



Bulked gold, riverine trade, hiking trails, and WorldView2 satellite remote sensing in Northwestern Luzon: The Angaqui network

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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on a case study of the Angaqui gold trade network in Northwestern Luzon during the Early Historical to Historical Period (10th to early 20th c). Multiple data sources including GIS predictive modelling and remote sensing through high-resolution and multispectral WorldView2 satellite imagery, written primary historical and secondary historical sources, indigenous peoples oral tradition, and results of systematic archaeological survey and excavation were integrated in the research to come close to a wholistic view. Availability of the satellite imagery facilitates a more regional and multi-scalar approach to archaeology of the region. Remote sensing has revealed segments of old trails within the network. The written and oral tradition both complement each other when correlated with available archaeological data. Availability of historical visual documentation also provides a means to reconstructing the gold evanescent market encounter in Northwestern Luzon.

1. Introduction

This is the fourth case study that looks at the gold evanescent market encounter for gold in Northwestern Luzon (see Canilao, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c) (Fig. 1). This article will deal with Network 3 (Fig. 2), which encompasses areas within coastal and upland Ilocos Sur and the Mountain Province. Ethnohistorically and archaeologically documented settlements within this network will be presented in a section below but first to provide historical context, we will look at primary and secondary accounts that talk about how the Ilocos coast is a source of gold in the Early Historical to Historical periods (10th to early 20th c) including its multiscale trade connections. This section will also explore the products that were exchanged, and actions undertaken by the small-scale gold producers to *up the stakes* in the gold exchange.

1.1. Trade with China and beyond

The Philippines has been argued to participate in a regional maritime exchange network during the protohistoric Period (or Early Historical period) (Dizon, 2003: 1, 20) with the Ilocanos of Luzon eventually adapting their own maritime trade vessel called *Biray* (sometimes spelled *Virei*). Historian Grace Mateo argues that Ilocano involvement with this trade network may have extended to Melaka, India and China (2004:42–43), and in terms of China,

[The] Ilocos trade network was not confined to the Island of Luzon. International trade was a significant component of the Ilocano economy during this time [pre 16th c]. A 1574 estimate claims that thirty to forty Chinese [Birays] came to the country annually and during prosperous years even as many as fifty. (2004:41)

Ilocano Birays also crossed the seas to trade with China as will be shown below. According to Berthold Laufer, a curator of Asian anthropology, the Chinese- Philippine trade can be pushed back to the latter part of the 12th c (Laufer 1908: 154). But, H. Otley Beyer the father of Philippine anthropology pushes this even further back to 890 CE up to the 12th c with the Arab traders pioneering these early exchanges using the Islands as intermediaries, after they were ousted directly out of China (Beyer 1979: 115). When relations began to improve between the Arabs and the Chinese in the middle of 10th c the direct trade with South China, Chuangchow and Canton was re-established and now the vessels regularly passed through Bornean and Philippines Islands rather than the Indo-China coast (ibid). One of the early historical accounts of such Arab ships unloading products from Mindoro at Canton was from 982 CE (ibid). This Arab ship as well as other trading vessels would have passed through Northwestern Luzon as its last stop just before crossing the Batanes channel, hopping to Formosa (Taiwan).

Albert Chan argues that Philippine gold actually ended up in smithies of Canton in Southern China (Chan 1978: 52). Jesuit priest

