



SPAFACON2021

Papers from the SEAMEO SPAFA International Conference on
SOUTHEAST ASIAN ARCHAEOLOGY AND FINE ARTS

13 - 17 December 2021

Editor: Noel Hidalgo Tan

SPAFACON2021 is published by SEAMEO SPAFA, the Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts established by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization. SEAMEO SPAFA focusses on archaeology and fine arts in Southeast Asia, and promotes awareness and appreciation of the cultural heritage of the region. Its member-countries are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam; and its associate member-countries are Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain and the United Kingdom.



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2021 SEAMEO SPAFA

ISBN: 978-616-7961-55-2

ISBN (e-book): 978-616-7961-54-5

DOI 10.26721/spafa.pqcnu8815a

Publisher

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INTRODUCTION

This volume contains the extended abstracts from the papers presented at the SEAMEO SPAFA International Conference on Southeast Asian Archaeology and Fine Arts, which was held online from 13 to 17 December 2021. Also known as the SPAFACON2021, this conference was organised online due to the pandemic. Despite the disruption brought about by Covid-19 to our in-person events, training programmes and field research, it is heartening to see that archaeology and cultural heritage has continued under new modes of communication and collaboration.

This fourth iteration of the SPAFACON is also scheduled a year earlier than our usual triennial cycle to commemorate the 50th anniversary of SEAMEO initiating a centre dedicated towards archaeology and the fine arts. Over the past year, SPAFA has also been highlighting this legacy of international cooperation and capacity-building by sharing our photographic archives on our social media.

I am delighted by the high level of enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity brought by the participants to the conference. During our call for papers we received close to 90 submissions, but owing to the pressures of time and the online format, we were only able to accept 34 papers for the conference. The variety of papers present here, although a small set compared with our usual proceedings, reflects the breadth of the centre's ambit – covering not just archaeology, but also performing arts, visual arts, museum studies, and other aspects of Southeast Asian cultural heritage.

I would like to thank all the participants, without whom this conference would not be possible in its present form, in particular, our Governing Board members who represent every country in Southeast Asia, and to the Ministry of Culture, Thailand and the Ministry of Education, Thailand for their long-standing support of SEAMEO SPAFA and its activities.



Mrs Somlak Charoenpot

Centre Director

SEAMEO SPAFA

After 30 Years and During a Pandemic: Pottery Production and Distribution in Bagacay, Talibon in the Island of Bohol in the Philippines

Pagkalipas ng Tatlungung Taon at sa Panahon ng Pandemya: Produksyon at Distribusyon ng Seramiko sa Bagacay, Talibon sa Isla ng Bohol sa Pilipinas

10792/pqcnu8815a-17

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Abstract

In 1986, SEAMEO SPAFA conducted training in Ethnoarchaeology in Bagacay, Talibon, from July 22 to September 22. From the training workshop and ethnographic fieldwork in the village, Mary Jane Calderon and Thelma Roales, who attended the course, wrote an article for the SPAFA Digest in 1987 to describe the village's pottery-making tradition. After 30 years, I re-visited and conducted pottery studies in Bagacay, Talibon pre-pandemic in 2017 to 2018 and during the pandemic in 2021. Using ethnoarchaeology as a research strategy and participant observation and survey interview as methods, I will identify and describe the ceramic production, organization, and distribution changes in Bagacay, Talibon, Bohol for the last 30 years and during this pandemic.

