

The Chinese Cultural Sphere in Vietnam

**Vietnamese Ceramics from the Đại Việt period (1054 - 1527) as a Visual
Indicator for Cultural Encounter between Vietnam and China**

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Conventions

A few notes need to be made about language in this thesis. In the following, it is preferred to use the term 'Vietnamese' to refer to the Citizens of the modern state of Vietnam, and also the official language of this nation. Of course, the cultures, peoples, and ethnicities of groups living in these areas millennia ago were far different from those of the modern era, and the regions probably exhibited a kaleidoscope of cultural variation. In addition, the word 'Vietnamese' describes the general provenance of material objects, as well as archeological and historical artifacts that were made within this territory in the past and the present. In the following text Vietnamese terms, eras, personal names, and locations are rendered in the Vietnamese alphabet and will be italicized. For ease of reading, the text will omit the diacritics on 'Vietnam' (Vietnamese spelling 'Việt Nam'). Concerning Vietnamese proper names, the text will use the Vietnamese system, which is generally the reverse of Western names, with the family name first, the middle name, then the given name. However, some Vietnamese scholars change their names in order to suit the Western environment. In this case, it will retain the name order under which they were published. For references, this means that there will be a comma after names that use the Western style (e.g., *Lê, Phan Huy* rather than *Lê Phan Huy*). The text will also follow the authors in the use of diacritical markings. Hence, some Vietnamese names will appear with them and some without.

Vietnam's geographical division is organized by villages, districts, and provinces. The Vietnamese often refer to their country in terms of 3 separate regions: the North *Bắc Bộ*, the Center *Trung Bộ*, and the South *Nam Bộ*. This corresponds roughly to French Indochina, which divided the North to Tonkin, the Center to Annam, and the South to Cochinchina. In the following text, the English form will be used.

The term 'Chinese' simply indicates the historical inhabitants of an area today known as 'China'. Of course, the cultures, peoples, and ethnicities of groups living in these areas millennia ago were far different from those of the modern era, and the regions probably exhibited a kaleidoscope of cultural variation.

As for the Chinese terms, eras and personal names are rendered in the internationally common transcription system *Hanyu pinyin* (漢語拼音) according to the standard current in the People's Republic of China. The pinyin system is a transcription system designed using the Latin alphabet. It is used to record the pronunciation of commonly spoken Mandarin. Exceptions are names that are already widely known in a distinct variation of writing deviating from *Hanyu pinyin*. Further, when a name of a person, an era and a location is mentioned for the first time in the text the biographical data and the name in Chinese characters is given once and is

omitted thereafter in the following text. This also applies to names of institutions, etc. Moreover, Chinese terms, eras, personal names, and locations will be italicized, except those that are already widely known in a distinct variation of writing deviating from *Hanyu pinyin*.

Chinese proper names are always written in the text in the usual form in China, i.e. the family name comes first and the first name comes second. No comma is placed between the last name and the first name. If the order of the Chinese proper name is changed in order to suit the Western environment, the text will follow this order.

All historical dates have been converted to the Common Era, including year, month and day. The abbreviations CE and BCE (Common Era and Before Common Era) are used in preference to AD and BC, as they are non-denominational.

In the following the illustrations of all kinds are not integrated into the continuous text, but are attached as a block at the end of the work. All illustrations are clearly numbered consecutively.

The text will use the terms 'ceramic' and 'pottery' to describe objects, which have been formed with clay, hardened by firing and decorated/undecorated or glazed/unglazed. Furthermore, the terms 'ceramic' and 'pottery' comprise earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain.

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Finally, the research could not have been done without the financial assistance of the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) and the Bonn International Graduate School - Oriental and Asian Studies (BIGS-OAS). Field research grants from BIGS-OAS have allowed me to gain experience in library, archival, and field research work in France and Jordan in October 2020 and October 2021. The doctoral scholarship from DAAD has allowed me to discover Vietnam and its academic world between January 2022 to July 2022. Without this financial assistance, this project would have been materially impossible. I hope that I have not let either down.

If I have forgotten anyone, please forgive me, and rest assured that I have not really forgotten you, just missed-placed you at the last moment.

Thesis Abstract

Vietnam and China were intertwined throughout their long history. The past relationship between Vietnam and China is marked by confrontation and liberation struggles. This power struggle had a tremendous impact on Vietnamese history and culture. Historically Vietnam has been a part of the Chinese Cultural Sphere. The development of specialized ceramic production in Vietnam is closely related to the interaction with China. Vietnamese ceramics from the Lý dynasty (1009 - 1225), Trần dynasty (1225 - 1400), and Primal Lê dynasty (1428 - 1527) are a central objective of this study. Although Vietnamese ceramic culture has a long tradition, Vietnamese ceramic culture is little researched, especially in the context of Chinese ceramic culture. Little is known about the Vietnamese organization, production, and distribution of ceramic products. This research project aims to shed new light on an old tradition of Vietnam and to show the deep cultural entanglement between Vietnam and China. The evolution of glazed ceramics in Vietnam does have parallels with the evolution of Chinese ceramics and Vietnamese ceramic culture is strongly shaped by the Chinese, however, it is still independent. Hence, the usage and choice of decorative motifs are similar to Chinese ceramic culture but still showcase a separate ceramic culture. Additionally, the purpose of this project is to provide insights into the knowledge transfer between these two countries and the role of Vietnam in the Southeast Asian maritime trade.

The data for this project was collected through extensive data collection of the excavated ceramic objects of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long and through gathering information about Chinese ceramic production, as there are few to no sources about Vietnamese ceramic production. The analysis of these components allows an insight into the Vietnamese organization of ceramic production and its distribution, the knowledge transfer between China and Vietnam, and Vietnam's role in the Southeast Asian trade market. In particular, the motif discoveries on Vietnamese ceramics assisted these understandings.

These findings indicate that because Vietnamese ceramics have such parallels with the evolution of Chinese ceramics, Vietnam also operated official kilns. The kilns in Vietnam also had imperial patronage, affirmed by ceramic objects with official kiln marks in Vietnam. The Vietnamese ceramic production was not a competitor for the Chinese ceramic commercial market, nevertheless, they could deliver orders in large quantities too. Furthermore, it attests to the ability of the diversity of Vietnamese glaze types and the ability of Vietnamese potters to adjust to the global market.

