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Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Newsletter

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Special exhibition entitled Qing Export Porcelain in the Kingdom of Siam During the Arrival of Chinese Junks, exhibited by Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum of Bangkok University

The exhibition is open daily with free admission at The Museum Siam (National Discovery Museum) until September 30, 2013.

Learn the history of the arrivals of Chinese junks to Thailand, since the Ayutthaya period, through the Chinese export wares found in Thailand.

Chinese ceramics in this exhibition will include Qing dynasty export wares to Siam during the late Ayutthaya period. This extends from the reign of Kangxi to the reign of Xuantong of the Qing dynasty, or from the reign of King Prasat Thong to the reign of King Rama V of Siam.

On exhibition is a Chinese junk model used to transport ceramics to Siam during the late Ayutthaya period before changing to steamer ships in the 19th century.

In the past, the Chinese junk was a bridge connecting the economic and cultural exchanges between China and countries around the world. This includes acting as a link between the Chinese people living in overseas territories with those in homeland China. In particular, the overseas Chinese came from the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian.

The Red Head Junk was used for travel to Siam. This junk was used for the merchant trade and shipping from the ports of Hangzhou Bay. It is called *hai chuan*, meaning "ship", and the larger junk that sailed in the South China Sea are called *yang chuan*, meaning "fleet". Junks from Guangdong province were made of hardwood. Under the gunwale

the edges were painted black with red eyes like a fish. The hull was painted white. This was the *hongtou chuan* which means "Red Head Junk" and both sides of the end of the junk were painted with a picture of a lion with a sword or a *dai ji* pattern (Yin Yang symbol).

During his reign, King Rama III ordered a *viharn* to be built in the form of a Chinese junk at Wat Yannawa, Bangkok to commemorate that the junk is a symbol of trade with Siam, and Chaozhou represents the relations between the Qing dynasty and Siam. Although the time of Red Head junk has already ended, it became a symbol the world will never forget.



Letter from the editor

This issue includes several interesting articles that we have the pleasure to give all reader. The first is a study of unglazed jar burials, which was discovered at the ancient city of Bang Khlang by Wannaporn Khambut, our new assistant curator, as her master's thesis. The second is the latest report of the thermoluminescence test of Ko Noi kilns no. 61 at Si Satchanalai conducted by the Fine Arts Department. The dating of unglazed stoneware is consistent with the dating of Chinese celadon produced at kilns in Zhejiang and Guangdong that are dated to the reign of Hongzhi (late 15th to early 16th century), and are often found together. These unglazed jars have been also excavated at Penny's Bay in Hong Kong and some archaeological sites in Japan. We will invite Dr. Sharon to report about unglazed jars at Penny's Bay, and Ko Mukai to report about jar burials in Japan in the next issue. In addition, there are interesting articles about Chinese tea ceramics in the Bangkok National Museum by John J. Toomey and Mataban jars found in Kenya by Ceasar Bitu and Atthasit Sukkham.

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RITUAL PRACTICE OF THE JAR BURIALS AT BANG KHLANG ANCIENT CITY, SUKHOThai PROVINCE

The location of this archaeological site is Bang Khlang ancient city, Sawankalok district, Sukhothai province. Archaeological studies conducted up to the present time have found remains in Bang Khlang ancient city at 22 temples, including 4 temples within the city, and 18 temples outside the city. Archaeological excavations have been completed at some of the large temples. There is evidence of buildings used for religious rituals, such as the *viharn* of Bot and Yaichaiyamongkol Temples.

The results of the study of the ritual practice of jar burials at the Bot and Yaichaiyamongkol Temples can be categorized in two different phases as follows: The first phase is during the late 14th to mid-15th centuries. Most of the ceramics are unglazed baluster-shaped stoneware jars with tiny token handles and incised decoration on the upper shoulder. The skeletal remains were put inside the jar and buried under the wall of a Buddhist temple. The jars were also buried together as a large group, such as location A on

the northern side of the temple which has 69 burials, location B on the southern side which has 42 burials, and location C on the eastern side which has 23 burials. In some of the jar burials the skeletal remains were burned with fire before being placed in the jar. In some of them appliances and jewelry were put into the jar together with skeletal remains as the grave goods. The jars used for jar burials are from the Ko Noi kilns in Si Satchanalai district, Sukhothai province.

The second phase was during the late 15th to 16th centuries. We found 12 unglazed earthenware pots containing skeletal remains. They were buried surrounding stupas that were built over the *viharn* of a Buddhist temple. Most of the earthenware pots are primarily undecorated, but some of them have stamped decoration on the shoulder.



