



# Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Newsletter

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Past newsletters at <http://museum.bu.ac.th>

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## Two ships both *circa* AD 1300 found, 2 different fates

AMAZINGLY, two shipwrecks *circa* AD 1300 were reportedly found within months of each other in 2006. One was apparently completely looted, but negotiations to excavate the second are underway. Some examples from each site on the antiques market are similar to the *Shinan* (*circa* 1325) Korea wreck, while others suggest a date closer to 1275-1300—the times of Marco Polo. For the first site ('Datu Island') there was a short Indonesian article in *Kompas* newspaper on 11 March 2006; Jakarta sources say it was totally looted soon thereafter. The second (said to be off My Duc, Phu My district, Binh Dinh province) was mentioned in a Vietnam news report in June 2006. The coincidence aroused suspicions that Vietnamese fishermen had obtained looted ceramics from Indonesia. At press time, officials at Binh Dinh Museum say they are convinced about a wrecksite and that Anh Duong Co has been commissioned to survey and excavate. See photographs of antiques market pieces brought in by fishermen here and on page 5. RMB



### Letter from the editor

FOR ANYONE HERE IN BANGKOK, please note our up-coming workshop with Bonnie Baskin (see directly above).

During a trip to Jakarta (Mar-Apr *Newsletter*, p.1), there was depressing news about the Yuan dynasty wreck that made news briefly last year. Local sources said the site was completely emptied without any documentation whatsoever. We did see a stunning large celadon censer with thick relief decoration round its cylindrical body in a private collection said to be from the site, and there were reports of twin-fish dishes and 22 cm high jars. Luckily, there appears to be another wreck from the same period in Vietnam which will hopefully be professionally excavated. Because of its importance, an extra page is added in this issue to preview reported finds. RMB

Here & below:  
On sale in HCMinh City, photos by W.



More photos page 5 !!



**CARE & REPAIR OF ANTIQUE CERAMICS** 4-hour workshop with professional USA conservator Bonnie Baskin at Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum, Bangkok Univ, Rangsit campus. Offered twice: Thurs 21 & Sat 23 June 2007. In English, Thai translation. 10-person limit.

Topics: Trouble-shooting types of damage & remedies; general & specific cleaning; storage & documentation; spotting old repairs etc.

Baht 1,600 fee  
Contact [Roxanna.b@bu.ac.th](mailto:Roxanna.b@bu.ac.th) (02 902-0299 x 2893) or [Burin.s@bu.ac.th](mailto:Burin.s@bu.ac.th) (02 902-0299 x 2894) VERY SOON!

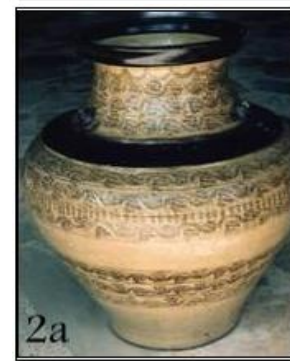
Private consultation with Ms Baskin by appointment 20-23 June 2007

## Lao jars?

By Don Hein

ABOUT 15 years ago [early 1990s] medium size flared mouth glazed jars of considerable beauty but without provenance appeared on the antiques market and were usually given a Northern Thai attribution. For several reasons I believe most or all were made in Laos, perhaps at several sites.

About that time an up-country dealer in Thailand was buying jars of the type (most with damage to the mouth), repairing them



## Letters to the editor

### Martaban jars

There is a small museum at the government office in Moulmein (Martaban) that displays old jars found in the area; one (Fig 1) is similar to the example in your last issue [March-April '07] (fig. 1). 'Martaban' probably reflects the point of trade rather than place of manufacture. Over several visits in the 80s and 90s I unsuccessfully searched the area for signs of jar production as suggested by Yule & Burnell 1903 and Gutman 1978. Twante, where hundreds of old kilns have been found in recent years, is the most likely place of origin. Another example (fig. 2) of the same jar type (but with four lugs) is in the local Buddhist *wat* at Myohaung near Maung Mya in the Ayerarwaddy River delta, an area with an ancient trading history. It appears two forms were made: one with a wide (stable) base (e.g. examples illustrated) and the other with a narrow extended base to facilitate partial burial into the



