



# Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Newsletter

Volume I Number 2 October 2004

**Editors :**

Roxanna M. Brown

Pariwat Thammaprechakorn

**Reporters :**

Bonnie Baskin, Allison Diem,

Gary Hill, Timothy Rebbeck,

Walter Kassela

**Museum staff :**

Burin Singtoaj

Utaiwan Chatuporn

Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum  
Bangkok University  
Rangsit campus  
Phahonyothin Road  
Pathum Thani 12120

Tel.: (66-2) 902-0299  
Ext.: 2892  
Fax.: (66-2) 516-6115

museumnewsletter@bu.ac.th

**Inside this issue:**

Klang Aow II	1
Letter from the editor	1
No Ming gap at the Freer	2
News briefs	3

## Klang Aow II

A newly discovered shipwreck that has been given the site name Klang Aow II was investigated off the coast of south-eastern Thailand in May 2004. The investigation was directed by the head of underwater archaeology, Fine Arts Department, Mr. Erbprem Watcharangkul. About 50 fragments of pottery were recovered.

With this new site name, the original Klang Aow ('Central Gulf') wrecksite now becomes 'Klang Aow I.' Klang Aow I is also known in various publications as the Central Bay of Thailand wreck, or the Australia Tide wreck, after the name of the ship used in its recovery in 1992.

Klang Aow II is closer to shore than Klang Aow I, and it is probably about 10-20 years later in date, at least according to the editor's theories about shipwreck chronology. Klang Aow I probably sailed c. 1500-1520, while Klang Aow II most likely belongs to c. 1520-1540.

A major difference between the two cargoes is the presence

of large numbers of Sawankhalok underglaze black ware – none of which were recovered from Klang Aow I – in the Klang Aow II finds. Both ships yielded Sawankhalok celadon and monochrome white ware.

Four Chinese blue and white dishes all show the same basic decoration: an ornamental garden rock and peonies. Similar dishes are known from the Ko Samui wreck. Most of the remainder of the pieces offered for photography were Sawankhalok underglaze black decorated covered boxes. There was also an interesting set of three bowls in the same size and shape from the Sawankhalok kilns: one is celadon glazed, one has underglaze black decoration, and the third shows the remains of monochrome white glaze. Monochrome white is a rare glaze at Sawankhalok, and it is documented only on two shipwrecks, Klang Aow I and Klang Aow II.

Continued page 2 .



.Above: Fragment, front and reverse, of a 'rock and peonies' dish from the Klang Aow II wrecksite off Trat province.

Below: A Sawankhalok potiche-shaped jar with no traces of its original monochrome white glaze and missing its cover.

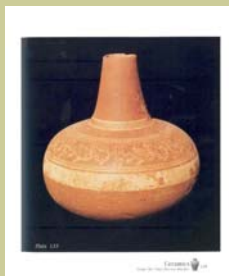
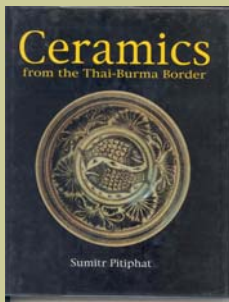
## Letter from the editor

Headlines in this issue include both the Klang Aow II and the Hoi An II shipwreck sites. The first is a genuine official new wrecksite that was explored in early 2004 by the underwater archaeology unit of the Fine Arts Department, Thailand. I am seen in the photograph here with the head of the underwater unit, Erbprem Wacharangkul (left) and long-time master diver Vira Panfak (right), who are both based at the Chantaburi National Maritime museum in southeastern Thailand. A supposed Hoi An II wrecksite in Vietnam, on the other hand, cannot be verified.

Roxanna M. Brown

museumnewsletter@bu.ac.th





No Ming gap at the Freer

TWO exhibits in the current *Luxury and Luminosity: Visual Culture and the Ming Court* (3 July 2004 to 26 June 2005) caught this editor's eye. Both pieces come from the approximate time of the famous Zheng He voyages (c. 1403-33) from China to Southeast Asia, India and Africa. Yet no ceramics similar to early 15<sup>th</sup> century imperial ware have so far been documented in Southeast Asia. The closest ceramics in style are bowls with a scroll of four or five flower blossoms round the exterior wall, and these are found on shipwrecks from about 1470 to about 1530. In the 100 years before 1470, only 6-9 examples of Chinese blue and white altogether are known from 10 shipwreck cargoes. This shortage of blue and white in Southeast Asia is one aspect of the Ming gap.



