



Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Newsletter

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Unique Bowl Ca Mau Shipwreck

Small chrysanthemum form shallow bowl (Fig. 1) with fluted sides and foliated mouthrim. Decorated on the exterior with three floral sprays with underglaze blue stems and leaves accented with overglaze enamel blossoms. The interior center decorated en suite with a single floral spray. Top of the splayed foot is encircled by a double line border with a single line border slightly above. Unglazed edge of footrim has extremely fine grained white colored body. Foot is slightly out-

ward slanting on the interior, and the flat glazed base contains a unique base mark. The fugitive traces of the overglaze enamel detailing on the bowl are only visible in reflected light. They are extremely difficult to see, especially on the sides and interior, and if were pointed not out by a prominent Vietnamese collector of shipwreck ceramics they may well have been overlooked. The base mark on this small bowl (Fig. 1), consisting of an overglaze enamel floral blossom within a single underglaze

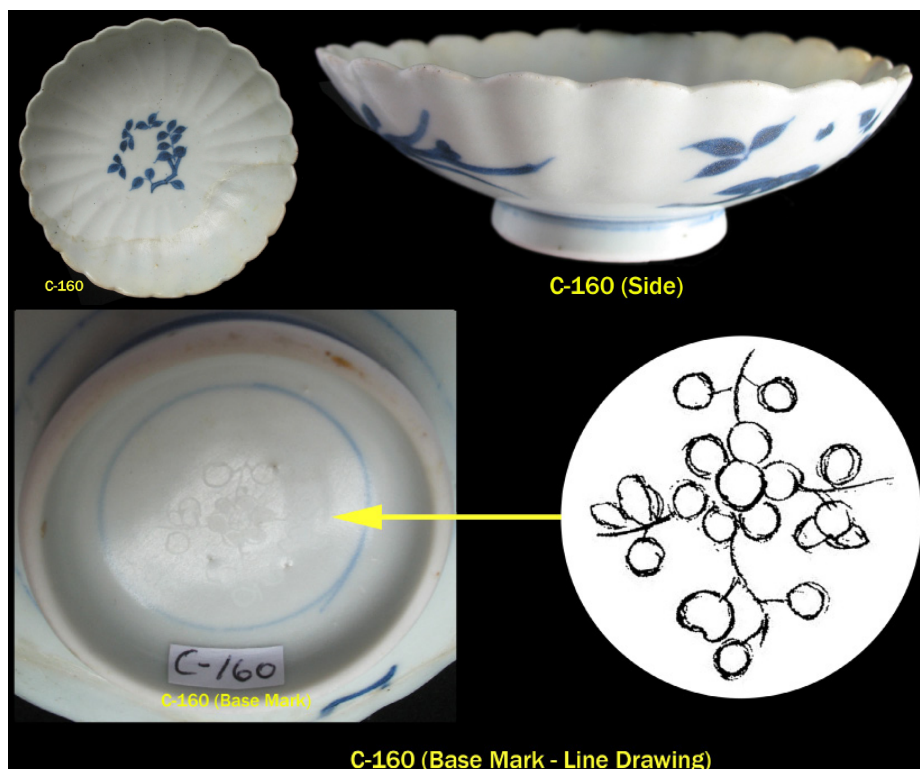


Fig. 1 Small chrysanthemum form shallow bowl, Qing Yong Zheng period (1723 to 1735), circa. 1725, recovered from Ca Mau shipwreck, Vietnam, acquired in Saigon (C-160: D. 12 cm.)