Figure 1 above. Figure 2 below



### 9th C. Angkor

IN REGARD TO questions about the earliest bulk shipments of Chinese trade ceramics [Newsletter Dec 2006], let me mention finds at Angkor. In order to study the earliest settlements in the Angkor area, the French Cambodian Archaeological Mission on the Development of the Angkor Region directed by Christophe Pottier (EFEO) investigated the Roluos region and, since 2004, conducted three excavation campaigns in the surroundings of Trapéang Phong and Bakong temples. Located in southern Roluos on the shore of Tonlé Sap lake, Trapéang Phong (which is thought to have been the original core of Haryharalaya city) is a characteristic preangkorian site, and 25 test pits have been dug there so far. At Bakong, the aim is to understand the earliest organized and geometrized capital centered on a huge monumental pyramid, especially since Bakong is still used as a model to understand and explain subsequent Angkorian capitals. Various pits and long section trenches have been excavated since 2004 in the outer enclosure of Bakong.

In this framework, I was asked to study the imported ceramics collected from these excavations. The work is still in progress and many dating variables are being considered. Nevertheless, the finds tend to confirm the appearance of Chinese ware at Angkor as early as the 9th century, a period previously very poorly documented since the times of BP Groslier.

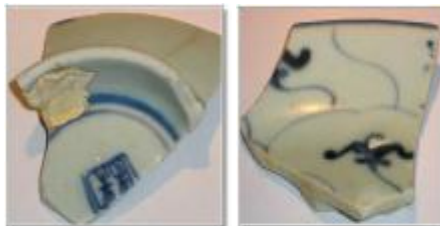
—Marie France Dupoizat, Paris



### Beachcomber

I found these shards on the beach on Pulau Besar, Malaysia. Can you please tell me what they are?

Sterling Kassela, age 7, Singapore  
Editor: They are early 19th C. Chinese porcelain. The first (left) is from a bowl similar to ones from the Desaru (c.1830) wreck off Johor. The other is similar to dishes from the *Tek Sing* (1822) wreck in Indonesia. You have a sharp eye, keep up the good work!



### Christian monogram?

About The Wanli Wreck bowl in your recent issue (March-April '07, p. 1), this type is #7381 in our inventory and we identified the characters as *wan* and *gu* in Chinese. Together they mean 'ancient'. The Wanli report has been slightly delayed but we expect to see it within a couple weeks.

—Sten Sjostrand, Malaysia



### Sunken blue?

I'm on fieldwork in Palawan right now. And I wonder if you could help make an identification. As I mentioned at the Chinese Trade Ceramics conference in Singapore (12-14 March 2007), we have recovered some fragments of blue and white ware about a month ago. I am sending a photo of a dish. Can you identify it? — Bobby Orillaneda, Underwater Archaeology Unit, National Museum, Manila

Editor: The other photos show fragments too encrusted with sea grit to identify. My guess is 17th C. Can a reader help?



### Chocolate bases

I don't think the chocolate base is a counting device as suggested in your recent issue [Letters to the Editor, March-April 2007] because it's so very common, even a preponderance of pieces have it at certain periods. Personally, am satisfied with a mundane decorative/pleasing-finish explanation, but let's keep up the dialogue!

— John Stevenson, Seattle



## Villaneuva collection on view

FOR MANY YEARS the Roberto T. Villanueva collection was displayed privately in an annex at the Villanueva home. Some 450 pieces of the nearly 4000 objects now on loan are now being shown at the Ayala Museum in Makati, Metro Manila. The pieces were chosen by Rita Tan who notes the wide range of material which includes a fine collection of rare spotted *qingbai* miniatures that were acquired from H. Otley Beyer. The collection was acquired mostly in the 1960s and thus is an historically important remnant of ceramics once found in the Philippines. The exhibition is on view 15 February to 27 May 2007. Photograph at right (sent by Rita Tan) shows Chinese blue and white including types known from the Lena Shoal (c. 1488-1505) shipwreck.



▽ ▽ ▽

WE WOULD LIKE TO report evidence for gilt ceramics in Vietnam prior to the excavation of the Hoi An shipwreck in 1999 [Newsletter, Nov-Dec 2006, p.1]. This came during the 7th excavation in 2004 of the Royal Tombs of the Lê dynasty in Lam Kinh, Thanh Hoa province by archaeologists of the Vietnam History Museum.

Among the debris of Vietnamese, Japanese and Chinese ceramics, there was some especially fine ceramics which were used by the Lê dynasty royal family in the 15th century. This included fragments from two big vases with underglaze blue and over-glaze enamels together with gilding with actual gold metal. Shards from the upper part of the vases varied in thickness from 0.8 to 1.2 cms. The clay and basic glazing technique were typically Vietnamese.

