



Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Newsletter

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CHINA SHIP?

Comments by Pierre-Yves Manguin on the ship (identifying it as S. E. Asian) drawn on a Vietnamese plate appeared in our July-Aug 2007 issue, and K. L. Tam argued that it was Chinese in the Sept-Oct 2007 issue. The plate itself (a stem-plate, from the Hoi An wrecksite, AD 1480-1505) belongs to Ho Chi Minh City collector Nguyen Van Dzong. Manguin gives a final assessment below. -Editor



"I maintain most of what I said earlier (except the Madura vessel I referred to is a *janggolan*, not a *golekan*).

Deck and superstructure

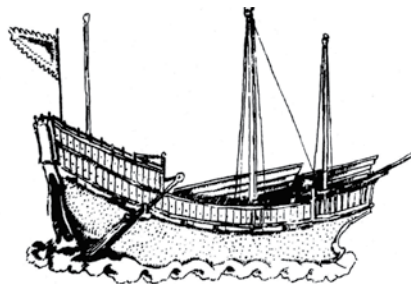
"The superstructures on deck (the pagoda like aft-castle) is very decorative, and does not make much sense for a true sea-going ship (it would be completely un-seaworthy); either it is due to the artist's freedom, which I doubt, since the rest is very well represented, or this is a ceremonial boat of some sort, a hypothesis reinforced by the seated character on the deck, in a central position, under a large umbrella. Its overall style is 'Chinese' like, indeed ... as expected on a Vietnamese dish. No conclusions can be drawn from this point.

"The ship is otherwise very well depicted and appears to be large, judg-

ing from the well represented three masts. These are not tripod masts, as expected on some Malay-world ships; they are rather Chinese (or Vietnamese), as noted by K. L. Tam. But we know of 16th C similar masts in S. E. Asian ships depicted in the late 16th to the early 19th C. See for instance Godinho de Eredia's *jong* of the Chinese of Melaka (with S. E. Asian quarter rudders and Chinese style sails). [drawing below]

Protruding keel

"Now the hull. There is no way the protruding timber (yellow) at the stem can be part of the smaller sampan in the background. The depiction is perfectly clear: the keel piece of the large ship projects in front of the triangular,



flat stem panel. Such a flat stem post is indeed to be found on the Sinan wreck (Korean or Chinese ship?), and on some sailing vessels observed in the early 20th C in Chinese waters (see Worcester's books); however, none of them have a protruding keel piece. This is a typically S. E. Asian feature. (It is well documented and originates from the fact that plank-built boats evolved from enlarged dugout canoes). I enclose pictures of two Madurese *janggolan*, both taken in 1981 on the coasts of Java. The protruding keel is clearly visible on both, as is the flat, triangular stem post.

"As a matter of conclusion, we should first remark the difficulties in comparing depictions of sailing vessels and what we know of them from contemporary shipwrecks. The archaeological site usually preserves only the bottom timbers, those, precisely that are not depicted in repre-

sentations of sailing ships, as they are under water. Conversely, the images rarely give clues about ship structure (rigging, and much of what is found above deck is known to be easily modified; the hull structure is far more resilient; one example: the well known Bugis *pinisi* of the 1970s had long used European rig – hence their Dutch name – but hulls were still built exactly as in the 16th C, in a pure S. E. Asian tradition). Fortunately, this plate shows one structural detail (the



protruding keel piece) that can be put to good use. Unfortunately, the tell-tale steering gear (i.e. quarter rudders at the sides) is not represented in this case. What we have therefore is a mix of 'Chinese' and S. E. Asian. It is most probably another representative of the hybrid 'South China Sea tradition'."

-- Pierre-Yves Manguin, EFEO



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ms Bui thi Hy?

The Chinese character 戲 on the Vietnam vase is NOT part of a name. [See page 1, July-August 2007 issue; vase shown below] Together with the next character *zuo* they formed one phrase '戲作': 'done for fun' or 'made for pleasure'. One finds this expression frequently on Chinese artifacts.

Although one cannot completely exclude the possibility that Bui Thi (裴氏 'Pei shi') was a woman, the chance that it means 'the man whose surname is Bui' is much greater. In Tang dynasty China there was a well known book 封氏闻见记 (*Things heard and seen by Feng shi*), and in the Song dynasty there was a book called *Things heard and seen by Shao shi* (邵氏闻见录). Both persons – surnamed Feng and surnamed Shao -- were well known scholars. In other words, it was more likely that those who had made a reputation would use their surname only. The character *shi* here had nothing to do with gender and was in fact especially not designated for referring to a woman in the world of letters.

