

## SIAM AND THE POTTERY TRADE OF ASIA

By

*Charles Nelson Spinks*

### Introduction

My first introduction to Sawankalok ware, a type of pottery made in Siam from the middle of the 14th to perhaps the middle of the 15th century, was both accidental and inauspicious. Shortly after the war we had the occasion to visit the unbombed Tōkyō home of Mr. Iida Shōichi, President of the Keihin Electric Railway Company, who had a large collection of old pottery and porcelain. After showing us some fine specimens of Sung and Ming wares and several exquisite pieces of old Kutani and Oribe, the proud collector asked if I were interested in *Sonkoroku-yaki* (宋胡錄燒). I had to confess I had never heard of this ware before. It looked like celadon, but the glaze had more of a greyish tone than the typical olive green, and it lacked that smooth almost pliable feel of the Chinese pottery. Several pieces also looked as if they had been damaged while being fired in the kiln. Nevertheless, this Sonkoroku had a quiet, simple, beauty, although many of the bowls and vessels were of unusual shapes, unlike the work of any Japanese or Chinese potter. The decorated pieces had rather conventional floral patterns or occasionally a stylized fish, either incised under the grey-green glaze or painted in brown or black against a soft yellowish-grey ground. One little vessel looked exactly like a *chōshi* (銚子), the Japanese bottle for serving rice wine. On a russet base a rich, dark brown glaze had been allowed to flow lazily down the sides forming an irregular coating. All the Sonkoroku in the collection had that quality of studied restraint combined with subdued elegance which appeals so profoundly to the aesthetic instincts of the Japanese who describe this characteristic with the single word *shibui* (渋), having something of the meaning of our word "tasteful". To my surprise, the owner told me that this *Sonkoroku-yaki* was made in Siam many centuries ago.

After this casual introduction I never had further occasion to come across this unusual pottery during our years in Japan and before long I had forgotten about it. My second introduction came some years later during my first week in Bangkok. While walking up New Road to get my first feel of this appalling thoroughfare, I happened to enter the shop of an art dealer, where I noticed on display something that suddenly recalled to my mind this same rather crude-looking celadon. The dealer said it was Sawankalok ware, and when I related how I had seen some pottery like this in Japan which was called Sonkoroku, I was dumbfounded that he readily knew this name. It later developed that he was partly Japanese. He then told me that the term Sonkoroku was merely a Japanese corruption of the Siamese word Sawankalok, the place where this pottery was made. I was soon attracted to a little vase-like vessel which looked exactly like the *sake* (酒) bottle I had once admired in Mr. Iida's collection. The simple but supernal little piece had apparently laid for years in some stream bed exposed to the abrasive action of water and sand, for the dark brown glaze had been worn away in places revealing the russet base beneath. It had thus acquired the true patination of age, and I could not resist the temptation to purchase it.

In this casual but curious way I had been led by a rather round-about course to this lovely ware of old Siam, and in my two unrelated Japanese introductions to Sawankalok pottery I had in effect been unconsciously retracing one important route of its diffusion over widely separated parts of Asia. Accordingly, I shall endeavor to unravel something further of the obscure history of this ware and try to discover something of the place it and Siam once occupied in the great pottery trade of the East.

### Origin of Siamese Pottery

As potters the Thai were comparatively late comers and their ultimate display of technical skill and artistic genius in this particular field was comparatively short lived. At the most, the Thai probably manufactured fine pottery for only a little more than

## Examples of Khmer Pottery



A.



B.

C.

- A. Water jar and bottle on both of which much of the dark brown glaze has flaked off.  
(From the collection of Phya Medha Dhibodi)
- B. Typical Khmer jar. (From the collection of Mr. Lek Viriyaphand)
- C. Typical Khmer jar with glaze in excellent state of preservation.  
(From the collection of Mr. Lek Viriyaphand)



a century and only in two small localities around Sukhothai and Sawankalok on the banks of the Yom River in north-central Siam. Before the 14th century their efforts had been limited to producing crude earthenwares and some stonewares for everyday household use, and after their one comparatively brief foray into the finer ceramic field they again confined themselves until modern times to making these same simple but practical utensils. Such wares have played and continue to play an important part in the life of the Thai, for in the ordinary Siamese household until the advent of cheap, foreign-made aluminum and enamel pots and pans, earthen and stoneware vessels have occupied a more conspicuous place than metal utensils. This is not necessarily a reflection on the metallurgical skill of the Thai, for over much of the same period of their history they have displayed a remarkable genius in the casting of bronze Buddha images and cannon, and in the making of steel weapons and other metal articles. We can only conclude, therefore, that, aside from the element of cost, the Thai have had some sort of aesthetic predilection for earthen and stoneware utensils for their homes.

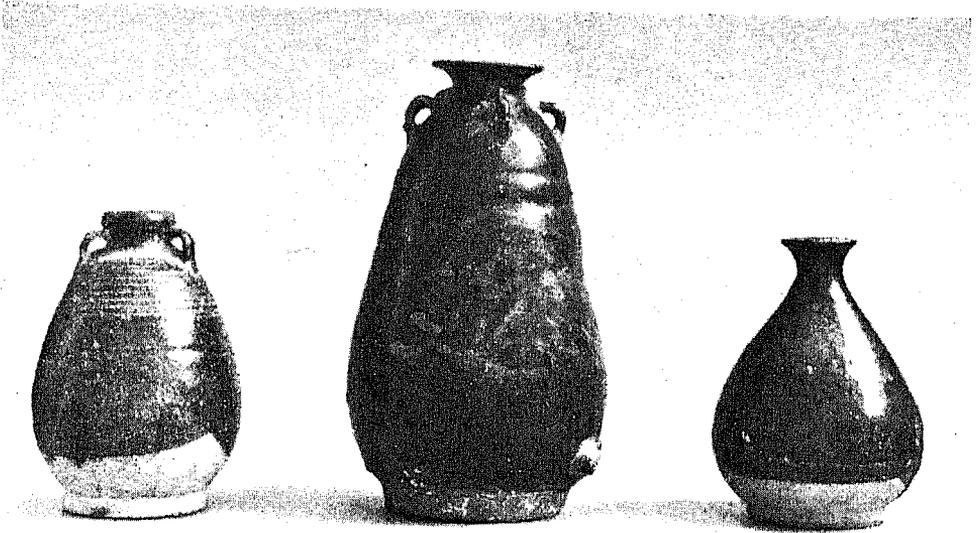
Yet it is strange that the Thai peoples apparently did not bring with them any advanced ceramic techniques from China when they left their ancestral kingdom of Nan Chao in southern Yunnan Province. During the period of the Nan Chao Kingdom the Thai undoubtedly achieved a fairly advanced stage of civilization, and they must have been in some contact with the exciting ceramic developments which took place in China during the T'ang and Sung periods. Yet all this seems to have been left behind when the Thai began their large-scale migrations southward from Nan Chao toward the end of the Sung dynasty. Their next probable contact with more advanced ceramic methods came as a result of their relationship with the Khmer in the Menam Valley of Siam. Some samples of very early Thai pottery bear marked similarities to the work of the Khmer, not only in form but also with respect to their rather brittle type of glaze. The Khmer apparently did not employ a true vitreous glaze, but used what appears to have been some lacquer-like substance of organic character. Japanese ceramic specialists call

this type of glaze *katsu-yū* (褐釉), a term which, however, tells us nothing about the glaze itself beyond the obvious fact that it is often of a dark brown (*katsu*) color. It is possible that this type of glaze was similar to the lacquer-like material the Khmer apparently used instead of lime mortar to bind together the bricks of their temples and other structures. I have also been impressed by the similarity between these early Khmer and Thai glazes and the lacquer coatings both peoples applied to their stone Buddha images prior to covering them with gold leaf. In any event, the peculiar glaze found on Khmer jars and some of the early types of Thai pottery is not especially durable and in time tends to flake off from the earthenware base or wear away from exposure to the elements. A true vitreous glaze is an almost indestructible substance.

### Founding of Sukhothai and Thai Relations with China

The Thai migrants from Nan Chao who settled in northern and north-central Siam formed small principalities which by the 13th century had come under the suzerainty of the Khmer as they expanded their power over much of what is now Thailand. From about the middle of this century, however, the Thai princes began to grow restive and sought to assert their independence. About the middle of the 13th century the town of Sukhothai, one of the northern Khmer outposts, was seized by two rebellious Thai chieftains, one of whom borrowed the elegant Khmer style of Sri Indraditya and made himself king. Thus was established the Kingdom of Sukhothai, the first independent Thai state. The third son of Sri Indraditya, the illustrious Prince Rāma Khamhêng, succeeded to the throne of Sukhothai in 1375 and vastly extended the boundaries of his domain at the expense of the Khmer and the Môn. It is believed that much of the manpower for his military enterprises was provided by fresh streams of Thai pouring out of southern China as a result of the conquest of the Kingdom of Nan Chao by Kublai Khan in 1254.

Examples of Siamese Ware with Dark Brown (*Katsu*) Glaze



A.



B.



C.

- A. Two small containers with "ears" for holding liquids and a vase-like bottle.  
(From the collection of Phya Meda Dhibodi)
- B. A vessel with "ears" typical of a type often made with a celadon-like glaze.  
(From the collection of Mr. Lek Viriyaphand)
- C. Wide-mouth jar with design incised through dark brown glaze.  
(From the collection of Mr. Lek Viriyaphand)



One of the significant events of King Rāma Khamhêng's reign was his establishment of political relations of a sort with the Yüan or Mongol dynasty of China. It is possible that the initiative for this step may have come from the Mongol Court itself, for in 1282 a Chinese emissary is said to have appeared at Sukhothai for the ostensible purpose of concluding a treaty of amity with the new Thai kingdom which would, of course, have been the Mongol's euphemistic way of inviting King Rāma Khamhêng to become the vassal of Kublai Khan. The Great Khan was now in his declining years. With his predecessor, Chinghis Khan, he had carved out a vast empire by military conquest, but now sought to consolidate his far-flung territories by re-establishing the traditional Chinese system of vassal states. In this way it would have been unnecessary for Kublai Khan in his old age to have embarked upon new military campaigns to subdue the kingdoms of Southeast Asia which he had not heretofore found time to conquer. The Mongol Court's emissary who arrived at Sukhothai in 1282 may have been making a circuit of some of these Southeast Asian kingdoms for this very purpose, since Chinese records indicate that in 1289 a Thai state to the south of Sukhothai, known to the Chinese as Law Hok Kok, sent a tribute embassy to Peking. This state was probably Luvo, later known as Lopburi. Another Yüan mission visited Angkor in 1296-97, one member of which, Chou Ta-kwan (周達觀), has left us the only extensive eye-witness account of the fabulous Khmer capital in his famous *Chêng La Fêng T'u Chi* (真臘風土記), or Account of the Customs of Chenla (Cambodia).

King Rāma Khamhêng responded to Kublai Khan's overtures. He had little choice in the matter, however, for to have refused to pay tribute to Peking would have incurred the wrath of the Mongols, while accepting a status of vassalage under the Yüan would, on the other hand, serve as an assurance against a possible reprisal invasion of Sukhothai by the Khmer. Accordingly, a Sukhothai tribute mission is said to have been despatched to China in 1294, and Thai tradition holds it was headed by King Rāma Khamhêng himself. Kublai Khan died the following year, 1295, and in 1300 a second mission from Sukhothai apparently proceeded to the Mongol capital,

again headed, according to Thai tradition, by the king. This second mission was probably for the purpose of paying homage to Kublai Khan's successor who took the Chinese dynastic style of Ch'eng Tsung (成宗). Subsequent Thai rulers occasionally sent tribute missions to China. For example, on the overthrow of the Mongol dynasty in 1368, the Thai state of Ayuthia despatched a mission to the Ming capital at Nanking in 1371. Another Thai embassy in 1373 was reportedly headed by a Siamese princess. Throughout the 15th century there were several such Thai missions, and down to modern times China has always looked upon Siam as one of her vassal states while the Siamese kings to varying degrees appear to have vaguely recognized their tributary status.

### Chinese Ceramic Influence at Sukhothai

The significant point of all this for our story, however, lies in the fact that from the close of the 13th century some form of contact was established between the Thai kingdoms and China, which in turn provided the opportunity for commercial relations. The official exchanges and missions connected with the tributary status of kingdoms lying along the periphery of the Chinese Empire were often thinly disguised commercial enterprises, the tributary goods and return presents merely affording a pretext for profitable trade.

Trade as well as politics, therefore, may have accounted in part for King Rāma Khamhêng's supposed visits to China in 1294 and 1300. During his first visit he and his suite were undoubtedly overawed by the material splendor of China, and what must have impressed them as much as anything was the great abundance of fine pottery. Thai tradition holds, therefore, that on his second visit Rāma Khamhêng brought back with him to Sukhothai a company of Chinese potters.

Some writers, notably the late Phraya Nakorn Phrah Ram, have tried to upset this tradition. Until recently it had rested largely on references in the early Thai chronicle, more recently known as the *Pongsawadan Yonok*, and the modern researches



A.



B.

A. An unusual example of Sukhothai Ware  
( From the collection of the Mr. Lek Virayaphand )  
B. Examples of Sukhothai glazed building ornaments and an elephant figurine.  
( Photograph by the author from the collection in Wat Yai, Pittsukulok )



of the late Prince Damrong. Reginald le May, one of the outstanding authorities on Thai pottery and art, made a thorough review of this problem in the March 1939 issue of the *Journal*, which was a critique on the views expressed by Phraya Nakorn Phrah Ram in an earlier issue. Le May found no reason to question the traditional belief that Chinese potters were actually brought to Siam and submitted some very substantial evidence in support of this view. In the first place, there began to be produced at Sukhothai early in the 14th century a type of pottery which was utterly new to anything heretofore produced in Siam or by the Khmer. This pottery is almost identical in style with the wares which were then being produced in the kilns at T'zu Choû (磁州) in Chihli (Ho-pei) Province south of Peking. Moreover, the wares produced at Sukhothai were fired in a manner entirely new to Siam, the bowls, jars and other vessels being placed on small earthenware stands, or pontils, with five pointed projections on their under sides. As the vessels were stacked in the kiln, one inside the other with a pontil between each vessel to prevent direct contact, the bottom of the interior of each vessel, except the very lowest one in the pile, invariably has five spur marks where the tips of the pontil were broken off when the pottery was removed from the kiln after firing. The appearance in Siam of this Chinese technical process strongly suggests the presence of potters from China.

There was, of course, nothing remarkable in the fact that a vassal king like Rāma Khamhêng or his representative could have arranged with the Mongol Court to bring a company of potters from T'zu Choû to Sukhothai. While at Peking the Thai undoubtedly saw T'zu Choû wares which were produced nearby and which were probably at the height of their popularity during the late Sung and Yüan periods. In fact, T'zu Choû wares were so popular that they were produced throughout the Ming period as well, for as Soame Jenyns has noted in his *Ming Pottery and Porcelain*, "these kilns are without rival in age and continuity." The products of T'zu Choû, however, were not one of the export wares, although fragments have been found in such widely separated regions as Mongolia and Indonesia. Nevertheless, King Rāma Khamhêng had gone to Peking

on a tribute-bearing mission, and when the outer barbarians paid homage in this manner the Mongol rulers had adopted the time-honored Chinese custom of bestowing upon such vassals some of the blessings of Chinese civilization. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that the Mongols in acknowledging King Rāma Khamhêng's tributary status were only too pleased to permit their vassal to share in some of the more advanced Chinese ceramic techniques and to allow him to take some skilled potters back to Siam.

There also may have been another more subtle reason why Rāma Khamhêng was permitted to take Chinese potters to Sukhothai. Having few cultural attainments of their own, the Mongols had readily adopted many of the customs and practices of China which were useful in giving their heterogeneous empire a greater degree of cultural unity as well as conferring upon themselves a more urbane, sophisticated character which was lacking in their nomadic heritage. The Mongols thereby became a kind of channel by which Chinese cultural influences were disseminated over large parts of Asia and even to Europe. We can find, therefore, an interesting as well as a striking parallel between the introduction of Chinese ceramic techniques into Siam and the introduction of Chinese pottery-making methods into Persia.

