parts are close to the shoreline. The location of this prehistoric jar-burial settlement may be seen against this topographical setting. The dating is derived from analogies of similar sites already investigated, ca. 400 B.C. – 200 A.D., or earlier.

Pottery as Determinant of Settlement Location of the Magsuhot Culture

The establishment of a particular type of settlement generally depends upon a number of factors: the most important being closeness to sources of food, accessibility to good drinking water and, to a certain degree, considerations of safety of location. Settlement sites normally reflect the adaptation of a society and its technology to its environment. In the case of Magsuhot we rest on the assumption of causative priority.

One is struck by the relative richness of the prehistoric culture that had at one time flourished there in marked contrast to the poor conditions that presently prevail. Only about twenty families now inhabit the relatively barren region. The determinant of settlement choice by this prehistoric jar-burial practicing people obviously had lain elsewhere than the important consideration of, say, a productive land base. The possibility of exploitation through some form of agriculture had, however, not been ruled out for while today the area is virtually denuded of even a secondary forest, in the past a different situation could have obtained. In any case, while the relative productivity of the land in the past is not readily manifest, it is apparent that this early Iron Age community was able to live out its annual subsistence cycle within its own settlement site.

The answer to why the site of Magsuhot was chosen for settlement was sought in the artifacts, for it is possible to draw information from the material culture that has been preserved. Settlements have been known to spring up in relative wastelands where rare and valuable resources are discovered. In Magsuhot, one of the important resources was clay. The most striking thing about Magsuhot burials is the quantity of the pottery that accompanied them. In two particularly rich burials, the recovered grave furniture constituting almost exclusively of pottery averaged 85 pieces per burial!

Other possible valuable resources that had been considered were forest products that were becoming important in the maritime commerce in Southeast Asia prior to the 10th century, A.D. As early as the turn of the Christian era, patterns of maritime trade had been established in the Philippine Archipelago. The evidence comes in the form not only of trade ceramics from China, but also of luxury products for adornments, glass beads and bracelets, traceable to Middle Eastern origins.

The maritime trade in Southeast Asia is traced back to the Southern Chinese dynasties' needs for Western luxury goods that had been blocked off from their traditional land routes. Rather than send out for what they needed, the Chinese were apparently content to just sit and attract shipping to their shores. As a consequence, entrepots along the main trade routes, like Oc-Eo in Funan and a few trade routes along the Isthmian routes in the Malay Peninsula, proliferated. It is not the intention of this paper to go into the details of the dynamics of this maritime trade. It is sufficient to mention here that one of the important products in the Western markets that attracted the Chinese were jungle aromatics (frankincense, myrrh, camphor, etc.) which were believed to have found competition in Southeast Asian substitutes.[3] This suggested that the trade in forest products spawned the establishment in the Philippines of settlements in upland areas which are regarded today as low in exploitative potentials.

A jar burial assemblage in situ uncovered in Bacong.

Thus apart from the local trade in pottery, the Magsuhot jar-burial people appear to have also been engaged in indirect maritime trade with more enterprising middlemen.

In Magsuhot, the accessibility to a seemingly inexhaustible source of clay in addition to other enterprises that were indirectly connected with maritime commerce may be said to determine the settlement choice, offsetting as it were the absence of inherently more ideal conditions in the area.

Once the complex surrounding pottery manufacture is understood and other commercial activities defined, it is not too difficult to see how this jar-burial culture developed progressively in a way comparable to groups whose stability depended solely on agricultural economies.

Pottery has been used as a standard basis of exchange for commodities not readily available in the community. The virtual lack of evidence for, say, iron working in the form of slag and other residue of smelting activities and the negative evidence for weaving (e.g. spindle whorls) point to iron products and woven fabrics as items that were bartered for the locally manufactured earthen ware. Luxury items in the form of exotic beads and bracelets made from

Magsuhot Pottery Coffin

glass were traded in exchange for other categories of staples within their reach of exploitation (viz: forest aromatics). The exchange of foodstuffs is seldom in evidence and it is through the discovery of extraneous raw materials or artifacts, such as iron implements and ornaments of glass, that the existence of external trade is established.

In his detailed discussion of the economics of Buhid pottery, Conklin had demonstrated the negotiability of pottery among an ethnic minority group called Mangyan on the island of Mindoro.[4] For instance, the smallest variety of cooking pot takes a value equivalent to one string of beads. The value of any other kind of pot is thereafter determined by using this standard as basis.

In Magsuhot, as far as determinants of settlement were concerned, it can be said that accessibility to a rich source of clay and consequent trade in pottery, as well as external commercial contacts in the form of exchange of certain staple products for manufactured foreign goods, may have provided the wherewithals for subsistence for this early Iron Age people.

Insofar as local pottery trade is concerned, one specialist in Southeast Asian pottery states: "Pottery may . . . be the only item through which there is a constant cyclical source of money or goods from outside (a) community."[5] Today pottery manufacture is a home industry from which a sizable number of people near Dumaguete City eke out their livelihood. The best clay material for pottery in the whole province is found in the area that is now Dumaguete City. Magsuhot is located just a few kilometers south of this source of clay in addition to other sources in the immediate vicinity. The availability of a good source of clay for the craftsmen has maintained the pottery industry in Dumaguete City just as this writer has hypothesized for the Magsuhot community in the prehistoric past.

Craft Specialization in the Pottery Industry of Magsuhot

Pottery making is usually a hereditary craft passed down through either the mother's or the father's side. In the case of the Iron Age Culture of Magsuhot, pottery craftsmanship appears to have been handed down generationally from both lines. Women have been traditionally associated with pottery manufacture but no rigid rule exists which prevents men from participating in a predominantly female activity. Solheim has shown that among the Ibanag of Isabela in northeastern Luzon, men involved themselves in pottery manufacture by taking on the harder task of making the heavier stoves.[6] The Magsuhot situation could have started as a cooperative endeavor between the women and their menfolk, especially in the manufacture of the heavy burial jars and pottery coffins. It appears that two factors operated towards bringing about male involvement in the pottery industry leading, as it were, to an actual craft specialization. These are the factors of size and sheer weight. One burial jar alone weighed more than 50 kilos. In primary burial in jars, size was not the only factor considered by the Magsuhot potters but thickness as well.

This theory of craft specialization finds support in certain elements of design and mode of manufacture:

a) the heavy burial jars and pottery coffins together with the ritual vessels and figurines that were manufactured under special conditions are attributed to the male potter, while
b) utilitarian forms with simple incised designs, such as the cooking pot forms and their derivatives, bowls with stands, angle pots, perforated

Magsuhot Burial Jar

pots, etc., that appear to be manufactured under different conditions than the above category of vessels, are believed to be made by the female potter.

