

## THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PHILIPPINE EXPEDITION

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**N**EARLY a decade ago, the late Dean C. Worcester encountered fragments of Asiatic ceramics in caves and burial grounds in several localities in the Visayan group of the Philippine Islands. Largely as a result of his recommendations the University of Michigan organized an expedition to conduct "anthropological explorations in the Philippine Islands." The field work, which covered a period of three years was completed during the past summer. It seems appropriate, at this time, to give a preliminary statement of the conduct and collections of the expedition.

In view of the fact that most interest was displayed in the intrusive Asiatic ceramics, this material was made the particular subject of the work. The original intention had been to explore the entire archipelago with reference to various forms of prehistoric burial. Practical difficulties, such as transportation and location of material, made it necessary to restrict the area to include only the southern half of it, i. e., those islands lying to the south of the thirteenth parallel of latitude. This includes all of the Visayas, Mindanao, and the Sulu group.

Because of Mr. Worcester's hospitality, the headquarters of the expedition were located at the Opon mill of the Philippine Refining corporation, on the island of Mactan. This is across the channel from Cebu, one of the principal cities of the Philippines, in the very heart of the Visayan area. An entire house was given as a laboratory for the work, to which collections were brought, and where they were sorted, catalogued and packed. Mr. Worcester placed his yacht, the *Anne W. Day*, a seventy-five foot schooner with auxiliary engines, at the disposal of the expedition, thus giving it control of its own means of transportation. When conditions warranted, explorations could, thereby, be conducted in localities not ordinarily reached by the usual inter-island steamers. In the course of three years of field work twenty trips

were taken to various parts of the southern islands, which resulted in collections and information from all but three of the twenty-two provinces into which the area is divided. The method of attack was purely exploratory. Information regarding likely sites was obtained from villagers and foreigners well acquainted with the restricted area under consideration at the time. As many as possible of these localities were visited, at which notes and representative collections were obtained. No attempt was made to exhaust all the possibilities in any district, because of the brief time available. Only in a few cases, when a given site showed promise of especial value, were extended excavations undertaken.

These trips and those of several agents working in restricted districts resulted in a tremendous collection of material, totalling 4500 catalogue numbers from 542 sites, about seventy-five per cent of which constitute unbroken ceramic specimens and sherds. This material was obtained from caves, inhumations, and miscellaneous localities, including one gold mine. The last is situated in the northwestern part of the island of Masbate, in a district in which several gold mines exist today. The old mine is at present being worked by two prospectors, who are very profitably removing the refuse left by the earlier workers. Intermingled with this refuse are many sherds of blue and white porcelain and stoneware, fragments of native pottery, a few iron implements, and examples of the mortars and hand stones used for crushing ore. No traces of habitations could be found here, although it seems extremely likely that the people lived near, if not upon, the refuse heaps. At present it is uncertain whether the mine had Chinese or native workmen. It is, however, very apparent that a strong Chinese influence existed here.

Nearly every island of the Visayas contains limestone caves, and in nearly every locality a few of the caves contain burials. The people living near these caves today consider the presence of bones and broken vessels a supernatural phenomenon, and many legends have sprung up accounting for them. The floors of the caves fall roughly into four classes: smooth rock floors with very little deposit of earth; masses of broken and jagged rocks, with inaccessible crevasses; more or less deep deposits of guano; and

relatively shallow deposits of soft earth. In all of these types fragments of skeletons and sherds were encountered.

In the great majority of cases, upon entering a cave, it was immediately possible to determine by the surface evidence whether it was barren or contained burials. Several times excavations were made in apparently barren caves to ascertain if deposits existed which had been entirely covered. Such a condition was never encountered in spite of the existence of occasional rumors that vessels had been found under many feet of guano or earth. The surface evidence consisted of sherds and fragments of human bones. In every case the vessels had been broken, and in many cases so thoroughly smashed that the only conclusions possible were that it had been done intentionally by those who placed them there. In some cases the small holes in the bottoms of native vessels implied ceremonial "killing." The native pottery lends itself to this form of evidence far better than a vessel of stoneware or porcelain, which would be broken into several fragments by such treatment.