### The Persian Parallel

Between 1256 and 1265 Hulāgu, a brother of Kublai Khan, consolidated Mongol power in Iraq and Persia where he established a kind of Mongol sub-kingdom with its capital at Tabriz. Hulāgu was, of course, politically oriented to the Yüan Court at Peking, which at once made him to some degree culturally oriented to the civilization of China. Thus we find Hulāgu and his successors using Chinese-style seals in their official correspondence, impressions of which are still preserved in letters sent from the Tabriz Court to Philip the Fair of France. We also find that Hulāgu imported Chinese potters, papermakers and other skilled artisans to his capital, as a result of which Persian pottery, textiles and painting soon reflected a strong Chinese influence. The dragon, phoenix and other

Chinese emblems were incorporated into Persian ceramics, just as at the beginning of the 14th century, only a few years later, Chinese designs and techniques were being employed by Chinese potters at Sukhothai.

### Sukhothai and Sawankalok Wares

In attempting to reproduce the wares of T'zu Choû the potters at Sukhothai turned out a hard, thick stoneware having a white slip decorated with simple designs in black and brown under a rather thin, yellowish-grey glaze. It appears that Sukhothai ware was produced for only a brief time, possibly for only fifteen or twenty years, although the kilns in this area probably continued to make elaborate roof tiles and architectural ornaments for a much longer period. Tradition holds, however, that the Chinese potters soon became dissatisfied with the quality of the clay at Sukhothai, and with royal approval moved their kilns to a more favorable site near Sawankalok, some fifty miles north. Accordingly, there began to be produced at Sawankalok a new type of hard, thick stoneware of almost porcellaneous quality with incised and painted designs, along with great quantities of undecorated monochromes with glazes running from a bluish-grey to the typical celadon greens.

Thus from around the middle of the 14th century the kilns at Sawankalok began to make a type of ware totally different from what had been produced earlier at Sukhothai. This raises a very interesting problem which, so far as I know, has never been considered before. As noted, Sukhothai pottery was utterly new to Thai ceramic tradition and has an unmistakable affinity with the wares of T'zu Choû. Can it be possible, however, that if the potters who produced these wares moved to Sawankalok, presumably in search of better materials, they would almost at once have turned their hands to making an entirely different type of pottery in no way related to their T'zu Choû tradition? Artisans in the East, especially in the 14th century, were far too conservative and tradition-bound for such abrupt changes. This suggests the possibility that a second group of potters in no way connected with T'zu Choû or its tradition may have arrived in Siam from China, probably as a result of

another tribute mission similar to that undertaken by King Rāma Khamhêng. Some of the wares produced at Sawankalok may not suggest too abrupt a break with the T'zu Chou tradition as practiced at Sukhothai, but the great production of celadon-like monochromes at Sawankalok is a different matter, and there is nothing in the T'zu Choû tradition or in the products of Sukhothai which can satisfactorily account for the sudden appearance of this type of pottery at Sawankalok. The monochromes of Sawankalok, which principally account for the fame of this pottery, bear a striking resemblance to the Chinese celadons of the famous kilns at Lung-ch'üan (龍泉) in Chekiang Province. Lung-ch'üan celadon was produced from the Sung period and for more than seven centuries, until it was finally eclipsed by the famous Ming blue and white, was China's export pottery par excellence.

It is very likely, therefore, that by the middle of the 14th century, if not earlier, Lung-ch'üan celadon was finding its way into Siam to the point where it excited the interest of the Siamese and aroused their desire to produce this unusual ware, as a result of which arrangements were made during some tribute mission to China for the procurement of Lung-ch'üan potters. In this connection it is perhaps significant that while he was with the Yüan mission at Angkor in 1296-97, Chou Ta-kwan found that among the Chinese products which the Khmer at this time particularly desired were "green porcelains" (that is, celadons). It appears, therefore, that the Khmer were familiar with Chinese celadon, and it is quite possible even at this early date that these wares had also reached Sukhothai where they aroused the interest of the Siamese.

As we shall presently see, there is considerable evidence that Sawankalok ware was produced principally for export, which in turn suggests that the Lung-ch'üan potters may have been brought to Sawankalok for the specific purpose of developing a ware suitable for the great Asiatic trade in celadon.

In any event, I believe we should now take into account the possibility that a second group of Chinese potters came to Siam, possibly from Lung-ch'üan, some years after King Rāma Khamhêng

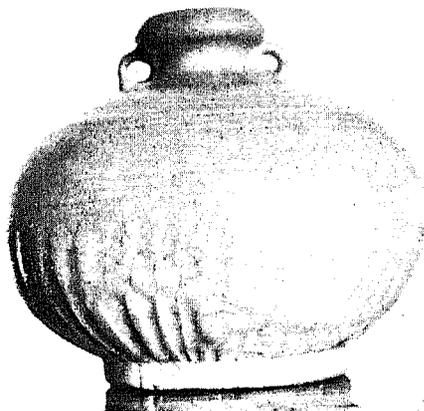
Sawankalok Vessels with Celadon-like Glaze and  
Incised Underglaze Decoration



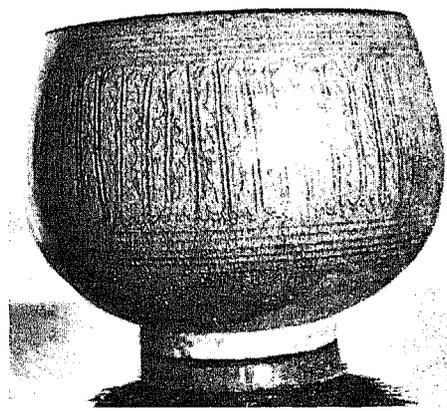
A.



B.



C.



D.



E.

A., B., C., D. From the collection of Mr. Lek Viriyaphand.  
E. From the author's collection.

## Decorated Sawankalok



A.



B.

A. Covered vessel with yellowish-grey glaze decorated with darker grey and olive green designs.

( From the author's collection )

B. Pot with greyish-green glaze and dark grey decoration.

( From the collection of Mr. Lek Viriyaphand )

presumably brought the first group from T'zu Choû, and that it may very likely have been reasons of trade which led to this development. Very little Sukhothai ware was apparently exported, whereas Sawankalok pottery was sent to widely scattered parts of Asia. The reason for this is obvious: it could be sold as celadon—albeit an inferior grade—and celadon was the ware in greatest demand. What probably happened was something like this: There was no real demand or market outside of the locality for the Sukhothai wares made in the T'zu Choû tradition. A new group of Chinese potters was brought to Siam, possibly from Lung-ch'üan, familiar with the manufacture of celadons, and were settled in Sawankalok where materials were available for making the celadon-like glazes. Meanwhile, the Sukhothai potters continued their work, but instead of attempting to produce glazed pottery utensils for which there was apparently no great market or demand, devoted their energies to making those fanciful end tiles and other glazed and decorated temple ornaments which came into vogue among the Siamese during the Sukhothai period. The amount of this glazed temple construction material produced at Sukhothai was prodigious, but none of it was exported. On the other hand, great quantities of Sawankalok pottery were produced and there is abundant evidence that much if not most of it went into the Asiatic pottery trade.

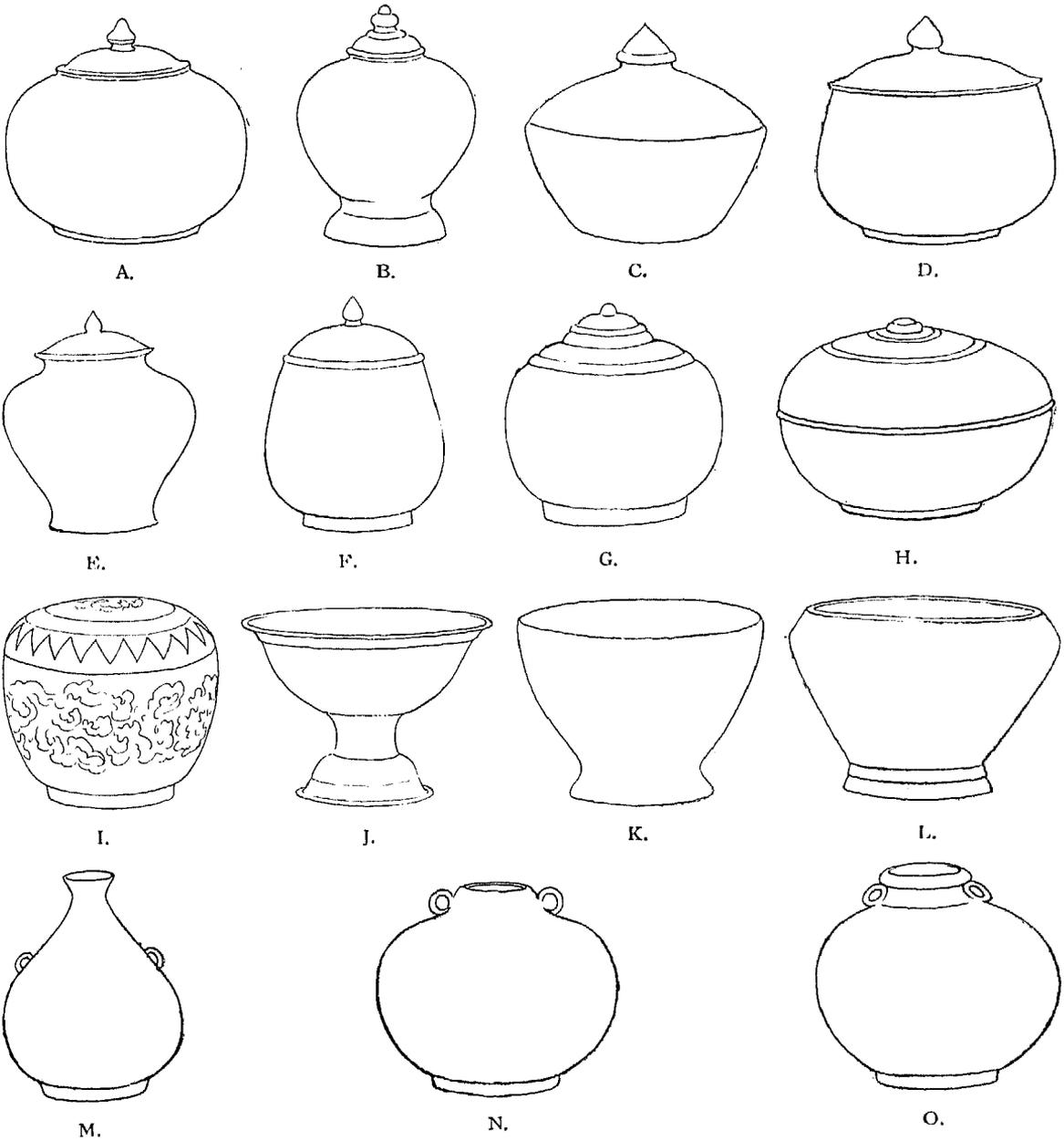
The products of the Sukhothai kilns were principally water jars, bowls and dishes, along with great quantities of the decorated temple materials mentioned above. Most Sawankalok ware was smaller and more delicate. Large water jars, bowls and plates are common, but more characteristic are small containers of various shapes many of which are in plain monochrome. One type of container which has always struck my fancy is in the shape of a persimmon, the little handle of the lid representing the stem of the fruit. Significantly enough, the persimmon does not grow in Siam and this shape was undoubtedly of Chinese origin. Japanese connoisseurs of Sawankalok classify this peculiar form as *kaki-no-te* (柿手), the persimmon type.

Other characteristic Sawankalok vessels are small water bottles, pitchers, ewers, cups, vases, and a great variety of small covered vessels presumably for holding betel-chewing ingredients, cosmetics or medicines. Many Sawankalok pieces were produced in typical Indian and Near Eastern shapes like the famous narghili bottles with their mammiform spouts, which provide further evidence that this ware was largely for export. One unique type of Sawankalok ware which may well have been made exclusively for Siamese consumption were the small animal and human figurines which were probably used as votive offerings or for purposes of sorcery.

### Duration of Pottery Production at Sawankalok

It is not clear just how long the Sawankalok kilns continued in operation. Strange to say, very few samples of this ware have survived today as heirlooms in the possession of Siamese families. I have often noted this singular fact when visiting the homes of upper-class Thai who generally have treasured collections of Bencharong and other Chinese export wares but seldom if ever a single piece of Sawankalok. This is perhaps no cause for wonder in view of the antiquity of this ware, its comparatively brief period of production and the series of destructive wars among the Thai kingdoms and with the Khmer and Burmese. Moreover, Buddhism with its great emphasis upon the transitory nature of our existence has tended to discourage the accumulation and passing on of earthly possessions. Consequently, most of the Sawankalok now in the hands of Thai as well as foreign collectors was unearthed in recent times at the kiln sites, and so far as I know none of this ware has been found among the ruins of Ayuthia and other cities in contrast with the many fragments of Chinese pottery, all of which would indicate that Sawankalok was not prized as heirlooms or even used to any great extent as ordinary household ware. Consequently, we may assume that much if not most of the pottery produced at Sawankalok was intended for the export trade. In this connection, it is significant that a large amount of the pottery unearthed at the kiln sites is known in the trade as wasters—damaged or imperfectly fired pieces which were not suitable for the market. There is also evidence that

Types of Sawankalok Pottery made Principally for Domestic Use



A., B., C., D., E., F., G., H., I. Various types of Covered Vessels.  
 J. Stand. K., L. Bowls or Spittoons. M., N., O. Vases with "ears".

1000  
1000  
1000

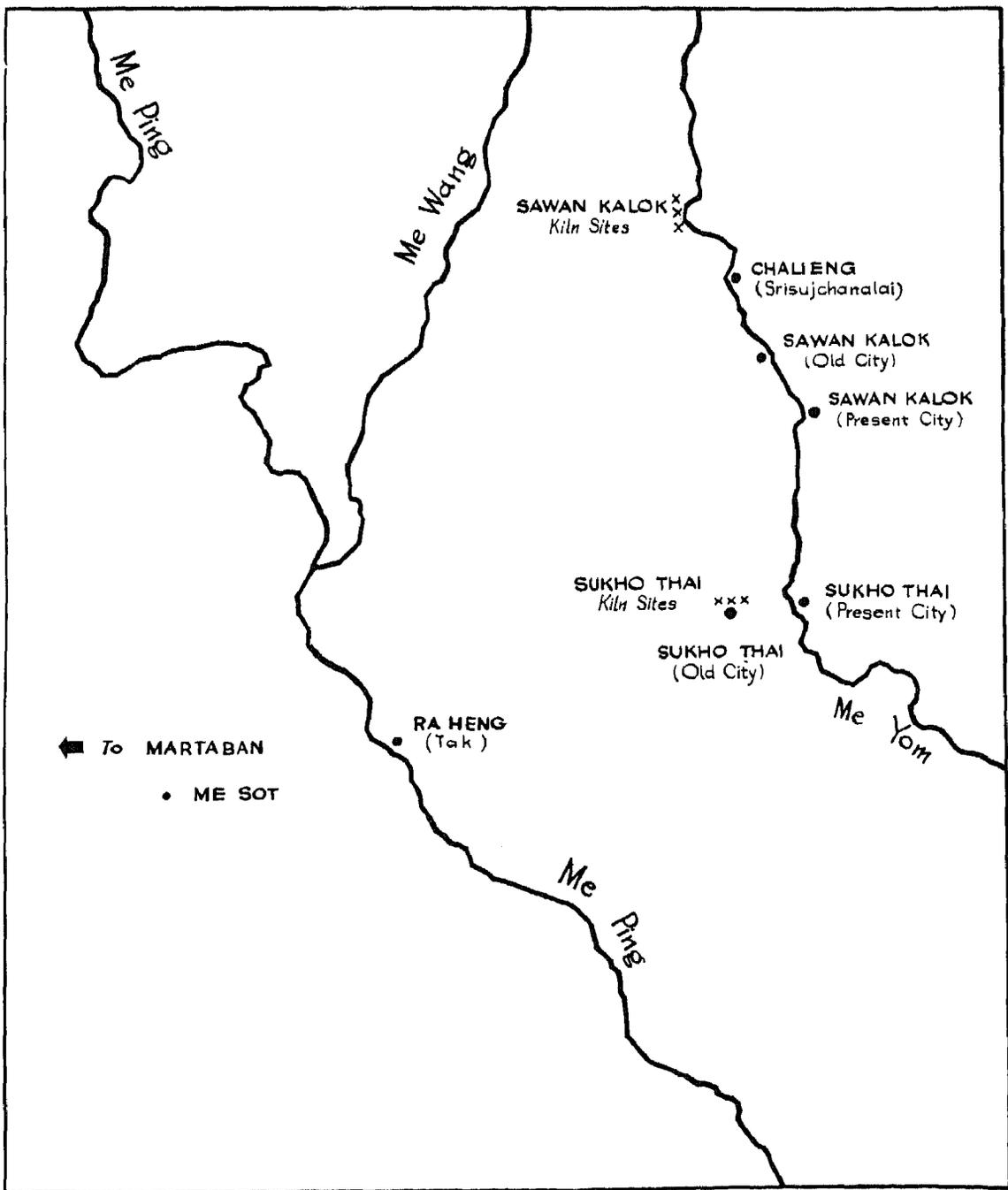
the Sawankalok potters were endeavoring to meet the demand for cheap export wares and accordingly attempted to increase their output without devoting much attention to technical proficiency, just as the provincial kilns of Chekiang, Fukien and Kwangtung turned out great quantities of cheap and often shoddy goods for the export trade.