Analysis has shown (the details of which will not be discussed here) that differential distribution of the Magsuhot pottery complex outside its centre is partly the result of trade and partly a reflection of change in the design vocabulary of this pottery complex.It resulted from the occasional marriage of women (as potters of the utilitarian forms) outside the group. As a pottery complex, the pottery assemblage of Magsuhot is identified with the Bagupantao Pottery Complex after Solheim.[7]

The burial jars and pottery coffins are invariably decorated with lenticular cut-out designs on appliqued flanges, usually located under the lip rims and covers. This design dominates the total pottery assemblage although it is not commonly met within the more utilitarian group of vessels like simple cooking pots, angle pots, footed dishes and so on that is believed to be the products of women potters. The jars, coffins, and certain categories of ceremonial vessels including the figurines that were the exclusive manufactures of the menfolk appear to have been fired under conditions different from that obtained in the rest of the pottery assemblage.

The very exclusiveness in the manufacture of ritual vessels by the male members of the community appears to have some religious significance. The shapes of some of the pottery that fall under the category of ceremonial vessels indicate non-utilitarian function. Examples are the double-rim or open-ended pots which are especially reminiscent of fertility symbols as are the elongated gourd-like forms. In one particular example of the double-rim type, the truncated rim produced an effect resembling the male organ. This phallic/fertility concept is exemplified in the discovery of a ritual vessel which shows two female figures sitting astride it, their limbs intertwined. The

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interesting point is that one of the female figures is unmistakably pregnant. This is one of two instances of pregnant figures recovered from the burials. The other bigger figurine, measuring about a foot high, has its hands supporting its distended stomach.

Reconstruction of some Socio-Religious Patterning in the Magsuhot Culture

The clearest evidence of status differentiation in a society comes from graves. Burials have also been a source of information on certain aspects of the socio-religious lives of people. In Magsuhot, three sources of evidence for social stratification may be mentioned:

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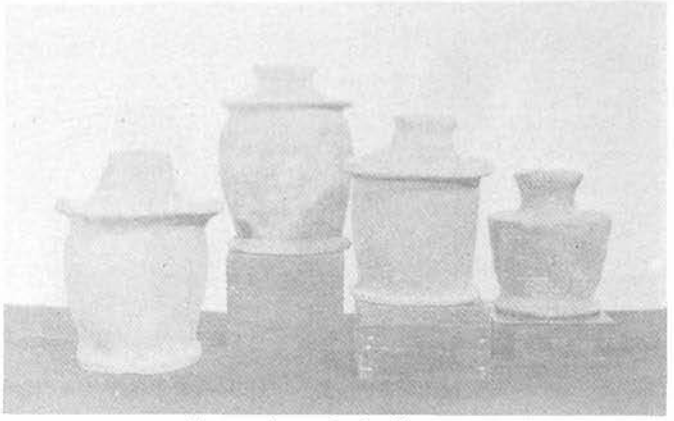
1. A phallic pot with female figures, one unmistakably pregnant, sitting astride the liprim.
2.&3. The front and side views of a figurine of a pregnant woman



Examples of phallic pottery

A carabao ceramic piece

a) the existence of rich complex burials vis-a-vis simple burials,
b) the presence of figurines and certain pottery objects identified as status or power symbols, and
c) a carved megalith weighing approximately 500 kilos that this writer interprets as a ceremonial seat.

Two types of burials were distinguished in Magsuhot on the basis of disposition: a) the complex burial, and b) the simple burial. Exemplified by two examples, one of the complex burials excavated in Magsuhot was a multiple burial of three jars in one grave pit measuring 2x1 meters and, the other, a combined burial of a very big burial jar measuring about 80 cm. in diameter and a pottery coffin in a grave of similar proportions. The evidence obtained disclosed the phenomenal association of funerary pottery goods numbering at least 70 and 100 pieces to each grave. These figures are remarkable by any early Iron Age standard; no other Iron Age jar burial culture has yet been discovered in the Philippines that approximates the richness and sophistication of the culture that existed in Magsuhot in the prehistoric past.

These complex burials were, moreover, disposed in what this writer calls "two-level graves." In other words, additional goods were laid after the initial cover up of the main burial. Simple burials are found in only one level and accompanied with relatively few (averaging 30 pieces) pottery goods.

Due to the extensive erosion of the topsoil – the cemeteries being located on top and along hillsides, the topmost layer of funerary pottery in complex burials is usually found just a few centimeters from the surface. In one of the complex burials found, the main burial located 77 cm. below the surface was connected to the top assemblage by a carefully placed series of nested pots in mouth – bottom arrangement that started directly from the main burial jar.

The motif seen on burial jars and pottery coffins is a stylized representation of a cock's head, usually in sets of two, on top of their covers. The significance of this motif was not immediately apparent until the recovery of one complex burial where the decoration of bird heads on the burial jar was graphically represented.

A staff-like pottery object with the stylized representation of a cock's head on one end has been identified, on the basis of analogy to Western-type mace heads, as some symbol of prestige or power. As such, this must have been associated with an important personnage. The attribution of status by itself is an indication of considerable influence and power of the individual to whom this is identified.

In an analysis of the tripartite view of the world by certain indigenous groups in Asia, it was shown that the underworld is represented by the fish (alternately lizard,, snake, or crocodile), the present world by the beast of sacrifice (eg. cow, buffalo, etc.), and the skyworld by the bird (alternately the rainbow).[8] The meaning of the bird motif on the burial and pottery coffins should perhaps be interpreted in this context. The idea must have carried with it the belief that entry into the skyworld would be greatly facilitated by its observance.

In shamanism and related phenomena, the cosmic axis takes many forms: rainbow (alternating with the boat among riverine and maritime groups), tree, ladder, mountain, etc. From as far west as India to China, the "heavenly ladder" usually has a cock on the top rung. Thus, in parts of China, the shaman candidate climbs knife ladders on top of which the celestial cock roosts. The heavenly ladder of the Indian Savara tribe, on top of which a cock is also perched, is believed to have identical significance.[9]

The existence of a stratified society within the Magsuhot jar-burial culture is inferred from the presence of certain pottery objects, the figurines, and differential treatment of burials. An important addition is the megalith which has tentatively been identified as a ceremonial seat. On one end of this stone are carvings of two heads and the beginnings of a third. Symbols or ancient forms of writing are incised just above the carved heads.

Some Logistics Involved in a Jar Burial Ceremony in Magsuhot

It is of interest to include a discussion on the probable logistics involved in a burial ceremony ir

the context of the early Iron Age community of Magsuhot.