Zusammenfassung

Vietnam und China waren in ihrer langen Geschichte eng miteinander verflochten. Die Beziehungen zwischen Vietnam und China in der Vergangenheit waren von Konfrontationen und Befreiungskämpfen geprägt. Dieser Machtkampf hatte einen enormen Einfluss auf die vietnamesische Geschichte und Kultur. Historisch gesehen war Vietnam Teil des chinesischen Kulturraums. Die Entwicklung der spezialisierten Keramikproduktion in Vietnam ist eng mit der Interaktion mit China verbunden. Vietnamesische Keramik aus der Lý-Dynastie (1009 - 1225), der Trần-Dynastie (1225 - 1400) und der frühen Lê-Dynastie (1428 - 1527) steht im Mittelpunkt dieser Studie. Obwohl die vietnamesische Keramikultur auf eine lange Tradition zurückblickt, ist sie, insbesondere im Kontext der chinesischen Keramikultur, wenig erforscht. Über die Organisation, Produktion und den Vertrieb von Keramikprodukten in Vietnam ist wenig bekannt. Dieses Forschungsprojekt zielt darauf ab, ein neues Licht auf eine alte vietnamesische Tradition zu werfen und die tiefe kulturelle Verflechtung zwischen Vietnam und China aufzuzeigen. Die Entwicklung glasierter Keramik in Vietnam weist zwar Parallelen zur Entwicklung der chinesischen Keramik auf, und die vietnamesische Keramikultur ist stark von der chinesischen geprägt, aber dennoch eigenständig. So ähneln Verwendung und Auswahl dekorativer Motive zwar der chinesischen Keramikultur, doch zeugen sie dennoch von einer eigenständigen Keramikultur. Ziel dieses Projekts ist es außerdem, Einblicke in den Wissenstransfer zwischen diesen beiden Ländern und die Rolle Vietnams im südostasiatischen Seehandel zu gewinnen.

Die Daten für dieses Projekt wurden durch die umfassende Auswertung der ausgegrabenen Keramikobjekte der Kaiserlichen Zitadelle von Thăng Long und durch die Recherche von Informationen zur chinesischen Keramikproduktion erhoben, da es kaum Quellen zur vietnamesischen Keramikproduktion gibt. Die Analyse dieser Komponenten ermöglicht Einblicke in die Organisation und den Vertrieb der vietnamesischen Keramikproduktion, den Wissenstransfer zwischen China und Vietnam sowie Vietnams Rolle im südostasiatischen Handelsmarkt. Insbesondere die Entdeckungen von Motiven auf vietnamesischer Keramik trugen zu diesem Verständnis bei.

Diese Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass Vietnam aufgrund der Parallelen zwischen der vietnamesischen und der chinesischen Keramikentwicklung ebenfalls offizielle Brennöfen betrieb. Die Brennöfen in Vietnam genossen kaiserliche Förderung, was durch Keramikobjekte mit offiziellen Brennofenmarken belegt wird. Die vietnamesische Keramikproduktion konkurrierte zwar nicht mit dem chinesischen Keramikmarkt, konnte aber dennoch große Aufträge abwickeln. Dies zeugt von der Vielfalt der vietnamesischen Glasurarten und der Anpassungsfähigkeit der vietnamesischen Töpfer an den globalen Markt.

Timeline of Vietnamese Dynasties

Based on "Asia for Educators," Weatherhead East Asian Institute - Columbia University, last modified December 25, 2023, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/timelines/vietnam_timeline.htm.

Hồng Bàng dynasty (Hồng Bàng thị [鴻龐氏]) 2879 BCE-258 BCE

Xích Quỷ [赤鬼] 2879–2524 BCE

Văn Lang [文郎] 2524–258 BCE

Thục dynasty (Thục triều / Nhà Thục [蜀朝 / 茹蜀]) 257 BCE-207 BCE

Triệu dynasty (Triệu triều / Nhà Triệu [趙朝 / 茹趙]) 204 BCE-111 BCE

Western Han (Tây Hán [西漢] 'First Chinese Domination') 111 BCE-9 CE

Xin dynasty (Tân triều / Nhà Tân [新朝 / 茹新] 'First Chinese Domination') 9-23

Eastern Han (Đông Hán [東漢] 'First Chinese Domination') 25-220

Liang dynasty (Lương triều / Nhà Lương [梁朝 / 茹梁] 'Second Chinese Domination') 502-544

Early Lý dynasty (Tiền Lý triều / Nhà Tiền Lý [前李朝 / 茹前李]) 544-602

Sui dynasty (Tùy triều / Nhà Tùy [隋朝 / 茹隋] 'Third Chinese Domination') 602-618

Tang dynasty (Đường triều / Nhà Đường [唐朝 / 茹唐] 'Third Chinese Domination') 621-907

Southern Han (Nam Hán [南漢] 'Third Chinese Domination') 930-938

Ngô dynasty (Ngô triều / Nhà Ngô [吳朝 / 茹吳]) 939-965

Đinh dynasty (Đinh triều / Nhà Đinh [丁朝 / 茹丁]) 968-980

Early Lê dynasty (Tiền Lê triều / Nhà Tiền Lê [前黎朝 / 茹前黎]) 980-1009

Lý dynasty (Lý triều / Nhà Lý [李朝 / 茹李]) 1009-1225

Trần dynasty (Trần triều / Nhà Trần [陳朝 / 茹陳]) 1225-1400

Hồ dynasty (Hồ triều / Nhà Hồ [胡朝 / 茹胡]) 1400-1407

Ming dynasty (Minh triều / Nhà Minh [明朝 / 茹明] 'Fourth Chinese Domination') 1407-1427

Primal Lê dynasty (Lê sơ triều / Nhà Lê sơ [黎初朝 / 茹黎初]) 1428-1527

Mạc dynasty (Mạc triều / Nhà Mạc [莫朝 / 茹莫]) 1527-1677

Revival Lê dynasty (Lê trung hưng triều / Nhà Lê trung hưng [黎中興朝 / 茹黎中興])
1533-1789

Tây Sơn dynasty (Tây Sơn triều / Nhà Tây Sơn [西山朝 / 茹西山]) 1778-1802

Nguyễn dynasty (Nguyễn triều / Nhà Nguyễn [阮朝 / 茹阮]) 1802-1945

Indochina (Bán đảo Đông Dương [中南半島]) 1862-1945

Democratic Republic of Vietnam (Việt Nam Dân chủ Cộng hòa [越南民主共和]) 1945-1954

Republic of Vietnam (Việt Nam Cộng hòa [越南共和]) 1956-1975

Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Cộng hòa Xã hội chủ nghĩa Việt Nam [共和社會主義越南])
1976-

Timeline of Chinese Dynasties

Based on "Timeline of Chinese Dynasties," The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature, last modified December 25, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199356591.002.0008>.

Shang Dynasty [商朝] (ca. 1300-1046 BCE)

Zhou Dynasty [周朝] (ca. 1046-256 BCE)

Western Zhou [西周] (ca. 1046-771 BCE)

Eastern Zhou [東周] (770-256 BCE)

Spring and Autumn Period [春秋] (770-481 BCE)

Warring States Period [戰國] (481-221 BCE)

Qin Dynasty [秦朝] (221-207 BCE)

Han Dynasty [漢朝] (206 BCE-220 CE)

Former/Western Han [前漢 / 西漢] (206 BCE-8 CE)

Xin Dynasty [新朝] (9-23)

Later/Eastern Han [後漢 / 東漢] (25-220 CE)

Wei Dynasty [魏] (220-265) / 3 Kingdoms [三國]

Jin Dynasty [晉朝] (265-420)

Western Jin [西晉] (265-316)

Eastern Jin [東晉] (317-420)

Northern and Southern Dynasties [南北朝] (420-589)

Sui Dynasty [隋朝] (581-618)

Tang Dynasty [唐朝] (618-907)

Five Dynasties [五代] (907-960)

Song Dynasty [宋朝] (960-1279)

Northern Song [北宋朝] (960-1127)

Southern Song [南宋朝] (1127-1279)

Yuan Dynasty (Mongols) [元朝] (1271-1368)

