Shipwreck Ceramics and the Fall of Melaka

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talk for
Southeast Asian Ceramic Society, West Malaysia branch, Kuala Lumpur

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Since 1974:
150+ wreck sites in S. E. Asia
New evidence from shipwrecks on

1. Who/what paid for Borobudur (early 9th century)?

2. Why the deva-raja cult, Cambodia? (early 9th century)?

3. Ming gap & the Golden Age for S. E. Asian ceramics.


5. The conch motif and the fall of Melaka
## Shipwrecks with Ceramics 9th – early 14th Centuries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belitung AD 826+</th>
<th>Intan c. 918-960, <strong>Cirebon</strong> c. 950-1000</th>
<th>Pulau Buaya c. 1000-1050</th>
<th>Tanjung Simpang, c. 1050-1100</th>
<th>Jepara 1130+</th>
<th>Allaipiddy c.1150-1200, <strong>Karang China</strong> c. 1100-1300</th>
<th>Breaker Reef, <strong>Java Sea</strong>, <strong>Huaguangjiao</strong> I: all c. 1200-1299; Quanzhou c. 1277</th>
<th><strong>Sinan</strong> c. 1325 <strong>Datu Island</strong> c.1300-1325</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98% Changsha ceramics</td>
<td>Mostly Guangdong</td>
<td>Mixed Guangdong, Fujian</td>
<td>Mixed Guangdong, Fujian</td>
<td>Minnan (Fujian), Longquan</td>
<td>Most Fujian, some Guangdong, Jingdezhen</td>
<td>Most Fujian, some Guangdong, some Jingdezhen</td>
<td>Longquan, Jingdezhen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Indian Ocean <strong>dhow</strong></td>
<td>Intan: lashed lug</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>single piece softwood at location</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>Java Sea probably lashed lug</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**B. Groslier**

- 877-889 Roluos earliest Kh glaze: roof tiles, conical bowls, boxes, covered urn
- boxes: no bowls at Angkor, ; cup-mouth bottles; major Ch import from c. 950
- No new Ch infi; begin brown Kh; animal shapes, lenticular, baluster jars
- c. 1050 begin Anlong Thom kilns; 1075-1125 Sras Srang burials (also end 12th)

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1. **Ships circa A.D. 800 – 1367**
2. **Ships circa A.D. 1368-1573**
3. **Ships post-1573**

Brown: proposed time span Buriram kilns c. 1050-1125
Belitung wreck (c. 826)
Cirebon (c. 960) shipwreck
AD 800-850:

Bulk China trade

Borobudur

Deva-rajah cult

Jayavarman II 802-850
Khmer *deva-raja* cult: “so that the country of the Kambujas would no longer be dependent on Java....”
Southeast Asian Trade Wares 15th Century

- **c. 1368 - 1400**
  - Rang Kwien, Song Doc (wrecksites)

- **c. 1400 - 1424/30**
  - Flecker Phu Quoc I & II, Turiang, Ko Si Chang II, Bakau, Baginda

- **c. 1424/30 - 1487**
  - Nanyang, Longquan, Royal Nanhai, Prasae Rayong, Pandanan, Belanakan, Phu Quoc II & III, Sha Tsui, Ko Si Chang III, Ko Khram

- **c. 1488 - 1505**
  - Brunei Junk, Lena Shoal, Santa Cruz (Hoi An)

**Sankamphaeng dishes**

**Singburi**

**Suphanburi storage jars**

**Champa ware**

- **Sawankhalok ‘Mon’ brown & green monochrome ware**
- **Sawankhalok green glaze, underglaze fish & floral plates**
- **Sawankhalok classic celadon**
- **Sawankhalok - Pa Yang celadon - 1 underglaze jarlet**
- **Early Vietnam underglaze**
- **Vietnam underglaze blue, monochrome, polychrome**

**About 50% Chinese Celadon & other monochrome ware**

**1 - 5% Chinese**

**About 75% Chinese**
‘Ming gap’

• Term ‘Ming gap’ from Tom Harrisson -- referred to the absence of Ming blue & white at the Sarawak river excavations (NOT to an absence of blue & white across the region). The missing Sarawak blue & white was instead discovered in excavations at Brunei.