Stoneware (Pottery #112, WB'99/101)

These types of ceramics are also used for secondary burials and assumed to be Ayutthaya style.

Reporter: Wannaporn Khambut



Pottery groups containing bones found along the north wall



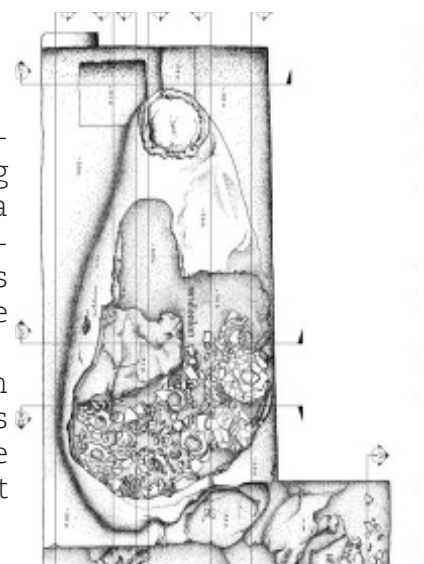
Bot Temple

LATEST REPORT OF THERMOLUMINESCENCE TEST OF KILN NO. 61, KO NOI COMPLEX

At Si Satchanalai Historical Park every year in the rainy season an underground tunnel kiln at the kiln no. 61 site, Ko Noi complex (including kilns nos. 176, 177 and 178) is damaged by underground water from a small canal located to the northwest with a very high risk of the collapse of the kiln and the wall. In order to prevent this The Fine Arts Department agrees to preserve the archaeology excavation site at the kiln no. 61's Conservation and Learning Center.

The final report of the Thermoluminescence (TL) test by the Earth Sciences Department, Faculty of SCIENCE, Kasetsart University, has been made after an excavation. Ten samples from the kiln site were selected, and the TL test result shows they are 450±50 years. The last activity at the kiln site is dated to the 16th century.

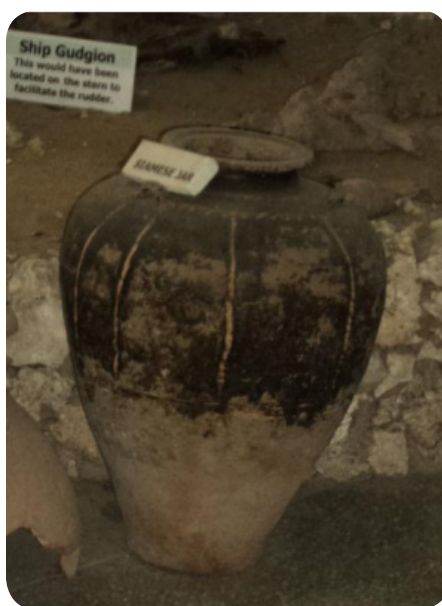
Reporter: Bundit Thongaram, Fine Arts Department.



MARTABAN JARS FOUND IN KENYA

Caesar Bitu from the National Museum of Kenya has reported about the excavation and survey finds by the archaeological research on the Kenyan coast during 1980s to 2000s.

A few ceramic vessels have been found from the underwater excavation of the 17th century Portuguese shipwreck named Santo Antonio de Tanna, which sunk in the Indian Ocean off the Kenyan coast. In the collection of Fort Jesus Museum in Mombasa where there were a few important port towns such as Malindi and Lamu in Kenya. Martaban jars are among the interesting ceramic vessels in the collection there. They are Burmese blackish-brown glazed jars with four strap handles, appliqué decoration of dots and lines on upper part, and dark reddish-brown body made at Martaban in southern Burma and dated around the 16th to



Figs. 1 and 2 A Martaban brown glazed jar, the collection of Fort Jesus Museum in Mombasa.

17th centuries (Figs. 1 ,2).

Moreover, Sumarah Adhayatman and Abu Ridho in 1985 mentioned that this type of Martaban jar have been found in Indonesia, as evidence of the trade between Indonesia and lower Burma as well.

Reporters: Caesar Bitu and Atthasit Sukkham

News in brief...

