

III. URN CEMETERIES

The burial of the dead in earthenware vessels, with or without the addition of funeral furniture, must have been a widespread habit in prehistoric times in Indonesia and surrounding territories, such as Tonkin, Laos, North Cachar, Japan, the Philippines, Formosa and Korea. It is interesting to note that urns have often been found close to megaliths and the idea that these two cultural elements may be associated with one another is therefore not unreasonable.

Up to the present we have insufficient data to achieve a proper insight into the distribution of such urnfields in Indonesia. The matter is further complicated by the fact that at least three different methods of burial in urns have been found. We shall return to this subject at the end of this paragraph. First we shall try to give a short summary of the known urnfields, treating each island separately.

a. J a v a.

The first traces of urn-burials in Java were found by the schoolmaster Munir in December 1954 at Anjar Lor, a village in North Banten, West Java. They were discovered two hundred metres inland from the coast and two metres above flood level. After a heavy rainstorm the schoolmaster noticed a ring-shaped mark in the soil in front of his house and when he started digging, the ring appeared to be the top edge of a large urn nearly one metre high. Inside he found a human skeleton and various gifts of earthenware. Only five metres away he discovered a second urn, which he also excavated, finding at the bottom another skeleton in a poor state of preservation. This second urn he left partly intact in its original place and filled it with sand. By request skeletons and funeral furniture were sent to the office of the Archaeological Service at Djakarta. No expert study of the skeletons has yet been made, so we shall confine ourselves to some general remarks about them.

The first skeleton was probably of a male person; the skull was

thick and the lower jaw very heavy. The second, being considerably more delicate, belonged probably to a woman. Both skulls had in common a *wajang*-like profile, the nose and forehead forming a straight line, without appreciable nose-bridge, similar to the classic Greek profile. Most likely this phenomenon should be ascribed to some kind of artificial deformation during childhood.

The funeral furniture consisted of the following objects: 1 jar, 292 mm. high and 215 mm. wide, made of polished dark-brown earthenware on a circular base.

1 dish, 179 mm. high, 271.5 mm. diameter, made of polished dark-brown earthenware. Round the base were 8 panels alternatively decorated with linear motives and unadorned.

1 dish like the previous one in shape and of the same material but somewhat smaller.

1 simple globular bowl of yellow-brown earthenware, 95 mm. high and 142 mm. wide. In the centre a row of fingernail imprints.

There were no metal objects in the urn.

The present author, assisted by Mr Basoeki, carried out a systematic excavation in this area. It became clear that the situation was not very suitable for the purpose, as digging was only possible between the houses, and as during the second world war the Japanese had dug hiding places there. In consequence the results were disappointing. The sequence of our finds was as follows:

Sector I: a concentration of large and small plain potsherds, probably belonging to an urn. In the midst of them two parts of a human mandible, which fitted together; part of an upper jaw and some skull fragments. Formerly a house had been built at this place; holes made by stakes were still visible.

Sector II: a number of plain potsherds and one round carnelian bead, red-brown, 14,5 mm. in diameter.

Sector III: Entirely disturbed by a modern refuse pit.

Sector IV: Urn B, which had been emptied by Munir, was found in this sector. The lower portion of the urn survived only because it had been buried in a hard-pan. It was cracked, but not compressed. The upper part had collapsed.

On April 2nd, the urn was removed with great care. It had been restored in the Djakarta Museum as far

as possible. As has already been mentioned, a crushed human skeleton was found in this urn, but there was no grave-furniture.

Sector V—VII: Plain potsherds only.

Sector VIII: An extended burial of an adult in south-north direction, buried in a hard-pan; feet pointing to the north, heelbones upwards, proving that the body was buried face downwards. Only the lower half of the skeleton was present; the other parts were destroyed by the digging of a Japanese shelter. Several human bones were found scattered in this section. One potsherd with impressed mat-design was unearthed, as well as two bone fragments of a goat with engraved parallel lines.

Sector IX—XI: Plain potsherds only.