## Gilt royal Vietnamese ware

by Nguyễn văn Đoàn and Bùi Kim Dinh

The excavation was on land occupied by Lê dynasty (1428-1527) kings. It was a secondary citadel after their residence in Thang Long (present-day Hanoi). Based on the shape, composition and glaze, the experts dated the ceramics to the 15th century.

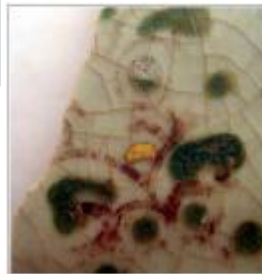
We are sure about there being actual gold on the vases because some bits fell off, and it is metal. It is actual GOLD which was applied over the glaze, NOT overglaze yellow as usual. Lam Kinh is an area of royal tombs and many of the ceramics were especially high quality and used only at Lê royal residences. These finds pre-date the Hoi An shipwreck examples of gilt ware.



## Tho Ha ceramics today



SOME 20 Hanoi members of the Friends of Vietnam Heritage made a half-day trip to the village of Tho Ha in April. Once a famous potting center said to have been founded in 1465, today it hosts a single family of potters. The visitors found instead village-wide rice paper making. After the communal house and a rice paper workshop, they visited the single pottery. In olden times the most famous products of Tho Ha were elaborate unglazed censers. Today the primary product is tieu, coffin-like containers for the second burial of bones. Information provided by Maggie Bodemer, Photograph by Caroline de Baan.



*Shards from Vietnamese ware with underglaze blue, overglaze enamels and gilt decoration. Lam Kinh excavation 2004.*



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.

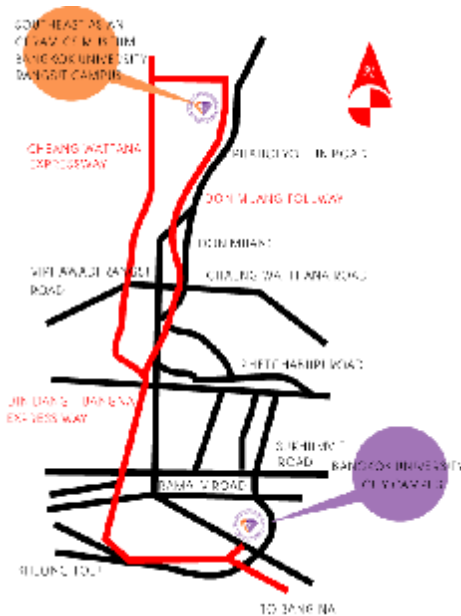
There are ceramics from production centers in Thailand as well as ceramics that were imported in olden times from neighboring countries.

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 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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THAILAND

Hours: Tues-Sat, 9 - 4 p.m.

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

## Lao jars? (from p. 1)

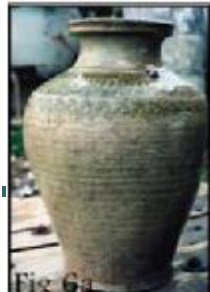
with coloured resin (to a very high standard) and putting them on the Bangkok market (figs 1-5). According to the dealer (who over the years had given me reliable information), the jars came across the river at Chiang Kong from Laos.

In 1991, driven by the name, I searched at Ban Sangkhalok on the left bank of the Mekong River near Luang Prabang, finding jar shards (fig. 7) on the surface and also kilns. In the following year while looking for signs of ceramic production along the river between Luang Prabang and Houei Xai in Laos I noted jars of the type in several

villages near Muang Pak Beng, Oudom Xai Province (figures 6a,b). I was told the jars were found in the hills on the north side of the river, in some cases at burial sites. I think that some of the jars were made at Ban Sangkhalok but suspect there may be at least one other site further up the river.

As a final note, despite a fairly extensive search I did not find any sign of production at Ban Pheung in Bo Keo province, or at Phu Ka in the mountains of Louang Namtha province.

Don Hein, Adelaide



*Continued from p. 1, Special preview of newly reported shipwreck*

## Ceramics said to be from shipwreck off Binh Dinh, Vietnam

Photographs from Ho Chi Minh City shops by W. Kassela, except white monochrome covered boxes (bottom left) by Augustine Vinh