In every one of the hundred odd caves from which material was collected, there was strong proof that the mortuary material had been disturbed since it had been placed there. Sudden torrents of water rushing through the caves seemed to account for the greatest destruction of evidence. Repeatedly, masses of sherds, bones, and ornaments were found washed into a pocket, or into a depression in the floor, then partly covered with earth. Animals and native shamans added to the havoc created by the elements. Empty half shells of cocoanuts, remains of candles and palmleaf torches, and small offerings of money and ornaments gave ample evidence of the recent use of many caves. In a very few cases fragments of a vessel were found closely together. Occasionally a cache of ornaments, or the major part of a broken vessel lay in a pocket not ordinarily reached by the elements or prowlers. Several attempts were made to discover evidence of stratification, but in every case the human deposits proved to be very shallow, regardless of the depth to which the cave was filled with earth.

Under such conditions it is obvious that the skeletal material was badly scattered. In only a few instances could the bones of

one individual be separated from the rest, but in all cases the remains had been disturbed. As a rule the body appeared to have been placed upon the floor of the cave, probably wrapped in a mat which had since disintegrated. A few examples of jar burials in caves were encountered, and in several, wooden coffins were found. Coffins dating from the first years of this century were encountered in caves in Samar and the Calamianes group. Practically all of the skeletal material in the collections came from caves. Due to the conditions described above, this material consists of unrelated skulls, mandibles, long bones, and teeth. Among the ninety-five skulls in the collection are several showing frontal-occipital flattening.

From a cursory inspection of the material obtained from caves, it is at once apparent that throughout the entire southern Philippines, the natives at one time buried their dead in caves, supplying them with ornaments, weapons, and vessels, and probably with the perishable examples of material culture which have since disappeared. No traces of cave habitations as cultural traits were encountered, although several examples of present day temporary cave dwellings of herders and fishermen were seen.

The Filipinos have been under Christian influence for such a long period that all recollection of pre-Spanish inhumations has passed. They vaguely associate bones and vessels found in the course of plowing and excavating, with ancestors, but never in a personal sense. As a rule they stand in fear of the spirits of the dead, a fear which is occasionally strong enough to cause the abandonment of fertile farming land. Today no surface traces remain of these old inhumations. Most of the evidence was therefore obtained by Filipino agents travelling from village to village making inquiries. In this way they met farmers who had encountered material while plowing or digging post holes for their homes. The agents would then collect what evidence was obtainable, buying any vessels saved in the houses of the discoverers and making a surface collection from the fields when that proved possible. Usually the burials were very near the surface, and repeatedly plates and skulls had been shattered by the point of the native plow. Little accurate data regarding position of the

bones and disposition of the furniture associated with them could be obtained from the farmers, who frequently had discovered the material several years prior to the advent of the agent.

Several old burial grounds were dug by the writer. Three forms of burial are recorded: simple inhumation, at length, but never in a wooden coffin, occasionally with vessels covering various parts of the body; jar burial, in native jars; and one case of secondary burial in a small pit hollowed out of the limestone. In one burial ground, intermingled with adult burials at length, the skeletal remains of infants were found in native jars covered with stones, some of which had been grooved to receive the lip of the jar. Hearsay had it that adult burials in jars had been removed from this burial ground in the course of the construction of a road, but none were found by the writer.

The expedition collections contain nearly a thousand practically whole specimens of ceramics, and many thousands of sherds, in the form of jars, a few vases, plates, bowls, cups, and special forms. The most interesting class of this material is, of course, the Asiatic ceramics. While most of it seems to be of Chinese origin, many vessels are obviously not Chinese, and their place of origin is, as yet, unknown. It seems probable that some of them came from Southern Asia, or possibly from India or the Malay Archipelago. Due to the great complexity of Asiatic wares it is impossible to say definitely just which are represented in the collections. This will have to be determined by specialists. It may, however, be safely said that some of the specimens closely resemble wares of the Sung dynasty (960 to 1279 A. D.). Later wares, of course, are more abundant. From the conditions of the specimens it appears that most of the material is second grade, some of it practically equivalent to kiln rejects, which were brought to the islands by the Chinese traders in exchange for the products of the country. No material evidence was found of permanent Chinese colonies in the Philippines.

