

Maritime Archaeology in the Classroom

Resources on the Online Museum of Underwater Archaeology

By Michelle Damian

The online *Museum of Underwater Archaeology* (MUA, <http://www.themua.org>) hosts a number of resources to introduce maritime archaeology and the history of Asia to a classroom audience. The projects highlighted in the museum contain information that is of interest not just to history or archaeology teachers, but also has applications in classroom discussions on art, geography, science, cultural studies, political science, and even international law. The MUA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and its mission is “to assist and promote the use of the Internet by ethical professional, student, and avocational underwater archaeologists.” Archaeologists contribute reports on their work, such as brief site reports or blog posts, real-time journals highlighting ongoing research projects, and full online museum exhibits. There is also a section containing conference papers focusing on Asian-Pacific maritime archaeology and an Asian maritime bibliography. Aimed at reaching a wide audience, posts on the MUA are written in a more casual style and often focus on the images and video procured during a project. This helps enhance the experience, making it more accessible to a non-specialist audience. The number of posts written

by students, from first-time participants in underwater field schools to MA and PhD students highlighting their own research, also presents information in easily relatable ways for other students.

Maritime Archaeology on the MUA (individual website URLs for each of the sections discussed below are listed at the end of this article)

For teachers unfamiliar with archaeological practices in general and underwater archaeology specifically, the MUA offers an online Children’s Introduction to Underwater Archaeology exhibit that outlines the basic steps in any archaeology project: historical research, search for a site, recording the site, analysis, conservation, and publication. Though originally designed for younger students, the principles can easily be adapted to an older audience. A more in-depth introductory kit, providing lesson plans, sample “artifacts” for exercises in site and artifact analysis, video clips, side-scan sonar slideshows, and other activities, is available for free (except for shipping and handling) to educators upon request. The kit includes a replica Chinese coin that is used as a talking point to discuss when a particular ship may have sunk, where it may have originated from, or what its cargoes may have been. The activities in this kit are suitable for all ages and have been used in elementary and secondary schools, university classes, and continuing adult education.

Even without a comprehensive classroom introduction to the theories behind maritime archaeology, the reports on the MUA can help enhance understanding of Asian history. The most accessible introduction to Asia on the MUA is through the “Asia learning path.” The learning path posts a



Screen capture of the MUA home page. Source: <http://www.uri.edu/mua/>.

series of thematic questions that make use of extant Asia-related projects on the MUA, highlighting certain aspects of the different types of reports in a manner most accessible to classroom teachers or motivated individual students. Though the location of any particular project may not even have been in Asia, often in the process of analyzing artifacts or researching the history of a site, Asian influences appear. The Asia learning path highlights findings in a number of different posts that may otherwise be overlooked. In this way, teachers may find ways to introduce topics such as local developments in underwater archaeology, Asian shipbuilding, the maritime legacy of World War II and other military sites, Chinese diaspora, and artifact interpretation. The following sections will focus in more detail upon the themes and projects introduced through the Asia learning path. As the questions posed in the learning path often link to specific entries within more in-depth projects, they are meant to not only highlight the answers to the thematic questions posed, but also serve as jumping-off points for interested students to explore the rest of the projects in more detail.

Remnants of War

Save for the occasional news story about an undetonated bomb found in a field in Europe, most students are unlikely to encounter reminders of World War II present in everyday life. The project journal from Southeastern Archaeological Research Inc. (SEARCH) documenting the invasion of beaches at Saipan in the commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands



Tank in Garapan Lagoon. Source: <http://tinyurl.com/n6ox7xe>.

shows that that is not always the case. This project journal highlights the survey of several lagoons and coastal sites. From a teaching perspective, it introduces a number of artifacts and locations often overlooked when considering the Pacific war theater. Both American and Japanese landing vessels, airplanes, and ships can be found in these waters. One site revealed an American amphibious tractor, an extremely unusual find, and another has several Sherman tanks. Image slideshows, videos, and maps show the proximity of the abandoned vessels to the shoreline. Video clips include historical photos and swim-throughs of an AMTRAC/LVT vehicle (Tanapag Lagoon entry) and comparisons of American and Japanese airplanes with a sunken aircraft (Plane Wreckage entry). Image slideshows focus on other landing craft (Tanapag Lagoon entry), tanks (Tanks a Lot entry), a pontoon barge (Garapan Lagoon 2 entry), and a comparison of side-scan sonar images with the actual submerged watercraft (Side-Scan Sonar entry). In the future, many of these sites are likely to become snorkeling trails for tourism, providing an excellent example for talking points in discussions of preservation of wartime artifacts and public interpretation. For educators, these images and sites provide an immediacy to the Pacific invasions rarely found elsewhere today.

