

Chapter 2. Overview of the Site

Section 1. Location of the Site

Longvek was the royal capital of the post-Angkor period. It is located in a region approximately 35km north of the present capital of Phnom Penh along National Road No. 5, in the Kompong Tralach district of Kompong Chhnang province in eastern Cambodia. Roughly 7km to the south of Longvek is Oudong, which later became the royal capital from the 17th to 19th centuries, and the lofty sacred peak of Phnom Preah Reach Troap.

Longvek is situated on a slight elevation on the west bank of the Tonle Sap River, which flows from Lake Tonle Sap and converges with the Mekong River. It is surrounded by triple earthen walls and moats extending approximately 2km east to west and 2.5km north to south. It has no walls on the east side, however, and displays a structure that is open toward the flood plain of the Tonle Sap River. It can be said that the location provides the convenience of both river and land routes.

Section 2. Historical Background of Longvek

A detailed prior study based on documentary materials such as the Cambodian Royal Chronicles, which is virtually the only documentary material in Cambodia with reference to the post-Angkor period, has been made by Takako Kitagawa (Kitagawa 1998). According to Kitagawa, when the Angkor Empire was invaded by neighboring Ayutthaya, King Ponhea Yat abandoned Angkor and moved the capital to Bassan in Srei Santhor in 1431. In Chinese annals called Da Ming Shi Lu, there is a record of a visit made by “King Bassan” of Chenla to China in 1372 and 1373, so it is believed that some sort of power had originally existed in Bassan around the end of the Angkor period. Thereafter, King Ponhea Yat moved the capital to Phnom Penh. Around this time, the war between the Bassan forces and the forces of the legitimate king intensified. In the fight between Sdech Kon of Bassan and Chan Reachea, the younger brother of the legitimate king, Chan Reachea defeated Sdech Kon in 1525, assumed the throne, and built his capital in Longvek in 1529. However, it is said that Longvek fell to Ayutthaya in 1594. The royal capital was then moved to Srei Santhor for a while, but King Chey Chetta unified Cambodia in 1620 and moved the capital to Oudong. Oudong continued to be the royal capital until 1855, when it was moved to Phnom Penh. Although it is said that the capital was moved from Longvek to Oudong in 1594, a Dutchman who visited Cambodia in the 17th century noted the capital of Cambodia as Leweeck or Eavweck, thought to refer to Longvek. This means that either Longvek continued to function as a capital even after the capital was moved to Oudong, or that it continued to be used in some way, since Longvek and Oudong are only 7 km away in direct distance. Thus, studies of Longvek need to be made with consideration also to its vestiges after the 17th century, although literary references in Cambodia define it as the royal capital during the 16th century.

Reference: KITAGAWA Takako, 1998, “Capitals of the Post-Angkor Period Longvek and Oudong”, *Southeast Asia History and Culture* 27

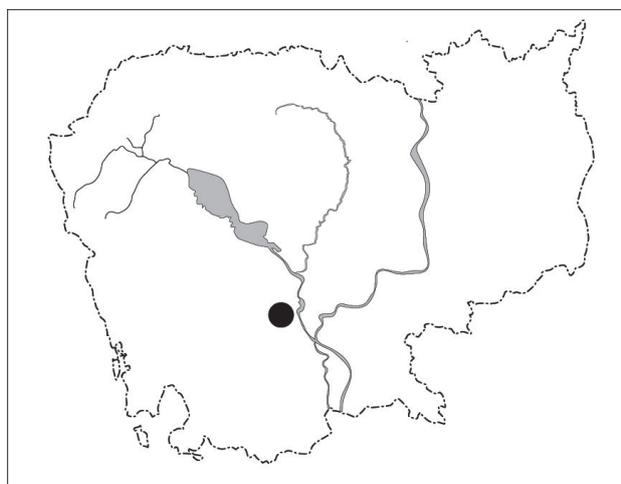


Fig. 52 Location of Longvek

Section 3. Remains

As mentioned earlier, studies based on literary materials are being pursued, but it is also a fact that the Cambodian Royal Chronicles lacks credibility. That is to say, the Chronicles was compiled in the 19th century, and poses an issue of how to assess its historical value. For this reason, it is considered effective to study Longvek by adopting the archaeological method of squarely addressing its actual remains and artifacts. Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties launched an archaeological exploration of Longvek in fiscal 2010 by numbering the spots from where remains or artifacts were found, documenting GPS and artifact information, and creating an inventory. Initial efforts were directed to gaining comprehensive knowledge of Longvek, as even basic information such as of the distribution of remains and artifacts in the site had been lacking.

