

## Potsherds from Bougainville Island

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The potsherds described in this report were collected by Conrad Johnson Jr, in 1949, from the village of Tiop, on Bougainville Island. It is a surface collection from a banana grove. We are grateful to the University of Colorado Museum of Anthropology for permission to study the collection.

We do not know whether the specimens came from one site at Tiop, or from around the village area. As the sherds are from the surface, it is impossible to make comparisons of design elements on a relative frequency basis by depth or by chronological association.

Of the 75 sherds in the collection all but one are decorated. This would seem to indicate that it is not a random sample, and that a special effort was made to collect only decorated sherds.

Pottery we have seen from New Caledonia, Fiji, and New Guinea is decorated only around the upper part of the vessel. As only one plain sherd was collected, there is no way of telling from this collection if this is also the case on Bougainville.

Variation in surface colour of the sherds (red to black), indicates that the ware was fired in a poorly controlled atmosphere, at a low temperature, thus producing a relatively low grade of pottery. The sherds are coarse-textured and crumble or shatter readily. No firing clouds are apparent, although there is considerable variation of colour even on individual sherds. No carbon streaks were noted. A description of the temper was not attempted, as it is a surface collection with no known provenance.

While the sherds are too small to indicate the size of the vessels, the curvature of the rim sherds, and other specimens suggest that they all represent fragments of bowls.

*Method of construction.* Anvil depressions on some sherds indicate that some vessels were made by the paddle and anvil method. All sherds show smoothing on both exterior and interior. One sherd showed that its vessel had been made by coiling, as the joint where the coils were pinched together was not entirely obliterated. There is a wide variation in the thickness of the vessel walls, ranging from 5 mm to 15 mm. The methods of construction of the pottery are similar to coiling with paddle and anvil as reported from New Caledonia and Fiji (Gifford and Shutler 1956: 70).

*Decorated sherds.* The decorated sherds are illustrated in Plates I, II, III. There are no painted sherds, nor any sherds with a slip (wash); no base, handle, or spout sherds, or sherds with suspension holes, appear in the collection. No evidence of resin was seen on any of the specimens. All decorative techniques are rather crude. Incising, gashes, gouges, or combinations of these are seen. While no detailed comparisons

