

COMPLETION REPORT

Production and Trade of Vietnamese Bat-trang and Japanese Hizen Porcelain in the Seventeenth Century:
A Comparative Study

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Dear Madam/Sir,

During the 18-month period from April 2013 to October 2014, I carried out my research project entitled: *Production and Trade of Vietnamese Bát-tràng and Japanese Hizen Porcelain in the Seventeenth Century: A Comparative Study*. Thank to the generous support from the Sumitomo Foundation, I have been able to obtain basically everything I planned in my research proposal. Herewith, I would like to report the major results I have obtained in the framework of the aforementioned research project:

1. Archival studies

Right after the commencement of the research project, in April 2013, I began to order the duplication of archival records relating to my research project, consisting of the classical Chinese documents and early modern English East India Company's records. After receiving the replica, I carefully exploited these valuable collections of documents which took me almost six months to complete the work. I am very happy to inform you that the rare information I could extract from these valuable sources is extremely important for my doctoral dissertation which I am accomplishing, to be defended in the next two years. Also, based on this exotic data, I have been able drafted two research papers and essays to be published in the short time.

2. Fieldworks - Surveys

With the sponsorship from the Foundation, my colleagues and I were able to make two a fieldworks to the two ancient ceramic production centers: Chu Đậu (Hải Dương Province) and Bát Tràng (outside Hanoi), where we collected a great amount of data (especially oral histories, local texts and inscriptions) relating to the history of these ceramic centers. I am particularly excited with the detailed information of the manufacture process as well as the deep understanding of the ceramic techniques such as kaolin selection, glazing and painting etc. All of this information will be of necessity for my doctoral dissertation later on.

During the fieldworks, I have also made a brief survey of the consumption market of these local products, gaining a great deal of interesting information on the current export of these products.

3. Academic Attainment

The academic attainment is multiple, emphasizing particularly the following focuses which I proposed in the research proposal:

1. *A comparative study of the historical context* in which both Bát-tràng and Hizen porcelain emerged as potential products for international markets: For this aspect a recapitulation of the socio-political development in Vietnam and Japan in the late sixteenth – early seventeenth century enabled me to compare the major similarities (feudal societies, agrarian economies etc.) and dissimilarities (Japanese rulers' open-minded outlook versus Vietnamese rulers' conservative viewpoint etc.)

2. *A comparative study of the actual production process of both products*: I recapitulated the overall process of ceramic production in Bat-trang and Hizen kilns, focusing on such detailed works as choosing clay, modeling raw products, glazing products, burning objects, etc. It is preliminarily concluded that, generally speaking, the actual process of ceramic production in Japan and Vietnam is rather similar. Yet the quality of clay and glaze did make the difference between the two products: the Vietnamese Bat-trang is rather raw and less blue compared to the Japanese Hizen.

3. *A statistical study of the export of Bát-tràng and Hizen porcelain to the regional and international markets*: A quantitative study of the export of these two products based on the Western archives and researches allowed me to gain a great deal of statistics. Among all, it is so impressive to see that, during only the last quarter of the seventeenth centuries, almost two millions of Vietnamese Bat-trang wares have been exported mainly to Southeast Asia while the Japanese wares, approximately three million pieces, have majorly been exported to Europe.

4. *A comparative study of the rivalry between the two products in the context of East Asian maritime trade*: Also, based on the statistical study which was mentioned above, I made an attempt to view the rise and fall of international ceramic trade in the early modern East Asian maritime trade, focusing deeply on the fierce competition between the Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese products. This focus reveals an interesting historical fact: even if the Chinese porcelains profoundly dominated regional and international markets, the other regional ceramics could also join the theatre of play should they adjusted themselves well to the consumer's taste. The fact that the Japanese Hizen wares were able to conquer the European high-demanding taste while the Vietnamese Bat-trang fitted well to the insular Southeast Asian market proves this assumption.

5. *A preliminary conclusion on socio-economic impact upon the local societies thanks to the production and trade of Bát-tràng and Hizen porcelain*: Based on all research finding stated above, I was able to come to a number of preliminary conclusion on the socio-economic impact of ceramic production upon the local societies in Japan and Vietnam. Accordingly, the increasing productivity in order to meet the regional and international demand: 1) required a great amount of labor working on this ceramic industry; 2) helped increase the actual income of the local porters and people related to this economic section such as traders, carriers etc., contributing to the overall socio-economic development of the country; 3) contributed to the first sign of environmental degradation in the handicraft areas such as destruction of field, pollution of the air and water etc.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

<p>Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* “Voice from the Past: An Observation of the Technical Heritages in Bat Trang Ceramic Production Process” - Presentation at the History Graduate Seminar (Hanoi, 19 Dec. 2013)
<p>Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* “The Vietnamese Court’s Policies on the Commodity Economy: The Case of Seventeenth-Century Export Ceramics” (intended for <i>Journal of Historical Studies</i>, 2015).* “Voice from the Past: An Observation of the Technical Heritages in Bat Trang Ceramic Production Process” (intended for a book chapter in a monograph or for <i>Journal of Southeast Asian Studies</i>)
<p>Books (NONE)</p>