Remains

The survey revealed that Longvek was a royal city that had a square shape, surrounded by earthen walls and moats on three sides, and diverse remains have been found inside the Longvek, including Buddhist terraces and Theravada Buddhist temples, and mounds. As of the present, 20 temples and Buddhist terrace remains and 9 mounds have been confirmed. In an interview survey, villagers say there are as many as 108 remains in Longvek. The recent survey was unable to explore all of Longvek, and a considerable area remains unexplored, so further surveys need to be made in the future. This section presents an overview of earthen walls, moats and temples that have been found so far.

Earthen walls and moats

Longvek is surrounded on three sides by earthen walls and moats (Fig. 53). At present, part of the earthen walls has been cut open to create a farm road in recent years, and cross sections of the earthen walls are exposed in some places (Fig. 54), but overall, it appears to have remained in good condition. The moats are being used as rice fields. The earthen walls of Longvek seem to have been made within a scope that takes advantage of the natural landform, and the edges of elevations slightly higher than the flood plain were used to create the earthen walls. The north and west sides have three layers of walls, and the south side, one layer. There is no earthen walls on the east side, perhaps because it faces the flood plain of the Tonle Sap River. The earthen walls are made by clay without using bricks or laterite. They are about 4-8m high as a whole, but differ in places. The southwest corner is demarcated by an earthen wall that intricately projects outward in the form of an external corner, and is thought to have served as the entrance to the royal city of Longvek or as a defense facility. From the earthen walls on the south side, three earthen walls spread further southward in the direction of Oudong city, and require further surveys in the future.



Fig.53 South earthen walls and moat (viewed from west)



Fig.54 Cross section of the earthen wall on the west side



Fig.55 West earthen walls (viewed from the south-southwest)



Fig.56 West earthen walls that has been cut open

Temples

Temples in Longvek are all Theravada Buddhist temples. However, it must be said that it is difficult at the present stage to determine the date of construction of the temples seen in Longvek. One of the reasons is because no reliable inscription materials exist. Although the dates of construction cannot be determined, the characteristics of temples in Longvek are presented below.

Types of temples

Theravada Buddhist temples in Longvek can be roughly divided into two types. The first are terrace temples (vihara) built on a mound (Fig. 57), and the second are relatively large Theravada Buddhist temples (pagoda) that stand on flat land (Fig. 59). Terrace temples have a simple structure. In front of a vihara that enconces a Buddha image, spreads a flat rectangular terrace or ritualistic space, and these structures as a whole are bounded by sema stones. This terrace style is frequently seen in the Angkor region as well, as such Buddhist terrace temples were built one after another in Angkor Thom from the end of the Angkor period to the post-Angkor period. However, the terrace temples in Longvek are mostly built on a natural mound. Theravada Buddhist temples, on the other hand, still function as temples today, and have been expanded or otherwise modified in recent years. For this reason, it is not possible at the present stage to restore the temple structures of the Longvek period. Nevertheless, the basic structure comprises a main temple, monastery, hall and pond inside a complex. It seems such temples were built not on a mound, but in flatlands to avoid floods.

Structural modifications

There are a number of temples where precedent structures that belong to the Angkor or post-Angkor period are found within the temple grounds today. For example, at Wat Tralaeng Kaeng (Fig. 60), an Angkor period sandstone structure and mound exist in the center of the temple grounds, and a seated Buddha image is enconced on the mound today. At the terrace temple of Vihear Bakko, the vihara that exists today stands on a brick foundation that is thought to be a precedent structure (Fig. 58). It can thus be said that the position of the precedent structure is respected in continuing the faith today.