Noong 1986, and SEAMEO SPAFA ay nagsagawa ng pagsasanay sa Ethnoarkeolohiya sa Bagacay, Talibon noong Hunyo 22 hanggang Setyembre 22. Pagkatapos ng pagsasanay at ethnograpikong pagaaral sa komunidad, sina Mary Jane Calderon at Thelma Roales ay nagsulat ng artikulo para sa SPAFA Digest nuong 1987 para ilarawan ang tradisyon ng paggwa ng seramiko sa pamayanan. Pagkalipas ng 30 taon, ako ay bumisita at nagsaliksik ulit sa nasabing nayon bago ang pandemya nuong 2017 hanggang 2018 at sa kasagsagan ng pandemiko nito lamang 2021. Gamit ang ethnoarkeolohiya bilang stratehiyang sa pananaliksik at pakikiugaling pagmamasid at sarbey na panayam bilang metodo, aking kikilalanin at ilalarawan ang mga pagbabago sa produksyon, organisasyon, at distribusyon ng seramiko sa Bagacay, Talibon sa Bohol pagkalipas ng tatlungung taon at ngayong panahon ng pandemya.

Keywords

Bohol; ethnoarchaeology; pottery; community specialization; Philippines

Bohol; ethnoarkeolohiya; palayok; komunidad na pagdadalubhasa; Pilipinas

Introduction

The island of Bohol is the 10th largest island in the Philippines. It is located in the Central Visayas region of the archipelago. Presently, four communities in Bohol continue to make traditional pottery. These are the villages of Bagacay in Talibon, Binogawan in Calape, Candua Occidental in Valencia, and East Poblacion in Alburquerque (Melendres 2018). This study focuses on the pottery village of Bagacay, Talibon.

In 1986, SEAMEO SPAFA conducted a workshop in Ethnoarchaeology in Bagacay, Talibon, from July 22 to September 22. From the training and ethnographic fieldwork in the village, Mary Jane Calderon and Thelma Roales, who attended the course, wrote an article for the SPAFA Digest in 1987 to describe the village's pottery-making tradition. This article listed the different pottery types and their functions in Talibon (p.10-11). They discussed the *chaîne opératoire* of pottery making in Bagacay from raw material acquisition to firing the pots (p.11-13). They listed and explained the different forming techniques used by the potters, from pinching, coiling, paddle and anvil techniques to coiling (p.12-13). They also noted that children were not keen on continuing the pottery tradition of their families (p.13). Moreover, they observed that pottery demand is diminishing in Talibon due to the prevalence of metal pots and plastic containers (p.13).

After 30 years, I re-visited and conducted pottery studies in Bagacay, Talibon pre-pandemic in 2017 to 2018 and during the pandemic in 2021. Using ethnoarchaeology as a research strategy and participant observation and survey interview as methods, I identified the ceramic production, organization, and distribution changes in Bagacay, Talibon, Bohol. Specifically, I will present the changes in the potter population, ceramic vessel forms, forming techniques, firing technology, social organization, and distribution mechanisms for the past 30 years in the pottery community. I will also highlight the changes in the pottery village during the Covid19 pandemic to see how it affected the pottery production and distribution in the area and the survival of pottery making as a traditional craft specialization in Talibon, Bohol.

RESEARCH SITE AND METHODS

Bohol is the tenth largest island in the Philippines and is located in the Central Visayas Region (Figure 1). It is bounded by Cebu and Cebu Strait on the west and northwest; Leyte and the Camotes Sea on the north and northeast; and Mindanao and the Bohol Sea on the south and southeast (Monreal 2003). The pottery town of Talibon is located on the northwestern coast of Bohol (Figure 1). According to the 2015 national census, it has a population of 66,969. It has a total land area of 22,400 hectares. The town's name is from

“*talibong*,” which means bolo or spear (Putong 1965). The town currently has 25 villages or *barangays*. It is divided into three groups: the island group consisting of 8 *barangays*, the coastal group with 11 *barangays*, and the six inland *barangay* groups (Talibon Municipal Planning and Development Office/TMPDO 2018). The primary livelihood in Talibon is farming with major products like rice, corn, coconut, and banana and fishing. The locals are also into seaweed farming, hats production, and pottery making. Silica, gold, clay, diorites, sand, and gravel mining and quarrying are also sources of income (TMPDO 2018).