1. Chinese tankard, blue-and-white, assigned to the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, probably Xuande (1425-34) reign. Freer Gallery of Art and Ar-

thur M. Sackler Gallery.



2. Chinese bowl, Xuande mark, assigned to the Xuande period. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.

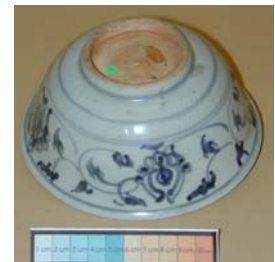
3. Chinese bowl, blue-and-white, recovered from burial site in Thailand, assigned to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum. This example has a brown-glazed mouthrim and an encircled center medallion with prunus branch and half-moon.



4. Chinese bowl, blue-and-white, recovered from a burial site in Thailand. Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum. This example has an encircled fu character at the center me-



dallion. Bowls of this type are documented on the Lena Shoal shipwreck in the Philippines. The illustrated inventory in Franck Goddio et al., *Lost at Sea* (London: Periplus, 2002, p. 179) shows three examples. At least 18 examples more, however, can be counted in a seabed view of the same wrecksite shown in Goddio et al., *Sunken Treasure* (London: Periplus, 2000, pp. 12-13).



5. Another Chinese bowl recovered from a burial site in Thailand. Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum. It has an encircled fu character at the center medallion.

Klang Aow II , continued from page 1



Left, above: Two Sawankhalok bowls of the same size, one of them with underglaze black painted decoration and the other with green celadon glaze. A third bowl (not shown) in the same shape and size had traces of monochrome white glaze. Below, left: This box cover appears to show a stylized Thai version of the rock & peonies pattern seen on the Chinese dishes. Below, right: The body of a rather large covered box.

Sumitr Pitiphat : CERAMICS FROM THE THAI-BURMA BORDER. 7.5X9", 190 pp., 115 plates, hard cover with jacket, 2003. ISBN 974-91468-4-1. Overseas US\$58 (airmail) Price in Thailand Baht 1,600. Send a postal money order, postal bill of exchange, or cheque payable to Pariwat Thammapreechakorn at Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Bangkok University, Rangsit campus; Khlong Luang, Pathum Thani 12120

For more information, e-mail Pariwat.t@bu.ac.th

### Phu Quoc shipwrecks

At least four shipwrecks with Thai ceramics have been reported off Phu Quoc island at the southern tip of Vietnam. There may be more, but it is difficult to keep track of the sites in the absence of official or published reports. The Thai ceramics shown here, which were photographed in a Ho Chi Minh City antiques shop in July 2004, appear to be from a site briefly investigated by Michael Flecker earlier in the year. The ship carried Thai Sawankhalok celadon plates and Sukhothai fishplates. According to my (Editor) own research, this ship most likely sailed about 1425-1450. Earlier ships have underglaze black Sawankhalok plates instead of celadon plates. For the time being, this site could be called the Phu Quoc Nanyang site, because the celadon plates are similar to ones from the Nanyang (site name) wreck off Malaysia. Since it is the second ship investigated by Flecker in this area, he calls it Phu Quoc II.

The photo shows a Sukhothai fishplate at the lower left (sorry for the reflection!) and three Thai Sawankhalok celadon plates, each with simple 'onion-skin' medallions at the cavetto. The pieces were being sold for US\$30-35 each.



### Qilin donation

The *qilin* dish shown here was donated to the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum by Sten Sjostrand who discovered it, along with five other Chinese and two Vietnamese ceramics, beneath the floor boards, beside the keel during his excavation of the Royal Nanhai (this is a site name) shipwreck. This may be the earliest *qilin* dish from an archaeological context in Southeast Asia. There is only one somewhat similar dish, and that is one from the Pandanan wreck in the Philippines. Until there is more archaeological evidence, the two ships are provisionally assigned (by the editor here) to *circa* 1460 (Royal Nanhai) and *circa* 1470 (Pandanan). Comments welcome.



Left: Three *qilin* dishes from the Pandanan shipwreck in the Philippines. This site probably belongs to about 1470. Diameters of the dishes are 14, 21 and 36 cms.

### Hoi An II?

Sometime last year the antiques dealers of Vietnam began stocking new displays of ceramics said to be from a new wrecksite discovered only some 40 nautical miles from the Cu Lao Cham (or Hoi An) wrecksite that was partially excavated in 1999-2000. Ceramics from the original site were sold at Butterfields in San Francisco as Treasures from the Hoi An Hoard on 11-13 October 2000.

