

Third Century Celadon Stoneware Ceramics Recovered in the Philippines



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Introduction

Over the last several decades a remarkable and diverse group of Chinese ceramics, dating to various dynastic periods, has been recovered from sites in the Philippine archipelago. Among the earliest of these are ceramics from the Six Dynasties (220 - 590 CE). This is the first of a series of articles that will document the surprisingly wide range of buried Six Dynasties ceramics that have been informally recovered in the Philippines in recent decades, and offered for sale in antique stores.

Our broad objective is to stimulate an interdisciplinary initiative to elucidate Philippine prehistory. The senior author is a biomedical scientist with a deep interest in early Philippine history and considers Chinese ceramics found in the Philippines to be an underutilized resource that, properly integrated with other discoveries, could make a significant contribution to the broad prehistoric reconstruction being carried out by scholars from archaeology, history, linguistics, genetics, and other disciplines. These articles are also written to specifically encourage future research field work at sites where Six Dynasties ceramics can be recovered in situ, ideally using the most rigorous possible archaeological methods.

The Six Dynasties ceramics recovered so far from the Philippines comprise the largest and most diverse set found outside China, comparable in scope and depth to the three well-documented collections that are most widely referred to in the ceramic literature: the Ashmolean Museum collection at Oxford (Tregear 1976); the Palace Museum collection in Beijing (The Commercial Press, Ltd. 1996); and the collection in the Nanjing Museum (Zhou 1999). All of the ceramic vessels in these three collections were found within China, mostly from tombs. Each collection has been expertly curated, with individual vessels shown in illustrated catalogs. The Ashmolean Museum's Six Dynasties holdings, widely regarded as the most

important outside China, were the personal collection of Sir Herbert Ingram, who purchased ancient Chinese ceramics that appeared in the European commercial markets in the early 20th century. Ingram donated his extensive collection to the museum in 1956. For dating purposes, the most authoritative catalog is that of the Nanjing Museum, as in recent years, tombs around the old imperial Wu kingdom capital of Nanjing have yielded conclusive dating for several types of Six Dynasties ceramics. The ceramics recovered from Philippine sites that we describe here overlap extensively with those found in these three collections.

In addition, published catalogs of the exhibitions held at the Indianapolis Art Museum (Tsiang 1986), and at the Musée Cernuschi in Paris (Crick and Béguin 2005) provide important background information, with a scholarly discussion of each individual Six Dynasties vessel. One international exhibit entitled "Art in a Time of Chaos: Masterworks from Six Dynasties China" (Hai, et al. 2016) presented three dozen celadon vessels with information about the culture of the period. The ceramics discussed in the catalogs of these important exhibits provide additional reference points for the ceramics described in these articles.

As far as we can ascertain, no previous reference to Six Dynasties ceramics found in the Philippine archipelago has been made. Chinese ceramics of this period found in Sumatra are illustrated in the catalog of the collection of the Pusat Museum, Jakarta (Ridho 1982). More recent reviews of Chinese ceramics from Southeast Asia have reported Chinese ceramics from the Six Dynasties and Sui dynasty found in Sumatra, Java and Bali, but not in the Philippines (Lim 2018, Crick 2010, and Wang 2007).

The discovery of Chinese ceramics in the Philippines is important for what it reveals about an undefined stage of Philippine history and culture. Those from the Six Dynasties, which are the earliest Chinese

ceramics in this set, provide concrete evidence for a surprisingly sophisticated and cosmopolitan culture in the Southeastern Philippines, herein referred to as the Kalaga Putuan Crescent (or KPC). We suggest

that the KPC flourished in the 3rd century as an active maritime trading kingdom with access to advanced watercraft. Articles positing this culture and its history, based on archaeological and textual evidence, have



Figure 1. “Privileged Sites” for Chinese Ceramics. Red circles show sites where ceramics distinct from standard “maritime silk road” exportware have been recovered. Blue triangles show the recovery locations for several of the Philippines’ most significant pre-colonial artifacts. The geographic distribution of these sites, herein referred to as the Kalaga Putuan Crescent (or KPC, shown as dashed orange lines) contradicts the conventional view that prehistoric Philippine maritime centers were primarily located along the Philippine archipelago’s western littoral zone.

been presented elsewhere (Olivera 2021 and Olivera et al. 2024). The crescent-shaped geographic extent of the proposed KPC cultural sphere is shown in Figure 1.