Bagacay is one of the 25 villages of Talibon. It is famous for its pottery making industry. The demographic and land-use data of the village was gathered on the bulletin board outside of the village chief’s office. Bagacay has a total land area of 585 hectares. Currently, it is divided into residential areas (1.24 hectares), agricultural area (582.51 hectares), timberland/forested area (0.83 hectares), and special class area (0.64 hectares). Based on the 2017 census of the local government of Bagacay, there are 3,984 people and 847 households in the village. According to the geologic map of Talibon (TMPDO 2018), the majority of Bagacay is composed of undifferentiated andesite and basalt lava flows except the part near the coast, which is composed of alluvium and Talibon diorite.

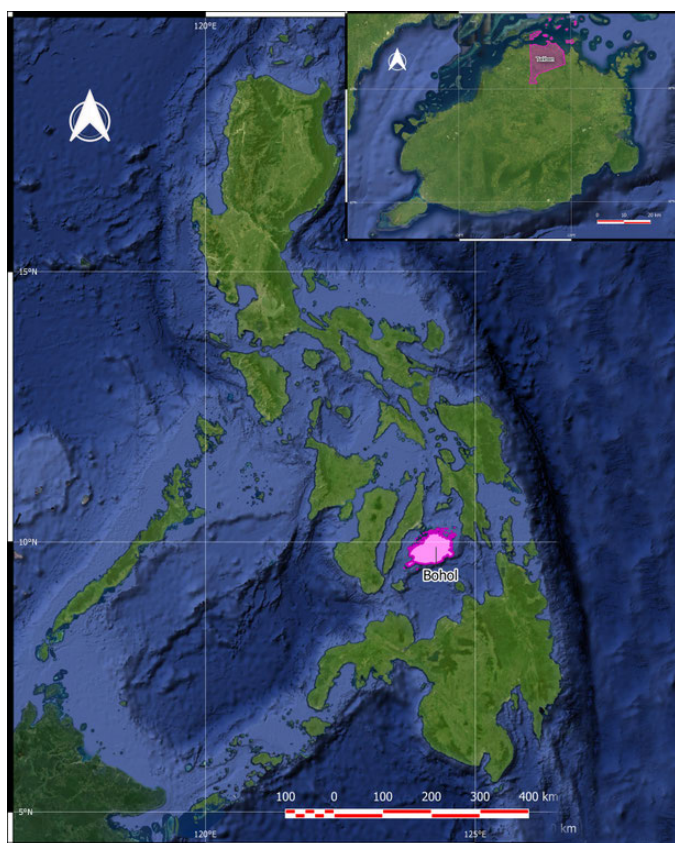


Fig. 1 Philippine Map showing the location of Bohol and Talibon (inset).

This study is part of my Bohol Ethnoarchaeology Project (Melendres 2018, 2021a). The 1986 SEAMEO SPAFA training data was based on the article written by Mary Jane Calderon and Thelma Roales (1987). I gathered additional and clarificatory information from Thelma Roales via phone interview in May and September this year. For the more recent data, I used a multitude of research methods (Melendres 2018). The pottery data for the pre-pandemic in the 2017 and 2018 periods and at the height of the pandemic in March to May 2021 were gathered through survey interviews, participant observation, photo, audio, and video documentation, and detailed field notes. For this research, we interviewed all the potters of Talibon using a survey questionnaire with the help of my local research assistants. The questionnaire is a modified and translated version of Owen Rye's Pottery Technology Data Sheet and Checklist (1981). The questionnaire and interview are in Filipino/Tagalog. If the potter prefers their language, such as Boholano, Cebuano, or Bisaya, the local research assistants translate it for them. I utilized participant observation to study how Talibon potters collect and prepare their raw materials, form their pots, fire them, and sell them. We took photographs, videos, audio recordings, and field notes with proper consent from the potters. In 2021, we strictly adhered to Covid-19 health protocols to conduct the study. A research permit was secured from the village government unit first. We used facemasks during interviews. We followed the proper social distancing rule. We only conducted interviews when there were zero covid cases or no suspected covid cases in the village for safety.