The results of these excavations may have been disappointing, but the importance of the Anjar site remains, as here the existence of urn-burials in Java was proved for the first time.¹⁰⁴

The urns were found immediately under the surface of the ground, no grave-mounds having been constructed over them. They were made of plain common earthenware. The dead were placed in the urns singly, in flexed position. The funeral gifts were fine polished earthenware but there were no ornaments or weapons. Probably the most eminent members of the community only were interred in urns, whereas the common man was buried in the earth. A possible illustration thereof is given by the discovery in the ground of a skeleton of a man lying face downwards in an extended position, the skeleton having the same degree of preservation as those found in the urns. This proto-historic tradition of burying men face downwards and women lying on their backs is still in use in Bali, near Lake Batur, in Upper Bangli and in East Buleleng.¹⁰⁵

The urns were almost circular, with a diameter of 75 cm. The funeral gifts were probably manufactured with the aid of a rotating disc or "tournette" and they were decorated in a simple and conventional style. No traces of influence of the Dongson Culture have been found at Anjar, but as we have no knowledge of Anjar metal

¹⁰⁴ van Heekeren, 1956b.

¹⁰⁵ van Stein Callenfels, 1940, p. 230—32.

objects, which might have carried such traces (none being found among the funeral furniture) our judgment cannot be final.

No definite conclusions can be drawn as to the age of this graveyard, but we venture to believe that it does not date back further than about the second or third century A.D.

In the same territory where the urns were found, a bronze kettle drum of type Heger IV was also discovered. In the collection of E. W. van Orsoy de Flines there are some potsherds of the Han period, which come from Banten. There is little doubt that undiscovered urnfields are still lying along Banten's coast and it is our hope that at some future date these will be excavated in a professional manner.

b. S u m a t r a.

The only person who has supplied information about urnfields discovered in this large island has been J. C. Noorlander¹⁰⁶. It concerned a couple of earthenware grave-urns, which were found accidentally by the population. In each was found a collection of remains of human bones and an empty brown-red beautifully polished jar. The shoulder and the neck of one of the jars were decorated with engraved meander and fish-bone motives, indicating influence of the Dongson Culture. (Pl. 32). The jars are 209 and 220 mm. high respectively. The urns were found at the village of Lesungbatu, Muara Danau, Tebingtinggi, South West Sumatra. The urns were destroyed by the finders, but the two jars are in the Museum at Djakarta. Most probably there are more urnfields in this territory.

c. C e l e b e s.

In Central Celebes the presence of megalithic remains such as stone urns and stone statues has been reported, among others by Kaudern¹⁰⁷; and in the same territory are also urnfields. Whether we may conclude that the urnfields belong to the megalithic culture or whether they are part of a separate culture, are questions which cannot be decided in the present state of our knowledge. Kaudern mentions that at Bada, close to a gigantic stone statue, the ground is covered with numerous small hillocks, which might well be tumuli. No further investigations into this matter have yet been made. At Pada he found a large broken

¹⁰⁶ OV, 1939, p. 13.

Heine Geldern, 1945, p. 148.

¹⁰⁷ Kaudern, 1938, § d, Chapter II.

urn made of earthenware, which has been repaired at a later date. It was 111 cm. high and had a circumference of 289 cm.; its walls had a thickness of only 0.7—1.0 cm. It is assumed that there is an urnfield on this terrain. At Jintu is a large stone statue lying face downwards on the ground. The valley there has a large number of hillocks about one metre high, which are sometimes more or less in rows. The possibility exists that these, too, are tumuli. Kaudern also mentions another hillock of more than human height, which looked like a tumulus. Kruyt finally reports the presence of urns at Leboni and in the Palau Valley, without however saying anything about their contents.

Further south W. J. A. Willems carried out methodical excavations from September 8th to 26th, 1938, near the deserted village of Sa'bang, 50 kilometres north of Paloppo on the Paloppo-Masamba road. The top layer produced potsherds of soft-baked earthenware, Chinese potsherds, stone bark-cloth beaters, stone mortars and iron spear-heads. Underneath this was a layer containing 10 large urns at a depth of 2—2½ metres below ground level. These urns were made of soft-baked earthenware and were broken in a multitude of small pieces, their contents having perished completely. Willems suspects that we are dealing with secondary burials, but of this there is no proof.¹⁰⁸

In South Celebes, from Sengkang southwards, there was once a tradition, which lasted up to the influx of Islam in 1609—1611, that deceased rulers and other important persons were to be cremated and their calcinated ashes interred in urns of Chinese porcelain. Already in 1912 L. van Vuuren drew attention to this custom. He reported that near the village of Bukaka, buried under a tree lies an urn, containing the ashes of a ruler of Bone, called Tamupaga, and on a flat hill not far from there, in an urn under another tree, are the ashes of the third ruler of Bone, who succeeded to the throne in 1398. This hill contains many more urns of Chinese manufacture.