A significant feature of the Six Dynasties burial ceramics found in the Philippines is that they have only been recovered from an area of the Philippines we have defined as the KPC (shown in Figure 1). Such ceramics have not been found at the many other Philippine ceramic sites that have been described, including the classic and carefully documented Santa Ana and Calatagan sites on Luzon Island (Fox 1959 and Locsin 1967). These latter Philippine localities have yielded thousands of Chinese ceramics from the Southern Song to early Ming (13th to 16th centuries). We believe the vessels documented in this series reveal that the importation of Chinese ceramics to the Philippine archipelago occurred, at the least, almost a millennium earlier.

First, we will present the rationale for dating each individual ceramic vessel to the 3rd century. In following sections, we will discuss how these 3rd century ceramics evolved, based on related Six Dynasties vessels found in the Philippines, China and Indonesia.

Old Yüeh Vessels from the 3rd Century

Third Century Jars

Of the substantial and diverse set of Six Dynasties Chinese ceramics found in a highly defined sector of the Philippine archipelago, a subset can be assigned to the 3rd century with confidence. Some of these, shown in Plates 1 and 2, have distinctive characteristics that link them stylistically to the earlier Han dynasty. These vessels all appear to be products of the Old Yüeh kilns during the Wu kingdom (220 - 280 CE).

The most persuasive evidence for a 3rd century provenance is demonstrated by a pilgrim flask-shaped jar (Plate 1A). Characterized by its incised loop handle, this ceramic is almost identical to a well known vessel in the Nanjing Municipal Museum which was found in a tomb dated to 259 CE (see Figure 2). Another example, whose discovery predates that of the Nanjing museum vessel, is in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The foot of the Boston Museum vessel was sawed or ground off, but close examination shows that the original vessel was nearly identical to the Nanjing example in Figure 2. The pilgrim flask found in the Philippines is thus the third example, and, as far as can be determined, the only such vessel found outside China. The incised decorative pattern is almost identical across all three vessels. The Philippine vessel may have been made earlier than the other two; there were rapid advances in the technology of glazing at this time and the glazes of the latter vessels seem technically more assured.

The incised Han style loop handles are also found in a jar and jarlet with flaring mouths (Plate 2). The division of the glazed region of each jar into sectors and the incised decoration in the central sector are also Han dynasty characteristics. The unglazed regions of both jars are brick red in color, and thick white adhesions from three kiln supports are found at the base of both vessels. The glazing of the smaller jar was more successful: a smooth, light homogeneous olive celadon, and fairly shiny. The similarities between the two jars, however, suggest they have a similar provenance, and were very likely to have been made in the same kiln in the same general period. Jars like these were made from early in the Han dynasty to the end of the Six Dynasties by many different kilns. A late example, from the Northern Wei period (386 - 534 CE), was included in the Art in a Time of Chaos exhibit and exhibition catalog (Hai et al., p.235).

Plate 1.

A: Old Yüeh Pilgrim Flask with Splayed Foot. Wu Kingdom, early 3rd century CE with lugs and lion heads (see insets). *Recovery location identified as Eastern Samar* (H: 28 cm).

B: Large Quincunx Jar with Dark Olive Glaze. *Recovered location identified as Eastern Samar* (H: 32.5 cm).



A

B

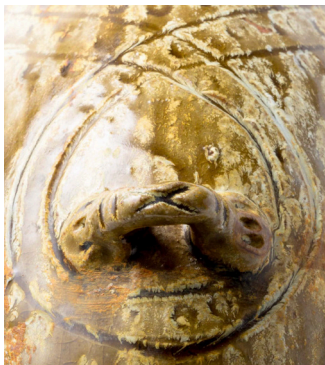


Figure 2. Celadon Pilgrim Flask.
Recovered from a Dated Wu Kingdom Tomb (259 CE). Nanjing Municipal Museum.

Photo reproduced from *Art in the Time of Chaos: Masterworks from Six Dynasties China 3rd - 6th Centuries* (Hai et al., p.242).



Another distinctive vessel found in the Philippines (Plate 1B) is a large Quincunx jar (gulian guan) which is a very characteristic form of Han dynasty pottery. The Philippine vessel, however, is clearly stoneware. A distinctive feature of this type of vessel is a central mouth that opens into the jar with four smaller jars attached around the neck; in spite of continuing speculation, the function of the quincunx remains undetermined. The characteristics of the dark olive glaze, which flowed down the vessel as it was being fired, and the construction of the splayed foot, are strikingly similar to the pilgrim flask, indicating a common time of origin.

