

Colonialism and Contact: Continuity and Change in Philippine Ceramic Trade from the 14th through 18th Centuries

Angela Marie Teng



AB Honors Candidate in Archaeology and the Ancient World and Economics; Brown University

Introduction

My research considers Philippine maritime ceramic trade as a proxy for surveying economic and social contexts across the archipelago during the Spanish colonial period. Changes in the ceramic trade provide clues about the social and economic effects of colonization in different regions of the Philippines. The frequency and density of trade porcelains and other ceramics in Southeast Asia during pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial times reveal trade patterns throughout the duration of the 14th through the 18th century. While much work still needs to be done to gain a holistic understanding of the effects of European colonialism on indigenous populations, the cross-disciplinary method I used in my research attempts to bridge the gap between the economic and archaeological perspectives on this issue.

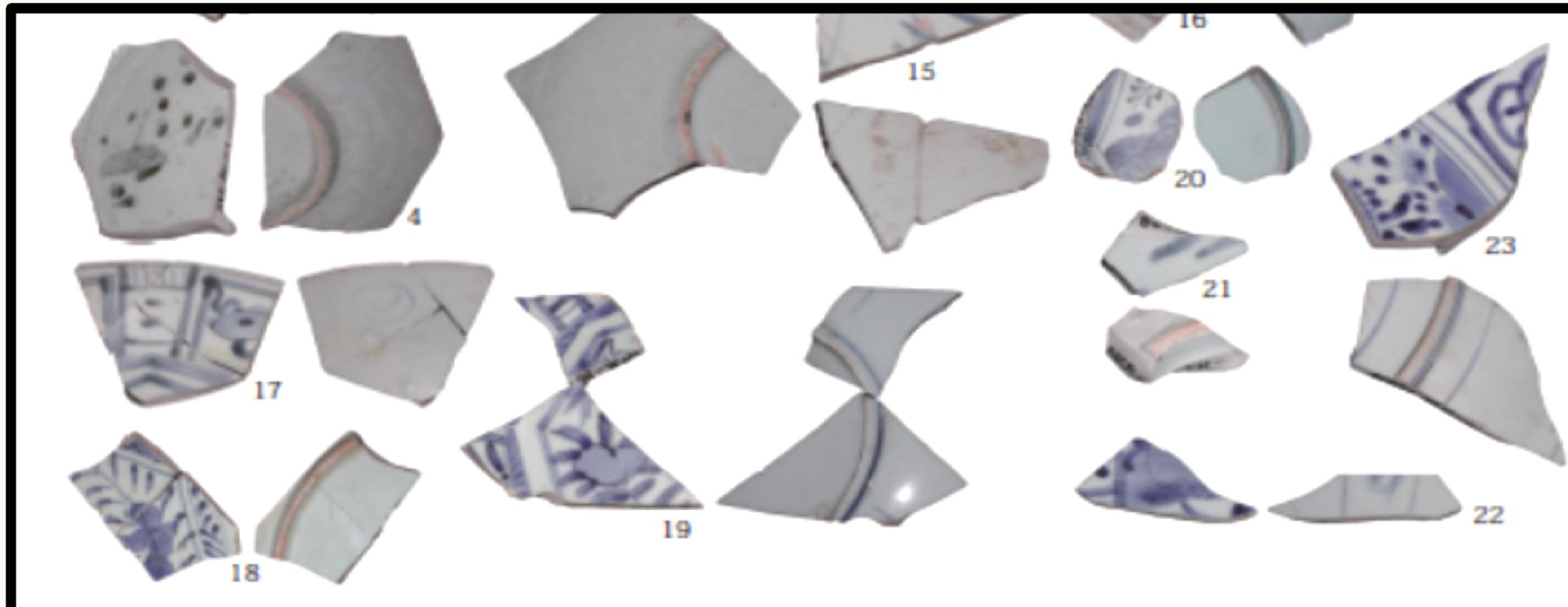


Image: Hizen porcelain data set from Plaza San Luis site, Manila, from Nogami (2005).