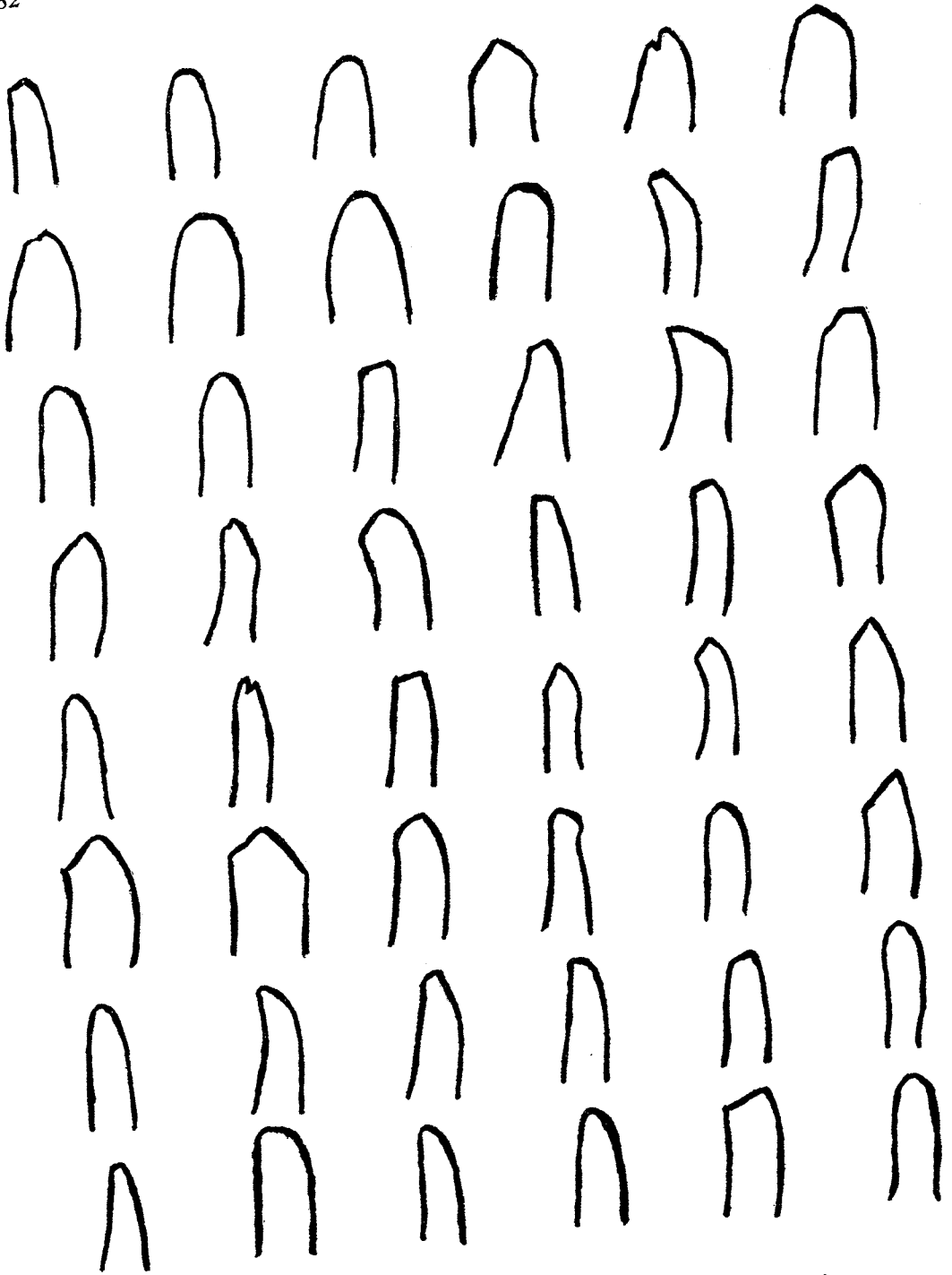
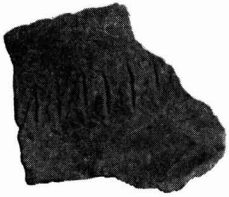


FIG. 1. Bougainville rim and lip types. Outside of vessel to the right.



