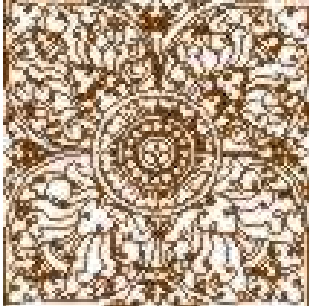




# NATIONAL CENTER FOR KHMER CERAMICS REVIVAL NEWSLETTER

Number 4

September 2007



## NCKCR Newsletters.

We are glad to present you our September newsletter. September has seen the small NCKCR team very hard at work and fully committed to preparing for the rapidly approaching IKCF 07. This has included fund raising efforts by us and other supporters.

The work and research of the NCKCR is proving of considerable interest internationally to scholars, researchers and potters alike. Unfortunately, such work costs money, and raising the funds for our essential and ongoing work is a constant concern to us all. Worthy and noble as our work may be, it is not possible without the financial support of so many of our supporters and others. In fact, financial sustainability is our greatest challenge.

News letters are available in either French or English language versions.

Please subscribe by email to [info@khmerceraics.com](mailto:info@khmerceraics.com) for either or both of these newsletters according to your interests.

## *Enjoy...*

### The Along Thom kiln recreation:

The recreation of an ancient Khmer kiln has only been possible through the close cooperation of many highly skilled and knowledgeable people from around the world, all freely sharing their knowledge across many disciplines, but all sharing a common interest in Khmer ceramics and kilns. The first few/many firings of this reconstruction of an ancient Khmer kiln are going to be very much a case of learning through trial and error! Even with highly trained and experienced kiln builders and firers, it would be miraculous if we got it right first time after about 950 years since this type of kiln was last thought to have been fired in the Khmer era.



The first firing in December of the recreated Anlong Thom kiln will be a unique experience for all concerned, as we all try to note, document and video record the workings of the kiln for the first time. Only by skilled scientific observation, measurement and recording of data from these early firings will we slowly be able to define the working parameters and mode/s of operation of this type of kiln for future generations of Khmer ceramic artists and potters alike. Hopefully, we will learn sufficiently of the knowledge and skills required to ensure successful demonstration firings at IKCF 08. The IKCF 07 firings will give us experience and guidance in what we may need to do to refine the design and procedures for:

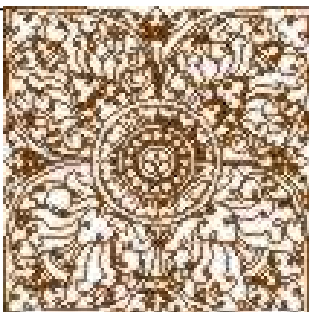
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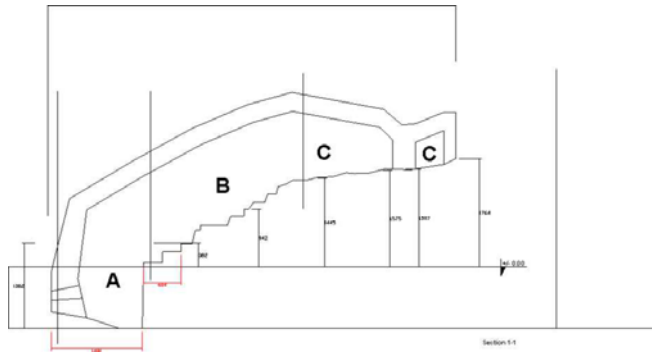
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A: The firebox.

B: The steps for loading the kiln; loading seems to begin near the firebox and to stop at the upper steps.

C: The horizontal chimney; this system is correct for the kiln era and works very well.

Archaeological research clearly indicates the use of a horizontal chimney and, to date, no evidence has been uncovered indicating the use of a vertical chimney for this type of kiln.

Due to the quantity and placement of pillars within the kiln, it is difficult to assume that the kiln was completely loaded from the firebox. We think it was partially loaded from the side and/or through the horizontal chimney. The wall of the kiln is constructed in two layers; a first and inner layer of stoneware clay; covered by a second layer of clay mixed with rice husk as an insulating layer.

The estimated time to reach stoneware temperature is 8 to 10 days; using 40 to 60 cubic meters of wood. It will be very useful to fire the kiln with at least 6 pyrometers; unfortunately, the NCKCR has only 2 pyrometers and they will be employed for other firings during the Festival. Accordingly, we would greatly appreciate the loan of any pyrometers that may be available, from whatever sources, and will gratefully acknowledge the generosity of those who may lend them to us for the trial firing/s.