Image (left): Blue and white floral ceramic dish from Vietnam 15th to 16th century, from the Ayala Museum. Courtesy of Ms. Tenten Mina.; Blue and white ceramic dish from the Ayala Museum, courtesy of Ms. Tenten Mina. Found in Calatagan, Batangas, 15th to 16th century,

Japanese Ceramics

Although the exact nature of the trade routes and trade relationships between the Philippines, Japan, and Vietnam remain unclear, it is evident that the relationships between provinces in the Philippines and its neighboring countries were largely influenced by social relationships, rather than purely political regulations as governed by the Spaniards. An important facet of the finds in Intramuros is that they may not have been directly transported from Japan to Manila, and instead may have passed through China and Taiwan first, which brings to light the critical concept of interconnectedness. Analyzing these in terms of feasibility and practicality, it is likely that trade vessels visited multiple trade sites before returning to their home ports.

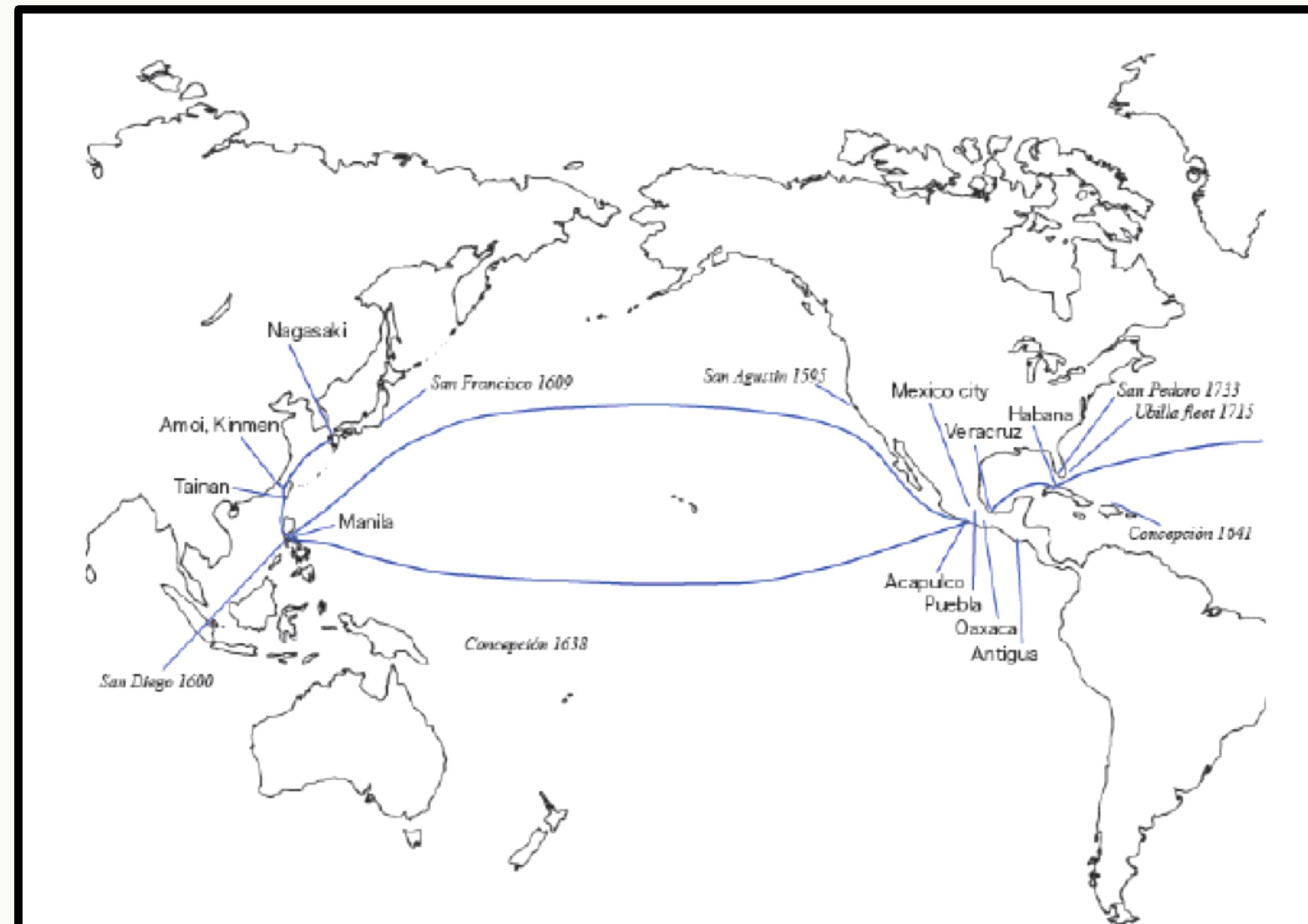


Image: World map showing some of the major trade points of the Galleon Trade, from Nogami (2006).

Vietnamese Ceramics

Trade existed between the Philippines and Vietnam before the Spanish came, and continued even during and after their occupation. The hypothesis that the status of more informal rather than legally permitted trade in Mindanao continued to flourish even during the Spanish era is significant because it gives us a different perspective into how trade networks in the Philippines were traditionally viewed. This new information puts forward the possibility that trade between more isolated populations like the Ifugao might have continued or even flourished during the Spanish era, in part because of enduring religious and cultural ties with lowland Philippine trade partners, and in part because of differing views of Philippine political divisions and political power by outside trade partners.