Given the weight of one jar alone, and the quantity of associated grave goods that were interred with the deceased, the burial entourage must have involved the participation of a good number of related families in conducting just one burial ceremony. An experiment was made by this writer using one medium-sized burial jar, approximately just 1/3 the size and weight of the 52-kilo jar from one of the complex burials. From a point in the center of the jar-burial site to only just about a kilometer down to base camp, it had taken an average farmer carrying the small jar at least three stops to go downhill! Assuming that the habitation areas were located on the surrounding valleys, burial entourages would be climbing up the hills to get to the burial site, not the other way around.

Ingenious ways were probably employed in conducting an elaborate burial like the complex burial of, say, three jars and an accompanying grave furniture of 100 pieces of pottery, or even of a less elaborate or simple burial of only 30 associated pieces of grave pottery, considering that one pot averages about a kilo in weight. And this does not yet include the rituals attached to the preparation of the corpse for burial, the preparation and setting up of the funerary offerings, arrangement of the entire assemblage of grave goods in the burial pit, plus ceremonies attending the exhumation of older burials for inclusion into the new one in some cases.

The Magsuhot jar burial practice was a primary mode of interment in jars with occasional inclusion of older bones of relatives. In one of the complex burials in Magsuhot that had lent itself to analysis, the primary burial of young female adult and two children inside one jar (the biggest jar in a complex of three jars in one grave) included older bones and teeth belonging to at least one other individual. Other interesting features of this particular burial were the deliberate breaking of a number of pots to line the grave pit, and the lining of the middle jar with powdered haematite. An adult body was cut up to accommodate the corpse inside the jar.

The following is a detailed description of the adult corpse and the other remains as these were carefully recovered from the jar:

A preliminary analysis of the contents of the burial jar disclosed a multiple primary burial of an adult female and two children. One of the children was approximately 6-9 years of age. The evidences used for age determination were the newly erupted first permanent molars and lost deciduous incisors on the mandible. The other was an infant. The limiting age of 20-25 years for the adult female was determined by the degree of union and non-union of the proximal and distal epiphyses, respectively, of the femoral bones. The portions of both maxilla and mandible that carry the second and third molars were missing, so it has not been possible to observe eruption or non-eruption of the third molar to substantiate evidence for aging. In any case, suture closure on the skull had not yet commenced.

The thigh and long bones of the adult female were articulated in flexed position when found. The majority of the vertebrae, especially the cervical set (all six in articulation, except the atlas bone) were intact.

In order to fit no less than three bodies into a jar measuring 54 cm. at its widest diameter and 79 cm. high to the top of its cover, the bodies had to be dismembered prior to placement. At the time it was excavated, the adult skull lay on its right side with the maxilla pressed against the northern section of the jar (later its mandible would be recovered from the opposite wall near the children's remains). It lay directly on top of the thigh bones. That the skull was no longer articulated to the rest of the body was shown by its unnatural position with the top of the skull oriented towards the pelvic region

1. Cock's head motif on a burial jar

2. A mace made of ceramic

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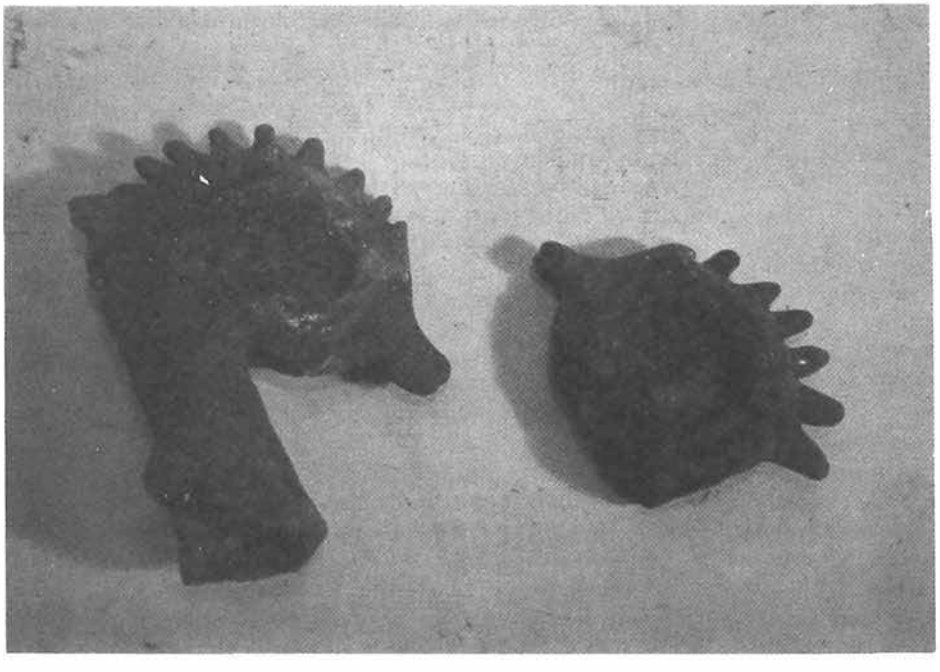

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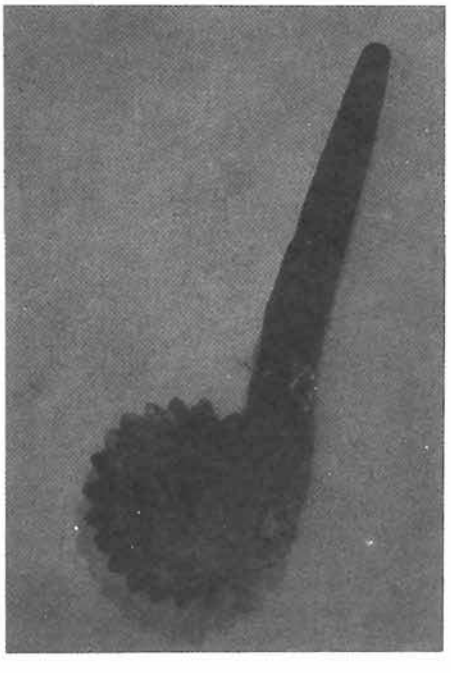

rather than the other way around, as would have been the case, if the body had been merely doubled up. Directly underneath the limb bones and enmeshed in a matting of rotted rib bones were the thoracic and cervical vertebrae. From this evidence it appears that the torso was laid first near the bottom of the jar, the flexed lower limbs on top of this, and the head deposited also on top of the thigh bones.

It has not been posible to reconstruct the exact placement of the children's remains. When found, only the outline of the skull of the older child could be seen. Its mandible, still more or less intact, lay beside it. Of the infant remains, only a few long and rib bones identified it in addition to the few teeth. The children's remains were located opposite the adult remains.