Fig. 2 Data gathering in Talibon this pandemic. Photo by the author.

Results and Discussion

The number of pottery households in Bagacay, Talibon increased over time (Table 1). During the 1986 SEAMEO SPAFA Ethnoarchaeology training in Talibon, ten households manufactured traditional pottery in the village (T Roales, personal communication, September 16, 2021). Before the pandemic in 2018, there were 13 family-based pottery production in the community where the potters were related by blood or marriage and lived in one house or one compound (Melendres 2018). During the pandemic this April 2021, the number of pottery-making households in Talibon also increased. From 13 families, it grew to 23, a 77% increase in the number of homes that make traditional pottery in Talibon (Melendres 2021a). Before the pandemic, many families in Talibon had different works and places of employment. But because of community quarantine, they had to return home for safety or lost their previous jobs. As a result, more Talibon potters returned to pottery making as demands and prices for cooking pots, clay stoves, and flower pots increased.

No. of Pottery Households in Talibon	1986 SEAMEO SPAFA Training	Pre-pandemic (2017-2018)	Pandemic Time (2021)
No. of Households	10	13	23

Table 1 Pottery Households in Talibon, Bohol over Time.

The number of potters in Bagacay, Talibon fluctuates over time (Table 2). For example, in 1986, Calderon and Roales (1987:9) reported 51 potters in the village. However, the study did not mention how many are men or boys and women or girls. Thelma Roales (personal communication, September 16, 2021) cannot accurately recall the sex profile of potters in Talibon in 1986. In 2018, there were 28 active potters in Talibon, 15 were males, and 13 were females (Melendres 2018). There was a marked increase in the number of potters in Talibon in 2021 during the pandemic (Melendres 2021a). From 28 potters, the number of potters surges to 72, a 157% increase in the total number of potters in the community. Of the 72 potters during the pandemic, 33 are males, and 39 are females.

Potters in Talibon	1986 SEAMEO SPAFA Training		Pre-pandemic (2017-2018)		Pandemic Time (2021)	
By sex	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
No. of potters	Not Indicated	Not Indicated	15	13	33	39
Total	51		28		72	

Table 2. Potters in Talibon, Bohol through Time.

Aside from the increase in the demand for cooking pots, flower pots, and clay stoves, the surge in the number of active potters in Talibon during the pandemic can be attributed to the increase of potters ages 20 and below. From zero or none in 2018, the number of young potters in the village increased to 25 (Melendres 2018, 2021a). Most Talibon children and teens are at home due to community quarantine in Bohol, as face-to-face learning in schools was prohibited by the national government. Therefore, they helped their parents make pots to augment their family income and fight boredom. This new development is significant in the continuity of the pottery tradition in Talibon as young ones are motivated to learn how to make pots because they saw that pottery making is profitable again.

The raw material acquisition in Talibon has not changed (Melendres 2018, 2021b). The Talibon potters used local clay (*yuta*) mainly from their backyards or in their lands. It is not unusual to see holes being dug around their houses. Potters mine the clay themselves or their relatives using a sharp metal implement. They put the clay in sacks and carry it to their production areas. They dig it just below the topsoil, which is 50 cm to 1 meter below the surface of topsoil. The temper used by Talibon potters is the clay with coarse rock fragments (and sometimes just rock fragments) found underneath the clay they used in making pots. The Talibon potters call it *bas* or *anapog*, which means sand or limestone. The temper stratum is between the bedrock and the clay strata in Bagacay at 1 to 2 meters below the surface.

The production areas or workshops of the potters of Talibon can be found inside their house, below their home (*silong*), a small space at the back of their house, or they build a small work area inside their backyard. First, the clay is brought to the workshop. Then, water is added to it. They let it stand for at least 24 hours. If the clay is “dirty,” meaning with some impurities, they dry it first under the sun before sprinkling water on the clay. Then, the clay and temper are mixed manually. Organic matter and big rock fragments are picked by hand. When the clay is ready, they prepare clay lumps (*umol*) for pot making.

