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特別寄稿
「近世日本とルソン—『篤国』形成史再考—」補論 清水有子 1

論文
The Hizen ware in the Philippines: Its historical and archaeological significance 11
— サダ・T. キャパス —
Naufragio, colonización y comercio: relaciones entre Filipinas y Taiwán en los siglos XVI y XVII 33
— 方真真 —
メソアメリカ考古学における日本人研究者 51
— 市川彰 —
Dinámicas de interacción en la transición del Formativo al Clásico: Los resultados preliminares del Proyecto Arqueológico Tialancáleca, Puebla 2012-2014 73
— 嘉幡茂／村上達也／フリエタ・M.＝ ロペス・J. —
メキシコと日本両国間の海洋生産者の貿易と対面（前編） 107
— ホセ・フアン＝チャベス・V. —
メキシコと日本両国間の海洋生産者の貿易と対面（後編） 121
— 小林致広 —
16世紀ニカラグアにおける造船拠点の成立条件に関する考察 133
— 立岩礼子 —

研究ノート
氾濫するドラッグの中で人生の無常性と向き合えるか 151
— 経済発展を続けてきたブラジルでドラッグの合法化を考える —
— 高橋慶介 —

調査研究報告
ニカラグア学術調査報告『2014夏期調査』— アメリカ地中海文化圈研究へのアプローチ — 161
— 達豊治／南博史 —
ARTÍCULO INVITADO
A supplement of Kinsei nihon to Luzon
Yuko Shimizu

ARTÍCULOS
The Hizen ware in the Philippines: Its historical and archaeological significance
Nida T. Cuevas

Naufragio, colonización y comercio: relaciones entre Filipinas y Taiwán en los siglos XVI y XVII
Chenchen Fang

Japanese Scholars in Mesoamerican Archaeology
Akira Ichikawa

Dinámicas de interacción en la transición del Formativo al Clásico:
Los resultados preliminares del Proyecto Arqueológico Tlaltenleca, Puebla 2012-2014
Shigeru Kabata, Tatsuya Murakami, Julieta M. López J., José Juan Chávez V.

Los desafíos de la justicia alternativa por la CRAC-PC de La Costa-Montaña de Guerrero, México (Primera parte)
Munehiro Kobayashi

Anton Chino:
A diáspora de um escravo de Cochin pelo mundo Iuso-espanhol dos séculos XVI e XVII
Maria de Deus Beites Manso, Lúcio de Sousa

El Realejo y sus condiciones como el puerto prospeño durante el siglo XVI
Reiko Tateiwa

NOTA Y COMENTARIOS
Facing the contingency of life in the overflow of drugs:
Rethinking the legalization of drugs and economic growth in Brazil
Keisuke Takahashi

NOTAS DE INVESTIGACIÓN
Informe sobre la investigación académica de Nicaragua [Investigación de verano, 2014]
—para estudios del área cultural del Mar Mediterráneo Americano—
Toyoharu Tsuji, Hiroshi Minami
The Hizen ware in the Philippines: Its historical and archaeological significance

Nida T. Cuevas

Introduction

The Philippines have been characterized by active maritime trade relations with the Asian and Southeast Asian countries as early as the 10th century A.D (Fox 1979). This trade relation may have been brought about by the country’s geographical location suitable for the trading route of seafarers following the discovery of trade wind that brings commerce towards the American continent (Figure 1). The Philippines is strategically positioned facing China and relatively close to Japan (Goddio 1997:40). In the early 16th century or even before the advent of Spanish colonialism both China and Japan were key players in this maritime trade and have been enjoying their long commercial history with the coastal settlements in the Philippines (Goddio1997:40). This Sino-Japanese-Filipino trade relation may have been seen and capitalized by the Spanish colonist in establishing the trans-Pacific maritime trade that link China and Nueva España (Reed 1978:27).
The turn of the 17th century marked the height of the Manila galleon maritime exchange. Establishing the Manila galleon may imply the birth of world trade. Major trade goods loaded in the galleons included porcelain that was notably in demand in Asian and Southeast Asian regions after imported products such as silk and spices in Southeast Asian markets (Tatel 2002). These have been made available for transshipment to Hispanic American market. Most of these trade commodities came from China, Japon (Japan), Maluko (Moluccas), Malaca (Malacca), Camboja (Cambodia) and Borneo (Tatel 2002) aboard their vessels.