The vessel in Plate 3, likely a product of the Old Yüeh kilns in the 3rd century, is a long-necked jar with both human and zoomorphic figures attached to the shoulder. The jar has three raised circular piecrust borders, one that delineates where the human anthropomorphic figures were attached, and two near the mouth rim. The human figures are similar to celadon human figures

recovered in tombs around Nanjing. In the Philippine jar, three of these are musicians, and one is a woman riding on a goose. In addition, there is a tiger, and a sharp, twisted object in the shape of a tall, conical hat, possibly representing a flame within a circular collar. One of the figurines is a musician playing a trumpet-like instrument. The musician's peaked hat, jacket and trousers are similar to a Wu kingdom celadon figurine, now in the Nanjing Municipal Museum, unearthed in 2006 from a Wu tomb found near Nanjing, and featured in the Art in the Time of Chaos exhibit. (Hai et al., p.214).

Both of the vessels shown in Plate 1B and Plate 3 have Han dynasty antecedents: the Zhejiang Provincial Museum catalog (ZPM 1994, #109) has a Han dynasty Quincunx jar and long-necked vase (ZPM #108) which are both clearly related to the Philippine vessels. The Philippine vessels differ in having celadon glazes that appear to be more technically advanced.

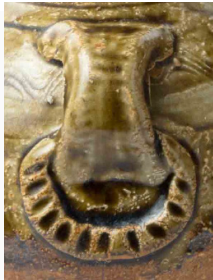
The vessel in Plate 4 is a hybrid between the long-necked jar with human and zoomorphic figurines and the quincunx jar. A similar hybrid, dated to the Three Kingdoms period, is in the Zhejiang Provincial Museum (Crick et al.); it has a variety of zoomorphic motifs but no human figures. The smooth celadon glaze of the Philippine vessel and the kiln scars with deep red halos on the base are consistent with a later provenance within the Six Dynasties period. It is notable that compared to the long-necked jar in Plate 3, the iconography has been simplified: all eight human figures are praying monks, and all 24 birds are identical. This may be evidence that ceramic production in the 3rd century was transitioning from an artisanal craft and was increasingly becoming an expanding, profitable commercial enterprise. The presence of birds is a recurring motif in the late 3rd century.

Plate 2.

Han to Early Six Dynasties Period Flared-mouth Jarlet and Jar. Insets show bases and incised lugs.

A: *Recovery location identified as Panguil Bay area, Northern Mindanao (H: 12.4 cm).*

B: *Recovery location identified as Eastern Samar (H: 20.0 cm).*



A

B



Plate 3.

Long-necked Jar with Musicians, Tiger, and Bird Rider. Additional detailed view on cover.

Recovery location identified as Central Leyte (H: 31.5 cm).

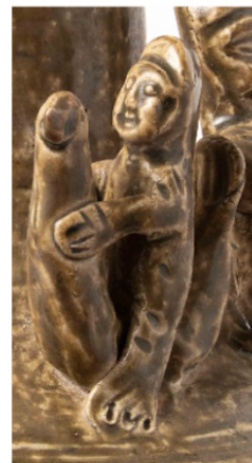
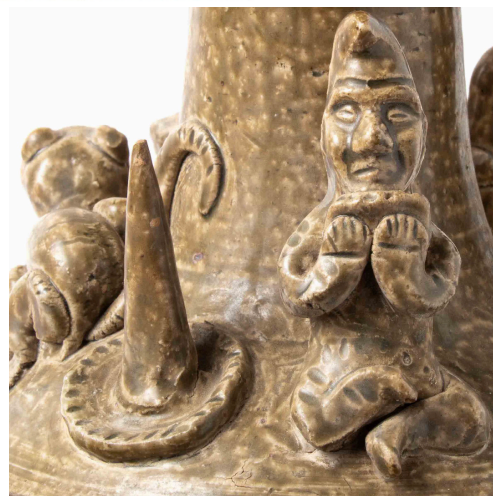
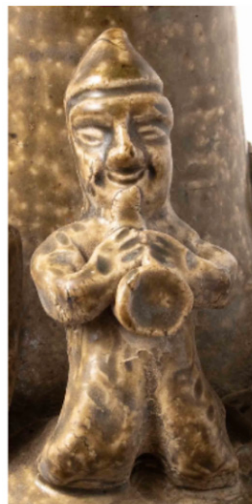


Plate 4.

Quincunx Jar with Praying Figures and Birds. The shoulder has identical human figures (praying monks?) around the neck of the vessel, and above, a flock of birds and 4 small pots. The flat base has three kiln scars with red halos. *Recovery location identified as Northeastern Mindanao (H: 27.9 cm).*



Hunping Jars, a Signature Ceramic Form of the Early Six Dynasties

One idiosyncratic and very distinctive type of jar is the so-called soul urn (hunping). Hunpings have human and zoomorphic figurines and elaborate architectural details that surround the narrow neck of the jar. Usually, at the very top, there is a pavilion. The belly of the jars has molded figures attached (which is why they are sometimes referred to as figured jars). A number of soul urns have been recovered from dated tombs in China, ranging from 260 to 302 CE. These have been illustrated by Xie Mingliang in a comprehensive treatise on Six Dynasties ceramics (Xie 2006).