Hundreds of paste beads, predominantly orange in color, and some iron implements were likewise recovered from the main burial jar. Included in the heap of human bones and grave goods were fragments of animal bones. Funerary provision must have included offerings of food. Evidence of meat offerings came in the form of remains of chicken and pig. In addition to the multi-colored paste beads, a thick bevelled, orange paste bracelet was found at the bottom of the jar directly under the adult remains.[10]

The Magsuhot Jar Burial Complex uncovered.

This practice of dismemberment prior to burial in a jar finds ethnographic parallel among the Sagada of the Mountain Province of northern Luzon.[11]

A closer examination of some of the remains of the animal offerings showed that these were ceremonially cooked over fire before being put inside the jar as some of the skeletal remains had shown signs of burning. These offerings of animal meat were laid at the bottom of the jar before actual interment of the bodies.

It is suggested that the pottery industry of Magsuhot was a collective effort by a good number of families in the community. The phenomenon of high quantity in pottery association that characterized many burials can be explained in part by the status of the deceased and the practice of each related family of offering an alloted number of funerary gifts of pottery in each burial.

As far as means of transport is concerned, the travois or bamboo sled would already have been in existence and used in transporting entire burial assemblages. One pottery figurine of a young calf or carabao recovered from a burial showed that species of domesticate had perhaps played an important role, then as now, as beast of burden and as beast of sacrifice.

The Pila Site

The excavation site in the barrio of Pinagbayanan, municipality of Pila in the province of Laguna, referred to as the Pila site, was one of several archaeological sites bordering the southeastern margin of Laguna de Bay, the largest lake in the Philippines. The total area excavated by this writer in 1967-68 involved three adjacent sites in all covering an area of 6000 sq. meters. Within this relatively small area, close to 400 burials comprising two main cultural periods were recovered. Period I is early Iron Age in date corresponding to the Magsuhot settlement. Period II, already protohistoric in date, is subdivided into three phases.[12]

Period II abounds in evidence of a more direct and intensified maritime trade contacts with China which was only suggested in Period I. This maritime trade contacts during Period II was not only confined to China but also showed relations with Siam and Annam, especially in the late 13th to the 15th centuries, A.D.

Determinants of Settlement Location in Pila

The Pila site was used both for habitation and burial over a much longer period of time than the Magsuhot settlement. The determinants of settlement choice do not appear to be too difficult to reconstruct. The Pila settlement is described as a fishing-oriented economy with an agricultural base, a classic example of an adaptation by a society to its environment. Reconstruction of the patterns of exploitation has not presented a real problem due to the strong indication of continuity of the same patterns into the present. Recovery of net sinkers and, in one instance, of a bronze fish hook indicate intensive fishing activities, a situation presently prevailing in many shore areas. The site's location along a stretch of irrigated agricultural land suggested similar utilization in the past. Just as maritime trade as supplementing the economic base is suggested for Period I, this activity appears to be intensified especially in Phases 1 and 2 of Period II.

In contrast to the Magsuhot situation, there is abundant evidence of iron working. Iron slag were items of artifacts commonly encountered in Phases 1 and 2 of Period II. Similarly, the recovery of spindle whorls indicates the existence of the weaving industry. Native cloth material was among the items mentioned as staple products of the indigenous peoples of the Philippines in the maritime trade with China.

Local earthenware in Periods I and II do not compare in quantity to those recovered from the Magsuhot burials. One of the reasons perhaps is that we are here witnessing the beginning of the deterioration of the local pottery industry in the face of stiff competion with the better-fired, better-shaped ceramics from China, especially in Period II. This is not a phenomenon unique only to Pila, however. It appears that devolution in local earthenware manufacture was a universal feature associated with the appearance of highly fired products from kilns in China and mainland Southeast Asia. In a subsequent discussion, it will be shown how the differential

treatment of local pottery vis-a-vis their imported counterparts established status differentiation in Pila society.

Evidence of Socio-Cultural Patterning in the Cremation Burial Practice of Pila

The Pila site yielded four cultural levels which were clearly delineated by a difference in associated assemblages and, in the case of the later phases, association of Chinese trade wares bearing diagnostic decoration of potteries manufactured under the Chinese Sung, Yuan, and Ming dynasties.

The appearance of a new burial tradition in Laguna heralded a new phase characterized by a religious outlook that included ritual burning of the exhumed bones before reburial in jars. Additional evidence of multiple reburial was also present, the jars becoming progressively smaller with each reburial.

Diggings in Pinagbayanan, Pila, Laguna

Cremation burial characterized Phase 2 of Period II. The cremation burials were of two types: 1) burial directly in a pit and, 2) burial in a jar or vessel. A further classification is based upon the presence or absence of associated grave goods. By the end of the project which lasted about one year, ninety one or roughly 25 per cent of the total number of burials recovered from the Pila site were cremation burials. Included in these assemblages were a number of doubtful cremation burials which were invariably found in larger stoneware jars. The regularity with which these were discovered in smashed condition initially provided a very challenging problem. Their subsequent inclusion within the cremation burial complex was based upon the following factors:

1) the presence in a number of these seemingly deliberately broken jars of traces of charcoal and charred skeletal remains believed to be human,
2) the regularity in which these were found in close proximity to definite cremations, whether directly in pits or in vessels; and
3) the presence of grave goods, whole or broken, inside these jars which provides a striking parallel to excavated cremations in vessels which also contained grave goods.

The hypothesis that the cremation in Pila was secondary is based upon several factors, foremost among which is the occurrence of large fragments of skeletal materials which is rarely found in primary cremation.[12] The cremation in Pila not only included recognizable parts such as long bones and large fragments of skull bones, but sometimes whole jaw bones with a few teeth still intact as well as finger and feet bones.

In this cremation burial in jars, we also see a parallel practice of multiple burial (burial of more than one individual inside one jar) that had been demonstrated in the Magsuhot jar burial culture.[14]

Ethnography has not shown an example of secondary cremation burial practice among existing groups in the Philippines. The closest parallel has been drawn from a tribe in Borneo called the Sihouggo. In their practice of secondary cremation, such ritual is considered an absolute necessity for purposes of purification. All unatoned sins are wiped away and then "the spirit is as clean as though washed in gold."[15]

Another and more important evidence in support for secondary cremation was the discovery of a crematory complex comprised of a structure made principally from ferric oxide with three chambers, none of which is large enough to contain an average-sized adult corpse. A number of smaller, basin-shaped structures made from the same material having an average dimension of 40-50 centimeters in diameter were also discovered. These smaller structures may also have been used for burning the disarticulated skeletal remains. Their discovery initially presented another problem until the recovery of a cremation burial in a brown spherical jar in situ sitting on top of one of these red ochre structures.

