

## 2016 Anthropology Summer Internship Programme

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Institute: Hong Kong Maritime Museum

Period: July and August 2016

During the summer, I had the privilege to be one of the interns working in the Hong Kong Maritime Museum which locates at Pier 8 in Central. It was an overwhelming experience, with the support of the Anthropology department and all the staff at the Museum.

I have chosen the 6-week internship, instead of the one of 4 weeks, and these 6 weeks has proven that it is worth staying at such energetic museum for a longer time. Every intern stays in a team and swaps to another after 2 weeks. The Education team was very helpful to arrange such rotation among their team, the Curatorial Team, the Events Team and the Marketing Team. I would like to thank everyone in the Museum, including all the guards, receptionists and staff of other teams, for teaching all of us lessons and giving us a brand new idea of how a non-governmental museum operates.

For my own perspective, I enjoyed the weeks in the Curatorial Team the most. By coincidence, we were lucky enough to help recording the new collection of old charts and prints collection about Hong Kong of 18<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> century. We needed to take photos, measure the dimension and record the title, origin and condition of these historical documents. I had a lot of fun as there were always surprises. Some documents were in German, Japanese and even Russian while some documents were suspected of being overrated in the price, especially for some prints and book pages. On one hand, the collection is considered one of the most important collection of the same kind in Hong Kong, while the original owner seemed not to be showing care for his pieces. The charts and prints are not clearly numbered or carefully stored. Identical pieces were found while book pages were torn without indicating the origin, such as the title and author of the book. On the other hand, some prints and torn book pages came with their invoice from antique shops and a single print could be sold as expensive as nearly a hundred US dollars. Yet, the authenticity of some pieces were questioned and some did not seem to be worth so much.

Even though we were only interns, the staff of the Museum were also too helpful to be always there to assign new tasks and make sure we enjoyed our time at their workplace. At first, I was not used to how they called us “children who are visiting the museum”. Yet, as time passed, I could feel their sincerity and kindness to guide and teach us different perspectives of the operation of a museum. It is grateful that they did not treat us as cheap labours and assign the easiest jobs to us, but always there thinking how we could participate in the real world regardless of our ignorance to the industry. Willy, the officer for security and human resource, had called a few lunch meet-ups for interns to share his experience in workplaces while Abbie, the officer for fund-raising, organized a fund-raising introductory lecture for us to take a glimpse of how to impress potential donors and how to propose, plan and carry out a fund-raising project with limited resources.

Apart from the regular operation of the Museum, we were fortunate to have been able to participate in some special events.

During the summer, Sørlandet, a Norwegian ship which is one of the world’s oldest full-rigged tall ships still in operation visited the Museum. We were invited to go on-board with

the volunteers who were going to lead tours on the ship on selected Saturdays to familiarize the basic facts about Sørlandet. The tour was led by the captain and his crews around the ship. Before serving in the Marketing Team, the ship was no more than an ordinary ship which sails on the sea for me. After working out the media press and other materials about Sørlandet, I soon realized it is sea school which sails around the world with high-school students from different countries and Hong Kong is the end port of the first school year and the start of the second school year. Other than the tour, we also went to the pier to farewell the ship as it set off for its ongoing journey in mid-August.



Fig 1.1 Looking back at the museum from Sørlandet

Additional to this foreign visitor, the Museum was opening its new exhibition, *In the Midst of the Storm: Hong Kong's Early Typhoons*. Although we did not have a chance to help preparing for the exhibition, we had the opportunity to join the opening ceremony and experience how a cultural organization held a launch event. Back to the office, the Curatorial Team was still busy amending any faults and accidents of the exhibits of this special exhibition.

Not only did we had the chance to handle old maps and charts, we also helped to turn special fragments of pots and plates into archaeological drawings. A short time before our internship began, the Museum, with local divers and some archaeologists, discovered a cannon from the Qing dynasty, together with other fragments of clay pots and artefacts. More diagnostic parts, such as the rims and handles of pots and plates with special patterns, were specially selected for further recording. By invitation from Bill, the research associate and the leader of the Hong Kong Underwater Heritage Group, interns attended a mini workshop on how to record these unique pieces in the style of archaeology. By coincidence, Mick, one of our adjunct assistant professor, was also involved in this project and, together with Bill, we learnt the technique and stories about the excavation and their archaeological findings in other field sites. It had been a fruitful time and equipped us with more archaeological skills and insight

as it was the first time I had ever been so close with archaeology other than attending field trips to the actual site, like many anthropology courses from our department.

