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The Changing Meanings of Objects: Calatagan and Archaeological Research in the Philippines

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The Changing Meanings of Objects Calatagan and Archaeological Research in the Philippines

As objects with a biography, artifacts—acquired by individuals or institutions, displayed in museums or privately appreciated—gain different meanings during production, acquisition, deposition in archaeological contexts, recovery, and analysis. This article examines the artifacts recovered from Calatagan, Philippines, to understand the layers and dynamic meanings of objects as commodities, mortuary goods, archaeological data, museum objects, and private collection items. It demonstrates the influence of archaeological practice in the Philippines on the interpretation of the Calatagan sites and artifacts. By understanding how meanings are produced, this article illuminates different contexts in which artifacts are utilized and create multiple experiences for people.

KEYWORDS: ARCHAEOLOGY · MEANINGS OF OBJECTS · INTERPRETATION · CALATAGAN

This article aims to demonstrate the many meanings of a specific assemblage of artifacts using the concept of the biography of objects. It seeks to show how the meanings of objects are acquired in the context of the history and practice of archaeology in the Philippines, focusing on artifacts excavated from Calatagan, Batangas, as a case study. In pursuing this objective, this article describes the excavations in Calatagan from the 1930s to the most recent one. The biographies of objects recovered from Calatagan are mapped, starting from their acquisition in the past as commodities, to their deposition as mortuary objects, their recovery and the interpretation of these artifacts as archaeological evidence, and their roles as part of museum collections and sources of data. This article demonstrates that these artifacts exist in multiple contexts: as individual objects and as part of an assemblage. Lastly, it shows how the development of archaeology as practiced in the Philippines has influenced the interpretations and perspectives of scholars and the public regarding the Calatagan sites and artifacts.

Archaeological Excavations in Calatagan

Calatagan remains the single most important location of archaeological diggings in the Philippines. Most of the excavations, which were formally initiated in the 1940s, were conducted on the western coast of the Calatagan peninsula in Batangas province (fig. 1). The large number of burials recorded and the range of artifacts recovered revealed interesting aspects of ancient Philippine societies.

In 1934 middens and archaeological materials, such as Chinese porcelain fragments, were observed during the preparation of a polo field in the Zobél estate (Beyer 1947; Cruz 1958; Fox 1959). Enrique Zobél, the owner of the property, recognized the sherds' importance, prompting him to contact the National Museum. In response the National Museum sent Ricardo E. Galang, who visited the area and collected stone adzes and chisels (Beyer 1947). Unfortunately the artifacts that Galang recovered were destroyed during the Second World War (Fox 1959).

After the Second World War, Olov R. T. Janse (1941, 1944–1945, 1947), conducted the first systematic excavation in Calatagan. A Swedish archaeologist, Janse was director of an archaeological expedition to Indochina, sponsored by the Direction des Musées Nationaux in France, the Louvre, the French governor general of Indochina, and l'École Française d'Extrême-

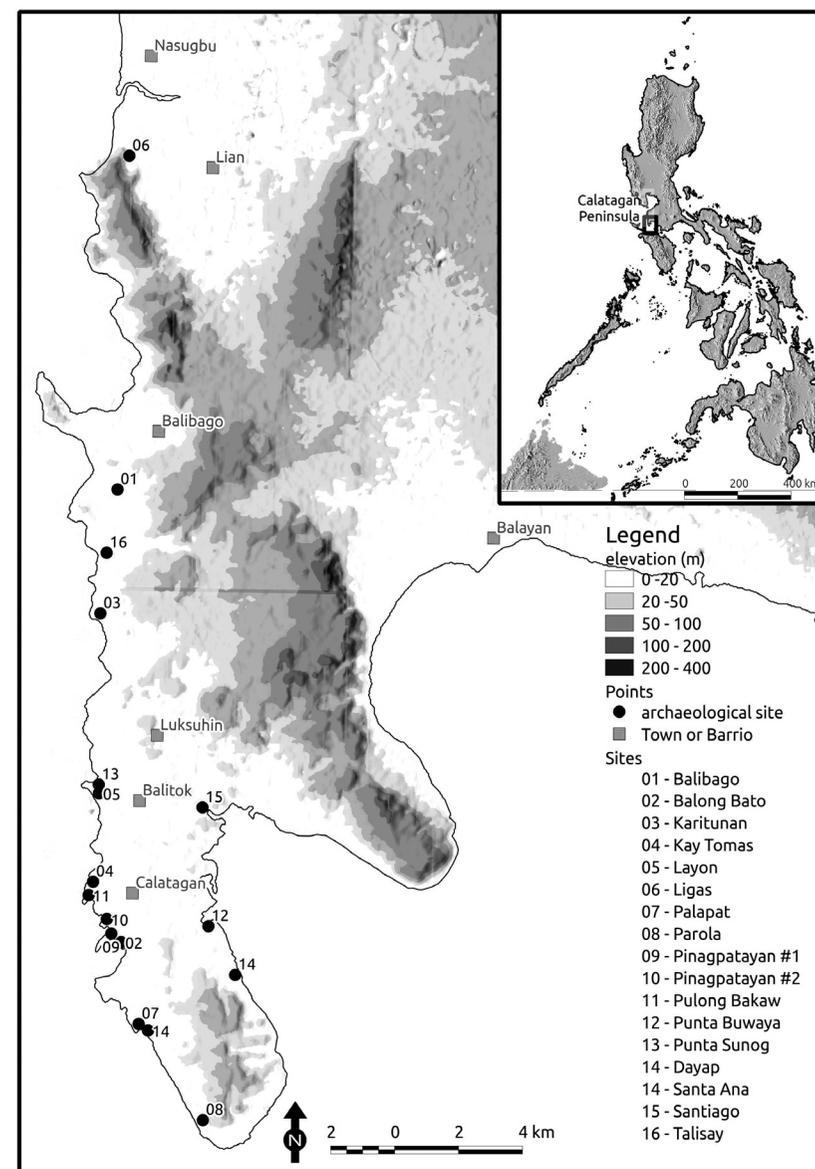


Fig. 1. Map of Calatagan showing the distribution of burial sites excavated by Fox from 1958 to 1961

Orient in Hanoi (Kanji 2005). After leading excavations in Vietnam and China, he came to the Philippines. The materials recovered from the Janse excavation in Calatagan were shipped to the Harvard–Yenching Institute and are now in the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University (Kanji 2005). Some skeletal materials and local vessels from Janse's (1944–1945) excavation were deposited at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila.