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1. *The crematorium*
2. *Secondary cremation burial in a Chinese export vessel*
3. *An Iron Age burial in Pila*

The Problem of Multiple Reburial

Secondary burial has been defined as an "indirect kind of burial practice in which the body is to be buried at least twice though often washed three or four times." A number of primitive groups practicing secondary burial today regard the ancestral bones as the abode of the ancestral spirit. Consequently, special care is taken in the cleaning of the bones before reburial as the belief prevails that the fortune of the entire family is dependent to a great extent upon the manner in which the ritual is observed. A calamity or serious illness befalling a member of the family is usually attributed to the displeasure of these spirits. In which case, the bones have to be exhumed, cleaned and subsequently reburied. The number of times that this is done appeared to be dictated by the exigency of the situation.

The smashed large jars were almost invariably found in close proximity to cremations whether in pits or in containers, and the inference is that the findings in Pila are parallels of the above situation in archaeological context.

Evidence of External Influence in the Cremation Burial of Pila

The cremation burial practice found in Pila had an impact so strong and compelling to the indigenous population as to spread rapidly around the lake region despite its relatively short duration. At this point, it is possible to present the conditions which facilitated the introduction of this cultural trait into this part of the Philippines.

The Chinese had, for centuries, been in contact with the early Filipinos through maritime trade. In fact, it would appear that the only intensive outside contacts the early Laguna settlers had during this particular period was with the Chinese traders. Evi-

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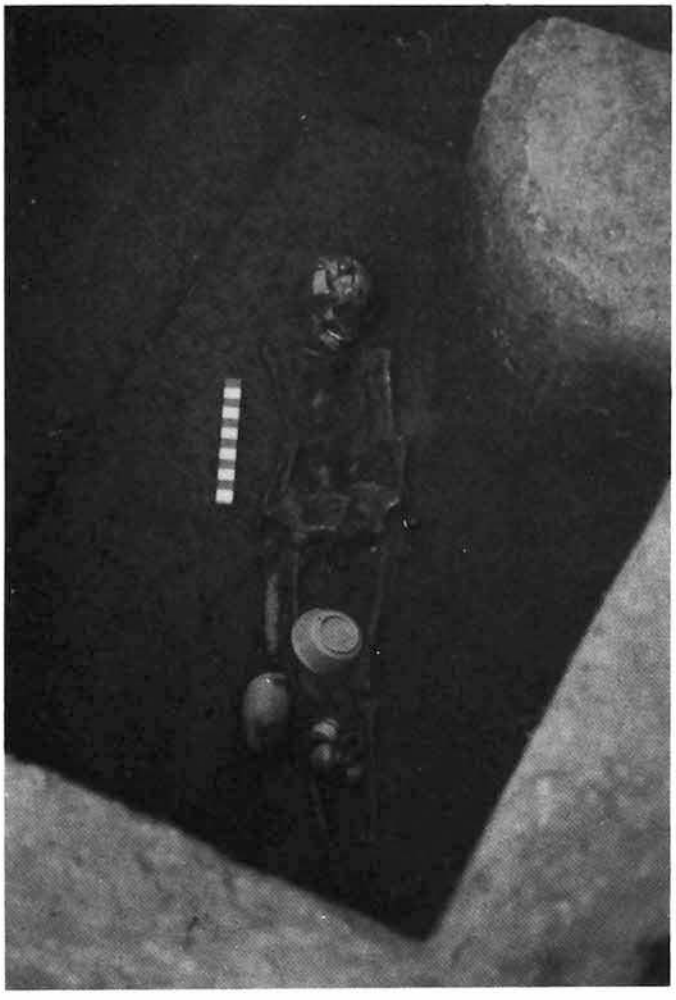


Assemblage of ceramic wares as found in burials in Pila in Period II.

Example of placement of export of ceramics vis- a-vis earthenware in Pila Burials in Period II.

dence points strongly to an actual settlement by these foreigners and, most likely, marriage to local women in the Laguna area.

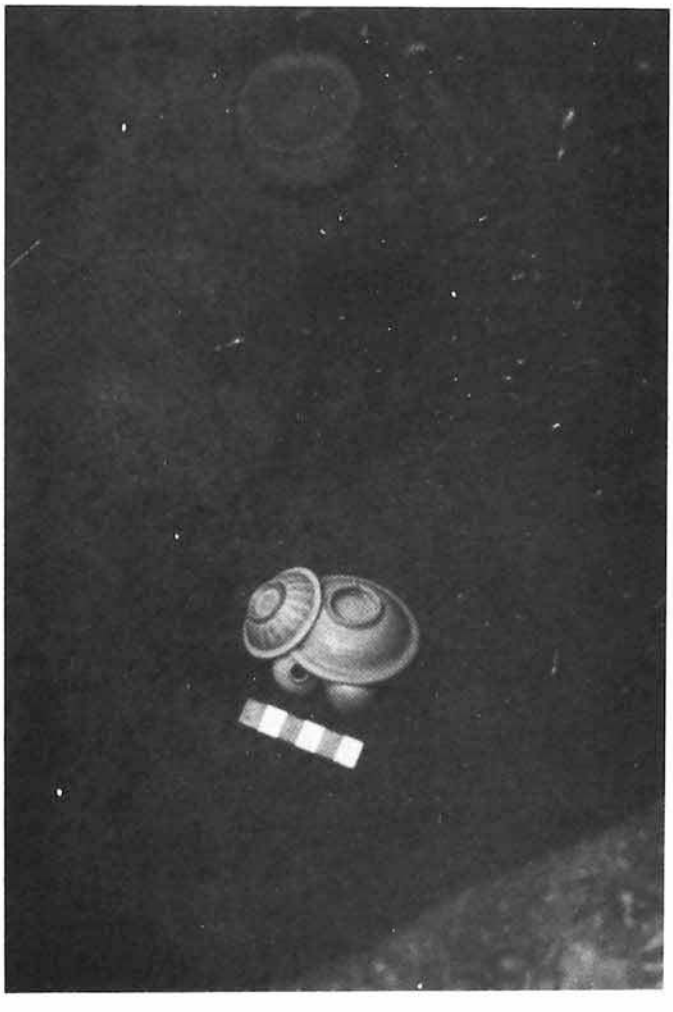
In this connection, it will be useful to introduce a category of ceramic item – the so-called "water droppers" – which was intimately linked to the problem and has constituted an additional argument for an actual foreign intervention at this time. These water droppers were tiny spouted vessels that were used to wet the ink used for writing or calligraphy. Outside of pure chance or unless actually carried and introduced into the indigenous culture by actual settlers who came from a tradition where writing was known to a literate few, there was no logical reason for these tiny vessels to be brought into the Philippines as items of trade. It is probable that they came to be introduced into the recipient Laguna culture, not necessarily in their original cultural context, but initially and it would seem thereafter, as highly valued knick-knacks with the added function of establishing status symbol to their new owners. Like the cremation burial practice, nowhere but in this part of the Philippines have water droppers been recovered, and in phenomenal quantity and shapes.

