

A VISIT TO

Puerto Galera

By ROSA C. P. TENAZAS
and LEONISA L. RAMAS

Evidence of some 600 years of Trade Relations with China and elsewhere in Southeast Asia in Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro

Trade potteries, in the collection of Fr. Erwin Thiel, S.V.D. parish priest of Puerto Galera, have been the object of a scientific study made by the writers during the month of April, 1964. These potteries possibly date from the T'ang dynasty (618-907 A.D.) of China to the reign of the early Ming emperors (late 14th — early 15th centuries).

Puerto Galera is the northwestern boundary town of Oriental Mindoro, and is forty seven kilometers west of Calapan, the provincial capital of the island. It is characterized by jutting peninsulas, coves and islets, an ideal place for habitation.

The principal site from which the bulk of the specimens in Fr. Thiel's collection came is the sitio of Bayanan, approximately 8 kilometers west of the town proper of Puerto Galera. The second major site, that of Minolo, is about 1 kilometer east of it. Two years ago, "diggers" from Batangas came over to Puerto Galera. They were inspired, no doubt, by the hope of gain, since they had realized a good profit from the sale of finds made in the Calatagan excavations. These men dug



NATIVE POURING VESSELS (earthenware).
They are identical with the Calatagan finds.

a few test pits and finally leased a total area of two hectares in Bayanan. The first hectare excavated, comprised a rugged peninsula, not too suitable for agriculture, the width of which hardly spanned 15 meters at the widest. The whole top commands a good view of the bay

and surrounding areas, typical of burial sites in the Archipelago. The second hectare was the adjacent hills, rolling east of the peninsula, also along the coast. In Minolo, the area of excavation was in two very low adjacent hills, just a few meters from the shore.



ANOTHER SET OF NATIVE POURING VESSELS
which are also identical with the Calatagan finds.

The possibility of making the study presented itself when the Dean of the Graduate School, and Head of the Anthropology Department of the University of San Carlos, Rev. Fr. Rudolf Rahmann, SVD, made a visit to Puerto Galera in February, 1964. For two years Fr. Thiel had had the interest and foresight to collect and reconstruct hundreds of trade pottery sherds, left over from the systematic looting of the above mentioned sites, as well as from other archaeological sites with which Puerto Galera seems to abound. The research was finally made possible by a grant from the German Research Association applied for by Father Rahmann only one month before the study began. Photography of the specimens was done by Brother Konrad S.V.D., of the Catholic Trade School, Manila operating on funds which came from the same research grant.

Centuries before the first European had set foot in the Islands an extensive trade had developed between China and the Philippines, pottery being one of the principal items of exchange. These contacts, at first gradual, occurred as far back as the T'ang Dynasty. It was not until the 13th century, under the Sung Dynasty (906-1290), that trade developed on an appreciable scale, reaching a climax in the 15th century, during the reign of the

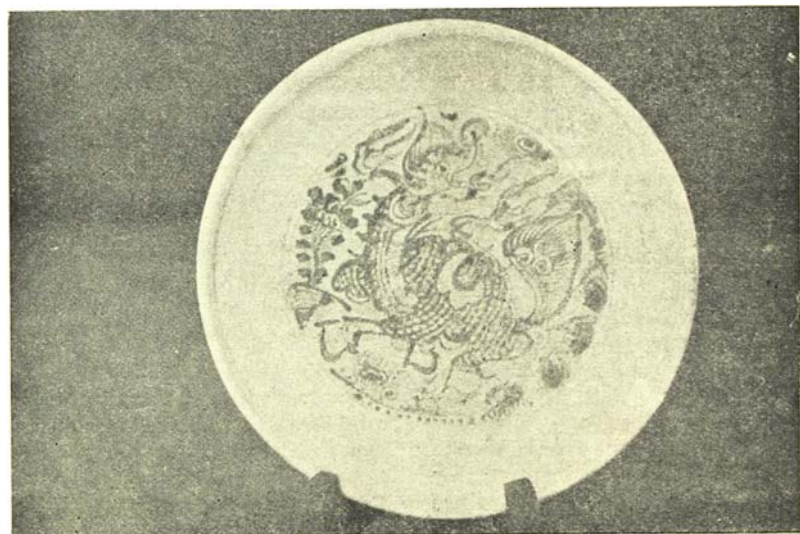
early Ming emperors. During this time, great quantities of porcelain and stoneware vessels, as well as other items were brought into the Archipelago. Filipino products such as hardwood, gums, resins, edible nuts, pearl-shells, fancy corals, gold, cotton, and the like, were offered in exchange to the foreign merchants.