In early 1958 Enrique's son Fernando Zobél and Jose McMicking, assisted by local residents, initiated amateur diggings that resulted in widespread looting (Cruz 1958). Zobél and McMicking soon realized the cultural and historical potential of the area, which had been part of the Hacienda de Calatagan owned by the Zobéls. What started as salvage archaeology and the interest of private individuals in the precolonial past turned into full-scale excavations in 1958 and 1960–1961, which Robert Fox supervised with the objective of recovering human remains and artifacts. The Zobéls and McMickings largely sponsored the 1958 excavations, which were intended to rescue archaeological materials from being looted by local residents. The 1960s excavations were likewise conducted to salvage more artifacts.

More than 1,000 burials from open-pits, including infant jar burials, have been recorded in Calatagan since the 1940s. Most of the skeletons were found to be in supine position, but some were flexed. The most common finds from the burials were earthenware vessels and foreign ceramics. Earthenware vessels included undecorated and decorated forms. The undecorated earthenware vessels consisted of cooking pots, spouted vessels called *kendi*, lobed pots locally known as *kinalabasa* (squash-like), bowls, and pots resembling cooking vessels but with flat-and-depressed bases instead of round bases. The decorated earthenware pots contained incised lines and punctuations. Decorations included incised triangles. The earthenware bowls and *kendi* were local copies of foreign forms. The foreign ceramics were from China, Vietnam, and Thailand. Forms included jarlets, saucers, bowls, and plates. Many of the foreign ceramics were monochromes, while some of the plates and bowls had floral patterns. The sites have been dated to the fifteenth century AD based on the foreign ceramics (Fox 1959). Nonceramic objects recovered in the burials included human skulls, shells, animal bones, giant clams, glass bracelets and glass beads, stone statues, metal implements, Chinese coins, a gold sheet, a gold ring, and spindle whorls (Fox 1959). The Calatagan Pot with

inscriptions on its shoulder was recovered by a farmer during a weekend break in the 1960–1961 excavations (Dizon 2003b; Guillermo and Paluga 2008–2009). As a result, its exact provenience is unknown. Most of the earthenware vessels that have been recovered are currently stored at the National Museum of the Philippines. Some Calatagan artifacts are now part of the Lopez Memorial Museum and Library (Artifact Inventory List from Calatagan 2005).

In 1959 Fox published the results of the 1958 excavations. In 1982 Main and Fox published a descriptive analyses and classification of the Calatagan earthenware vessels. Analyses of the ceramics from the 1960 to 1961 excavations remained unpublished (Fox 1961) until 2008 (Barretto-Tesoro 2008a).

Since earlier excavations in Calatagan were undertaken mainly on the western coast, the National Museum spearheaded a project that surveyed and eventually undertook excavations on the eastern coast of the peninsula in the 1990s (Ronquillo and Ogawa 1996). They recorded and recovered burial jars belonging to an earlier period, 1695 ± 20 BP and 2820 ± 40 BP (Dela Torre 2003). The sites and artifacts discussed here are from the 1958 to 1961 excavations.

Calatagan Artifacts: A Biography

The discussion below elucidates how the meanings and interpretations of objects are multiple, changing, and context dependent. I argue that the meanings of the Calatagan objects, although generally referred to as grave objects, are multiple at any given time and through time, depending on who is viewing them. The viewer may be the producer or end-user of the artifact, merchant, archaeologist, scholar, student, researcher, laborer, property owner, local resident, museum curator, or private individual. These individuals have diverse socioeconomic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, which may affect how they see the artifact. The biography begins with the acquisition of the artifacts through to their becoming museum pieces. However, this course of events does not mean that the artifacts tread along a unilineal path, for they can take multiple paths and move in and out of a specific context.

Foreign objects found in the Calatagan burials consist of porcelains that were traded from China, Vietnam, and Thailand in the fifteenth century. At an early stage in the biography of these objects, they were sold by merchants as commodities for daily use. After the ancient inhabitants of Calatagan



acquired these trade goods, they transformed some of the porcelains into burial goods or burial jars. Centuries later these objects were recovered by residents of Calatagan unintentionally while fields were being plowed. Prior to the 1958 excavations, many local residents used the Ming ceramics for their own tableware (Fox 1959). One Calatagan resident used the sherds to “pave his salt beds” because the stoneware sherds were “superior to red tile for evaporating the salt” (ibid., 338, n. 9). To the local residents the imported ceramics had neither historical nor symbolic value; instead they found in them a utilitarian and practical value. The local residents whom Fox met in Calatagan in the late 1950s were migrants to the area. They possessed neither historical nor biological associations with the human bones and other objects they had encountered in their fields. The most obvious use they thought of for the plates and bowls was for kitchen use, which in a sense was their original purpose.

When archaeologists arrived to excavate in 1958, the residents found the excavations more important than the objects. Community members who worked as laborers to assist Fox and his team in the excavations were paid a daily wage (Cruz 1958), which helped them earn additional income. Moreover, hosting the visitors, including the American Fox, gave local residents social prestige (Caubalejo 2005). Subsequently the people who owned the land, where the excavations sites were located, sold these properties.

During the 1958 and 1960–1961 excavations, mortuary items (such as the foreign ceramics, which had been merchandise objects) and domestic items (such as the used cooking pots) became archaeological specimen. In the hands of scholars who came from different perspectives, the Calatagan artifacts became sources of archaeological data. Their interpretations were based on the excavator’s particular research agenda and the existing theoretical paradigm at the time of the excavation or study. Thus, Janse (1941, 1944–1945, 1947), who was influenced by the diffusion-migration theories of the 1940s,¹ was interested in the impact of the Ming Dynasty on Indochina and the Philippines. He excavated Ming pieces from sixty graves in three cemeteries in Calatagan. In the 1950s Fox’s (1959) interpretation focused on the grave objects, but he gave no sufficient explanation for the distribution of the grave goods, the demand for specific pottery types, and the apparent chosen locations in the graves for particular items (fig. 2).

Fig. 2. An example of a grave in Calatagan containing an earthenware vessel and porcelain bowls and plate. Source: Fox 1959, plate 6.

In the early 1980s Main and Fox (1982) wrote a comprehensive description of the earthenware vessels from twelve Calatagan sites. Their descriptions centered on forms, clay, temper, temper size, paste, slip, firing, and designs, which comprised the bases for the classification of the vessels into three pottery complexes. They assessed the chronology of pottery forms and designs by comparing manufacturing techniques used on the Calatagan vessels with pottery obtained from other sites. The aim was to identify the “ancestors” of the Calatagan types in order to determine the spread of pottery types from their putative origin. This type of investigation ensued from the typological analyses that were common during the 1970s when archaeologists became interested in the evolution of artifact styles. The purpose of reconstructing the “genetic affiliations” of artifacts, in this case earthenware vessels, was to investigate when and whence stylistic and technological attributes and innovations originated and spread. Results of the analyses could provide information about cultural interactions and population movements.