The influx of these trade items including the people coming in the Philippines has leave footprints in many areas in the island. Archaeological evidences through the discovery of shipwrecks, trade goods, fortification and settlements may attest its historical role in maritime commerce. Primary trading ports in the Philippines were identified located in areas such as Jolo (Abubakar 1978:2168), Butuan, Cebu (Nishimura 2014:275; Junker 2000:109), Manila and Palawan (Junker 2000) which oftentimes yielded Chinese tradeware ceramics.

The wide distribution of high quality Chinese porcelain in foreign markets including the Philippines may have implied high demand of porcelain importation. Historical issues on the domestic conflict in China over dynastic succession (Nogami 2006) had been
The Hizen ware in the Philippines: Its historical and archaeological significance

intensively discussed by many scholars. In the 17th century, China closed its door to foreign traders which resulted to an increasing demand of Chinese porcelain including Japan. In order to fill-in the demands of foreign market Hizen porcelain was produced to supplement the shortage of Chinese wares. Importation of Hizen porcelain to other areas in Southeast Asia has been archaeologically confirmed found in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Philippines which may have been brought by Chinese junk and VOC (Nogami 2006).

The 17th century maritime trade network in Asia and Southeast Asia including Philippines has been intensively studied by Nogami in 2004 that traces presence of Hizen porcelain (Nogami 2006). There are material evidences that show involvement of Japanese goods in the galleon trade but however, there is no confirmation on the direct relationship between the Manila galleon and the Japanese traders. This paper will attempt to reinvestigate those archaeological evidences that would provide information of involvement of Japan in the trading network in the 17th century. This will also look in to the spatial distribution of the Hizen porcelain discovered in the archaeological sites in the Philippines.

Nogami’s preliminary result on the analysis of the tradeware ceramics from the Collection Holdings of the Archaeology Division of the National Museum in the Philippines was utilized in order to locate areas identified with presence of Hizen porcelain. Nogami’s analysis involved sorting and identification of the Japanese porcelain in selected underwater and terrestrial sites in the Philippines (Nogami 2006). From the data gathered, questions is being raised on how diffuse is the presence of Hizen ware in other parts of the country? Are Hizen porcelain intended for Philippine market? How do early Filipinos value Hizen porcelain as part of their daily life? This however, will generate information that may infer the trading patterns and behavior of traders in the islands. Determining its spatial distribution would help provide a comprehensive artifact database of Hizen ware in the region.

This will also review all available historical documents that convey the existence of Hizen ware in the Philippines. This historical information will provide added information on the maritime trading network and relationship of the Japanese traders and Spanish colonist in the 17th century.

**Discourse on the Manila Galleon Trade**

The late 16th century marked the opening of Manila to the International maritime trading network brought by the Manila Galleon that linked the East and West. This was made possible through the discovery on the famous route conducted by Felipe de Salcedo
(grandson of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi) through a current that moved toward the northeast of the Philippines and would be sailing south toward the coast of the America (Desroches et al. 1991:40).

The Philippines geographical location relatively fronting China and situated close to Japan (Desroches et al. 1991:40) (see Fig. 1) has been one of the favorable location of the colonizer in which to have a commercial intercourse between the Philippines and Mexico (Alip 1940:183). There were two known trading ship routes discussed by Quirino (1977:933) the ship going east or known as the *nao de China* and west known as *nao de Acapulco*. In 1575, Manila was formally ruled by the Spanish government and established a regular trade via the “Manila galleons” or *naos de la China* (Desroches et al. 1991:40). The Manila galleon was regulated by Spanish administrators in Mexico and controlled by Manila merchants (Hedinger 1977:982). Manila became a vast warehouse for rare China goods which were re-exported on Spanish galleons. Historical account mentioned that Chinese and Japanese junks began trading with this new power. As narrated by Reed (1978:32) that:

*There is little doubt that the Spaniards soon convinced the Chinese and other interested Asian merchants of their ability to hold the Philippines, to sail the westerlies between Japan and North America on a regular basis, and to market the costly merchandise from China, India, and Southeast Asia in Nueva España. Even before the dawn of the seventeenth century, the renown of the *naos de Manila* as the richest of Spanish treasure ships had spread far and wide, thereby testifying to the improved quality of goods being transported to Acapulco. Indeed it was a deserved reputation, for within their holds the galleons carried expensive jewelries, Persian rugs, scarce spices, lustrous porcelain, rare woods, precious stones, ivory bric-a-brac, a variety of valuable cloths, and most importantly, great qualities of the finest silks. As a result of this early and rapid expansion of international trade, only three decades after its foundation Hispanic Manila had begun to rival the famed Portuguese city of Malacca as the foremost colonial emporium in Southeast Asia.*

Establishing the galleon trade was corollary to the development of the real *situado* (Quirino 1977:936) or subsidy from Mexico (Alip 1940:183) to the Philippines. The *situado* was first made up of the returns from *almojarifazgo* or customs tax collected at Acapulco. During this period, tributes and taxes were insufficiently raised to meet the expenses of the insular officials in the Philippines. The galleon trade may have served as the most important aid and prompt solution for the ailing Philippine royal treasury (Quirino 1977:936). The economic life of the colony depended almost exclusively on trade with the *naos de la China* or *Manila galleon* (Desroches et al. 1991:40). This galleon trade oftentimes encountered hardships or difficulties in their voyage that caused irregularities in their arrival with the
situado from Mexico. As cited by Quirino (1977:963) that:

Much later, when the galleon trade could not meet the amount either because the ships could not make the voyage because of typhoons, shipwrecks, or capture by the English – the Mexican treasury had to draw from its own funds to help the Philippines balance its budget.

Historical reports mentioned that importation of goods through the Manila galleon had created controversy between the merchants of Manila and the merchants of Cadiz and Seville (in Spain).

The merchants of Spain protested against the importation of Chinese silk and other Oriental stuffs into Mexico on the ground that their products were underselling the Spanish goods there and consequently would drain the silver of Spain. They urged therefore, the prohibition of the importation of whatever products of the East that might compete with those of Spain, Peru and Mexico (Alip 1940:180).

It was also recorded that dispute on unfair allocation of subsidy or situado among Manila officials existed. In the late 17th century, the Manila to Acapulco trade maintained a maximum limit with a value to 250,000 pesos, and from Acapulco to Manila twice as much (Alip 1940:180). Later, it was reduced to 100,000 pesos subsidy in the mid-18th century. This reduction made the Manila officials complained to the crown of unfair subsidy that caused hardship in insular administration. The insular officials requested for an increase of their situado as the government expenses continuously increased. In the same period, a parallel demand was made by the merchants on the expansion of the volume of the Manila-Acapulco trade.

The movement of galleon trade has been restricted through the promulgation of laws that strictly limit the volume of cargoes entering into the trans-Pacific exchange, and to guarantee Spanish Manileños the greatest share of its rich proceeds (Reed 1978:33).

Bigger vessels were constructed or refitted as in the Galleon San Diego in 1600 (Dizon 1993; 2012) and more merchandise was sent to Acapulco and more silver dollars were shipped to Manila (Quirino 1977:936) in response to the request of the Manila officials. In 1802, the Manila-Acapulco trade had slowed down in which the galleons returned to Manila with unsold cargoes.

For two hundred and fifty years (1565 to 1813), the galleon trade had attracted hundreds of independent merchants that conducted intense commercial activity in the Philippines.
It was loaded with various trade goods coming from diverse places including Japan. Residue of the Manila galleon trade is best shown through the discovery of the San Diego shipwreck located off the Coast of Fortune Island in Batangas Province, south of Manila, Philippines (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). A more detailed description on how this shipwreck was discovered and how trade goods were diversely loaded is thoroughly discussed in the book of the Treasures of San Diego (Goddio 1997).

