



The Oriental Ceramic Society of the Philippines

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Newsletter November-December 2009

Regular Meeting & Lecture

APPRAISING ART



Figure 1- Juan Luna: Interior de Un Café.

Speaker	Mr Ramon Villegas Author, independent Curator, Professional art appraiser.
Date	8 December 2009
Venue	Eliza Romualdez-Valtos 8 Tangile - North Forbes Park Makati

“Interior de un Café”, re-titled “Parisian Life” and purchased at a Sotheby’s auction in Hong Kong by the Philippines’ Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) for Php 42 million, is one of several art forms presented by Expert Ramon Villegas to illustrate his lecture. As a distinguished art expert and critic, historian and jewellery designer from a long line of jewellery professionals in his ancestry, Ramon Villegas is the best person to talk of the art of art appraisal, and help us understand it better. This is intricate and goes well beyond the basic professional principles, understanding of aesthetic quality and technical expertise. This skill requires an appreciation of a multiplicity of less tangible factors, which are fundamentally variable with time and space.

Our speaker is an independent curator who has helped put together exhibitions for the Intramuros Administration’s Casa Manila, the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the National Museum, the Ayala Museum, the Pacific-Asia Museum in Pasadena, California, the Musee de l’Homme in Paris, and the New York based Asia Society. He is the author or co-author of several books, of which “*Ginto: The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Gold Collection*” received the Anvil Award and the National Book Award, in 2004.

A report of the lecture will be included in the January-February 2010 newsletter.

CONTENTS	OCSP NEWSLETTER Nov – Dec 2009
1	Lecture –Ramon Villegas – Art Appraisal – at Eliza Romualdez-Valtos
2-6	Reports & Announcements:
	- Program Review by Brigitte MacDonald:
2-3	- Archaeology of Bahrain and Alexandria - Wilfredo Ronquillo.
4-6	- Maritime trade and the Belitung cargo – John Guy
6	- Hosting , Cristina and Howard Belton
	- Upcoming Program
6-7	- Ceramics Talk – Rita C. Tan : Important Archaeological Discoveries at Liyang Town outside of Jingdezhen
8	-Library
8-9	-Local and regional exhibitions

OCSPP Committee Reports & Announcements

Program Review – October - November 2009

Archaeology of Bahrain and Alexandria – Willie Ronquillo

We were delighted to welcome again at our October meeting Willie Ronquillo, expert, friend and wonderful speaker. A Scientist with a 35 years career at the National Museum where he heads the Archaeology department, he recently returned from conferences in Bahrain and Yokohama, and had accepted to share with us elements of recent findings in the archaeology of Bahrain and Alexandria. In the Kingdom of Bahrain, a conference of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites had been held during the first week of May 2009 to discuss the terms of the UNESCO conventions with respect to prehistoric sites and the probable inclusion of Prehistoric Archaeological sites for protection and preservation.

Bahrain is situated in the Persian Gulf, north of Qatar and covers a small area of 30 by 20 miles. Its present population of 1.5 million people includes many foreigners and in particular a large Filipino community; It is located in the middle of the ancient trade route between India and Mesopotamia. Bahrain played a key role in trading its legendary pearls, its oyster population benefiting from the fine quality of the water, a suitable mix of salt and freshwaters. In 1932 the first oil was struck in the Middle East. This wealth was to change the local culture.

Willie Ronquillo described the importance of the sites and the problems caused by encroachment from the city development. During a day of visits to the different archaeological sites of Bahrain, it was clear to see that these are in dire need of protection as population growth and urbanization catches up with this small island kingdom. Hundreds of tumuli, some Neolithic, were found, especially in the North of the city. Each tumulus had been one burial site. These ancient historical sites are now threatened by the development of this fast expanding city.

A field trip was organized to the ancient tumuli. Some of these were intact, others partly disturbed, and others already encroached upon by the expanding city. In looted sites, only the rectangular burial stone structures remained. Some others were very difficult to access. Artefacts found there include glass bottles, some of which are shaped like dates. Authorities try to prevent encroachment by placing these sites on UNESCO listings, as has been done for the Tabon Caves in the Philippines.