World history teachers discussing Kublai Khan and the Mongol expansion will find the images of the Vietnamese Bach Dang site of interest. In 1288, Kublai Khan sent the Yuan fleets to invade Đại Việt (Việt Nam). Đại Việt generals planted large, pointed wooden stakes into the river to repel the ships, destroying possibly hundreds of attacking vessels. Photos on these pages show the excavation site and examples of the actual stakes that have been unearthed, evidence of a rare, successful defense against the Mongols.

Chinese Diaspora

Several *MUA* posts record information about the influence of Chinese immigrants throughout the world. Three separate projects help illuminate the lifetimes of Chinese workers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the California coast. The exhibit, titled "Breaking the *Candace*: The 300 Spear St. Project," and Dr. James Delgado's In-the-Field report on "A Long Forgotten Buried Ship" discuss two different vessels that were unearthed under the streets of San Francisco. These excavations highlighted the work of the shipbreakers: Chinese men hired on by local entrepreneurs to tear hulks down and salvage anything usable before the ship was buried as landfill. Both sites yielded pottery and other artifacts that hint at the role these men played, providing valuable information about a segment of San Franciscan society that has gone all but unmentioned in the written record. Delgado's posts include interactive images that allow students to zoom in on a photograph of the site to explore the details of the excavation or to roll over an unearthed box to reveal what was inside. Videos in the

FRANKLIN R. BUCHANAN PRIZE

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Association for Asian Studies (AAS) invites submissions for the Franklin R. Buchanan Prize. Established in 1995 by the AAS Committee on Teaching about Asia, the prize is awarded annually to recognize an outstanding curriculum publication on Asia designed for any educational level, elementary through university.

The winning submission will reflect current scholarship, present innovative teaching strategies, and make a significant impact on the intended audience. Submissions must have been published after January 1, 2013, and include extensive teaching strategies in order to be considered. Various formats are acceptable, including print, CD, video, and online formats. Submissions that address underrepresented regions of Asia and/or which are applicable to both secondary and undergraduate levels of teaching are especially encouraged.

The 2015 Buchanan Prize will be awarded to the author(s) of the work at the AAS Annual Conference in Chicago, IL, March 26-29, 2015. The prize includes a \$1,000 monetary award and a one-year membership to AAS. Submissions are due **November 1, 2014**. For more information and a submission form, please contact:

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<http://www.asian-studies.org/publications/book-prizes.htm>.

introduction and conclusion of the “Breaking the *Candace*” exhibit show historical photographs, footage of the excavation, removal of the hulk, and its status today.

A third project discusses endeavors to preserve the *Free China*, a Fujian-style junk that crossed the Pacific in 1955, sailing with five Chinese and one American from Taiwan to San Francisco. As the only operable early twentieth-century junk capable of making an ocean crossing, it formed an important piece of the history of Chinese shipbuilding and Chinese-American relations. It has since been returned to Taiwan in an effort to ensure its long-term preservation.

Though the above projects are directly related to the Chinese diaspora, examining other posts on the *MUA* can yield more ties as well. The *MUA*'s director, Dr. T. Kurt Knoerl, chronicled a research trip through coastal sites on Lake Michigan from the eighteenth century. A slideshow on that post shows artifacts from those collections that included pottery with Asian influences. Through perusing the various reports on the *MUA*, educators can show students concrete examples of how maritime-based interactions helped connect the world.

Asian Shipbuilding

Maritime archaeology uses different types of methodologies to research different ship typologies and construction techniques. Several projects on the *MUA* demonstrate the various ways in which archaeologists explore Asian shipbuilding. First, my own research on Japanese shipbuilding discusses different types of methodologies used to study the details of nineteenth-century ship construction. I discuss using *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints that depict maritime scenes to examine the types and construction of different vessels. There is much rich detail about hull types, rigging and propulsion systems, and joinery visible in the artwork. The artists' propensity to elaborate upon a scene, though, presents challenges to accepting the prints unequivocally as historic sources. In the project journal entry titled Research, I also highlight the importance of oral histories in learning about traditional crafts through several video clips of an interview with a Japanese shipwright. The final installment in the project journal links to a map placing identifiable woodblock prints in a geographic context, graphically demonstrating where people in early-modern Japan were using different types of vessels for different purposes.