Ming Dynasty [明朝] (1368-1644)

Qing Dynasty (Manchus) [清朝] (1644-1911)

Republic of China [中華民國] (1911-1949)

People's Republic of China [中華人民共和國] (1949-)

Chapter I

Problematizing the Material Cultural of Contact

Introduction

Vietnam has had a rocky road to modernization. It has a population of over a hundred million people and is located between East Asia and South Asia, where the Southeast Asian landmass meets the Gulf of Thailand and the South China Sea. In this country, millennia of territorial mobility and cultural diversity are closely linked to cooperation and competition between indigenous ethnic groups as well as interactions with neighboring nations. Vietnam occupies a long, narrow territory with almost 3,300 km of coastline. Over the course of this country's long history, numerous kingdoms were founded. The main ethnic groups populating present-day Vietnam include, from north to south, the *Việt/Kinh*, Cham (former Champa kingdom *Chăm Pa* [占城]), and Khmer. Vietnam's main ethnic group of modern times, the *Việt*, are descendants of the various peoples once called *Baiyue* [Bách Việt [百越]; literally 'Hundred Yue', or simply *Yue* [越]). The *Baiyue* were various ethnic groups who inhabited the regions of Southern China and Northern Vietnam during the 1st millennium BCE and 1st millennium CE. These people are known for their tattoos, adaptability to water, and casting of beautiful bronze drums, with the latter becoming one of Vietnam's most important cultural symbols. Between the 2nd and 10th centuries, China's various imperial dynasties tried to absorb Vietnam into their domains, and, as a result, left a legacy of cultural influence in the form of rites, laws, political systems, and ceramic arts.¹

According to a Vietnamese legend, the *Việt* people are descendants of the dragon king *Lạc Long Quân* [貉龍君], who is believed to be the great-great-grandson of the mythical Emperor Shennong [神農大帝]. The creation myths reveal the close connections between *Việt* people and their neighbors in the northern country as they share many similarities in their creation myth. The culture of the neighbors of the north permeated the Vietnamese landscape for several thousand years, and Vietnam faced the threat of being taken over by its neighbors countless times. After a thousand years of subjugation by its northern neighbor, in 939, the *Việt* established their own *Ngô* dynasty [吳朝] (939 - 965 CE). Documents from the 18th and 19th centuries, which were held in the court of the *Qing* dynasty [清朝] (1644 - 1911), act as

¹ "Exhibition," NPM, last modified October 23, 2023, <https://south.npm.gov.tw/english/ExhibitionsDetailE003110.aspx?Cond=266a3507-37b5-496d-865b-bab72a7a44db&appname=Exhibition3112EN&State=0>.

written records of how the Vietnamese relied upon military tenacity and a strategy of flexibility to face the cultural appeal and military dominance of their northern neighbors.²

These documents were, inter alia, from the biographies of Chinese officials who served in Vietnam during the period of Chinese colonization and domination and are thus characterized by a one-sided and subjective perspective. In these reports, present-day Northern Vietnam is described as backward and as an area that had no developed culture of its own before the Chinese arrived. Local Vietnamese writers started to compile historical chronicles about their own country in the 13th century, and in the process, they also recorded detailed information about figures who had supposedly lived before the period of Chinese rule and about whom Chinese writers had not mentioned. Thus, Sinocentric views stand in contrast with Vietnamese traditions, which indicate considerable complexity in the Northern Vietnamese region long before the arrival of the Chinese. The official descriptions of the earliest stages of Vietnamese history in *Đại Việt sử ký* [大越史記] ('Annals of *Đại Việt*'), the official historical text of the *Trần* dynasty [陳朝] (1225 -1400), start with myth and legend and only include more entries of historical facts later in time. The legendary and semi-historical traditions were recorded in texts such as the *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* [大越史記全書] ('Complete Annals of *Đại Việt*'). Overall, these narratives and tales mediate the image of Northern Vietnam as the nucleus of an indigenously developed Vietnamese civilization with powerful kingdoms ruling over vast populations before the arrival of Chinese rule.³

Perceptibly, Vietnam and China were intertwined throughout their long history. Geographically, Vietnam belongs to Southeast Asia, but no other country in Southeast Asia has adapted to Chinese culture like Vietnam. The reason for this adaptation is the classification of Vietnam as one of the countries that existed within the so-called 'Chinese Cultural Sphere',⁴ the definition of which will be further explained in the second chapter. The past relations between Vietnam and China are marked by confrontation and liberation struggles. Over the course of history, Vietnam was repeatedly under the occupation of the Chinese. This power struggle had a tremendous impact on Vietnamese history and culture.

Archeological data confirm cross-cultural, multilateral contact between southern China and northern Vietnam for millennia. Archaeological research has elucidated the relationship between the *Hòa Bình* culture (12,000 - 10,000 BCE), the *Bắc Sơn* culture (10,000 - 8,000 BCE), and the early Neolithic culture in South China, revealing cultural similarities in settlement

² NPM, "Exhibition."

³ Nam C. Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 148.

⁴ The term 'Chinese Cultural Sphere' is also known under several different names, for example, it is also known as 'Sinosphere', 'East Asian Cultural Sphere', 'Sinic/Sinitic world' or 'Confucian World'. Essentially, all these different names mean the same thing.

and burial customs, and outlining forms of economic and domestic activities characteristic for each culture.⁵

For instance, pottery from *Phùng Nguyên* sites is marked by motifs that have clear parallels with pottery from sites in the *Yunnan* [雲南] province (present southwest China), such as *Baiyangcun* [白羊村] and *Dadunzi* [大墩子]. These apparent similarities would suggest that the exchange happened between southern China and northern Vietnam. It is quite possible that the exchange between coastal southern Chinese and coastal northern Vietnamese communities was facilitated through a combination of overland travel and maritime travel. The wide distribution of the distinctive incised and zone-impressed pottery across parts of far southern China, northern Vietnam, and Thailand after about 2500 BCE suggests that this region might express a similar phenomenon of exchange.⁶

Today, Vietnam officially comprises 54 ethnic groups scattered across the country. The territories in South and Central present-day Vietnam were not reached by ethnic Vietnamese settlers until recent centuries, and as such, the distinction between Northern Vietnam and South Vietnam occurs in several categories. For instance, Vietnam's exposure to Indian philosophy and religion played a similarly important role as its exposure to Chinese culture; however, the South was more exposed to Indian culture than the North. Concerning the Vietnamese ceramic culture in Northern Vietnam, the influence of Indian culture is not as relevant as that of Chinese, whereas the inverse is the case in South Vietnam. Besides the impact of these two major cultural groups, Vietnam's role in the Southeast Asian trade network is also related to the ceramic culture of Vietnam. Southeast Asia has attracted foreign merchants and traders since the early first millennium due to its richness in natural resources, many of an unfamiliar nature, which were much desired by foreign traders. The region was, therefore, ideally located to function as a location for exchange between the East and West in luxury commodities such as rhinoceros horns, ivory, tortoise shells, pearls, and kingfisher feathers.⁷

Besides these luxury commodities, pottery played an essential role in the Southeast Asian trade network. Pottery belongs to the categorization of craft specialization, which can be a useful sign of political complexity. The presence of craft specialization is a potential material indicator of complexity, as it may have functioned as an important driver of major cultural change. In contrast with the part-time production by individuals or families during agricultural slack periods of the year, the production associated with full-time specialists produced high-quality goods. At the top of the craft hierarchy were the elite craft workers who specialized in

⁵ Trinh Năng Chung, "Cultural Relationship Between Northern Vietnam And South China After Hòa Bình - Bắc Sơn Period," *Vietnam Archaeology*, Number 6 (2011): 31.