Building materials

The foundations of stupas and viharas seen in the temple complex are mostly made of brick. The majority of temples in the Angkor period were made using sandstone and laterite, but at Longvek, using bricks seemed to have been the mainstream. However, the sema stones that border the temple grounds are sandstone. Thus, sandstone was also used, albeit in a limited scope.



Fig.57 Vihear Bakkor on a mound



Fig.58 Former structure beneath the vihara of Vihear Bakkor



Fig.59 Main vihara of Preah An Tep



Fig.60 Angkor period remains at Wat Tralaeng Kaeng

Sema stones

Sema stones (boundary stones) were found in some temples in Longvek. They were originally placed in a total of 8 places—in the four corners of the temple and in the center of each side—to signify the boundaries of the temple grounds. Such stones are characteristic of Theravada Buddhist temples in Cambodia, but in this study, only a few of them were found, namely from Wat Tralaeng Kaeng, Vihear Bakkor and Tuol Bayok. Moreover, most of the stones were regrettably not found in their original locations, and many simply lay abandoned on the ground. The only exception was the sema stone of the main sanctuary of Wat Tralaeng Kaeng, which was reburied in its original location accompanying the renovation of the building.

The sema stones found in Longvek can be roughly divided into two types. One type is shaped like a cannon shell or a spearhead with a constricted lower portion. A vertical line runs down the center of the stone but displays no other decoration—neither on the front nor back, and is with a lotus bud on the top (Fig. 61). The other is also shaped like a cannon shell or a spearhead, but is decorated with an arabesque pattern on the surface (Fig. 62). This type with a decoration has been found only at Wat Tralaeng Kaeng so far.

Buddha images

Most of the Buddha images that are seen in Longvek today are those that have been newly made, but images that appear to date from the Longvek period have been found in a few of the temples. The main sanctuary of Wat Tralaeng Kaeng enshrines a four-direction standing Buddha image. The image today is one that has been made in later years, but the feet part of the original image that is assumed to date from the Longvek period still exists today (Fig. 63). As the feet measure more than 1m, the original four-direction Buddha image is believed to have been considerably tall. Additionally, Vihear Bakkor enshrines a seated Buddha image made of pink sandstone that were diverted from an Angkor-period temple (Fig. 64).



Fig. 61 Sema stone at Tuol Bayok



Fig. 62 Sema stone at Wat Tralaeng Kaeng



Fig. 63 Feet part of the four-directions Buddha image at Wat Tralaeng Kaeng



Fig. 64 Seated Buddha image at Vihear Bakkor

Section 4. Artifacts

In the exploration of Longvek, large numbers of artifacts were collected from the ground surface. They were a wide variety of artifacts, but it is particularly worth noting that more than half were fragments of Chinese blue and white porcelain. They are proof of the lively trading activities that took place during the post-Angkor period. Of the 1,500 surface artifacts that have been collected in all, 60% were Chinese blue and white porcelain, 10% were glazed pottery, another 10% were unglazed stoneware, 11% were earthenware, and the rest included Khmer stoneware, Chinese celadon, white porcelain, and five-color porcelain.