Posts from a Sri Lankan project and an entry in the Saipan Invasion Beaches journal highlight the unusual places in which archaeologists practice documenting traditional watercrafts. The Sri Lankan training project posts from April 1 and March 28, 2008, respectively, offer a zoomable image of a watercraft preserved at a museum and another found at an antique shop. The Saipan Garapan Lagoon entry has a large image of a traditional Carolinian craft that the researchers happened upon at a local festival. Not only do these two posts preserve images of disappearing types of boats but also highlight how maritime archaeologists must explore on land as well as in the sea, taking advantage of opportunities as they occur to learn from local sources.

Training Future Archaeologists

Students interested in learning more about the general training required to be an underwater archaeologist or, more specifically, how training is being conducted in Asia, can also benefit from the first-person accounts on the *MUA*. Thai student Warang Petch discusses the challenges and rewards inherent to in-the-field training in a region with no formal programs for maritime archaeology. Other field journals from East Carolina University in the US and Flinders University in Australia, while not specifically Asia-focused, include entries in the students' own words about preparations, execution, and follow-up to underwater archaeological projects. These types of accounts, highlighting the excitement of finding a decades- or centuries-old

site alongside the tedium of waiting out inclement weather or repairing faulty equipment, can provide useful information for secondary and higher education students who may be considering options for future careers.

Final Thoughts

Though the projects recorded on the *MUA* contain no buried treasure or harrowing tales of escaping from the jaws of death, the variety of sites and circumstances help bring to life different aspects of maritime endeavors. The basic introductions to underwater archaeology can help foster an appreciation for the exploration and preservation of sites. Students who may not have had much exposure to Asia may find it more relatable to their lives through projects focusing on newer sites. Evidence of diaspora movements as seen through the different projects can show the progression of globalization in earlier centuries. Ongoing projects help reveal more about aspects of the past that may not have been recorded in the written documents, giving a voice to an otherwise-silent sector of society. Discussions of training and research processes provide insight into the daily operations of an archaeologist, useful information for students who may be considering it as a career.

The *MUA* will continue to grow and serve as a dynamic resource for information helpful to teaching different aspects of Asian maritime history. Maritime archaeology is gaining momentum in Asia overall. China has recovered several intact wrecks, placing them whole into specially designed museums for conservation and study. Shipwreck and coastal sites in Việt Nam, the Philippines, and Cambodia continue to be explored in more depth, and legislation has tightened to protect these resources. In 2012, Japan designated its first underwater national historic site offshore Takashima, Nagasaki Prefecture, where the wrecks of the 1281 Mongol invading fleet were discovered. As these excavations and conservation continue, these underwater time capsules will show students of all ages different aspects of Asian history otherwise often lost to time. ■

WEBSITE URLS

The Museum of Underwater Archaeology: <http://www.themua.org>.

Children's Introduction to Underwater Archaeology: <http://tinyurl.com/o2zgjs7>.

Teaching Kit and Asia Learning Path: <http://tinyurl.com/nfxav3w>.

Việt Nam Project Center: Bach Dang Site: <http://tinyurl.com/oe5h7a5>.

Breaking the Candace: The 300 Spear St. Project: <http://tinyurl.com/q4eacmq>.

A Long Forgotten Buried Ship: <http://tinyurl.com/oymg6cy>.

A Junk at Risk (Free China): <http://tinyurl.com/p9czrl2>.

A Road Trip to the 18th Century: <http://tinyurl.com/pvdc9ow>.

Underwater Archaeology Invasion Beaches Survey: <http://tinyurl.com/npafdtv>.

Underwater Archaeology Training Project Hin Bush Shipwreck Site, Rayong, Thailand: <http://tinyurl.com/lt6udon>.

UNESCO Sri Lanka Training Project Journal: <http://tinyurl.com/ovwv9or>.

Other Project Journals: <http://tinyurl.com/odxv4uc>.

Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Underwater Cultural Heritage Proceedings: <http://tinyurl.com/pz49pfa>.

Asian Maritime Resources Bibliography: <http://tinyurl.com/oupuwen>.

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