The potters of Bagacay use coconut leaves and stems (*lukay* and *palwa*), coconut nuts (*binuungan*), various types of wood, and rice hay (*dagami*) in firing their pots (Melendres 2018, 2021b). If they do not own coconut trees or wood trees, they buy coconut leaves and wood from others. The hay is for free, but they usually give a cooking pot or clay stove to the rice field owner as a gift.

Traditional ceramics are hand-made in Talibon and other pottery villages in Bohol (Figure 3) (Melendres 2018). Boholano potters like the Talibon potters use only mats, woodblocks, banana leaves, broken pots for rotational devices and potholders, small bottles for burnishing, fishnets and dried banana leaves for polishing, and wet cloth, wooden paddles, bamboo sticks, and stone anvils for shaping (Melendres 2018). They do not use a potter's wheel nor molds in forming their potteries. Clay and temper are mixed manually using their hands but sometimes even their feet. Traditional Talibon potters do not use machines like electric mixers or grinders for this.



Fig. 3 A Talibon potter making a cooking pot using a mat, broken pot, wooden paddles, and stone anvils. Photo by the author.

The traditional pots in Talibon are open-fired in a vacant space in their backyard or village (Figure 4) (Melendres 2018, 2021b). Talibon potters share firing platforms with their relatives and neighbors. They do not use a kiln. In Talibon, firing is a family or group activity where everyone, including the children, arranges the pots and fuel in the firing platform.



Fig. 4 Preparing the firing platform for open firing (pagba) in Talibon. Photo by the author.

The ceramic repertoire of traditional Talibon potters is almost the same as 30 years ago (Figure 5). Table 3 lists the different types of pottery being made in Talibon from 1986 to the present time. For example, in 1986, Calderon and Roales (1987) recorded 15 different ceramic types made by traditional potters of Talibon (see items #1 to #15 below). However, by 2018, two ceramic forms had disappeared because the potters stopped creating them (Melendres 2018). These are *tatso* (shallow hemispherical pot for cooking peanuts) and *tinghoy* (pots for melting gold). Metal pots replaced *tatso*. Pots for melting gold (*tinghoy*) disappeared when gold production on the island ceased. Some ceramic types are only made from time to time or when pottery consumers request them. These include *putohan*

(clay steamer), *banga* (water jar), *batidor* (clay pitcher), *figurines* (anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines), *kaldero* (rice cooking pot), and *toy-toy* (miniature kitchen utensils used as children's toys). Talibon potters also created a new ceramic form due to high demand from the clients by the year 2000. It is called *patukaan* or *patuwaan*. These are pots used to feed animals (see item #16). These were made because there was considerable demand from Boholanos, who started raising fighting cocks, chickens, and other animals as pets.

Vessel Form	1986 SEAMEO SPAFA Training	Pre-pandemic (2017-2018)	Pandemic Time (2021)
1. <i>Kolon/koon</i> (globular cooking pot)	√	√	√
2. <i>Daba</i> (angled cooking pot)	√	√	√
3. <i>Putuhan</i> (clay steamer)	√	√	√
4. <i>Batidor</i> (clay pitcher usually for preparing chocolate drinks)	√	√	√
5. <i>Hudnohan/hornohan</i> (rice cakes pot)	√	√	√
6. <i>Takkub</i> (pot cover)	√	√	√
7. <i>Kalan/sug ang</i> (clay stove)	√	√	√
8. <i>Banga</i> (water jar)	√	√	√
9. <i>Masetera/ka ang</i> (flower pots)	√	√	√
10. <i>Hang-ing</i> (flower pots for orchids)	√	√	√
11. <i>Kandel/kaldero</i> (rice cooking pot)	√	√	√
12. <i>Figurines/alkansiya</i> (anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines that are also used as coin banks)	√	√	√
13. <i>Toy-toy</i> (miniature kitchen utensils for children)	√	√	√
14. <i>Tatso</i> (shallow hemispherical pot for cooking peanuts)	√	X	X
15. <i>Tinghoy</i> (small hemispherical pot for gold melting)	√	X	X
16. <i>Patukaan/patuwaan</i> (pot used in feeding animals, specially chickens)	X	√	√

Table 3 Pottery Vessels Forms of Talibon, Bohol and their Functions.