Around the 14th and 15th centuries, the Chinese wares met stiff competition with products kilned in Siam (Thailand) and Annam in Indo-China, which about this time began taking active part in the island commerce. In the Visayas, es-

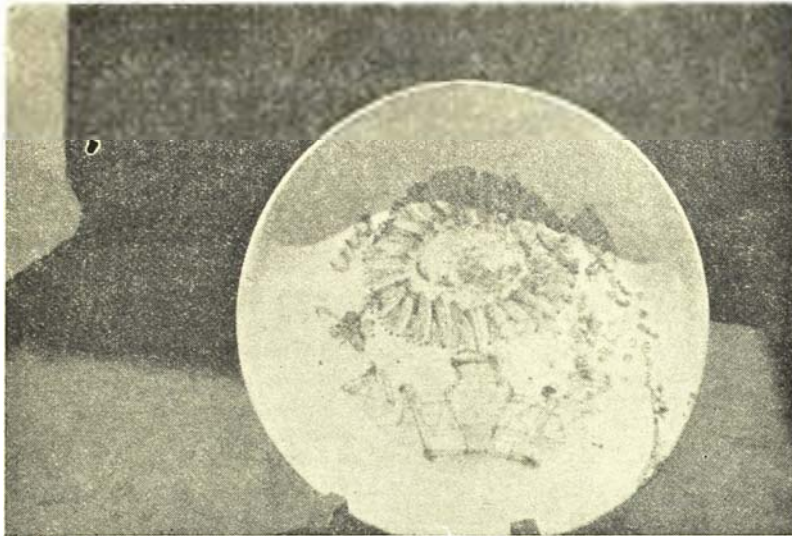
pecially, Siamese wares were said to have reached approximately 40% of the total southern trade by the 15th century.

In the early references to the Philippines in Chinese annals, the island of Mindoro was frequently mentioned (if we accept the supposition that *Ma-i* refers to the island of Mindoro and not to Luzon or the whole Archipelago as generally held by Historians). The first recorded encounter of the Spaniards with the Chinese was made on this island in 1570. When the Spaniards searched the cabins of these Chinese junks, "silk... gold thread, musk, gilded porcelain bowls, pieces of cotton cloth, gilded water jugs, and other curious articles... earthen jars, and crockery, large porcelain vases, plates and bowls, and some fine porcelain jars..." were found.

At this point, we would like to point out that Puerto Galera is just across the sea from the peninsula of Calatagan, Batangas, where the major excavations of 15th century burial sites were conducted from 1958 to 1961, by the National Museum, led by Dr. Robert B. Fox, head of the Anthropology Department. Preliminary comparative studies made by the writers between trade potteries recovered from Calatagan and those from Puerto Galera have brought out the interesting fact that the latest



TYPICAL DESIGN OF A KYLIN of Early Ming blue and white.
This is identical with those recovered at Calatagan.



A CHRYSANTHEMUM DESIGN, also traceable to the Early Ming blue and white; identical to specimens recovered at Calatagan.

wares found in the Puerto Galera area are contemporaneous with wares excavated in Calatagan. Incidentally, Dr. Fox estimated the length of use of the Calatagan sites as burial grounds of the early Filipinos as only about one-hundred and fifty years. Calatagan is, so far, the only archaeological site in Luzon where great quantities of Siamese wares have been recovered. This



A DEITY (?) carved out of coral, identical with specimens found in Calatagan.

fact is in contrast to Professor H. Otley Beyer's early findings. According to him, "Chinese trade-relations with Luzon were much less disturbed (by competition with traders bringing wares from Siam and other Southeast Asian areas), and the quantity of Siamese and Indo-Chinese ceramic wares probably never exceeded 5 to 10% in the Luzon trade." The discrepancy in the percentage of Siamese potteries recovered in Calatagan, plus the fact that the area had been occupied for a relatively short time, and Beyer's hypothesis has posed a challenging problem. To solve this problem Dr. Fox postulates the likelihood of an intrusion of a group from the south, or central Philippines, where, according to Beyer, the Siamese potteries were common.

Many comparative studies with other areas have yet to be made, but there is a strong indication that this "intrusion", to use Dr. Fox's expression, may have been made by groups of people coming from Mindoro, in particular, from the Puerto Galera area. The presence of large quantities of similar trade wares as well as of native earthenware found in the two areas would seem to support this preliminary hypothesis.

FLASH!

NEW U.S.C. APPOINTMENTS

The Divine Word Missionaries have received from their Superior General in Rome the list of new superiors who will govern the Society in the Philippines in the next three years.

The new U.S.C. appointments are as follows:

Very Rev. John Vogelgesang, S.V.D. — Rector of the University of San Carlos Fathers' Community, Cebú City.

Very Rev. Rudolph Rahmann, S.V.D. — President of the University of San Carlos.

Rev. Isidoro Kémerer, S.V.D. — Director of the USC Boys' High School and the SVD Seminarians at the USC-BHS.

Rev. Jerónimo Galván, S.V.D. — Secretary of Finance (Procurator) of the University of San Carlos.

Furthermore, the following have been appointed as councilors:

Rev. Gregorio I. Pizarro, S.V.D. — Vice-Rector; Rev. Michael Richartz, S.V.D., Rev. Harold W. Rigney, S.V.D., and Rev. Raymond Kolk, S.V.D., (admonitor).

Very Rev. George Heinemann, S.V.D., is the new provincial superior, succeeding Fr. Alphonse Lesage, S.V.D.

Fr. Constante C. Floresca, S.V.D., assistant provincial, Fr. Alphonse M. Mildner, S.V.D., admonitor; Fr. Vicente Braganza, S.V.D., and Fr. Ernest Keiten, S.V.D., councilors.#