



# Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Newsletter

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## Modern Myanmar celadon production confirmed

THE EXISTENCE OF continuing celadon production in Burma has been confirmed by Myo Thant Tyn, a member of the Myanmar Ceramics Society. Apart from a short period sometime about the late 15<sup>th</sup> C. [see Sept 2004 issue], the predominant tradition of Myanmar from ancient to modern times is lead-glazed earthenware. Yet, the possible survival of celadon production in Myanmar has been an intriguing possibility especially since Thai folk tradition claims that modern Chiangmai celadon production returned to Thailand from Myanmar about AD 1900. Ancient celadon production in Thailand appears to have disappeared during Burmese invasions in the 1560s. There were early 20<sup>th</sup> C. reports about celadon at Mongkung town in the Southern Shan State, but no one was able to verify this belief until Myo Thant Tyn and compan-

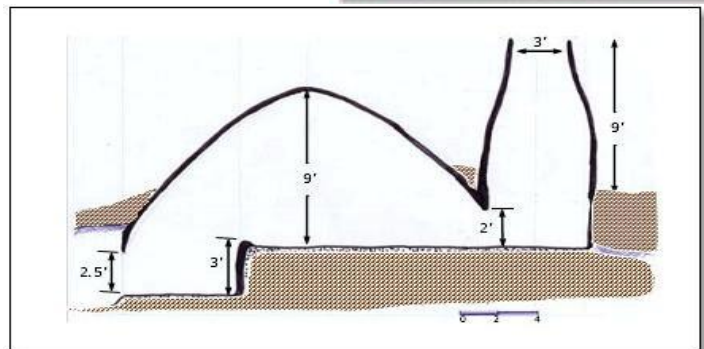
ions Aung Bo & Win Maung made the trip from Mandalay on Nov 2, 2003. They discovered working kilns at Ho-Nar village about 5 miles north of Mongkung (which had none). The kilns are a unique cross between up-draft and cross draft kilns. The men saw 7 ancient kilns (17<sup>th</sup> C.?) nearby and heard that about 120 more were in the area.

Myo Thant Tyn read a report on Ho-Nar to the Myanmar Academy of Arts and Science and then sent a copy to the *Newsletter* — 'Celadon Kilns of Ho-Nar (Southern Shan State)'. No date given, although it must be 2004 or 2005.

Below: Ho-Nar kiln



Above: Modern Ho-Nar celadon  
Below: Old Ho-Nar celadon identified by Myo Thant Tya as 17<sup>th</sup> century



### Letter from the editor

**IMPORTANT! THE MUSEUM WILL BE CLOSED DURING SEMESTER BREAK 15-23 OCTOBER 2006.**

This issue has two important news features, an eyewitness report on current celadon production in Burma (p. 1) and the surfacing of evidence for early Chinese ships in S. E. Asia (p. 4). The photograph at right shows myself with a few other participants at the very successful Angkor conference in Sydney in July 2006. From left: Paisan Piamattawat, Gillian Green, Ang Choulean, R. Brown, Hab Touch, Dawn Rooney, Donna Green, and Pam Gutman. — RMB



## Letters to the editor

### More on makara origins

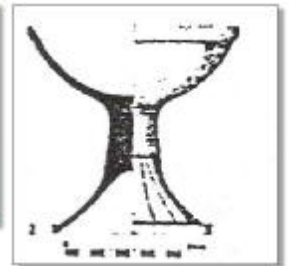
AFTER reading the comments from Nicol Guerin and Dick van Oenen in your July-August 2006 issue, I would like to clarify my research project on *makara*, *naga* and *hera* in Thai culture [ref. news story, May-June 2006 issue]. I consider *makara*, *naga* and *hera* as cultural symbols to be studied in all aspects of culture including mythology, architecture, iconography, history and ceramics.

I agree that the ceramic images are generally identified as *makara*, even when a *naga* emanates from the mouth, but the combination of *naga* with *makara* is not a Thai invention. They appear earlier in Khmer arts. See the photo [below] which was taken in the Nakhon Ratchasima National Museum. Here a Bayon-period lintel shows *makara* spouting *naga* on both sides. As for *hera* in Sukhothai period ceramics, I realize now they were misidentified in captions.

I have never read an argument that related the 3-headed *naga* to the 3-headed Airavata [white elephant] figures. I would like to learn more about this issue.

During the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Thai adapted many Chinese cultural elements. I feel sure the *makara* acquired a dragon's horns from Chinese influence. If the *makara* acquired horns from the antelope, then how to explain the pearl in the mouth or the long beard under the *makara's* chin?

Also, how is the antelope associated with *makara* and/or the god Varuna? Vedic mythology associates the antelope with Agni and Civa, not Varuna. — Phan Anh Tu, Ho Chi Minh City ✓



### Pedestal bowl

I am a senior at the Faculty of Archaeology, Royal University of Fine Arts, Cambodia. I recently worked on a pre-historic site at Phnom Ambeng Peam Cheang, Kg Cham province. I attach photos of fragments found and a drawing of the complete shape in case you have seen anything similar that would help. I think the site belongs to about 200 BC-AD 500. One similar piece [above left] is from Angkor Borei. — Leng Rattanak, Phnom Penh ✓