The NCKCR is definitely thriving well, due to our work; but this works come mainly from your help on the sidelines and in the shadows. NCKCR now sends its newsletters to more than 500 supporters around the world - Scholars, Academics, Potters, Humanists, Collectors, Tours Developers, Leaders and Operators... Many of them are very helpful, assisting us with translations, corrections, communication, bibliography, advice, important contacts with others and in so many other areas. Please feel free to contact us at any time...as your views, thoughts, knowledge and advice are always welcome. A special "Thank you" to all of our supporters and helpers, where ever you are, from all of the NCKCR team here in Siem Reap.

### **Starting the Ancient Khmer Kiln Construction:**

Finally, after eight months of studies and building four different models, the construction of a working replica of an ancient Khmer kiln has begun at NCKCR. Originally, these Along Thom type kilns were built in to a hillock. The NCKCR site is flat and without a hillock so we have to create our own hillock! To simplify and reduce our intensive labours somewhat, the firebox is being build 1.4 meters below ground level. An estimated 12 cubic meters of clay is required to build the kiln; the work involved is enormous relative to our very small workforce and limited means! Our energy will come from our enthusiasm and determination to recreate and fire this ancient Khmer kiln. We drained the land to avoid the last rains of the monsoon season and we have protected the building site with a cover - we can't afford a corrugated iron roof – but we hope to install a more permanent roof before the onset of the 2008 wet season in May, to avoid the destruction of the kiln, our real research and didactic tool. The ground level plan is completed but the upper area of the kiln remains under discussion. Once finalized, the complete plans will be posted to our website.





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We have started digging the firebox and stoking areas. We have made the mound for kiln's chamber. Work is temporarily stopped because of the last rains of the wet season but should start again in a few days time as the wet season comes to an end. We actively encourage constructive criticism and advice from our followers, supporters and critics alike. After all, we are striving for an as authentic reconstruction of an ancient Khmer era kiln as possible.

**Self-sustainability**

The NCKCR needs to be fully self-sustainable if it is to be a viable operation supporting the vocational training of young Khmer potters and ceramic workers and the related research activities. As such, a lot of our time and energy is devoted to finding new and potential customers for our actual and proposed products.

We are currently developing a range of products such as tableware, tiles, spar and sauna products, construction of pizza ovens, the refurbishing of an industrial incinerator, to name but a few of our current activities.

We expect to shortly post a catalogue of our products on our website.



**Clay mixer**

Until very recently, all clay used in the NCKCR was wedged by hand because we could not afford a clay mixer. This month we made a clay mixer by ourselves and it works very well. Plasticity and homogeneity of the clay is largely improved. Our home-built clay mixer now lets our trainees spend more time in studies and working than wedging. All clay that we use is dug and prepared by ourselves. The clay mixer will also help us to prepare clay for the construction of the ancient kiln. No mean assistance given that around 8 cubic meters of clay are necessary!



**Japanese translation**



Mr Chris White gives us a helping hand to translating NCKCR presentation text in to Japanese. This text will help to raise the awareness of Japanese tourists about the lost skills that we are reviving and enable communication with them about the illegality of the exportation of ancient Khmer artefacts; as well as helping to explain about the need for the sustainability of the centre through donations and souvenir and other sales. The staff at the NCKCR wish to acknowledge and sincerely thank the many voluntary supporters and helpers making this project become a reality.

### IKCF marketing budget

The NCKCR needs to undertake a promotion and marketing campaign in Siem Reap about the IKCF but to do this we need, as usual, funds we do not yet have. It is not a large budget that is required but it will be most helpful in raising the awareness of tourists, hotels, guesthouses and the tour operators and *motodops* etc about the International Khmer Ceramics Festival 07. This budget funding is required for the printing of 5000 folders, 10000 flyers, 300 posters A3 and 10 advertising panel (~2sq.meters each). The IKCF 07 is already foreseeing some coverage of our activities in numerous national, international magazines and newspapers.



### Latest news of the International Khmer Ceramics Festival

We confirm that the internationally renowned potters Janet Mansfield, Louis Katz, Suwanee Natewong, Alan Lacovetsky, and Canadian potters, will attend the IKCF 07. The reconstruction of the ancient Khmer kiln is well advanced as covered elsewhere in this news update.