New definition:

1. Severe shortage of blue & white to S. E. Asia circa 1352 – 1470

2. Drop in overall Chinese ceramics export (from previous 100%) to about 50% circa 1368-1424

3. Drop in overall Chinese ceramics export to less than 1% circa 1425-1487

-- Ming gap ends with Hongzhi (1488-1505) reign --
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- Sankamphaeng dishes
- Suphanburi storage jars
- Singburi
- Champa ware
- Sukhothai fish & floral motifs
- Sukhothai: plates only
- Sukhothai 1 underglaze jarlet
- Sawankhalok ‘Mon’ brown & green monochrome ware
- Sawankhalok green glaze, underglaze fish & floral plates
- Sawankhalok classic celadon
- Sawankhalok - Pa Yang celadon - 1 underglaze jarlet
- Early Vietnam underglaze
- Vietnam underglaze blue, monochrome, polychrome

About 50% Chinese Celadon & other monochrome ware

1 - 5% Chinese

About 75% Chinese
Zheng He-like voyages from 1369, e.g. 180 ships built 1384, 300 in 1387

1383 (9 Sept) ‘envoys sent to confer cloth and 19,000 pieces porcelain on Champa, Siam, Cambodia’

Zheng He one of 13 named admirals in Yongle reign

Missions end 1424; except one more in 1432; ships dismantled Nov 1435

*Geoffrey Wade translations of Chinese chronicles

Blue & white?! Archaeology shows…
Early Ming celadon, Song Doc shipwreck 1380-1400

‘Zhenghe’ ceramics
Turiang-type cargoes (c. 1400-1424)

‘Zhenghe’ ceramics
Early Thai green glaze – Sawankhalok Turiang-type cargoes  c. 1400-1424
Classic Thai celadon 1425-1487

Royal Nanhai (c. 1460)

1% and less Chinese, e.g.:
Royal Nanhai (c. 1460):
21,000 pieces Thai classic celadon
6 Chinese blue & white, 1 celadon
2 Vietnamese blue & white
My theory:
Hongzhi (1488-1505)-type cargoes continue through 1511, Zhengde (1506-21) group begins 1512
My theory:
Hongzhi (1488-1505)-type cargoes remain unchanged through 1511

2 groups of shipwrecks definitely follow one after the other, and Chinese agree 1\textsuperscript{st} group is Hongzhi. 2\textsuperscript{nd} must be Zhengde (1506-21)?

What could cause the drastic differences between the 2 groups?
Lesser quality Chinese ware, overall smaller cargoes & smaller ships

Hongzhi blue & white

Zhengde blue & white
Counter-attack January 1512

- Empoli: 35 500-tonne junks, 70 slightly smaller, then many very small

- Pires: Meantime Java gathered all its forces and came against Malacca with a hundred sail, …some 40 junks and 60 lancharas and a hundred calaluzes… Our ships went out to meet them, at which the Javanese withdrew with the tide, leaving everything and taking to the calaluzes. All the rest were burnt, ..
Increased shipping reported in China for Hongzhi (1488-1505) reign

6 April 1493

- The Censor-in-Chief Min Gui, supreme commander of Guangdong/Guang-xi, memorialized: "In the coastal areas of Guangdong, many people are privately dealing with [those who come on the] fan ships. The ships come in an unbroken stream and ...[those on] the fan ships start selling their merchandise....

   According to Gui's memorial, the problem lies with the great number of fan ships .... According to this Ministry, since the first year of the Hong-zhi reign (1488/89) the only fan ships which have brought tribute missions through Guang-dong have been one from Champa and one from Siam.
Zhengde-type porcelain
No substantial change in China until Wu Ting-ju sacked 1521-22

13 January 1521  [Because of regulations] The yi persons could thus not make much profit and the number who came was limited. Recently, the administration commissioner Wu Ting-ju put forward a proposal based on his claim that [the province] lacked aromatics to send to the Court and lacked provisions for the armed forces. Thus, frequency restrictions were ignored and the goods of any ship which arrived were taxed. This has resulted in fan ships continually coming to our coastal bays…. Ting-ju's proposals have led to these troubles. The Ministry of Revenue should be instructed to examine the precedents and remove him."

Drop in trade

Pires (1512-1515, p.195) .. And through the destruction of Malacca they [Grisee merchants] do not navigate…nor have they any junks, because most of the Javanese junks come from Pegu, where the Javanese – and other people who bought in Malacca – used to send for them to be made; … it is already five years since this stopped, and the Governor of India burned and defeated all the enemy junks, they were all left without any, and they have no junks.”

(p 217) “This king [Tidore] is very desirous of trading with us, because the Moluccas Islands are going to ruin, and for the last three years they have only gathered a few cloves, because of the drop in navigation since the capture of Malacca.