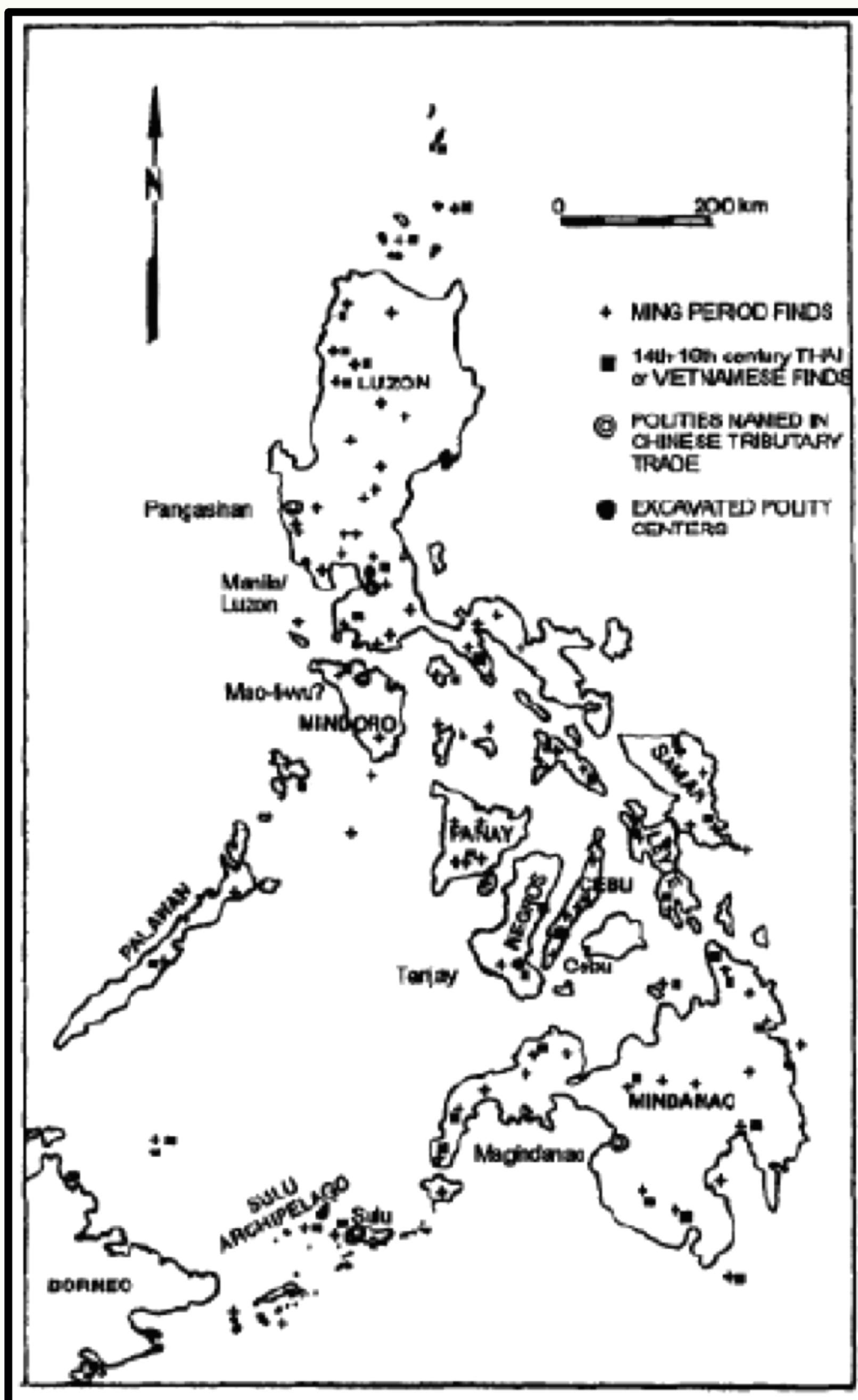


Image: Philippine map that shows the locations of the polities known from the 14th to 16th centuries, from Junker (1998). Map of the locations from 14th to mid 16th century Philippine polities known through Chinese tributary records and archaeological excavations. Also includes finds of Ming Period Chinese and mainland Southeast Asian porcelains.

Guiding Questions:

- How do colonial forces affect the societies and economies of the territories they acquire?
- What socioeconomic impact did Spanish colonization have on different parts of the Philippine archipelago?
- How can material culture specifically ceramic ware, help identify differing responses to the arrival of colonial forces such as the Spaniards?
- How much of these effects can we study by investigating changes in global Philippine ceramic trade?

Acknowledgments

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Further information

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Chinese Ceramics

Chinese porcelain was an important trade good as well as an indication and possible proxy for the socio-economic conditions within the Philippine archipelago. The socioeconomic impact of the Spanish colonization was far-reaching, yet diverse. The continuity and change in the trade routes as well as the trade networks between the Philippine archipelago and Chinese junks puts forth the importance of maintaining social and cultural connections with other barangay leaders and regions. Some Philippine regions like Mindanao experienced continued trade in the form of Chinese porcelain, yet other regions had a more controlled trading regime. The overall effects of the Chinese-Philippine ceramic trade contributed, on a larger scale, to Philippine history, heritage, and religion.