While Sawankalok ware has a strange, simple beauty, from the technical standpoint it cannot compare with the celadons of Lung-ch'üan or even with many of the cheaper export wares of the contemporary Chinese private kilns. It was often cracked or damaged in the firing and there are frequently imperfections in the glaze. Moreover, the Sawankalok potters used a long horizontal type of kiln in which the heat was often unevenly distributed, and it is only too evident that some of these kilns were poorly constructed. They often collapsed during the firing and their contents, being damaged beyond repair, were never removed until the collapsed kilns were excavated in modern times, revealing bent and twisted pots or several vessels fused together by their molten glaze. There are also examples of kilns which were apparently abandoned before the pottery could be removed after firing, suggesting the hasty flight of the potters because of invasion or some other disaster, a point we shall presently consider in attempting to determine the period at which pottery production ceased at Sawankalok.

We should not, of course, judge all Sawankalok by the damaged or inferior samples which have been discovered in collapsed or abandoned kilns, but it is nevertheless a fact that many pieces of Sawankalok which were exported (having presumably been considered suitable for the market) were imperfect. For example, the *Te Kagami* (手鑑), a Japanese pottery manual compiled early in the 17th century, notes that much of this ware which was known to the Japanese as Sonkoroku was damaged or improperly fired. The same can be said, however, of much of the contemporary Chinese pottery, especially those wares made for export, for as Soame Jenyns has pointed out "Ming vessels were often distorted in the kiln by shrinkage but do not seem to have been rejected on this account, as they would have been under the next dynasty."

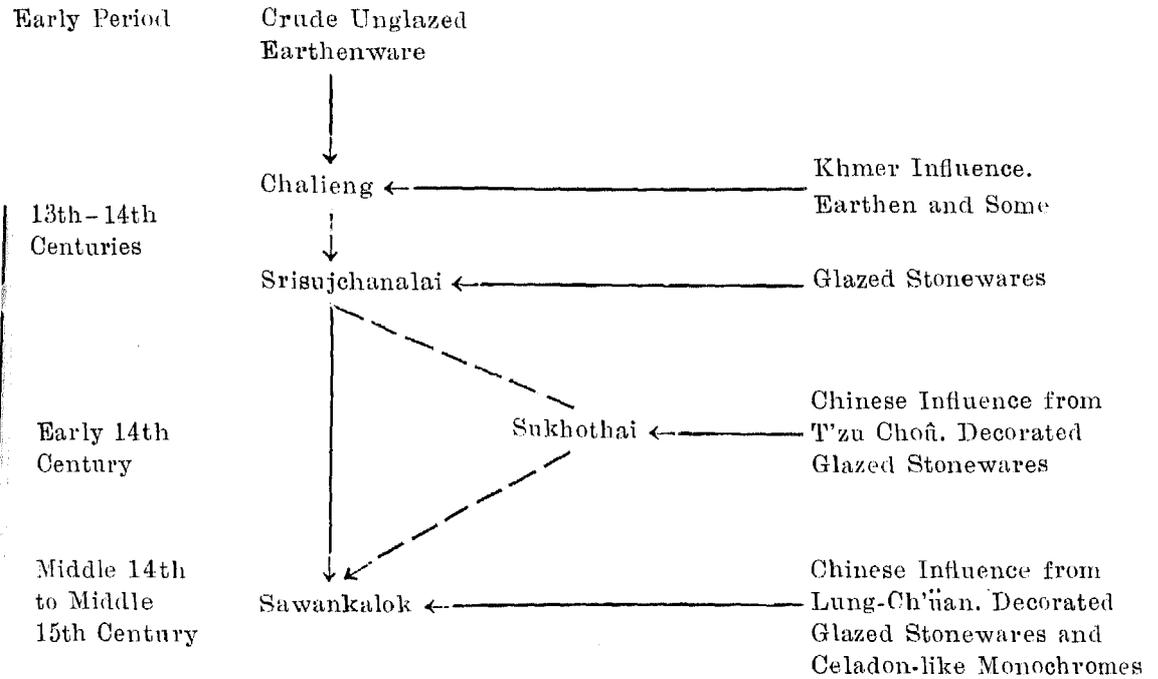
In this connection, an American pottery expert, Harding Black, made an interesting experiment with two pieces of Sawankalok and in June 1953 published his findings in *The Far Eastern Ceramic Bulletin*. He re-fired two bowls from the collection of Edwin L. Neville, former United States Minister to Siam. As a result, their pale greenish-grey glaze changed to a typical celadon green. But something even more remarkable occurred which gives this unusual experiment a touch of historical drama. As if by magic, there appeared on one of the bowls as a result of the second firing an incised underglaze lotus decoration which had remained invisible over the centuries.

There has been considerable disagreement as to just how long Sawankalok pottery was produced, and it has generally been held that production continued until well into the 16th century if not later. Both Reginald le May and Otley Beyer are of the opinion that production ceased during the 16th century, but as le May has cautiously noted, "we shall probably never know definitely." I am inclined to believe, however, that production came to an end, at least at the Sawankalok sites, in the 15th century. During most of this period Sawankalok occupied a precarious position in the series of wars waged by the Siamese of Ayuthia with the kingdoms of Chiengmai and Luang Prabang. Sawankalok was under attack a number of times and a great part of the town was destroyed in 1460 and again in 1464. Some years earlier a turn-coat governor deserted to Chiengmai and reportedly took most of the population with him. It was probably because of circumstances like these that abandoned kilns have been found at Sawankalok filled with unfinished pottery; the potters either fled because of invasion or were forcibly evacuated. Accordingly, I believe Giga Tetsuji (儀城徹二), one of the foremost Japanese authorities on Sawankalok ware, may be correct in concluding that production ceased because the potters became so dispersed that it was impossible to hold the industry together. Many of them probably went to Chiengmai where they endeavored to carry on their craft. For example, Giga found one potter in Chiengmai who was still making a ware with a greyish-green glaze which so closely resembled Sawankalok that it was often sold in Bangkok's famous Nakorn



Sketch Map of Sukhothai—Sawankalok Area

## EVOLUTION OF THAI POTTERY



Kasem district as the genuine article by unwitting or unscrupulous dealers. Moreover, Giga found that this Chiengmai potter employed the same type of kiln used by the potters at Sukhothai and Sawankalok; he also made animal figurines similar to the Sawankalok pieces, and his spatula work had the same characteristics. It was at his kiln that there had been produced some generations before the famous pottery columns with their celadon-like glaze which until recently adorned the entrance to Wat Phra Dhātū, the mountain temple on Doi Suthep. Giga was accordingly inclined to believe that this Chiengmai potter was a descendent of some ceramic artisan of Sawankalok.

In addition to the disruption of the pottery industry at Sawankalok as the result of wars and other disasters, there was also a great expansion of the Chinese pottery trade during the 15th century against which it would probably have been difficult for the small-scale operators of Siam to have competed. Moreover, we must take into account technical and artistic developments in the Chinese ceramic field which undoubtedly brought about the remarkable change of taste among consumers of pottery throughout Asia. By the 15th century the Chinese had perfected the technique of underglaze blue ware to the point where it was assuming a major position in their export trade. Faced by these various difficulties—the disruption of their industry at home and increased Chinese production of new ceramic lines enjoying great popularity—it is only too obvious that the Thai would have been unable to compete with the Chinese in the Asiatic pottery market.

There is further evidence that Sawankalok ware was no longer being produced in the 16th century or was even represented in the pottery trade from the fact that there are no references to it in contemporary historical records. Before the close of the 16th century Japanese traders and adventurers had begun to settle in that unique international community which had grown up outside the walls of Ayuthia. Yet in all the Japanese records of the late 16th and 17th centuries no mention is made whatever of Siamese pottery or any trade therein.

By the beginning of the 17th century Japanese trade with Siam had grown to substantial proportions and was largely in the hands of merchants who received special licenses from the Shogunate, the famous Red Seal Documents, or *Shuinjō* (朱印狀). From the early part of the Keichō (慶長) era (1596-1614) until the Japanese were prohibited from going abroad by the decrees of 1638, the so-called *Shuinsen* (朱印船), or Red Seal Ships, made some 182 voyages for which records exist. Of this total, 37 licenses were issued to ships making trading expeditions to Siam, 13 to Annam, 26 to Champa, 11 to Tongking, 23 to Cambodia and 5 to Pattani. In his *Shuinsen Bōeki Shi* (朱印船貿易史), History of the Trade of the Red Seal Ships, Kawajima Motojirō (川島元次郎) offers no indication that the Japanese ever obtained any ceramic wares during these voyages to Siam. The records of the voyages give long lists of the cargoes involved in which Siamese pottery is conspicuous by its absence. The *Tsūkō Ichiran* (通航一覽), a massive compilation of documents and records pertaining to Japan's foreign trade and relations from the Eiroku (永祿) era (1558-1569) to the Bunsei (文政) era (1818-1829), compiled under orders of the Shogunate in the 6th year of the Kaei (嘉永) era (1853), contains sections on Japanese relations with Siam and other Southeast Asian countries, as well as records of all Siamese trading vessels which were known to have come to Japanese ports. Nowhere in this large compilation is there a reference to any shipments of Siamese pottery either from Siam or from neighboring countries. On the contrary, there are occasional references to pottery reaching Japan from other sources and to pottery and porcelain being carried to Siam in Japanese ships. No references to a trade in Siamese pottery are to be found in Iwao Seiichi's (岩生成一) *Nanyō Nihonmachi no Kenkyū* (南洋日本町之研究), A Study of Japanese Communities in the Southern Regions, and the comprehensive *Jūshichi Seiki in okeru Nissha Kankei* (十七世紀に於ける日暹關係), Japanese-Siamese Relations in the 17th Century, which was compiled in 1934 by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the supervision of the Ministry's Siamese specialist Gunji Kiichi, (郡司喜一). Besides using all relevant European sources on 17th







century Siam, this latter work also had recourse to a great wealth of Japanese and Chinese materials some of which only exist in manuscript form.

Had Sawankalok pottery been produced at this time or had it been available in the Siamese market, the Japanese traders at Ayuthia would certainly have recognized it as the type of ware which, as we shall presently see, was at this time highly prized by the tea masters and ceramic connoisseurs of Japan.

The noted Dutch scholar, T. Volker, gives us further evidence in his recent book *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company* that Sawankalok pottery was not being produced in the late 16th and 17th centuries. "Nowhere in the *Dagh Registers*," he writes, "nor in the other contemporary papers examined is Siamese ceramic export ware even once mentioned as a merchandise." The only pottery exported from Siam at that time were coarse earthenware pots used as containers for honey and occasionally oil, "but never shipped as an article of trade in themselves." Even these vessels may have been of Chinese origin. Hence, Volker concludes that "the export of Sawankalok, the only ware on a par with Chinese stoneware, came to a full stop in 1460, when the town of Sawankalok was taken by hostile northern forces; the potters were dispersed, and many of the kilns were left in a hurry with their contents still intact, to be excavated only in the 20th century." Nor could Volker find evidence of a pottery industry of any kind at Ayuthia, for with a Dutch East India Company Factory established there, any locally-made wares of export standing would certainly have come to the attention of these energetic traders. The only wares the Dutch found at Ayuthia were Chinese and later Japanese porcelains, much of which was imported by the king's merchant marine both for local use and re-export. Again, the writings of Jeremias van Vliet, who was in Ayuthia in 1639, make no mention of Siamese pottery. On the basis of these various pieces of evidence, I believe we can discard any belief that Sawankalok pottery was produced in the 17th century, while no available evidence supports the view that it was produced

in the 16th century. It would appear that this ware was made for only a comparatively short period, from about the middle of the 14th century until about the middle of the 15th century.

### Export of Sawankalok Ware

There is little evidence that Sukhothai pottery was ever made for export, although a few pieces have been found in Java and elsewhere. The first export of wares from Sawankalok was probably by way of Martaban. This port was in fact seized from the Peguans by King Rāma Khamhêng around the beginning of the 14th century along with the Tenasserim area. Martaban was occupied on and off by the Siamese until the beginning of the 15th century when it fell to the Burmese who held it continuously thereafter. During this period Martaban became an important commercial entrepôt for traders from India and the Near East. As an outlet for Siam's products, however, Martaban suffered two disadvantages: the long and difficult overland route from north-central Siam, and the fact that the port was only in Siamese possession periodically until it was permanently lost to the Burmese early in the 15th century. Consequently, as we shall presently see, the port of Mergui in the Tenasserim area, which was continually held by the Siamese from King Rāma Khamhêng's time, was to assume a greater importance in the trade of Siam. The trade route from Sawankalok to Martaban was undoubtedly by way of Raheng (Tak) and Mesot, the Siamese using elephant trains for transport.

Unless Thai distaste for commercial enterprise is a more recently acquired characteristic, it was probably the Chinese potters or Chinese and other foreign traders who first promoted the export of the products of the Sawankalok kilns. Consequently, there may have been, as noted above, strong commercial reasons for the appearance of Lung-ch'üan potters in Siam. They may well have been brought there for the specific purpose of producing a type of ware which would be saleable in the pottery markets of India and the Near East.

## Some Types of Sawankalok Export Wares



A.



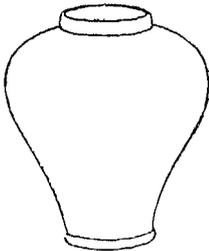
B.



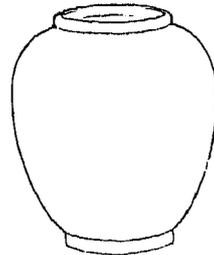
C.



D.



E.



F.

A. Narghili bottle. B., C. Ewers. D., E. Vases.  
F. Vase of type sought by Japanese for use as a tea caddy.



At this period (the middle of the 14th century) China was experiencing troubled times as a result of the conflicts which overthrew the Yüan dynasty and finally brought the Ming to power in 1368. This was not only a period of wars but also one of famines, plagues, locusts, earthquakes and floods and consequent social unrest. The Ming Dynasty was no sooner established when the Japanese pirate fleets of the dreaded *wakō* (倭寇) began their large-scale raids along the China coast which seriously interfered with trade and shipping. Lung-ch'üan and the other famous Sung kilns were situated principally in Kiangsi, Chekiang and Fukien, the districts most exposed to *wakō* depredations. Many of these kilns had suffered during the strife attending the Mongol conquest and again during the subsequent liberation by the Ming, while before the end of the Yüan period a rival pottery center had begun to develop at Ching-tê Chên (景德鎮) which eventually was to dominate the export trade with its underglaze blue and white wares which largely took the place of celadon in popular taste throughout the Asiatic markets. Early in the Ming period, the Lung-ch'üan potters were compelled to move to Ch'u Chou (株州) where they were able, however, to continue producing their famous celadon in the face of rising blue and white competition until almost the end of the Ming period.