When someone in contemporary Vietnam combined the 'Bui thi' with the next character 'Hi' into a name, the possibility of 'Bui Thi' being a woman became zero. The character 戲 can only be 'Hi' in Vietnamese, not 'Hy' as the person claimed. 'Hi' means '[horse] neighing', and could hardly be used for any girl's name. --Li Tana, Australian National University



Bottle-vase, inscribed with a Vietnam reign date equivalent to AD 1450. Topkapi Sarayi Museum, Istanbul

Arabic date?

The duck bowl with the possible Islamic date [Letters, Jan-Feb 2008 issue] is identical to those from the Binh Thuan Wreck, although the base seems a little coarser. I've dated the Binh Thuan [Christie's Australia 2004] to around 1608 – so the proposed Islamic date of 1580 is not far off.

-- Mike Flecker, Singapore

Wanli Shipwreck

Last week I received my copy of *The Wanli Shipwreck and its Ceramic Cargo*. [Sept-Oct 2007] Interesting. Nearby the old city of Banten (Java, Indonesia) there is a village with coconut plantations. The villagers find many broken Chinese ceramics when they dig on their land. The pieces belong to the Wanli period through to the transitional period. [photo below]



The digging is forbidden by the government but they don't do anything about it. I've heard about villagers giving shards to the Banten Museum. I also hear that they sell the shards. Maybe they sell to Japan or China. I noticed during a trip to Jingdezhen five years ago that they were selling shards to tourists. It would be funny if they were shards from Banten.

From one pit they find broken pieces from various types of ware, but sometimes they find many pieces of only one type. In some places the shards are two meters deep. Maybe some are below debris left by the eruption of Mount Krakatoa in 1878.

--Zheng Jin Ie, Jakarta

Champa ceramics

I would like to inform you that our Go Sanh-Champa Ceramics Museum has been recognized by the competent authorities as the first Champa ceramics museum in Vietnam. We look forward to co-operating in projects relating to the research and promotion of the ceramics. --Nguyen Vinh Hao, Go Sanh-Champa Ceramics Museum, 173 Le Hong Phong, Quy Nhon City, Vietnam

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FROM THE EDITOR

Semester break
MUSEUM CLOSED
2-10 MARCH 2008

Since the museum is inside the Rangsit campus, we must close whenever the university closes. We are so sorry!

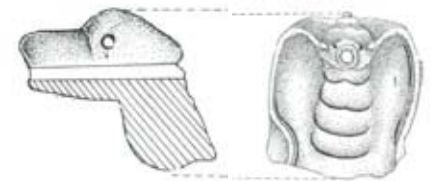
In regards to our Page 1 feature, I want to add that whenever ship remains from around the time of the Hoi An shipwreck have been investigated, they have been identified as Southeast Asia vessels. This includes the Pandanan (c. 1470), and the Ko Si Chang III, Hoi An, Australia Tide, Lena Shoal and Santa Cruz (all circa 1480-1510) ships. The Chinese chronicles themselves note the high numbers of foreign ships coming to China in the Hongzhi (1488-1505) reign.

-- R. M. Brown

OLDEST NAGA & HAMSA SPOUTS

SILPAKORN UNIVERSITY archaeologist Thanik Lercharnrit has sent illustrations [far right] of *naga* (serpent) and *hamsa* (swan-like bird, vehicle of Brahma) spouts from his 2006 excavation at Ban Promtin Tai, Lopburi, Thailand. These are now the oldest excavated zoomorphic kendi spouts in Thailand. Hamsa spouts are well-known on early 16th C. Sawankhalok kendi [near left, S. E. Asian Ceramics Museum], and now their history can be pushed back 1,000 years. Both the earthenware spouts were found in a habitation area, and both are believed to be parts of kendi. The hamsa spout is slightly older, 5th-6th C, and the naga spout came from an early Dvaravati layer of about 7th-8th C. Thanik has not been able to confirm whether the fine clay pottery fragments are local or imported ware. His finds were

published in the Thai language *Art & Culture Magazine* (Vol. 28/8 June 2007). The spouts are strong evidence for contact with Hindu India, although naga spirits (protectors of the land) may have at least an equally long history in S. E. Asia as in India. No other similar spouts are known from this early period. •



Hamsa, left
Naga, right



KO KONG CERAMICS



Finds include (clockwise from left) Sawankhalok post-classic celadon, Singburi brown and (not shown) Singburi unglazed ware, along with small amounts of Chinese blue and white.