Images (left): (from left) Blue and-white dishes with standing phoenix designs; from Zhangzhou, Fujian, Ca. 16th-17th century; found in Mindanao, Philippines, courtesy of the Roberto T. Villanueva Foundation Collection in the Ayala Museum (CAT. No. RTV-CGV BW-92); Blue-and-white dish with stylized chrysanthemum design, from Dehua, Fujian, Ca. 18th-19th century, excavated from Mindanao, courtesy of the Roberto T. Villanueva Foundation Collection; Blue-and-white crescent-shaped pouring vessel with floral designs on central spout, from Jingdezhen, Jingxi, Ca. late 15th-early 16th century, a similar piece was recovered from the Lena shipwreck, courtesy of the Roberto T. Villanueva Foundation Collection, excavated in Mindanao.

Discussion and Conclusion

- In the Philippines, it is clear that there are varied effects of colonialism, whether we are looking at archaeological or economic data.
- Social relationships played a huge role in Philippine trade relations.
- The effects of Spanish colonialism on ceramic trade across the archipelago are not uniform. Thus, it is evident that these trends must be studied on a case by case basis to be able to provide a clearer picture of overall average trends in the ceramic trade, and how effectively these act as proxies for the socioeconomic environment during the 14th through 18th centuries.
- Despite the caveats about the data available it is clear that ceramic trade provides valuable insight into studying the socioeconomic environment across the Philippine archipelago.
- This thesis provides an innovative angle on the effects of colonialism on indigenous populations by asking relevant questions that continue an ongoing discussion pertinent to many countries today—effects that continue to be relevant both to economic growth, sociocultural heritage, cultural conservation, and national biographies.