It is possible, therefore, that some of the Lung-ch'üan potters may have moved to Siam during this troubled period around the middle of the 14th century in search of better opportunities as well as in response to the desire of the Siamese for additional Chinese potters to supplement the original company brought to Siam by King Rāma Khamhêng. Although no evidence is available, the Arab and Indian traders may also have been instrumental in such a move. Having seen and possibly handled samples of the wares produced at Sukhothai, they may have endeavored to promote the production of the more saleable celadon lines in Siam, a country more accessible to the Indian markets and at the same time not subject to the vicissitudes which were then disrupting the economy of China. This is conjectural, of course, but it is by no means outside the realm of possibility. For example, the famous Kirman wares of Persia offer a case in point. Shah Abbas I thought it possible to develop

an export pottery trade which could compete successfully with China in the blue and white market in Europe. Accordingly, about the middle of the 17th century he brought some three hundred Chinese potters to Persia where they began to produce Chinese-style porcelains which one contemporary European remarked were "difficult to distinguish from the Chinese wares". As a result of the disturbed conditions in China the kilns at Ching-tê Chên were virtually out of operation between 1673 and 1681, and during this period the Dutch East India Company made strenuous efforts to find satisfactory substitutes for Chinese wares among the Kirman products as well as those of Tongking and Japan. It is not altogether impossible, therefore, that the production of celadon-like wares at Sawankalok may have been in response to a demand for this type of pottery which could not be satisfactorily met because of difficulties at the celadon production centers in China.

### The Chinese Ceramic Trade

The Asiatic trade in Chinese ceramics is a fascinating story of international commerce and cultural diffusion. There is evidence that Chinese pottery was being exported early in the T'ang period, the bulk of this trade probably being in the hands of Indians and Arabs who not only had settlements in the port cities on the southeast coast but in the T'ang capital at Ch'ang An as well. The Indian and Arab traders at Canton (Khanfu) and Ch'uan-chou (the Zaytun of Marco Polo) dealt principally in silk and the export wares of the provincial kilns. The Arab merchant Suleyman in an account dated 851 gives a description of this trade which during the Southern Sung period reached such proportions that it was made a government monopoly. In the middle of the 14th century the great Arab traveller Ibn Battuta visited Canton and also left a description of the Arab pottery trade there. At that time the Arab ships took Chinese wares principally to India and the Arabian ports from whence they were trans-shipped to other parts of the Near East. From an early period the Chinese also carried some of their wares to Japan, the Philippines, Borneo, Java and Sumatra. At Palembang there was a large commercial entrepôt where these goods

were exchanged for the products of India and the Near East. Some pottery was also shipped overland from China by the old silk route across Asia. By the Ming period, however, there arose such a strong demand for Chinese ceramics throughout Asia that the Chinese began to participate in this trade on a much larger scale. One significant as well as picturesque result was the series of spectacular maritime expeditions undertaken on orders of the Emperor Yung-Lo (永樂) by the Mohammedan court eunuch Cheng Hó (鄭和) who held the rank of admiral. His expeditions not only visited Champa, Siam and Java, but India, Persia and Arabia and possibly the east coast of Africa, one curious by-product of which was the bringing of the first live giraffe to China. These voyages have been described by J.J.L. Duyvendak in his engaging monograph *China's Discovery of Africa* and in his brilliant article in *T'oung Pao*. One important result of Cheng Hó's voyages was the re-establishment of tributary relations with Sumatra, for among the subsequent tribute goods were much-needed supplies of cobalt which the Chinese used for making the underglaze blue of their famous Ming wares.

The widespread dissemination of Chinese ceramics throughout Asia from as early as the T'ang period down into the Ming period is an almost unbelievable story. White T'ang pieces were being copied in Persia as early as the 9th century, long before the Mongol Hulāgu brought Chinese potters to Tabriz, and Ting glazes and shapes were being imitated by Persian potters in the 12th century. By the following century the Persians were using the same types of enamel glazes developed by the Chinese. Sung fragments have been unearthed at Samarra, the temporary residence of the Caliphs of Baghdad, destroyed in the 9th century, and similar shards have been found in excavations at Fostat near Cairo. There is a record of a shipment of forty pieces of celadon from Egypt to Damascus in 1170. Ming blue and white shards were found at Hama, a city in northern Syria destroyed by Timur in 1401, and fragments of celadon and other Chinese wares have been unearthed at various sites in Persia, India and even at Mombasa and Zanzibar. It would almost

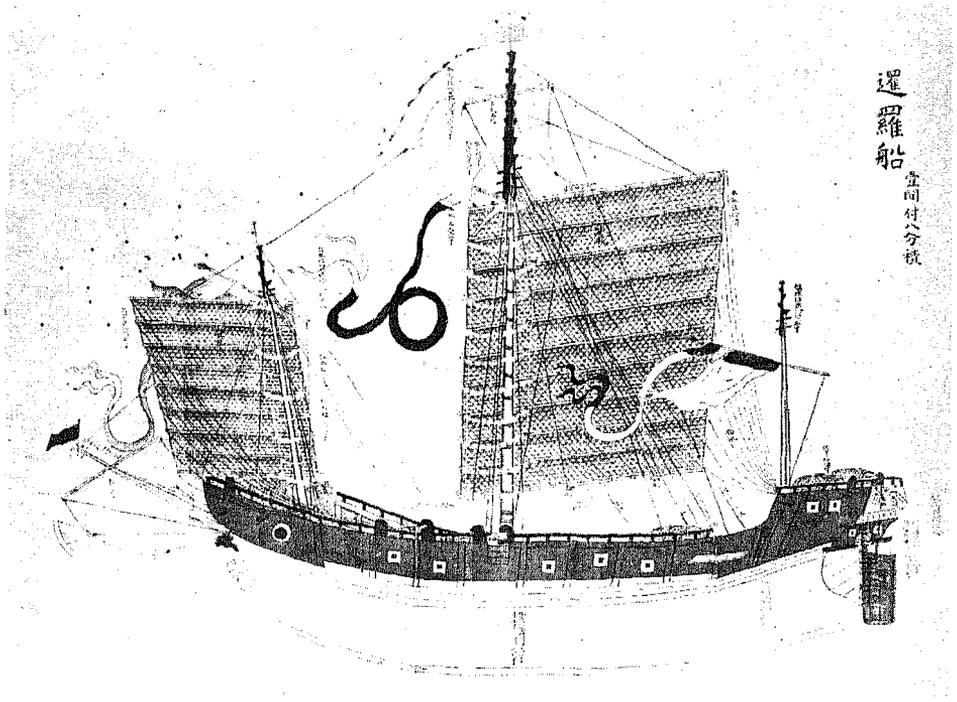
seem unnecessary to add that celadon, Ming blue and white and other Chinese wares have been found in considerable quantities throughout Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, Malaya, Borneo, Siam and the Philippines.

It was, of course, the great overseas demand for Chinese ceramics which accounts for this remarkable expansion in China's pottery trade. Many Indian and other Asiatic rulers appear to have developed an unquenchable desire for Chinese wares. Persian miniatures of the 14th and 15th centuries frequently show exquisite pieces of Ming blue and white, and the Venetian Ambassador at Tabriz in a report to his government in 1474 expressed amazement at the great quantities of Chinese porcelains he had seen at the Shah's court. In 1487 the envoy of the Sultan of Egypt presented some Chinese porcelains to Lorenzo de Medici. Shah Abbas the Great of Persia (1587-1629) assembled a magnificent collection of Chinese wares which was originally housed in the mortuary mosque at Ardebil in Azabaijan but is now in the National Museum at Teheran. A still more fabulous collection was amassed by the Sultans of Turkey, parts of it representing loot taken by Selim I and Suleiman the Magnificent when they invaded Tabriz, or pieces carried off as booty during Turkish military expeditions to Syria and Egypt. From the 15th century Chinese porcelains were being used as tableware in the Sultan's palace and a special building called the China Khane was constructed to house these treasures. The vast collection of some ten thousand pieces, of which over three thousand are celadon, has happily been preserved and is now on display in the enormous kitchens of the former Seraglio in Istanbul. Another great collection was assembled by Akbar and Jehanajir, which was kept in the Mogul Fort at Agra until it was regrettably destroyed by the Mahrattas in 1771.

### The Rôle of Siam in the Pottery Trade

The export wares of China were carried to India by way of Java and Sumatra, the ships often touching en route at the Philippines, Borneo, Celebes and the Moluccas, which explains the discovery of so many pieces of old Chinese pottery in

## A Siamese Trading Junk of the Late 16th or Early 17th Century



From the *Karabune E-maki* (唐船會卷), An Album of Foreign Ships, a two-volume manuscript scroll in the Nagasaki Provincial Library. The above picture was reproduced in *Nompo Hakai Kobunken Zuroku* (南方渡海古文獻圖錄), An Album of Old Documents Pertaining to Navigation in the Southern Regions, compiled by the Ōsaka Provincial Library and published by the Kobayashi Shashin Seihanjo, Kyōto, 1943.



these islands. On these long voyages the small trading junks often encountered fatal storms or were exposed to attacks by pirates lurking among the islands and especially in the Straits of Malacca. Until the advent of the Portuguese with their gunnery skill and their superior types of vessels with heavier armament, the pirates of the Malacca Straits were a formidable and traditional obstacle. Even as early as the 5th century these pirates presented a problem, as the famous Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa-hsien, who travelled overland from China to India and then returned by sea via Ceylon and Java in 399-414 A.D., has so graphically described. Consequently, many of the Chinese junks and other vessels began to prefer a less convenient but safer route over which to transport their precious cargoes. This lay from the South China ports along the coasts of Tongking, Annam, Champa, Cambodia and Siam, where at the capital at Ayuthia there developed from perhaps as early as the 14th century a great trading center which was in time to rival Palembang. Merchants from China and the various kingdoms of Southeast Asia as well as from such distant lands as India and Persia established themselves in individual settlements outside the walls of the Siamese city. In time this polyglot community was enlarged by traders and adventurers from Japan, Portugal, Holland, England and France.

At Ayuthia the silks and ceramics of China were exchanged for goods from Siam, India and other areas and were then trans-shipped either by junk or overland to Pramburi or Kui on the western shore of the Gulf of Siam for transport by caravan across the narrow isthmus to Tenasserim and thence down-stream in small river boats to the port of Mergui. From this entrepôt the goods were loaded aboard Indian, Arab and later European ships for the great markets in India and the West. From Ayuthia there was also an important trade in Chinese and other goods with Pattani, Malacca and Java, while some of the merchandise which went to Mergui was also shipped to Acheen in Sumatra.

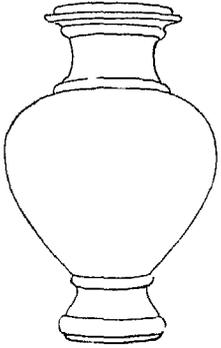
While the great bulk of this trade consisted of Chinese products, including celadon and other wares, Sawankalok pottery also entered into the inventories and in the distant markets undoub-

tedly lost its identity and was sold as Chinese goods. By this process the products of the Sawankalok kilns were carried in some quantities to India and possibly even as far west as Egypt, for the Postat finds contained shards among the Chinese celadon fragments which are believed to be pieces of Sawankalok. But the various Asiatic dealers who frequented such trading centers as Martaban, Ayuthia and Mergui were, we may assume, shrewd fellows who were undoubtedly well aware that the products of Sawankalok could not be substituted for the superior celadon of China in any trade with the more discriminating customers of India and the Near East. It appears, therefore, that the principal markets for Sawankalok were among the less demanding peoples of Java, Borneo and the Philippines, for it is in these islands that the largest finds of Siamese ware have been discovered outside the kiln sites in Siam. In other words, Sawankalok pottery, being inferior in quality to Chinese celadon, was shipped to those parts of the East where there were suitable markets for what were regarded as second-grade goods. The same practical considerations we know governed the export of all ceramics from China, the finer wares going to India and the Near East, while the coarse, crude potteries were shipped to Java, Borneo and the Philippines.

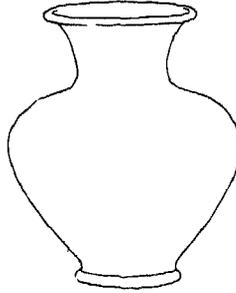
### The Demand for Large Water Jars and the Martaban Trade

There is one notable exception to this, however, namely, the great demand which prevailed throughout India and even in the Near East as well as throughout Southeast Asia for large jars for storing water, oil or wine. Many of these vessels were of crude workmanship, although we today have come to admire them for their artistic qualities. These jars were also in great demand by the Indian, Arab and early European traders who found them a convenient cargo, not only for storing fresh water for the long voyages but also as containers for other more valuable commodities. The provincial kilns of South China and those of Sawankalok endeavored to meet the great demand for these jars. As we noted, the products of Sawankalok were probably first exported by way of Martaban. For some reason the trade in:

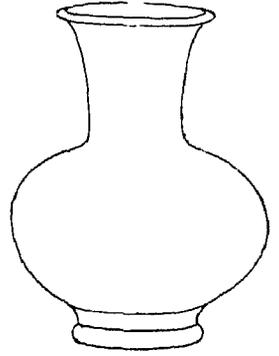
## Types of Water Vessels



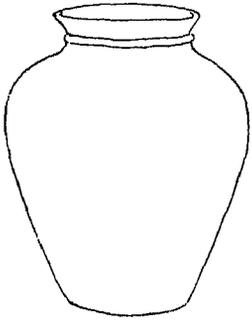
A.



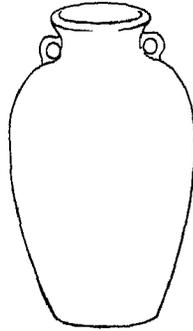
B.



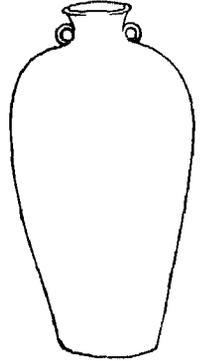
C.



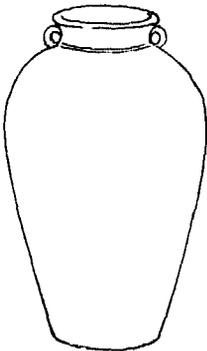
D.



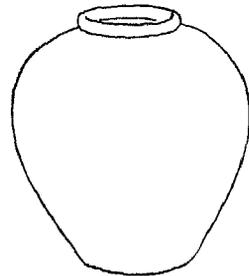
E.



F.



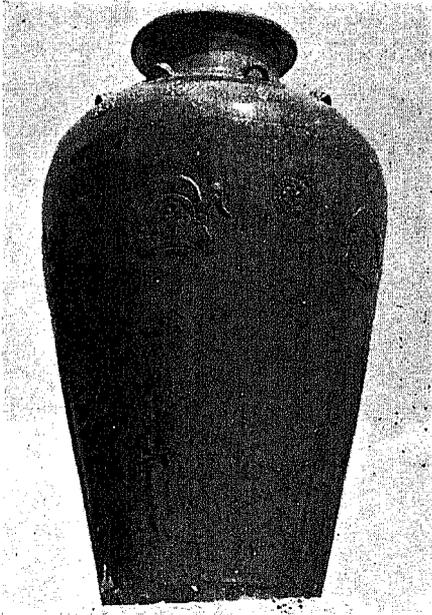
G.



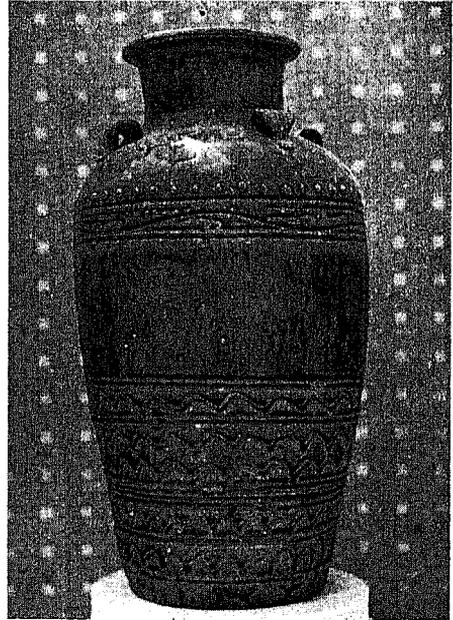
H.

