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THE BURIAL MOUNDS OF CAMIGUIN ISLAND.

By MERTON L. MILLER.

(From the Division of Ethnology, Bureau of Science, Manila, P. I.)

The Island of Camiguin lies north of the northern end of Luzon, about 55 kilometers distant from Aparri. It is approximately 20 kilometers in extreme length and 12 kilometers in extreme width.

At the time of my arrival on the island, April 17, 1910, there was a population of 90 souls. During my stay of six weeks 30 people arrived from Dalupiri and other neighboring islands with the intention of remaining on Camiguin. Tradition says that there was formerly on the island a population of several thousand, but that the greater part of the people died of cholera between twenty and thirty years ago.

Camiguin is almost entirely covered with forests. If there formerly was a numerous population on it, the clearings which would have been made have become reforested, unless there is some open country of which I did not learn.

The people now living on the island are Ilocanos with the exception of two or three individuals who have come from the Batanes Islands. Some of the Ilocanos were born on Camiguin and some came from the Ilocos Provinces or from the Cagayan Valley. I can not say what the proportion is of native born to immigrants. All the people live within a radius of from 6 to 8 kilometers of the usual landing place at Cadadalman and all are but a short distance from the beach in the harbor of Pio Quinto. A few live at Cadadalman, more at Cadadagan, a small

valley to the south of Cadadalman, but the majority are at Malatubat, a comparatively large valley which opens out on the other side of a rocky point, north of Cadadalman.

The extinct volcano, known to the natives as Dakelabalai, rises at the extreme southeastern point of Camiguin. There are several places with an area of from 10 to 20 hectares on the southwestern slope of this mountain where there is no vegetation and where there are many openings in the ground which emit sulphurous fumes. On these bare places and on grassy spots just beyond them are numerous artificial heaps of stones. Captain Mitchell, of the Signal Corps of the United States Army, was on Camiguin in the latter part of 1909. He was much interested in these stone piles and opened two or three of them. In the center of each he found a large earthenware jar.

My visit to Camiguin was for the purpose of discovering some clue to the people who buried these jars. The stone piles were found to be from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 meters in diameter and were made up of stones ranging in size from a few centimeters to 50 centimeters in diameter. The mounds rose from 50 to 80 centimeters above the general surface of the ground.

The stones in some cases covered a mound of loose, brown earth mixed with loose stones, in others, a mixture of sulphur and clay, either in the form of a powder, or consolidated into rock, probably by the deposition of sulphur. In the center of each was an earthenware jar. The greater number of these jars were broken, usually so badly that they could not be taken out. The earth in which many of them were embedded was moist and the jars, which appeared to have been poorly baked, were in consequence easily destroyed. They hardened on drying in the air. Those which were embedded in the hardened sulphurous mass in some cases were broken, in others they could not be removed without breaking, while in a few instances it was possible to get them out. A few jars had an inner coating of very delicate crystals of sulphur.

The vessels varied in size from 20 to 60 centimeters in diameter, and in height from 20 to 80 centimeters. Some of them had mouths but little narrower than the greatest width of the jar, while others had small openings, not more than 15 centimeters in diameter. All had originally a cover of some kind over the opening, either an inverted jar or a true cover. Only in the case of one small vessel did I find the cover unbroken, so that I could determine its form. This cover was of almost the same shape as the jar below. The fragments which I found led me to infer that some of the covers had extended about halfway down the side of the body of the jar, being in reality inverted jars; others seemed to have covered the opening of the vessel and to have extended but a short distance beyond the edges.

There can be no doubt that these jars were used for containing the bones of the dead. The merest fragments of bones were found in two

of them, but they were too small to determine what bones they were; a third jar contained a small piece of one of the bones of the skull. In one of the jars were found a few common, pale blue, glass beads together with a piece of dark brown, loosely woven, coarse fabric, which fell to pieces at a touch of the hand. In another jar a few more blue beads of the same kind were seen together with a black, sticky mass which had a very unpleasant odor.

I found it almost impossible to secure any information on the island about the customs of former times, because the people native to Camiguin had all died and the few old people still living had come over from Luzon or from other islands in recent years. The only statement as to the use of these jars which I could secure was from a young man who told me that he had heard an old man say that they formerly buried the dead in earthenware vessels, cutting the legs of the corpse at the knees so as to make it possible, by doubling the legs, to put the entire body into a jar. While this may have been one practice followed, it could not have been the only method of burial, because many of the jars had openings too small to admit the body even of a young child. Of course, it is possible that two methods of burial might have been followed at the same time, one, that of putting the dead body in a jar, and the other, that of placing the bones only in the vessel after the flesh had either been removed or allowed to decay. The presence of the black, sticky mass and the beads in one jar and of the piece of fabric and beads in another would seem to argue for the first method, and the small openings in many of the jars are certainly an argument for the second method.

I made inquiries of many people as to the existence of similar heaps of stones in other parts of the island, but I could learn of none excepting a few on the other side—northeast—of the volcano from those already described. These I visited and examined. They were found to be of the same general style as those to the southwest of the volcano. I was told that at the extreme northern end of the island similar mounds were to be found. However, when I arrived there the guide pointed out certain heaps of stones which on examination proved to be natural outcrops of rock. I believe from what I learned after leaving Camiguin that possibly there are other burial mounds on the island besides those which I saw.

I do not see that there is any reason for concluding that these burials were made by any other people than Filipinos who formerly inhabited Camiguin. Cave burials have been found on at least one island off the northeast coast of Surigao, and others have recently been reported from the Island of Bohol. Burial jars containing bones have also been found in the vicinity of Dapitan, Mindanao.