Chinese blue and white porcelain

Bowl: Fig.65-1 is a blue and white bowl. It has a rim diameter of 14.1cm, a height of 6.0cm and a base diameter of 5.6cm. A horse design is drawn below a pattern band around the outer rim. A conch is shown on the inside bottom (Fig.67-1). Fig.65-2, 3 is a blue and white bowl with an incised flower design. It has a rim diameter of 18.1cm, and a base diameter of 6.6cm. The inside bottom shows a landscape design. (Fig.67-2). Fig.65-4 is a fragment of a blue and white bowl. The outside body shows a flower design, and the inside bottom shows a fern design. The characters “永保長壽” are inscribed on the inside of the base(Fig.67-3). Fig.65-5 a fragment of the bottom of a blue and white bowl. A fern design is drawn on the inside bottom, and the characters “大明年造” are inscribed on the inside of the base (Fig.67-4). Fig.65-6 is a fragment of the bottom of a blue and white bowl with a base diameter of 9.2cm. A fern-like design is drawn on the inside bottom (Fig.67-5). Fig.65-7 is a fragment of the bottom of a blue and white bowl. It has a base diameter of 8.0cm, and a rounded inside bottom. A flower design is drawn on the inside bottom, and on the inside of the base are the characters “精製” within a square frame (Fig.68-1). Fig.65-8 is a fragment of the bottom of a blue and white bowl, with a base diameter of 4.6cm. A design of figures is drawn on the inside bottom, and the character “福” is inscribed on the inside of the base (Fig.68-2). Fig.65-9 is a fragment of a blue and white bowl with a design composed of Reishi mushroom, plum, bamboo and crane. (Fig.68-3). Fig.65-10 is a fragment of the bottom of a blue and white bowl. A dragon design is drawn on the inside bottom, and a character is displayed on the inside of the base.

Plates: Fig.65-11 is a fragment of the bottom of a blue and white plate. A portion of a phoenix design can be seen on the inside bottom. Characters that appear to be “萬福做同” remain on the inside of the base. Fig.65-12 is a fragment of the rim of a blue and white plate, so-called Kraak porcelain. It has a brimmed rim with the edges forming a petal design (Fig.68-4).

Jar: Fig.66-1 is a fragment of a blue and white lid for a jar with a diameter of 4.0cm. The outside is decorated with an arabesque pattern, while the inside has no design (Fig.68-5).

Covered box: Fig.66-2 is a fragment of a lid of a flat covered box with 6.4cm in diameter. A flower design is drawn on the outside (Fig.68-6). Fig.66-3 is a body of covered box. It has a rim diameter of 1.8cm, a height of 2.1cm, and a base diameter of 1.2cm. A Floral motif is painted on the outside of the body (Fig.68-7).

Unknown artifacts: Fig.66-4 is the foot part of a small blue and white footed bowl or other small item. It is shaped in the form of animal legs. There are patterns on the outside of the foot, but none on the inside (Fig.69-1).

Porcelain with underglaze blue and overglaze green enamels: Fig.66-5 is a fragment of the rim of porcelain with underglaze blue and overglaze green enamels bowl with a rim diameter of 8.2cm. The outside is entirely glazed with green glaze, and the inside displays a blue and white cross-bracing in four directions (Fig.69-2 center).

Porcelain with underglaze blue and overglaze yellow enamels: Fig.66-6 is a fragment of the bottom of a small blue and white bowl with yellow glaze with a base diameter of 3.6cm. Yellow glaze is applied to the outside. The inside of the base and inside of the vessel are decorated with blue and white, and a flower design is drawn on the inside bottom (Fig.69-2 left).

Porcelain with underglaze blue and overglaze enamels: Fig.66-7 is a body of a porcelain with underglaze blue and overglaze enamels bowl. Green and red glaze remain on the outside, and the inside body has a blue and white design (Fig.69-2 right).

Thai celadon and ceramic with underglaze iron painting: Fig.66-8 is a fragment of the bottom of a Thai celadon bowl. The base diameter is 6.8cm. The glaze is a greenish-gray color. The inside of the base shows traces of a cylindrical support (Fig.69-3). Fig.66-9 is a part of a Thai underglaze iron painting item, but the shape is unknown. It is made as though to enwrap the clay in the form of a knob. The outside body displays an iron design that gives off black color, and the inside is unglazed(Fig.69-4).

Khmer brown-glazed stoneware: Fig.66-10 is a fragment of the rim of a Khmer brown glazed stoneware jar. The rim diameter is 14.4cm. Both the inside and outside are coated with blackish brown glaze (Fig.69-5).