The examples of native wares found in caves, and occasionally with burials, offer details of great interest. All are, of course, a rather inferior grade of pottery. They differ radically in form and decoration from the present-day vessels. Some very bizarre forms

have been encountered, such as polygonal vessels with standards. The decoration is both incised and applied, the former predominating. The applied designs are formed with strips and lumps of clay arranged upon the vessel in relatively simple forms, usually marked with what appears to have been a blunt stylus. The incised decoration is often very complex. Both curvilinear and rectilinear designs occur, associated with dots and dashes. Frequently the high standards of vessels are perforated by both circular and polygonal holes. Contemporaneous native pottery, if it is decorated at all, has usually short incised lines at the base of the neck. It is hoped that a study of shapes, rims, and decoration of these older vessels will prove very illuminating with reference to the problems of migration of designs in Malaysia.

The smaller objects found associated with the burials offer great variety. The most common type of material is iron in various forms, usually weapons, occasionally implements and ornaments. Shell material is very common. In the majority of sites, shell ornaments abound, principally in the form of bracelets, although rings, pendants, and beads frequently occur, and occasionally small shell containers. Beads are very abundant, usually as rather crude examples of glass work, but also made of pottery, shell, a stone resembling agate, and various metals, including gold. Copper and copper alloys occur, usually as bracelets, and in two cases as bronze implements. Two lantakas, or bronze cannon, were excavated in the Sulu province. Stone objects are rare, although a few specimens of chipped and polished implements were found, as well as small whetstones. Gold occurs as ornaments, including ear pendants, beads, clasps, small squares which resemble buttons, and minute discs which have been set into human incisors as decoration. Lead and glass, with the exception of glass beads, occur only rarely. Lead net sinkers and a peculiar type of lead ornament in the shape of an uneven loop compose most of this class. Pottery pipes, with ornamented wings over the short stem are associated with the native ware bearing applied designs, and seem to be confined to northeastern Mindanao. Miscellaneous pottery objects, including stamps and spindle whorls also occur. Bone implements and ornaments are extremely rare, although

several specimens of antler tips, and a few implements were obtained. Wooden and textile material is practically non-existent, with the exception of native coffins. In one cave some woven fibre arm bands, belts, carrying-straps, and so forth, were obtained in very dry earth.

From the foregoing summary of the material obtained by the expedition, it is apparent that abundant opportunity exists for research along several lines. During the period of gathering the material little more than keeping the field records in order could be accomplished. The general impression gained from the geographical distribution of the material and the specimens themselves, is that early Chinese commerce, which possibly existed as early as the twelfth century, A.D., appears to have centered about a line drawn in a northeasterly direction along the western coast of Mindanao, through the central Visayas towards the southern tip of Luzon. The minor objects obtained seem to demonstrate that the earlier culture of the Visayan islands closely resembled that found today among the pagan tribes of the interiors of the larger islands. The detailed and comparative study of the material which is still to be undertaken should add not only to the knowledge of early Chinese commerce, but also to a better understanding of the earlier Filipino cultures.

A small miscellaneous collection of ethnological material was obtained although no systematic collecting was done in this field. However, the archipelago offers an extraordinary field for an ethnologist. The complexity and diversity of the various cultures of the islands is far greater than is generally supposed. Among the pagan tribes of Mindanao ample opportunity still exists for thorough study of all phases of ethnology. In the majority of cases, the people are hospitable and within easy access of the coastal towns. Although our modern culture has to some extent replaced the native material culture among the coastal Filipinos, the field for various phases of social ethnology and linguistics is still very rich. The broad ethnological situation in the Philippines is roughly similar to that in this country, in that many different culture areas exist which are more or less closely related, but, due to foreign influences, the data are gradually disappearing and will

in a few years be entirely non-existent unless trained ethnologists do field work in this area. Dr. Beyer of the University of the Philippines, has accomplished a tremendous amount in collecting material of all kinds, but the problem is too large for any one man to handle thoroughly.

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