A. Khmer.      B. Chalieng.      C. Srisujchanalai.      D. Luang Prabang.  
E., F., G., H. So-called Martaban.

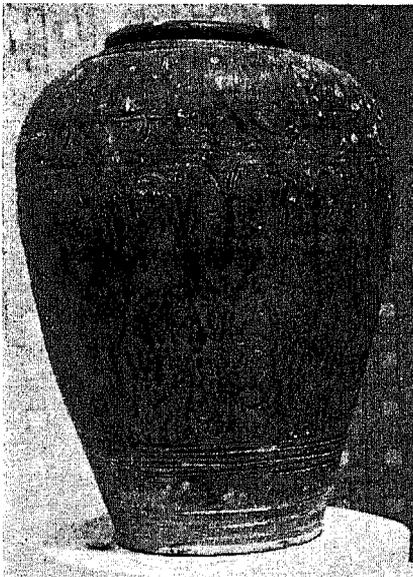
## Examples of Large Water Jars



A.



B.



C.



D.

A. B. Typical tall, narrow vessels of the Martaban type with "ears" for lashing coverings in place.

C. Large water jar of Sawankalok make.

D. Wide-mouth water vessel of Chinese make.

(From the collection of Mr. Lek Viriyaphand)



Relief depicting the Hindu Myth, the Churning of the Cosmic Ocean, on the south pediment of the second *Gopura* of the 12th century Khmer Temple at Khao Phra Vihāra, Srisaket Province, Northeast Thailand, showing a large water vessel resembling some of the so-called Martaban jars.

( Photograph by the author )



these large water jars, whether of Siamese or Chinese manufacture, eventually became centered at Martaban. Cumbersome as they were the Sawankalok jars were undoubtedly shipped overland to this port by elephant caravans, while some of the jars from China which reached Siam may have been shipped over the same route. It would appear, however, that most of the jars of Chinese make reached Martaban by sea. Since this trade became centered at Martaban, these large storage vessels became known as Martaban jars and the belief grew up that they were actually manufactured at the Peguan port. In India and elsewhere the term Martaban became variously corrupted into Martavan and Martabani as terms to designate any celadon or celadon-like ware, since considerable quantities of celadon *ghores* dishes of Chinese origin were also exported from the Martaban pottery entrepôt or from other ports in the delta region of Burma, such as Syriam and Bassein. In India the term Martaban became so synonymous for any large glazed water vessel that the Chinese and Siamese jars were later copied in the 18th century by Muslim potters around Delhi who unabashedly marked their wares with the word "Martaban". Occasional references are made to Pegu jars of local manufacture which were exported from Martaban and other ports in lower Burma. So far as I have been able to ascertain, these were of unglazed earthenware and were made solely as containers for export commodities, much as the Siamese at Ayuthia in the 17th century employed similar vessels as containers for exporting oil, honey and other local products.

The best description of the so-called Martaban jars is to be found in Namme Ottema's *Handboek der Chineesche Ceramiek*. They have been found all the way from the Philippines to Egypt, and what look very much like such water jars can be seen in the 12th century reliefs at Prambanan and Borobudur in Java. At Khao Phra Vihāra, an 11th-12th century Khmer ruin on the Thai-Cambodian border, there is a remarkable relief depicting the Churning of the Ocean in which appears a jar having no resemblance to the typical Khmer vessels but looking very much like some of the Martaban water jars. These jars were described by Ibn

Battuta in the 14th century and by the Portuguese traveller Duarte Barosa in the 16th century. They are also mentioned occasionally in later accounts of Dutch and English travellers.

T. Volker in his *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company* offers evidence that the Chinese, possibly as early as the Sung period (long before Martaban was annexed to the Kingdom of Sukhothai), were shipping some of their celadon wares overland to the Peguan ports by way of Bhamo, a trade which continued long after the Siamese were forced out of Pegu. Bhamo was the western terminus for the mule teams which entered Burma from Yünnan. The course was not by the Shweli River but through the Taping River pass considerably to the north, joining the Bhamo-Myitkyina Road about twenty miles north of Bhamo. This old Burma-Yünnan mule track is still in use. Accordingly, there developed a sizeable Chinese trading community at Bhamo (which even today is predominantly a Chinese town). From Bhamo the Chinese products were shipped by boat down the Irrawaddy River to the delta area for trans-shipment to India and elsewhere. No doubt much of these goods found their way to Martaban because of its importance as a trading center.

As Volker notes, the Dutch East India Company became very interested in the Martaban trade and from 1635 to 1678 maintained factories in Pegu. In 1670 the Company actually made an attempt to open a post at Bhamo in order to tap this overland trade from China closer to its source. Because of fear of the Chinese, however, the Burmese refused to grant permission, for in 1659 the Shan and Kachin regions had been overrun by Yünnanese refugees fleeing before the Manchu forces, all of which was, as Volker reminds us, strangely analogous to certain events in that area in our own day. Nevertheless, the Company continued to maintain an interest in the Bhamo trade, and in 1675 the Company's representative in Pegu in a report to the Governor-General at Batavia called attention to the fact that the Chinese were coming annually to Bhamo with caravans of pack mules bearing *ghoree* dishes for the Indian and Near Eastern markets.



An unusual jar of Chinese provenance but probably made for Thai order. The design around the central portion of the jar depicts a deer-hunting scene. The two very un-Chinese figures shown above are carrying pieces of venison suspended from a pole. The jar has a yellowish-gray glaze with the decoration in brown, green and red.

(From the collection of Mr. Lek Viriyaphand )



Similar scene of Siamese returning from a hunt carrying pieces of a deer's carcass. ( Photographed by the author in Amphur Koke Samrong, Changvad Lopburi )



## The Magic Appeal of Celadon

Aside from their artistic and utilitarian purposes, Chinese pottery and porcelain, particularly celadon wares and the celadon-like products of the Sawankalok kilns, came to possess for many peoples throughout Asia a strange, magical power. For example, it was a common belief in India and Persia that a celadon cup would crack or abruptly change color if it were filled with poisoned wine, and it was universally believed throughout South and Southeast Asia that celadon plates, known as *ghoree* dishes in India, had the power to detect the presence of poison in any food served upon them. Monarchs and officials throughout the East have traditionally been preoccupied with the danger of assassination by poison in consequence of which it is not difficult to understand the great demand which prevailed for such magical pottery. In China some rare porcelain and jade cups were also believed to possess magical powers, although the favorite safeguard against poisoned wine among the Chinese was the use of drinking vessels made of rhinoceros horn, while according to the Abbé Huc the Tibetans believed that bowls made of certain rare woods had the power to neutralize poisons. Nevertheless, the Chinese have traditionally regarded a rare or especially fine piece of pottery or porcelain with an almost superstitious awe, and it was customary for the owners of such treasures to keep them concealed with the greatest secrecy.

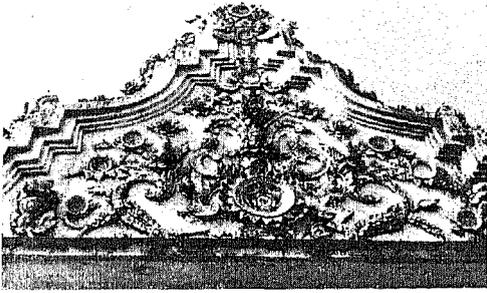
It was also held in many parts of the East that a medicine prepared in or taken from a celadon vessel or any antique piece of pottery or porcelain was more effective. This belief sometimes reached strange and for the collector unfortunate lengths, for among the Burmese and others old celadon and porcelain vessels were occasionally reduced to powder to make medicaments and elixirs. In southern Siam and among the Malays there was the similarly regrettable custom of fling the glaze off old vessels for use in the preparation of potions and philtres. Even with their deep veneration for pottery and porcelain the Chinese were not adverse to using it in the making of elixirs of immortality. For example, one old Taoist formula for such a concoction called for pulverized porcelain, along

with such appalling ingredients as cinnabar, alum, copper oxide and a dash of arsenic. We should have no cause for wonder that some of those who experimented with these elixirs often came to an abrupt end, but before passing judgment on such customs "it is salutary for us to realize," as Maurice Collis has written, "that there are persons who salute porcelains for reasons other than our own."

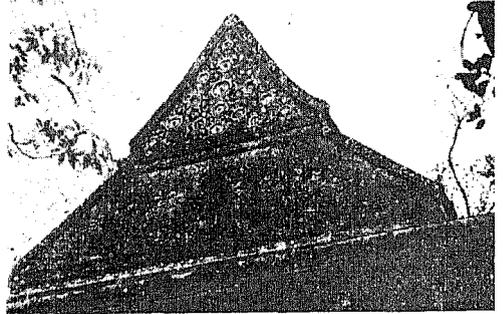
In his study of Chinese pottery in the Philippines Fay-Cooper Cole made some interesting discoveries concerning the magical powers attributed to old jars and vessels. Many Ming and Sawankalok pieces have been unearthed in the Philippine archipelago and in Borneo where large water vessels were frequently called Siam jars. They were highly regarded by the peoples of these islands, and those having exceptional powers were given names and grades of rank. The Sultan of Brunei was reputed to possess a magical jar which could speak to warn him of approaching danger. In the Philippines and elsewhere old Chinese jars were often used as burial urns, while mediums claimed to be able to communicate with departed spirits by the aid of old porcelain dishes. Jars were also kept about homes as talismanic pieces, and a man's wealth and social position was frequently measured by the number and magical character of the jars in his possession. Most owners of such vessels would only part with them as marriage dowries.

It was (and is) a common belief in many parts of Southeast Asia that antique jars serve as the abodes of spirits, and often when a farmer or woodsman by chance unearths such a vessel he immediately reburies it for fear of arousing the anger of the spirit residing within. Only the more courageous dares to take such a find home. Among devout Buddhists, however, one who accidentally discovers a buried jar can rely upon the power of the Enlightened One to afford him protection against evil or irate spirits. Accordingly, in some of the Buddhist countries unearthed vessels of this kind are often presented to temples. Some Thai unfortunately have a more cavalier way of dealing with spirits who happen to reside in old jars. When accidentally discovering a perfect or undamaged vessel, the farmer or woodsman may break a piece out of the lip or in some

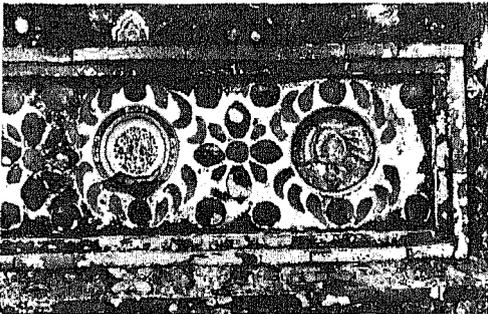
## Examples of the Curious Use of Chinese Dishes and Bowls as Architectural Ornaments



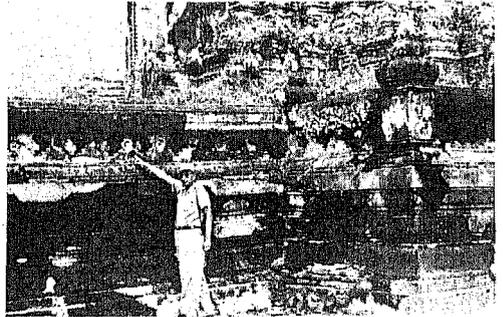
One of the gable ends of Wat Chamni Hattakarn (Wat Sam Ngam) near the Yose Bridge, Bangkok, lavishly decorated with bowls and dishes set in the plaster.



Chinese dishes and bowls used as gable ornaments at Wat Mai Chaivichit, Ayuthia.

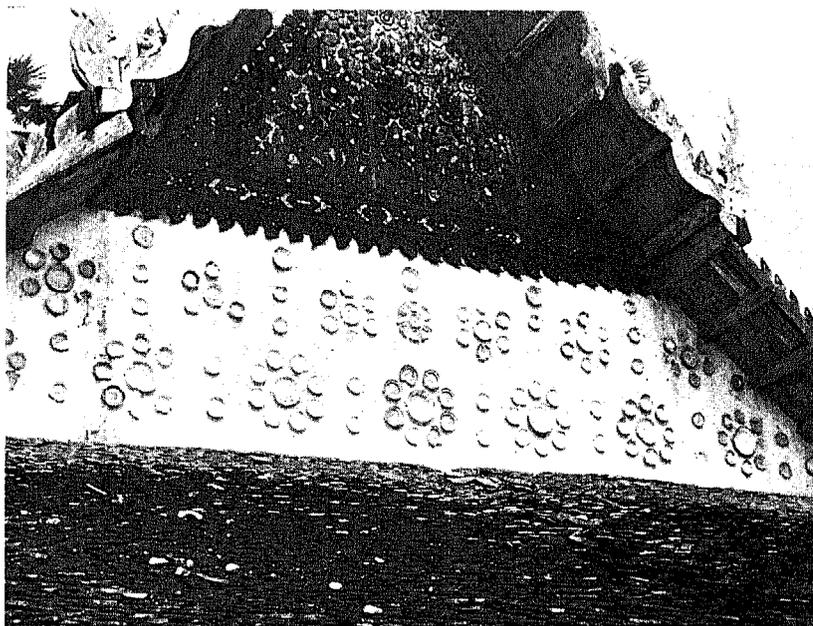
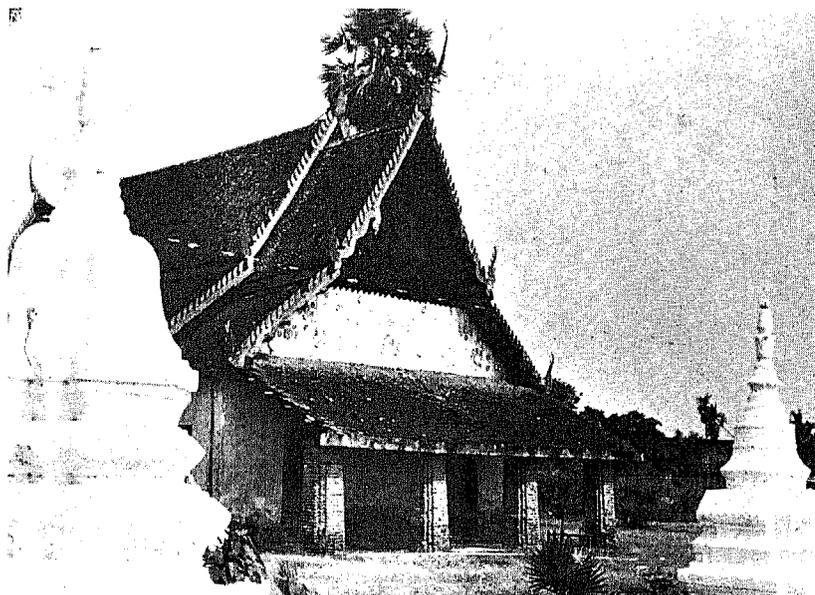


Small Chinese dishes and fragments of Chinese pottery used to ornament Wat Arun, Bangkok.



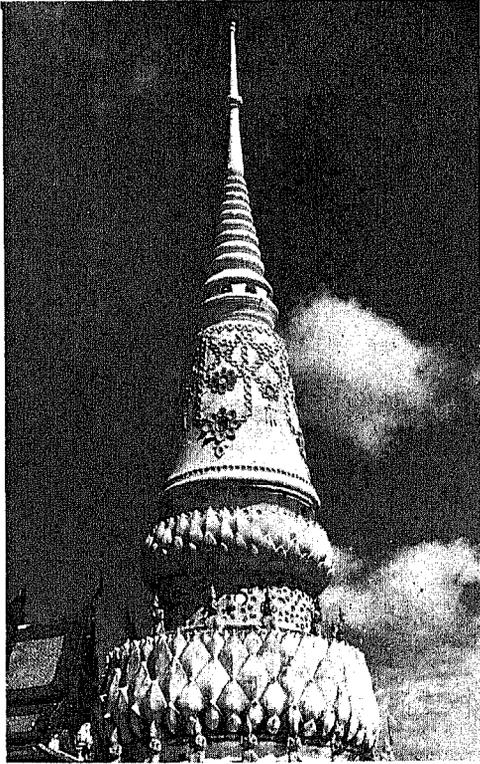
Chinese dishes set in the balustrade around the great *Phra Prang* of Wat Puthai Sawan, Ayuthia.