Hongzhi cargoes
Hongzhi (1488-1506)-type cargoes:

1. First bulk Ming blue & white export

2. Greatest variety types of ware, i.e.:
   a. Chinese (1)blue & white (2)celadon,
      other monochrome ware, (3) 1st polychrome Chinese from ships
   b. Burmese celadon (&
      Burmese lead-glazed..?)
   c. Vietnamese blue & white, 
      and monochrome (& polychrome?)
   d. Rare heirloom Champa ware
   e. Sawankhalok post-classic celadon (1 single underglaze jarlet known)
   f. Sukhothai underglaze, 1 single jarlet known

wrecksites
Lena Shoal, Philippines
Hongzhi-type cargo

- Discovered 1996
- Excavated 1998
- About 4,000 ceramics
Santa Cruz, Philippines
Hongzhi-type cargo
Excavated June-September 2001
- 15,000 objects
  (11,500 ceramics, about 8,000 intact)
-no official report yet
Brunei Junk, Brunei
Hongzhi-type cargo

Reported 1997, excavated 1998
About 12,250 ceramics
Book 2001
Hoi An, Vietnam
Hongzhi-type ??

Butterfield’s auction Oct 2000
Gujangan (Jolo) shipwreck, Philippines, Zhengde-type cargo

Discovered by fishermen 1997
Reported 1998
Excavated 1999
NO official report yet

Larry Gotuaco, *Arts of Asia*, Nov-Dec 2002
Xuande shipwreck (c. 1530-40), Malaysia, Zhengde-type cargo

Excavated 1996

Oriental Art
Summer 1997
300-400 ceramics
Phu Quoc I, Vietnam, Zhengde-type

Found early 1970s

About 100 fragments collected

Klang Aow II, Gulf of Thailand, Zhengde-type

Chinese blue & white, Thai Sawankhalok underglaze

50-100 fragments, early 2004;
Ref. *Newsletter* October 2004
Australia Tide/Klang Aow I, Gulf of Thailand, Zhengde-type

except NO Swk underglaze, NO Sukh
Hongzhi group (1488-1511) base marks rare 2 on Brunei Junk

Zhengde group (1512-40) base marks more common; but for earlier reigns (e.g. Xuande)
Xuande wreck (Zhengde-type): 4-character, 6-character, stylized
Hongzhi group: Burma celadon, Vietnamese

Zhengde group:

NO Burmese

NO Vietnamese
Hongzhi group: Swk post-classic celadon

Zhengde group: Swk post-classic celadon (mainly large bowls) + opaque white + underglaze black
Hongzhi group: Chinese celadon about 25% of total Chinese ceramics

Zhengde group: NO Chinese celadon
Zhengde group (1512-40): hole-bottom saucers

Xuande wreck

Hongzhi group (1488-1511): hole-bottom, wide dishes

Lena Shoal
REVIEW

Hongzhi-type cargo, c.1488-1511
- Sawankhlok post-classic celadon
- Sukhothai very rare
- Chinese celadon
- Burmese celadon
- Vietnamese

Zhengde-type cargo, c.1512-1540
- Sawankhalok post-classic celadon + monochrome white + underglaze black
- Fair quantity Sukhothai bowls (cakra, picul)
- NO (rare?) Chinese celadon
- NO Burmese, NO Vietnamese

Next: style changes in Chinese blue & white ware
Rock & peonies

Hongzhi group rare

Lena Shoal
Rock & peonies: Zhengde group common
Conch motif: Hongzhi group, with *ershu*; Zhengde group plain
Hongzhi blue & white earliest:

Rock & peonies, rare

Zhengde-type (Xuande wreck)
Makara

Hongzhi-type

Zhengde-type (Xuande wreck)
Zhengde group ONLY: Ribs on exterior dishes (Xuande wreck)
Zhengde-group ONLY:
4-horsemen, lotus-shape bowls
Gujangan wreck
Trade ceramics offer new evidence:

1. S. E. Asia AD 800-850: bulk trade, Borobudur, Angkor *deva-raja* cult.
2. Ming ban/Ming gap
3. Zhenghe *celadon*
4. Shipwreck ceramics & the Fall of Melaka
   a. Fewer & lesser quality Chinese ware after 1512
   b. Vietnamese & Burmese drop out, Thailand increases export amount and variety
   c. The 2 types of cargo very easy to identify by knowing only a few basic Chinese blue and white designs