

Research Notes



A general view of the excavation site in Ban Wong Samrong

The Thai Ceramics Dating Project

For the first time in Thailand, the Telemag, a fully automatic digital magnetic surveying equipment developed by Dr. John Stanley of the University of New England, Australia, will be used in locating buried kilns. This will take place in the excavation to be conducted in Ban Ko Noi, a major ceramic center of Ancient Thailand, by the Thai-Australian team undertaking the Thai Ceramics Dating Project. The field work is scheduled from December 1981 to January 1982.

The Project Goals

The Project is a five-year research venture between Thailand and Australia. It seeks to investigate the history of the Thai export ceramic trade between the 12th and the 16th centuries A.D. Dating the various ceramic wares of Sukhotai and Sawankhalok and tracing the

development of the ceramic industry during the periods under study are the focus of the investigation. The research activities are grouped into two major ones: field work to be carried out in Thailand annually within the life span of the Project and continuing research and laboratory analyses which are to be implemented in both countries.

Sample Tests

Trial excavation was conducted early this year in Ban Wong Samrong occupation site in Amphoe Sisatchanalai, Sukhotai Province. The samples uncovered are currently undergoing different testings in Australia. Professor Prescott and Dr. G. Robertson of the Physics Department of the University of Adelaide are doing the TL test. The Radiocarbon Laboratory of the Australian National University

headed by Dr. Henry Polach conducts the C-14 test while Dr. William Spencer of the Australian Mineral Development Laboratories heads the group which analyzes the glazes and clays. The sherds retrieved are being classified in Thailand by Sechawat Naen-na and Anat Bamroongwong of the Fine Arts Department.

Since the beginning of the Project in 1980, over 2000 titles and references in western languages have been collected and computerized. Further work involves gathering bibliographic materials on the subject which are written in Thai.

The Ban Wong Samrong excavation has directed the research team to concentrate in the Ban Ko Noi area for the second phase of the Project. Aside from the Telemag, a device able to take samples for paleomagnetism will be employed

in the second field work. Unlike the samples from AD. 1200-1300 those produced from 1300-1450 do not lend itself well to C-14 tests due to the rapid geomagnetic field changes that occurred in that period. Palaeomagnetic testing suits the specimens of the era better. Dr. Mike Sarbetti of Sydney University will supervise the use of the device.

Research Supervisors

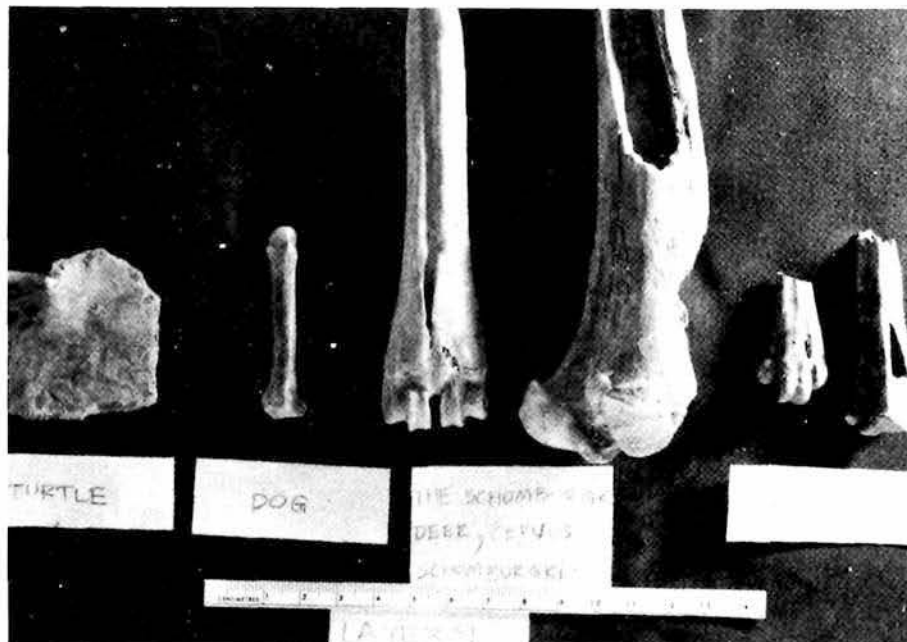
The principal researchers of the Project are as follows: Dr. P.L. Burns, Senior Lecturer in Southeast Asian History at the University of Adelaide; Richard Richards, Curator of Decorative Arts of the Art Gallery of South Australia; Donald Hein, Curator of the same gallery; Prachote Sankhanukit, Director of the Sukhotai Regional Office; Khemachart Thepchai, then from Sisatchanalai Branch of the Sukhotai Office; and Seehawat Naen-na, Khonkaen Office. The Thais are all archaeologists from the Fine Arts Department.

Funding

Funds for the Project come from several Australian institutions, namely, the Australian Research Grants Council, the Australian Foreign Affairs Department and its sponsors – the University of Adelaide and the Art Gallery of South Australia. Thailand's contribution cover the expenses of the Thai members of the team and the provision of necessary equipment and facilities.



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1. These sherds are samples of the type of stoneware unearthed in Ban Wong Samrong.
2. The Ban Wong Samrong site yielded bones of various animals when it was excavated in 1981.