



Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Newsletter

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Searching for Zheng He in Champa

The search is on for the actual landing place for Admiral Zheng He's fleet in Champa. Champa was a standard stop on Zheng He's treasure ship' voyages from China to S. E. Asia, India and sometimes Africa during AD 1405-33. All historical evidence points to the Qui Nhon area, but no specific site has yet been identified. Dr. R. Brown from the S. E. Asian Ceramics Museum argues that the port could be identified on the basis of ceramic evidence. To test the theory, archaeologist Dinh Ba Hoa dug a test pit in a promising area before Brown, along with museum officials Burin Singtoaj and Bhujjong Chandavij visited Qui Nhon during 24-26 April. The site was thick with Chinese and some Japanese shards but all the pieces were 17th C, without a deeper

earlier level. During a meeting in the Binh Dinh museum director's office, Dr. Brown presented shipwreck data that shows contrary to conventional belief that Zheng He period sites will have mainly Longquan celadon ware and little or no blue and white. Dr. Hoa feels certain that the location of the old port was the same from Zheng He's time to the late 17th C. when it was moved to Qui Nhon city after the river mouth at the old port became too shallow. He will continue to dig test pits in the general area.

Right: The excavation pit in fields in the old port area. Binh Dinh archaeologist Dinh Ba Hoa stands at centre in photo to immediate right, talking to Champa specialist Tran Ky Phuong.



Far left: Chinese shards in the excavation. Near left: on site consultation of researchers and villagers. Dr. Brown sits front center, Burin stands front right.

Below: Museum Director Mr. Dang Huu Tho presides over a meeting at the Binh Dinh provincial museum on 26 April.



Letter from the editor

The big event for March 2006 was the Indo-Pacific Prehistoric Assoc (IPPA) meeting at the University of the Philippines. While in Manila, I gave two lectures. One (for IPPA & Museum Volunteers of the Philippines) was a re-evaluation of the Calatagan burial sites at Batangas, which shipwreck evidence shows are largely early 16th C. (rather than 15th C.) The other (for the Oriental Ceramic Society of the Philippines-OCSPP) argued, contrary to a TV documentary, that Admiral Zheng He carried Chinese celadon overseas on his AD 1405-33 voyages--not blue and white ware. Illustrations for the OCSPP lecture showed early Thai Sawankhalok green glazed dishes recovered from two shipwrecks of about AD 1380-1400. John Forbes realized he'd seen a similar piece, which had been found in the Philippines and once belonged to Dr. Arturo de Santos, a famous Manila collector. He procured it, and sent it to us in the hands of OCSPP member Pilar B. Martinez-Miranda as a gift to our museum from the OCSPP. Its bluish green color is stunning. Thank you, members of the OCSPP !! A copy of the book on page 4 was given to us by China scholar Li Jian'an (an editor of the book) who attended the IPPA meeting and OCSPP member Rita Tan. RMB



OCSPP member Pilar B. Martinez-Miranda presents a valuable early green-glazed Thai Sawankhalok plate (circa 1380-1400) found in the Philippines to the S. E. Asian Ceramics Museum.

Letters to the editor

More on collar-neck jars

Thank you for the newsletter for the period of March/April 2006. For those interested, jars with similar or identical shape, size, lugs, decoration and bulge ring are also illustrated from a book named *A Thousand Years of Stoneware Jars in the Philippines* (1992). I have included these images scanned from the above book by a collector who shared and expressed his opinions on my brown glazed storage jar from the Asian Art Forums. —Lim Lee Seng, Myanmar



Earliest Vietnam trade ware

This Vietnamese underglaze black sherd from Ujung Batee Kapal was found along with a nice fragment of Yuan blue and white. [Both below right.] Can you confirm that this is c14th? This site is a former coastal habitation place located on a coral limestone headland at the eastern side of the Krueng Raya, the 'Great bay' of Aceh. It is characterized by eroded soils, numerous early Islamic *nisan* or grave markers, Indian style earthenware, Chinese late Song and Yuan Zhejiang, Longquan, Jingdezhen Yuan blue and white wares, Vietnamese underglaze black & underglaze blue; and some Thai stoneware. —E. Edwards McKinnon, Banda Aceh

Editor: Its not certain if Yuan blue and white, which ceased production according to Chinese scholars about AD 1352, and the earliest Vietnamese painted wares overlap or not. A similar Vietnamese underglaze black shard was recovered in Japan from a context that might be as early as AD 1330 but the evidence is not certain. Otherwise the earliest context for the Vietnamese piece is the Rang Kwien shipwreck which also carried Hongwu (1368-98) coins. I tentatively assign the wreck to circa 1380-1400. For now the only site from c. 1325-1380 is Santa Anna in the Philippines, with Yuan blue and white but no Vietnamese. Please keep us informed about this VERY interesting site!