Figure 2. Map of Fortune Island, Nasugbu, Batangas (photo taken from Google earth).

Figure 3. Photograph of the wooden planks of the San Diego wreck.
The Historical Milieu of the Japanese in the Philippines: Their settlement and activities

Early historical writings mentioned the movement of Japanese outposts in Korea in the 15th century and were repatriated in 1512 (Delacour 1997:214). “Some of the Japanese emigrated south (Fig. 4) and some were attracted by the profits of trade with the Portuguese, who had been solidly established in Macao since 1557 and reached Japan in 1543” (Delacour 1997:214). The presence of Japanese traders in Luzon prior to the establishment of the Manila galleon trade in the 16th century have been substantiated with the sighting of Japanese fortified settlements near the mouth of Cagayan River (present-day Aparri) by the wako expedition (Buccaneer merchants) and in Pangasinan known to be the “port of Japan” was deemed to be trading communities before the end of the 16th century (Saniel 1977:912). Later, they were eradicated by Spaniards during the establishment of Manila as trading center and the seat of Spanish government.

According to Delacour (1997:216) “some of the Japanese expelled from Cagayan by the Spanish had moved to Manila. In 1593 the Governor of Manila received a letter which stated in no uncertain terms that Japan wished to include the Philippines among its vassal states.”

Figure 4. Map of Southeast Asia showing movement of Japanese traders in the 17th century after the prohibition of Catholicism in Japan as issued by the Tokugawa shogunate (Goddio 2002).
The distrustful behavior of the Spaniards towards the Asian traders was not a deterrent for foreign merchants to cease trading in the Philippines. The unrestricted trading of Manila galleon may have attracted more foreign merchants to settle in the Philippines where they could conduct intense commercial dealings. Included were several thousand of Japanese merchants that settled in Manila. As narrated by Legaspi to the King of Spain (Reed 1978: 27-32) that;

_Farther north than our settlement (on Cebu)....are some large islands, called Luzon and Vindoro (Mindoro), where the Chinese and Japanese came every year to trade. They bring silks, woolens, bells, porcelains, perfumes, iron, tin, colored cloth, and other small wares, and in return they take away gold and wax. The people of these two islands Moros (Muslims), and having bought what the Chinese and Japanese bring...._

The Japanese populations situated in the suburbs of the Walled City of Manila had expanded and prosper in almost two decades (1604-1623). The areas outside Intramuros have been divided by Morga according to ethnic affiliation in 1595. The areas in Dilao situated South of Pasig River and San Miguel have been assigned to the Japanese and the Chinese occupied the Parian area. Meanwhile, the Bagumbayan and Cavite were settled by mixed races such as the Japanese, Chinese and the natives (Saniel 1977). In 1660, Dilao was extended to include San Anton as settlement for Japanese castaways. San Anton was the place that corresponded of what are now the areas of Manila City Hall, the Philippine Normal University and the National Museum. In 1614, the settlement in San Miguel was established to accommodate Japanese Christians expelled from Japan. This was the year that the Tokugawa shogun had issued a law that overthrow Christians from Japan. The Japanese settlement in Dilao was later moved to Paco in the late 18th century, before the British occupation in Manila.

The Japanese were the main suppliers of wheat flour that facilitated in the demand for large quantity of biscuits, soya bean, bean paste, ham, iron, raw cotton, textile, armour, cases, munitions, and stone ink palettes (Saniel 1977). They were not only traders in Manila but some of the Japanese were employed as servants, laborers or soldiers by Spaniards when needed (Saniel 1977).

Morga’s account on the prosper of Hispano-Japanese commerce in the beginning of the 17th century stated that;

_merchantmen come every year from the part of Nangasaque (Nagasaki) in Japan at the end of October with the north winds and at the end of March. They enter and anchor at Manila...The bulk of their cargo is excellent wheat-flour for the provisioning of Manila,
and highly prized salt meats. They also bring some fine woven silk goods of mixed colors; beautiful and finely decorated screens done in oil and quilt; all kinds of cutlery, many suits of armor, spears, catans (sabers) and other weapons, all finely wrought; writing cases, boxes and small cases of wood, japanned (lacquered) and curiously marked; other pretty gewgaws; excellent fresh pears, barrels and casks of good salt tunny; cages of sweet voice larks called Fimbaros and other trifles..... (Reed 1978:27-32).