Fox’s (1959) analyses of the porcelains also focused on manufacturing and painting techniques. He noted the low quality of the porcelains but maintained that they were good sources for the study of the development of ceramic studies in mainland Asia, including kiln activity, production periods, and trade. Main and Fox’s (1982) work focused on the production of foreign ceramics because ceramicists were interested in the quality of these items, including the question of how they reached the Philippines. Tradeware ceramics could be used as temporal markers in archaeological sites, making it imperative to know porcelain designs and their manufacturing techniques. Porcelain production could also indicate where the tradeware ceramics had been fired; hence information on kiln locations could be deduced, which in turn could reveal their role in the maritime trade networks at a given historical period.

Excavations produce numerous recording forms, including inventory forms, burial forms, and artifact analyses forms. These forms, which are submitted to the National Museum, are integral to archaeological practice because they become the sources of data for future investigators. In the absence of the actual materials, archaeologists can still collect information about the artifacts from the excavation forms. In other words, the artifacts can be studied indirectly, with the researcher relying on the recorder’s perception of the materials. The excavation records become the virtual images of the artifacts.

During the data gathering for my master’s thesis and doctoral dissertation, I encountered the original burial sketches, preliminary analysis forms, and the burial and specimen inventory records from the Calatagan sites dating to 1958 and 1960–1961 (Barretto 2002; Barretto-Tesoro 2007). These documents also included letters to sponsors and short reports on the status of the excavations. On one hand, I was delighted to hold the actual records and documents on the excavations that yielded notes handwritten by Fox and his team members some of whom had become well-known Filipino archaeologists (fig. 3). Ecstatic with the burial sketches, I copied information on the forms and scanned them. On the other hand, I was worried that the yellowing and brittle sheets were in danger of progressive deterioration. It would be better if future researchers handled printouts of digital copies of the documents and forms rather than the originals. If records are not stored properly, needless to say, valuable information about the Philippines’s past will be lost.²

The only available Calatagan artifacts that can be accessed physically are those found in the National Museum, the Ayala Museum, and the Lopez



Fig. 3. Original excavation documents of the Calatagan burials located at the Records Section, Archaeology Division, National Museum. Burial information being collected by Jethro Barretto, the author’s brother

Museum. In addition to the available artifacts and the published materials (Barretto-Tesoro 2008a; Chang 2013; Fox 1959; Main and Fox 1982), only the excavation documents remain sources of information on other artifacts that are now part of private collections. The Calatagan objects in these collections exist but may not be accessible for analyses; to researchers the records are the only available sources of data. Thus the Calatagan artifacts now exist in two forms: as physical materials stored somewhere and as constructed images based on records.

Calatagan Artifacts as Museum Objects

After excavations in the 1960s and analyses of these objects in the 1980s, the Calatagan artifacts became museum pieces. By 2005 many earthenware vessels from Calatagan had been kept in the Ceramic Storage Room of the National Museum. The pots were stored in open shelves. Accession numbers written on the pots could be cross-referenced with the excavation documents (Anon. 1961a, 1961b, 1961c; Evangelista 1966; Fox and Santiago 1960; Fox and Santiago 1960–1961; Paniza et al. 1960–1961; Paniza et al. 1961; Santiago 1961; Santiago and Penuliar 1961). Some pots did not have accession codes, but their forms indicated that they were recovered from the same area. In 2005 a visit to the storage room showed that, while the earthenware objects rested in open shelves, some foreign ceramics were stored inside cabinets, which could suggest the different values these objects were assigned by museum personnel. According to Eusebio Dizon (2012), current Curator I of the National Museum's Archaeology Division, the porcelains could have been stored in the cabinets for security reasons because of their higher market value compared with earthenware vessels. In 2012 the objects were moved to a new storage location (*ibid.*).

In the former Ceramic Storage Room, one item was memorable. It was a small jar that still contained the remains of an infant. The jar labeled Grave 19 was found in Talisay, one of the sites in Calatagan. The imported jar had two lugs, and its upper body was glazed. I did not expect to see human remains inside any of the pots or jars in the Ceramic Storage Room. I had expected skeletal remains to be stored in a secure environment that arrests further deterioration of the osteological sample. This jar was probably moved to the new storage room mentioned above.

It is difficult to assess whether the original excavators recognized the infant whose remains were found in the jar was once an individual. Based on

personal experience and observations, there is a tendency for excavators to treat human remains as specimens assigned with alphanumeric codes, such as Grave 19. For some archaeologists, human bones are sources of data that can yield information either unique to a specific skeleton or generalizable to a bigger population. This distinct characteristic enables the archaeologist to recognize the specimen as an individual after gleaning more information that reveals how the person lived. For other archaeologists, there is instinctive recognition that the human remains once belonged to individual persons and thus must be treated with respect. In other countries this very concept has led to the repatriation of human remains for reburial where they were recovered (Parker Pearson 1999; Smith 2004).

In the case of the jar labeled Grave 19, it appears to me that, once in a storage room, the artifacts are stripped of their significance and become objects that literally are hidden from view. The artifacts' relationships with the body and other artifacts in the grave are imperceptible due to the conditions of the storage area. Materials of the same raw material, form, and make are expected to be stored or kept together due to varying requirements of storage space and containers. More importantly, different artifacts demand diverse preservation measures. Thus, what is lost in storage areas is the contextual significance of the objects at the site level.

However, the objects' biography expands at this stage because comparisons can be made with other assemblages from other sites in a different geographical location and/or another time period, allowing archaeologists to explore and consider other cultural connections and meanings. For instance, these comparisons may shed light on the relationships of Calatagan earthenware vessels with other earthenware vessels, the differential burial treatment of infants, locations of objects in graves, the use of human skulls as mortuary furniture, and the active selection of porcelains with specific decorations. Some objects may be exclusive to a site. The collective and individual connections of artifacts emphasize the multidirectional paths and multilinear biographies of objects. This point is explored further in the section below, which deals with how artifacts become part of private collections.

A quick look around the current exhibit galleries of the National Museum in Manila reveals that Calatagan artifacts are not visible. Whether they are indeed exhibited in the National Museum is not apparent. When I was doing research for my dissertation in 2005, I inspected the National Museum

records, which indicated that some Calatagan artifacts were on exhibit in one provincial branch of the National Museum. In 2005 I personally observed a glass bracelet from Calatagan displayed at the National Museum branch in Bolinao, Pangasinan. The records show that porcelain plates, bowls, and saucers from Calatagan were likewise displayed at the Bolinao branch, but I did not see them in the exhibit during my visit.