The five hunping jars found in the Philippines differ from any illustrated in the literature. Two of these retain the quincunx motif (Figures 3 and 4), although elaborate

architectural elements have been added. The large hunping shown in Figure 3 incorporates the quincunx motif with the presence of four globular jars on the edge of the shoulder pavilions. An idiosyncratic feature of this vessel is that the roofs of all of the architectural elements are held up by 20 bears, each with the front paws raised. There are sixteen applique medallions around the lower body of the jar.

The hunping in Figure 4 shares the quincunx motif, which is crowded out by architectural, human and

Figure 3. Six Dynasties Hunping with Quincunx Elements, Bears, Birds, and Guardian Figures. *Recovery location identified as Northeastern Mindanao (H: 47 cm).*



zoomorphic elements. Another distinctive feature is that four of the human figures have the same prayerful pose as in the vessel in Plate 4. Both vessels have small wide-mouthed globular jars with 2 birds on each side (as part of the quincunx motif). The four larger human figures are musicians, each with a different instrument. The glaze and kiln scars on the base with red halos are diagnostic characters consistent with an Old Yüeh late 3rd century provenance. The architectural and quincunx-with-birds features are shared with the hunping in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan (Yu, et al. 2018), as well as one in the Shangyu Museum (Crick et al.).

The three other Philippine hunpings do not have the four smaller jars around the raised neck, and have fewer applique medallions attached below the jar shoulder, but like the hunping in Figure 4, have architectural elements on top of a flat platform that covers the mouth of the

jar. One of these soul urns, shown in Plate 5 (A), has a shiny, inhomogeneous greenish glaze, with a multilevel architectural structure that has birds on the roof of the pavilions. Between each of the four architectural sections on the shoulder are two human figures, one a musician holding an instrument, and the other a dancer. There are smaller kneeling female figures on the top platform, in a prayerful pose.

The soul urn with the musician and dancer is clearly different from the other two, shown in Plate 5 (B) and

Figure 4. Six Dynasties Hunping with Quincunx Elements, Musicians, Praying Figures, and Birds. *Recovery location identified as Northeastern Mindanao (H: 41.5 cm).*

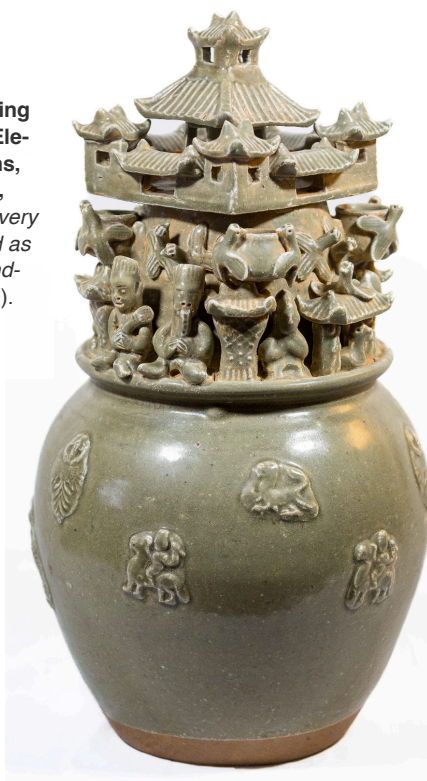


Plate 5.

Early Six Dynasties Hunpings.

A: Olive Brown-glazed Hunping with Musicians, Praying Figures, and Birds. *Recovery location not further specified (H: 32.0 cm).*

B: Lightly-glazed Six Dynasties Hunping with Identical Female Figure Trios, and Birds. *Recovery location identified as Northeastern Mindanao (H: 31.3 cm).*



Figure 6, which appear to be related both with respect to their ceramic morphology, as well as their iconography. The latter two have a more brownish (instead of olive) glaze, and have three human figures in each section between the architectural structures on the shoulder. A comparison with the dated vessels in the literature makes it likely that these were products of the Old Yüeh kilns in the last two decades of the 3rd century.

In contrast to the other hunpings, all human figures in these latter two lightly-glazed vessels appear to be women. In the slightly smaller soul urn (Plate 5B), the same three figures are depicted on each of the four quadrant scenes. From left to right, these three female figures appear pregnant, holding a baby, and of older age. In the other vessel (Figure 6), the two smaller figures in each of the four quadrant scenes' trios are identical, but the central, larger figure differs in each quadrant. As can be seen across Figures 5 and 6, the central figures in the four quadrants appear to be a younger woman, a pregnant woman, a woman holding an infant, and an older woman, respectively. The four female figures together, present the reproductive life cycle raising the possibility that the design of these burial ceramics may have had a specific role in marking

the deaths of women or celebrating the physical and supporting roles of mothers in the lives of the deceased.