⁶ Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam*, 119-120.

⁷ John S. Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia: Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries; with a Catalogue of Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai Wares in Australian Collections*. *Oxford in Asia Studies in Ceramics*, (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986), 1.

producing goods of exceptional quality and value for the elites and most powerful members of society. Though household-based production remains viable in complex societies, in many cases, a centralized authority might have a monopoly over the production of the most powerful, politically and ideologically loaded goods, whose successful crafting required an understanding of the full spectrum of iconic meanings and how to deploy them.⁸

The specialized craft workshop that this dissertation is interested in is the specialized production of pottery. Why is it relevant to study ceramic objects? The study of ceramics can be helpful for many sectors. For instance, ceramics can show advanced and sophisticated material technology, evidence of human occupation and activity, and evidence of global trade. All of these aspects are cross-disciplinary, encompassing the fields of archeology, art history, material science, and many others.⁹

In reference to the field of archeology and art history, ceramic objects are made of durable material; even if damaged, these small fragments, or shards, are almost indestructible, even after hundreds of years of being on the ground. Furthermore, ceramics were not just tools for cooking, serving, and storing food, but were also an avenue of artistic expression. Even in prehistoric times, the potters formed and decorated their vessels in a variety of ways. Potters from one community or region made a few characteristic styles of wares, and because forms and styles were shared among specific groups, archeologists can often relate sites in time and space if they contain the same ceramic types.¹⁰

Research Problem

We should be aware that when we talk about Vietnam and China today, historically, we are talking about two completely different countries. Today's southern Chinese provinces of *Yunnan* [雲南], *Guangxi* [廣西], and *Guangdong* [廣東] have a long intertwined history with what is now northern Vietnam. The kingdom of *Âu Lạc* [甌駱] (257 BCE - 179 BCE) covered parts of the present-day province of *Guangxi* and Northern Vietnam. Its capital was in *Cổ Loa* [古螺], present-day *Hà Nội*, in the Red River Delta. *An Dương Vương* [安陽王] was the king and the only ruler of the kingdom of *Âu Lạc*. As the leader of the *Âu Việt*¹¹ tribes, he defeated the last Hùng king (*Hùng Vương* [雄王]) of the state of *Văn Lang* [文郎] (2524 BCE - 258 BCE) and united its people – known as *Lạc Việt* [駱越 or 雒越] – with his people, the *Âu Việt*. In 204

⁸ Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam*, 51-52.

⁹ Stacey Pierson, *Chinese Ceramics*. 1st ed. (London: V&A, 2009), 7.

¹⁰ "Prehistoric," Ancient Technology Series, The University of Iowa, last modified December 17, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140428055658/https://archaeology.uiowa.edu/prehistoric-pottery-0>.

¹¹ The *Âu Việt* or *Ouyue* [甌越] were an ancient conglomeration of Baiyue tribes living in what is today the mountainous regions of northernmost Vietnam, western Guangdong, and northern Guangxi.

BCE, *Zhao Tuo* [趙佗] or Triệu Đà in Vietnamese, established the kingdom of *Nanyue* (*Nam Việt* [南越]) (204 BCE - 111 BCE). *Zhao Tuo* was a *Qin* dynasty [秦朝] (221 BCE - 206 BCE) Chinese general and the first emperor of *Nanyue*. He participated in the conquest of the *Baiyue* peoples of *Guangdong*, *Guangxi*, and Northern Vietnam. After the fall of the *Qin*, he established the independent kingdom of *Nanyue* [南越] with its capital in *Panyu* (now *Guangzhou* [廣州]). Some traditional Vietnamese history scholars considered him an emperor of Vietnam and the founder of the *Triệu* dynasty, while other historians contested this, saying that he was a foreign invader. The kingdom of *Âu Lạc* and the kingdom of *Nanyue* co-existed until *Zhao Tuo* conquered it. As we can see, geographically speaking, the localities between Vietnam and China shift to the advantages or disadvantages of one country. Culturally speaking, southern China is closely linked to northern Vietnam. At the same time, Vietnam is also in the Sinosphere (also known as the 'Chinese Cultural Sphere').¹²

In this context, a new discourse can be led in the direction of the question of to what extent historical South China could be more culturally assigned to Northern Vietnam. What is the nature of the frontier culture between the prehistoric cultures of Northern Vietnam and South China? Was there a sharp distinction between them? Where was the boundary between 'Vietnamese' and 'Chinese' culture? This discourse is closely followed, among others, by Professor John Miksic from the National University of Singapore, whose research focus is on Southeast Asian archaeology. While this line of inquiry would constitute another research project, the author nevertheless wanted to mention this discourse. Although these questions cannot yet be answered with the current state of research, the importance of this discourse is relevant for a different approach to dealing with Vietnamese ceramic culture and could be managed in the future.

First of all, the term 'Vietnamese ceramics' is difficult to categorize. Some ceramics, which are nowadays identified as Vietnamese ceramics, originated from kiln sites in regions that were under Chinese control. The areas close to the present Chinese border experienced particular political turmoil throughout the centuries. These types of ceramics are, among other terms, referred to as '*Annamese ceramics*'.¹³

¹² Philippe Truong, *The Elephant and the Lotus: Vietnamese Ceramics in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 1st ed. (Boston, Mass.: MFA Pub, 2008), 11-13.

¹³ Hiromu Honda and Noriki Shimazu, *Vietnamese and Chinese Ceramics Used in the Japanese Tea Ceremony*, (Singapore; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 5.

The term 'Annamese'¹⁴ in this context seems to have originated with the Japanese and then transferred to English after the publication of 'Annam Tōji Zukan (Annamese Ceramics)' by Okuda Seiichi in 1954, the first comprehensive work on Vietnamese wares. Another known term for Vietnamese ceramics resulting from the arrival of the Europeans, in particular the Dutch East India Company (VOC), is the term *Tonkin/Tongking* [東京]. As the main traders for Vietnamese ceramics in the 17th century, they referred to Vietnamese ceramics as *Tonkinese/Tongkinese*, due to a mispronunciation of the name of the capital at *Hà Nội*, which was then called *Đông Kinh*.¹⁵

In the first catalog of the National Museum of Indonesia in the early 1970s, Vietnamese ceramics were still named 'Annamese ceramics', although the museum staff knew of the problematic naming. In the catalog, another term for Vietnamese ceramics is mentioned - 'Japanese Kochi Ware'. The emergence of this term could derive from the ancient name for Northern Vietnam - Jiaozhi (*Giao Chi* [交趾]¹⁶).¹⁷

The usage of 'Annam' by Okuda Seiichi derived from the 'Protectorate General to Pacify the South [安南都護府] period (679 – 866). Annan [安南]¹⁸ was an imperial protectorate and the southernmost administrative division of the *Tang* dynasty [唐朝] (618 - 907 CE). An Nam, simplified to 'Annam', is the Vietnamese form of the Chinese name Annan, which means 'the Pacified South' or 'to pacify the South', a clipped form of the full name, the 'Protectorate General to Pacify the South'. In 679, the Annan Protectorate replaced the Jiaozhou Protectorate [交州]. Today, the same area is sometimes known as *Tonkin/Tongking* (as mentioned above, in Vietnamese: *Đông Kinh*), literally the 'eastern capital' of *Đại Việt*. Locally, the area is known as *Bắc Kỳ* [北圻], literally the 'northern area'.¹⁹

¹⁴ 'Annam *An Nam* [安南]' was an administrative term for Vietnam, which literally means 'pacified South'. As mentioned, this term was considered pejorative by the Vietnamese and was dropped after the restoration of independence in 939 CE. It was adopted by the French again after their conquest of Vietnam in the late 19th century.

