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SOME RESULTS ON SPAFA REGIONAL SEMINAR-CUM-WORKSHOP ON CERAMICS OF EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA AND A TENTATIVE REVIEW ON THE DATING OF TRADE CERAMICS DISCOVERED IN SARAWAK

Lucas Chin

The SPAFA (SEAMEO Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts) Regional Seminar-cum-Workshop on Ceramics of East and Southeast Asia held in the Sarawak Museum in May, 1981 was considered significant in many respects as it had shed light on a number of issues confronted by scholars in this region for many years.

It was the first time that ceramists from the People's Republic of China actively participated in such a seminar. Their expertise and experience on their investigations on kiln sites in provinces (Zhejiang, Guangdong and Fujian) in South China which were responsible for the production of the types of ceramic wares traded to Southeast Asia, have greatly assisted scholars in this region in alleviating the problem on the dating and attribution of excavated ceramic material. The Chinese scholars also made an important observation on certain types of ceramic ware produced in China for the exclusive market of Southeast Asia and other countries and such wares have not been found in China. A good example is the De-hua kendis.

Among the important issues discussed in the Seminar-cum-Workshop included the practice by the people in Southeast Asian countries in using ceramic objects as gravegoods. This practice was found to be widespread. Ceramics of different provenances and antiquities which had been kept as heirlooms over a long period were later buried or interred with ceramics of recent and contemporary periods with the dead (persons of social status). This practice would explain why a wide range of ceramics belonging to a long period of time, from the Song Dynasty to the late Ming Dynasty, has been commonly recovered at the same levels in many proto-historic sites in Southeast Asian countries.

**Some results on SPAFA Regional Seminar-cum-Workshop on
Ceramics of East and Southeast Asia and a tentative review
on the dating of trade ceramics discovered in Sarawak**

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The Seminar-cum-Workshop also observed that the practice of "killing" or breaking ceramic objects before they were interred with the dead was widespread in Southeast Asia as evidenced by the large proportions of ceramic sherds which constitute in not less than 80% of the excavated material recovered from sites in these countries.

Another relevant issue discussed in the Seminar-cum-Workshop was the question on terminologies on ceramics used by the Chinese on one hand and those by other scholars on the other. Ceramics which have been known by Western and other scholars as Ch'ing-pai and white wares are called by the Chinese as Ching-hua and De-hua or bluish-green or bluish-white respectively and the Temmoku is referred to by the Chinese as Hai Tze (black porcelain).

The Chinese delegates headed by Mr. Feng Xianming spent some considerable time examining the ceramic material excavated from sites in Sarawak. According to Mr. Feng, the majority of the so-called white wares (Ch'ing-pai,