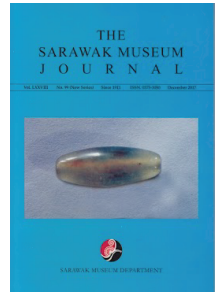




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TRADITIONAL IBAN POTTERY-MAKING AT KAMPUNG SKAROK, LUBOK ANTU, SARAWAK

Suresh Narayanan and Stephen Chia

INTRODUCTION

In May 2013, an ethnographic study of Iban pottery-making was carried out by the authors from the Centre for Global Archaeological Research (CGAR), Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, with technical assistance from the Sarawak Museum Department, Kuching, in the district of Lubok Antu, Sri Aman Division, Sarawak (Fig. 1). The main objective of the study was to locate the few former and active Iban potters in this area, in order to gather data and information on traditional pottery technology, types and functions. This study has provided some useful insights into the origin, history and production of traditional Iban pottery in the district of Lubok Antu, Sri Aman, Sarawak.

Keywords:

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Prior to this study, a brief ethnography survey had been done at Nanga Sumpa, Lubok Antu in 2003 by a group of foreign researchers and the Sarawak Museum Department to study the Iban pottery-making. However, the findings of the study have not been published except for some brief commentary notes by staff of the Sarawak Museum Department (Noel Laman, *pers. comm.*, 14th May 2013, retired museum assistant of Sarawak Museum Department, Kuching). However, pottery is no longer made today at Nanga Sumpa because the potters now live in Kampung Skarok, a small village situated not far from Batang Ai Dam, Lubok Antu. The Iban pottery of Rumah Tungku in Sungai Tiau, Kapit District, on the other hand, has been well-studied by Freeman (1957) and Dunsmore (1991). Unfortunately, Iban pottery production in Sungai Tiau and other longhouses in the headwaters of Sungai Mujong, Kapit ceased in the late 1960s (Saravanan Gopalkrishnan & Andrew Ngalai, *pers. comm.*, 2015, staff of Sekolah Kebangsaan Methodist, Kapit). There is also a brief record of Iban or Sea Dayak pottery-making from Sungai Skrang, Betong (Roth 1896; Freeman 1957). According to Roth (1896), many Sea Dayaks of Sungai Skrang stopped making pottery in the late 19th century. So far, no study has been done on the Iban pottery-making at Lubok Antu, Sri Aman.