We are delighted to announce that the IKCF 07 has already received publicity in the following journals: [Canadian Craft Federation](#); [Fah Thai magazine](#) (Bangkok Airways), Touch Stone Magazine, [Siem Reap Angkor Visitors guide](#), [Stay Another Day](#) website, [Heritage Watch](#) website, [studiopottery website](#), Center for Khmer Studies website, [Siem Reap Eating & Drinking](#) guide, and more may yet follow. The NCKCR extends its sincere thanks and deep appreciation to all of these publications for their generous support.

### Conferences program during IKCF

#### **Ancient Khmer Ceramics: New Archaeological Findings, Production and the Revival of Techniques**

#### **Organized in collaboration with Center for Khmer Studies and Heritage Watch**

This conference aims to bring together Cambodian and international scholars specialized in ancient Khmer ceramics, with contemporary potters and craftsmen working in the revival of ancient production techniques. The objective is to raise awareness of the archaeological importance of ancient Cambodian ceramics and the new opportunities for sustainable economic development in the region through ceramic technology. Scholars based in Southeast Asia are especially encouraged to participate.



Please submit titles and short abstracts (300 words maximum) and contact details to [info@khmerceraamics.com](mailto:info@khmerceraamics.com) by October 15, 2007.

#### **Conference Advisory Committee:**

Dr. Dougald O'Reilly, Chair

Prof. John Miksic, Mr. Chhay Rachna, Dr. Philippe Peycam, Mr. Serge Rega

#### **Conference Ancient Khmer Ceramics: New Archaeological Findings, Production and the Revival of Techniques.**

#### **Wat Damnak, Siem Reap - Cambodia**

Thursday December 13 (afternoon) Friday, December 14 and Saturday December 15 (morning), 2007

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### **Main Themes**

Economics of ceramics in Ancient Cambodia.

Craft and production in ancient Cambodia.

Appraising and typology of ancient Khmer ceramics.

Chronology of Khmer ceramics.

Revitalization of ceramic production in Cambodia.

Contemporary ceramic production and slowing the illicit trade of antiquities.

### **Agenda**

**Thursday, December 13, 2007**

**13:30 Optional visit to two ancient Khmer sites**

**19:00-20:30 Cocktail**

**Friday, December 14, 2007**

**8:30 Opening of the Conferences**

Philippe Peycam, CKS Director, & Mr. Serge Rega, NCKCR

**8:40 Panel 1** Economics of ceramics in Ancient Cambodia.

**9:30 Panel 2** Craft and production in ancient Cambodia.

**10:30 Panel 3** Appraising and typology of ancient Khmer ceramics.

**11:30 Discussion**

**12:00 Lunch**

**14:00 Panel 4** Chronology of Khmer ceramics.

**15:00 Panel 5** Revitalization of ceramic production in Cambodia.

**16:00 Panel 6** Contemporary ceramic production and slowing the illicit trade of antiquities.

16:50 –17:00 Closing by Dr. Philippe Peycam, CKS

**Saturday, December 15, 2007**

8:30 – 10:30 Visit to the workshop in the National Center for Khmer Ceramics Revival.

### Reviving Lost Skills – Khmer Ceramics.

The **National Centre for Khmer Ceramic Revival – NCKCR**,

cordially invites you to visit, free of charge, our ceramic revival training centre, workshops and kilns, as we assist present and future generations of young Cambodians to revive the rich ceramic heritage of the Khmer Empire – 802 to 1432. The Khmer ceramic heritage is unique and very different from the ceramic traditions of China, Vietnam, Champa and later Siam. You will be fascinated by the many activities taking place, and we encourage you to try your hand at the potter’s wheel! The NCKCR and its young Khmer students are passionate about bringing about a full revival of the ancient skills and recreating traditional, high quality, Khmer ceramics for the benefit of future generations. We wish to share this passion with you – its infectious!

Our trainees will give you a fully guided tour with explanations and demonstrations of all stages and processes involved in turning raw clay in to a full finished, fired and glazed Khmer ceramic of beauty and utility. After which we invite you to browse in our show room and relax in the beautiful tropical garden setting. Our several kilns are all faithful reconstructions of ancient traditional Khmer Kiln types based on proven archaeological discoveries, and are of great interest and fascination to most people; especially so if your visit coincides with the regular firing of one of the kilns. These kilns operate at very high temperatures, between 1,000 °C to 1,400 °C (1,800 F to 2,550 F). Please join in and help us “fire” a kiln – an impressive and awe inspiring activity and highly photogenic! Visiting the NCKCR is a “must” whilst in the Angkor region as it brings you closer to the true Khmer spirit and gives you a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Khmer ceramic arts and heritage, so sadly lost, but now making a slow renaissance through our work and research.

Opening hours are: 8 am to 6 pm daily.