Use of Chinese Pottery and Porcelain as Building  
Ornaments at Wat Thai Chumpol, Sukhothai

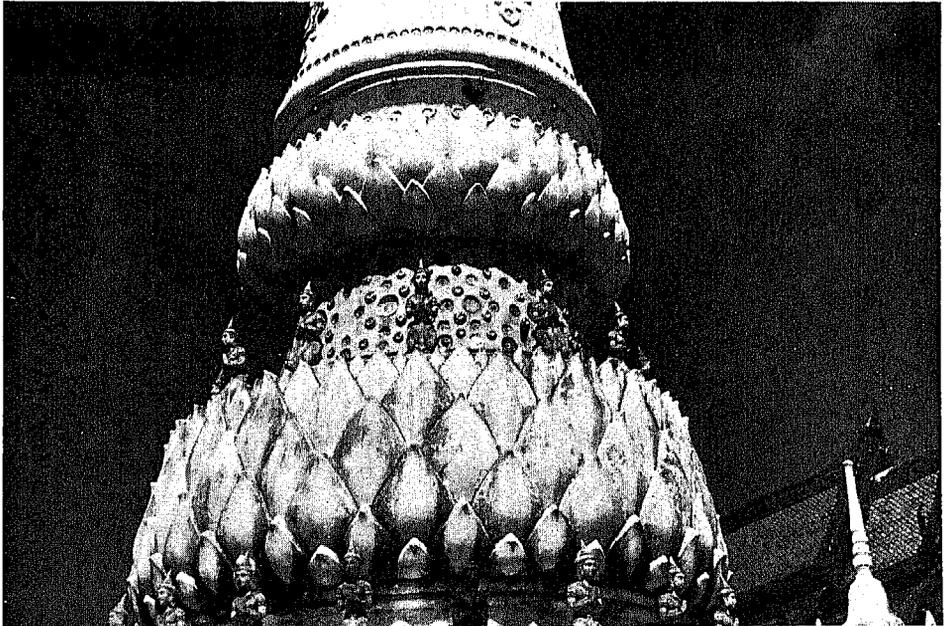


( Photographed for the author by Dr. Pan Lauhabandhu )

A Fine Example of Pottery Used to Ornament a Pagoda



The *Phra Chedi* of Wat Paknam at Samut Prakarn lavishly ornamented with old Chinese dishes and bowls.



Detail of *Phra Chedi* at Wat Paknam showing pottery ornamentation on section of pagoda surrounded by *Tephanom*.

( Photographed by the Author )



equally deplorable manner ruin the pot or jar from the standpoint of the archaeologist or collector in the belief that by damaging an unbroken vessel it will be made so unattractive that the spirit will no longer care to use it as an abode and the discoverer can consequently carry it off with impunity. It is for this reason, I have been told, that one rarely if ever finds an undamaged piece of old pottery or porcelain in or around the home of a Thai farmer or woodsman.

In the Philippines, Borneo and other parts of Southeast Asia old Chinese jars are used by some peoples for brewing rice wine for their ceremonial drinking bouts. In his *A Dragon Apparent* Norman Lewis has given an interesting account of this custom as practiced by the Moi peoples of Indo-China who brew rice wine in sacred jars and drink the beverage by means of long hollow reeds. The Moi were also fond of using exceedingly large jars of the Martaban type as dwellings to house their tutelary spirits. In Northeast Thailand rice wine, called *chang* (elephant), is prepared in and consumed from pottery vessels in the same manner by the Phu Thai, while other Thai peoples in the Northeast and Central Siam make a similar beverage called *ũk* which is also brewed in and consumed from jars. The present-day Thai, however, seem to attach no particular importance to the age or supposedly magical properties of the jars, using any old vessel at hand including those in which *nam plā* (fish sauce) is packed for the market.

### Use of Ceramic Vessels as Architectural Ornaments

In Persia old celadon and other Chinese porcelain vessels were often set in the plaster on the walls of tombs and mortuary mosques, the purpose of which may have been more decorative than talismanic, although the idea of providing the deceased with the magical vessels he once cherished should not be excluded. Strange to say, the Thai have also used Chinese ceramics to ornament some of their *wats*, generally employing small fragments of porcelain somewhat in the manner of making a mosaic. Nevertheless, there are some notable examples of this practice in Bangkok, Ayuthia and elsewhere in Thailand where in addition to the use of mosaic-

like fragments whole dishes and bowls have been set in the plaster in the Persian manner. One striking example is Wat Arun in Dhonburi, its huge towers having a strange, porcellaneous quality from the countless pieces of Chinese bowls and whole dishes cemented to its surface. Other curious examples are Wat Phra Yurawongse, Wat Anongkaram, and several other temples in Dhonburi, Wat Lieb and Wat Sam Ngam in Bangkok, Wat Phra Mongkol Bawphit, Wat Mahā Dhātū and several other temples in Ayuthia, and Wat Bang Chang in Samut Songgram. It is interesting and perhaps significant that a number of these temples, notably Wat Pra Yurawongse and Wat Sam Ngam, have been connected with the famous Bunnag family, descendents of Sheik Ahmad, a Persian or Arab trader who settled in Ayuthia early in the 17th century. Similarly, Wat Bang Chang in Samut Songgram was founded by the Bang Chang family who were also descendents of Sheik Ahmad. It may be possible, therefore, that this unusual custom of using fragments of pottery and whole dishes as architectural decorations on temples in Siam was of Persian or Near Eastern origin. It was not a Chinese custom to employ porcelain wares in this manner, which would be considered a gross misuse of dishes and bowls from the purpose for which they were originally intended. The Chinese, it is true, used ceramic tiles in building construction but these were specially made for this purpose. There is also no indication of any earlier use of pottery and porcelain in this manner in Siam. While the kilns at Sukhothai turned out many dishes, bowls and other pottery utensils, they also manufactured roof and building ornaments, as was occasionally done at Sawankalok as well.

### Japanese Trade in Chinese and Siamese Pottery

In studying the part played by Sawankalok ware in the pottery trade of the East, the Philippine Islands assume an important position. Berthold Laufer believes that Chinese jars and other vessels were first brought to the Philippines as early as the Sung period, although the great bulk of Chinese pottery most likely reached the islands during the heyday of the Ming export

trade. Among the jars and vessels excavated in the Philippines by Professor Beyer were a great many pieces of Sawankalok ware; in fact, in the Visayan Islands Sawankalok pieces ran from twenty to forty percent of the total finds, indicating that there must have been large shipments of this ware from Siam to the Philippines. The presence of so much Sawankalok in these island has another significance which I shall presently relate.

The Chinese also shipped considerable quantities of their export wares to Japan during the Sung and Ming periods. There was an especially strong demand for these wares under the Ashikaga (足利) Shoguns (1339-1574) because of the development of *cha-no-yu* (茶之湯), the tea ceremony, as an aesthetic pursuit and social refinement among the warrior class. The tea ceremony requires the use of various pottery and metal utensils all of which must meet the rigid aesthetic standards inherent in the ceremony itself. It was among some of the export wares of China that the *cha jin* (茶人), or tea masters, found the types of vessels best suited to their exacting taste. The Ashikaga Shogun Yoshimasa (義政) (1444-1475) was a devotee par excellence of the tea ceremony, which in turn meant that he was also a connoisseur of fine ceramics.

Under the Ashikaga Shoguns formal diplomatic and trade relations were re-established with the Ming Court, the Japanese shoguns in effect making their country tributary to China in order to take fullest advantage of the trade. On the Japanese side this diplomatic-commercial intercourse was placed largely in the hands of the Zen monks of the Tenryūji (天龍寺), a temple near Kyōto. Its ships which sailed to Ningpo and other Chinese ports bearing envoys and merchandise in the guise of tribute goods and returning with the silks, ceramics and other prized products of China were thus known as the *Tenryūji-bune* (天龍寺船) and represent a rather unusual example of formal commercial activity on the part of the Buddhist clergy. Several of the ceremonial utensils prized by Yoshimasa were acquired through these tribute-bearing trade missions. One of the pieces is the exquisite little *cha-ira* (茶入), or tea caddy, to which Yoshimasa was moved to give the poetic name of *Hatsuhana*, (初花), Early Spring Flower. This famous piece

became a shogunal heirloom and has remained a treasured possession of the Tokugawa family to the present day. Another unique piece obtained by Yoshimasa through the trade of the *Tenryūji-bune* was a Sung celadon censer which became known to history as the *Chidori Kōro* (千鳥香爐), the Plover Censer. The supernal vessel was said to have been given this name because when incense was burned in it birds were reputed to have burst into song with delight at the paradisaical fragrance. Another and perhaps more plausible explanation of the name lies in the fact that the shape of the censer resembles in a way the *chidori*, or plover. Like the magical jar of the Sultan of Brunei, the *Chidori Kōro* was also said to have had the power to warn its owner with a cry when danger was at hand.

In addition to the tribute and trade missions of the *Tenryūji-bune*, it is also likely that the *wakō*, the Japanese pirates who ravaged the coasts of China and even Annam from the 14th to the 16th centuries, brought back to Japan in their *Bahan-sen* (八幡船) quantities of Chinese wares, since the growing popularity of the tea ceremony created such a lucrative demand for fine ceramics.

It is possible, therefore, that some Sawankalok pieces may have been introduced into Japan through both the Ashikaga tribute missions of the *Tenryūji-bune* and the more unconventional trading activities of the *wakō*. Both Giga Tetsuji and Miki Sakae (三木榮), the two foremost Japanese authorities on Sawankalok, are of the view that it was the *wakō* who first brought this ware to Japan during the Ashikaga period. If so, as we shall presently see, they most likely obtained the ware in Annam rather than in China. Miki cites one piece of Sawankalok ware in Japan which can be dated, at least to its Japanese ownership, as far back as the 16th century by its *hako-gaki* (箱書), that is, the inscription on the lid of the box in which the piece was kept, which was written as a certification by the famous *chajin* Sen Rikyū (千利休) (1521-1591). In all possibility, however, the Japanese at this date regarded Sawankalok as some form of Chinese or Annamese ware.

### Japanese Pottery Trade with the Philippines

It is when we turn to early Japanese contacts with the Philippines that we begin to find more positive evidence of the introduction of Sawankalok pottery into Japan. During the 16th century and possibly even earlier Japanese trading vessels were regularly visiting Luzon. When the Spanish expedition under Miguel Legaspi arrived in the Philippines in 1565 it was found that the Japanese had been coming every year to the islands to trade, obtaining principally pottery and silk. Antonio de Morga in his *Successos de las Islas Filipinas*, published in Mexico in 1609, gives a fairly full description of this trade and with respect to Japanese purchases of pottery makes this interesting and significant comment :

In this island of Luzon... very ancient clay vessels of a dark brown color and of a sorry appearance are found by the natives, some of medium size and others smaller, marked with characters and stamps. They are unable to say when or where they obtain them; but they are no longer to be acquired nor are they manufactured in the islands. The Japanese prize them highly, for they have found that the root of a herb which they call Tscha and which when drunk hot is considered as a great delicacy and of medicinal efficacy by the kings and lords of Japan cannot be effectively preserved except in those vessels, which are so highly esteemed all over Japan that they form the most costly ornaments of their showrooms and cabinets. Indeed, so highly do they value them that they overlay them externally with fine gold embossed with great skill and enclose them in cases of brocade, and some of these vessels are valued at and fetch 2,000 to 11,000 reales. The natives of these islands sell them to the Japanese at very high rates and take much pains in the search for them on account of the eagerness with which they have been sought for.

The picturesque reference to the use of characters and stamps could point to Chinese wares, for I know of no instances where Sawankalok pottery was labelled with calligraphic markings

or *nien hao* (年號) to show the date of manufacture. The writer was correct, however, in his statement concerning the high value the Japanese placed upon ceramics associated with the use of tea, and how treasured tea caddies and canisters were always kept enclosed in thick brocade coverings, a practice which still prevails in Japan. I have never heard of such utensils being overlaid with gold, however, for this would cover up just what the Japanese most highly prized, namely, the glaze. The writer's reference to the Japanese fondness for tea and their belief that it could be kept properly only in these jars is not quite so fanciful as it may at first appear. The so-called Luzon ware were principally jars and vessels of such sizes and shapes that they were most appropriate as containers for storing tea. I am not inclined to believe, however, that the Japanese attached any magical powers to these vessels as enabling them to preserve the flavor, but were attracted to them largely from artistic considerations and their supposed antiquity. In general, the Japanese have always had a strange relish for the exotic, especially when some foreign article comes close to meeting the *shibui* character of their own restrained tastes. The celadons and other monochromes of China and the subdued shades and designs of Sawankalok were fully in keeping with Japanese aesthetic standards. Moreover, in Japan as elsewhere in the East, tea has been traditionally associated with ceramics, and the use of Luzon wares for this purpose represented neither an innovation nor anything unusual.

We have another even more significant contemporary record of Japanese trade in the so-called Luzon wares, which happily sheds some direct light on the fact that Sawankalok vessels made on the banks of the Yom River in far off north-central Siam were most likely imported into Japan through this round-about course. In 1597 Francesco Carletti, the intrepid Florentine merchant and traveller, made a voyage from Manila to Nagasaki. He travelled on one of the Japanese ships engaged in the Luzon trade, which he described in his famous *Discourse* as having sails made of matting supported by poles at regular intervals, which could be folded up like a fan. The ship left Manila in May and arrived in Nagasaki the following month. As Carletti relates:

Next morning before we landed, the police officials, acting under orders of the Governor of the place, came on board to search among all the sailors, merchants and passengers for certain earthenware vessels, which are commonly imported from the Philippines and elsewhere in these parts, and which, by the laws of the King of Japan, everyone is obliged on pain of death to declare, because the King wishes to buy them all for himself.

This curious reference to the confiscation of pottery vessels imported from the Philippines because the "king" wished to buy all such articles himself was not entirely a figment of this traveller's imagination. While he was at Nagasaki, Carletti no doubt heard enough about the celebrated case of a shipment of Luzon jars to give him this distorted version of the true story.

### The Case of the Luzon Jars

There was a famous merchant of the old port of Sakai (堺) near Ōsaka who engaged so extensively and profitably in trade with the Ryūkyū Islands and Luzon that he became known as Rison Sukezaemon (呂宋助左衛門), that is, Luzon Sukezaemon. In the third year of the Bunroku (文祿) era (1594), only three years before Carletti's arrival at Nagasaki, one of his ships had returned to Sakai after a successful voyage to Luzon bringing with its cargo no less than fifty Luzon jars of a superior type which the Japanese *cha jin* called *matsubo* (真壺). Of all the categories of *chatsubo* (茶壺), or tea jars, those from Luzon, known as *Rison-tsubo* (呂宋壺), were the most highly prized, and of these the so-called *matsubo* type were regarded as the last word in elegance. Hence, the arrival in Japan in one shipment of no less than fifty of these treasured vessels was sufficient to set the *cha jin* and connoisseurs and collectors of tea ceremony utensils agog.