The current exhibits at the National Museum and its branches present the archaeological history of the Philippines in a conventional and linear manner. It starts with the geological formation of the Philippine islands, moves on to the Pleistocene and Palaeolithic periods, then to the Neolithic Period and Metal Age, and then to the Protohistoric period. To the Protohistoric period belong the Calatagan sites. As such, some Calatagan artifacts, such as ornaments and porcelains displayed in other National Museum local branches, have been included in exhibits to highlight the developing long-distance trade from the tenth century to the fifteenth century. The Calatagan artifact exhibited in the Bolinao branch of the National Museum was presented as evidence of trade links during the precolonial period.

As of this writing, the current National Museum exhibits make no mention of the significance of the Calatagan finds as grave goods or what they meant to the users of the artifacts. There is an inclination toward a linear storytelling of the Philippine's past as part of a macroscopic view of precolonial polities wherein artifacts from different sites, such as Calatagan, are employed as evidence of the different time periods of Philippine prehistory. This linear narrative is rooted in the culture history paradigm that permeates Philippine archaeology (Mijares 1998; Santiago 2001). This theoretical approach orders artifacts (and sites) in a chronological sequence based on stylistic and technological features that enable archaeologists to date sites based on presence and absence of artifact types. Diffusion and migration were used to explain similarities in artifact style and technology; hence, it was important to trace the artifacts' "genetic" affiliations, which was the concern of early Calatagan scholars such as Olov Janse, Dorothy Main, and Robert Fox. Even in an earlier publication on the reconstruction of Philippine prehistory, Fox (1967) does not mention the significance of Calatagan; however, he includes photos of foreign ceramics from Calatagan as evidence of the "Age of Contact and Trade with the East."

The distribution and display of the Calatagan artifacts in provincial branches of the National Museum also removes them from their

archaeological contexts as grave objects and their implications in burial practices; they are viewed merely as trade items. Porcelain trade is seen as the beginning of the Protohistoric period dating from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries. This period is usually described in the context of long-distance trade between maritime polities in Southeast Asia. It allows scholars to trace the maritime trade routes that brought Thai, Annamese, and Chinese ceramics to the Philippines, including the development of ceramic technology and production. The linear narrative on regional trade is a synthesis of trade activities that track the distribution of imported items from its source in Southeast Asia. The emphasis on trade items, such as ceramics, within the linear narrative tends to downplay local meanings of foreign materials because the focus is on the trade network rather than on the local values attached to these items.

In 2005 the Calatagan artifacts stored in the National Museum became a source of data to study social identities in the past, to recover some of their original meanings beyond being mere trade goods. My work (Barretto-Tesoro 2008a) hypothesized that various identities could be inferred from the burials by analyzing the qualitative attributes of the ceramics and their locations in the graves in relation to the body of the deceased. Cultural affiliations were symbolized by the inclusion of undecorated locally made earthenware vessels placed near the head and feet of the deceased, the general location of the burials, and the manner of burial (Barretto-Tesoro 2008b). The remains of some infants, perhaps due to their age, were placed in jars, which were then buried. Social status in Calatagan was expressed through the placement of trade ceramics that were decorated with solar and bird motifs and found on top or near the pelvis; the solar and bird motifs marked the prestige statuses of the socioeconomic and ritual leaders (Barretto-Tesoro 2008c).

This interpretation differed from earlier studies that determined status based on the density and type of foreign items present in burial sites (Bacus 1996; Junker 1999). The number and presence of foreign ceramics in the Calatagan burials did not automatically translate to economic wealth because some graves contained only one porcelain, but it had solar or bird motifs. Some burials contained imitation prestige markers in the form of foreign ceramics, without the associated prestige motifs, found on the pelvis. Other status markers could have been the earthenware vessels with triangle patterns on its shoulder that could be interpreted as solar designs. The inhabitants of Calatagan in ancient times actively selected foreign ceramics

with sun and bird symbols to be used as status markers in the graves (Barretto-Tesoro 2008c). Both symbols were considered potent motifs based on the indigenous belief system (Salazar 2004, 2005), which could have influenced the selection and use of porcelains with said designs.

The same Calatagan assemblage was investigated by Kuang-Jen Chang (2013) to explore the value of objects based on their location around the body. Using quantitative-based approaches, Chang demonstrated that local tastes played a role in the consumption of certain forms of trade ceramics in Calatagan but did not mention specific reasons that could have influenced these local preferences. In my work (Barretto-Tesoro 2008c), considering both forms and decorations, I attributed local preferences of ceramics to identity and status entrenched in reciprocity and local cosmology. Chang and I utilized independent methods and arrived at similar results in terms of the location of ceramic forms in the grave.

Private Collections and an Outdoor Museum

Some materials excavated from Calatagan have ended up in private collections. As mentioned above, the Zóbel and McMicking families provided financial support for the field expenses during the 1958 excavations (Fox 1959). As part of the agreement, they received 65 percent of the excavated ceramics (Cruz 1958; Fox 1959). Whole ceramic pieces from the 1958 diggings are displayed at the Ayala Museum in Makati City; in addition, six small sacks of ceramic sherds are stored in crates in the same museum (Bautista 2007). Similarly, in recognition of his valuable support, Eugenio Lopez Sr. received a token share of the recovered artifacts from the 1960s excavations. The Lopez's Calatagan collection consists of foreign ceramics, local earthenware vessels, glass bracelets, glass beads, spindle whorls, net weights, and metal spears. They are now housed in relatively good condition in the Lopez Memorial Museum and Library located in Pasig City, Metro Manila. However, some items in private collections come from unsystematic diggings around Batangas. Nonetheless, because the forms of these pots are similar to those coming from Calatagan, their provenance cannot be denied (Valdes 2003).

Unlike the objects in private collections, the Calatagan materials that are physically available for analyses have the potential for their life histories to be expanded, as academic interest in them continues. They can be investigated from different perspectives and subjected to different methodological analyses. But the objects in private collections can linger in

a state of restricted access, unless the owner displays them in museums such as what the Lopezes and Ayalas have done. They then become museum pieces.