Fig. 5 Different vessels forms in Talibon (left to right): different kinds of clay stoves (*sug ang*), globular and angled cooking pot (*kolon* and *daba*), and flower pots (*ka ang*). Photo by the author.

During this pandemic, Talibon potters continued to manufacture the vessel forms they made in 2018 (Melendres 2021a). What changes according to the potters is the increase in the demands for different kinds of flower plots (*ka ang*), cooking pots (*daba* or *kolon*), and clay stoves (*sug ang*). Because of the pandemic, the people looked for ways to make their time on community quarantine productive. Therefore, Boholanos, like the rest of the Filipino people, engaged in new hobbies and interests to safely pass the time. For example, people started to cultivate plants and cook. These new activities led to high demand for clay flower pots, cooking pots, and clay stoves. This made pottery making in Talibon profitable again for the local potters.

Talibon potters use different modes of distribution systems to circulate and sell their products (Table 4). They have employed the exact marketing and distribution mechanisms from the 1980s (Melendres 2018, 2021a). The only difference is the intensity of how they utilized it from time to time. Calderon and Roales (1987) did not mention any distribution

systems in their article. However, I obtained this data by asking the old potters of Talibon in 2017 and 2018 if their parents or they have been doing the same distribution strategies in the 1980s. The potters have been selling pots during market days (*tabo* or *taboan*) in Talibon every Sunday (Figure 6). They also peddle pottery in nearby towns on their respective market days. In this mechanism, the potters display their products in one corner of the market, church, or town center. However, this was discouraged this pandemic to protect the potters from getting infected with the covid19 virus. Before the pandemic, the potters sold their products almost every week. This pandemic, they only do it at least once a month.



Fig. 6 Selling pots during the market day (*tabo* or *taboan*) in Talibon. Photo by the author.

Some of the potters own pottery stores in Talibon and nearby towns. As of 2018, two of the potters were pottery store owners in Talibon and Ubay. All of the Talibon potters sell their products to pottery resellers or *kumprador*. In two instances in 2018, the *kumpradors* are Talibon potters themselves. All potters accept orders from store owners and customers in Talibon and other nearby towns. They usually use a tricycle to deliver their wares to these nearby places but for a fee. Sometimes, people from nearby islands of Talibon also order cooking pots and clay stoves from them. If this is the case, they deliver their products to the pier/port of Talibon and are loaded to boats. Potters living near the main highway of Talibon also show their products in front of their houses for passers-by. In this pandemic, the Talibon potters prefer to sell to *kumpradors*, accept orders from customers, and transport the pots to clients because the chance of contracting the virus is lesser. After all, the face-to-face interactions in these methods are limited.

Pottery Distribution Systems	The 1980s	Pre-pandemic (2017-2018)	Pandemic Time (2021)
1. Selling during the market day (tabo or taboan)	√	√	√
2. Selling in a pottery store they own	√	√	√
3. Selling to <i>kumprador</i> (pottery intermediaries or pottery resellers)	√	√	√
4. Potters being <i>kumprador</i> themselves	√	√	√
5. Accepting orders from pottery consumers	√	√	√
6. Delivering orders for pottery consumers	√	√	√
7. Displaying their products in front of their houses for passers-by	√	√	√
8. <i>Baylo</i> or <i>bayloan</i> (bartering pots for other items)	√	√	X
9. <i>Suroy suroy</i> (itinerant selling)	√	X	X

Table 4. Pottery Distribution Systems in Talibon, Bohol.