The various accounts of this episode which appear in such historical chronicles as the *Taikō-ki* (太閤記) and the *Todai-ki* (當代記) differ somewhat in details, but in essence the following incident occurred. The prized jars excited such interest that the *Daikan* (代官), or Governor, of Sakai directed that they be taken to

Osaka where they were placed on display in one of the great rooms of the Castle in order to be appraised and classified by Sensō-no-Eki (千宗易), a famous tea master. The jars were then offered to the various shogunal officials, but apparently some unseemly disagreement arose over the division of the spoils. In any event, Sukezaemon, being a mere merchant and therefore ranking lowest in the social order, was compelled to part with his treasures. The matter finally came to the attention of Hideyoshi (秀吉), the *de facto* ruler of the country, who subsequently compelled the various shogunal officials to give up the jars, although he paid them double the market price for doing so. Hideyoshi then returned the prized vessels to Sukezaemon, and directed that henceforth there should be no commerce in such articles which were to be regarded as national treasures. Sukezaemon later made a fortune in the Luzon trade, as a result of which he took to living in such an ostentatious manner as to incur the displeasure of Hideyoshi who summarily confiscated all his wealth and property. Carletti's experience on arriving at Nagasaki could well have been a result of the foregoing incident. One of these Luzon jars was preserved among the treasures of the Daianji (大安寺), a temple in Sakai. I have only seen a photograph of the famous piece which looks strikingly like a Sawankalok water jar.

Later in his *Discourse* Carletti notes that "nowadays one rarely meets specimens [of this Luzon ware] which are less than several centuries old having been brought from the kingdom of Cambodia, from that of Siam or that of Cochin-China, from the Philippines or other islands in these seas." Elsewhere Carletti further indicates that at the time he was in Japan (1597) the Japanese had been trading regularly with Siam, Pattani, Malacca and other southern countries. From this it might appear that the Japanese had been importing pottery directly from Siam which, however, does not seem likely. Nevertheless, it is apparent from his account that the Siamese origin of some of these wares was known to the Japanese at this early date, which may have an important bearing on the origin of the Japanese term Sonkoroku to describe certain types of foreign pottery. Parenthetically, it may be added that Carletti departed from Nagasaki in March 1598 aboard a Japanese ship bound for Cochin-China, which put him ashore at the Portuguese settlement of Macao,

## Siamese Pottery in Japan

While the Japanese generally called the ceramic wares which came from the Philippines *Ruson-tsubo* or by the more general term *Ruson-yaki* (呂宋燒), having the meaning of Luzon ware, at some point the word *Sonkoroku* came into use. Although both Giga and Miki have suggested that the *wakō* first imported Sawankalok wares, it is doubtful if they obtained them in China, for it would have been like carrying coals to Newcastle had the Siamese shipped any of their wares to this great source of pottery and porcelain. Since the *wakō* never extended their piratical activities to the Philippines, we must conclude that they obtained such Siamese wares in Annam, assuming it was actually the *wakō* who pioneered their importation into Japan. Little if any Sawankalok ware has been found in Annam, however. These considerations reinforce the conclusion that Japan's principal if not only source of Sawankalok pottery was the Philippines, a view which is strongly supported by Beyer's discoveries of so much of this ware in the islands. It is also possible, however, that some Sawankalok may have reached Japan by way of the Ryūkyū Islands, although I have never heard that any of this ware has ever been found there.

In any event, by the close of the 16th century wares known to the Japanese as *Sonkoroku* became popular in Japan among devotees of the tea ceremony. After the Korean expeditions of Hideyoshi in the 1590's many Korean potters were brought to Japan and settled on the island of Kyūshū by the feudal lords who had accompanied Hideyoshi to the peninsula. Because *Sonkoroku* ware was so popular and presumably difficult to obtain, the Korean potters were soon called upon to imitate it. Hence, we find a type of Kyūshū ware which came to be called *Satsuma-Sonkoroku* (薩摩宋胡錄) which was made by Korean potters under the patronage of Shimazu Yoshitiro (島津義弘), the Lord of Satsuma, who was a great devotee of the tea ceremony and an avid fancier of fine tea utensils. About a century later Kiyomizu Rokubei (清水六兵衛), one of a famous line of Kyōto potters, produced a ware which was known as *Sonkoroku-utsushi* (宋胡錄寫), that is, imitation

Sonkoroku. It is also of interest that the Japanese taste for Sonkoroku or its imitations is believed to have exercised some influence on the development of such noted Japanese potteries as the Shino (志野), Karatsu (唐津) and Mishima (三島) wares.

We are by no means certain, however, just what the Japanese at this time meant when they used the term Sonkoroku. For example, as Giga has shown, some Chinese and Annamese wares were also called Sonkoroku. In the 16th and 17th centuries the Japanese did not believe that any *sei ji* (青磁), that is, celadon, pieces were ever to be found among Sonkoroku, and any wares of this kind which were not unmistakably of Chinese origin were attributed to Annam and were hence known as *Annan sei ji* (安南青磁), or Annam celadon. Since celadon-like wares were so common among the products of the Sawankalok kilns, it is possible that many of the wares to which the Japanese applied the name Sonkoroku at this time were of another origin: Chinese, Korean or possibly pieces of the yellowish-grey Sukhothai, the Khmer wares of Cambodia, or some of the potteries of Tongking.

As early as the Kanei (寛永) era (1624-1643) there was published, as noted above, a famous Japanese pottery manual called the *Te Kagami* in which Sonkoroku was unfortunately described primarily in terms of what the Japanese considered to be the three principal shapes in which this ware was believed to be found. These were the *shioge* (監筩), a small globular vessel with a short neck and a rather narrow mouth, the term literally meaning a salt pot; the *asagao* (朝顔), or morning glory type, a term generally used to describe embrasured-shaped tea cups; and the *suginari* (杉形), or cylindrical-shaped tea cup. This handbook, however, describes Sonkoroku as a *sometsuke-gosu* (染付呉須) type of pottery, that is, underglaze blue and white, a type which, of course, is never found among Sawankalok. The manual adds, however, that it differs from the *sometsuke-gosu* wares found in Annam. The author of the *Te Kagami* was undoubtedly describing some Chinese provincial ware under the name of Sonkoroku, and the so-called *Annan-gosu* (安南呉須) was most likely one of the products of the South China kilns.

Nevertheless, the *Te Kagami* warned prospective collectors that kiln-damaged and poorly fired pieces of Sonkoroku often appeared in the market. While this applied to Sawankalok wares it was also characteristic of many of the wares of the Chinese provincial kilns.

Most Japanese pottery experts even until modern times were convinced that Sonkoroku was made in Luzon, although a few, including the late Captain F. Brinkley, were under the erroneous impression that it was produced in Arabia or some other Near Eastern country. Among most of the *cha jin*, however, any ware resembling celadon was invariably called *Annan sei ji*, much of which was undoubtedly Sawankalok. The Philippine origin of Sonkoroku was the most persistent and common explanation.

Tauchi Baiken (田内梅軒) published a pottery manual, the *Tōkikō* (陶器考), in the 2nd year of the Ansei (安政) era (1855), in which he described the ware called *Ido-yaki* (井戸焼) which was made in Japan in imitation of the famous Ido tea cups of Korea. He noted, however, that there was also a ware like *Ido-yaki* which was believed to come from Southeast Asia and which was known among some Japanese experts as *Ao Ido* (青井戸), that is, Green Ido. This was undoubtedly another reference to as well as another name for Sawankalok. While Tauchi also used the term Sonkoroku, he confined it exclusively to the so-called *Ruson-tsubo* and other wares believed to have been made in the Philippines. In fact, Tauchi, like many others, was convinced that the term Sonkoroku was merely a corruption of *Ruson-kōroku* taking the word *kōroku* (in this case with a long "ō") to mean a kind of pottery believed to have been made in Luzon. Nothing has been found, however, to support this theory.

In the *Tōkikō* Tauchi used the Japanese *kana* (假名) syllabary to write the word *kōroku*. In his curious little monograph, *The Sawankalok Kiln in Siam*, privately printed in English in Tōkyō in 1931, Miki Sakae used two peculiar ideographs\* for the word

\* 珉甌. In the understandable absence of types for these two unusual ideographs (which were probably "invented" by Mitani Ryōboku or some other tea master), it has been necessary to present them here from a specially engraved wooden block.

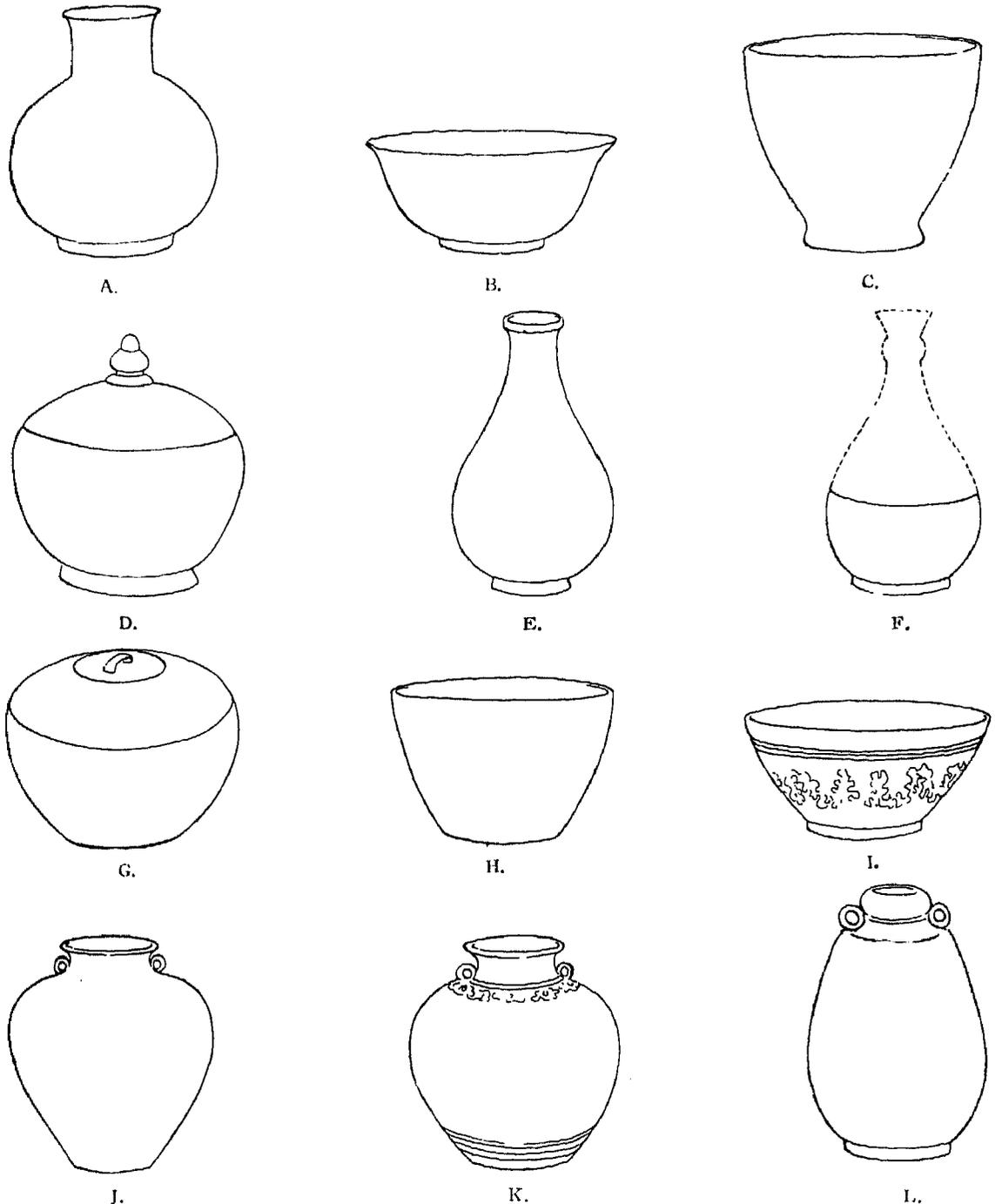
*kōroku*. Miki claims that this word was a term meaning ceramic ware, and cites the phrase *Tobutsu* (唐物) *kōroku* used by the tea master Mitani Ryōboku (三谷良朴), better known as Mitani Sōchin (三谷宗鎮), meaning Chinese porcelain, to describe a vase made in Foochow. If the word *kōroku* thus has the meaning of ceramic ware, its modified use without the long "ō" in the term *Sonkoroku* might well refer to Sung pottery, for the ideography *son* (宋) is, of course, the same Chinese character used for the Sung dynasty. I have been unable, however, to identify either the term *koroku* or *kōroku* in any Japanese dictionary or reference work on pottery. Likewise, I have been unable to identify the two peculiar characters Miki has used for this term.

### Sawankalok Pottery and the Japanese Tea Ceremony

The Japanese were greatly attracted to the rustic, simple beauty of Sawankalok pottery. Even some of the damaged pieces, especially those which had been bent slightly out of shape while being fired, had a peculiar charm in their irregularity which appealed to a people whose aesthetic ideals do not necessarily demand a rigid adherence to symmetry in line or form. There is a type of Sawankalok bottle or vase of somewhat globular shape but gradually narrowing toward the top and terminating in a very narrow mouth. The Japanese called this form the *tokkurinote* (德利手) because of this vessel's resemblance to a *tokkuri* or *chōshi*, the bottle used for serving rice wine. Many of these which reached Japan had the necks broken. The vessels were then cut through at the globular mid-section to make tea bowls, a form which was known among the *cha-jin* as *tokkuri-kiri* (德利切), that is, cut *tokkuri*.

Virtually all of the Sawankalok ware which reached Japan found its way into the hands of devotees of the tea ceremony among whom it was regarded almost as highly as the famous *Temmoku* (天目) wares of China not only for its subdued elegance but also for its exotic character. This latter consideration goes far, I believe,

# Types of Sawankalok Vessels Popular Among Japanese Tea Masters



**A.** *Shioge* ( 藍筍 ), salt pot type. **B.** *Asagao* ( 朝顔 ), morning glory type. **C.** *Suginari* ( 杉形 ), a cylindrical often conical type. **D.** *Jikiro-no-te* ( 食籠の手 ), cake box type. **E.** *Tokkuri-no-te* ( 德利の手 ), wine bottle type. **F.** *Tokkuri-kiri* ( 德利切 ), cut wine bottle type. When the upper part of the bottle was damaged, the vessel was sawed through the middle to make it into a tea bowl. **G.** *Kaki-no-te* ( 柿の手 ), persimmon type; a small covered container in the shape of a persimmon, the handle of the lid representing the stem of the fruit. **H.** *Hachi* ( 鉢 ), water basin type. **I.** *Kohachi* ( 小鉢 ), small bowl or basin type. **J.** *Chatsubo* ( 茶壺 ), tea cannister type. **K.** *Kogame* ( 小甕 ), small jar type often for used as tea cannisters. **L.** *Futamimi tsubo* ( 雙耳壺 ) double-eared pot.



to account for the fine collections of Sawankalok which were made in Japan in the 16th and 17th centuries. From the earliest periods of their history the Japanese have been attracted to the strange and often beautiful things which have reached their shores. Sometimes this mania for the exotic has reached unusual if not disturbing proportions, and to some degree this was true during the period from the latter half of the 16th until almost the end of the 17th century, when the Japanese became enamoured of things foreign from European firearms, clocks and velvet cloth to Siamese pottery, lacquerware and game cocks.

### Other Siamese Influences in Japan

We have noted the rôle of Sawankalok pottery in the Japanese tea ceremony and how to some extent it influenced the development of several Japanese wares. To take a few other examples of curious Siamese influences in Japan, in the 17th century the Japanese began to manufacture a type of lacquer which was called *kimma-nuri* (蒟醬塗), or *kimma* lacquer. Strange as it may seem, this was a copy of a kind of a Chiengmai ware which the Japanese had apparently discovered through their contacts with Ayuthia and greatly admired. The word *kimma* is believed to be a Japanese corruption of the Siamese term *kin mak*, betel-chewing, for the Siamese ware which attracted the attention of the Japanese were the lacquer vessels used to hold betel-chewing ingredients. Again, during the 17th century Siamese textile designs exercised a peculiar appeal to the Japanese. The Siamese cotton prints which reached Japan were most likely made in India from Siamese patterns, just as Bencharong pottery, a kind of *wu ts'ai* (五彩), or ware in five colors, was made in China from Thai designs. During the latter half of the 17th century Siamese cotton prints became so popular in Japan that one cloth dealer styled himself Shamuro-ya (暹羅屋), that is, Siam House. The merchant of Omi (近江) who established this shop had traded with Siam and was said to have introduced this style of cotton prints into Japan during the Genwa (元和) era (1615-1623). He was known as Shamu-ya Kambei (暹羅屋勘兵衛), that is,

Kambei of the Siam House. The goods he produced were called *Shamu-sarasa* (暹羅更紗) or *Shamu-some* (暹羅染), namely, cotton prints with typical Siamese patterns.

