

# SHARDS

A Newsletter of the

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China Students' Club of Boston

September 2004

## A Message from Our President

Dear Fellow Members,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to a new year of interesting programs for the members of the China Students' Club, Inc.. Not only do we have a diverse and wonderful array of offerings, but a new venue in which to hold them! After meeting for many years in Seccomb Hall, we learned last winter that the Women's Educational and Industrial Union had plans to sell the building. Various sites were investigated and The College Club at 44 Commonwealth Avenue was determined to be an appropriate and affordable meeting place. An added feature is that lunch is available at The College Club for those who are interested in eating there. It is my hope that members will take advantage of this option as an opportunity to share common interests in the study of ceramics over lunch. Information on meals at The College Club will be available at the first meeting on September 23.

In 2009, the China Student's Club, Inc. will mark its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We can be proud of the fact that our group is the oldest organization in the United States formed specifically for the study and appreciation of

ceramics and is still going strong today. A committee has been formed to plan for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. If you have any thoughts concerning this event, please let me know about them.

The programs offered by the CSC are available to all for the relatively low cost of a membership. In order to continue to bring outstanding speakers to the club, a sponsorship program was initiated last spring. I am pleased to report that two of our members—Shirley Nichols and former President Jim Kaufman—have agreed to sponsor lectures this year. If you are interested in sponsoring a lecture, I would be delighted to hear from you.

In closing, I would like to thank Anne Lanning for putting together yet another outstanding program year, Penny Sander and Amanda Lange for shepherding the Blue Book through the printing process, and Jim Kaufman who, like all of the club presidents before him, has raised the bar another notch. I look forward to seeing you all.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Parsons Roy

## Andrew Maske on The Amazing Diversity of Japanese Ceramics Report by Jeff Brown

The CSC April lecture was held in the beautiful auditorium of the newly renovated Peabody Essex Museum. Members had gathered to hear Andrew Maske, Curator of Japanese Art at the museum, speak on the topic of "The Amazing Diversity of Japanese Ceramics." The lecture was generously sponsored by our club president, Jim Kaufman.

Amazingly, despite its small size and geographic isolation, Japan has been over the past 10,000 years one of the world's leaders in ceramic production, despite the fact that Japan was not as advanced technologically as her neighbors China and Korea. The Japanese were adept at basketry and woodworking but their

ceramics industry seldom advanced without some kind of outside influence. But once the innovations were introduced, the Japanese often outdid the original sources of their inspiration.

The oldest Japanese ceramics, and according to some scholars the world's oldest ceramics, are earthenwares called Jomon or "rope-patterned" ware. Sometimes the pattern was made from impressed rope, sometimes it was incised. The piece illustrated to the group dated back to about 7500-4500 B.C.. During this period the vessels were ritualistic in nature rather than utilitarian. The mostly hunter-gatherer Jomon culture was

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## Andrew Maske on The Amazing Diversity of Japanese Ceramics

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replaced around the second century B.C. by people from the Korean peninsula who brought with them rice cultivation and established agrarian communities. Ceramic production changed to wheel-thrown wares. This was the Yayoi or rice-growing culture which lasted until about the third century A.D. Earthenwares during this period were all low-fired in pits.

The fourth and fifth centuries saw more influences from Korea, such as the practice of constructing large burial mounds. Earthenware cylinders containing sculptural figures of warriors, sometimes peasant farmers, animals or model buildings, were arranged around the mounds. These figures are called haniwa after the cylinders that contained them. Also under Korean influence the first high-fired stonewares were produced, again for ritual purposes, in the Korean taste. It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between Japanese and Korean wares of this period.

The seventh and eighth centuries saw influences from Tang Dynasty China and the first utilitarian stoneware with an ash glaze was developed about this time. This was used throughout the eleventh century, by which time it fell out of favor.

In the fifteenth century Shigaraki wares were developed with a rough clay containing feldspar. Storage jars were produced in great numbers, many surviving to this day; this rough ware being highly appreciated and considered central to Japanese culture and aesthetics. Examples of it are very highly prized today. These utilitarian stonewares were for the most part the only ones being made throughout the twelfth to sixteenth centuries. However, in the central Seto district there was another type of glazed stoneware being produced with influences from the southern Sung Dynasty of China. This brown/black glazed ware called tenmoku was favored for teabowls and was brought back to Japan by Zen Buddhist monks who had gone to China to study. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the tea ceremony had an enormous influence on the development of Japanese ceramics. By the sixteenth century, these stonewares had pushed teaware forms away from Chinese imitation towards a completely Japanese aesthetic. A natural, unaffected look was what was prized

by the tea connoisseur. Some of these pieces have been lovingly appreciated and used for the past four centuries.

At the end of the sixteenth century, a new kind of kiln was introduced from Korea. It was called a “climbing kiln” as it was built up a hillside, the heat rising chamber to chamber for a much more efficient, controlled effect. Another innovation brought in by Korean potters was the kick wheel.