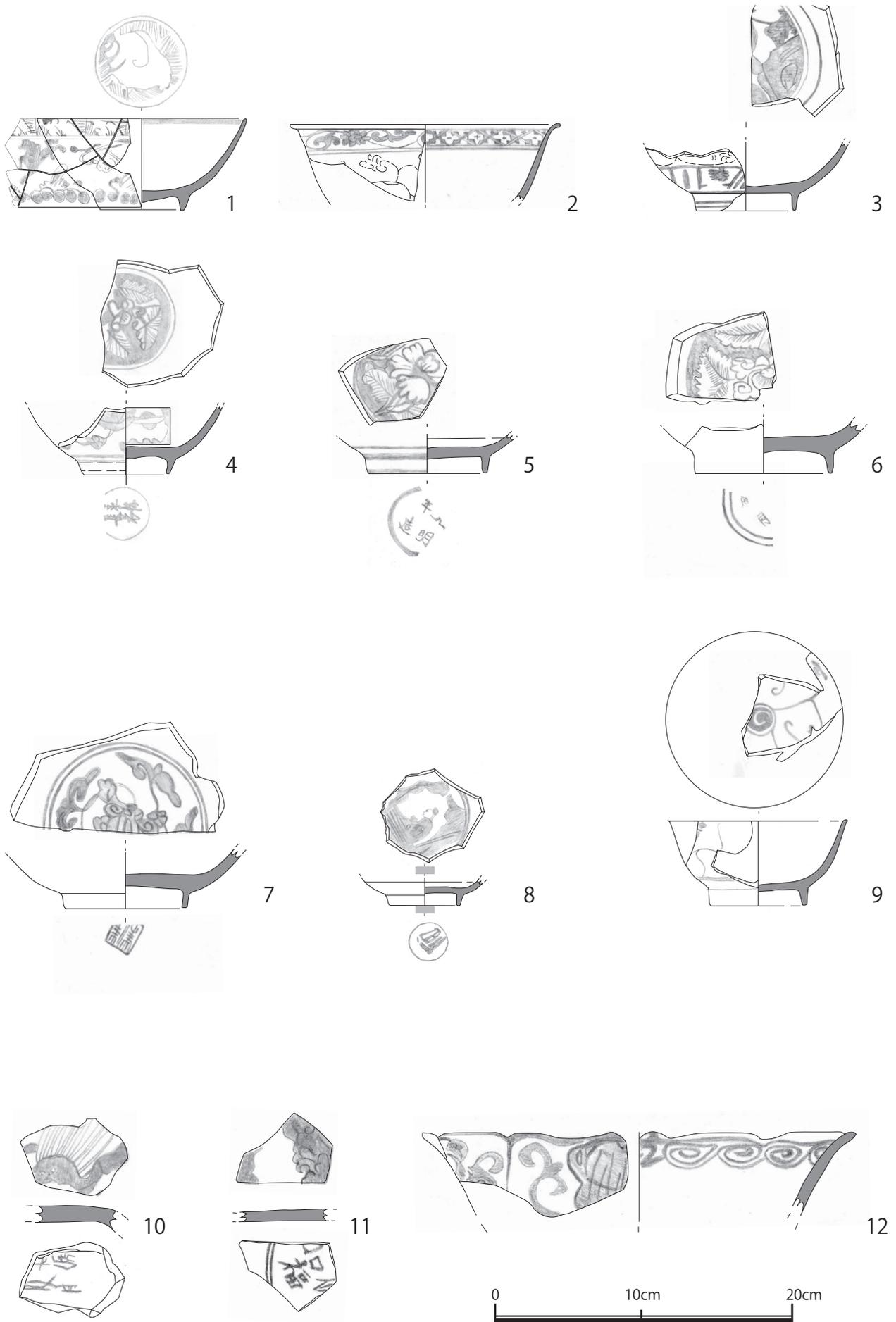


Fig.65 Drawings of Unearthened ceramics 1