An active trading relation between Philippines and Japan had been recorded in the middle of 16th to late 17th centuries (Fig. 5). There was even an increase of trading voyage by the Japanese merchants in Manila during this period as they discovered the production of tibor jars in Luzon which became the choice of the shogun (Hedinger 1997:986). The Japanese merchants in exchange of their traded goods took deerskin, honey, wax, Brazil wood and indigo, and cotton goods from the Ilocos. They traded with their boats that even reached the Pacific coast of America and even penetrated the Indian subcontinent (Rodriguez 1998:194). Morga’s account on the Japanese merchants in the 17th century stated that:

....These vessels return to Japan at the season of the vendavals (southwest monsoon) during the month of June and July. They carry from Manila their purchases, which are composed of raw Chinese silk, gold, deerskin, and brazilwood for their dyes. They take honey, manufactured wax, palm and Castilian wine, civet cats, large tibors (jars) in which to store their tea, glass, cloth and other curiosities from España..... (Reed 1978:27-32).

Figure 5. Photo of a Japanese trader in Manila (Picture taken from Saniel 1977:915).
Archaeological Evidences of Hizen porcelain in the Philippines

The presence of Japanese in the Philippines from the 16th-18th centuries did not leave any historical footprints or record about the Hizen porcelain as one of the cargo in the Manila galleon or has been traded only for local consumption. As discussed by Nogami (2006:2) that there was no archaeological evidence that Hizen ware was exported to the Philippines, but these were found in Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesia. These findings have shown that Hizen porcelain had been valued by Southeast Asian consumers as well.

The production of the Japanese porcelain in Arita in the early 17th century had been an offshoot from the insufficient supply of Chinese porcelain in the markets caused by the economic condition that occurred in China in the second half of the 17th century or during the Qing dynasty. It was also this period that Arita porcelain were produced for the first time in Japan. In the middle of the 17th century exportation of Arita porcelain had started (Nogami 2006). The design and form was copied from the Chinese porcelain as highly demanded by foreign markets.

The exportation of Hizen porcelain to Southeast Asia, Mexico and Europe have been carried out by the Chinese junks and VOC (Vereenigdae Oostindische Companie) or Dutch East India Company ships from the port of Nagasaki, Japan (Nogami 2006:2).

In the Philippines, sherds of Hizen porcelains have been found in the areas of Manila and Cebu known to be of historical and archaeological significance. At present, both areas are highly urbanized and were systematically excavated by the National Museum.

The Intramuros, Manila

Intramuros or the Walled City of Manila is a triangular wedge of land that curved outward and surrounded by a moat (Fig. 7). It is geographically located between Pasig River on the north and Manila Bay on the west with an area that measures about two and a half miles in circumference. This had been the place favored by Legaspi for the location of the colonial capital of the Philippines or the Spanish quarter of Intramuros in the 16th century. During this period, the area was confronted with natural and cultural threats such as fires, wars and earthquakes but still bears the imprint of the Spanish colonial design (Reed 1978:43). From the buildings made of wooden palisade, wooden floors, trunks of palm trees and heavy upright hardwood timber of port settlements prior to 1571, the reconstruction of Manila in stone has been preferred by the European colonist in building a permanent fortification for the colonial city. This has been supported with the discovery of quarries of
volcanic tuff and limestone in the nearby areas of Manila, aided with the used of roof tiles and bricks.

Several sites in Intramuros have been excavated that yielded archaeological materials dated from the 15th century to the Historical period (American and WWII). Huge amount of tradeware ceramics were uncovered. In 2004, Nogami (2006) found several pieces of Hizen porcelain from the sites in Ayuntamiento, Plaza San Luis, and Beaterio de la Compañía de Jesus in Intramuros (see Fig. 6).