In the mid seventeenth century, Kyoto, the capital and cultural center of Japan, started to play a role in ceramics production due in large part to studio potters. Some worked in stonewares, others in earthenwares. The famous low-fired Raku ware was developed at this time. The aesthetic was to create something so somber and unaffected that it would seem like drinking tea from one’s own hands. Other ceramics of the period reached such a high status in the culture that they were sometimes decorated by some of the leading painters of the day.

The third type of Japanese ceramic was, of course, porcelain. By the mid seventeenth century there was discovered near the town of Arita a mountain of china stone that didn’t need anything else mixed with it to produce hard paste porcelain of great strength. The earliest pieces date to around 1620. Underglaze blue was developed and then overglaze enamels by the 1640s. The most popular decoration that came out of the seventeenth century was the Kakiemon palette which features orange/red, green, blue, yellow and black. This ware was eventually exported to the west and copied by such factories as Meissen and Chelsea. The other popular style was the Imari style, introduced around 1700, which featured a lot of underglaze blue highlighted with overglaze iron-red and gold and black. This was a very popular export ware.

Nabeshima ware was produced circa 1700 onward and was made for the ruling elite of Japan, not really for export, reflecting a very Japanese aesthetic in form and decoration.

Having introduced us to the development of these three major categories of Japanese ceramics, the lecture concluded with some slides of contemporary wares

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## Andrew Maske on The Amazing Diversity of Japanese Ceramics

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(ceramics is still a very active and highly regarded art form in Japan) and then the group was invited up on stage to view some pieces from the museum's extraor-

dinary collection.

We thank Dr. Maske for his informative lecture, and the Peabody Essex Museum for hosting our meeting.



Footed vessel, Yayoi culture, earthenware, 1c



Small dish, Arita ware, porcelain, early 17c



Right: Tea caddy, Takatori ware, stoneware, mid-17c

Left: Ko-kutani dish, porcelain, 18c Peabody Essex Museum

*(More pictures on back page; all items from private collections unless otherwise noted)*



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## Jessica Lanier on Elias Hasket Derby and the Post-Revolutionary Ceramics Trade in Salem, 1785-1799

### Report by Jeff Brown

After enjoying the use of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union for many years, the China Students' Club of Boston held its last meeting and tea at that venue in May. The new club officers were elected, the treasurer's report was delivered, and kind words of appreciation were delivered by outgoing President Jim Kaufman to all those who helped make his administration so successful.

Our last speaker of the year, traditionally a club member, was introduced by Program Director Anne Lanning. Jessica Lanier, who has a Masters degree from and is in the Ph.d. program of the Bard Graduate Center, is a former motion picture set designer. She most recently has worked on "Vasemania," an exhibit drawn from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection which is now on display at the Bard center. Jessica spoke to the group on the import and export of ceramics into and from Salem, MA, circa 1785-1812, using the merchant Elias Haskett Derby as a case study.

After the Revolution the Massachusetts consumer would have been extremely limited in his choice to redwares and stonewares, had it not been for the importation of English refined wares. The high price of American labor and failed attempts at American manufacture of a comparable product gave the English an advantage—until the Americans ventured forth on their own and opened direct relations with China.

The taste of Salem's burgeoning middle and upper classes for porcelain seemed insatiable and then, as now, there was a direct connection between material goods and social status. For the most part, porcelain was an expensive luxury item, sold in large sets catering to an elite market which valued grand entertainments and displays of food. But given the large number of people at all levels of society who were involved in the China trade one cannot strictly say "only rich people had porcelain." Most merchants allowed even the lowliest sailor to bring home from Canton what would fit into his sea chest. And despite the availability of other tradable commodities like silk and spices, it seems that the sailor more often than not opted for a high status porcelain tea set.

The cheapest sets retailed in Salem for about \$5.00 whereas a sailor could get one in Canton for \$1.50. By 1802 almost all the porcelain entering Salem came in the hands of mariners as private trade. Most of these wares were the simple blue and white export decorated with Chinese pavilions and river scenes. Over time merchants and seamen imported more and more porcelain as more people desired and could afford it. As time went on, more came into Salem and less was re-exported—a sign of the city's prosperity. At the same time, keep in mind that English wares were pouring in, the majority of which were pearlwares and creamwares.

As for the legendary trader Elias Haskett Derby, he never went to sea but rather inherited his father's trading business and went right into the counting house! His famous ship "The Grand Turk", Salem's first ship to trade with Canton, only made it to China as a last ditch attempt to save a failed venture to trade with the Cape of Good Hope. Once in Canton they were able to line the floor of the ship with porcelain for \$2000, topping off the cargo with cinnamon and tea. The porcelain sets ranged in price from \$2.00-\$7.00 for 20-49 piece sets. Most of the cheaper sets remained in Salem, the more expensive were re-exported to such places as Philadelphia, Alexandria, Wilmington, and Madeira. This proved in the long run a major headache for Derby as Philadelphia merchants complained of breakages and shoddy merchandise. It took years to settle these accounts and Derby never speculated in export porcelain again.

As this first voyage is legendary we want to associate objects with this historic venture. Fortunately, the sets ordered for Derby—a 101 piece tea set and a 171 piece dinner set bear his cypher. There are other pieces with other cyphers—"JD" for John Derby, a brother(?), but their connection to that first trip is tenuous at best. The only other piece that can be reasonably associated with the Grand Turk's cargo is a large punch bowl with a ship's portrait—for years assumed to be the Grand Turk herself, but it is, in fact, an image copied from the frontispiece of a 1770s manual on seamanship.