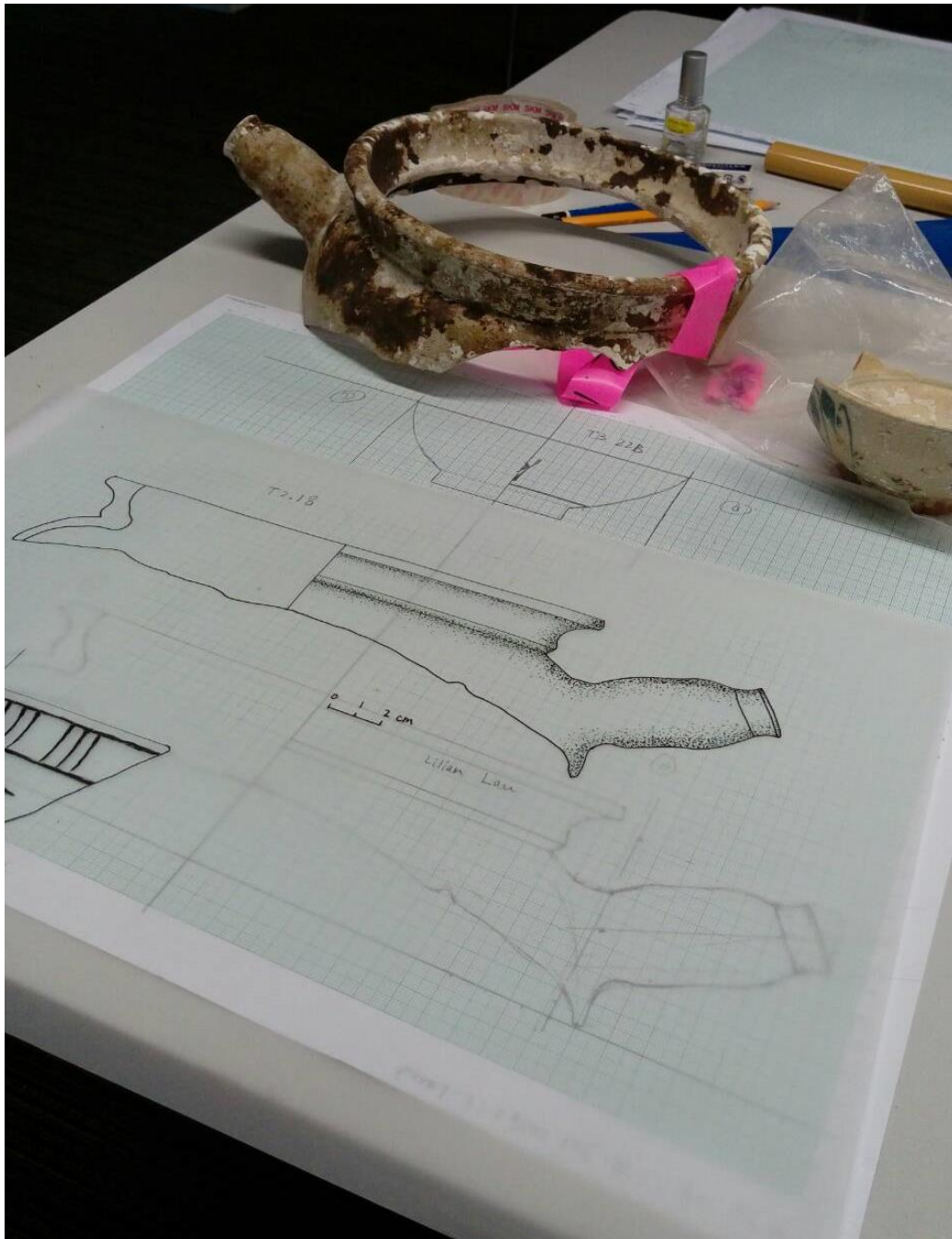


Fig 1.2 A more diagnostic feature of the top part of an artefact with its rim and handle, and an archaeological drawing interpreting the size, shape and thickness of the piece (drawn by me, under supervision of Bill and Mick)

Having spending almost 2 months in the Hong Kong Maritime Museum, I have learnt how a museum operates and how different teams corporate with each other. The arrangement of our department and all the staff at the Museum have made this intership programme successful and smooth. I need to express my gratitude to all the staff for sharing their knowledge and experience with us and taking care of us even they were busy with their work.