The problem is that the new ceramics are indistinguishable from the original Hoi An wreck ceramics. Yet, even while admitting they cannot tell any difference, the dealers of Ho Chi Minh City claim to a man (and woman) that the new supplies are coming from a new site. One dealer who stocks particularly large amounts says he knows for sure there are two sites because he has visited both. By this, one presumes he means that he has seen divers surface at two different sites. The wrecks themselves are some 40 meters deep. The ceramics are probably salvaged with nets.

Provincial authorities, however, told an informant of this editor at VISAL (the national salvage company) that there is only one site. An article in *The Saigon Times Weekly* (13 Sept 2003) in fact mentions that once the official salvage ended, the Ministry of Culture and Information gave Quang Nam province authorities the right to exploit the remaining artifacts. The new supplies of ceramics probably come from this old source. On the whole, it seems unlikely that there is a second site. Since less than half the cargo was recovered in the official salvage, enough was left behind to account for the new dealer supplies. Then why do the dealers insist on a second site? It's anyone's guess. The ceramics shown here were recovered in the official excavation of the original Hoi An (or Cu Lao Cham) wrecksite, which lies off Cham island, central Vietnam.

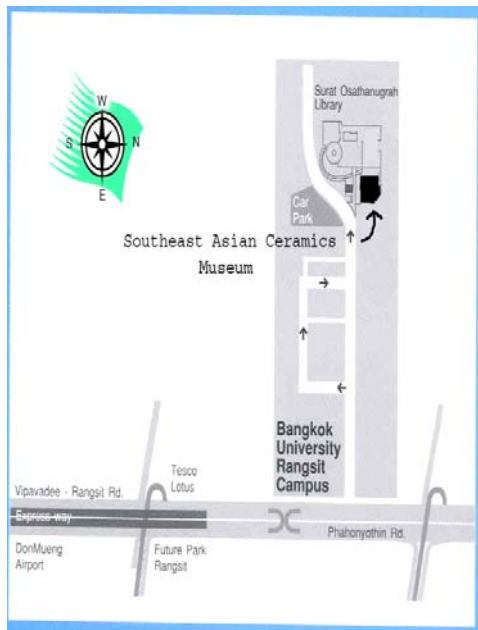


## Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum

The museum houses an initial collection of 2,050 ceramics donated by Mr. Surat Osathanugrah. With few exceptions, these ceramics were all found in Thailand. They include pottery from as early as about 3,000 BC and as late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are ceramics from Thai production centers as well as ceramics that were made elsewhere and imported into Thailand in olden times. Khmer ceramics from old kilns presently located within Thailand are represented. There are also Vietnamese ceramics, a great variety of Chinese ceramics, Burmese, Lao and Japanese ceramics.

Display galleries show the types of ceramics found in Thailand and the technology involved in local Thai production. The museum collections include kiln site wasters and fragments that are essential for teaching ceramics dating and identification. It is also home to one of the largest collections of ceramics from the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries Tak-Omkoi sites of western Thailand. The museum will open to the general public in early 2005.

## Interior museum views



Left: the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum is located at the Rangsit campus, Bangkok University.

## More news briefs

### Unsold shipwreck ceramics

ON A one-day excursion to the sights, antique shops and contemporary stone carvers of Ayutthaya, five volunteers from the National Museum Volunteers group of Bangkok discovered some old shipwreck ceramics that appeared to be from the Rang Kwien shipwreck in the Gulf of Thailand. The shop owner admitted he had bought the pieces more than 20 years ago but had so far been unable to sell them. Exactly the same types of ceramics are known to have been excavated from the Rang Kwien wrecksite in 1977-1982. The latest theory on the age of the ship places it about AD 1380-1400.

The three ceramics shown here include a Chinese bowl (right) that was originally brown-glazed, a Chinese celadon bowl with an unglazed center, and a dish (top) from the Thai San Khampaeng kilns. Shipwrecks later than about 1400 do not yield San Khampaeng ware.



### Champa tour

AFTER a successful symposium on New Scholarship on Champa (5-6 August 2004 at Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore), one of the key organizers, Tran Ky Phuong, led a tour to important Cham sites in central Vietnam. The group poses at the Pho Hai temples in Phan Thiet. Standing (from left) Geoff Wade, Kyle Latinis, John Whitmore, Heng Piphah, and Yashuko Yoshmoto. Front: Kang Fong, Heidi Tan, Tran Ky Phuong, Alison Diem, Vu Phuong Diem, and Thaveeporn Vasavakul.