NEW RESEARCH ON THAI TRADE CERAMICS FOUND IN CAMBODIA AND HONG KONG

The Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum (SEACM), Bangkok University assisted two research teams from Cambodia and Hong Kong for their data collection and comparison at museums and kiln sites in Thailand. The research team from Cambodia was comprised of Dr. Nancy Beaven from the University of Otago in New Zealand and Tep Sokha from the ceramics conservation laboratory at the Royal University of Fine Arts in Cambodia who are responsible for research on the Cardamom Mountain burial sites and the Koh S'dech shipwreck in Koh Kong province, southwestern Cambodia. The other research team includes Dr. Sharon Wong Wai Yee from Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Hong Kong, who is researching the various types of ceramics found at an archaeological site in Penny's Bay, Lantau Island, Hong Kong, China. For more information on this research, please contact Dr. Nancy Beaven at nancy.beaven@anatomy.otago.ac.nz, Tep Sokha at tepsokha81@yahoo.com and Dr. Sharon Wong Wai Yee at ccwwy@hkcc-polyu.edu.hk.



(Left to right) Atthasit Sukkham, Dr. Sharon Wong Wai Yee, Veronica Walker-Vadillo, Dr. Nancy Beaven, Abhirada Komoot and Tep Sokha [left to right] visited the Bang Rachan (Mae Nam Noi) kiln sites in Singburi province.

CHINESE TEA CERAMICS IN THE BANGKOK NATIONAL MUSEUM

by John J. Toomey photos by author, courtesy of the Fine Arts Department

The Ceramics Gallery of the Bangkok National Museum holds some good examples of Chinese ceramic tea utensils from ancient times, as well as from the reigns of the Chakri Kings, especially Rama II, Mongkut, and Chulalongkorn, that help document the history of their reigns. These kings commissioned porcelain sets for steeped leaf tea as gifts to be distributed at cremations and on other auspicious occasions. But all the important tea pots are Yixing unglazed clay, considered by tea connoisseurs to make the best tea due to qualities in their clay. Other classical Chinese wares such as celadon and *tenmoku* lie hidden in obscure corners of the gallery, as well as one tiny, rare treasure of enameled porcelain. It is the purpose of this article to clear up some misunderstandings of earlier scholarship, using the wisdom of Chinese tea practice and tradition.



Fig. 1 Late Qing blue and white tea sets and Yixing teapots, with *gaiwan* in foreground

During the Song dynasty the tea leaf was powdered and whisked into a froth directly in the bowl without the use of a teapot. At the end of the Song Dynasty there had been some successful experiments in making handled teapots for brewing leaf tea from unglazed *zisha*, purple sand clay. These

had evolved from the forms of ewers and wine servers. The literati of Song waxed strong on the simplicity of the unglazed purple clay for their spare form and hand carving and claimed that their special clay enhanced the taste of the tea. Pole-like handles were eventually inserted onto the sides of these servers to prevent burning the hands when removing the lids; but the drinking of leaf tea did not become popular at that time, as whisked powdered tea was still in fashion at court. Eventually handled pots for leaf tea were produced for everyday ware, and anyone was allowed to use them, not just the imperial court, nobles, and literati. During the 16th C, while the creative wabi-cha rustic tea ceramics were being generated in Japan and Korea, China was undergoing its own tea ceramics revolution. Toward the end of the Ming dynasty, with the invention of better methods of attaching handles to the side, back or top of teapots for glazed porcelain at the kilns at Jingdezhen, it was then possible to brew leaf tea in a porcelain pot more safely and conveniently. Exquisite porcelain cups, with white interiors which showed the pale green color of the translucent beverage, also developed for the enjoyment of infused leaf tea. At Jingdezhen, during the Ming, there was a separate factory for Imperial porcelain. Kilns produced both imperial wares termed *gongyu* and everyday wares called *min yao*. Later, during the Qing, which favored opaque colors, the color indicated rank, yellow porcelain being reserved for Imperial ware only.



Fig. 2 Thais preferred gold or other metallic fittings and three small feet on their *Yixing* teapots

Famous teapots are found along with the finest inkstones and jade objects on any scholar's desk and are prized even above jade. While the history of Yixing-ware can be traced back to 3000 BCE, it was only in the Ming dynasty that Yixing teapots took center stage. The literati elite, who discovered Yixing, located not far from the legendary city of Suzhou, went there in droves to enjoy the beautiful scenery and partake in the premium tea grown there. The Yixing teapot was held up as "the ultimate tea-making utensil," and its clay was "more precious than gold, or even jade." Chinese tea connoisseurs believe that the clay used to fire Yixing ware interacts with chemicals in the tea to produce the most delicious and fragrant pot of tea possible. Because it is so soft and porous, handling unglazed pottery can be a very sensual experience; soft to the touch, it is warmer and more organic than any other kind of teapot and it nestles comfortably in one's hands.