This could mean that foreign agents – most likely the Chinese – actually established settlements in the area and introduced certain artifacts specific only to their culture, such as the water droppers that were used in caligraphy or writing. At the same time, they introduced a new religious concept resulting in the sudden and widespread appearance of an entirely new burial tradition, that of cremation. Whether these practices were introduced in toto or were the result of indigenous innovation of the same concept are questions that will not now be possible to answer.

Stratification of Pila Society as Seen Through Pottery

It was previously mentioned that a mode of burying in two levels characterized the complex burial in Magsuhot. This practice of adding grave goods after the partial cover-up of the burial pit also finds a parallel in the Pila site of Laguna.

In the case of Pila, it was the local earthenware that were placed on top, perhaps an indication of the high value the Pila people had attached to the imported ceramics which formed the main burial assemblage, in opposition to the seeming low esteem of their own local products that were separated from the rest of the assemblage. Another illustration of this apparent pottery discrimination is connected with the practice of wrapping of the dead in a shroud or matting

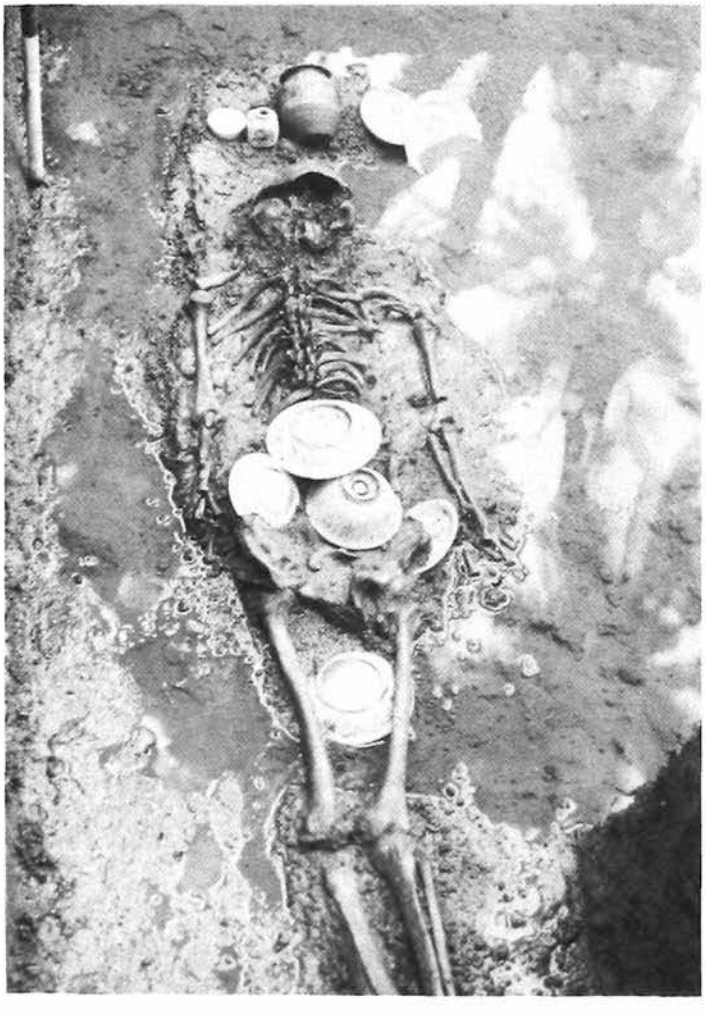


together with some of their prized possessions. In such cases, the earthenwares were found on the same level but away from the main cluster of imported ceramic pieces giving the impression that they were not bundled together with the corpse.

Again, as demonstrated in Magsuhot complex burials, the Pila burials with associations of relatively high number of pottery of better quality, exemplified by the delicately potted ch'ing pai pieces – in a good number of cases in shapes of animal and fruit and water droppers – and celadon dishes and jarlets, are attributed to personnages of higher rank in society. In contrast, the burials of lower class had only a few pottery which are generally of the more inferior, stoneware varieties.

Some Socio-Religious Concepts Found in Pila

Concepts connected with fertility are not unique to the jar burial culture of Magsuhot. The extensive recovery of net sinkers in Pila has been mentioned. These earthenware objects were recovered from the earliest to the middle phases of Period II. As an indicator of intensive fishing activities in the lake area, this mode of exploitation existed at least for two cultural levels. These pottery objects were in a number of instances realistically carved into representations of the phallus. A number of these phallic objects were recovered from the excavation floors, others in clear association with inhumation and cremation burials. A more interesting association was of a male and female symbols in a cremation burial. The female symbol takes the form of a spherical net sinker or large earthenware bead with a deep cleft along one side.



Placement of ceramic pieces in relation to the body. Pila, Period II.

Another example of how the wares were found in Pila. Period II.

Similar sexual conceptualization encountered in the Magsuhot jar burial culture appears to be an integral part of a widespread cult that involved the worship of the phallus in connection, perhaps, with ancestor worship and/or fertility. In the case of Pila, these sinker/phallic objects were probably either worn as pendants or strung to the fishnet as regular sinkers but attached with religious significance.

A category of pottery, not quite uncommon in the Delta region of Sarawak and Malaysian Borneo, is the phallic-topped covers. Phallic tops were first reported by Solheim from studies he conducted on pottery from Tanjong Kubor near Santubong.[17] These phallic-topped covers have been ethnographically correlated with the Badjau in Sabah who continue to make such lids today. The phallic lids are included in the discussion of phallic objects/net sinkers recovered from Pila because of their suggested connection with a widespread sexual symbolism. It seems to include also the Jaong anthropomorphic rock carvings of figures with legs outspread and arms outstretched. It is mentioned here that such a motif has also been encountered on some stone burial jars recovered from cave sites in the province of Cotabato in the island of Mindanao[18] and in Sulawesi in Celebes (data obtained from a communication from W.G. Solheim II).