Figure 6. Lightly-glazed Six Dynasties Hunping with Female Life Cycle Figures and Birds. *Recovery location identified as Eastern Samar (H: 32.0 cm).*



Figure 5. Detailed View of Female Life Cycle Figures on Six Dynasties Hunping. The fourth life cycle figure on this soul urn is shown in Figure 6.



From Bears to Monsters

There are very distinct zoomorphic jars that likely date from the Three Kingdoms period. One is in the form of a bear (Figure 7). The dark olive drippy glaze is very similar to the pilgrim flask and quincunx jar shown in

Plate 1. Additionally, the base has thick, white adhesions from kiln supports similar to those found on the two jars in Plate 2. These features suggest that this unique bear jar has a Wu kingdom provenance.

Figure 7. Wu Kingdom Bear Jar with White Kiln Support Adhesions. *Recovery location identified as Eastern Samar (H:19.8 cm).*



A second bear jar discovered in the Southeastern Philippines (Figure 8) lacks the drippy olive brown-colored glaze and instead is covered by a smooth green glaze, which showcases the impressive finely incised features on the jar which contribute to its refined appearance. Interestingly, a similar decorative motif can

also be found in a small Nanjing Museum bear jar, which is assigned a Western Jin provenance (Figure 9). An almost identical vessel was in the Ellsworth collection. These are wide-mouthed vessels similar to the bear jar in Figure 7. In contrast, the green bear jar in Figure 14 has a narrow, raised mouth rim.

Figure 8. Six Dynasties Bear Jar with Globular Kiln Support Marks. *Recovery location identified as Northeastern Mindanao (H:14.5 cm).*



Figure 9. Western Jin Celadon Bear Jar Recovered from Chinese Tomb. *Photo reproduced from Celadon Wares of the Six Dynasties: Gems of Collections in the Nanjing Museum (Mei, 1999, p.27).*



Vessels from Indonesia

Several Six Dynasties jars found in Indonesia appear, stylistically, to be derived from the Philippine-recovered vessels from earlier in the 3rd century. Two bear jars recovered from Indonesia have distinctive similarities (Figures 10 and 11). Both are wide-mouthed and have a large-waisted double gourd shape with amorphous red kiln scars on the flat base. In both jars, the bear legs are applied in a distinctive, idiosyncratic manner. The front legs, attached to the upper gourd, have upturned paws facing forward on the side of the bear's head. The placement of the hind legs on the lower gourd makes

the animal look pigeon-toed. The jar in Figure 11 differs in having 3 loop handles on each side of the vessel, and with the bear biting what appears to be a large pearl.

The two Indonesian bear vessels are clearly related to a famous ursiform monster jar in the Nanjing Museum (Figure 12), regarded as one of the most important archaeological findings of the Six Dynasties (Hai et al.). The Nanjing vessel has a mythical monster head instead of the bear head found in the Indonesian examples. The bear jar in Figure 11 and the Nanjing vessel share the pearl in-mouth and loop handles on the jars' sides. The Nanjing museum monster jar came

Figure 10. Indonesian-recovered Bear Jar. *Recovery location not further specified (H: 14.7 cm).*



Figure 11. Indonesian-recovered Lugged Bear Jar. *Recovery location not further specified (H: 15.3 cm).*



from a tomb, dated to 302 CE, in the family cemetery of Zhou Chu and is more elaborately decorated than the two Indonesian vessels, but clearly all three are made in the same style. It seems that bears were very prominent in the iconography of the third century, but by the beginning of the fourth century the bears appear to have transitioned to mythical monsters, which substitute for the real animal.

The only other vessel documented so far with the same monster-with-a-pearl motif is a much smaller and simpler jar found in the Philippines, shown in Figure 13. The four jars in Figures 10 - 13 share the upturned front paws and the beard applied in relief.

Together, the seven zoomorphic jars (Figures 7 - 13), which include the two well-documented vessels in the Nanjing museum, three from the Southeastern Philippines and two from Indonesia, provide a narrative thread for the development of these very distinctive, short-lived Six Dynasties ceramic forms. Among the animal forms, bears are well represented in Han dynasty art. In the Wu kingdom period, realistic bears became a motif for ceramic jars, and bear heads were

used to decorate a wide variety of ceramics including candlesticks, small jarlets and wide-mouthed jars. As noted above (see Figure 3), bears were depicted as literally holding up the roof in some soul urns. The bears with expressive faces (Figures 7 and 8) are not only a unique artistic ceramic achievement by the potters that made them, but could only have been produced by individuals in a culture that must have had a degree of warm affection for bears. However, the Indonesian jars and the iconic Nanjing Museum monster jar represent the other, threatening aspect of bears that became transmuted into a monster; why this monster is represented biting a pearl remains a mystery.