William J. Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow, 1998), 13.

¹⁵ Roxanna M. Brown, *The Ceramics of South-East Asia: Their Dating and Identification. Oxford in Asia studies in ceramics*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977), 13.

¹⁶ *Giao Chi* is an ancient administrative term for the Red River Delta, which was used by the Chinese. It literally means 'intertwined feet' or 'crossed toes'. This term may have derived from the Chinese belief that the 'barbarians' in the south slept in communal fashion with their feet together and their heads pointing outwards.

Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 88.

¹⁷ Frank Lammers, *Annamese Ceramics in the Museum Pusat Jakarta*, (Indonesia: Himpuan Keramik Indonesia, 1974), 1.

¹⁸ In Vietnamese it was pronounced as 'An Nam'; thus, Vietnam was also known as 'Annam' in the West.

¹⁹ Trung, *The Elephant and the Lotus: Vietnamese Ceramics in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 14.

To minimize confusion, ceramic objects that were produced in present-day Northern Vietnam and present-day Central/South Vietnam will be referred to as Vietnamese ceramics throughout the remainder of this thesis.²⁰

The development of specialized ceramic production in Vietnam is closely related to its interaction with China. For a very long time, Vietnamese ceramic culture did not receive any scholarly attention, as it was considered to be less sophisticated than Chinese ceramic culture. Furthermore, some would even go so far as to claim that Vietnamese ceramic culture was a simple imitation of Chinese ceramics. However, this point of view is outdated, as discoveries and published materials have demonstrated a highly developed Vietnamese ceramic culture. While in the past, scholarly interest in Chinese ceramics tended to overshadow that of Vietnamese ceramics, recent excavations in Vietnam, including underwater excavations, and research on ceramic objects, have awakened the interest of collectors, connoisseurs, and scholars. This is especially true in the case of Vietnamese ceramics from the *Lý* dynasty [李朝] (1009 - 1225), *Trần* dynasty [陳朝] (1225 - 1400), and the Primal *Lê* dynasty [黎初朝] (1428 - 1527).

The key to Vietnam's unique aesthetic in the ceramic arts lies in its people's technical mastery of the art during a time of creative and economic flourishing in the 15th and 16th centuries, when Vietnamese ceramics joined the fray of international trade. Before the 18th century, the process of firing porcelain was a big mystery. However, the potters of northern Vietnam could decipher this secret with their ability. Starting in the latter period of the *Trần* dynasty in the 14th century, Vietnamese ceramics began to be exported to Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, and Taiwan. During the Primal *Lê* dynasty (1428 - 1527) and the *Mạc* dynasty [莫朝] (1527 - 1592), Vietnam's northern neighbor, China's *Ming* dynasty [明朝] (1368 - 1644) closed its doors to maritime trade. Vietnamese ceramics partially filled the gap created by China's exodus from the market and were even able to expand their coverage, including Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia, and North Africa. Out of all of these regions, the

²⁰ An important note: the author is aware that the term 'celadon' is a European term for a wide range of high-fired green-glazed wares, and among some archaeologists, the term is no longer used for this glaze type because it is too imprecise. This group prefers to use the term 'green ware'. Furthermore, the term is a Western art collector's term. However, the term 'celadon' will continue to be used in this thesis because the author thinks that the term 'green ware' includes too many green color nuances and that the term 'celadon' can be used to better visualize this grouping in the 'green ware' group. No suitable term has yet been found in this context, hence its continued use here. Certainly, the author is aware that the term could be problematic in some respects and, as such, wanted to point this out.

island nations of Southeast Asia became Vietnam's most valuable trading partners. During this period, Vietnam's primary places of ceramic production were the *Chu Đậu* kilns, located in present-day *Hải Dương* province [海陽], and the *Thăng Long* kilns, located in present-day *Hà Nội*.²¹

Present-day Northern Vietnam is very much culturally linked to the southernmost provinces of present-day China. In terms of their diet and many other pleasures, Vietnam clearly shared common factors with Southeast Asian culture, as did some of their neighbors in South China. The higher status of women and the less developed manufactures than was the case in China. Yet the political and intellectual life of Vietnam, and even basic habits such as the manner of eating with chopsticks, were deeply influenced by China. Although historically, Central and South Vietnam were more closely bound in commerce as in culture to the rest of Southeast Asia than Northern Vietnam, a line cannot be drawn between the two. Both saw China as a cultural model. The role of Vietnam as a frontier between Southeast Asia and China would have been critical if Vietnam had not learned lessons of Chinese bureaucratic and military practice so effectively. They have fought to maintain equality and independence from China. Chinese political influence would have certainly spread further south.²²

Objectives of the Study

A central objective of this study is to elaborate on the historical relationship between present-day Northern Vietnam and present-day China. Historically, Vietnam has been a part of the Chinese Cultural Sphere, the legacy of which is still visible to this day. As such, the development of Vietnamese ceramic culture is closely related to Chinese ceramic culture (Map 1). The primary focus of this study will be on the historical context between Northern Vietnam and China. Recent archaeological research contributes to the study of Vietnamese ceramic culture in two ways: by examining sites of the Vietnamese imperial court, and by tracing the cultural, political, and economic relationship between these two countries. In particular, the organization of Vietnamese ceramic production, its distribution, and the influence of the Chinese Cultural Sphere in Vietnamese ceramic culture are examined in this project. The Vietnamese ceramic production, organization, and distribution will be explored with the help of Chinese ceramic production, as there are no sources on the Vietnamese side. Chinese potters strove for perfect technique, as the colossal and almost mechanistic production of the *Jingdezhen* [景德鎮] kilns demonstrates. The aesthetic appeal of Vietnamese ceramics, which combines the principle of chance with great technical skill, lies somewhere between these two

²¹ NPM, "Exhibition."

²² Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450 - 1680*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 8.

extremes. Vietnamese ceramic culture was strongly shaped by the Chinese, but is nevertheless independent. This independence will serve as a common thread throughout the dissertation.

The question that arises in this context is whether Vietnam also had official and private kilns like the one that operated in *Jingdezhen*. Inscriptions and decorative motifs on Vietnamese and Chinese ceramic objects play a central role in answering this question. Above all, the dissertation focuses on the selection of motifs and their meanings. Vietnamese potters made almost unlimited use of Chinese motifs, and the question therefore arises as to whether the motifs were used in the same spirit or were chosen for purely aesthetic reasons. Archeological research on the sites of the Vietnamese imperial court and museum collections will contribute to the research of Vietnamese ceramic culture.