Starting in the early decade of this century a trend in archaeology has been the development of site museums (Bautista 2005; Renfrew and Bahn 2000) or even temporary exhibits in the vicinity of archaeological sites (Paz 2005; Valientes 2009) where visitors can view not just the artifacts but also the site. Site museums and/or exhibits are seen as promoting awareness of local heritage that encourages locals to become stewards of archaeological sites. In Calatagan a site museum has been established inside the Golden Sunset Village Resort and Spa, a first-class resort built on top of what was previously known as Kay Tomas and Pulong Bakaw, the two sites excavated by Fox in 1958. The property owner, a television personality, had not been aware that the property he purchased was an archaeological site. During construction of the resort, laborers came across many pieces of broken ceramics. Giovanni Bautista (2007), then a graduate student at the Archaeological Studies Program of the University of the Philippines (UP-ASP) who works for the National Museum, informed the owner of the property's significance. After consultations, an outdoor museum was established to "add prestige, value, and feature" to the resort (ibid., 117). A memorandum of agreement was signed between the National Museum and the owner, with the former providing information about the archaeology of Calatagan as well as replicas and photographs of artifacts recovered from the sites.

The gallery was inaugurated in March 2007. This outdoor museum, which is now a popular feature of the resort, makes the visitors' stay more significant because of the history attached to the place. The outdoor museum endeavors to widen the target market of museums; however, the museum gallery is located inside a resort property and inaccessible to local residents. Although the audience is limited, the outdoor museum should still be seen as an accomplishment in its own right. Its viewing is incidental to visiting the resort, making the museum experience unimposing. Visitors of the resort can give their own interpretations to the artifacts and site and discuss their ideas with their companions. The outdoor museum provides visitors with another dimension of the site as they are physically standing where the graves were found.

The discussion thus far has mapped the movement of the Calatagan artifacts from one context to another. Despite acquiring different meanings

as archaeological materials, museum pieces, records, identity markers, trade objects, local products, and tokens, the Calatagan artifacts have been viewed perennially as mortuary objects. They have also been used as evidence in studies dealing with topics not related to burial practices such as long-distance trade, ceramic production, ornamentation, and metadata. To date, the Calatagan materials await renewed interest from scholars for them to be investigated using current theoretical paradigms. The next section narrates the history of archaeological research in the Philippines, which will help explain how its development influenced the different interpretations of the Calatagan artifacts.

Philippine Archaeology and Calatagan, 1880s to the early 1980s

This section and the next draw from major publications that have reviewed the state of Philippine archaeology (Evangelista 1969; Dizon 1994; Mijares 1998; Paz 2009; Santiago 2001; Ronquillo 1985) to explore what researchers have considered as key advances in this field. It demonstrates that the layers of meanings of the Calatagan sites and artifacts have been influenced by the history of archaeological research in the Philippines. It focuses on how the theoretical milieu and archaeological practice of a given period have prompted scholars and private individuals to view the Calatagan artifacts in specific ways.

As in other Southeast Asian countries, foreign scholars and enthusiasts initiated archaeological practice in the Philippines in the 1880s. These scholars included Alfred Marche, Feodor Jagor, and Alexander Schandberg (Muijzenberg 2008; Ronquillo 1998). Marche's collection, consisting of human bones, foreign ceramics, shell ornaments, glass and bronze objects, gold ornaments, wooden coffins, and burial urns, is now stored in Paris and Madrid. At the turn of the twentieth century, during the American occupation, many American scholars came to the Philippines to conduct academic studies. H. Otley Beyer, considered the father of Philippine anthropology, was known for his diffusion-migration theories of the peopling of the Philippines, which posited that each succeeding group that arrived in the Philippines brought with them a more advanced technology. The diffusion-migration theories became prevalent around this period. From 1921 to 1924 Carl Guthe (1927, 1929), head of the University of Michigan Philippine Expedition, conducted systematic surveys and collected

prehispanic materials from the central Philippines. Currently stored at the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology, the artifacts include earthenware vessels, Southeast Asian and Chinese ceramics, shell artifacts, and assorted types of beads.

Prior to the 1900s, no archaeological activity—not even looting—took place in Calatagan. According to Fox (1959), the area where the sites were located was covered with forest until the end of the Second World War. Calatagan was a hunting ground for the Roxas and Zobél families from 1812 until a town was established in 1911, when the estate owners donated parcels of land to the town and church (Barretto-Tesoro 2008a). In addition, less than 200 people inhabited the area in 1900. However, by 1916 migrants started arriving in Calatagan when the sugar (central) mill started operations. The absence of archaeological activity and looting in this area around this period was primarily due to the low density of inhabitants. With the influx of migrants, the land began to be cultivated in the 1920s (Fox 1959) and people became acquainted with archaeological materials that they accidentally uncovered while plowing the land for farm production. The artifacts, as mentioned above, were used mostly as domestic items.

The National Museum, created in 1901, became involved in the Calatagan sites when reports about looting became rampant from the 1930s until the 1950s. In the 1940s, Janse (1941, 1944–1945, 1947) excavated three sites in Calatagan as part of his investigation of the impact of the Ming Dynasty on Southeast Asian societies. Diffusion-migration theories influenced Janse's excavation in Calatagan in the 1940s as he was searching for the Ming Dynasty connection in the Philippines.

The 1950s saw an increase of Filipino participation in archaeological research in their capacity as assistant archaeologists, scientific illustrators, artists, and excavators (Ronquillo 1985). Earlier studies on how specific cultures reached the Philippines began to be challenged, although the historical-cultural approach was still the basis for archaeological interpretations. Excavation techniques and recording methods were also becoming more systematic. Radiocarbon dating started to be employed in Philippine sites in the early 1950s. These transitions can be attributed to developments of theoretical paradigms in the West, the increasing interest of Filipinos in Philippine prehistory, and developments in technology and methods to refine dating techniques. Although Fox was an American, his institutional affiliation at the time of his excavations was the National

Museum, and his team was primarily composed of Filipinos. One of the members of the excavation team was the late Alfredo Evangelista (2001), who later led excavations in other parts of the Philippines. Filipinos also drew the burial sketches (Barretto-Tesoro 2008a). Despite the Filipinos' participation in the excavation, only Fox (1959; Main and Fox 1982) published on the Calatagan finds prior to the 1990s. The general lack of publications on Calatagan by Filipinos can be attributed to the absence of formally trained Filipinos at the time of the excavations.

Although no research questions were explicitly formulated prior to the excavations, Fox produced very good excavation records so that fifty years later researchers could still refer to those documents in order to produce scholarly work. This clearly indicates the systematic nature of Fox's excavations in Calatagan.

