



# Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Newsletter

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## Inside this issue:

APSARA archaeologists	1, 4
Letter from the editor	1
Letters to the editor	2
News briefs	2-3

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## APSARA archaeologists tour monuments & ceramics sites in Thailand

THE SOUTHEAST Asian Ceramics Museum was proud to help host the visit of seven Khmer archaeologists from the APSARA Authority of Siem Reap, Cambodia. SPAFA (SEAMEO Project on Archaeology & Fine Arts) and the Archaeology Division of the Fine Arts Department, Thailand also facilitated the trip.

The group traveled by land from Siem Reap to guestrooms at SPAFA headquarters, and gave a seminar entitled 'Up-Date on Khmer Archaeology' in our museum the next day, 10 June.

They left the following morning to visit ancient Khmer kiln sites in Buriram province. They also visited old Khmer temples in northeast Thailand, and the Ban Chiang prehistoric site as well as modern-day potteries.

Mr. Ea Darith, Head of the Ceramics Conservation Centre, Dept of Monuments & Archaeology, APSARA Authority, gave the first paper: 'New Data on Ancient Khiln Sites.' Chhay Visoth summarized finds from the Phnom Kulen, or Anlong Thom kilns. Chhay Rachana described the

Kbal Spean site, and Norng Boravy spoke on 'Rescue Excavations at Angkor.' In 'Angkor as a Living Site' Tos Somaneath described relations with residents. Oum Sineth described the environmental management system for Angkor, and Khut Vuthyneath summarized GIS (mapping) studies.

Burin Singtoaj, Education Officer in our museum, accompanied the group upcountry. They also enjoyed the company of Bhujjong Chandivij, a museum director; Karakot Boonlop from the Princess Sirindhorn Anthropology Center; Leedom Lefferts, an American anthropologist; and Sureerat Bupha of Khon Kaen office of the Fine Arts Dept, Thailand.

(More on page 4.)



The group is seen with a couple local people at Prasat Tamean Thom, upper left. They hiked to the newly discovered Prasat Ta Ka-bei temple, and spent time at old Khmer kilns in Buriram province (left).

## Letter from the editor

JUNE WAS an especially busy month, too busy to deliver this issue on time. We could have made a combined June-July issue, but there is such an accumulation of news that we need a separate July issue. Our lead story this month is the visit of the APSARA archaeologists. The visit was in planning for months, and when it finally happened and proceeded flawlessly, we were all overjoyed. Although I wasn't able to accompany the group upcountry, I paid a nostalgic visit to a C-123 at the Royal Thai Air Force Museum later in the month. While working as a freelance journalist in Vietnam 1968-75, I flew in a good many of these aircraft. This one appeared in the movie *Air America*. With me is Mohd Nasrulamiazam Mohd Nasir, a curator at the Ethnology of Malay World Museum, Malaysia. R. M. Brown



## Letters to the editor

*In the March-April 2005 issue of this newsletter, we solicited opinions on the dating of a group of Chinese shards found at a possible shipwreck site near the Sunchi Reef, India. (The shards are shown again to the right.)*

Willy A., Jakarta, wrote:

“It looks like early 19th century blue and white from Fujian, similar to the Tek Sing (1822) wreck.”

Valerie Esterhuizen, South Africa, wrote:

“I have seen sherds with similar decorations, collected from the Portuguese Fort Jesus, Kenya. The body is thick and white with a rather thick translucent glaze over dull dark blue decoration, rather like the Nanking ware. Does the description match the sherds? My guess at a date is late 18th century to early 19th — Qing dynasty Qianlong to Jiajing.”



## 900 trade ceramics from S. E. Asia bring US\$39,000

An American ex-foreign service officer’s collection of some 900 Chinese and Southeast Asian trade ceramics, all originally bought in S. E. Asia, brought US\$39,000 at a Hantman’s auction on May 14, 2005. Judging by the catalogue descriptions, the collector, John Tabor, knew as little about identification as most of his contemporaries did during his 1960s stay in S. E. Asia. Few then could distinguish Chinese



from Vietnam wares, so a common attribution in the sale was ‘Annamese Vietnamese Ming blue and white.’ Two of the best pieces were however Vietnamese: Lot 485 (left), a rare 17th C. polychrome bottle that went for \$108; and Lot 488 (above, left), with



its stunning brushwork, which brought \$240. It belongs to the end of the 14th C. The highest price (all include buyer’s premium) was \$2400 for a green-glazed Chinese lamp (above right), Lot 495. A group of three polychrome stem dishes (right & below right), Lot 480, sold for \$1,020. The dishes, called Bencharong ware in Thailand, were made in China specially for the Thai market.