During the Qing dynasty the unglazed purple clay Yixing pots became smaller, specifically for brewing oolong tea. The rule of thumb "red earthenware pots for oolong, darker pots for puerh, green tea in porcelain or glass teapots" is com-

mon today. But of course a true connoisseur has different standards. Most of the diminutive Yixing teapots in Thailand date to the 19th C; and during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, to commemorate the 110th anniversary of the Chakri dynasty, Yixing teapots were imported to Thailand in 1892.



Fig. 3 Enameled Chinese zodiacal animal motif on *gaiwan*, probably Rama V period (Kuang-hsu reign, 1875-1908)

It is easy to see the high quality of the craftsmanship of the splendid matched tea sets ordered from China by Thai royalty, adorned with so many lovely patterns of *bencharong thepanom*, *lai nam thong* gold-leaf *pak kannard* Chinese kale or cabbage motifs, or the Chinese zodiacal animal signs, and other classical motifs in overglaze enamels and classic blue and white. Many of the tea sets were ordered to be given as gifts at royal functions, such as cremations. Some of these sets are arranged on trays in a special way which Prince Damrong called the *gee bo* arrangement (no complete *gee bo* is to be seen in the Bangkok National Museum cases, though many exist in monasteries and royal homes in Bangkok and the provinces), always with a Yixing teapot in a boat (a deep saucer-like vessel of hot water for

keeping the pot hot), one or two tea cups, and a large covered vessel which Prince Damrong Rajanubhab said has no function but is merely decorative.



Fig. 4 Chinese cabbage motif on *lai nam thong* ware, probably Rama II period (Chia Ching reign, 1796-1820)

As a tea practitioner with decades of study, I must beg to differ regarding the large “decorative” vessel for two reasons. First of all, it is against the virtues of simplicity and economy of tea that any utensil be purely decorative. Each utensil must have a function.



Fig. 5 Brewing tea in a *gaiwan*. Photo Tea master Dr. Jongrak Kittiworakam

Second, this utensil in Chinese tea has at least three functions, which are 1) as a *guijung* or *jung* or *gaiwan* for brewing the tea and then drinking the tea directly from it while using the

lid to hold back the leaves, 2) as a vessel for brewing the tea and then pouring the tea into smaller cups, and 3) as a vessel for warming the teacups in hot water.



Fig. 6 Serving tea from the *gaiwan*

The misunderstanding may have arisen from a lack of knowledge of actual tea practice in a country where most people might not want to drink hot liquids. Not actually having the chance to see the utensils in actual use, but only as decorative/commemorative items from royalty, one could assume any number of misunderstandings when these tea sets eventually lost their function and meaning and became display sets, like “trophy cups”.

Another vessel that was also beautifully created in blue and white, *benchrong* and *lai nam thong* in China for Thailand is often mislabeled as a tea pot. It would, indeed, be quite difficult to brew tea in this vessel due to the lid being depressed into the pot, which would necessitate burning one's fingers or hand when pouring the tea and also probably spilling tea as the lid is not secured. I know because I experimented with this for years. This vessel is properly referred to as a cold water pot in auction catalogues and its true function is to refill the boiling tea kettle. The morphology of this vessel conforms more to

the shape of cold water carriers that we know in living Korean and Japanese tea practice.



Fig. 7 Blue and white fresh water pot

It is possible that the misunderstanding of the function of these water carriers as well as of the gaiwan might have arisen because the brewing and serving of tea in Thailand was left to servants; and perhaps the elite did not visit the kitchen to observe the process, whereas Chinese, Korean, and Japanese teamen brew and serve with their own hands and hearts in the presence of the guests to show their special care for the guest as one of the philosophical virtues of the Heart of the Way of Tea.

In one of the Bangkok National Museum's cabinets of 19th century ceramics, near the Khmer ware, there is one of the museum's treasures. It is a small covered tea cup of very delicate white porcelain, about two and a half inches tall, three inches (8 cm) including the lid, the motifs blending Chinese landscape with Thai *kinaree* in polychrome enamel. It is possibly from the reign of Rama I (1782-1809) and perches on the edge of an upper shelf in the center. Very exquisite, it is one of the treasures most often shown in overseas catalogues.



Fig. 8 Chinese landscape elements blend with the kinaree motif in this *lai nam thong* porcelain covered cup, Rama I period (1782-1809)

There is also a black, tapering Song dynasty *tenmoku* teabowl which is much neglected but extremely important. At the moment some piece of trash is lying in the center of it as it lies hidden at the bottom of a dusty cabinet near the entrance to the Ceramics Gallery.



