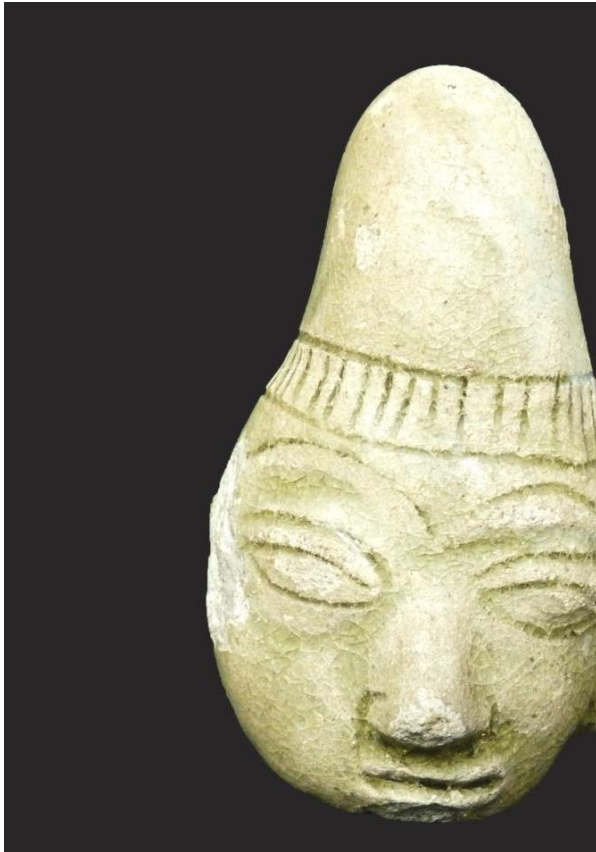


For immediate release

From the Ashes: Reviving Myanmar Celadon Ceramics

NUS Museum presents ongoing attempts to revive the technology of making ash-glazed ceramics in Myanmar



Head of a high-ranking official (detail), greenware, 8.2 x 4.9 x 5.2 cm. Collection of Myanmar Ceramic Society.

SINGAPORE, 8 February 2017 –

From the Ashes: Reviving Myanmar Celadon Ceramics presents a range of greenware from historical kilns alongside pieces from the contemporary revival in the use of ash glazes. Contextualising the relatively recent discovery of Myanmar’s significance in the history of glazed ceramics production in the region, **the exhibition is also the first devoted solely to Myanmar ceramics in Singapore.**

Despite pottery’s importance as an industry in contemporary Myanmar, its historical contributions to the regionally rich tradition of glazed ceramics production has been the last to emerge and be studied. In 1999, crossdraft kilns from the 15th century were discovered during archaeological excavation in the township of Twante¹, revealing that ash-glazed greenware (also known as celadon) had been produced at the time. Further findings have shown that Twante was probably the biggest and one of the most long-lasting and commercially successful ceramic production centres in Southeast Asia.

Professor John Miksic (NUS Department of Southeast Asian Studies), notes, “Myanmar is the last major Southeast Asian nation with a tradition of glazed pottery production to be studied. It is becoming apparent that pottery kilns in Myanmar were more numerous and more widely distributed than in any other part of the region. The Twante kilns are at the point the most important yet discovered, and the most intensively studied.”

The Myanmar Ceramic Society and its President, Dr Myo Thant Tyn, have led community capacity building efforts to re-introduce the production of ash-glazed ceramics in Twante. The community at present produces lead-glazed earthenware, which has limited use as the metal is poisonous when consumed. Despite the commercial viability of glazed wares amidst Myanmar’s burgeoning hotel and catering industry, local potters have shied away due to the increased firewood, and costs, involved in

¹ Located southwest of Yangon, the delta township of Twante has had immense historical significance due to its pottery industry, central location on navigational routes as well as sites of religious interest.

maintaining the minimum 1300°C needed to fire traditional ash-glazed wares. To address this, experiments have found that a compound known as borax, when added, reduces the melting point of glazes to a temperature more consistent with typical earthenware firing conditions. The resulting ash glazed, yet lead-free and low temperature fired invention has been termed ‘celabon’, a portmanteau of ‘celadon’ and ‘borax’.

Exhibition curator Foo Su Ling (Curator, NUS Museum) shares, “While archaeological discoveries inform us about life in the past, in this case, they have also ignited new developments and a way to push forward. The Myanmar Ceramic Society is attempting to revive the knowledge of ash glazing in the hope of invigorating Twante’s contemporary pottery industry and connecting local potters with their heritage. The project was also an opportunity for students to gain some experience in overseas fieldwork. Our student interns participated in the fieldtrips to archaeological find sites and pottery workshops. They were actively involved in documenting artefacts for the exhibition and conducting research about the Twante area.”

From the Ashes: Reviving Myanmar Celadon Ceramics is on display in the Archaeology Library (Lobby Level) until December 2017. The 55 artefacts on display include archaeological finds of greenware, earthenware, wasters and components of the crossdraft kilns, as well as contemporary celabon pieces.

For more information about the exhibition, media interviews, gallery tours or high resolution images, please contact:

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[Annexes](#)

- Annex A: About the exhibition
- Annex B: About the Archaeology Library
- Annex C: NUS Museum
- Annex D: NUS Centre For the Arts