### China for Siam

The phrase ‘China for Siam,’ which is used by Thai collectors to describe Chinese ceramics made specially for Thailand, provided a title for a discussion by Mr. Bhujjong Chandavij, and Ms. Pimpraphai Bisalputra, a popular writer on Chinese culture in Thailand. The two collectors talked about the history of Chinese ceramics collecting in Thailand and the maritime routes from China to Southeast Asia at the Thailand Cultural Center on 22 April 2005.



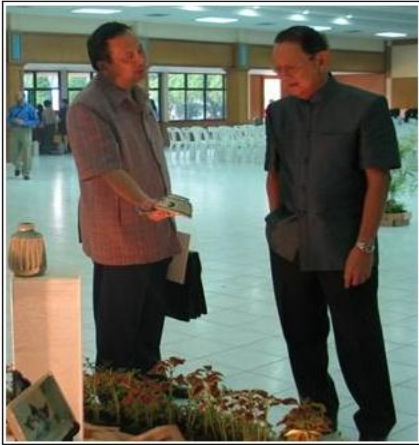
Mr. Chandavij, who formerly worked with the Fine Arts Department, currently sits on the board of directors for the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum.



### Nanyang shipwreck donation

May 2005 — Sten Sjostrand donated one from about 20 Sukhothai fish plates from the Nanyang shipwreck

(c. 1430) to the museum in honor of our opening. It is the earliest documented example of Sukhothai ware with a decorated cavetto. Later fish plates have either a decorated or undecorated cavetto, but earlier ones all have plain interior walls.



## Kalong ceramics

KALONG CERAMICS were introduced to another generation of students in a seminar at Rajapath University, Chiang Rai entitled 'History, Present and Future of Kalong Ceramics.' The seminar was presided over by Surat Osathanugrah, the founder of Bangkok University and patron of the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum; and the museum's Education Officer, Burin Singtoaj, gave a report on ceramics recovered from old burial sites in the mountains along the Thai-Burma border. Burin had made a survey of activity in the mountains in 2003 and discovered that sites are still being found. The sites first became known in 1984-86 when tens of thousands of ceramics, including large numbers of Kalong ware, were unearthed. Before 1984, unbroken examples of Kalong ware were extremely rare. Since 1984, they are less rare, but now there are also vast numbers of modern copies being sold as antique Kalong ceramics.

**Photo:** Surat Osathanugrah is shown at right, and Bhujjong Chandivij at left.

## Ca Mau shipwreck boxes in Bangkok

Chinese ware from the Ca Mau shipwreck (c. 1723-1735), Vietnam, continues to appear in Bangkok's Chatuchak weekend market. Because of their similarity, a recent supply of covered boxes from the wreck are mixed with blue and white Vietnamese ware from the Hoi An shipwreck (c. 1500-1520) that was also excavated off Vietnam. The Chatuchak sellers are unaware of the difference in age and provenance. The boxes are priced at about US\$25 each. The Ca Mau wreck was found in 1998, and excavated in 1998-1999. Shortly after the discovery large quantities of Ca Mau ceramics filled antique shops in Ho Chi Minh City, but the supply is now limited.

For excavation finds, see Nguyen Dinh Chien, *The Ca Mau Shipwreck 1723-1735*, Hanoi: National Museum of Vietnamese History, 2002. These two examples are from Chatuchak market.



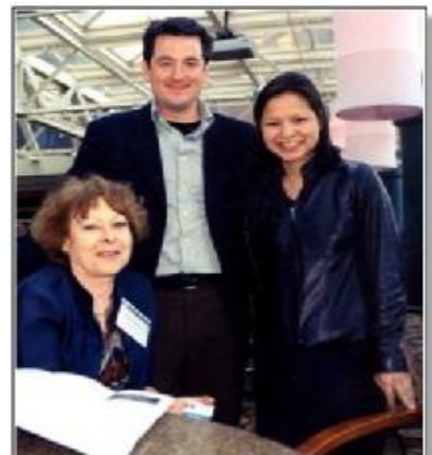
## Marine archaeology conference New Delhi

AN ALUMNUS OF THE Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum's course on Historical Ceramics, Mohd. Sherman Bin Sauffi, assistant curator of the Maritime Archaeology Museum, currently based at the National Museum Kuala Lumpur, gave an important paper recently on Malaysian archaeology. The paper was presented at the International Seminar on Marine Archaeology 2005, 18-19 March 2005, held at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. It was organized by the Indian Navy and the Archaeological Survey of India. Sherman's paper was entitled 'Maritime Links between Malaysia and India.' It reviewed the known archaeological sites in Malaysia which have revealed evidence of early contact with India. He also discussed the development of maritime archaeology in Malaysia, highlighting recent shipwreck excavations. (Incidentally, we were delighted when one of the organizers of the New Delhi conference, S. P. Gupta, made a private visit to our museum while attending a Sanskrit conference in Bangkok held during 23-26 June.)