Figure 2 Sphinx from port of Alexandria.
Photo by W. Ronquillo

A beautiful new museum offers a display area of a plain large rectangular shape, well-lit and air-conditioned. It is housed in a fort built by the Dutch in the 15th c to protect and control the large port. The fort stands high on top of a 12-meter mound. The area is about half that of Intramuros, and surrounded by a moat.

In the display, a number of Sumerian and Akkadians inscriptions, testify to the presence of Babylonian settlers in the region. Burial styles are displayed and documented. This includes the “flex”, or “S” shape, which has also been found in the Philippines.

Also found there are coins, of silver and gold, gold-coloured beads in a murex shell, sculptures, ceramics with greenish clay and green glaze.

Identification of Clay source and manufacturing technique require chemical analysis.

These could well originate from some distant source, as some ancient Carnelian beads found in the Philippines which have been identified as of Indian origin, and some glass excavated in Butuan which proved to have been

imported in the 10th c. More than for other materials, for glass, manufacturing techniques – moulded or blown – can help date and show the origin of the artefact, as techniques differ and glass had been moulded earlier, before being blown.

During the first week of July 2009 Willie Ronquillo attended a seminar on Maritime Silk Route Trade held at Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan, where he gave a paper on early trade in the Philippines. This was in the context of the opening of the exhibition “Egypt’s Sunken Treasures” on the Underwater Archaeological finds from Alexandria at Yokohama. The latest generated underwater archaeological finds, superbly shown, complement the long existing land archaeological evidence from Egypt through time immemorial. In a very impressive pictorial display, Willie Ronquillo shared with the Society members some of the new finds which were on exhibit at Yokohama.

Huge screens at the exhibition showed sphinxes, colossal figures of king, queen, religious man which had been retrieved from the harbour of Alexandria. Of the over 500 pieces exhibited, such pieces as a very fine figure of the queen give an idea of the original importance of these sites. Beautiful didactic presentations of items such as large jars affixed on a wheel, showed how this early technology was used for canal irrigation. Technological tools used in exploration were also well presented, such as, in one instance, the recording method which consists in imprinting inscriptions and bas-reliefs with a silicon compound.



Figure 3 Colossal pharaoh statues. Photo W. Ronquillo

The exhibition developed the “East meets west” concept along the maritime silk route. Frank Goddio, well known in the Philippines for his underwater exploration of the San Diego in the early 1990, had taken over work in Alexandria from another French underwater archaeology exploration group.

Alexandria, founded in 331 BC, had become capital after the fall of Memphis. It was a huge centre of intellectual activity in the 5th century. For the first time, items of monumental size, such as colossal pharaohs and columns, were brought up. The submerged land works show up through the water. However many on-land structures had been covered by contemporary buildings. The data brought by the archaeological works laid mostly in the East port, including pharos, the largest lighthouse, which had collapsed in 1303, after a major earthquake.

Message from Willie Ronquillo

Below please find the correct caption for the submitted picture of a head that I erroneously identified earlier as that of Zeus. I apologize for this mistake. The head is that of **Sarapis, A Guarantor for Fertility**. It is made of marble and dates to the 2nd century B.C. Below is a quote about the piece.

"On the top of the head is a slightly raised, horizontal, circular surface. In the centre of this disc a square hole has been drilled as a fixing point for a feature mounted on top of the head. This detail and the imposing size of the head prove that this is the image of a god. The powerful face adorned by a thick flowing beard and mass of hair is characteristic of the effigies of Sarapis. The shape of the disc on top of the head exactly matches the base of the basket, or calathos, a fruit basket that the god is commonly represented wearing.



"The calathos' _ _ _ outer wall is decorated with a slight relief of two similar plants with thick stems and short side shoots ending in large lanceolate leaves. This is a stylized but unmistakable representation of olive trees, the form of decoration most commonly found on the headgear of the god Sarapis.

"The scale of the sculpture also plays an essential part in its identification. In its current state, with the calathos, it is 83 centimetres tall. The only head that is any larger is that of Crocodilopolis in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, which is 90 centimetres tall! The method of fixing at the rear of the sculpture implies that it was most likely part of a canonic-type statue of the god - that is, one in which he is sitting on a throne. Therefore it can be assumed that this was a colossal statue of between 4 and 4 1/2 metres tall. The size means that this not a simple votive statue. There could only have been one statue of such a scale in a Greek temple: the statue central to the cult. _ _ _".