Another question that arises in this context is how the transfer of knowledge between Vietnam and China functioned. In this context, the division of labor in Vietnamese ceramic production is relevant. Was labor divided? Did they fully follow the Chinese model? Were the Vietnamese potters full-time craftsmen or seasonal potters? How did the Vietnamese potters learn to make glazed pottery? Did they invent the techniques themselves, or did they just imitate Chinese ceramics? If they did imitate, how did they acquire this knowledge? Although Vietnam has such a long history and Vietnamese ceramic culture also has a long tradition, the latter is little researched, especially in relation to Chinese ceramic culture. Little is known about Vietnamese organization, production, and distribution of its ceramic products.

Furthermore, given that Vietnam played a special role between China and Southeast Asia, one aim of this research is to consider how it functioned in the trade network that developed widely over maritime Asia. This will be done by focusing on each stage of the process of the production and distribution of ceramic objects. As ceramic production and distribution were closely linked, it should be studied in terms of their mutual interrelations, in particular, tracing the routes of production and distribution, which will elucidate our understanding of the Southeast Asian trade network. Finally, this dissertation will demonstrate the diversity of Vietnamese ceramics in terms of its adaptation of technique, glaze, form, and materials, as well as its rapid response to the changing tides of the global market.

Thesis Structure

This dissertation will start with the historical context between Vietnam and China, followed by the clarification of the term 'Chinese Cultural Sphere', an important discussion here due to its major impact on Vietnamese history. The dissertation will continue with the trade network of both countries. While the emphasis of this dissertation is indeed on Vietnamese ceramics, the nature of their evolution in relation to that of Chinese ceramics necessitates a lengthy historical

discussion of the relationship between the two regions. The main part of the dissertation starts with a focus on several wares that arguably shaped Vietnamese ceramic culture. These include white wares, celadons, *Jian* wares, *Cizhou* wares, and blue & white wares. The ceramic production and the organization of kilns in China are stated on the basis of *Jingdezhen*. On the Vietnamese part, the different kinds of glaze types are outlined.

Following the discussion of motifs, the organization of ceramic production in Northern Vietnam in terms of its division of labor and production techniques will be explored. The distribution of Vietnamese ceramics will be clarified by looking at key kiln sites in Northern Vietnam and its main ports. In that sense, this project mainly analyzes the ceramic collection of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* '*Hoàng thành Thăng Long* 昇龍皇城'. This collection will be a key factor in this dissertation project. In addition to the ceramic collection of the Imperial Citadel, two collections of provincial museums will support the analyses. This research is further supplemented by two private collections - the collection of Noriko Nishino and Dr. Masanari Nishimura, and the collection of Mr. *Nguyễn Văn Việt*.

Lastly, Vietnamese historical export wares serve as instruments of political iconography, as Vietnamese ceramic objects can be found in the international trade market. In particular, the Southeast Asian trade market played an essential role in the Vietnamese export wares.

State of Art

There is already research on Vietnamese ceramic culture, especially the work of Roxanna Brown (1977, 2009) and John Stevenson and John Guy (1997), who explored the fundamental forms of Vietnamese ceramics and paved the way for further research. Brown's work (2009) about the '*Ming* Gap', a period of around 300 years that is characterized by the absence of Chinese ceramics in the Southeast Asian region as a result of the isolationist trade policy of the emperors of the *Ming* dynasty and the resulting boom in regional ceramic goods, is a formative understanding of the trade structures in the region that partially explains the increased ceramic production in Vietnam. Stevenson and Guy (1997) clarified that Vietnamese ceramic culture is a separate ceramic culture, and is a topic that this dissertation will further pursue. Another groundwork publication is that of Bùi and Nguyễn-Long (2001), who focus solely on Vietnamese blue&white ware and how it solidified Vietnamese ceramic objects as export wares in the Southeast Asian market. Some scholars emphasize the history of Vietnam in conjunction with its ceramic culture (May 2000), while others focus on Vietnamese ceramics in the context of Southeast Asian ceramics (Miksic 2009). In the Vietnamese academic world, basic studies on ceramics from the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties have been conducted recently through new excavations from the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* by scholars from the Institute of the Imperial Citadel Studies (Lê 2014; Bùi 2010). However, publications about the new

discoveries have only become more numerous in recent years, due to the ongoing identification process of millions of ceramic shards, with the collaborative work of Bùi and Tống (2010) exploring deeper into the history of the citadel and emphasizing its importance in understanding Vietnamese ceramics. Besides the Institute of the Imperial Citadel Studies, the Institute of Archaeology in *Hà Nội* has also conducted excavations and published about architectural ceramic elements from the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties (Đặng, 2018). A recent work by Kikuchi (2021) focuses on the maritime trade of Northern Vietnam through the archaeological excavations of their port sites. This dissertation will build on the work of Tống (2006; 2010), who has thoroughly analyzed the ceramic collection of the former residence of Vietnam's imperial family, though the focus of this project will be on the connections between Vietnamese and Chinese ceramics.

On the Chinese side, numerous research has been done. Early works by Beurdeley (1974), Medley (1977), Satō (1981), and Li (2010) serve as groundbreaking works for Chinese ceramic culture. Following the groundbreaking works, specialized publications about Chinese blue&white porcelain helped to understand the aesthetic at that time (Carswell 1985, 2000). Another specialized publication about Chinese brown- and black-glazed ceramics helped to understand the Vietnamese brown and black-glazed ceramics (Mowry 1996). Such fundamental works were followed by publications dealing with the interface between Vietnamese and Chinese ceramics in the Southeast market (Joseph 1973; Gotuago, Tan, and Diem 1997).

The dictionary of Duiker (1998) was helpful in understanding Vietnamese history by mentioning Vietnamese historical figures with important life dates. For the Southeast Asian side, Reid (1988) provided useful information about the Southeast Asian historical trade network. In addition to Reid (1988), Stuart-Fox (2003) helped to understand the tribute, trade, and influence between China and Southeast Asia.

The already numerous published books do not deal with the relationship between Vietnam and China, and, above all, they have not yet dealt with the question of Vietnamese ceramic production in the context of Chinese ceramic production. While there is already research on Vietnamese ceramics, none focuses on Vietnamese-Chinese relations, the question of Vietnamese organization of ceramic production and its distribution, knowledge transfer, the selection of motifs, and the role of Vietnam in the Southeast Asian maritime trade. This research project aims to fill this gap, and, consequently, it will mediate between Vietnamese, Chinese, and Western research about Vietnamese ceramic culture. Furthermore, research on Vietnamese and Chinese relationships through ceramic objects from the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* has not been done before. The focus on the subject of transcultural studies of the Vietnamese and Chinese in this dissertation will close a research gap and contribute to the academic world.