Letter from the Editor

In the New Year 2016 the editorial staff and reporters of the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Newsletter wish all of you great success during the year and that you achieve all the goals you have set. For us also, we have a great start by the latest progress in research by Walter Kassela, who has reported on the unique bowls recovered from the Ca Mau shipwreck. Also, Burin Singtoaj writes on the Bang Pun unglazed jar in the SEACM's collection, which was one of the famous products supplied for the domestic market and maritime trade routes as described in the "Collection Review." This year also brings a great start for more new exhibitions related to ceramic study and other topics around Southeast Asia, especially the special exhibition of Si Satchanalai maternity figurines at the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum in Thailand during January 11 to March 12, 2016, the past exhibition about burial jars and coffins from the Cardamom Mountains at the National Museum, Phnom Penh in Cambodia, the permanent exhibition of Belitung shipwreck ceramics at the new spaces of the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore, and the special exhibition entitled "The History of Thailand" at the National Museum, Bangkok in Thailand - these all are included in the "News in Brief."

blue circle, is extremely unusual. There is no evidence, neither published nor anecdotal, of a Chinese ceramic base mark with a combination of overglaze enamel along with underglaze blue.

Corresponding items in this series are illustrated in Sotheby's (Amsterdam), *Catalogue for Made in Imperial China - 76,000 Pieces of Chinese Export Porcelain from the Ca Mau Shipwreck, circa 1725*, January 29 - 31, 2007, page 222, lot 978. A bowl in the series is also illustrated in Nguyen Dinh Chien, *Tau Co Ca Mau (The Ca Mau Shipwreck)*, page 186, N.252. The Ca Mau sale included only one lot of these small bowls consisting of three items. Of the 76,000 pieces in the Ca Mau auction there were 46 items included with base marks indicated and consisting of the following:

- Lots 109 to 111, 9 cups with four character Yong Zheng mark.
- Lot 112, 9 cups with four character Ruo Shen mark.
- Lots 359 to 360, 14 cups with four character Ruo Shen mark.
- Lot 361, 10 cups with four character Ruo Shen mark, and 1 bowl with six character Yong Zheng mark.
- Lot 978, 3 bowls with overglaze enamel floral blossom within a single underglaze blue circle.

Additionally, although not specifically indicated in the catalogue, there were more items in the sale which may have had base marks. These items are lots 104 to 108, consisting of a total of forty-eight "Chrysanthemum Pattern" bowls, and are the same series of bowls as those with twin fish base mark illustrated in Nguyen Dinh Chien, *Tau Co Ca Mau*

(*The Ca Mau Shipwreck*), page 145, N.141. Also to be noted is that three items with base marks in *Tau Co Ca Mau (The Ca Mau Shipwreck)* were not included in the auction: page 119, N.61, cup with six character Ruo Shen mark; page 121, N.68, cup with four character Ruo Shen mark with figure on horseback under a parasol; and page 145, N.140, bowl with floral sprays and stylized Chinese character with twin fish base mark. The only other known piece with a mark from the Ca Mau shipwreck is a saucer with brown exterior (Fig. 2). This saucer has the very unusual feature of an underglaze mark in the form of a "+" representing the Chinese character signifying the number ten. The mark is inscribed in blue, but has assumed a distinct blackish hue under the brown glaze of the exterior side of the saucer.

The Ca Mau shipwreck was discovered by local fishermen in the summer of 1998 near Ca Mau Island about 90 nautical miles south of Cape Ca Mau, southern Vietnam at a depth of 36 meters. The official excavation of the wrecksite was performed from August 8, 1998 to October 16, 1999 by the government owned Vietnam Salvage Corporation (Visal), the National Museum of Vietnamese History, and the Museum of Ca Mau. A total of over 130,000 ceramics along with numerous broken items and shards dated to the Yong Zheng reign (1723 to 1735) of the Qing Dynasty were recovered from the wrecksite. This total includes official recoveries as well as material recovered earlier by fishermen. Sotheby's conducted the sale of 76,000 Chinese ceramics from the Ca Mau shipwreck in January 2007.



Fig. 2 Saucer with brown exterior, Qing Yong Zheng period (1723 to 1735), circa. 1725, recovered from Ca Mau shipwreck, Vietnam, acquired in Saigon, (C-104)

Wanaporn Khumbutshya, Assistant Curator, Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum (SEACM), Bangkok University, made the line drawing of the base mark (included in the reference photos) and assisted in the research and preparation of this article.