Figure 12. Six Dynasties Jar in Shape of Beast, Western Jin Dynasty (256-316 CE). From the collection of the Nanjing Museum. Photo reproduced from *Celadon Wares of the Six Dynasties: Gems of Collections in the Nanjing Museum* (Mei, 1999, p.26).



Figure 13. Philippine-recovered Bear-like Monster Jar. Recovery location identified as Western Samar (H: 11.7 cm).



Discussion

This is the first in a series of articles that document the diverse range of Six Dynasties ceramics recovered from the Philippines. The article focuses on a small subset of these ceramics that can be assigned with confidence to the 3rd century because similar ceramics have been found in dated 3rd century tombs in China. After the 3rd century, the production of these types of vessels became much more rare. In the next article of this series, we will document the chicken-headed ceramic vessels found in the same sector of the Philippine archipelago. Like the jars presented here, chicken-headed vessels had their origins in the 3rd century, but in contrast, their manufacture persisted over a much longer period of time.

The Wu Kingdom - Nanhai Maritime Trade

During this 3rd century period, the Han dynasty was overthrown and China was divided into three kingdoms. Maritime trade connections with island Southeast Asia were made by one of these, the Wu kingdom. A substantial set of textual records attests to maritime trade between the Wu kingdom and Nanhai, the Chinese term referring collectively to the Austronesian kingdoms across the South China Sea (reviewed by Crick 2010, and Wang 1958). A number of Nanhai kingdoms are mentioned in these texts but more specific locations of many are unknown or uncertain. None are proposed to have been located in the Philippine archipelago (the scholarly historical consensus on the Nanhai trade has regarded the Philippine archipelago as peripheral until after the 11th century). The ceramics documented in this study suggest that a careful reappraisal of this literature may be timely.

The Wu kingdom encouraged and greatly expanded maritime trading connections. The kingdom was

completely cut off from the traditional Han dynasty silk road that brought western goods through Central Asia to the cities of Northern China. The most important innovations in ceramics during the Six Dynasties were initiated by kilns located within the Wu kingdom, close to the Yangtze river. The stoneware vessels and their celadon glazing, collectively known as Old Yüeh ware, are well-represented by the 3rd century pieces recovered from KPC locations in the Philippines.

The 'Maritime Silk Road' is conventionally used to explain the presence of Chinese ceramics at and near coastal sites outside China before the Ming dynasty. Starting in the 9th century, Chinese export ceramics were produced en masse and shipped from ports in South China to Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. The recovered Six Dynasties ceramics strongly suggest that KPC areas were not first connected to China through the Maritime Silk Road distribution network, but through earlier trade connections that more directly provided spices, gold, and other products of Nanhai to elite Chinese markets. The high-end ceramics being recovered in the KPC areas from the 3rd through the 11th century present a striking contrast to the bulk exportware merchandise shipped out from South China to ports along the later Maritime Silk Road routes.

It is highly significant that all of the Six Dynasties ceramics from the Philippines are exclusively found only in the crescent shaped southeastern sector of the archipelago, that we have called the Kalaga Putuan Crescent, and none are known to have been found at ceramic-rich sites elsewhere in the Philippines. It is also notable that the only other place outside China where ceramics of the same period have been documented is Indonesia. The limited information on the location at which individual ceramics were recovered (such as the records of the Pusat Museum) suggest locations in Western Indonesia, primarily Sumatra and Java. Chinese written records make clear that kingdoms in

Java and Sumatra had trade links with China and sent tribute missions during this period, and that in return, the emperor of the Wu Kingdom sent envoys to these kingdoms (Wang 2007). In addition to ceramics from the Six Dynasties (more examples are shown in Plate 6 and Figures 14 and 16), ceramics of the highest quality made after the Six Dynasties, but before the 9th century Maritime Silk Road was established, have also been found in the Kalaga Putuan Crescent. Examples of Sui and 7th - 8th century Tang dynasty ceramics recovered from KPC sites are shown in Plate 7.

The unusual geographic distribution of Chinese ceramics, found outside China whose manufacture predates the 9th century, suggests a new framework for Nanhai maritime trade (between China and Island Southeast Asia). The ceramic evidence provided here is consistent with regular maritime trade between the Wu Kingdom in China and two Austronesian federations: the KPC in the southeastern Philippine archipelago, and Austronesian kingdoms in Java and Sumatra. In the Six Dynasties, a maritime entrepôt in this area of the Java Sea, referred to in Chinese texts as Ko-ying (Hall 1985), was apparently a major port for trade with China (and likely the KPC as well).

