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A CLASSIFICATION OF CERAMICS DISCOVERED IN KAMPUNG SENANGEH, SAMARAHAN, SARAWAK

Jonathan Ko and Stephen Chia

INTRODUCTION

Kampung Senangeh is an Iban settlement situated on the bank of Sadong River and near to its estuary in Asajaya District, Samarahan Division, Sarawak (Fig 1). This small village consists of a few modern Iban longhouses with a population of about 260 people. According to our chief informant, Penghulu Pawi anak Sidi (pers. comm., 17th April, 2011), a hoard of ceramics was serendipitously discovered by several villagers while they were digging a well behind their longhouse on 18th September, 1996. All the ceramics were recovered from a small pit, measuring about 2.3 metres long, 2.4 metres wide and 1.2 metres deep (Fig. 2). However, no written report was made but it is believed that the finds probably belonged to an old longhouse which was built there in the 1880s.

The Sarawak Museum Department was only notified in 1997 about the ceramic finds, and they managed to acquire about 138 pieces of the ceramics, including 126 complete pieces and a small number of sherds (Fig.3). All the ceramics are now kept at the Sarawak Museum's storage facility in Sekama, Kuching. This study is the first attempt to identify and to classify the ceramics recovered from Kampung Senangeh. 125 out of the 126 intact or complete ceramic pieces were examined and classified in this study. The complete forms included 54 jars (52 of them are four-handle jars), 26 dishes (9 of them with twin-fish design; 16 are plain and one with single fish design); 22 bowls, three ewers, nine jarlets, five bottles, two plates, two cups, one basin and one covered box (Chin, 1977; 1988). A large celadon plate with the flying dragon design, jarlets with the ice-crack pattern, and dishes with the twin-fish design are among the most unique ceramic pieces from the Senangeh finds.

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Fig. 1: Location of Kampung Senengeh in Asajaya, Samarahan Division, Sarawak.



Fig. 2: The site dug by villagers at Kampung Senangeh in 1966.



Fig. 3: Some of the ceramic pieces that have survived intact.

CERAMIC TYPES

The majority of the ceramics found in Kampung Senangeh are celadon wares with pure green glaze, green-grayish glaze, light greenish-blue glaze, green-yellowish glaze and non-average green glaze that were probably mixed with pure green, grayish and yellowish colour (a result of technical defect of material content and the firing process). Green-yellowish glaze and green-grayish glaze are the most common colours of the celadon wares. Green-yellowish colour always shows on the four-handle jars, while green-grayish colour is common on dishes. White wares are found second only to celadon, including pure white glazed wares; white-grayish glazed wares and a small number of white-yellowish glazed wares. This is followed by the brown or yellowish glazed, black glazed and *Qing Bai* wares (Table 1). Brown or yellowish glaze is mainly found on the four-handle jars, while black glaze is found only on the crude storage bottles as was similarly reported by Chin (1969).

Table 1: Quantity of ceramics from Kampung Senangeh according to glaze.

Ceramic type	Number of pieces	Percentage
Celadon	70	56%
White ware	16	12.8%
<i>Qing Bai</i> ware	2	1.6%
Brown-glazed	3	2.4%
Black-glazed	3	2.4%
Glaze not visible	31	24.8%
Total	125	100%

In this study, typological analysis was used to examine the attributes of the ceramic vessels such as form or shape, function, decoration, glaze colour and other features. Based on these attributes, the ceramics were classified into ten main types (Table 2).