The Beaterio de la Compañía de Jesus site has been the domicile of the Religious of the Virgin Mary established in the late 17th century. It was located along the Sta. Lucia corner Victoria Street, between Bastion de San Diego and the Cuartel de la Artilleria in Intramuros. “Prior to the establishment of the religious order (Beaterio), the property was owned by a wealthy Spanish citizen” (ACECI 2002). The 2002 excavation revealed tradeware ceramics identified belonging to the Chinese of the 17th-18th centuries.

The re-examination of the tradeware ceramics from the sites mentioned earlier yielded Hizen ware sherds mostly comprised of underglaze blue-and-white dish and cup vessels with flower and animal design (Nogami 2006). Nogami further described the production of the Hizen ware sherds found in Intramuros mostly of “craak style” produced in 1660 to 1690 in Arita, Japan.

Figure 6. Photo showing the walls and streets of Intramuros. Black circles indicate sites mentioned with presence of Hizen artifacts.
More sites in Intramuros had been exposed that yielded tradeware ceramics that need sorting and further analysis.

The Mehan Garden, Manila

The site is located outside the walls of Intramuros. It is an area that measures approximately 3,770 square meters. It is bounded to the north by Besa Street, to the south by Hospital Road, to the east by Arroceros Street and to the west by P.Burgos St. (Cuevas 2000:71). At present, Mehan Garden houses the Mehan Circle, Mehan City Library, the Universidad de Manila (formerly City College Manila) and the Bonifacio Shrine (Fig. 8).

Mehan Garden used to be one of the sites of the Chinese Parian as a ‘result of a place restriction on Chinese residences in 1581’ (Conrad 1977:875). Parian was a Chinese residential quarters and marketplace established in the immediate outskirts of Spanish settlements in Intramuros (Cuevas 2000:71). They provided services and goods from China, Japan, India and Europe which were primarily for the Spanish colony in Intramuros.

Archaeological excavation in this site revealed materials such as tradeware ceramics, local earthenware sherds, Chinese coins, bricks, clay crucibles, animal bones, beads, ivory fan, modified bone implement and others. Preliminary analysis of porcelain sherds belonged mostly to the Chinese and European wares. These were dated from about the late 17th century to about the middle of the 19th century (Cuevas et al. 2000:77).
The Hizen ware in the Philippines: Its historical and archaeological significance

The Hizen ware identified by Nogami was morphologically described as fragments of blue and white dishes with insect and flower motif. The sherds were produced in 1660-1680 in Hizen (Nogami 2006).

On the other hand, the Island of Cebu, located in the Visayas region of central Philippines is known for its historical importance during the 16th-18th centuries. The island is sheltered from typhoon and monsoon weather and geographically situated in the coastal terrain with evidence for regional trade (Peterson 2005:128).

Evidence of Hizen ware was also reported found in the island of Cebu.

**Boljoon site, Cebu**

The town of Boljoon is located southeastern coast of Cebu Island in the Visayas, Central Philippines (Bersales and de Leon 2011:186). It is approximately 100 kilometers south of Cebu City characterized with narrow coastal strips and bordered by high mountains (Fig. 9). The place was known for its cotton industry that produced very good textiles, grew
forest timber particularly the *Sibucao* tree species that produced sap for ink and grew rice, corn, coffee and tobacco in the late 16th century CE. Boljoon was established in 1599 by the Augustinian as one of eight mission stations or *visitas* under the Sialo (Carcar) parish (Bersales and de Leon 2011:186; De Leon et al. 2009; De la Torre 2007).

Archaeological excavations conducted in the grounds of the Patrocinio de Sta. Maria Parish Church in the small town of Boljoon (Bersales and de Leon 2011:186) had yielded material evidences of a 17th century burial ground. The burials were associated with ceramic and earthenware vessels, iron tools and metal ornaments. The ceramics from this site included four intact pieces identified manufactured from Chinese and Japanese kilns (Bersales and de Leon 2011:205). The Chinese blue-and-white porcelain dish was dated to about the second half of the 17th century and Japanese blue and white small double-gourd bottle (Fig. 10) belonging to the Arita kiln, Hizen area was dated to ca. 1650-1670’s. A Japanese overglazed enamel large dish was manufactured in Yoshida kiln located at Hizen area was dated to ca. 1650-1670’s (Fig. 11) as well as the overglazed enamel bottle in Arita kiln, Hizen area to about ca. 1650-1670’s (Fig. 12) (Bersales and de Leon 2011:186; De Leon et al. 2009).