However, perhaps the most interesting fact in this connection is that I was told that jars similar to these on Camiguin are to be found on Calayan, an island northwest of Camiguin. An old woman who has

lived on Camiguin for the past five years told me that formerly she lived on Calayan and that jars like those found on Camiguin were also found buried on the latter island, but she did not know what purpose they had served nor why they had been buried.

It is to be hoped that some-day evidence will be found which will give a clue to the time when the dead in the Philippines were buried in jars and in caves.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

PLATE I. Dakelabalai Mountain with burial sites in the foreground.

II. Burial mounds near sulphur fumaroles.

III. Burial mound.

IV. Burial mound.

V. Fig. 1. Partly excavated jar buried in a mixture of clay and sulphur.

2. Partly excavated jar buried in a mixture of clay and sulphur.

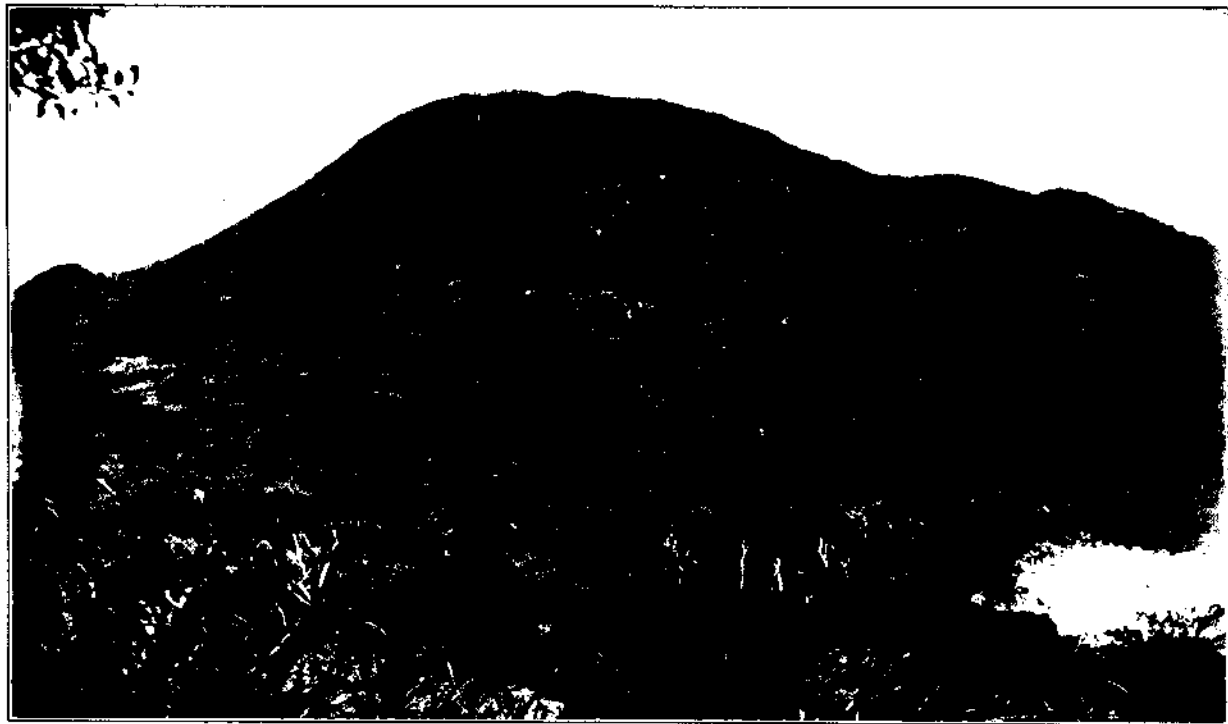


PLATE I.



PLATE II.



PLATE III.



PLATE IV.

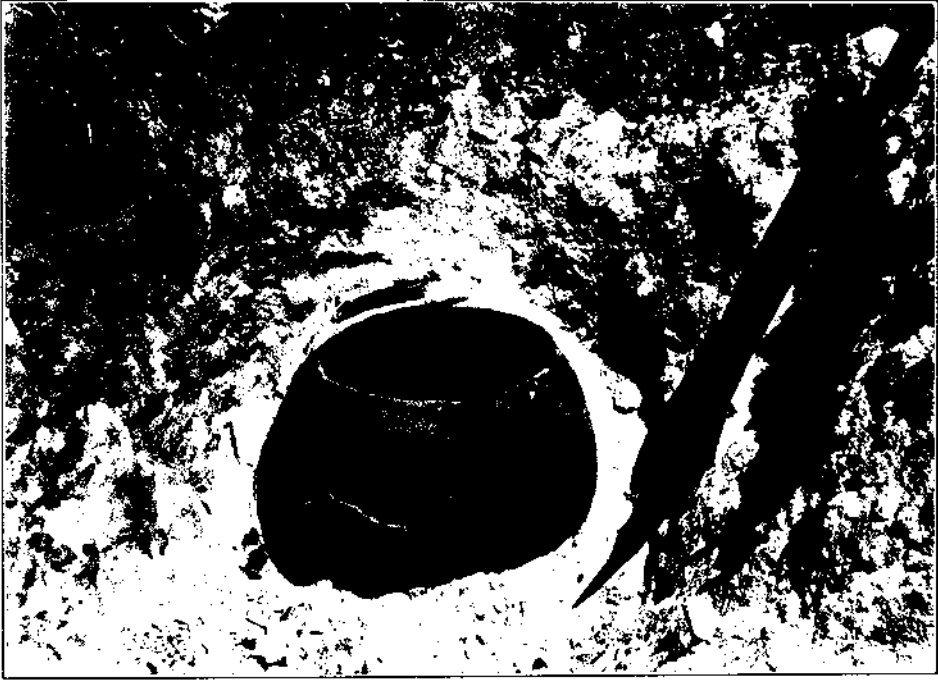


FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.