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Collection Review



Bang Pun Storage Jar

Bang Pun kilns, Suphan Buri
13th-14th centuries
Diameter 28.8 cm.
Height 38.1 cm.

Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum,
Bangkok University

This heavy duty unglazed gray stoneware jar is characterized by a long trumpet-shaped neck, a wide shoulder, a swollen body and an expanded base. The jar was decorated with a number of unique stamped designs completely filling in rectangular frames or Bodhi leaf motifs, and the neck and shoulder were stamped with a design of a scene with a man and elephant maybe representing an ancient elephant roundup ceremony.

Stoneware kiln sites are located in the village of Bang Pun village in Suphan Buri in the west of central Thailand. The shape of the stoneware jars from Bang Pun kilns can be compared typologically with the storage jars from the kiln no. 61 of the Si Satchanalai kilns in Sukhothai.

The Bang Pun jars are a little different from Si Satchanalai jars in that the upper body is wider and the lower part is narrower making the base seem wider, and the decoration is mostly of a distinctive stamped design. In fact, the Bang Pun jars are usually more similar to large Khmer jars than to those of Si Satchanalai.

The Bang Pun jars probably developed before the Ayutthaya period around the 13th-14th century corresponding with the rise of the Suphanaphum state. They probably are contemporary with the first type of Sukhothai wares.

The Bang Pun jars have been found largely in central Thailand, such as the Mae Klong River in Ratchaburi, the Nakorn Kosa Temple in Lop Buri,

and the old river course in Suphan Buri. They have also been discovered on the shipwrecks sunk in the Gulf of Thailand, such as the Rang Kwien and Si Chang shipwrecks in Chon Buri. Moreover, during the 2015 excavation season by the Underwater Archaeology Division of Thailand on the Khram (Sattahip) shipwreck in Chon Buri, Bang Pun jars have been found as well. According to the research by Roxanna Brown, the jars from the Bang Pun kilns are found on shipwrecks dated until the mid-15th century.

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News in Brief

New Opening of SEACM's Special Exhibition “Si Satchanalai Figurines: Loving Relationship between Mother and Child,” Thailand

On January 9, 2016 the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum (SEACM) hosted the opening ceremony of the special exhibition entitled “Si Satchanalai Figurines: Loving Relationship between Mother and Child.” The opening ceremony included Assistant Professor Suravudh Kijkusol, Executive Vice President for Administrative Affairs, Bangkok University, who gave a welcome speech, and Mrs. Chorpipop Osathanugrah, who

gave the opening speech for the special exhibition, as well as Wanaporn Khumbutshya, who gave a curator's talk on this special exhibition.

The special exhibition will be open to the public from January 11 to March 12, 2016 at the special exhibition gallery of SEACM, and will include the curator's talk on January 30, February 6 and 13, 2016. The special exhibition displays maternity

figurines made of ceramics produced at the Si Satchanalai kiln sites, which reflect the life and childcare in ancient Sukhothai of the Siam Kingdom. The maternity figurines include brown glazed, green glazed, and underglaze black examples produced during the 16th century. Also included in the exhibition is information to assist all visitors to understand the concept of maternity figurines in various postures.



Fig. 1 The special exhibition was opened by Mrs. Chorpipop Osathanugrah (middle) as well as Assistant Professor Suravudh Kijkusol, Executive Vice President for Administrative Affairs (left) and Dr. Pariwat Thammapreechakorn, Director of Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum, Bangkok University (right), who hosted the opening ceremony



Fig. 2 Wanaporn Khumbutshya, an assistant curator of SEACM, gave a curator's talk

***Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum,
Bangkok University
January 9, 2016***

Restructuring a Masterpiece, Thailand



Fig. 1 Audiences interest in the new special exhibition



Fig. 2 Sukhothai stone inscription no. 1



Fig. 3 Famous torso statue of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara dates back to the late 9th century, provenance from Wiang Temple in Chaiya, Surat Thani

