

## Preface

The seven papers in this issue of the *Taida Journal of Art History* have been heard at the conference “Asian Ceramics: Resolving the Enigmas of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century,” held last October at the Field Museum in Chicago. The conference was the third in a series jointly organized by Asian Ceramic Research Organization (ACRO) and the Anthropology Department of the Field Museum.

A total of 17 papers were presented at the conference. The speakers were invited because they are actively engaged in research on ceramics of the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Because of this, we feel that real progress was made in working out the main unresolved issues concerning the making and trading of ceramics in East and Southeast Asia during the early Ming period. In addition to the seven papers in this volume, the other conference papers included “Southeast Asian Design Motifs and Their Historical Context” (Hiram Woodward, Walters Art Gallery), “15<sup>th</sup> Century Korean Ceramics—Unique Style and Foreign Influences” (Kim Young-Won, Kongju National Museum), “14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> Century Southeast Asian Ceramics in Japan” (Miyata Etsuko, Hagi Urugami Museum), “A Technological Context for 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ceramic Production” (Pamela Vandiver, Smithsonian Institution), “Ten Thousand Dragons: Ceramic Production in Southeastern China” (Peter Holmes, Independent Scholar, Denver), “Ships and Shippers in East Asian Waters in the Mid-2<sup>nd</sup> Millenium A.D.” (Pierre-Yves Manguin, École Française d’Extrême-Orient), “Ceramic Production in Central Vietnam (Vijaya): Internal Motivations and External Influences” (Allison Diem, Independent Scholar, Manila), “From Ming China to Choson Korea: Manufacturing Blue-and-White Wares” (Heekyung Lee, School of Oriental & African Studies), “Notes on Chinese Export Ceramics in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries” (Brian McElney, Museum of East Asian Art), and “Evidence in Southeast Asia for a Ming Gap Involving Chinese Blue-and-White Ceramics” (Roxanna Brown, Independent Scholar, Los Angeles).

Thanks to the interest of the Editorial Board, the Journal has agreed to produce a special issue to include the seven papers most immediately relevant to the work of the Graduate Institute of Art History. The other thirteen papers had, regrettably, to be omitted from this volume due to limitations of budget and space.

The three papers by Hsieh, Ouyang, and Ho & Smith form a focused China-oriented discussion, each bringing out new ideas and perspectives. In his paper “Some Issues Related to Chinese Ceramics of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century,” Hsieh shakes the traditional confidence that the chronology of 15<sup>th</sup> century imperial ware can be established by the writing or painting style of calligraphers and artists. He further

challenges the reliability of the archaeological data recently recovered by excavations in the former Nanking palace precinct. Those data have been used increasingly in attempts to date and understand different phases of social and economic activities there. Hsieh argues convincingly that, when excavated data have such an important bearing on broader questions, they should be thoroughly scrutinized before application.

Ouyang's paper, "A Study of Ceramics Made at Ching-te-chen Commercial Kilns during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century," draws on the author's many years of research experience. While most scholars and connoisseurs tend to focus on imperial production at Ching-te-chen, Ouyang sees that large-volume, market-driven production in private kilns was important because it was linked more closely to the local economy than the necessarily low-volume and non-cost effective production of the imperial kilns. He views ceramics primarily in terms of an economic production mode which was highly responsive to market demand. Ouyang also elaborates on the difficult issue of chronology based on the evolution of painting techniques on ceramics.

The paper by Ho & Smith, "Gaps in Ceramic Production/Distribution and the Rise of Multinational Traders in 15<sup>th</sup> Century Asia," examines Asia as a whole with emphases on China and Ryukyu, where rich documentary evidence is available. The authors explain what the gaps have meant to researchers, define the new ceramic trading patterns that were emerging in the area during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and describe the fluid identity and mobility of traders—in this case, the Ryukyans and overseas Chinese—as increasingly important qualifications for success in international business.

Three other papers bring out the latest information on ceramic production in Thailand and Vietnam, based on the authors' own archaeological research. Until the last decade, few interpretations of Vietnamese ceramics derived from research at kiln sites. The recent vigorous growth in field projects at ancient kilns have now allowed researchers to re-assess the significance of Vietnamese wares domestically and globally. In his paper "Vietnam and Vietnamese Ceramics in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century," Trinh summarizes recent excavations and surveys of Vietnamese kiln sites as well as the socio-economic background of their growth. Prishanchit's paper, "Key Sites of 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ceramic Production in the Upper Northern Thailand Lanna Region," reports new work at several kiln complexes in Thailand which were previously unknown to the world. Using data from archaeological surveys and excavations carried out under his direction, Prishanchit's contribution lies not only in his willingness to share vital new data, but also in his insights on the issues of dating and regional trade. In a third paper, "The First Underglaze Painted Decoration at Sawankhalok — identification of a key influence?", Hein discusses the sequence of production at kilns in Sisatchanalai, based on ware types recovered from a

five-year field program conducted jointly by The Fine Arts Department of Thailand and the Southeast Asian Ceramic Research Center of the University of South Australia in the early 1980s. In terms of its scale, complexity and significance in local and national politics, the Sisatchanalai complex was probably the most important ceramic production center in Thailand at any time in that country's history.

The paper by Morimoto Asako, "A New Approach to Enigmas from Medieval Hakata: Trade Ceramics as Seen from Archaeological Data," was written in order to address one of the conference themes—cross-cultural influences. A repeatedly raised question at the conference was why 15<sup>th</sup> century Korea did not participate in the wider and more profitable international ceramic trade, at a time when Korea's blue-and-white and white wares were of excellent quality and undoubtedly saleable on overseas markets. Morimoto does not answer this question directly, but her data corrects incorrect perception: Korea was in fact involved in ceramic exports, at least to Japan. The Hakata data show that a fair quantity of unusual Korean wares were used by residents there, along with imports from China and Southeast Asia. Morimoto's paper raises an alarming question—could it happen that 15<sup>th</sup> century Korean ceramics, if found outside Korea and Japan, might not be recognized because archaeologists in other countries are not familiar with Korea wares and do not anticipate their presence?

It is apparent that the conference and these papers have merely scratched the surface of a vastly under-studied subject and period. We are glad that we have made a small move toward correcting that situation. We thank The Graduate Institute of Art History for endorsing that interest by publishing these papers.

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The Field Museum