What makes Calatagan exceptional is the spatial extent of the cemeteries along the western coast; the scale of excavations unheard of in the 1950s in the Philippines; Fox's application of standard methods of retrieving and recording archaeological evidence; and the enormity of the project in terms of sites, quantities of artifacts, and number of burials. The Calatagan excavations defined an era in the history of Philippine archaeology. It marked a clear break from the antiquarian approach of the late 1800s until the early 1900s. In this earlier period, Philippine archaeological and ethnological materials helped augment the collection of foreign museums such as Harvard's Peabody Museum, the University of Michigan's Museum of Anthropology, the Musée de l'Homme, and the National Ethnographic Museum in Leiden.

Although Guthe had employed relatively standardized methods as early as the 1920s, including recording the provenience of the artifacts, describing sites, maintaining a field journal, and illustrating artifacts, all collected artifacts were shipped to the University of Michigan. Early foreign practitioners of archaeology saw Philippine materials as objects of curiosities or evidence of external cultures either interacting with local populations or migrating to the Philippines. This approach was evident in Janse's interpretation of the Calatagan finds mentioned above. The interest in the Calatagan excavations centered on the large quantities of foreign ceramics that were found, which was evident in the treatment of the trade ceramics in Fox's 1959 publication in which a special section was devoted to foreign ceramics. Fox's main interest in the ceramics was their production, distribution, and

classification in the sites. Years later, Fox attempted to understand the Calatagan materials, particularly the earthenware vessels, in the context of Philippine prehistory (Main and Fox 1982). The role of maritime trade in the prehispanic Philippines was also highlighted (Fox 1959).

In the 1960s a number of Filipino students became interested in archaeology and even conducted excavations as part of their academic program (Locsin et al. 2008; Ronquillo 1985). In the 1970s ethnoarchaeological research was conducted among the Agta Negrito and the Kalinga (Longacre 1981, 1999; Longacre et al. 1988, 2000; Longacre and Skibo 1994; Ronquillo 1985). The National Museum also began actively searching for evidence of human antiquity in Cagayan Valley and Palawan (Fox 1970). Also during the 1970s, more research collaborations were established between Filipinos and foreign archaeologists (Ronquillo 1985). It was also from the 1970s through to the 1980s that American archaeologists utilized Philippine data to test hypotheses regarding the social development of societies, political economy, and trade in the context of an island environment (Hutterer 1974, 1976, 1977a, 1977b, 1986, 1991). Despite the numerous excavations from the 1970s to the 1980s, most of the interpretations regarding archaeological sites continued to be framed from a foreign perspective, mostly offered by non-Filipino scholars.

Between the mid-1960s and the 1980s, no archaeological work was conducted in Calatagan. After Fox's 1959 publication on the 1958 Calatagan excavations, the next published work was on the classification of the Calatagan earthenware vessels by Main and Fox in 1982. The archaeology practitioners from the 1960s to the 1970s were mostly engaged in salvage archaeology (Ronquillo 1985) or proponents of state-sponsored projects on human antiquity (Paz 2009). The fifteenth-century burial sites of Calatagan had to wait. Research before the 1980s focused on "culture history, cultural chronology, [and the] typology of prehistoric material cultures, using the unilineal development stages of cultural evolutionary theory" (Dizon 1994, 199). This approach was evident in the nature of the interpretations offered for the materials recovered from Calatagan, which focused on the typology of ceramics, the dating of the sites based on foreign ceramics, and the "genetic" relationships of local pottery with pottery from other sites in the Philippines (Main and Fox 1982). The culture history approach also influenced the linear presentation of materials in museum exhibits. As mentioned above, several Calatagan objects were separated from their original context and

used to represent a specific period under a linear framework that followed the conventional cultural chronology from the Palaeolithic to the Historic Period, thus ignoring the objects' significance in the burial.

Beyond the materials recovered in excavations, the 1958 excavations in Calatagan spawned widespread looting of archaeological sites and treasure hunting in the Philippines. Fox employed many local workers during the excavations. He taught them the rudiments of excavation and identification. These laborers influenced others to become treasure hunters, who methodically made their way across Batangas, parts of southern Luzon, Palawan, and the islands south of Luzon (Barretto-Tesoro et al. 2009).

Fuelled by formal archaeological research, private collections became in vogue beginning in the late 1960s (Gotuaco et al. 1997; Paz 1992; Peralta 1982; Valdes 2003). The ownership of antiquities served to validate the high and cultured status of the owners (Brodie and Luke 2006; Paz 1992; Poulter 2007). More than concern for the monetary and aesthetic values of the objects, according to Brodie and Luke (2006), people collected antiquities because they were motivated by power, status, reputation, and other psychological needs. Giving access to these private collections through donations, loans, and scholarly analyses reinforced the owner's social standing (ibid.).

Some private collections sustained the illicit antiquities trade, through which artifacts were viewed as commodities that were sold by laborers and diggers and as status symbols from the collectors' perspective (Paz 1992). Other collections came from systematic excavations conducted in collaboration with archaeologists (Desroches et al. 1996; Goddio et al. 2002; Locsin and Locsin 1967; Tenazas 1968) or, in the case of the private Calatagan collections, the Ayalas and Lopezes received token shares from the excavations in their capacity as sponsors of these excavations.

Paz (1992) conducted an ethnographic study of the trade of *antik hukay*, or artifacts from ancient graves in the Philippines that were sold by pothunters or middlemen-pothunters to middlemen or middlemen-owners of antique shops, who in turn sold these objects to collectors. Pothunters performed the actual diggings. Pothunters and middlemen viewed *antik hukay* as commodities, and therefore they saw these items as having economic or monetary value. Collectors, commonly belonging to the economic elite, viewed the *antik hukay* as having a symbolic value attached to their status as elites. Paz revealed that, even at the level of pothunters, there was symbolic value in trading in *antik hukay* in the form of good business ethics that ensured

good relations among pothunters and with buyers. Middlemen and collectors tended to be more profit driven in their relationships. Paz found that the underlying impetus for the elite to collect artifacts is rooted in magnifying power and status. The reasons for pothunting and collecting were therefore distinct, although monetary exchange took place at all levels. Paz (ibid., 35) likewise described the "value transformations" of artifacts from "exchange value to a use value, going through the cycle and back again," which he attributed to human society. In my view, this value transformation is akin to the changing perspectives on the meanings of objects as demonstrated in this article.

Although access to private collections may be restricted, eventually these objects can be viewed by a broad audience through permanent exhibits such as the Calatagan objects in the Ayala and Lopez museums, the Philippine precolonial pottery collection and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas gold collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, and the Philippine ancestral gold collection at the Ayala Museum. The publication of high-quality images also makes private collections accessible to the larger cultural elite and academic communities, although these publications tend to be expensive coffee table books so that their circulation is limited.