This preoccupation with the sex symbolism in the form of phallic objects appears to find many parallels in China where these are correlated to the ***tsu*** and ***she*** ritual places for ancestor worship. The characters for these ritual places are supposed to symbolize the sex organs. This situation is likened to the marae of the Polynesians and the ***sua*** or ***sar*** of the Melanesians.[19]

Summary and Conclusions

The foregoing discussions brought out the kinds of factors that were operative in determining site placement by Iron Age communities that were widely located in space and, to a certain extent, also in time. The Magsuhot jar burial culture was located far inland in a region that, evaluated at present face value, does not appear to possess the wherewithals for a substantial food resource that was necessary for existence. But a rich culture did exist there in prehistoric times and the probable stimuli for the development of a sophisticated jar burial community lay in certain choices of usable resources, in particular clay, to sustain a flourishing trade in pottery and, possibly, accessibility to mineral ores and certain forest products that were bartered for foreign manufactures within the framework of wider commercial contacts.

The Pila settlements, on the other hand, had enjoyed an inherently favourable environment, being situated along a lakeside site teeming with exploitable equatic life and an area equally high in potentials for irrigation farming. Still, the area would have been relatively remote had it not happen to lie along the main route of traffic in foreign goods and many cultural ideas. Entry into the lake area was effected through the Pasig River which formed the main artery that connected the Lake area to the South China Sea maritime trade traffic. The traffic of goods and ideas along the Pasig River route resulted in the proliferation of important trading ports, not only around the Lake area as Bay, Pila, Lumbang, and Sta. Cruz in Laguna, but also in the area of Manila Bay as witnessed by the famous site of Sta. Ana.

Trade, rather than any other subsistence strategies, provided the stimulus for cultural development among the early Iron Age settlers of Magsuhot and Pila. The wealth amassed had, in turn, enabled the groups to procure certain items of material culture from near and distant regions that were necessary for their existence.

In Magsuhot, the negative evidence for actual iron working and cloth weaving presupposed trade for these items outside the settlement in exchange for its own pottery products. Trade as the main economic base has provided an ample source of wealth for both the Magsuhot and Pila Iron Age settlements and as demonstrated especially in Magsuhot, the growth of a rich jar burial community in a relatively remote region.

In Magsuhot, two levels of economic activities appear to have been engaged in: 1) local trade in pottery and, 2) an implied wider commercial contacts that brought in foreign products of which the only surviving testimonies are the ornaments of glass that originated from as far as the Middle East and the Mediterranean.

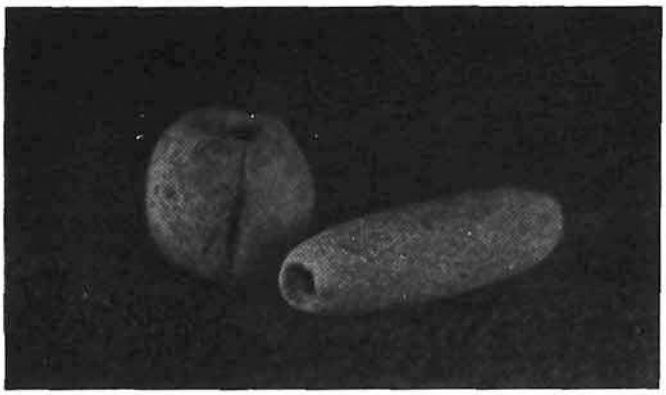
The obvious reliance on other material goods for existence presupposed some kind of craft specialization on a local or village level. Perhaps a number of communities, not necessarily related, were linked together in a trading network enabling them to transcend particular limitation in their respective environments.

It had, likewise, been shown how graves provided interesting clues for social and political organizations. We saw how status (which implies social stratification) can be inferred from the differential treatment of burials as well as in the manner of their disposition and the types of grave goods that are interred in the burials. Certain items of artifacts also can give information or clues on the political organization of a people. The existence of a pottery staff-cum-mace head, the presence of special ritual vessels and figurines from the Magsuhot site, and the stone ceremonial seat point to a developed political organization which would be expected to follow in the wake of a growing population. It is pointed out that the Magsuhot jar burial settlement encompassed three contiguous barrios: Liptong, Malabago, and Magsuhot. The density of population, demonstrated by both the Magsuhot settlement and Period I and Phases 1 and 2 of Period II of Pila, was drawn from the extensive distribution of burials in these sites. The burial sites alone belonging to Period II in the three barrios of Pila, which includes Pinagbayanan (the actual excavation site) that had been overrun in the late 60's by commercial diggings, totalled a remarkable area of 18 hectares. Consequently, a form of political structure had to be in existence.

Certain items of artifacts such as the phallic pottery objects from Period II of Pila provide an idea of the extent of the influence of cultural ideas, perhaps mainly through stimulus diffusion, a by-product of the existing trade contacts.

The secondary cremation burial encountered in Phase 2, Period II of Pila , was likewise the result of intensive contacts, resulting in its actual introduction into the area of Laguna through actual migrations and not through stimulus diffusion. The change of mode of disposal of the dead from the common inhumation type of burial to that of secondary cremation denotes a probable change in outlook that affected religious concepts, especially in the areas of attitudes towards life after death.

The motif seen on the Magsuhot jar burial complex was derived from the bird which, from ethnographic



Phallic net sinkers – male and female. Pila, Period II.

analogies, represents the skyworld. Representations of the bird motif have also been on other forms of burial, such as in the boat-coffin burials that co-existed with jar burials over wide areas in Southeast Asia.[20] Because the bird is thought of as representing the skyworld, the boat coffins of the Ngadju Dayak are shaped like a hornbill. Likewise, among groups in Assam, coffins are decorated with hornbills which they call boats. Finally, the ceremonial Dongson bronze drums on the Southeast Asian mainland and parts of Indonesia carry motifs, not only of boats, but also of birds and bird-shaped men.[21]

Thus it has been shown that certain factors of the environment can determine particular choices of the archaeological settlement: in Magsuhot, it was the source of clay for their pottery industry and in Pila, an environment rich in food resources in addition to trade in ceramics in the later phases.

The overall implication is that the particular settlement pattern chosen by early peoples can be a causal factor of social forms. Religion was seen as being expressed in certain rituals and in the types of burials encountered as well as in the quantity and types of grave goods, especially of pottery, associated with these burials. The nature of the political organization was partly inferred through trade (predominantly) as well as in certain artifacts (e.g. the pottery mace head) and, in the case of Magsuhot, the megalithic structure that is interpreted as a chief's ceremonial seat.