South of Sengkang, van Vuuren found another urn with human ashes and an ordinary Chinese plate covering the urn. These Chinese urns used for the ashes of the dead are called *balubu* by the population and they still play a part in important events, especially those at the beginning and the end of life on earth. *Balubu's* are nowadays often found on Mohamedan mosques in South Celebes, right up to Masamba.

In 1947 the author was able to collect some additional material.

¹⁰⁸ Willems, 1940a, p. 207—8.

Rectangular grave-mounds with many urns of Chinese porcelain were discovered at Lampokko and Sompoh. Many urns had been broken under the plough and a few only could be saved, together with their contents of calcinated human ashes. The porcelain sherds were examined by van Orsoy de Flines, who identified them as originating from Siam, Tonkin and South-East China, and dated them to the 14th and 15th centuries A.D.¹⁰⁹

At Lampokko there is also the "Ritual Tumulus" which was excavated by the author by the quadrant method, but which produced nothing of great archaeological value. One small sherd of Chinese porcelain only, probably dating from the middle of the 16th century was found at the very bottom.¹¹⁰

The graveyard at Sompoh was close to a square of menhirs and to a few stone mortars.

d. S a l a j a r.

In 1912 E. E. W. G. Schröder reported that at Tiletile in the south-western part of the island, three earthenware urns had been found by the population at a depth of 0.50 metres during some digging operations. These urns were 0.60 metres high and contained broken human bones and ornaments by way of funeral furniture. Only one of these urns could be saved although even this had been partially opened. Schröder found inside beads of semi-precious stone, a ring, three bracelets, an ear-ring of bronze and a few small golden leaves. The present whereabouts of these finds are unknown to me.¹¹¹

e. S u m b a.

From an early date the necropolis of Melolo, which is an extensive urnfield in the eastern part of the island, has drawn the attention of the curious and part of it was pillaged by marauders of Savunese origin and by unqualified and incompetent explorers. Only the diggings of E. R. K. Rodenwaldt and L. Onvlee have been to some purpose, and an excellent excavation has been carried out by W. J. A. Willems.

The first person to devote a few lines to this hoard was

¹⁰⁹ OV, 1945, p. 54.

¹¹⁰ van Heekeren, 1949, p. 85—8.

¹¹¹ Notulen Bataviaasch Genootschap, 1912, p. 107—8.

A. C. Kruyt,¹¹² who wrote in connection with some digging by D. K. Wielenga.¹¹³

In 1923 excavations were carried out by L. Dannenberger and Rodenwaldt.¹¹⁴ Rodenwaldt divided his finds between the Museum at Djakarta and the Tropical Museum at Amsterdam. He also sent 34 of the skulls found to J. P. Kleiweg de Zwaan, who made a detailed study of them.¹¹⁵

In 1926 K. W. Dammerman did some excavation in this graveyard. After that date all unauthorized digging was forbidden.¹¹⁶

In 1936 permission was given to Onvlee for renewed research of the terrain. This learned scholar sent an extensive report of his findings to the Head of the Archaeological Service at Djakarta, presented the funeral furniture and other finds to the Museum at Djakarta, and sent the human remains for examination to C. A. R. D. Snell at Surabaya. (Pl. 34). The anthropometric study of this material is the subject of a separate publication.¹¹⁷

P. J. Lambooy also published a short article on Melolo¹¹⁸ in which he mentions, among other discoveries, the lower jaw of a pig found in an urn, the only indication of animal sacrifices at Melolo.