Most catalogues of ceramics and other materials in private collections were published by private institutions and societies such as the Oriental Ceramics Society of the Philippines (Brown 1989; Gotuaco et al. 1997; OCSP 1993; Valdes and Diem 1991; Valdes et al. 1992), the Ayala Foundation (Capistrano-Baker 2011; Valdes 2003), the Eugenio Lopez Foundation, Inc. (Valdes et al. 1992), and the Yuchengco Museum (Tan 2007). Some private institutions linked up with academics to provide context and history to their collections (Brown 1989; Capistrano-Baker 2011; Peralta 1982; Tan 2007; Valdes 2003; Valdes et al. 1992). The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas likewise published a book on their gold collection (Villegas 2004). Again, the status of the collectors belonging to the economic elite is reinforced through such publications.

The Calatagan excavations also validated the acquisition by private collectors. Fox (1959) generated financial support from private individuals through grants to the National Museum for the Calatagan excavations. Consequently this support facilitated the presence of Calatagan artifacts in private collections (Cruz 1958; Fox 1959) as token shares were given to supporters. At present, artifacts recovered from systematic excavations

using scientific methods are obviously more credible than those dug by pothunters. Scientifically excavated artifacts that are now part of private collections did not only have aesthetic value, but also cultural, historical, and archaeological significance. The involvement of private individuals in archaeological research, such as the Ayala and Lopez families (Fox 1959; Tenazas 1968), who received a token share of the excavated materials, has helped in protecting archaeological sites and can also be seen as a form of archaeological resource management (cf. Paz 2009) to the extent that it sanctioned collecting through scientific research rather than through “looting.” In recent years, private collectors have become interested in the history of their collections. As Paz (ibid.) has noted, collectors aspire to know more about the context of their finds, prompting the publication of catalogues of these collections. In 2005 the Lopez Memorial Museum highlighted the historical and cultural significance of the Calatagan artifacts in their collection through an exhibit (Legaspi-Ramirez 2005).

Philippine Archaeology and Calatagan since the late 1980s

In 1988 the Archaeology Division at the National Museum formally separated from the Anthropology Division. This administrative restructuring created more opportunities for the National Museum to conduct archaeological work in the country, such as underwater archaeology as well as environmental and impact assessments.

Dizon (1994) had noted that the research trend during the 1980s combined inductive and deductive approaches. Research projects utilizing the deductive method were very few and spearheaded mainly by foreign or Filipino archaeologists who had formal training. Although there were Filipino scholars actively conducting research in Philippine archaeology in the 1980s, which eventually led to the creation of the Archaeology Division, the reconstruction of Philippine prehistory was still dominated by foreign scholars (Mijares 1998). The presence of foreign archaeologists in the 1970s and 1980s and the use of scientific methods and analyses did not influence local archaeological interpretation, which was still coming largely from a cultural-historical approach (Mijares 1998; Santiago 2001). Archaeological research by local scholars in the 1980s was not problem-oriented. Rather, local research usually adopted a reactive approach wherein sites were excavated after they were reported, usually as a result of becoming threatened (Mijares

1998). Hence, there was a growing need to establish an academic institution in the Philippines that offered formal courses and degrees in archaeology (Dizon 1994).

In response to the challenges faced in the 1980s, the UP-ASP was created in 1995. It has become a base for research-oriented projects and education. In this program, each member of the faculty leads his or her research projects and supervises excavations. *Hukay*, the UP-ASP's peer-reviewed journal that was launched in 1998, is now an international publication with foreign contributors and referees. The UP-ASP has been engaged in collaborative efforts with the National Museum, the University of San Carlos in Cebu, and other academic units in the University of the Philippines System. It has also collaborated with foreign institutions such as the Institut de Paléontologie Humaine, the Australian National University, the University of Washington, the University of Guam, and the University College Dublin. Due to new research questions and technology, sites such as the Tabon Cave and Callao Cave have been reexcavated and artifacts reanalyzed to generate more data about the earliest humans in the Philippines and Southeast Asia (Dizon 2003a; Jago-on 2007, 2008; Lewis et al. 2007–2008; Mijares 2007–2008; Mijares et al. 2010; Schmidt 2009).

The surveys and excavations on the east coast of the Calatagan peninsula in the 1990s were part of a joint project between the National Museum and Japanese archaeologists (Ronquillo and Ogawa 1996). The joint research project's primary aims were to look for habitation sites in Calatagan, to survey the eastern coast of the peninsula, and to search for the context of the Calatagan Pot. Although no fresh information about the Calatagan Pot was revealed, the project resulted in the discovery of sites along the eastern coast dating earlier than the fifteenth-century Calatagan burials on the west. The jar burial sites on the east date to the Metal Age. Radiocarbon dates show that the burials date to more than 2000 years ago (Dizon 2003b). Dating the relationship of the jar burials on the east with the inhumations on the west has not yet been established. Nevertheless, the project showed that Calatagan was inhabited much earlier than previously known.

In addition, in the early part of the twenty-first century, British excavation techniques, introduced by a British-trained Filipino, were incorporated in local field excavations (Paz 2003). The direct impact of the British technique on Philippine archaeology has been the use of the context recording system in excavations wherein all sediment layers and

archaeological features (i.e., pits, graves, walls, posts, holes) are assigned context numbers. A context is a unit of record produced by a single action in the past (Museum of London Archaeology Service 1994). The context numbers are placed in a matrix to indicate the chronological sequence of deposits. The Calatagan finds that were excavated in the 1950s were recorded using a different method. Nevertheless, I used a contextual-analysis approach, introduced in the United Kingdom (Hodder 1986 and 1987), in interpreting the Calatagan graves (Barretto-Tesoro 2008a). Associations and connections of objects with other objects and with the body of the deceased in individual graves were analyzed. Each grave in the study sample was broken down. The analyses included types of materials, designs and forms of ceramics, and locations of the objects in reference to the body and other objects. These kinds of analyses have led to a new level of understanding of the function of the Calatagan grave objects as indicators of different identities (*ibid.*).

By the 1990s, as linkages with foreign institutions strengthened, the inscribed Calatagan Pot was scientifically dated in 1992 through the assistance of William Longacre of the University of Arizona (Dizon 2003b). The Calatagan Pot was subjected to direct dating using Accelerated Mass Spectroscopy (AMS) (*ibid.*). However, the results produced inconsistent dates as the pot had been contaminated by the petroleum-based products that were used in making casts. The sample from the exterior dated to 6000 BC and the interior sample dated to 2000–2500 BC.

