From Books Received on Maine Antiques Digest

Review of Shirley M. Mueller's article by Maine Antiques Digest Staff:

"Revelations of the Ca Mau Shipwreck: Chinese Export Porcelain Teapots on the Cusp."

American Ceramic Circle Journal: Volume XV (American Ceramic Circle, 2009, 188 pp., softbound, $30 plus S/H from American Ceramic Circle, PO Box 224, Williamsburg, VA 23187-0224; [www.amercercir.org]).

Shirley Maloney Mueller explains that the teapots found in the Ca Mau shipwreck off the coast of Vietnam, discovered by Vietnamese fishermen in 1998, show that two types of teapots were made simultaneously. The findings clearly demonstrate for the first time that teapots with a single opening on the interior where the spout joins the body and with no perforation in the cover to allow for the intake of air to facilitate pouring continued to be made after teapots were made with the improvement of three small perforations, or strainer holes, in the interior body at the base of the spout to prevent the tea leaves from clogging the spout and after the cover perforation was uniformly present.

The ship that was wrecked, a Chinese junk fully laden with cargo en route to Jakarta from Canton, met a dramatic end sometime between 1723 and 1735. The recovered cargo tells the story of Chinese export porcelain teapots during the first decades of the 18th century, the golden age of the China trade. By 1735, the newly improved model with the perforated spout base and vented cover had become the standard model for all shapes of Chinese porcelain teapots. The shipwreck contained teapots that show the different stages of the innovation, demonstrating that neither Chinese producers nor Asian and European consumers made a sudden break with tradition. Both types of teapots continued to be made and exported to Asia and Europe in the first third of the 18th century.