How Were 3rd Century Chinese Ceramics Brought to the Southwestern Philippines?

There is an increasing consensus that long distance maritime trade routes linking Austronesian settlements across island Southeast Asia and beyond were well-established long before the 3rd century. Both genetic and archaeological evidence indicate that ocean-going vessels had been developed by 1500 BCE; the colonization of Guam from the Philippine archipelago via the longest open ocean voyage (over 2000 km, an accomplishment that stood for the next two millennia) is now well-established (Pugach et al. 2020). Also, nephrite jade from a specific mine in Taiwan that was worked into

a distinctive form in Philippine workshops, the lingling-o, was widely distributed across sites in the South China Sea before the 1st century BCE. The vessels that were capable of such ocean-going maritime voyages are referred to in the Chinese literature as K'un-lun po. These might have had over 100 oarsmen, 500 passengers or more, and be capable of carrying several hundred tons of cargo (Manguin 1993). An example of this type of Austronesian ocean-going vessel is depicted in the 9th century Borobudur temple in Java. The Buddhist monk Faxian describes being on such a vessel that took him directly from Sumatra to Canton in 413 CE. Additional textual evidence is provided by the description of the 5th century voyage of an Indian Prince, Gunavarman, from Java to Canton (Shi 2022). Other large watercraft apparently did not play a significant role during the Six Dynasties: Arab Dhows first came to China a few centuries later, in the Tang dynasty, and Chinese junks did not make a significant impact until the 13th century.

Stylistic Developments and Cultural Uses

Ceramics from the Six Dynasties era, whatever their provenance, are of intrinsic interest to cultural historians because of the transformative changes in ceramic art during this period. Whereas earlier ceramic vessels were modeled after more valuable bronze, lacquer or jade objects, ceramics in the Six Dynasties became an independent art form, with imaginative, playful themes. This period of flourishing ceramic creativity was also marked by increasing commercial success. New vessels were made for scholars' desks, for pouring wine, and other diverse household uses.

Six Dynasties vessels found in the Philippines were imported and possessed by elite families. Interring prestige goods with their deceased owners was a well-established Austronesian custom. Some ceramics intended for scholars doing calligraphy in China were probably repurposed to pour various liquid condiments

Plate 6.

Six Dynasties Zoomorphic Ceramics from the Kalaga Putuan Crescent Area:

A: Bixie. *Recovery location not further specified (L: 13.0 cm).*

B: Bird Cup. *Recovery location identified as Western Leyte (D: 15.2 cm).*

C: Bird and Toad Cup. *Recovery location identified as Western Leyte (D: 11.5 cm).*

D: Bird Figurine. *Recovery location identified as Western Samar (L: 10.0 cm).*

A



B



C



D



Plate 7.

Assorted 6th - 8th Century Sui and Tang Dynasty Ceramics from the Kalaga Putuan Crescent Area. *Recovery locations not further specified.*

A: Tang Sancai Tripod Jar (D: 20.0 cm).

B: Sui Double Ampora with Dragon Handles (H: 23.4 cm).

C: Tang Dragon-handled Ewer (H: 33.0 cm).

D: Tang Straw-glazed Pottery Figurines (H: 22.0, 19.5, 16.5 cm).

E: Tang Sancai Figurines (max. H: 33.2 cm, min. H: 13.5 cm).

A



B



C



D



E



such as vinegar, wine or fish sauce in the prehistoric Philippine culture. If burial ceramics can be recovered in situ in their intact form, increasingly sensitive analytical techniques should make it possible to use trace chemicals to identify the fluids, grains or other plant materials that they had contained. Thus microscopic analyses of ceramic vessels immediately after recovery could provide important new insights into ancient cultural practices, with the ceramic vessel itself contributing to a precise dating of the recovery site.

Conclusions

The geographic distribution of Six Dynasties ceramic recoveries includes those in China, Sumatra and sites in the Philippine archipelago shown in the map in Figure 15. Within China, the locations of productive Six Dynasties ceramics recovery sites are relatively circumscribed, with Old Yüeh kiln sites and tombs around Nanjing being the primary sources documented in the literature. The sites in Sumatra indicate where the vessels illustrated in the Pusat Museum's published catalog were found, and the KPC sites indicate the identified recovery locations for some of the vessels illustrated in this article. Taken together the Six Dynasties ceramics sites are eloquent testimony in support of 3rd century maritime trade links.