The above were quoted from

Goddio, Frank and Clauss, Manfred (editors). *Egypt's Sunken Treasures*. Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin. Prestel Publishing. 2006. Munich Berlin London New York.

This book is highly recommended for those wishing details on the Underwater Archaeological finds from Alexandria and its nearby areas undertaken in the last 15 years.

All the best to you, the OCS Newsletter and its members. It was an honour and a pleasure to have been invited (once again) to give a talk in one of your monthly meetings".

Further thoughts on the Belitung Cargo - John Guy

The OCSP was very privileged that Professor John Guy, recently invited to Manila by the Ayala Museum, accepted to give a lecture, during this visit, to our Society. The lecture was held on November 16, at the residence of Sylvia Cancio Campos, Makati, and hosted by Jacqueline Cancio Vega.

John Guy is currently Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. His main fields are Oriental Trade Ceramics in South East Asia, Indian Temple Art, Culture and Religion, with particular focus on ceramics and textiles. He is Curator, writer and author of numerous major publications and currently working on a publication by the Metropolitan Museum on the 9th c. Belitung cargo. The title of the November 16th lecture was: "Further thoughts on the Belitung Cargo and the Nature of Influence in the Arab-China trade and the Persian Gulf trade, from the study of the 9th century Chinese Ceramics from Belitung". Below are some of the key points of this lecture.

The nature of the cargo underlines the important development of ceramics in China at the time. The quantity of goods supplied was vast; yet China was not a great maritime power then. The great mariners were not Chinese but Malays, as testified by objects found in Borobudur stupas, and Tamils, from South India. Traders from India were sourcing gold, metals, aromatics, and forest products in South East Asia. Trading links were reaching the West, via the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, as early as the 8th c.

In the early 9th century, China knew a commercial boom and actively produced goods for export to an international market, in a mass production of a new scale. This production was driven by demand from powers to the West of Indonesia, the Middle-East, Iran, Persia, and by the activity of Arabic merchant along with Gujerati, Tamil and Malay traders. Arabic, Hindu and Buddhist merchants were operating in the same region. Archaeological evidence and historical annals build the same picture.

Of all, the most significant archaeological evidence is the Belitung cargo; on board were found Arabic gold dinars –in spite of the fact that barter trade was still very common- along with silver ingots, likely from Yunnan, bronze and copper. Naturally very little survives of the textile and spice trade; But Tang high-fired ceramics remain, whether white, green splashed, celadon style, with fish patterns, or others, and such artefacts regularly emerge, for example, at low tide in the Surat Thani region of present day Thailand.

Maritime transport by Arabian merchants was using the traditional dhow style boat, built largely of East African hardwoods from the Malabar Coast supplied to the Arabian shipyard, the Arabian Peninsula having been deforested since biblical times. Later, after the 12th century many junks, of Chinese design and built of South-East Asian hardwood, plied these maritime routes; by the 17th and 18th centuries the newly-arrived Portuguese ships found a well-organized system of large fleets in place.

The 9th centuries maritime expeditions linking Basra and China were high-risk ventures, but huge fortunes were to be made; one such example is of a major patron in Mecca, then very successful in the trade of Chinese textiles. In the 2nd quarter of the 9th century, the Belitung cargo appears to have picked up its cargo from Yangzhou and to have departed from Guangzhou. In new Muslim kingdoms expanding from Basra, metal works and ceramics were developing, stimulated by Chinese exports. This was a two-way trade: Some ceramics from Basra, Pakistan, Goa, also found their way to distant Eastern locations; sherds of Islamic and green-glazed materials are found for instance around the great stupas of Sri Lanka, along the coast of Vietnam, and in the Intan wreck, such as light green Islamic jars from the Belitung cargo.

In the Belitung wreck, plates from the Chinese Changsha kilns were beautifully stacked inside Guangdong storage jars; they are finely decorated with dark green and light brown patterns on a cream background. By juxtaposing

photographs of a Belitung plate and an Iranian pattern of contemporary period, John Guy drew attention to the similarity of a floral design, underlining the cultural link, the inspiration from Changsha. More juxtaposed images showed a Yue-type original Chinese light green ware, of foliate form, and a similar item, made in Persia, imitating the Chinese form, but with applied Arabic details. Chinese and pseudo-Arabic writings are both found in jars.