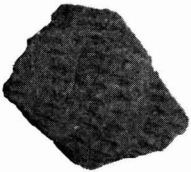
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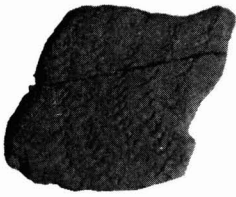
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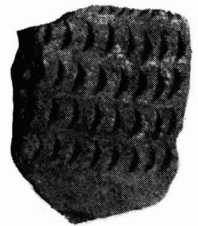
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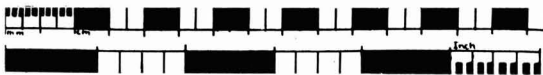
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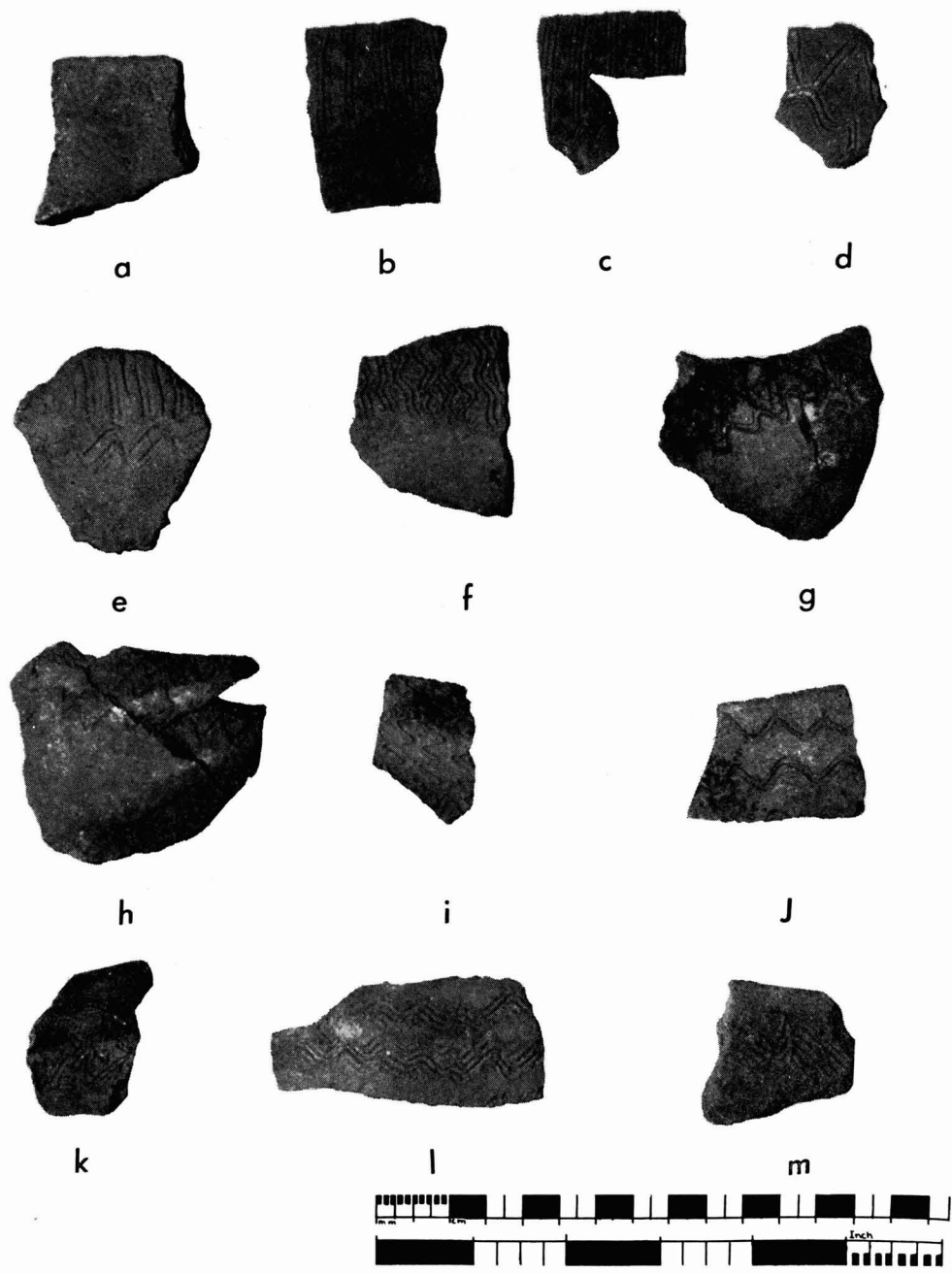
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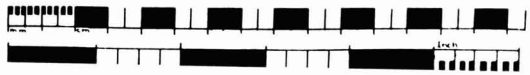
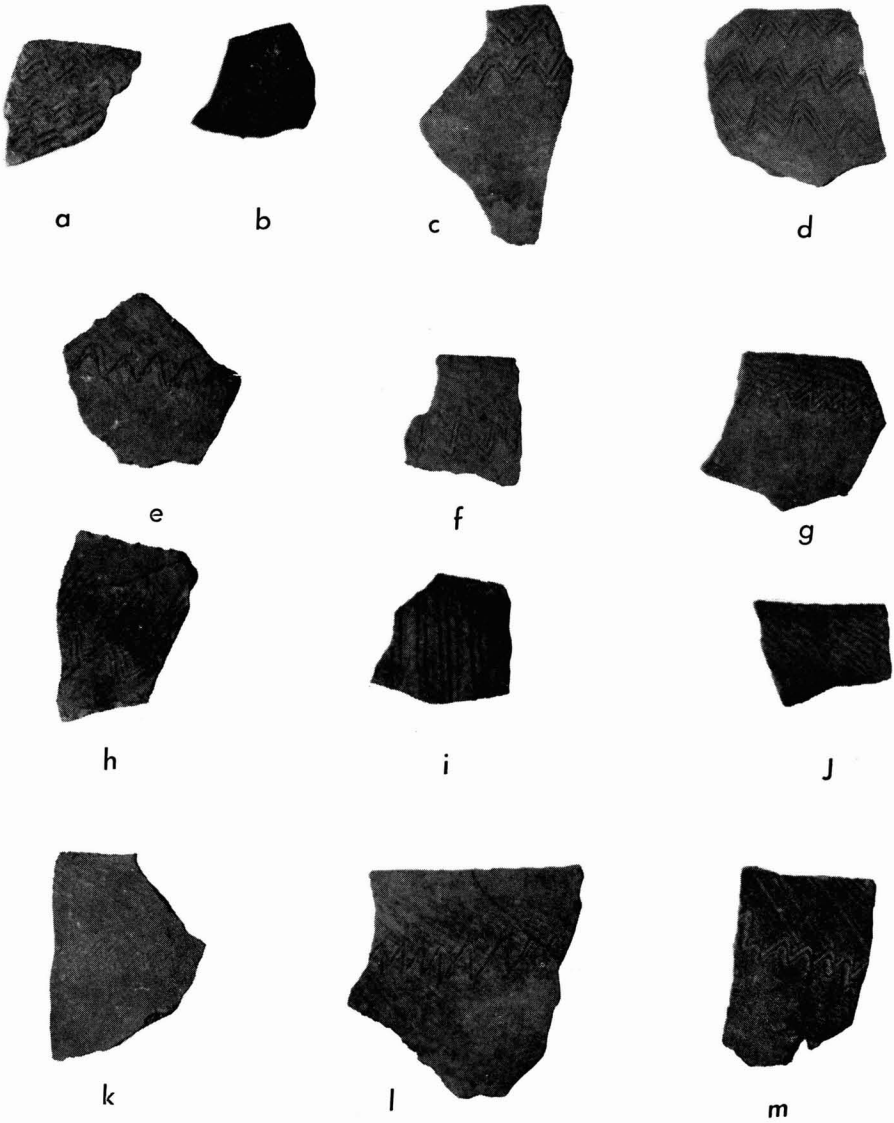
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of areal design elements will be attempted here, the close resemblance of the Bougainville decorated sherd designs to those from Fiji (Gifford 1951: pls 21, 22), and New Caledonia (Gifford and Shutler 1956: pls 13, 14, 15) can be noted. The decorative incisions, gashes and gouges seem to have been made by twigs, straws and the edges of shells, as described by Avias (1950: 115).

No relief sherds are present in the collection. This may be due to the surface provenance of the specimens. No relief sherds were recovered in the upper levels in Fiji or New Caledonia.

*Rim and lip types.* Forty of the specimens are rim sherds, see Figure 1. Following our New Caledonia rim typology (Gifford and Shutler 1956: 71, fig. 4), straight, outcurved, and incurved types are noted. Thickness of the rims varies from being thinner or thicker than the vessel walls, or of the same thickness. Lip types, again using our New Caledonia typology (*ibid.* 71, fig. 4), Figure 1, shows round-grooved, flat, inside bevels, outside bevels, and double-bevelled specimens.

While this small sherd collection does not provide any chronological framework for pottery on Bougainville, it does extend our knowledge of the geographical distribution of the rather simple elements of Melanesian pottery design further to the west.

#### REFERENCES

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