NEWS ABOUT THE first ever shipwreck ceramics found off Cambodia (near Ko Kong island) appeared in a Phnom Penh newspaper in March 2006. Mr. Hab Touch, director of the National Museum at Phnom Penh recently sent photos of about a dozen pieces from the site. The mixture of Chinese & Thai wares suggests a date about AD 1500-1520. The same site may also have been discovered by Thai fishermen in 1997 when they brought about 50 pieces to the Wat Buppharan museum at Trat, Thailand on the Khmer border. •

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, CONTINUED

Rembang vs Demak?

YOUR NOVEMBER- December 2007 issue, page 4, mentions a sudden influx of ceramics thought to come from a wreck recently discovered in Indonesia, the Rembang. The photos of bowls and Dehua ware are very similar to the Demak cargo, a wreck recovered in the late '90s by an Indonesia business man. From the ceramics and some coins discovered and now in Frankfurt, the wreck was dated late 13th – early 14th C. According to information I collected in Jakarta and Singapore, the cargo was huge, in the order of 150 000 – 200 000 wares, in large part bowls from the Nan'an and

Tong'an kilns, but also bottles from Cizao and vases, small jars and vases from Dehua. Prices for bowls in the best condition were S\$40 in Jakarta, S\$120 in Singapore, and 200-300 Euros in Europe. There were also rare small truncated *meiping* bottles from Cizao with eroded brown glaze. I wonder if the Demak and Rembang sites could actually be one single site? I attach photos of ceramics said to be from the Demak wreck.

-- Roberto Gardellin, Singapore

Editor: I have no information about the Demak site. Can anyone help?! Contact us: museumnewsletter@gmail.com



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 within the borders of Thailand. There is pottery from as early as about 3,000 BC and as late as the 19th century.

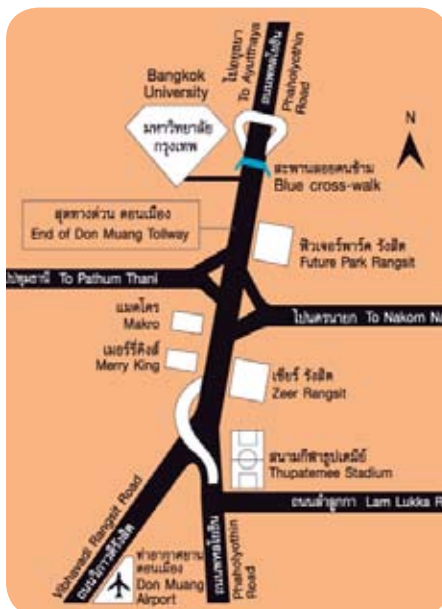
There are ceramics from pottery production centers in Thailand as well as ceramics that were imported in olden times from neighboring countries.

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 the Thailand-based 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 opened to the general public on 11 May 2005.



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



Interior views of the museum
From upper left: wall of storage jars; a 6-period outline chronology for Thai trade ceramics; and three open 'sandpit' displays showing the mixtures of Southeast Asian and Chinese trade ceramics at various dates from AD 1380 to 1550, with Northern Thai ceramics in the background.



Rita C. Tan (with Li Jian An, Eusebio Z. Dizon, Bobby C. Orillaneda), *Zhangzhou Ware found in the Philippines "Swatow" Export Ceramics from Fujian 16th-17th Century*.

Malaysia: ArtPostAsia Pte Ltd, with Yuchengco Museum, The Oriental Ceramic Society of the Philippines. ISBN 978-971-93170-9-8 (soft cover, US\$40) ISBN 978-971-93170-0-6 (hard cover, US\$55). 192 pp, 260 images. Contact: orders@selectbooks.com.sg

BEYOND JINGDEZHEN

THIS CATALOGUE IS a welcome re-introduction to what many still call Swatow, a ware that may include the first blue and white made outside the Jingdezhen area. Nearly 200 exhibits, for the first time, specifically survey the types of Zhangzhou ware found in the Philippines, an amazing amount considering these are heirloom pieces handed down intact through 400 years.

Importantly, the catalogue presents archaeological pieces loaned from the National Museum -- 36 from the San Diego (1600) shipwreck, and 24 from the San Isidro wrecksite (16th C.), along with an essay from Li Jian An who excavated 'Swatow' kiln sites in Zhangzhou district, Fujian, China in the 1990s. The catalogue provides solid ground for future scholars to refine dates and chronology. For

now the ware is identified only as mid-16th to mid-17th C.

With this elegant catalogue, the Oriental Ceramic Society of the Philippines presents yet another invaluable review of local finds. This is the fifth in a series of exhibitions since their founding in 1980. •