Cirebon/Nan Han shipwreck

Recently there was an article in a French newspaper about a 10th century shipwreck near Cirebon with a French diver arrested. John Guy was in one photo, identified as a ceramics expert. Do you have more news? The ceramics sound exciting. Any CD? — Marie-France Dupoizat, Paris

Editor: The *Newsletter* asked John Guy to comment, which he does below, but one can sense his reticence to speak while the legal situation in Indonesia is touchy and unclear. In a short additional aside, he wrote "no photographs, everything is embargoed." The *Newsletter* has been following this very intriguing wreck which was excavated over almost two years in 2004-2005. We call it the Nan Han wreck since it reportedly yielded coins from the 10th C. Southern Han (or Nan Han) dynasty. See our Nov-Dec 2004 and November 2005 issues. Besides ceramics, the ship reportedly also carried Chinese bronze mirrors, and pearls, gems and jewelry. RMB

John Guy answers: Another major cargo has been discovered in the Java Sea. A licensed underwater excavation has been undertaken and a substantial cargo of ceramics and other artefacts has been recovered over two seasons. The bulk of the cargo was made up of 10th century Chinese monochrome wares, principally white and green wares identifiable as belonging to the Five Dynasties (907-960). A number of metal objects associated with western Indonesia were also recovered, together with glass vessels assumed to be of Middle Eastern origin. Sufficient ship timbers survived to establish that the vessel belonged to the Malay ship-building tradition. The cargo is currently embargoed in Jakarta whilst a legal dispute between different Indonesian ministries is resolved.

— J. Guy

More troubled waters

I thought you might be interested to know that the *Kompas* newspaper (11 March 2006) reported the Sambas Navy ship caught four fishing ships involved in looting at the southern island of Datu, West Kalimantan. Two ships escaped, but 26 fishermen were detained. The Navy seized 261 old ceramics in the form of jars, tempayan, ewers and bowls. The fishermen said that the depth of the wreck was about 25-30 meters. They confessed they had already sold pieces to someone with the initials IW, a Pontianak citizen. The ceramics appear to be Song dynasty. — Zheng J. I., Jakarta



Editor: The photo (above) was scanned from the newspaper article and so it is not very clear. The squat small storage jars that take up most of the photo seem to be similar to ones from the Sinan wreck (c. 1325). Hopefully we will learn more. One can guess that the ceramics are being identified as Song because they do not include blue and white.

1576 shard?

I found this shard at a wrecksite off Florida (USA). I am looking for a specific wreck from AD 1576, and I wonder if this shard is from that time? — Jeffery, USA



Editor: Help! Can anyone identify the shard?



Vietnamese underglaze black ware at left probably late 14th C., and Yuan dynasty blue and white from about 1327-1352; both from Ujung Batee Kapal, Aceh, Sumatra. Photographs by Edward Edwards McKinnon

Kiln sites mapping in Cambodia
Cambodian archaeologist Chhay Visoth sends news that a team from APSARA Authority are spending 20 days this month (May 2006) mapping the Anlong Thom kilns on Phnom Kulen. [Photo at far right shows new Anlong Thom finds.] In March the team re-visited the Pakaong kiln site east of Angkor. A single kiln was first noted there in 1995, and a 2nd kiln was discovered in 2005 during an investigation of destruction at the site. On a visit in March this year, Visoth found both further destruction of the area and what appears to be four further kiln mounds. Shards at the site represent mainly large unglazed stoneware vessels such as *kaam* (flared mouth, squat body jars; photo at upper left) water jars and large basins.



Pakaong kiln mound & *kaam* shards(above); new finds from Anlong Thom



Glorious Pots exhibition in Washington D. C. area

'Glorious Pots', an exhibition of the Washington D. C. Oriental Ceramics Group (WOCG) enjoyed a spectacular opening at Towson University's new Asian Arts Center (see www.towson.edu/asianart). Louise Cort (center photo, at right) gave the opening talk on 8 April, and guest curator David Rehffuss (left photo, with white hair) gave a gallery tour. Louise told a detective tale about her search for sources of decoration for 3 Khmer vessels donated by the Hauge Family, and then showed the contemporary use of large storage jars in long houses of the Vietnamese Central Highlands. The exhibition is also featured at the ceramic group's new website www.washingtonocg.org where all the exhibits are shown along with a historical essay by Rehffuss. Nineteen members of the WOCG lent pieces for the exhibition which will be on view Monday-Fridays through 20 May 2006. Photographs by Carol Kim Retka.

Researcher says some Sukhothai-period *naga* are actually *makara*
Vietnamese scholar Mr. Phan Anh Tu, who is spending 9 months in Thailand researching the history of the *naga* in Thailand's art, has interesting things to say about Sukhothai period ceramic images that are called 'naga' or *tua nak* in Thai. During his visit to our museum, he said that he learned that the Sukhothai-period images acquired characteristics not seen in earlier art, and Tu attributes these to Chinese influence. From the Chinese dragon, the images acquire a pair of deer horns, 2 or 4 legs with clawed feet, and a pearl in the mouth. Yet, he says, not all the images are a *naga* — some are *makara*, another aquatic creature. The *naga*, he says, has a more angular face, multiple heads and long sinuous body. The *makara* has one head with a curled elongated snout, wide mouth with sharp teeth, and it may have forelegs. Some images show a *makara* spewing a *naga*.