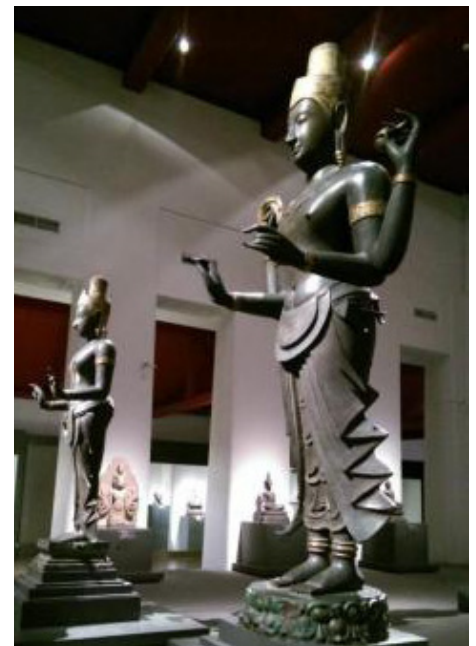


Fig. 4 Statues of Hindu gods Vishnu and Shiva

Stepping into the newly renovated front building of the National Museum Bangkok, visitors may be reminded of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York or the Louvre in Paris. We are not really there yet, but with a new design, tasteful lighting, concise bilingual descriptions and

exquisite ancient artefacts displayed in a wider space to highlight their unique beauty, the 128 year old museum has a new lease of life.

Phra Sitthitecho, a Buddhist monk who has visited museums in Europe, as well as the US, echoed the same

sentiment: The hall looks wider and does not smell musty. The new lighting is dimmer but looks good. This museum meets international standards.

The hall has become very popular and attracted many more visitors.

Most of them, as shown above, express their contentment with the change -- especially the way each artefact, from Buddha statues to archaeological objects, is displayed separately on a raised platform, like most international museums, giving it breathing room and an aura.

The project, which is the pioneer of the Ministry of Culture's "living museum" policy, involved the restoration of Sivamokhaphiman Throne Hall of the former Front Palace, which has long served as the museum's Thai History Exhibition Hall. It opened in September to mark Thai Museums' Day.

Sivamokhaphiman Throne Hall was built in 1782 by the viceroy and younger brother of King Rama I. But in 1885, it was abandoned, and was turned into a Royal Museum in 1887 during the reign of King Rama V. In the reign of King Rama VII, the king allowed the use of the entire Front Palace as the Vajirayan Library and the National Museum Bangkok. In 1967, the hall was turned into the museum's exhibition room focusing on prehistoric times.

In 1982, it was named the National Museum History of Thailand, and the hall was modified and divided into rooms featuring exhibitions on different periods of Thai history, such as Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, Thon Buri and Rattanakosin, through models and multimedia.

This year under the new design, the hall has been brought back to its traditional Thai beauty and the Thai History Exhibition was improved through the display of 111 masterpieces, which were formerly kept in the National Museum Bangkok, Khon Kaen National Museum and Sawan Woranayok National Museum. They are displayed chronologically -- from prehistoric times to the Dvaravati, Srivijaya, Lop Buri, Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin periods -- in order to inform visitors about the civilisations of this country and its people.

The facelift is in line with newly appointed Fine Arts Department director-general Anan Chuchote's policy. He provided the policy to develop all national museums into lifetime learning centres for people of all

ages and educational levels because these museums are sources of ancient artefacts and art pieces, which are a national heritage.

He added that the department is speeding up the process of creating and digitalising complete lists of ancient artefacts and art pieces in its collection. The National Museum Bangkok consists of many former throne halls and royal mansions, and after the work at the Front Palace, Uttraphimuk Hall is being developed into a textile museum, while Surasinghanart Hall and Prapasphipitthaphan Hall are undergoing facelifts. The aim is to turn the National Museum Bangkok, which had fallen into neglect and largely ignored, into a leading museum in the ASEAN region.