In the months of August and September of 1939 Willems, prehistorian to the Archaeological Service, carried out a systematic excavation on the terrain. Unfortunately he left for Europe shortly after, but I have been able to use his diary, photographs, and drawings for a treatise on Melolo, containing all known facts about this urnfields.¹¹⁹ My conclusions were as follows:

Melolo is an extensive urn cemetery. Only part of it has been explored so far and its boundaries in the south and west have not yet been clearly defined.

The area is about 20—25 m. in length. Numerous urns were recovered some 2 to 50 cm. below ground level with no apparent scheme of distribution. They were found singly, and sometimes in groups. The urns were of a low standard of workmanship. They were

¹¹² Kruyt, A. C. 1922: *De Soembaneezen*. BKI, 78, p. 536.

¹¹³ Wielenga, 1923: *Notulen Bataviaasch Genootschap*, p. 174; *Bijlage IX*, p. 250—51.

¹¹⁴ OV, 1923, p. 12—3.

¹¹⁵ Kleiweg de Zwaan, 1941.

¹¹⁶ Dammerman, 1926.

¹¹⁷ Snell, 1938.

¹¹⁸ Lambooy, P. J. 1936: *Opgravingen op Soemba*. *De Banier*, 24, p. 188.

¹¹⁹ van Heekeren, 1956a, p. 2—24.

round-bottomed; none had a flat base. The colours were red, grey and dark-brown. Many had collapsed and were completely crushed, sometimes mixed together in a confused mass. Comparatively few specimens were unearthed intact.

A large proportion of the broken urns could be restored, and this work was carried out by Willems. They were all globular jars, some with straight necks, and mouths of varying width, others with necks curving outwards to a lesser or greater degree. (Fig. 22 A). Only a few were adorned, simple incised line patterns being used, mostly meanders, wavy lines, and fingernail imprints. The height varied from 20 to 70 cm. The urns were found covered in various ways; by sherds, broken pots, and inverted jars, and sometimes by peculiar earthenware flasks or bottles placed inverted into the mouth of the urn. The urns contained human skeletal remains but never a complete skeleton, which points to the custom of secondary burial, the skull only, with or without mandible, sometimes with a few limb bones, being finally buried in an urn. Although the majority of urns contained one skull only, there were examples of two or three skulls in one urn, skulls of adults as well as of children. In this kind of multiple interment all the dead were probably buried simultaneously.

The funeral gifts found consisted of shell beads drilled on both sides, stone beads, shell bracelets and rings, quadrangular stone adzes and a unique pendant, skilfully carved out of shell, representing a pig's head. (Fig. 23).

Outstanding among the grave-goods were the highly polished earthenware flasks, red or dark-brown with long slender necks. (Fig. 22 B). They were decorated with incised line patterns, the lines filled in with a white paint and with designs such as strings of triangles, parallel dotted lines, meanders arranged in straight parallel rows, small circles and series of zigzag lines. The effect of white-on-red and white-on-dark-brown is most pleasing and this pottery is of high standard of workmanship. The necks of the jars had a single incised line-pattern of a human face, usually with round eyes, sometimes with oval or slit eyes. (Fig. 24). One jar had three faces.

Another jar was quite outstanding and different from all others. It is of dark-brown earthenware and the neck is shaped like a human figure with flattened torso and its short, outstretched arms only partly indicated. The head is covered with what seems to be a helmet. (Fig. 25).

In this urnfield there is hardly any evidence of sacrificial offerings;

only some shells mixed with ashes and a pig's mandible were found. A record was made of a considerable number of skulls found, from which it appeared that these urn-burial people were a meso-dolichocephalic group, apparently a mixture of Palaeo-Melanesian and Malayan races. Similar groups still live further to the east in the Indonesian Archipelago.

The presence of quadrangular adzes among the funeral gifts of the Melolo urn cemeteries and the absence of any metal objects might well be a temptation to date this cemetery to the Neolithic Age. Further careful study of the objects and particularly of their decoration, however, makes an assignment to the Bronze-Iron Age more convincing, and such dating has already been suggested by Willems and Heine Geldern. We should not lose sight of the fact that stone adzes played an important part throughout the Bronze-Iron Age in Indonesia. Such adzes have been recovered at the classical Dongson site as well as from Balinese stone sarcophagi.

An interesting discovery of a shuttle was made by Onvlee, which indicates that the art of weaving was known to the urn people of Melolo.

