

2022 Anthropology Summer Internship Report

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Institution: Antiquities and Monuments Office

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Cannot believe that my little internship journey has come to an end. I am honoured to have this precious opportunity to work in the Antiquities and Monuments Office as a summer intern for a month during August. I was assigned to work in the Archaeology Sub-unit at Hong Kong Archaeological Archives in Kwun Chung. I have learnt more about handling artifacts, practical artifacts documentation and some administration work during this period. This fresh experience has definitely brought me new insights and knowledge about archaeological works in Hong Kong.

Among different duties, the first and one of the most major works for me is artifact accessioning. Accessioning is the process of documentation that gives an official and organized record of artifacts. Since different archaeological excavation would have their own ways to note down their finds, the original record of the artifacts from one site might be the same from another site, when piles of artifacts are handed over to the AMO from the excavation sites, accession work would give an accession number to every finds according to the site, excavation date and numbers of finds. This formal documentation is generally divided into three parts, firstly by labelling the artifact with the accession number; followed by basic measurements such as height, width, length, weight, etc.; and photo records from the front, back and side views. The accessioning process is like giving an official identification to every find, aspiring to make future studies, exhibitions, or public education more convenient through a more complete database of artifacts.

To be honest, accessioning work is quite robotic; however, it is a fascinating work which

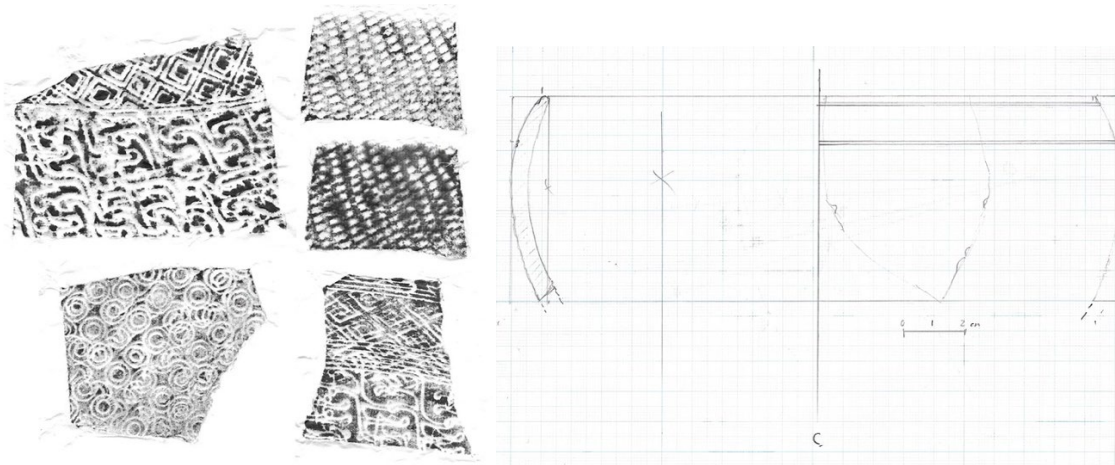
allows me to handle artifacts most directly. During accessioning, when the artifacts are measured and photographed, I could experience how the actual artifacts are distinct from what I usually expect or saw on reports. The experience of actually holding the artifacts is very precious for me, it is a perfect opportunity that allows me to apply what I've learnt in class to distinguish differences between materials and tools through practice, at the same time, educated me about the variations between books and realities. I found the divergence between course materials and reality interesting; it reminded me of the diversity of human activities in the past which made me treasure the time working on the documentation work.

After the accessioning work, information of artifacts is identified and entered into the database system, waiting for double checking, and further detailed photographing before publishing to the public. Through identifying types of artifacts and translating their names between Chinese and English, the database entry is also remarkable for applying and acquiring knowledge. Notably, the database is not just for record, the Hong Kong Archaeological Archive System is one of the work results of the data work which enables the public to acquaint with finds of Hong Kong excavation.

Aside from accession work, I could visit different collection centres of AMO. There are a total of six storerooms including the Hong Kong Archaeological Archives that I work in, different collection centre have different location and condition to store different finds; for instance, the outdoor storeroom in Pok Fu Lam could store soil sample which is less perishable, air-conditioned storeroom in Kwun Chung could store fragile items such as metal coins. Visiting storerooms is not just seeing different piles of artifacts but also checking on the maintenance and administration part of AMO work, for example, pest-controlling and cleaning are included in the regular maintenance work, and reports are drafted afterwards for record. Besides, other workplaces such as Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre were

visited for regular checking and renewal of loaned artifacts since AMO has been lending artifacts for organizations to exhibit or for educational use, the visit is for ensuring the condition of the artifacts. The visits enable me to understand more about the role and structure of AMO.

Last but not the least, thanks to my colleagues, I have learnt a lot in addition to my planned duties. During the last two weeks of my internship, I was assigned to wash artifacts which were excavated freshly from the site, with mud and soil wrapping around them. The cleaning process is the fundamental step to identifying the finds for report writing and accessioning. Moreover, my colleague taught me practical archaeological techniques such as rubbing(拓印), archaeological drawing and artifacts conservation as an extra sharing apart from my work. Learning these techniques is a valuable experience for me; photos of rubbing and artifact drawings always appear in the archaeological reports that I read but I had no idea about how these pictures are made, I realize these kinds of archaeological records are also forms of art that require practice and profession. For instance, rubbing has to be evenly inked, and the time management of the process depends on the artists' experience; a precise artifact drawing can reproduce the complete appearance of the tool only with a fragment on hand. The detail of rubbing and archaeological drawing reminds me of why cleaning the artifacts is important to present their features. As for the artifacts conservation, it is a very entry-level experience, I tried to stick back artifacts with a specialized glue which causes no harm to the artifact and is removable with acetone; reproducing the rim of a vessel with plaster and mould made of toughened wax.



On the whole, I've learnt a lot during this little one-month internship. It is a remarkable experience for me to learn from actual practices and specialists. Because of my friendly colleagues and supervisors who generously shared their experiences and advice with me, I've learnt far more than just archaeological knowledge and AMO but also about their experience in the cultural industry. Besides, despite some of my colleagues did not hold a degree in archaeology or related discipline, I've learnt a lot from them, their working experiences make them professional with all practical skills that I did not know. Thank you for their patience and generosity in giving me this unforgettable experience. At the same time, I realized that resources put in Hong Kong's archaeology are very scarce. Piles of backlog finds and projects are still waiting to be handled by a small team of staff; however, it is appreciative to see AMO is still striving for a better result, my supervisor had once asked me about the defects of the Hong Kong Archaeological Archive System, they are trying hard to improve the archaeological work in Hong Kong. The AMO internship is definitely a meaningful experience.