

## SEACS event @Johannes Rizal's Sept 18 2010

Members of SEACS recently jumped at the opportunity to view some of Johannes Rizal's special ceramics. Johannes, who is a keen collector and a member of SEACS for many years, guided an appreciative audience through his collection, even allowing us to fondle a few pieces. These ceramics were mainly from the Song (960—1279) and Yuan (1260-1368) dynasties, originating from both land and maritime sites, having been produced for China's thriving export market.

A few of the highlights were:

Small, square-shaped, blue and white water pots which sat uniformly in line and were decorated with moulded designs and painted with freely applied scrolling floral motifs.

Blue and white jarlets, some with tiny looped lugs on their shoulders, and others, with beaded decoration running down their multi-lobed sides.

Several *qingbai* glazed jarlets in the form of star fruit were spotted with an iron-red glaze. These small containers may have been used to hold medicine and were often found in burial sites in Indonesia and the Philippines attesting to their valued heirloom nature in countries far from the site of production.



Some pieces were strongly influenced by demand from the Islamic world which had made its presence felt in Southeast Asia by the 14<sup>th</sup> century. One sinuous ewer, decorated in energetic cobalt blue, floral motifs bore a silver spout and lid which were added by Johannes to echo the original style of the piece. This ceramic shape was often found in metal ware and reflected the cross cultural exchange between trading partners of the time.

An attractive, spouted and ribbed, blue and white dish belonged to the Chenghua period dating from the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. We crowded close to peer inside the base to observe a conch shell—one of the Eight Emblems of Buddhism which was an important force in Ming dynasty, China.



The crab, often used to represent harmony, was crafted into a charming underglaze blue lidded box which fitted neatly into one's hand. The crab bore a somewhat bemused expression which seemed to invite one's touch.



An unusual piece underglaze blue ewer with a silver lid with a rat shaped handle; this creature was probably chosen because of its importance in Buddhist symbolism.



One Song dish that caught my eye was a lotus leaf rendered very realistically as it curled protectively around a turtle, one of the revered creatures of China. This was discovered in Martaban, Burma, again indicating prevailing trade patterns and the spread of Buddhism into the region.

Most of the ceramics we examined were small in size but Johannes informed us that he has many other larger pieces. To underline his point, he dragged out a box containing a large blue and white Arita vase. The experienced eyes in the group were able to distinguish the differences between this 17<sup>th</sup> c Japanese ware and a comparable Chinese produced item, such as the clarity of the design and the difference in the 'heaped and piled' effect of the cobalt glaze.

Margaret White Oct 21 2010

Photos: Alvin Chia