Methodology

The history of Vietnamese ceramic objects is fraught with periods of social disorder, war, and economic instability, leading to periods of decline in production and the loss of many ceramic production centers. Because of the hampered access to certain storage rooms, it was difficult to conduct research in Vietnam. Nowadays, the lack of information about techniques, conservation, and the actual kilns further complicates the situation. For these reasons, this dissertation worked with limited sources. The main sources were English-language and recent Vietnamese-language monographs; unfortunately, only a few original sources from Vietnam have survived, as nearly all Vietnamese sources have been lost to time. Although original Vietnamese textual sources could not be used, scientific progress from recent years in Vietnam is compensating for this fact: *inter alia*, the excavation at the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. The lack of original Vietnamese textual sources was not the only difficulty this research project faced. During the course of research, a global pandemic added to the strenuous work. For these reasons, this dissertation project worked with parts of the collection of the Imperial Citadel, provincial museums, and the two private collections, which were mentioned above.

To understand the history of Vietnamese ceramic culture, several factors play an important role. The key factor would be the history of Vietnam itself and the corresponding history of the Vietnamese and Chinese relationship. To do adequate research about Vietnamese ceramics, it is indispensable to study Chinese ceramics. Due to the lack of written sources of Vietnamese ceramic production, this dissertation utilizes sources on the well-researched (and evidenced by written sources) ceramic production and organization in China. Through maps, literature, local gazetteers, and merchant manuals in China, we can learn how Chinese potters worked. Consequently, we adhere to Chinese resources to understand Vietnamese ceramic production. However, in recent years, through excavations and increased research in Vietnam, this dissertation also uses these findings and new knowledge as its foundation.

The research questions are answered based on the ceramic objects from the various collections, but mainly from the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* and the sources from China. The significance of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* is undeniable, but excavation work around the former residence of Vietnam's royal family proved to be difficult. First of all, the former area of the complete Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* accommodates, among many important Vietnamese government seats, *Hồ Chí Minh's* mausoleum, the Ministry of Defense, and the Vietnamese National Assembly House. It is basically the government district of Vietnam. The sheer size of the complete Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* is phenomenal. However, because it houses important buildings of the Vietnamese government, gaining permission to excavate is very difficult and is granted only by the Vietnamese government itself. Furthermore, when permission had been granted, the excavation had to be conducted within

a very strict timeframe before the team was required to refill the excavation trenches. Funding for the excavations is provided by the government, and it is either conducted by the Institute of Archeology or the Institute of Imperial Studies (sometimes both of these institutes cooperate with the University of Social Sciences and Humanities). Additionally, the execution of the excavations by different parties complicates the management of the excavated artifacts. For instance, the '*Thăng Long - Hà Nội* Heritage Conservation Center (*Trung tâm Bảo tồn Di sản Thăng Long - Hà Nội trực trọng*)' is basically the head of all the excavation works (right under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism). In general, they do cooperative excavation work with the Institute of Archeology or the Institute of Imperial Studies.

Currently, there are four places where the excavated objects are stored. It may be mentioned in this context that these four warehouses are all situated within the area of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. The first warehouse is managed by '*Thăng Long - Hà Nội* Heritage Conservation Center' itself. The second warehouse contains the objects from the 2012 - 2014 excavation works underneath the Vietnam National Assembly (*Tòa nhà Quốc hội Việt Nam*) and its parking lot, which was also called the Rose Garden (*Vườn hồng*). It was designated as 'Excavation Area G'. The head of the second warehouse at the time when the current author received permission to work in the warehouse was Dr. *Trần Anh Dũng*, research associate of the Institute of Archeology. The third warehouse contains objects from the 2002 - 2009 excavation works in the area of the 18 *Hoàng Diệu* and was designated as 'Excavation Area A, B, C, D, and E'. The head of the third warehouse is Prof. *Bùi Minh Trí*, associate professor and director at the Institute of Imperial Citadel Studies (IICS). The fourth warehouse contains objects from the excavation works in the Kinh Thien Palace (*Điện Kính Thiên*) and was designated as 'Excavation Area Kinh Thien'. This excavation area is located in the midst of the Imperial Citadel, where visitors are allowed to enter. Surprisingly, this excavation area is excavated and closed to visitors once a year for a period of a couple of weeks. Officially, the head of this warehouse is the vice president of the Institute of Archeology, *Dr. Hà Văn Cẩn*. However, the fourth warehouse does not house all of the excavated objects. Once the objects are fully registered and further research is done, the objects are returned to the '*Thăng Long - Hà Nội* Heritage Conservation Center'. The trenches of 'Excavation Area A, B, C, D, and E' and the 'Excavation Area Kinh Thien' are not refilled, and visitors can visit the former on bridges, with the latter still being an active excavation area.

Regarding the literature search, in Vietnam, this project mainly worked in two libraries: the library of the VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities (Nishimura Masanari library) and the library 'École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO)'²³. The majority of the

²³ The EFEO played an essential role in the research of Southeast Asia. To this day the EFEO is the contact point for research in and about Southeast Asia. In 1898 the EFEO was founded by a decree, but only in 1900 it received its definitive title, and finally in 1901 its institutional stability was assured. The purpose of its foundation was and is a French society in Asia that would be devoted to the study of the area and the preservation of cultural heritage. The reason why present-day Vietnam (first in Ho Chi Minh City, then it was moved to *Hà Nội*) was chosen as its headquarters was that at that time Indochina was the most important French colony in Asia. The EFEO was determined to make Indochina a center of excellence for French Oriental studies. When

inventory of the library of the VNU consists of the donation of Dr. Nishimura Masanari's private collection, which includes many archeological reports and publications about Vietnamese ceramics. This collection served as a solid foundation for this dissertation project. The same applies to the EFEO library. The historical connection of this institute alone gave rise to many fundamental publications that this library owns. In Germany, the libraries of the 'Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS)' at the University of Heidelberg and the library of the department of Asian and Islamic Art History of the University of Bonn served as a solid foundation for the textual research. In particular, the library of the CATS was helpful, as it is one of the largest centers for Asian media in Germany and Europe. In France, the library of the curator of the Musée Guimet and Musée Cernuschi filled some literature gaps. In Taiwan, the research library of the National Palace Museum and the library of the National Taiwan University also supplemented the literature used for this dissertation project.

Besides the secondary sources, this thesis worked with primary sources like excavated material and museum collections, primarily those of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. While the Imperial Citadel in *Hà Nội* is relatively unknown, it can be compared with the Beijing Imperial City 北京皇城. In the center of the Beijing Imperial City is the famous 'Forbidden City 紫禁城', the former seat of the Chinese *Ming* [明朝] (1368 - 1644) and *Qing* (1644 - 1911) imperial households. The Imperial Citadel was the former seat of the Vietnamese *Lý* to *Nguyễn* dynasties [阮朝]. Both sites served as the residence of the former monarchy and have the same imperial background.

Apart from the collection of the Imperial Citadel, the collections of the province museums in *Nam Định* and *Ninh Bình*, and the collections from two private collections (the Noriko Nishino and Masanari Nishimura Collection and the *Nguyễn Văn Việt* Collection) were involved. The two collections of the provincial museums were used for reference, as they provide examples of what kind of ceramic objects were used and produced in the surrounding provinces of the capital.

Although the ceramic culture in South Vietnam also has a long and sophisticated history, this dissertation focuses on the ceramic culture of Northern Vietnam, as its study is aided by that of Chinese ceramic culture. Culturally, Northern Vietnam has been greater exposed to China, with present-day South Vietnam only having been seized in the 19th century.

