

Historical archaeological proposal of las pinas salt beds essay



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The paper aims to recommend the excavation of the site that previously held the salt-making industry in Las Piñas. The site is situated near the coastal line of Manila Bay which played an tremendous role in the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade during the 16th to 19th century. To be able to appropriate this task, the paper will provide historical background, present conditions, and site proposal to yield the possibility of excavation. This is to determine the role and ownership of Las Pinas salt beds during the 18th - 19th century which will give light on the industrial progress of Las Pinas during colonial times. This paper will be using the history and interactions of past and present of salt beds as a primary source.

Project description & summary The researcher proposes to conduct an archaeological site examination at Barangay Pulanglupa Uno, Bernabe Compound, Las Pinas City, located at the northwest border of Manila Bay. The site was a location to a 2-hectare (approx) of salt beds during the 16th - 19th century. According to the Las Pinas City website¹, the location of where Las Pinas is at was a fishing village by which one produce is the salt. Salt were solar-dried in clay tiles or gibak that were shipped all the way from Vigan so that the salt would not touch the ground.

The site is currently built mostly with residential structures with a number of commercial establishments. The northwest side of the salt beds is the current Las Piñas Dump Site, and the south and southeastern sides are composed of residential/commercial area. First, this would necessitate an approval from the government of Las Pinas to do excavation especially that the surrounding site is a stable human settlement. There is also a need to formulate plans on the relocation of these settlements for the time of

excavation. Second, a feasibility study and archaeological plan should be presented to the Villar Foundation, them being the owner of the 1 property.

1. Engineer Dexter Gonzales from Villar Foundation said that the salt beds are only existent during summer. Due to the isolated rain showers of the season (July - November)², they converted the salt beds into fish ponds. Lastly, since the northwest side of the site is a dump site, sanitation authority should do inspection before further excavation.

2. Research problem.

The paper tries to answer the question of the role and ownership of salt beds during the era of colonial trade. Were the salts produced traded? Were the salts produced exported to other parts of the Philippines and/or to other countries? The purpose of raising these questions is to identify the role of Las Pinas in the colonial trade. With this, the stunning question to ask is whether the salt beds were owned primarily by the locals in the mid-colonial era. The furtherance of this will also likely to determine the various industries that catapulted the urbanization in the area. Another important question the paper will try to answer is that if the salt beds turned into fish pond in the rainy season, does this signify the incapacity of the Manila Bay produce for sustenance among the inhabitants of the area of Las Pinas? During the dry season when the salt beds are in trend, did the inhabitants engage in other means for sustenance like vegetation or domesticating animals? With salt, were they create food specialty using preservation? With these questions, it will more or less answer the way of life of the inhabitants in area pre-

urbanization. Most of the questions raised are answerable by doing excavation on the site and align it with existing literature.

Previous work

Dealing first with the Manila Bay as a secondary focal point of the study, the researcher found a strategy study entitled “ Manila Bay Coastal Strategy” released October 2001. The strategy was initiated by (PEMSEA), a partnership arrangement that “ involves various stakeholders of the Seas of East Asia, including national and local governments, civil society, the private sector, research and education institutions, communities, international agencies, regional programmes, financial institutions and donors.

3. The Manila Coastal Strategy defines the historical background and environmental assets of the Manila Bay. It has also determined the people of Manila Bay and the demographics, including the ethnicities that occupy the coastal habitats of the bay. The work has no mention of the salt beds in Las Pinas, but it will be able to provide data on Manila Bay pre-history and history and the people along the coastal area. As for the salt beds, the Villar Foundation established.

In 2005 a rebirth of the salt beds together with other livelihood strategies like coconut weaving, fishport, compost making, and recycled crafting

4. The rebirth of the salt beds was for the purpose of providing the residents a viable livelihood and showcasing a tourist attraction at the same time

5. The researcher tried to search online for literature supporting any findings for salt beds but found none. Hence, the location of the salt bed has not
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been exposed or much in terms of excavation. Research material One of the sources of historical material would be the aforementioned Manila Bay Coastal Strategy by PEMSEA. This will give a background on Manila Bay's history and surrounding. Interestingly, the work gave words on the culture and people near the coastal. On the investigation side of things, the primary source of location would be old map of Metro Manila in order to assess old boundaries that might be relevant to the study. Below is an example of an old map dated 1898.

The clay tiles from the salt beds might also be investigated if those were imported from other location which can signify interactions. Most of the information might be needing to come from the old-timers. As the salt beds are not highlighted on literature as yet, data from those who operated the salt beds would be highly priced. The data gathered from the old-timers together with the artifacts exhumed from the site would yield theory on the involvement of locals on the salt beds.

6. Methods

The researcher recommends to first get an interview with the old-timers. The old-timers, according to Engineer Gonzales, are the locals of Las Pinas who owned and operated the lands that accommodated the salt beds before the construction of the Coastal Road 6. They may have the knowledge on why and how the salt beds were located in Las Pinas and not with any other coastal areas of Manila Bay.

This is to learn the scope of the land and their exact locations. They would also give idea on materials that were used in producing, purifying, and <https://assignbuster.com/historical-archaeological-proposal-of-las-pinaz-salt-beds-essay/>

distributing salt. Questions about the saltmaking industry in Las Pinas will also help bound the timeline of any artifact to be found in the site. Another thing we can acquire from the old-timers is the industries that have bloomed in connection with the salt-making industry.

Excavation of the site is highly recommended. Mentioned in the project description, the excavation might take time acquiring permits. One problem would be the fact that a probable site is now a dump site which may encumber or contaminate the artifacts. If not for the materials used in salt-making, discovering the span of clay tiles that harness the salt may also identify the growth of the industry. Below is an image of the expanse that can be excavated to obtain relevant information.

Analysis

The role of salt in the community of Las Pinas will be determined by the methods given above. The question of distribution of salt in colonial or local trade will be determined through excavation of trading pots accompanied with appropriate dating. The kind of pots excavated the trade relations in the area. The magnanimity of the machinery, if found, will measure the scale of trading of salt. This would work hand-in-hand with the information gathered from the old-timers. Since there are not much detailed historical accounts of the salt beds, the first-hand information from the old-timers would serve as the gateway to the salt beds' past and the other industries that it catapulted. Since Las Pinas is a fishing village prior to its urbanization, excavation of site would also dig information on the kind of vegetation and livelihood of its inhabitants in the past. It is necessary to keep in mind, when it comes to

location, that Las Pinas had its boundaries within Paranaque since the 18th century and was only declared as an independent municipality by 19077.

Furthermore, determining the foundation of the salt beds would shed light to the ownership and operation of the industry. This would yield realization on the status the locals had in the time of the Spanish, in case found that the locals owned and operated the salt beds. In the talks of urbanization in Las Pinas City, the rapid urbanization led to a number of construction of roads and highways. This is also in line with the development of the reclamation bay area. The constant dredging and construction works had led to fall of the salt-making industry together with the fishing community. Owing to the theory of Urban Bias, city areas has created a disparity between country (rural or rurality) and city with respect to consumption, wage and productivity levels. Since the fishing communities in Las Pinas died down and the upper part of the city is undoubtedly booming with various industries, the coastal part of Las Pinas City is left with struggling to find sustenance on the ruins of the old Las Pinas that was rich in water culture.