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## Upcoming Ceramics Events

### CSC Meetings (All events at The College Club)

**9/23:** Gauvin Alexander Bailey on *The phoenix and the hummingbird: Asia in the arts of Latin America, 1520-1820*; 1 PM

**10/28:** Anthony Butera on *The Huntington Long Island pottery explored through the eyes of a collector*; 1 PM

**11/16:** Virginia Dossett Dreux on *French and Italian influences on the use of Delftware in the palaces of King William and Queen Mary in the Netherlands and England*; 1 PM

**1/27/05:** Robert Mowry on *Song-Dynasty (960-1279) ceramics and the problem of Jun ware*; 1 PM

**2/24:** *Bits and pieces*; 1 PM

**3/24:** Louise Richardson on *17th century ceramics in Newfoundland historic sites*; 1 PM

**4/28, The Vivian Hawes Memorial Lecture:** Tracey Albainy on *A decade of ceramics acquisitions at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1996-2005*; 11 AM

**5/26:** Annual meeting and tea, plus Amanda Lange on *The Canton connection: Chinese porcelain at Historic Deerfield*; 1 PM.

### Auctions:

#### **British and/or continental:**

9/16, Christie's London

10/12, Sotheby's Amsterdam (European, Dutch Delftware, 250 years of Wedgwood)

10/21, Christie's London (British; Staffordshire figures)

10/25, Christie's London (continental)

11/4, Christie's London

11/9, Christie's Amsterdam (European; Dutch Delftware)

11/25, Christie's London

12/3, Christie's Milan (Maiolica and porcelain)

12/6, Christie's London

12/15, Christie's London

12/21, Sotheby's Milan

#### **Asian:**

9/21, Christie's NY (Chinese)

9/22, Christie's NY (Japanese & Korean)

10/31, Sotheby's Hong Kong (Chinese)

11/9, 11/11. Sotheby's London (Japanese & Korean)

11/11, Christie's Hong Kong (Chinese)

11/2, Christie's Amsterdam (Chinese & Japanese)

11/12, Christie's London (Chinese)

11/22, Sotheby's Amsterdam (Chinese & Japanese)

## Jessica Lanier on Elias Hasket Derby

### and the Post-Revolutionary Ceramics Trade in Salem, 1785-1799

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What else was available in the market at that time? Throughout the 18th century domestically produced lead-glazed redwares were the cheapest and most widely used ceramics. There was a redware pottery in Danvers, MA, using Essex County clay. Stonewares had to be imported from Boston and beyond. There was a Boston stoneware pottery, but the clay had to be imported from New Jersey. These local wares met with a declining local market and were actually used as export wares to places such as the Cape of Good Hope and the Caribbean ports for use on slave plantations. Archaeological evidence shows declining amounts of redware and increasing amounts of English wares after the Revolution as the English wares came to dominate dining and serving functions. Derby, like the rest of the known world, turned to England to fill his ceramic needs. Creamware

and pearlware came in the same forms and sets and often had similar decoration to the Chinese export wares, but were cheaper. Derby continued to speculate in English wares until his death in 1799, buying cream and pearlware through his agent and son-in-law in Boston and re-exporting it to the Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius and Calcutta, along the East Indian trade routes.

Ceramics are especially good indicators of social and economic variation, cultural and ideological change, and Salem's ceramic trade reflects this unique period in the city's history. But the War of 1812 marked a turning point in Salem's fortunes and the city was no longer at the forefront of international commerce. After the war, ordinary seamen saw the virtual elimination of the private venture privileges and this helped signal the end of social mobility for the mariners.

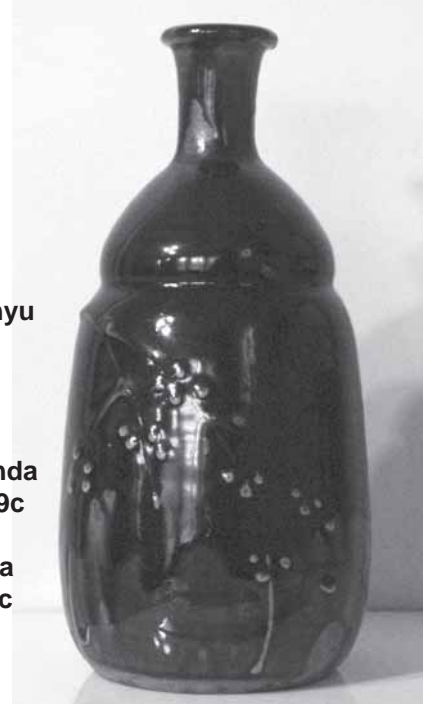


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**Left: Tea bowl, Ryonyu style, Raku ware, glazed earthenware, 19c**



**Right: Sake flask, Onda ware, stoneware, 19c**



**Changing of the guard: incoming and outgoing presidents Carolyn Parsons Roy and Jim Kaufman**