The same facelifts will be applied to other museums around the country, with the Office of National Museums providing academic assistance to help museums across the country achieve high standards -- in displaying exhibitions, signage, description -- as well as improving professionalism among curators, especially in terms



Fig. 5 Buddha images



Fig. 6 Overview of special exhibition in the Sivamokhaphiman Throne Hall, National Museum Bangkok

of services, academic aspects, activities and English proficiency.

Phombootra Chandrajoti, director of the Office of National Museums, said that there is already a plan for the next fiscal year to improve the National Gallery, the Royal Elephant National Museum and the Royal Barge Museum. The office will run a pilot project to improve five to seven museums in the provinces. It regularly organises training and academic seminars for national museum curators nationwide.

According to him, the budget for renovating Sivamokhaphiman Throne Hall was less than 50 million baht. It was worth every satang, said Phombootra, since the project brought the throne hall back to its past glory.

The display pattern is in line with standards for ancient artefact museums by emphasising the elegance of the objects. The newly installed bases and lights in particular are central to the new mood -- more modern, less stuffy, and more sophisticated. The descriptions that were once long

and textbook-like have been edited to be more user-friendly, and more attractive to newcomers. Thai and English audio guides are available for free.

To the director, the new face of this exhibition room was inspired mainly by museums in Japan in terms of display and lighting. Artefacts are displayed chronologically from prehistoric times and the Dvaravati Period to the Rattanakosin Period. Those in the main hall, especially the masterpieces, are shown one by one, while there are glass cabinets on both sides showing other objects.

Cardamom Mountains: Body Jars and Cliff Coffins, Cambodia

The remote and mysterious Cardamom Mountains are giving up some of their secrets – burial jars and wooden coffins – to the public as part of an exhibition that begins today at the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh.

After a decade researching the mysteries of the Cardamom Mountain people, Nancy Beavan, a senior research fellow at New Zealand's University of Otago and an expert

project began. In a separate room in the museum, one can see the recreation of the hoard of burial jars and a dozen coffins hidden on a ledge in remote jungles of Cambodia – which have stayed secret for centuries.

The jars are partially covered by plants and sit aloft a small ledge with two wooden coffins lying opened. This was what Ms. Beavan saw in the remote mountains of Cambodia, when she was first flown to the area

bon dating, has been looking into the lives of the Cardamom people and piecing together the clues left by the mysterious people at the 10 sites scattered across southwestern Cambodia.

Knowing very little about Cambodia while living and working in New Zealand, Ms. Beavan received a call from National Geographic about doing radiocarbon dating for a bone sample their team had taken. While



Fig. 1 Body jars and wooden coffins from the Cardamom Mountains, displayed in an exhibit of the “Living in the Shadow of Angkor” project at the National Museum in Phnom Penh. Photo by Nou Sotheavy, Khmer Times

in radiocarbon dating, will be exhibiting her findings as part of the “Living in the Shadow of Angkor” project at the museum.

The project seeks to broaden the breadth of understanding of Cambodian history outside of the Angkor period.

The exhibit will be the first time the public can see how the immense

to see it.

The site was discovered on a conservation boundary survey expedition in 2000. The surveyor met an old Khmer Rouge soldier who had some of these exquisite bowls, Ms. Beavan recalled.

The Documentary Step

For over a decade, Ms. Beavan, an archaeologist who specializes in car-

examining it, she discovered it was a human rib bone. Curious, she called back and asked where the bone sample was from. They answered: the Cardamom Mountains.

Shooting a documentary in Cambodia, National Geographic originally wanted her to link the bones to the builders of Angkor Wat. But she proved the bones dated to 1482 – near the decline of Angkor and dur-

ing a time when the Khmer socio-economic position was transitioning into trade ports on the Mekong.

Flying in a helicopter to the remote mountains, Ms. Beaven was entranced.