Footnotes

1. Rosa C.P. Tenazas, "A Progress Report on the Magsuhot Excavations in Bacong, Negros Oriental, Summer 1974" **Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society** 2 (3), 1974.
2. R.C.P. Tenazas, **A Report on the Archaeology of the Locsin – University of San Carlos Excavations in Pila.** Manila, 1968; cf. R.C.P. Tenazas, "Salvage Excavation in Southern Luzon, Philippines: A Summary," **Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society** 1 (2) 1973, pp. 132-137.
3. O.W. Wolters, **Early Indonesian Commerce.** New York: Cornell University Press, 1967, p. 154.
4. Harold C. Conklin, "Buhid Pottery," **Journal of East Asiatic Studies** 1 (1), 1953, pp. 1-12.
5. Wilhelm G. Solheim II, "The Functions of Pottery in Southeast Asia: From the Present to the Past," **Ceramics and Man,** Frederick Matson (ed.). New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research Inc., 1965, p. 256.
6. W.G. Solheim II, "The Ibanag Pottery Manufacture in Isabela, Phlippines," **Journal of East Asiatic Studies** 3 (3), 1954, pp. 305-307.
7. W.G. Solheim II, **The Archaeology of Central Philippines.** A Study chiefly of the Iron Age and its Relationships. Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1964; cf. Solheim, "Pottery and the Malayo-Polynesians," **Current Anthropology** 5 (5), 1964, pp. 360 ff.

   In his classic study on the Philippine Iron Age, Solheim identifies at least three groups of people that introduced the technology of iron working into the Philippines which he calls the Kalanay, Bau, and Novaliches, after the type sites where their pottery complexes were first recognized.

   Apart from definite areas of distribution, each of these complexes is distinguished from the other through formal elements of decoration diagnostic of each group.

   A pottery complex which Solheim assumes to be a subgroup of the Kalanay is what he calls the Bagupantao. The diagnostic decoration are lenticular cut-out designs while sharing certain elements of forms with the other complexes such as the ring stand attached to bowls with or without cut-out designs.
8. L.G. Loeffler, "Beast, Bird, and Fish: An Essay in Southeast Asian Symbolism," Paper read in the Symposium on Folk Religion and World View in the Southwestern Pacific, 11th Pacific Science Congress, Tokyo, 1966.
9. Rudolf Rahmann SVD, "Shamanistic and Related Phenomena in Northern and Middle India," **Anthropos** 54, 1959, pp. 736 ff.
10. Tenazas, 1974, **op. cit.,** p. 135.
11. W.G. Solheim II, "Notes on Burial Customs in Near Sagada Mountain Province," **Philippine Journal of Science** 88, 1960, pp. 123-131.
12. See attached Table showing the Chronology of Cultural Developments in Pila.
13. Nils-Gustaf Gejvall, "Cremations," **Science and Archaeology,** Don Brothwell and Eric Higgs (eds.). USA: Thames and Hudson, 1965, p. 381.

    Fragments of any given sample in primary cremation only have an average size of 1.5-2.5 cm.
14. Cf. R.C.P. Tenazas, "Notes on a Preliminary Analysis of Cremation Burial," **Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society,** 1 (2), 1973, pp. 137-138.
15. Henry Ling Roth, **The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo.** 2 vols. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968, pp. 146-154; 160-163.
16. The following are some graphic descriptions of secondary cremation burial practices in China and Japan: "Among the Lolo of Yunnan and Sikiang... when a person dies, offering of medicine is at once made to him; usually his corpse is placed on a platform. When it completely decays, the bones are removed and washed five times and finally cleaned with fire, that is, burned." The information on Japan states that "bones which have been washed, or burned, and buried for a second time, have been widely found in archaeological sites of Japan; the evidence strongly indicates the past existence of the bone-washing (secondary burial) in Japan." Cf. Shun-Sheng Ling, "The Bone-Washing Burial Custom and Ancestral Bone Worship in Southeast Asia and Around the Pacific," **Academia Sinica** 2 (1), 1955, p. 192.
17. Wilhelm G. Solheim II, "The Prehistoric Earthenware of Tanjong Kubor Near Santubong," **Sarawak Museum Journal** XII (25-26), 1965, p. 17; figs. 6 and 14; plate 10.
18. Marcelino N. Maceda, "Preliminary Report on Ethnographic and Archaeological Work in Kulaman Plateau, Island of Mindanao, Philippines," **Anthropos** 59, 1964.

19. Shun-Sheng Ling, "Ancestral Tablet and Genital Symbolism in Ancient China," **Academia Sinica** 8, 1959, p. 39 ff.
20. R.C.P. Tenazas, "The Boat-Coffin Burial Complex of the Philippines and its Relations to Similar Practices in Southeast Asia" **Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society"** 1 (1), 1973; cf. Loeffler, **op. cit.**
21. H.G. Quaritch Wales, **Prehistory and Religion in Southeast Asia.** London: Bernard Quaritch, Ltd., 1957.

The boat is believed to be an alternate development by riverine and maritime peoples of Southeast Asia to the Rainbow-bridge Myth by which means the souls are carried to the afterworld or heaven.

Table 1: Chronology of Cultural Developments in Pila, Laguna

Period	Culture	Characteristics	Date	Burials
Period I	Early Iron Age	Novaliches type Pottery Complex, first identified by W.G. Solheim II (1964); limited distribution in the Laguna area; simple inhumation burial	Ca. 400 B.C. – 200 A.D.	9
Period II Phase I	Early Late Iron Age	Characterized by the first evidence of direct maritime trade contact with China and, indirectly, with Middle Eastern countries; period of contact with the so-called "Great Traditions"; simple inhumation burials wrapped in mats; extensive evidence of metal working, weaving, and fishing; pottery objects identified as phallic symbols. The site was used, for both habitation and burial.	Ca. 10-12th Century A.D.; Associations of trade ceramics from China of early to late Sung dynasty attributions; Chinese coins from two burial assemblages with the latest dates of 1063 A.D. and 1100 A.D., respectively.	278
Period II Phase 2	Early Late Iron Age	External trade contact with China continues; first appearance of cremation burial, predominantly in jars; a crematorium of haematite, the first substantial prehistoric structure excavated in the Philippines; phallic pottery objects continue to appear. Evidence indicates utilization of the site for both habitation and burial.	Early 13th-14th Century A.D. by radio carbon dating method; trade ceramic associations as well as the burial jars are diagnostically of late Sung/Yuan Dynasty types.	91
Period II Phase 3	Late Iron Age	Abrupt fall in density of population; a period of migrations; complete disappearance of cremation burial and reappearance of inhumation type of burials; first appearance of export wares from mainland Southeast Asia.	Late 13th-15th Century A.D., by association of early Ming trade wares and export wares from Siam and Annam in mainland Southeast Asia.	17