Fig. 9 Important *tenmoku* teabowl lies neglected

There are many other Chinese tea cups, often in blue and white, but there is also a cabinet of good celadons given by George Coedès, and there are some green glaze Song dynasty celadon tea bowls. The *tenmoku*, celadons, and green glaze wares attest to Thailand's long-time trade in Chinese antiquities.



Fig. 10 Song celadon bowls



Fig. 11 Blue and white teacups



Fig. 12 Chinese celadon teabowls, gift of George Coedès

...continue next page

To understand why special utensils for tea were made as they were, one needs to understand a bit about tea history and the Heart of the Way of Tea. In practicing the Way of Chinese Tea, *Cha Dao*, one learns a way of life, just as one learns a way in the martial arts of kendo, judo, aikido, and even Zen. The same Chinese character *Do* or *Dao* forms the final syllable of these words. The inner cultivation of “Harmony, Purity, Respect, Tranquility, and Modesty” forms non-verbal bonds between host and guest which stretch far beyond the humble tea hut. This deep inner dynamic has raised the practice of the Way of Tea to such a level that Zen (Chinese, Ch’an) -based cultures recognize it as a form of enlightenment and spiritual fulfillment, as is often heard in the maxim, “Tea and Zen Have One and the Same Taste”.

SUKHOTHAI AND SI SATCHANALAI CERAMICS: INSPIRATION AND REALIZATION

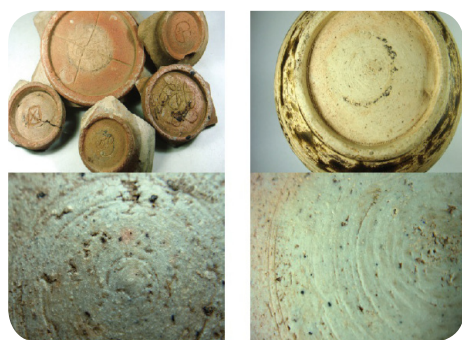
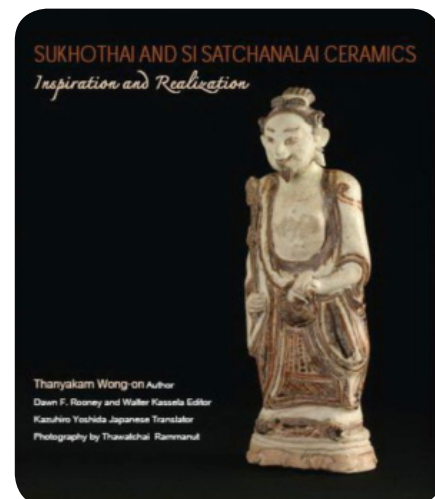
AUTHOR : WONG-ON, THANYAKARN

This book has been written as a result of his interest in Sawankhalok and Sukhothai ceramics. The author would like to share his experiences in the study and collection of ancient Thai ceramics, over more than ten years with readers and collectors. This included the identification of real and fake ceramics, the background of Siam (now Thailand), and Thai ceramics are related to each other in terms of cause and effect. This book also contains articles from experts in Thai ceramics, such as Dr. Dawn F. Rooney and Dr. Pariwat Thammapreechakorn.

The details on artifacts which were illegally found at the Thai-Burma borders are based on the information of Asst.Prof. Sumitrit Pitipat. In addition, brief information on research from Dr. Roxanna M. Brown that she conducted in 2004 about maritime trade and shipwrecks in neighboring countries, which provides clear evidence to precisely date Sawankhalok and Sukhothai ceramics, is also included. Information on the usage of ceramics which is included, is based upon his extensive research, which proposes the use when the owner was alive as well as after he or she died. Buddhist votives tablets are also included, because most of them were created from fired clay probably manufactured at the two important kilns, Ko Noi or Pa Yang kilns, and they demonstrate the

religious beliefs of Thais at that time.

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4.1 The pagoda with supporting elephants

It depicts the bell shape pagoda, which derive influence from the Lanka Wong cult. In a later period, on applied this type of pagoda to Kamphangpael, Si Satchi and Sukhothai.

One example of a ceramic model illustrate construction of a bell shape pagoda with sixteen supporting elephants with white glaze stands on a square stage. (heads and forelegs of the elephants are visible

Construction of a bell shape pagoda with sixteen supporting elephant white glaze stands on a square stage. Picture from the Southeast Asian Museum.



The Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Newsletter is inviting all members to submit articles for the Newsletter.

Please send your articles or comments and suggestions to the Newsletter Editor at museumnewsletter@gmail.com.

Please take note that there will be no honoraria for articles published.

The Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum is still closed for repairs.