Figure 4 the Belitung "signature" on a green splashed ewer detail



Figure 5 Blue and white dish from Belitung cargo with similar design

Changsha ware dominates the Belitung cargo, along with Xing ware, green splashed and brown ware. White wares come mainly from the very important Gongxian kilns, where the earliest cobalt blue and white also were produced. Green splashed ware has been excavated also in Iran, along with white ware. The green splashed effect is very present in the Belitung cargo.

John Guy had selected for us photographs of some superb green splashed pieces, among them, a 4-lobed bowl with central medallion of a moulded applied décor, a very fine jar with a cat-shaped (or leopard) handle and a magnificent slender ewer, over one-meter high, with a finely detailed dragon-head cover.

This ewer, John Guy pointed out, expresses especially well the cultural "fusion" between 9th century China and Persia. It carries a pattern so recurrent in this cargo that it is considered to be the Belitung "signature": A main lozenge which can be subdivided in 4 parts, and leaf clusters, "palmettes", projecting from the lozenge corners. A floral design occupies each part of the lozenge.

This pattern originates from the middle-East, as seen in early metal works (8th and 9th centuries) excavated in present day Irak and Iran. It was highly valued in Persia then, and decorated prestige items in these households. This makes the Belitung cargo an especially high-end production from China, and provides an important clue as to its intended market.

The shape of the long slender ewer was inspired by an original Iranian metal import piece. This had been copied in ceramic in a first stage, and subsequently Chinese metal copies of the ceramic copy eventually emerged.

The cobalt-decorated white ware had the lozenge and “palmette” signature, created by using cobalt in a blue and white “in glaze” décor. With this technique, the glaze solution being still mobile, gives a soft edge to the design. The cobalt itself had most likely been traded from Persia.

The Belitung cargo, in its unique character, raises questions and speculations such as: Why was green splashed style ware discontinued? Was this style a precursor for celadon, which would be obtained later by improved kiln technology which permitted high-firing? Is no Tang ware found in the Philippines? Was the Belitung cargo being shipped further west than Java? Was Java, this biggest single market in the region then, only to be a port of call? *Discussions continued during the convivial dinner which followed the lecture. The Society wishes to express its profound gratitude to Professor John Guy for this superb lecture and to the Ayala Museum. Our thanks also go to our gracious hosts Sylvia Cancio Campos and Jacqueline Cancio Vega for providing an excellent venue and dinner.*

Hosting

October 2009 - Christina and Howard Belton

For our October meeting, we had the great pleasure of welcoming Wilfredo Ronquillo. Our hosts, Cristina and Howard Belton, had once again created the most welcoming atmosphere, and prepared a sumptuous dinner, with delicious British desserts and fine wine. The evening was well attended, and new members felt warmly welcome. The society extends sincere gratitude for Cristina and Howard’s generosity and the hospitable evening.

Upcoming Program

February 23 rd , 2010	Workshop.
March 23 rd , 2010	Election of new OCSP Committee.
April 2010	Reception marking the 30 th anniversary of OCSP foundation.

Venues are to be announced.

Ceramics Talk

By Rita C. Tan

Important Archaeological Discoveries at Liyang town Outside of Jingdezhen

In 2005, archaeologists from the Palace Museum, Jiangxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology and Jingdezhen Institute of Archaeology conducted excavations at two kilns in Liyang Town located at 21 km. southwest of Jingdezhen. One of them was a dragon kiln dated to Yuan 14th C and the other a gourd-shaped kiln dated to early Ming 15th C. The former was a kiln that had remained unopened since its last firing. Such discovery was unprecedented. Inside the kiln chamber, piles of saggars were undisturbed. The intact condition provides a

wealth of information on the kiln structure, the quantity of wares accommodated in each firing, the arrangement of saggars inside the kiln, etc.