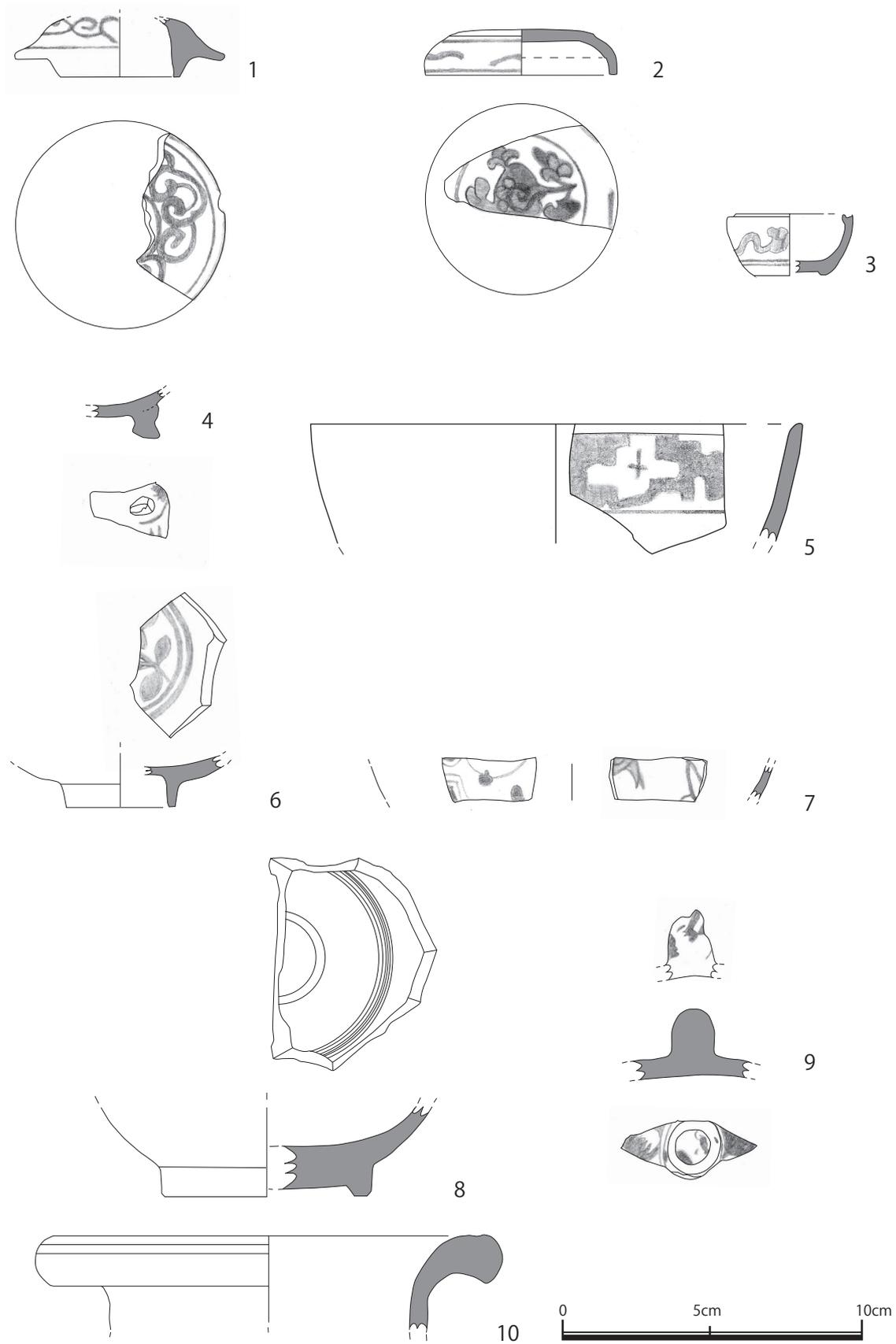
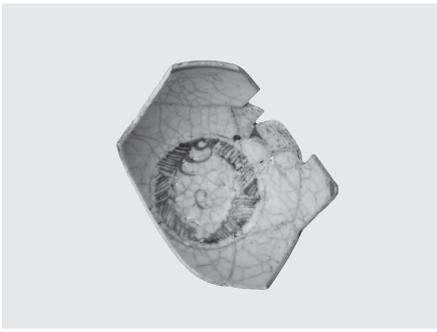
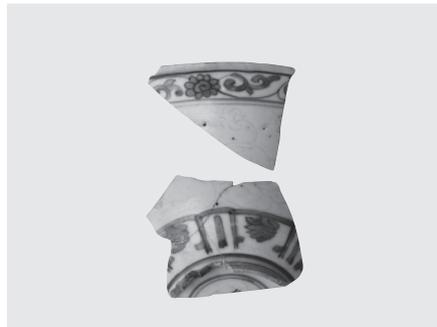