To take a few more examples of such Siamese influences, to this day a game cock in Japan is called a *shamo* (軍雞), a corruption of *Shamu-dori* (暹羅鳥), meaning "Siamese bird". The ideographs for the word *shamo* should properly be read *gunkei*. They were selected because they literally mean "fighting chicken", but the arbitrary pronunciation used clearly betrays the Siamese origin of the term. Presumably, this long-legged brown and red fighting rooster was first brought to Japan from Siam or some other part of Southeast Asia. During the Temmei (天明) period (1781-1788) a dance known as the *Shamu-odori* (暹羅踊) became popular among the *chōnin* (町人), or townsmen class, in Japan and was based upon one of the classical Siamese dances. One of the principal Japanese imports from Siam in the 17th century were deerskins which the Japanese used for making leather socks called *kawatabi* (皮足袋). This material was known as *Shamu-gawa* (暹羅革), or Siamese leather. Among the *Jōruri* (浄留璃), or puppet players, a seedy looking person was known as a *Shamu Tarō* (太郎). Whether in this case the word *shamu*, which was written in the *kana* syllabary, referred to Siam is not clear, but the word strongly suggests this association and may have originated from the strange if not seedy appearance of some of those Japanese traders and adventurers who returned to Japan from Ayuthia.

During the Edo period there was an official at Nagasaki who held the title of *Shamu Tsūshi* (暹羅通詞). He was the Siamese interpreter of the Shogunate and dealt with the Siamese ships which occasionally arrived at this port, which were, of course, called *Shamuro-bune* (暹羅船), Siam ships. It is possible, therefore, that some of the foregoing terms were coined by these Siamese interpreters and through them found their way into the Japanese vocabulary. Several plants also came to have the prefix *Shamu* or *Shamuro* attached to them. For example, the *tōjisa* (唐渦巨), or *Beta vulgaris*, was frequently called the *Shamuro daikon* (暹羅大根), or Siamese radish.

I shall cite but one more example of a Japanese term of Siamese origin because of its rather unique and picturesque character. Soon after the Portuguese arrived in Japan in the middle of the 16th century the Japanese adopted the newly-acquired European custom of smoking tobacco. At first the Japanese used rather heavy metal pipes, two feet or more in length, but soon began to search for a lighter, more suitable material for the stem. Bamboo was, of course, the most logical choice, but the kind of bamboo available in Japan which had sufficient space between the nodes was much too large in diameter to make the long pipe stems which were in vogue during the 17th century until the short-stem pipes became popular in the Genroku (元禄) era (1688-1703). What was required was a thin, reed-like bamboo having a long space between the nodes. The Japanese apparently found such a type of bamboo in Siam, which came either from the North or the Northeast and which they accordingly called *Rao-dake* (羅越竹), or Lao bamboo. After the introduction of this material into Japan, the phrase *Rao-dake* became the standard term for the bamboo stem of the Japanese *kiseru* (煙管), or pipe; and even to this day a pipe with such a stem is known as a *Rao kiseru*, while the artisan who cleans and repairs pipes is called a *Rao-ya* (羅越屋).

### Sonkoroku a Japanese Corruption of Sawankalok

In view of these odd by-products of Siamese-Japanese relations in the 16th and 17th centuries, it would appear that the Japanese term Sonkoroku or Sunkoroku (寸古録) as it is occasionally written was a corruption of some Siamese word, most likely being the Japanese rendition of Sawankalok. This would imply, of course, that the Japanese were to some extent aware, as Carletti has suggested, that the pottery to which this term was applied came from Siam. If we only knew something more definite about the origin of the term Sonkoroku and its early usage in Japan, for, as we have seen, there is no substantial evidence to show that the Japanese ever imported Sawankalok pottery directly from Siam.

From all I have been able to ascertain the Siamese have always called this pottery after the name of the place at which it

was made—Sawankalok. It was also customary, however, for foreign traders dealing in a particular commodity to refer to it by the name of the port or place at which it was obtained, regardless of where the article was actually manufactured. Examples of this practice are numerous and we have already seen how the Arab, Indian and European traders attached the name Martaban to water jars of Siamese and Chinese provenance, and how in Borneo such water vessels were often called Siam jars although most of them probably came from China. Even today we have a predilection for calling large water vessels Shanghai jars regardless of where they were produced. As I have suggested earlier, it is quite possible that it was the Chinese potters or Chinese traders at Sawankalok who promoted the export of these wares. If so, they would most likely have described this pottery after the name of the place where it was made. It may be, therefore, that the Japanese derived the name Sonkoroku or Sunkoroku from the Chinese. In writing the name Sawankalok the Chinese have traditionally used the following three ideographs 宋膠洛 which in Mandarin are pronounced *Sung Chiao Lo*. This is, of course, a far cry from the original Thai name. In the Swatow dialect, however, the three ideographs are pronounced *Sung Ka Lok* which comes much closer to Sawankalok. The Japanese pronunciation of these three Chinese characters would be *Son* (or *Sun*) *Kyō* (or *Kō*) *Raku*. Like the Chinese, however, the Japanese have been most adept in using Chinese ideographs to give a phonetic rendition of foreign words, and have had their own preferences in the selection of ideographs for their sound distinct from those used by the Chinese, either for phonetic or even aesthetic reasons. Consequently, it would have been a simple matter for the Japanese to select a different set of characters which to them would better represent the strange sound of the place where the pottery was supposed to have been produced. Thus Sonkoroku written with the three ideographs 宋胡錄 may have been from the Japanese standpoint a more preferable way of writing this name which probably reached them in a form somewhat similar to the Swatow dialect reading of *Sung Ka Lok*.

In any event, Sawankalok pottery for at least a century played an important rôle in the ceramic trade of the East. Because it did not measure up to the standards of the Chinese export wares, most of it apparently went to the cheaper markets of Java, Borneo and the Philippines. In these countries it was probably regarded primarily as ordinary household ware, except in those curious cases where certain pieces were treasured for their supposedly magical powers. It is, therefore, not only of historical interest but also a significant commentary on the aesthetic character of the Japanese that it was only in Japan, so far as we know, that Sawankalok pottery was valued principally for its artistic qualities. Happily for this reason there are some splendid collections of Sawankalok ware in Japan today, many of the pieces of which have come down from those appreciative *cha jin* and devotees of the tea ceremony who were first attracted in the 16th and 17th centuries, if not even earlier, to this truly unique Siamese product. Accordingly, it should be no cause for surprise that the most elaborate and best book on Sawankalok pottery in any language should be Okuda Seiichi's (奥田誠一) magnificent *Sonkoroku Zukan* (宋胡録圖鑒), An Album of Sawankalok.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beamish, Tony

"First Report on 'The Johore Lama Hoard'," *The Malayan Historical Journal*, II, 1, July, 1955.

Black, Harding

"Two Siamese Bowls Refired," *Far Eastern Ceramic Bulletin*, VI, 2, June, 1953.

"The Carletti Discourse, a Contemporary Italian Account of a Visit to Japan in 1597-98,"

translated by Bishop Trollope, *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 2nd Series, IX, 1932.

*Ching-Tê-Chên T'ao-Lo or the Potteries of China*,

translated with notes by Geoffrey R. Sayer, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1951.

Cole, Fay-Cooper

*Chinese Pottery in the Philippines*, Field Museum of Natural History, Publication 162, Anthropological series, XII, 1, Chicago, 1912.

Collis, M.S.

"Fresh Light on the Route Taken by Export Porcelain from China to India and the Near East during the Ming Period," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, XIII, 1935-36 (London).

*Dai Jiten* (大辭典)

(Dictionary), 26 vols., Heibon-sha, Tōkyō, 1934-36.

*Dai Nippon Kokugo Jiten* (大日本國語辭典)

(Dictionary of the Japanese National Language), 5 vols., Fusambo, Tōkyō, revised 12th edition, 1928-29.

Duyvendak, J.J.L.

*China's Discovery of Africa*, Arthur Probsthain, London, 1949.

Duyvendak, J.J.L.

"The True Dates of the Chinese Maritime Expeditions in the  
Early Fifteenth Century,"

*T'oung Pao*, XXXIV.

Forbes, W. Cameron

*The Philippine Islands,*

2 vols., Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston and New York, 1928.

Fukui Kikusaburō (福井菊三郎)

*Nihon Tōjiki to Sono Kokuminsei* (日本陶磁器と其の國民性)

(Japanese Ceramic Art and National Characteristics),

Privately Printed by Ōhashi Mitsuyoshi,

Tōkyō, 1927. (Text in Japanese and English).

Giga Tetsuji (儀嘯徹二)

"Shamu no Tōki" (暹羅の陶器)

(Siamese Pottery), *Tōki Kōza* (陶器講座)

(Ceramics), III, pp. 1-80, 1935 (Tōkyō).

Giga Tetsuji (儀嘯徹二)

"Sonkoroku no Shurui" (宋胡録の種類)

(Types of Sawankalok), *Tōji* (陶磁) (Oriental Ceramics),

VI, 1, May, 1934 (Tōkyō).

Graham, W.A.

"Pottery in Siam,"

*JSS*, XVI, 1, 1923.

Graham, W.A.

*Siam,*

2 vols., Alexander Moring, Ltd., London, 1924.

Hara Bunjirō (原文次郎)

"Miki Sakae Shi to Shōrai no Shamu-tō" (三木榮氏と將來の  
暹羅陶)

(Mr. Miki Sakae and the Prospects of Siamese Ceramics),

*Tōji* (陶磁) (Oriental Ceramics), III, 1, Sept., 1930 (Tōkyō).

Hobson, Robert Lockhard

*The Wares of the Ming Dynasty,*

Benn Bros, Ltd., London, 1923.

Ibn Battuta

*Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354*, selected and translated by H.A.R. Gibb, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., London, 1953.

Iwao Seiichi (岩生成一)

*Nanyō Nihon-machi no Kenkyū* (南洋日本町の研究)  
(Study of the Japanese Communities of the Southern Regions),  
South Asia Cultural Research Institute, Tōkyō, 2nd ed., 1941.

Jenyns, Soame

*Ming Pottery and Porcelain*,  
Pitman Publishing Corp., New York, n.d.

*Jushichi Seiki ni okercu Nissha Kankei*(十七世紀に於ける日暹關係)  
(Japanese-Siamese Relations in the 17th Century), ed. by Gunji  
Kiichi (郡司喜一) and published by the Research Bureau of  
the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tōkyō, 1934.

Kawajima Motojirō (川島元次郎)

*Shuinsen Bōeki Shi* (朱印船貿易史)  
(History of the Red Seal Ship Trade),  
Kōjin-sha, Ōsaka, 4th ed., 1942.

Kraisri Nimmanahaeminda

"Sangambaeng Glazed Potteries,"  
*JSS*, XLIII, 2, Jan., 1956.

le May, Reginald

"The Ceramic Wares of Siam,"  
*Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, 1944-45 (London).

le May, Reginald

Review of H. Otley Beyer's "A Preliminary Catalogue of Pre-Spanish Ceramic Wares Found in the Philippine Islands,"  
*JSS*, XXV, 2, 1932.

le May, Reginald

"The Ceramic Wares of North-Central Siam,"  
*The Burlington Magazine*, LXIII, nos. CCCLXVII and  
CCCLXVIII.

le May, Reginald

"Notes and Queries on Thai Pottery,"  
*JSS*, XXXI, 1, 1939.

le May, Reginald

"A Visit to Sawankalok,"

*JSS*, XIX, 2, 1924.

Lyle, T.H.

"Notes on Ancient Pottery Kilns at Sawankalok, Siam,"

*Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, XXXIII, July-Dec., 1903.

Lyle, T.H.

"Siam: Celadon Ware,"

*Man*, Nos. 39-50, 1901.

Miki Sakae

*The Sawankalok Kiln in Siam*,

Privately Printed, Tōkyō, 1931.

Miki Sakae (三木榮)

*Shamu no Geijutsu* (暹羅の藝術)

(Siamese Art), Kuroyuri-sha, Ōsaka, 1930.

Miki Sakae (三木榮)

"Shamu no Sonkoroku Kama ni tsuite" (暹羅の宋胡錄窯に就て)

(Concerning the Sawankalok Kilns of Siam), *Tōji* (陶磁)

(Oriental Ceramics), II, 1, May, 1929 (Tōkyō).

Miki Sakae (三木榮)

"Fuhirippin-tō Shutsudo no Sonkoroku" (フヒリッピン島出土の宋胡錄)

(Sawankalok Excavated in the Philippines), *Tōji* (陶磁)

(Oriental Ceramics), IV, 5, Nov., 1932 (Tōkyō).

Morris, A.P.

"Pottery in Burma,"

*The Journal of the Burma Research Society*, VIII, 3, Dec., 1918  
(Rangoon).

Phraya Nakorn Phrah Ram

"Tai Pottery," *JSS*, XXIX, 1, Aug. 1936.

*Nihon Bijutsu Jiten*

(日本美術辭典) (Dictionary of Japanese Art),

Tōkyō-dō, Tōkyō, 1953.

Nishimura Shinji (西村真次)

*Nippon Kaigai Hatten Shi* (日本海外發展史)  
(History of Japanese Overseas Expansion),  
Tōkyō-dō, Tōkyō, 1942.

Okuda Seiichi (奥田誠一)

*Sonkoroku Zukan* (宋胡錄圖鑒)  
(An Album of Sawankalok),  
Zusekihō Kankō Kai, Tōkyō, 1944.

Ottema, Nanne

*De Praktijk van het Porcelein Verzamelen*,  
J.H. de Bussy, Amsterdam, 1953.

Ottema, Nanne

*Handboek der Chineesche Ceramiek*,  
J.H. De Bussy, Amsterdam, 1943.

Paske-Smith, M.T.

"The Japanese Trade and Residence in the Philippines before  
and during the Spanish Occupation,"  
*Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, XLII, 2, Nov.,  
1914.

Pelliot, Paul (trans. and ed.)

*Mémoires sur les Coutumes du Cambodge de T'cheou Ta-kouan*,  
Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Paris, 1951.

Pope, John Alexander

*Fourteenth Century Blue-and-White*.  
*A Group of Chinese Porcelains in the Topkapu Sarayı*  
*Muzesi, Istanbul*,  
Smithsonian Institution, Free Gallery of Art, Occasional Papers,  
II, 1, Washington, 1952.

Raphael, Oscar

"Notes on Siamese Ceramics,"  
*Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, 1930-31 (London).

Robb, Walter

"New Data on Chinese and Siamese Ceramic Wares of the  
14th and 15th Centuries,"

*Philippines Magazine*, XXVII, 2,4, Aug., Sept., 1930.

*Shamu Sonkoroku Tōji Monyō Shū* (暹羅宋胡錄陶磁紋樣聚)

(A Collection of Siamese Sawankalok Designs), Society for  
Collection and Dissemination of Siamese Ancient Art, Tōkyō,  
1931.

*Shinsen Dai Jimmei Jiten* (新撰大人名辭典)

(New Biographical Dictionary), 8 vols.,  
Heibon-sha, Tōkyō, 1937-38.

"Siamese Pottery,"

*Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago*, XVIII, 2, Feb., 1923.

*Tsūkō Ichiran* (通航一覽)

(An Epitome of Communications by Sea),

6 vols., privately printed by the Kokusho Kankō Kai

(Society for the Publication of National Literature), Tōkyō,  
1912-13.

Volker, T.

*Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company*,

E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1954.

Wang Yi-t'ung

*Official Relations between China and Japan, 1368-1549*,

Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies, IX, Harvard University  
Press, Cambridge, 1953.

Watanabe Shunjiro (渡邊修二郎)

*Sekai ni okeru Nihonjin* (世界上於ける日本人)

(Japanese in the World), Keizai Zasshi-sha, Tōkyō, 1893.

Wood, W.A.R.

*A History of Siam*,

The Siam Barnakich Press, Bangkok, revised edition, 1933.