Figure 6 Dish with Longquan style glaze

There were four strata in this kiln. The lowest was dated to the Song – Yuan period. Ceramics recovered included *qingbai*, black ware and *shufu* ware which were classic wares of the period. Noteworthy among those unearthed from the next stratum are some under fired celadons with lotus petals similar to the Longquan style. That Jingdezhen was producing Longquan - style celadon in the 14th century is a revelation to the ceramics scholars. The third and the fourth were remains from the Ming and contemporary periods.

Gourd-shaped kiln was very popular in the Ming period. The one excavated at Liyang was from the early Ming period or the Interregnum period 1436-1464 and was better preserved than any of those excavated previously. Important specimens such as imitations of *Ge* ware and Longquan ware were found in this kiln.

Qing is known for its great diversity of wares, both monochromes and polychromes. Monochromes come in varied types of glazes many of which are imitations of classic wares of earlier periods. Except for a few shards unearthed at Xuande stratum 1426-1435 at Zhushan, the imperial kiln site in Jingdezhen, wares that are imitations of *Ge* ware and Longquan ware from as early as middle of the 15th century are extremely rare.

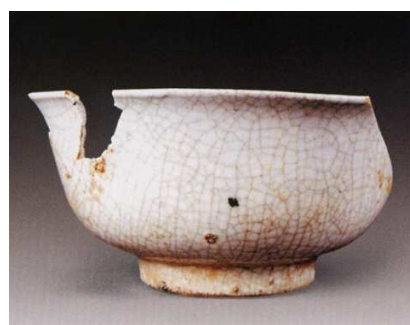


Figure 7 Dish with Ge Style

The early Ming kiln also yielded substantial quantity of blue and white ware with decorative style that is highly representative of the period. This group of specimens must have been instrumental in the dating of this kiln. Among them is a fragment of a blue and white bowl painted with plum and moon designs on the interior. It is similar to that seen on the centre of a bowl with four floral sprays on the inner wall recovered from the Pandanan cargo. This further confirms the dating of the Pandanan shipwreck discovered in Palawan.



Figure 3a Bowl with Plum and Moon Design from Pandanan Cargo

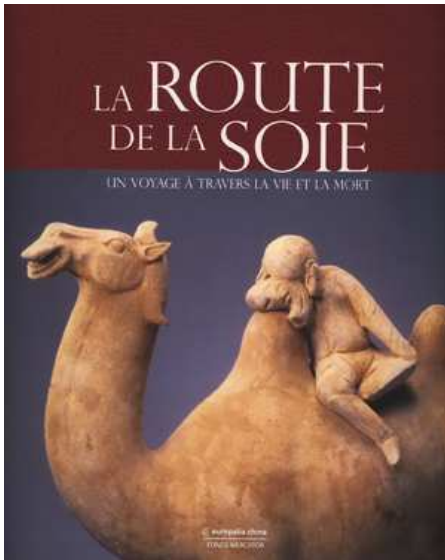


Figure 8b Blue and white bowl with plum and moon design

Reference:

“Excavation at the Yuan-Ming Kiln Site in Liyang of Jingdezhen, Jiangxi”, pp161 – 168, Major Archaeological Discoveries in China in 2005, *Wenwu Chubanshe*, Beijing, 2005.

Library

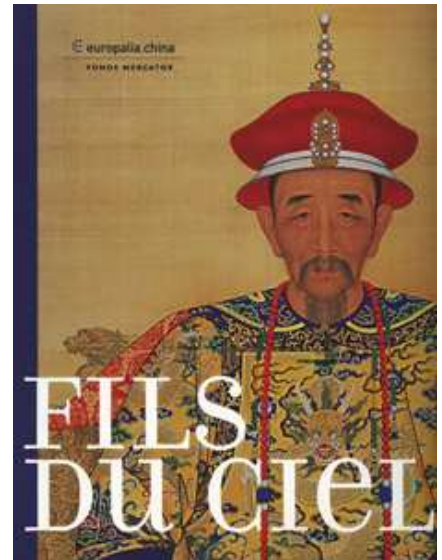


Europalia exhibition catalogues:

“La Route de La Soie” (Silk Road)
« Fils du Ciel » (Sons of Heaven)

OCSP member Alain Miaillhe loaned to the library two catalogues from the present Europalia exhibition in Brussels, Belgium, which is dedicated to China and explores different aspects of history, culture and civilization. Our thanks go to Alain for sharing this with us.