Two of the most interesting distribution systems in Talibon are *baylo* or *bayloan* (bartering pots) and *suroy suroy* (itinerant selling) (Melendres 2018). In *baylo*, the potters exchanged their pots for other items, mainly for rice, root crops, and marine resources. The old Talibon potters told me they exchanged cooking pots, clay stoves, and water jars for rice, corn, banana, and other root crops. In 2018, only two potters were practicing this method. They mainly barter pots for fresh and dried fish, shellfishes, and other marine resources from people living in nearby islands of Talibon. This pandemic, this technique was discouraged

for safety reasons. In the 1980s and before, potters also practiced *suroy suroy*. In this marketing strategy, potters transport their products and walk around villages to sell or barter their pots. In 2018, no one was already doing this. During this pandemic, the potters were prohibited by the local government from doing this.

Pottery making in Bagacay, Talibon, Bohol is resilient to change except in one family. This family is the only pottery production in Talibon with different forming techniques, firing technology, and social organization. The family introduced new means to form and fire pots. The son of the potter worked in a pottery workshop in Liloan, Cebu in the 1980s. In Cebu, the island direct across Bohol, he learned how to make pots using molds and potter's wheel. He also learned firing pots using a kiln (Figure 7). In the late 1980s, he went back to Bagacay, Talibon, and introduced these new techniques. However, they are the only ones that adapted to this new forming and firing technology. Aside from this, they are the only pottery family that hired potters to work for them. All of the potters in Talibon are independent specialists and are family-based. Some of the potters in this particular family are attached artisans. Aside from they are not locals of Talibon, they work for a fixed salary.



Fig. 7 The lone kiln in Bagacay, Talibon.
Photo by the author.

Concluding Remarks

The pottery making tradition in Bagacay, Talibon, Bohol is resilient. Except in one family, all the potters in the village continue to use the “traditional” way of making and firing the pots. The Talibon potting technique uses only simple tools like paddle and anvil in forming pots. The Talibon potters would not utilize potter’s wheel and molds even if one family introduced it in the village. The locals continue to use an open firing (*pagba*) system in firing pottery using locally sourced fuel even if kiln firing was also brought in the community.

Ceramic vessel forms in Talibon are almost intact from the 1980s. Except for pots for melting gold and frying peanuts, the same ceramic repertoire is being manufactured by the potters of the village. During the pandemic, the demand for flower pots, cooking pots, and clay stoves surged because many people started new hobbies like cultivating plants and cooking traditional cuisine to pass the time this community quarantine safely.

Pottery distribution is almost unchanged except for two marketing techniques that are slowly vanishing. First, before the pandemic, the potters sell pots in a temporary location or their permanent stores. Second, they sell to pottery resellers (*kumprador*), accept orders from customers, and deliver the pots to their clients. Third, they sell in front of their houses. Baylo or bartering pots for other commodities is slowly vanishing. Only two potters do it before the pandemic. *Suroy suroy*, selling or trading pots by walking around a village, was no longer done by potters even before the pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted our lives. But, surprisingly, it has a positive effect on pottery making in Bagacay, Talibon, Bohol. First, there was a marked increase in the number of pottery households, potters, and new and young potters in the village. Second, pottery making gave additional income to several families in the community. Third, it motivated the young people in the village to learn the art of pottery making. Fourth, it gave both the pottery producers and consumers productive yet safe activities during this pandemic. After the pandemic, I will continue this research to see if its effects on the pottery making tradition in Bohol remain the same or not.

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge the Office of the Chancellor of the University of the Philippines Diliman through the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Development for funding support through the Outright Research Grant. Thank you also to the village officials of Bagacay, Talibon. Special thanks to my Talibon research assistants, namely Florencia Sabior and Wilma Cruta. I am also grateful to Kate Lim and Carlos Flores Jr. for the maps used in this research. Finally, this study will not be possible without the help, generosity, kindness, and openness of the Talibon potters. Daghang Salamat!

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