### Burma underglaze ware

THE LETTER by Don Stadtner (July-August 2006 issue) requesting provenance for an underglaze blue painted dish was interesting. While there is no doubt about the editor's attribution, caution may be required in other cases. Burmese underglaze painted wares are uncommon but do exist as the two examples below testify. The one on the left was found in the Myanmar Department of Archaeology excavation of the Mon palace of King Takayutpi at Bago (Pegu) destroyed in AD1539. The other was found in the informal diggings at Bago and was given by me to Dr. Myo Thant Tyn in 1999. The bases particularly are diagnostic and prove the pieces were made in Burma. — Don Hein, Adelaide ✓



### Reproduction Sawankhalok

Recently I stayed at Shutters on the Beach Hotel in Santa Monica, California. It's a designer kind of place full of fancy people, but what was interesting is that they had reproduction Sawankhalok pottery decorating the room (see photo for one of the pieces)! So now its very fashionable. — Timothy R. Rebbeck, USA ✓





## Prehistory below the West Baray

Ceramics from the oldest site yet found at Angkor, Koh Ta Mea, dated as early as 1,000 B.C., are being conserved by the Ceramics Conservation Lab, Phnom Penh. Shown here are conservators Pich Thyda, Chap Sopheara, and Tep Sokha working on three of the 12 large-scale pots unearthed from a burial below, and therefore older than, the layer dated 1,000 B.C. Overall, Koh Ta Mea ceramics are large, high-fired, coiled pots scraped to a consistent 2 mm thinness on their upper walls and decorated with red and white slip or post-fired paint. Conservation is time-consuming because the pots, whose diameters may measure 40 centimeters or more, are typically found in 300 to 400 pieces. The Koh Ta Mea ceramics conservation project is supported by Friends of Khmer Culture and the École Française d'Extrême-Orient, which in 2005



*Pich Thyda (above), Tep Sokha (upper right), and Chap Sopheara (right).*

excavated Koh Ta Mea—located underneath Angkor's Western Baray—under the direction of Christophe Pottier.

—News from Bonnie Baskin



## Letters to the editor, continued

### Asian ceramics in London

I was in London in late June and did a survey of Southeast Asian ceramics on display. London was a mixed bag. The British Museum had a good selection, including Si Satchanalai, Sukhothai and Khmer wares. There was a fine Burmese green and brown-glazed plaque from Pegu, and Vietnamese ceramics were well represented. The collections at Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge University, are worth a trip. The highlight is its Gompertz collection of Koryo celadons, which must be one of the finest outside of Korea. There were lots of Japanese polychrome porcelains for export to the West. S. E. Asian wares -- Si Satchanalai, Sukhothai and northern Vietnamese -- were on two shelves in the Chinese gallery. No northern Thai (Lanna) nor Vietnamese Ly-Tran wares were seen. In a Portobello Road market stall I purchased the new catalogue of the Vietnamese collection at the Musée Cernuschi, which is in French and wonderfully illustrated. With four authors led by Monique Crick, the 2006 *Collection Vietnamiennne du Musée Cernuschi* is an important work. ▼ — David Rehfuss

### Nan Han shipwreck ceramics

Since there is no news yet on the ceramics from the Nan Han shipwreck mentioned in your past issues [November-December 2004, called the Five Dynasties Wreck; and November 2005, called Nan Han wreck], I enclose a photograph of a 10<sup>th</sup> century Yue-yao *makara*-fish lamp that is similar to one from the Nan Han site. The example in my photograph (which is not from the Nan Han shipwreck) is on display in the exhibition 'Mysterious Celadon' at the Princessehof Museum in Leeuwarden, Holland. The exhibition began in February and runs through 17 September 2006. Most of the pieces at the Princessehof came from Indonesia. Some pieces from the Nan Han site were sold on the Jakarta antiques market by fishermen prior to 2005, and that is where I saw an example similar to the Leeuwarden lamp. ▼ — Zheng Jin Ie, Jakarta



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

## First evidence for 12th C. (pre-Ming) Chinese ship in S. E. Asia

Stone anchor stock reported from Jepara (c.1130) wreck

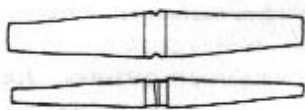


Figure 1. Scale drawing of one of the Chinese stone anchor stocks found at Quanzhou Bay (after Qin Zhang).



Figure 2. Suggested reconstruction of the Chinese merchant vessel wrecked at Jepara, showing the stone anchor stocks in situ. (after Qin Zhang)

Above: G. Kapitan, 'Ancient Two-armed Stone-stocked Wooden Anchors-Chinese and Greek', *Proceedings of the International Sailing Ships History Conference, Shanghai, 1991*. Kapitan cites a descrip-

W. Atma Juana, co-author (with E. Edwards McKinnon) of 'The Jepara Wreck' at the International Conference on Chinese Export Ceramics and Maritime Trade, 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Centuries (2005), reports that a Chinese stone stock has recently been recovered from the Jepara wrecksite (Indonesia). This would be the earliest archaeological evidence for Chinese shipping in S. E. Asia. Otherwise the earliest known wreck is the Ko Si Chang II (c. 1400-1420) from the Gulf of Thailand).

Coins from the Jepara wrecksite offer evidence (corroborated by ceramics) that the ship sank about AD 1130. A 2nd anchor stone was reportedly left at the site.

Atma Juana identifies the stone as

cal Fujian stone,' he says, "and so it must be from a Fujian junk." The same type of stone, he says, was carved for Chinese cemeteries and temples in Indonesia. Similar stone anchor stocks, he says, are displayed at China's Quanzhou Maritime Museum. Both the Chinese Quanzhou and Jepara examples are about 2.5 meters long and weigh about 300 kg.