The S. E. Asian Ceramics Museum has 8 such images. Three from the Sukhothai kilns are all *makara*. Those from Sawankhalok include 3 *makara*, one *makara* spewing a 3-headed *naga*, and one unidentified image with both multiple heads and forelegs that may be a *hera*, still another aquatic creature born from a *naga* father and dragon mother. After 10 years at the Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, Tu will return to teach at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City.



Above left: *makara* spewing a 3-headed *naga* which itself spews another *naga*. Right: single *makara*. Both Sawankhalok brown and white ware, beginning 16th century, Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum.

The CENTRE FOR PORTUGUESE NAUTICAL STUDIES [CPNS] announces its 2nd international conference on Maritime Archaeology & History which will take place in Mossel Bay from 6-8 August 2006. Local and international presenters will take part in discussions on Maritime archaeology, Maritime history, Trade & Trade ceramics, Ships & Shipbuilding, Shipwrecks & Survivors, South African shipwrecks, shipwreck legislation & museums. Various sponsorship/marketing opportunities are available to companies wishing some international and local exposure. For more details, see www.cpnssa.org. e-mail: cpns@cpnssa.org Fax: +27 12 3192436 +27 82 9402423 Paul Brandt; +27 82 9291142 Valerie Esterhuizen; +27 82 5572777 Andrie Meyer

Papers on ceramics will be presented by Prof Cao Jian Wen (Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute), Monique Crick (Baur Collection), Brian McElney (Museum of East Asian Art), Christine van der Pijl-Ketel and Valerie Esterhuizen among others. Several of the papers will discuss Chinese trade ware recovered from Portuguese shipwrecks.



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 19th century.

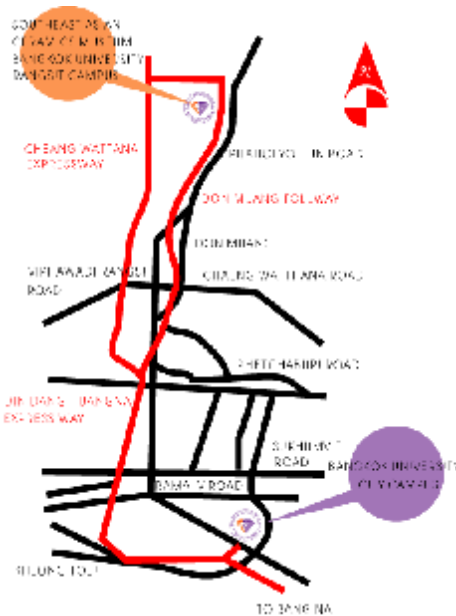
There are ceramics from production centers in Thailand as well as ceramics that were imported in olden times from neighboring countries.

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 14th-16th centuries Tak-Omkoi sites of western Thailand.

The museum formally opened to the general public on 11 May 2005.



Interior views of the museum (from upper left) show a variety of storage jars; a 5-period outline chronology for Thai trade ceramics; and an open 'sandpit' mixture of Thai, Chinese and Vietnamese ceramics made about AD 1380-1430, with Northern Thai ceramics in the background.

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For enlarged map, go to <http://museum.bu.ac.th>

Xi Sha Islands shipwreck sites

Zhang Wei, editor, *The Xisha Islands Underwater Archaeology Project Report*, produced by the Underwater Archaeology Research Office of the National Museum of Chinese History and the Cultural Heritage Administrative Office of Hainan Province, 2005. ISBN 7-03-016108-4. Rembini 360. In Chinese, except Foreword and Contents pages in English. (Cover shown at near right.)

THIS IS A REPORT on the Xisha Islands Underwater Archaeology Project. During 18 December 1998 to 25 January 1999, 13 sites with Chinese ceramics were recorded on the Xisha Islands of the South China Sea (280 km SE of Hainan, east of Vietnam) and about 1500 ceramics were collected. Three possible wrecksites were visited, and 10 undefined sites with ceramics. The best documented probable wrecksite is Huaguangjiao I (white glazed cover box designs shown here at upper right) which offers ceramics similar to the Breaker Reef site in the Philippines and Java Sea Wreck in Indonesia, both believed to be about mid 13th century. Two pages with brown-glazed wares in the Huaguangjiao I section however show pieces that could be earlier. Illustrations from the other two possible wrecksites also show contemporaneous pieces together with a small number of pieces that must be a century or more different in date. The two sites are Beijiao I, with mostly late Kitchen Qing (near right below); and Beijiao I (far right below) with Jiaying (1522-66) ware as well as pieces that must be from the 17th-18th C. One of the 10 other sites — Yinyu 2 — is interesting for yielded large amounts of celadon that appear to be from the time of the Zheng He voyages (early 15th C.), and no blue and white ware. The book is a valuable edition to Asian maritime archaeology literature.

W. Kassel