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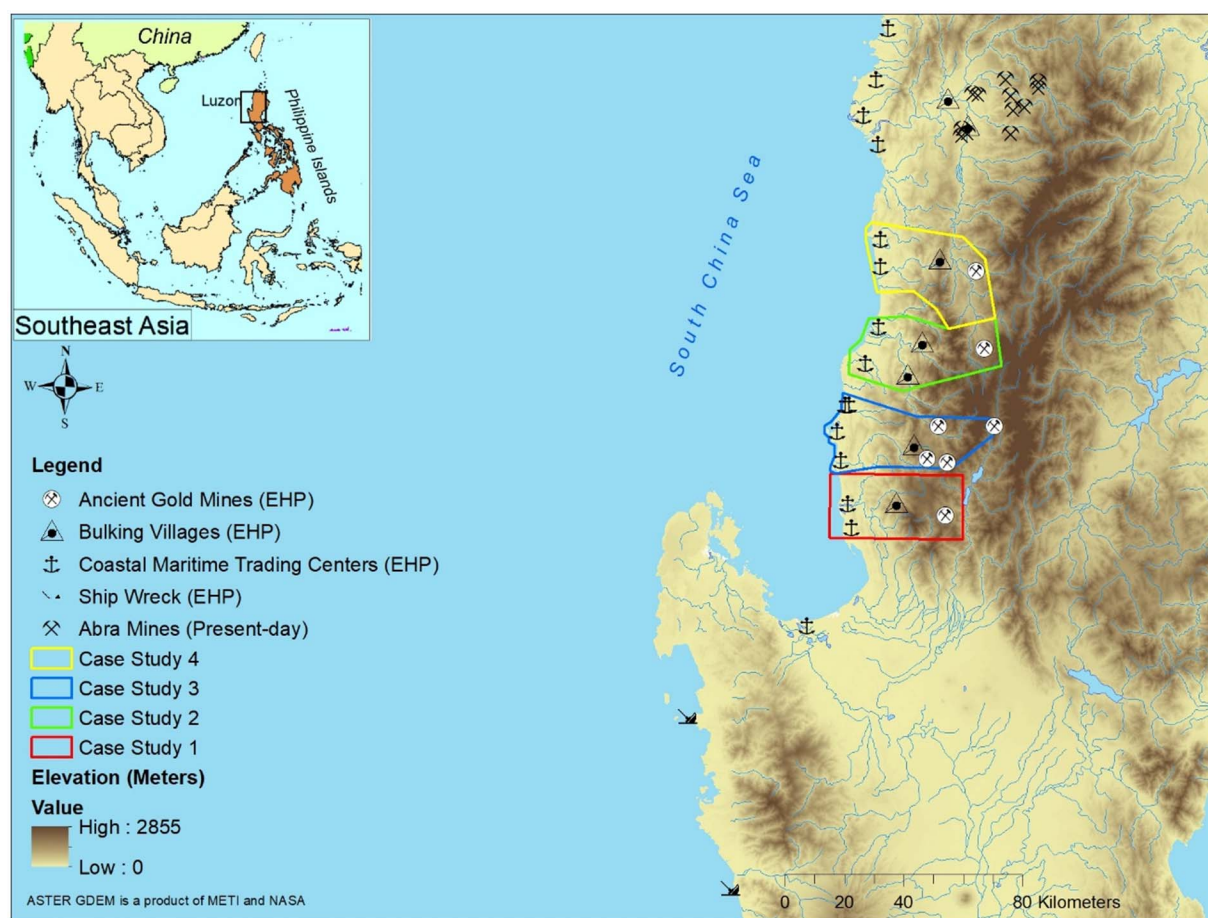


Fig. 1. Case studies of gold trade networks in Northwestern Luzon (ASTER GDEM is a product of METI and NASA).

Alonso Sanchez who ministered in the Philippines observed a great amount of gold from the Philippines being cast in the form of small boats, weighing half a pound each when he went to Canton in the 16th c, right at the advent of Spanish colonization of the Philippines (Chan 1978: 52).

Entanglement into this trade was not unidirectional as Ilocanos eventually adapted their own maritime vessel called locally the Biray, which is similar to the Sampan in coastal Indo-China. Structural remains of this vessel type was seen in Pandan, Caoayan, Ilocos Sur during the first season of the Ilocos Sur Archaeology Project of 2011 (Canilao, 2015) (Fig. 3). The vessel and the span of its operations also figures in the Northwestern oral tradition of Biag ni Lam-ang,

Dua pay ti sasakayan
a **balitok** a bulawan
nga agbubunag ti pinggan
idiay ili a Kasanglayan,
ta nalpas met a naikamang
iti ari idiay Puanpuan.

I have two **gold** tradeships
plying between here and the
Chinese country trading in
porcelain. I have commercial
connections with the
king of Puanpuan,

Isu ti partesko ken kabagian
idiay ili a Kasanglayan,
isu ti napanna nagbiahian
tay barangayko a **sampan**;
pamayak adda itan,
ta napan nagkarga ti **pinggan**.
(Yabes 1935: 38) (emphasis
mine)

My relative in that Chinese
land. My boat **sampan** has
gone
there on a voyage, and
probably
now it has returned with its
cargo of **porcelain**.

In this passage we see that gold was exchanged mainly for porcelain.

According to archaeologist Laura Junker,

Between the tenth and fourteenth centuries Philippine chiefs in a limited number of polities strategically located along the western littoral [includes Northwest Luzon, Ilocos] dominated a low- volume trade for Chinese porcelains and a wide variety of other foreign luxury goods (glass beads, silks, bronze objects)

(Junker 1999:19)

By the 15th and 16th c, at contact with the Spaniards, this trade has already intensified (ibid). Several archaeological excavations in Northwestern Luzon reveal whole pieces and sherds that are provenienced from Dai Viet (Northern Vietnam), Siam, Khmer, and China (i.e., see Canilao, 2015, Tidalgo, 1979, Legaspi, 1974). German traveler Hans Meyer also observed stoneware dragon jars in Candon intended to be sold in the upland areas including the Lepanto mines (1975: 117). Meyer himself was perplexed when his personal Igorot interpreter spent all of his month's earnings just to purchase a single jar from Candon (ibid). But at this juncture let us expound more on how gold ended up in coastal communities when the mother lode is located several kilometers upland in the fastnesses of the Cordillera Mountains of Luzon, with alluvial gold drained along the rivers.

2. "Ilocos Gold"

In her dissertation work on the Ilocos, Grace Mateo talks about how gold ended up with the Ilocanos,

Gold and forest products were not obtained in the lowland, but through trade with the Igorots. The Ilocanos served as middlemen, buying gold from the Igorots and selling it to foreign traders. For the gold and the forest products of the Igorots, the Ilocanos bartered

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