

6

Other explored but unexcavated sites

Peter Bellwood

The Kayoa-Laluin-Goraici region

The Bukit Keramat site is located on the eastern coastline of Laluin Island (see Fig. 5.1). This site was visited by Bellwood, Irwin, Kusnowihardjo, and Waluyo during this project in 1991, and again by Bellwood, Kusnowihardjo, and Waluyo in 1994. It is located on the top of a flat-topped limestone hill that rises to over 50 m above sea level at the end of the Tanjung Keramat peninsula, on the eastern coast of the island. It has not been surveyed, but a paced survey done in 1991 indicated an irregularly shaped occupied area on top of the hill of about 150 by 150 m, with remnant foundations of dry coral walls surviving along the northern, western, and southern sides where easy approaches exist. No walls are visible along the top of the eastern cliff, which drops down to flanking mangroves. The area yielded large quantities of local earthenware pottery, imported blue-and-white wares (mainly Chinese, presumably), and large numbers of marine shells and volcanic pebbles (for cooking?). Much material was exposed by megapode mounds, but the top of the hill also has a very thin soil layer, planted in 1991 under cassava in places, and much archaeological material seems to have eroded and fallen down the sides of the hill. It is unlikely that coherent stratigraphy survives, unless material is trapped in pockets in the limestone.

Local informants indicated that Bukit Keramat had once been a fortified dwelling place. The presences of sago cooking moulds (*forma*, a borrowing from Portuguese), ledge handles on earthenware bowls (not a feature of prehistoric Kayoa pottery), and one earthenware sago mould with a relief copy of what appears to be an element of European-style decoration (again, Portuguese?), all suggest that this site was occupied after a European presence first began in the region in the sixteenth century.

The potential for future research on this site seems small, but test-pitting will be necessary for any conclusive decision. An attractive Sama-Bajaw stilt village occupied the lagoon offshore from Bukit Keramat at the time of the research (Fig. 5.2), but whether the inhabitants were related to those who once occupied the archaeological site we do not know—such questions were not asked during our visits.

Tolimau Island, Goraici Islands: The sports field to the immediate northwest of Tolimau village produced many plain sherds of a recent variety of earthenware, including many forms paralleled in the contemporary Pulau Mare industry (Mahirta 1996). Coring of the deposit indicated that the sherds occurred throughout a topsoil layer 30 cm thick. The site yielded no decorated sherds.

Kayoa Island, Batui rockshelter: This shelter (Fig. 5.1) lies in a similar position to Uattamdi, about 50 m inland from the beach in a low coral cliff. The shelter floor covers perhaps 25 m² and would merit excavation. In 1991 we were unable to get permission from the landowner to work in the site.

Kayoa Island: Sherds of incised pottery were collected about 0.5 km south of Uattamdi, directly behind the beach. The pottery presumably belongs to the Early Metal Phase, as Layers A and B at Uattamdi. No indications were noted of any stratified deposit.

The Weda region

The cave called Batu Lubang at Sagea, located 3.5 km up the Sagea river from the coastal village of the same name (north side of Weda Bay) is spectacular, known to all inhabitants of the region and visited from time to time by speleological parties, but unfortunately of no archaeological significance. The Sagea river runs through the system and leaves no habitable area within. A small cave called Gua Jalamolo, 2.5 km from Sagea village on a north-northwest bearing, was test-pitted but yielded nothing.

A similar negative conclusion applies to several other caves visited in the Weda region. Indeed, Siti Nafisah was the only one found with any archaeological potential. Other caves, spectacular to look at but filled by periodic floodwaters, include Gua Paniki, about 3–4 km upstream from the coastal hamlet of Sidanga (north of Weda), and Gua Woye Papaya, which lies up a steep limestone gorge directly inland from Gua Siti Nafisah. A survey was also undertaken of the flat limestone region that lies immediately south of Tanjung Tilope, about 8 km south-southwest of Siti Nafisah (Fig. 4.1); no less than eight caves/shelters of various shapes and sizes were visited here during the course of a single day, but none showed high potential. All have problems of aspect and dampness, with inward-sloping floors of rock and mud, which would discourage any serious human occupation. None were seen close to the sea.

Lake Galela

While travelling to Morotai in 1991, in order to commence the Tanjung Pinang excavations, the team stopped for a day to examine the shoreline of volcanic Lake Galela to check out archaeological potential. There seems to be very little potential; the lake itself seemingly contains no shellfish and has a very steep coastline for much of its circumference, cut through an enormous thickness of volcanic ash. The impression received was that surface indications of sites are likely to be rare, and chances of locating sites will be small. The lake itself reveals no sign of a stable shoreline, except to its northeast where it abuts the lower slopes of the Tarakan Lamo volcano. It has probably changed its shape very frequently in the past according to prevailing conditions of water flow and volcanic ash deposition; it has no surface outlet and drains into the sea via subterranean seepage to the south of Tarakan Lamo.

Morotai

Non-systematic surface survey on the southern Morotai mainland and on the small islands that lie off the southeastern coast of the island (Fig. 3.1) produced the following surface indications:

- Sungei Sangowo Kecil: sherds of Sabatai Tua type were found on the west bank of the Sangowo Kecil stream, a little east of Tanjung Pinang.
- Mamuju: a flaked pebble, a *Canarium* anvil and potsherds of Sabatai Tua type were found on the surface of a bunded rice field about 1 km inland.
- A number of the small islands near Daruba were visited in 1991 for rapid surface survey, with interesting results. On Galogalo Besar, several megapode mounds near the southern tip of the island produced potsherds of the incised type typical of Tanjung Pinang (Morotai) and Um Kapat Papo (Gebe), as described in Chapter 7, in Tanjung Pinang found with human burials. A similar sherd was collected on Rube Rube Island, and this style of pottery is well dated to around 2000 BP at both Tanjung Pinang and Um Kapat Papo, and probably at Buwawansi 3 and 5 on Gebe as well. Otherwise no finds were made, apart from plain potsherds of the recent Pulau Mare type on Lungu Lungun. It is possible that some of these islands, especially those that consist only of coral sand, are of very recent formation. A few, such as Rube Rube, Ruki Rukiti, and Galogalo Besar, are of slightly raised coral and might repay more attention in the future, since it was these that yielded the c. 2000 BP sherds.

This text is taken from *The Spice Islands in Prehistory: Archaeology in the Northern Moluccas, Indonesia*, edited by Peter Bellwood, published 2019 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

doi.org/10.22459/TA50.2019.06