## Association of Asian Studies Chicago 2005

The director of the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum, Roxanna Brown, gave a talk entitled 'Ayutthaya shipping revealed by old shipwreck cargoes.' She explained that Thai trade ceramics export through Ayutthaya was once thought to have ended in the 1460s. The first suggestion of later shipments came in 1980 from a shipwreck in the Gulf of Thailand that yielded Thai Sawankhalok ceramics in association with Jiajing (1522-66) Chinese ware. More shipwrecks since that time prove that Sawankhalok ware was still being exported in volume during the middle 16<sup>th</sup> century. The exact end date is uncertain but must be about 1560-1580. Wanli (1573-1619) wrecks do not carry cargoes of Sawankhalok ware. Dr. Brown's talk was part of a panel on 'Re-accessing Ayutthaya.' Pattaratorn Chirapravati, Caverlee Cary, and John Listopad were also on the panel.

**At right:** Dr. Brown at the AAS meeting with Bryce Beemer, a graduate student, and Dr. Nhung Tuyet Tran, University of Toronto.



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. There is pottery from as early as about 3,000 BC and as late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

There are ceramics from production centers in Thailand as well as ceramics that were imported in olden times from neighboring countries.

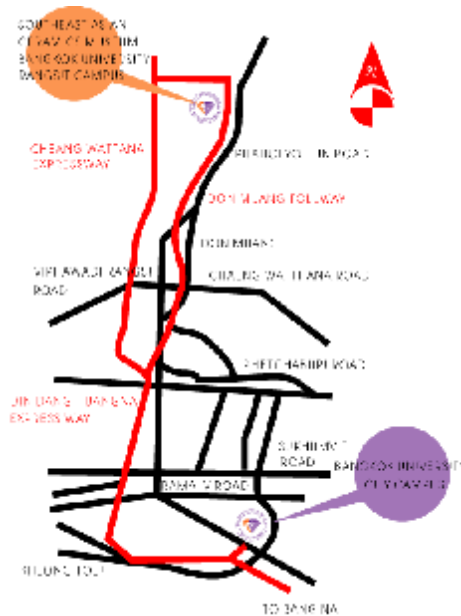
Khmer ceramics from old kilns presently located within Thailand are represented. There are also Vietnamese ceramics, a great variety of Chinese ceramics, Burmese, Lao and Japanese ceramics.

Display galleries show all 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 formally opened to the general public on 11 May 2005.

## Interior museum views



The displays seen here show (upper left) a variety of storage jars (upper right) an outline chronology for Thai trade ceramics (forefront, lower right) the mixture of Thai, Chinese and Vietnamese ceramics made about AD 1380-1430.

The Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum is located at the Rangsit campus of Bangkok University.

Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum  
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## APSARA archaeologists upcountry

THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS went by van directly from guestrooms at SPAFA headquarters to old Khmer kilns in Ban Kruat district, Buriram province. They visited a site museum built over an excavation at Ban Sawai, saw other kilns at Nai Chiang, and then visited with local teachers who have a museum of ceramics at Ban Kruat Wittayan school.

The next day they visited Prasat Ban Phluang (upper left photo) in Surin province where an important excavation that uncovered broken pots and fragments of Khmer pottery known to have been produced at the Ban Kruat kilns was conducted in the mid 1970s. Ban Phluang, which was built c. AD 1050 and seems to have fallen into disuse c. AD 1125, offers the only archaeological evidence for the age of the Buriram kilns.

The group also visited Phnom Rung, Tamean (lower left photo) and other temples along an old road from Angkor to Pimai. Later they went north to see the prehistoric excavations at Ban Chiang village, had lunch on the banks of the Mekong at Nong Khai (middle, left & lower right), and visited a modern pottery at Phon Phisai (upper right photo) near Khon Kaen. The ruins of old kilns from about a century ago were also seen in a field at Phon Phisai (middle right photo).