It is difficult to imagine that the KPC vessels described above were brought in by random travelers as the large, elaborate ceramics would have been challenging for individual travelers to transport and must have had significant value in China. Comparable hunpings, for example, were placed in family tombs of the nobility in China, and were found with other high value objects (gold personal adornments, jade, and bronze vessels).

The textual evidence that the Wu kingdom had regular maritime trade with the Nanhai makes it compelling to propose that starting in the Six Dynasties, ceramics were brought back to the KPC areas directly

from China using advanced watercraft that had been developed in the Philippines a millennium earlier. This is further supported with the multidisciplinary evidence that the very same sector of the Philippine archipelago later sent formal tribute missions and had established maritime trade links with the Northern Song court. The sophisticated, impressive Old Yüeh ceramic vessels were presumably obtained in exchange for valuable Nanhai products prized by the Chinese elite (tortoise shell, pearls, spices, and gold).

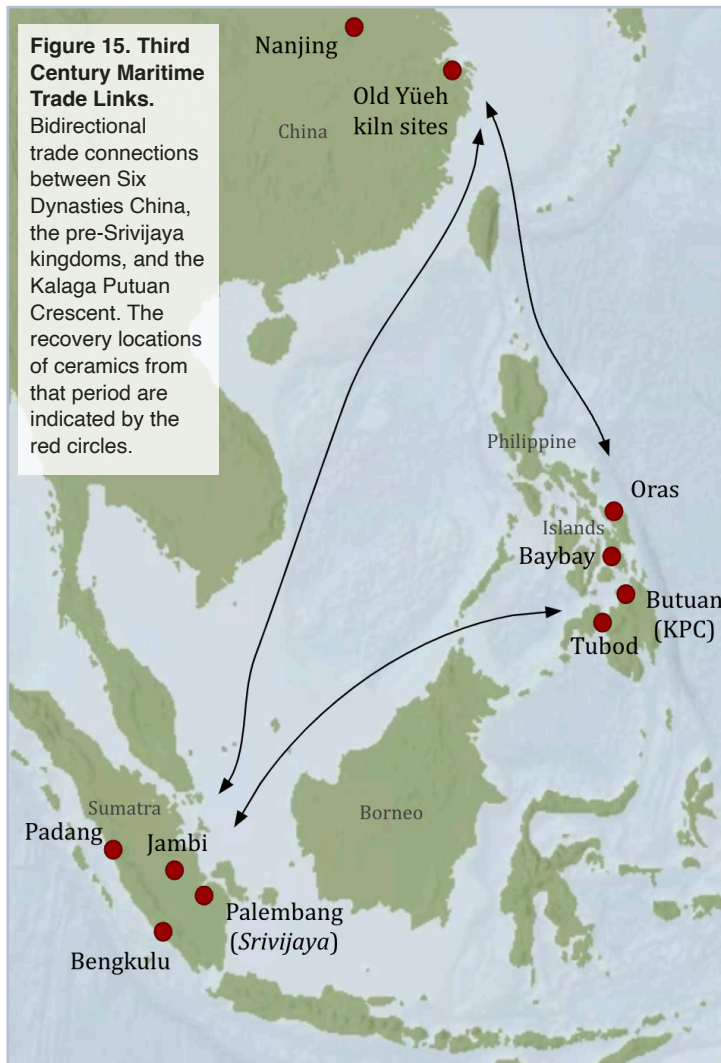
The major implication supported by the ceramics and other evidence, is that the KPC area of the Philippines was far from a peripheral player in the Nanhai trade. Instead, the ceramic evidence suggests that by the 3rd century, the KPC kingdom was already a major node in the nascent maritime world trade network. This is a striking departure from the conventional historical narrative of maritime trade in Southeast Asia, which regards the Philippine archipelago only as a marginal participant, starting only at the beginning of the Song dynasty. The ceramic evidence presented here predates the conventional historical chronology by seven centuries, and clearly suggests the Southeastern Philippines as being central to long distance Austro-nesian maritime trade at its very earliest stage.



Figure 14. Large Six Dynasties Ram with Extensive Impressed Decoration. *Recovery location identified as Northeastern Mindanao (L: 48.5 cm).*

Figure 15. Third Century Maritime Trade Links.

Bidirectional trade connections between Six Dynasties China, the pre-Srivijaya kingdoms, and the Kalaga Putuan Crescent. The recovery locations of ceramics from that period are indicated by the red circles.



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Figure 16.
Large Six Dynasties
Owl Jar and Lid.
Recovery location
identified as Western
Leyte (H: 37.1 cm).



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Cover: Musician and Tiger
from Six Dynasties Long-
necked Jar (see Plate 3).

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