Only the most methodical investigation, like that of which Willems gave us so excellent an example, will enable us to determine the distribution in time and space of urn-burial customs in Indonesia. The scant data that are at present available for purposes of comparison justify a few general statements only.

From the material at our disposal it is evident that there were three or four different customs of urn-burial in Indonesia, all belonging to the Bronze-Iron Age. They can briefly be listed as follows:

1. Large urns in which human skeletons were interred singly in a squatting position, accompanied by funeral furniture, consisting of darkbrown earthenware, saucer-shaped cups on stands, flasks with long straight necks and crude globular pots without flat base. Decorations are of a simple and conventional nature. Example: Anjar, West Java.
2. Large urns with skulls and a few limb bones only, indicating a secondary burial system. Funeral gifts, consisting of outstandingly fine polished earthenware flasks with incised geometric patterns and human faces, the lines filled in with white paste, and globular

pots, shell rings, shell and stone beads and stone quadrangular adzes. Example: Melolo in East Sumba.

3. Large and small urns, mostly of Chinese origin, dating from 1300—1600 A.D., containing calcinated human bones, unaccompanied by any funeral gifts. This kind of urn-burial was in use to the advent of Islam. Examples: numerous in South Celebes (Bone, Soppeng and Wadjo).

PRINCIPAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL DATA
OF THE SKULLS FROM MELOLO

(after Snell and Kleiweg de Zwaan)

	Max. Length	Glabello Inion L.	Max. Width	Min. Frontal Width	Max. Occip. Width	Height calvar.	Index cranialis
A.	177	168	131	85	101	100	74.0
B.	188	181	130	101	110	110	69.1
C.	183	171	131	88	99	111	71.6
D.	166	157	133	83	100	98	80.1
E.	184	172	139	96	—	108	75.5
F.	183	175	—	90	105	106	—
G.	175	153	128	85	99	102	73.1
H.	181	164	133	91	103	111	73.5
I.	173	163	136	—	—	101	78.6
J.	170	149	136	—	101	113	80.0
K.	182	173	—	89	101	101	—
I	181	164	133	—	106	107	73.5
II	160	156	126	85	97	88	78.8
III	190	184	137	95	112	107	72.1
IV	178	173	140	87	105	98	78.7
V	183	171	138	93	—	102	75.4
VI	187	180	136	—	112	101	72.7
1.	178	163	133	94	102	109	74.72
2.	186	183	133	96	106	101	71.51
3.	185	181	140	—	114	108	75.68
4.	176	171	136	98	105	103	77.27
5.	175	174	125	—	101	97	71.43
6.	186	179	137	—	103	96	73.66
7.	182	182	140	95	113	106	76.92
8.	185	175	144	90	108	105	77.84
9.	180	179	133	92	100	96	73.89
10.	168	164	138	—	—	78	82.14
11.	188	189	136	96	109	97	72.34
12.	178	177	141	—	105	96	79.21
13.	175	169	145	97	107	100	82.86
14.	181	179	134	—	95	105	74.03
15.	180	178	138	—	106	87	76.67
16.	180	172	133	—	109	99	73.89
17.	180	—	141	—	—	—	78.33

	Max. Length	Glabello Inion L.	Max. Width	Min. Frontal Width	Max. Occip. Width	Height calvar.	Index cranialis
18.	178	169	132	96	111	104	74.16
19.	177	178	130	90	101	95	73.45
20.	181	170	138	89	104	106	76.24
21.	171	166	132	90	97	98	77.19
22.	173	—	130	82	104	100	75.14
23.	183	181	136	98	107	99	74.32
24.	169	159	133	84	—	95	78.70
25.	175	166	138	89	104	102	78.86
26.	174	166	133	90	103	96	76.44
27.	173	164	139	90	105	102	80.35
28.	177	165	133	—	105	96	75.14
29.	181	173	135	100	116	105	74.59
30.	183	181	139	—	107	104	75.96
31.	174	—	125	86	—	—	71.84
32.	179	172	137	—	106	105	76.54
33.	167	157	131	87	—	93	78.44
34.	182	178	137	95	107	103	75.27
average	178	171	135	91	105	101	75.7