She and her research team have found around 10 sites so far full of ancient jars and small wooden coffins. These sites are in the eastern ranges of the mountainous region that stretches across Koh Kong and Kompong Speu provinces.

Secrets of the Mountain

The discovery of the items given to the dead can determine what that community considered important.

Simple copper rings and beads from three international trading sources were found. Most of the jars found in the grave sites were made in Thailand, except for one from the kilns from the Angkor region.

Little is known about the unique culture of the people that placed their dead on the ledges between the 15th and 17th centuries – a practice which has not been recorded in Cambodia before.

Cremation was most common at the time.

On a cliff 100 meters high in the Cardamom Mountains, the site of Phnom Khnang Peung is the largest site with 42 intact jars with fewer than a dozen human remains as well as more tiny coffins which held body parts from more people. There are also about 10 broken jars, which Ms. Beaven and her team tried to reconstruct during the time she stayed there as part of a ceramics

conservation effort.

Although one Angkorian jar is always found at each grave site, the rest of the jars were found to have been from Thailand. This puzzled the researchers and challenged them to find connections between the trade and maritime routes.

Noting the nearest sea trade point was in Trat, Ms. Beaven suspected the Cardamom people did not have direct connections, but traded products such as ivory, beads, resin and cardamom wood with other traders for the jars.

In 2005, fishermen off Koh Kong province found the same jars in their nets, leading to the discovery of sunken ship called the Koh Sdech wreck dated to be from 1428 to 1482. The ship's resin gave scientific evidence which linked the community in the Cardamom Mountains to the items traded.

The ship contained ivory, Chinese porcelain and Thai and Angkorian jars. The jars were part of a type of ceramic known as Mae Nam Noi – made in kilns of Ayutthaya in Thailand which could have been transported to the Gulf of Thailand along the Chao Phraya River.

Unmarked History

One reason why this archaeological treasure is not very well known is the inaccessibility of the location. Even the locals didn't know.

Despite the importance of the discovery, conservation remains a problem.

The best Ms. Beaven and her team could do was to display them in the

exhibit, preserve some ceramics but leave the rest where they are for future tourists and locals to enjoy them.

The Cardamom sites are an important part of Khmer history, but although the Wildlife Alliance has helped support Ms. Beaven's research by providing their helicopter in 2012, it was not until the following year that she received a grant from New Zealand to fulfill the research.

Khmer Times
September 30, 2015

Asian Civilisations Museum Opens New Wings in Singapore



Fig. 1 Primary 5 students from Greenwood Primary School sharing about the Tang shipwreck collection with Ms. Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, at the new Khoo Teck Puat Gallery in Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore. Photo by Asian Civilisations Museum Photo



Fig. 2 The Asian Civilisations Museum opened new wings this week with ongoing celebrations

The changes at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) are the first phase of major renovations at the museum and increase the space by more than 1,300 square metres, reports the Straits Times.

The museum is home to the region's most comprehensive collection of items from around Asia. The galleries explore history, culture and religion in Southeast Asia, China, Islamic West

Asia and the Asian subcontinent.

The museum is located in the Empress Place Building, which was designed by a British architect named John Frederick Adolphus McNair. It was built with Indian convict labour in 1865 and its original use was for colonial government offices.

The new additions add a contemporary element to the colonial building.

The exhibits will now also be organized based on themes, instead of geographic regions, to reflect the interconnectedness of cultures.

The new Khoo Teck Puat Gallery will feature the Tang shipwreck collection, which contains 9th century artefacts from a shipwreck which was discovered in 1998. The ship was discovered in the Java Sea, and contained more than 60,000 ceramics made in China during the Tang dynasty, which lasted from 618 to 907. The ship also contained objects of gold and silver.

The museum now has its first contemporary art space. Along with the changes also comes a new app, which users can download and find more information about artefacts on their mobile phones.

The opening was celebrated with a 24 hour celebration, which included a barbecue and picnic under the stars.

Lonely Planet Travel News
November 18, 2015