(French text)



Exhibitions



Ayala Museum
“A Millennium of Contact”

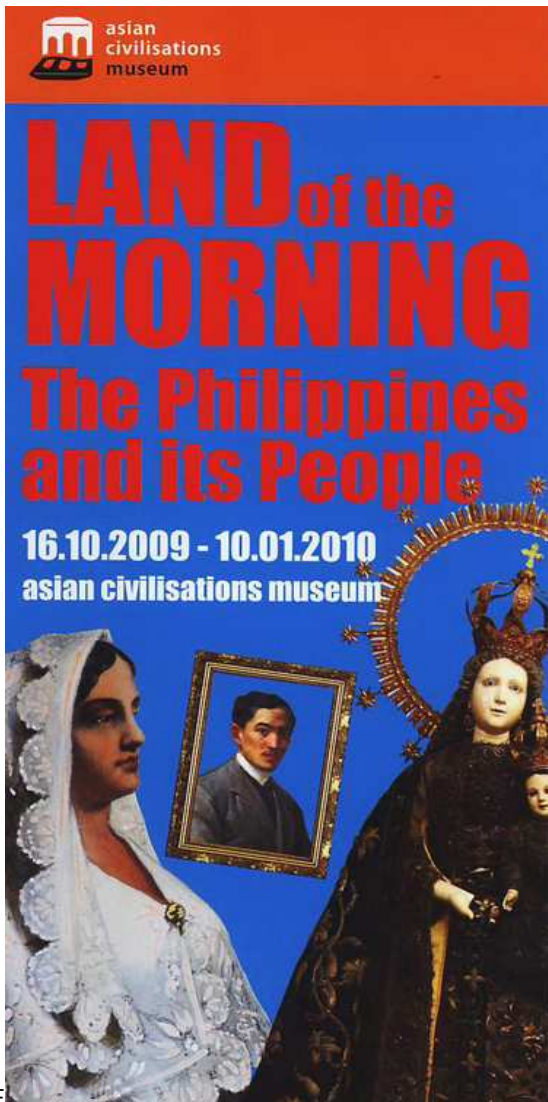
Permanent exhibition of the superb Villanueva Ceramics Collection, to be visited and re visited.
Holiday Schedule: Museum closed only on December 25th, December 31st and January 1st.

Ayala Museum
“Gold of Ancestors”

Superb exhibition of pre colonial gold, now accompanied by an exhibition guide written by Curator Dr Florina-Capistrano Baker.

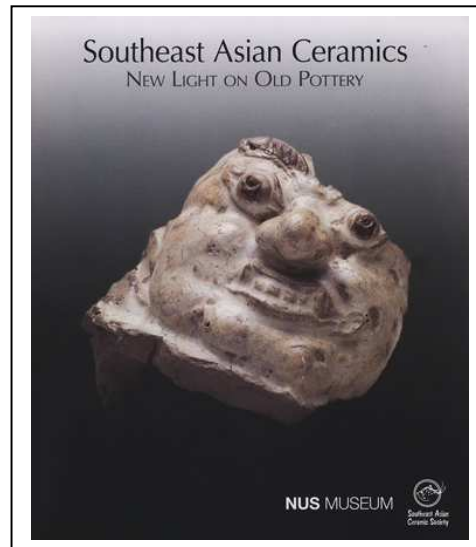
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NEW LIGHT ON OLD POTTERY

The exhibition brings together ceramics from various collections, including NUS permanent collection, items from the Belitung Cargo, and a large number of pieces lent by several museum and private collectors.

Co-curated by Dr John Miksic and Foo Su Ling, it marks the South East Asian Ceramics Society 40th anniversary.

In the words of Ahmad Mashadi, Head of NUS Museum, “The exhibition’s emphasis on the objects provides significant opportunity to observe, compare and connect the formal elements that characterise the various materials. To facilitate this, the display is conceived along broad lines of key archaeological sites, technological development, and changing patterns of trade.”

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication, of the same titled, edited by Dr John Miksic.

14 November 2009 – 25 July 2010

*The OCSP Board
Sends all Members and Friends
Very best wishes on this holiday season.*

*And for the
New Year*

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