Since the establishment of the UP-ASP in 1995, Filipino and foreign scholars have regained interest in the rich potential of Calatagan for archaeological research (Barretto 2002; Barretto-Tesoro 2008a; Bautista 2007). The appeal of Calatagan has been the ready accessibility to scholars of both the sites and the collections from the early excavations. Revisiting and reexcavating sites and reanalyzing artifacts have become an ongoing trend due to new theoretical frameworks and technology (Barretto-Tesoro 2011; Dizon 2003b; Jago-on 2007, 2008), which have influenced the reinvestigation of Calatagan. Recently there has been renewed interest in the Calatagan Pot, which has resulted in several readings of the inscriptions (Borrinaga 2009; Comandante 2013; Guillermo *n.d.*; Guillermo and Paluga 2008–2009; Oropilla 2008; Salazar 2008; Tiongson *n.d.*).

Several transliterations of the inscriptions have been put forward after more than forty years since the Calatagan Pot was recovered. The

experimental method utilized by Ramon Guillermo combined paleography, cryptography, and trial-and-error methods. Guillermo's method granted him decipherments in two languages: Tagalog and Bisaya (Guillermo *n.d.*; Guillermo and Paluga 2008–2009). Tiongson (*n.d.*), using Guillermo's transliteration, consulted an old Tagalog dictionary dated 1613 and came up with a different result. Borrinaga (2009) read the inscription counterclockwise, that is, opposite the direction in which others read the inscriptions. Like Tiongson, he consulted an old Bisaya dictionary dated 1616. Rolando Borrinaga's Bisaya transliteration differed from Guillermo and Paluga's (2008–2009). Salazar likewise used Guillermo's transliteration but came up with a different interpretation. Oropilla and Comandante each had a separate reading of the inscription using different methods. Despite the differences in the methods and decipherments of the inscriptions on the Calatagan Pot, all these scholars have concluded that the pot was specifically produced for a ritual purpose. This kind of inquiry reflects the growing interest in ancient ritual, cosmology, and spirituality worldwide and in the Philippines (Amano Jr. 2011; Barretto-Tesoro 2008c; Lara 2010; Paz 2012; Paz and Vitales 2008; Reyes 2010; Rountree et al. 2012; Vitales 2009).

Recent theoretical developments in archaeology have initiated new research questions on the Calatagan artifacts such as studies on identity, ethnicity, status, symbolisms, cosmology, and heritage management, to name a few (Barretto-Tesoro 2008a; Bautista 2007). In terms of heritage management, Philippine archaeologists have realized the importance of including the public and local community in site management and heritage protection (Paz 2005; Valientes 2009). Bautista (2007), through the National Museum, has effectively implemented a cultural resource management program that involves a commercial institution located in Calatagan. The case of the Golden Sunset Village Resort and Spa discussed above is instrumental in promoting the archaeology of Calatagan to its clientele. It is through such strategies that heritage preservation and commercial expansion can be combined.

One of the latest interpretations regarding the grave goods in Calatagan is the recognition that—rather than seeing the materials as merely burial furniture—these materials were actively selected by the inhabitants of Calatagan in ancient times as symbols marking various identities such as cultural affiliation, status, and personal and elite identities. This interpretation underscores the contextual-analysis approach described above, which has been utilized in my research on the Calatagan burials

(Barretto-Tesoro 2008a). Furthermore this approach has enabled the demonstration of the link between cosmology and the negotiation of an elite identity in the past.

Conclusion

Using the Calatagan artifacts as case study, this article has demonstrated that the objects are a means to an end; in possessing and analyzing them they acquire diverse meanings for different individuals. How and why they acquire their meanings is the central theme of this discussion. The meanings of objects do change throughout an artifact's lifetime (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986). The creation of those meanings is greatly impacted by the nature of archaeological practice at any given time. Utilizing the biographical approach and tracking the trajectories of the artifacts enable us to comprehend how the artifacts' meanings changed for the people who excavated, examined, possessed, stored, and displayed them.

The many and changing meanings of the Calatagan materials and excavations suggest that meanings changed with how agents at various times perceived these objects. The people who possessed and used these objects gave them meanings, which could be multiple and dependent on their contexts and how people from various sectors viewed them (De La Paz 2008). The Calatagan objects are no exceptions. These objects had their own histories prior to their function as mortuary goods. Despite the collective term "Calatagan artifacts," it has been proposed here that these objects have held different meanings. Some of the artifacts, such as the foreign ceramics traded by Southeast Asian and Chinese merchants, started as commodities. Some were household supplies and implements that were locally manufactured. Some trade items were tokens shared with trading parties that later became symbolic of status and potency. Foreign ceramics were later transformed into mortuary items. They acquired the status of artifacts during the systematic excavations in Calatagan. They were also given as tokens to sponsors of the excavations. To scholars and collectors, the foreign objects were proof of the precolonial trade network of the Philippines. The burials were taken as evidence of the elaborate belief system that the ancient Filipinos practiced before Spanish colonization. The earthenware pots were seen as evidence for the level of craft production, while the skeletons could point to past pathology.

Moreover, an assemblage of artifacts can have a shared collective biography, even as individual objects and specific types of objects can have

their own separate biographies. An object that shares a collective biography with others while possessing its own biography highlights the notion that biographies can be multilineal and multidirectional, depending on the contexts in and out of which objects circulate. All the Calatagan objects were grave furniture, and shared a collective biography, yet individual Calatagan artifacts might have their own meanings. Archaeologists may choose to analyze or exhibit only the earthenware vessels or porcelains or nonceramic objects from Calatagan. The analysis can bestow new meanings to a specific group of artifacts; hence, they can achieve new biographical paths that are separate and different from other artifacts from the same site.

Research in Calatagan mirrors the history of the practice of archaeology in the Philippines. This article has outlined the development of archaeological research in the Philippines and addressed how research trends have influenced the ways the Calatagan sites and artifacts have been interpreted. In this light, archaeologists in the Philippines need to look at innovative ways to navigate the layers of meanings behind the artifacts and sites in contemporary society, which otherwise would remain hidden.

Notes

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- 1 The diffusion-migration framework aims to explain culture change via the spread of material culture, ideas, and cultural traits from one source to other cultures through trade and/or migration. The framework's underlying idea is that cultures change and advance in a unilinear direction because of an external source; it disregards or overlooks internal innovations as the source of cultural development. By identifying the source and recipient cultures, archaeologists can map the spread of cultures chronologically.
- 2 Preservation of the excavation records through digitization is important in storing data for future scholars. To date the Archaeology Division is in the process of digitizing all their records, which is an important step in the proper management of written archaeological information. The same idea was proposed by Bautista (2007) in his MA thesis.

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