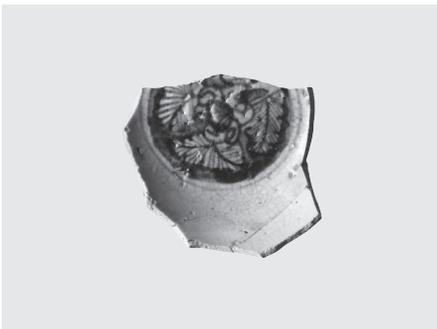
Fig.66 Drawings of Unearthed ceramics 2



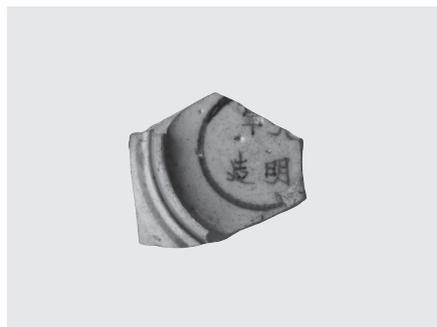
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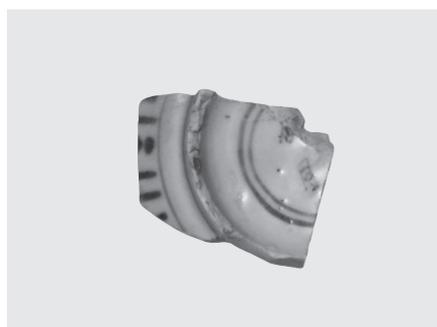
2.Blue and white bowl 2



3.Blue and white bowl 3



4.Blue and white bowl 4

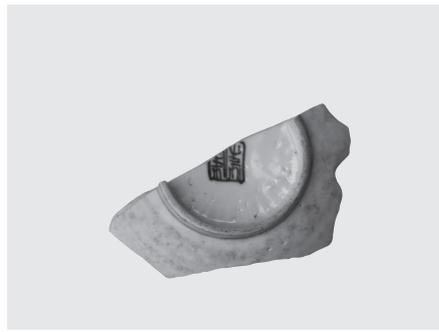


5.Blue and white bowl 5

Fig.67 Photo of Unearthed ceramics 1



1.Blue and white bowl 6



2.Blue and white bowl 7



3.Blue and white bowl 8



4.Blue and white plate



5.Lid of blue and white jar



6.Lid of blue and white covered box

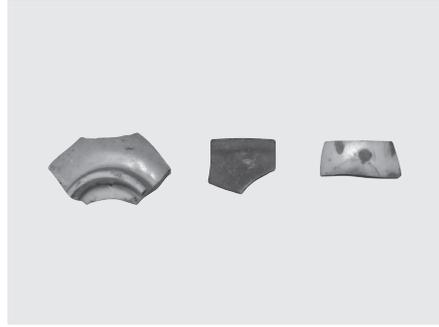
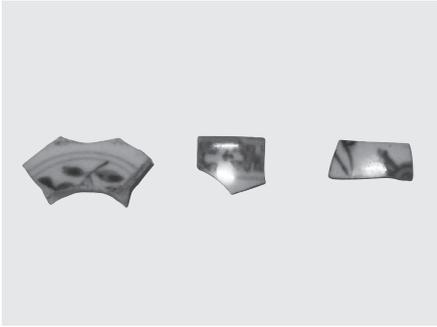


7.Body of blue and white covered box

Fig.68 Photo of Unearthed ceramics 2



1. Animal shaped leg of blue and white container



2. Underglaze blue and overglaze yellow enamels (left), green enamels (center), five colored enamels (right)



3. Thai celadon bowl



4. Thai underglazed iron paintings



5. Khmer brown glazed stoneware jar

Fig.69 Photo of Unearthed ceramics 3