The excavation at the Boljoon site resulted to the recovery of 53 burials in which four samples taken from skeletal remains were subjected to AMS analyses giving dates of 421 BP ± 40 years; 401 BP ± 40 years, 359 BP ± 40 yeas, and 331 BP ± 40 years (Bersales and de Leon 2011:186).
Plaza Independencia Site, Cebu City

The present day Plaza Independencia is located at the center of Cebu City, in the Visayas, Central Philippines (Fig. 13). It is surrounded by famous historical landmarks such as the Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral and Patria de Cebu on the northwestern side; Sto. Niño de Cebu and Magellan’s Cross on the southwestern part; adjacent to the Plaza on the east side is Fort San Pedro and further eastward the Cebu Port Area (Cuevas and Bautista 2009:18).
Plaza Independencia is rectangular in shape with total land area of about 17,600 square meters (Nishimura 1992:177).
Historical accounts reveal that Plaza Independencia was continuously used as burial ground from the late 16th to the 19th centuries A.D. ( Cuevas and Bautista 2009:18). This has been confirmed from the extensive archaeological excavation carried out in the area that yielded skeletal remains with associated grave goods ranging from blue and white porcelain identified coming from Japan, China, Thailand and Vietnam; green-glazed celadons from Longquan, China and Si Satchanalai in Thailand; gold death masks; iron implements; local earthenware vessels; glass bottles, animal remains, shell and modified shell bracelets etc.

Discussion

The history of the Philippines in the 16th century is basically shaped by the Spanish colonialist. The expansion of the Spanish colonialism in the country had impacted so much on the social, political, and religious structure of the colonized society. And that, Manila galleon or naos de China, and the Chinese junk may have contributed to the economic transformation of the country. An example of an archaeological investigation in the Philippines that distinctly describes the remnants of the Manila-Acapulco trade and “demonstrates the primacy of tradeware ceramics in the external trade during the Spanish colonialism is the 17th century San Diego galleon shipwreck” (Tatel 2002). The San Diego is a trading galleon that harbors at the port of Cavite awaiting for the proper season to return to Acapulco ( Goddio 1997:49). It carries almost thirty four thousand trade objects (Ronquillo 1993:18) that included stoneware jars, blue-and-white porcelain, gold objects, earthenware vessels, Japanese sword, cannons and cannon balls, silver and gold coins, silver ware, and more (Goddio 1997). The tradeware ceramics were considered very important item in the history of maritime trade along the silk and spices’ (Tri 2010:49). An analysis done by de la Torre and Crick (1997:252) on the terra cotta pieces from the San Diego wrecked stated that the “introduction of these materials reveals the cultural impact of a conquering or dominant political power on the work of local craftsmen.”

An intense commercial trading that occurred in the Philippines resulted to the tremendous influx of mass-produced Chinese export porcelains and the competing Siamese and Annamese export wares that increased dramatically (Junker 2000:16). Aside from the export wares coming from other Southeast Asian region, luxury goods from Japan were also exported to the country. The Japanese has been known to be another trade competitor in the 16th century (Goddio 1997:28). This trading relationship with the Chinese, Japanese and Filipino network had been taken advantage by the Spanish colonizers in the emergence of the Manila galleon in 1571 (Reed 1978). Further, this trading relationship had transformed Manila into entrepot or trade center that linked China and Nueva España (Reed 1978; Dizon and Ronquillo 2010).
At the turn of 17th century, the Manila Galleon trade had grown and stabilized the Philippine economy with unrestricted commerce. A parallel event happened in China in 1643 of which the Ming dynasty totally collapsed (Medley 1976) had affected the Asian and the Southeast Asian markets. The high demand of Chinese porcelain by foreign markets in the second half or late 16th and throughout the 17th centuries may have set off the production of Hizen porcelain from Nagasaki through the Chinese junk and Dutch vessel (VOC). The analysis of tradeware ceramics from various archaeological sites in the Philippines had verified presence of Hizen ware. Nogami’s result on his preliminary investigation in 2004 established the presence of Hizen ware in few areas in the Philippines. In his study, Nogami (2006) had deduced that these materials were carried by the Chinese junk ship in the 17th century. While, the notion of the VOC vessel carrying the Hizen ware to the port of Manila is unacceptable because of the Dutch hostile relationship with the Spaniards (Nogami 2006).