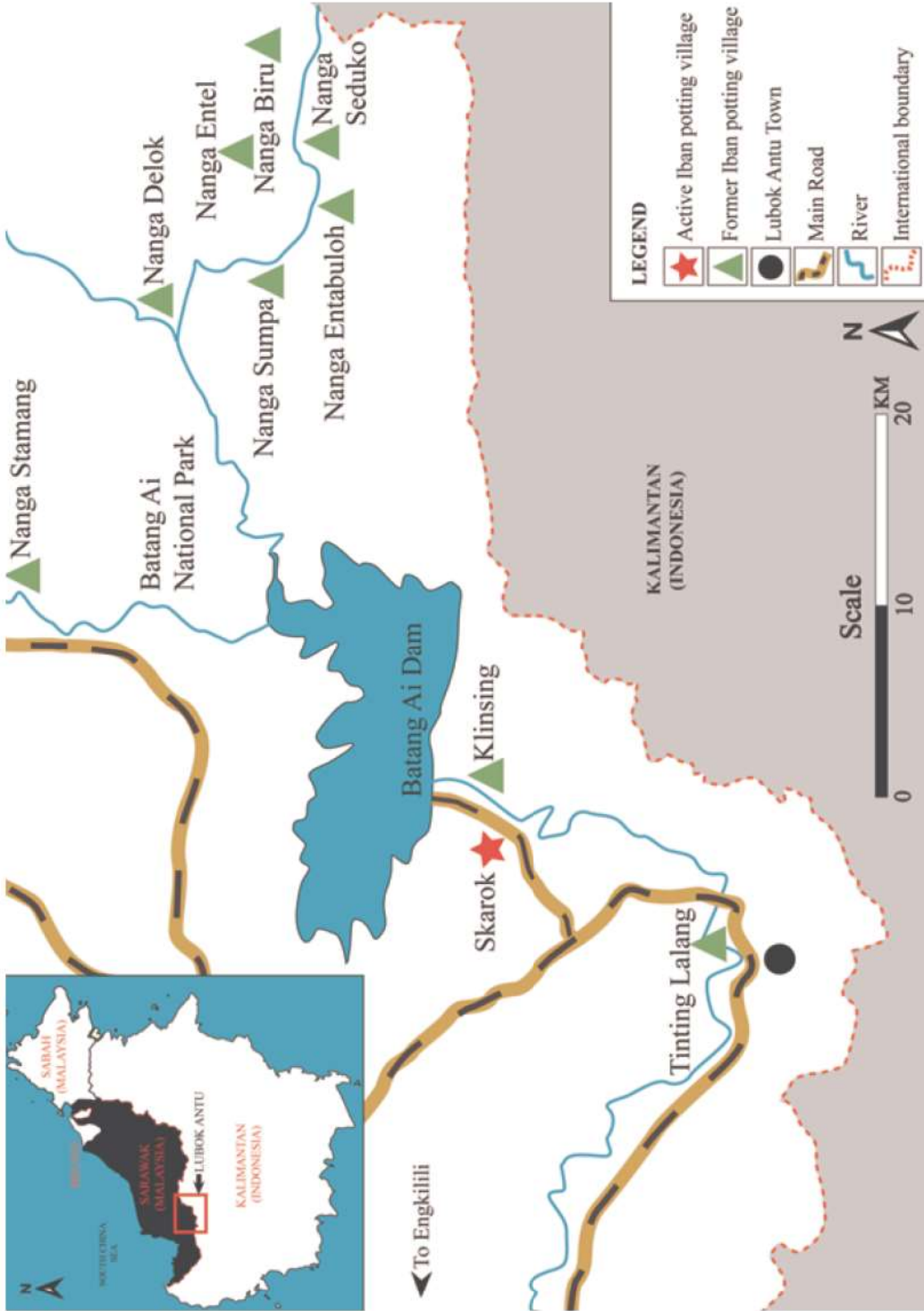


Fig. 1: Distribution of former and active traditional Iban pottery-making villages in Lubok Antu, Sri Aman Division, Sarawak.

Given the lack of knowledge about traditional Iban pottery at Lubok Antu, it was decided that a systematic ethnographic study should be undertaken at Kampung Skarok and its surrounding areas to collect as much data as possible on traditional pottery technology, types and functions. The findings from the study were compared with those of previous research on the Iban pottery, particularly by Freeman (1957) and Dunsmore (1991) in order to have a better understanding of the Iban pottery-making tradition in Sarawak.

THE FIELDWORK

In Lubok Antu, our ethnographic fieldwork was focused on former and present traditional Iban potting villages in the area of Ulu Engkari, a rural settlement located outside the boundary of the Batang Ai National Park. In addition, several Iban longhouses situated nearby Batang Ai Dam lake and Lubok Antu town were surveyed. These surveys were made with the assistance of Mr. Noel Laman, staff of the Sarawak Museum Department, Kuching.

Our surveys revealed that there is only one village, Kampung Skarok in Lubok Antu, still producing traditional Iban pottery (Fig. 1). Kampung Skarok is located about two kilometres from Batang Ai Dam and has been producing traditional Iban pottery since 2010. In Ulu Engkari, a majority of Iban potting villages stopped making pottery in the 1960s (Andah Lembang, *pers. comm.*, 15th May 2013, an active traditional Iban potter at Kampung Skarok, Lubok Antu). These villages include Nanga Sumpa, Nanga Entabuloh, Nanga Seduko, Nanga Biru, Nanga Entel, Nanga Delok and Nanga Stamang (Fig. 1). Tinting Lalang and Klinsing are two former Iban potting villages located near the town of Lubok Antu (Fig. 1). The following discusses the findings of the ethnographic fieldwork carried out at Kampung Skarok and other former Iban potting villages in Lubok Antu, Sarawak in 2013.

THE POTTERS AT LUBOK ANTU, SRI AMAN DIVISION

At Kampung Skarok in Lubok Antu (lat. 01°07'35.4" North and long. 111°51'80.6" East, 114 metres above sea level), there are three active traditional Iban potters, Andah Anak Lembang, and his two daughters, Mary Anak Andah and Jani Anak Andah (Fig. 2). Andah Lembang has more than 40 years of experience in making traditional Iban pottery. He learnt the technique of making pottery from his grandmother, Pundut Anak Nam, who was a famous