Likewise, it can also be inferred that Hizen porcelain may have been brought to the Philippines through “private trade and smuggling” (Goddio 2002:50). This uncontrolled or unmitigated trading activity is oftentimes not documented which probably explain the absence of historical record. Goddio (2002:50) mentioned private trade and smuggling started with the tributary trade system that would benefit the envoys and the ruler. Oftentimes, this tributary system coincided with bad management style of the tribute missions in both the seaports and during trip would result to internal conflict. Goddio (2002) further explained “all classes of people became involved in this lucrative and illegal trade and smuggling of banned products.”

There has been no mention in any historical documents that Hizen porcelain was loaded in the Chinese junk or in the galleon vessel or was traded only for Manila consumption. Though there are accounts that mentioned the increasing number of Japanese ships coming in to Manila in the late 15th century until in 1630’s solely for trade (Hedinger 1977:988). They brought goods either for local consumption (wheat flour, salted meat, fish, fruits) or for transshipment to Acapulco (silk textiles, cutlery, steel arms, writing desks, fancifully wrought chests and cases and all sorts of attractive knick knacks) (Rodriguez 1998:200). During this period, Japan has been buying porcelain from China for their consumption. This was prior to the discovery of the source of white clay in Izumiymaya site in Arita in the early 17th century.

In the middle of the 17th century, the Tokugawa Shogunate had strictly implemented a maritime policy prohibiting foreign traders to enter Japan and preventing Japanese to leave the country. This policy has put Japan into complete isolation from foreign traders. However, a provision or a window that allows only the Chinese and Dutch merchants to
transact trade inside Japan was enjoyed by these two maritime traders. This window of maritime policy bestowed a chance of exporting the Hizen porcelain to other parts of the world. This may support Nogami’s findings that Chinese traders have been carrying the Hizen porcelain from Nagasaki to Manila.

To summarize the result on the preliminary tradeware analysis carried on the sites at the Mehan Garden and Intramuros in Manila, it is strongly suggestive of a habitation site. The discovery of Hizen porcelain in these sites may have proved that these were intentionally brought for local consumption and were used as utilitarian vessels. Corollary to this, porcelain materials excavated in Intramuros have shown high quality of porcelain compared to porcelain recovered outside the walls of Intramuros like the Mehan Garden site which have shown an inferior quality. This may also further prove that Intramuros area was occupied or settled by the elite Spanish community.

The recovery of three (3) intact vessels from Boljoon and fragments of Hizen porcelain at Plaza Independencia sites in the island of Cebu distinctly shows a belief system of grave offering to the deceased person. The Hizen porcelain wares in both sites were associated with burials which have been used as grave goods. This tradition of “burying the deceased person’s possession with the body” (Barretto 2003:70) is a continuing practice from Neolithic period until present with ancient belief on “life after death” or the soul’s journey to the afterlife” (Carr 1995:118). This belief system of ‘afterlife’ has been archaeologically observed during the excavations in Plaza Independencia and Boljoon sites.

Although, the information gathered from both archaeological and historical research on Hizen porcelain is not straightforward more data can still be obtained through intensive ceramic analysis in other archaeologically worked sites in the Philippines. The morphological characteristic, i.e. design element and form of the Hizen porcelain is basically a copy or reproduction of the Chinese ware. This however may explain the absence of historical footprint of the Hizen porcelain in the context of site formation in the Philippine and as trade cargo in the Manila galleon which maybe because of the mixing up and (mis)identification of the object as Chinese porcelain. This will also require a specialist or potter to identify its differences.

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— 31 —
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