On the Chinese side, direct access to ceramic objects was not granted, however, this dissertation utilized the collection on display at the National Palace Museum, Taipei. While

the EFEO dealt with their own history, they acknowledged their role as colonizers. They are aware that the research conducted during the Indochina period took place within the colonial context. Catherine Clémentin-Ojha and Pierre-Yves Manguin, *A Century in Asia: The History of the École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1898-2006*, (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2007), 18-20, 26, 35, 215.

access to the research library and exhibition of the National Palace Museum was available, unfortunately, direct access to their storage rooms and the objects themselves was not granted. As such, the objects of the Palace Museum collection could not be analyzed in the same way as those from the Vietnamese collections, but they serve as a reference for the Chinese ceramics.

Sampling Technique

As mentioned, this study focused on the ceramic collection of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. The permission to access these warehouses is extremely difficult to obtain. When the permission was finally obtained by the author to enter the storage rooms from the 2012 - 2014 excavation works underneath the Vietnam National Assembly (*Tòa nhà Quốc hội Việt Nam*) and its parking lot (Rose Garden *Vườn hồng*), the author had to work as quickly as possible on the objects, as permission could be rescinded at any moment (and this is actually what occurred). Fortunately for the project was the fact that the collections of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* are stored in four different storage rooms, as mentioned above. However, the author was denied access to the excavation objects from the so-called 'Rose Garden Excavation' or the 'Excavation Area G'. The author was able to analyze over 300 objects before access was revoked, but considering that the storage room has hundreds of thousands of ceramic sherds, this is really just a small portion. Nonetheless, the author did what she could to compile a representative assemblage from this collection.

Permission for accessing the storage room of the excavations from the *Kính Thiên* Palace or 'Excavation Area Kinh Thien' was also granted. Fortunately, at the time of research for this dissertation project, the excavated objects from the season of 2021 were displayed in the storage rooms, though many objects had unfortunately already been returned to the '*Thăng Long - Hà Nội* Heritage Conservation Center'. Nearly 500 objects were analyzed from this storage facility. Besides the excavation season of 2021, there were some objects from the excavation season of 2017 (about 30 objects), 2018 (about 130 objects), and 2019 (about 20 objects). Apart from the storage room access, the author attended the excavation (2022 season) for a day. By joining the active excavation work, the author was able to get an idea of how excavation work in Vietnam is. The goal of the excavation season of 2022 was the excavation of the layer of the *Lê* dynasty [黎朝] (1428 - 1789). The excavation team speculated that the area is the so-called 'Dan Tri courtyard', which is the center of the heritage site and the place where the most important national ceremonies took place. It is also the site of the so-called 'Ngu Dao axis', which was the main route of the King when he entered and left the Royal Palace. After excavating an area of nearly 1000m², the excavation team actually discovered the 'Dan Tri courtyard' and the 'Ngu dao axis' from the early *Lê* dynasty. It was paved with large red square bricks. Next to the axis is an auxiliary side path to the east, which

coincides with the eastern side door of *Đoan Môn* Gate (the main gate). Until the discovery of the large red square bricks, it was unknown what type of material the *Lê* dynasty used in their constructions. During the excavation, thousands of artifacts were found, including bricks, tiles, glazed ceramics, crockery, and household utensils from the royal palace. Excavations from 2022 revealed many important results showing that there are many mysteries underneath the main hall of *Kính Thiên* Palace that need to be decoded, especially regarding the detailed and overall structure of 'Dan Tri Courtyard'.²⁴

Regrettably, access to the museum collections was also challenging to obtain. For foreign scholars, it is always obligatory to have an official recommendation letter from a governmental institute. This provides security for the museums. The Institute of Archeology served as a guarantor for the author. The issue with limited access to provincial museums is not restricted to foreign scholars, but also applies to Vietnamese scholars. It may be related to territorial misconceptions on the side of the museum staff. Partial permission to the museum collections of *Nam Định* and *Ninh Bình* was granted for this project. For the provincial museum in *Nam Định*, access to their storage room was very limited and required the constant company of the storage manager. The storage room was in the basement of the museum, and the ceramic collection was stored in wooden cabinets, with glass doors and some bigger or heavier ceramic objects being stored on open shelves. It was possible to analyze 78 objects in total. In the storage room, there were ceramic objects from various dynasties, but the most numerous were from the *Trần* dynasty. The storage manager only allowed the author to see objects from the *Trần* dynasty. There were at least two cabinets full of ceramic objects from the *Lê* dynasty, but after examining two objects from the *Lê* dynasty, the storage manager denied the author further access without explanation.

For the provincial museum in *Ninh Bình*, two days were given to do research in their storage rooms. It was not as organized as the museum in *Nam Định*, but some objects were from well-documented excavations. It was possible to analyze 128 objects in total.

For the Noriko Nishino and Masanari Nishimura collection, the author was lucky enough to personally meet Noriko Nishino, and she gave consent to handle the 39 objects that were still in her private collection. The rest of the objects from the excavation projects of her and her late husband were located in the communal *Kim Lan* Museum before they were all sold on the black market.

For the *Nguyễn Văn Việt* Collection, two days were given to do research in the private storage room. When the author visited the storage room in May of 2022, *Nguyễn Văn Việt* was in the process of labeling his objects to exhibit them in his private museum in the province of *Hòa Bình* (Northern Vietnam). It was possible to analyze 53 objects in total, of which 33 had

²⁴ "Dan Tri Courtyard," Vietnamplus, last modified December 17, 2023, <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/new-major-discoveries-at-hanoi-kinh-thien-palace/245320.vnp>.

certain provenance. These 33 objects were discovered in the *Lục Đầu* River regions, which proves the usage of this river- and ocean-based exchange network.

The ceramic objects from these collections were meticulously photographed in high resolution. The objects were given inventory numbers and color information for the interior and exterior glazes using the Munsell color chart. For the fabrics, the colors were also compiled by using the Munsell color chart, inclusions were noted down, the firing quality was determined, and lastly, the degree of levigation of the fabric.

Research Approach

In this study, the development of Vietnamese ceramic culture is examined from the perspective of the term 'Chinese Cultural Sphere'. An important clarification, however, is that this is not a one-to-one comparison of the two ceramic cultures, but rather a consideration of two ceramic cultures that are inseparable from each other, as their histories are interlinked. In this regard, the dissertation will focus on the following ceramic types on the Vietnamese side: white wares, green wares/celadon, brown pattern wares, and blue&white wares.

The term 'ceramic types' in this project includes the glaze, form, shapes, and decorative motifs on the ceramic objects. These ceramic types in Vietnam represent the adaptation, the 'otherness', and the 'advancement' of Chinese ceramic culture. With 'adaptation', the natural reception of Chinese culture in Vietnam is meant; with 'otherness', the influence of the Indian subcontinent and other Southeast Asian regions is meant; and with 'advancement', the acceptance of Chinese culture, but with local developments, is meant.

Vietnamese ceramics are a vast subject, and there are many ways to approach it. The methods of art historical iconography and archaeological object collection are used. The objects are collected, described, analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated. Through art historical analysis, ceramic objects can be understood and given meaning by describing formal features, examining content or themes, and placing works of art in their historical context. The methods used in this dissertation are a comprehensive collaboration with textual sources from China and Vietnam, the collections of museums and institutes, and the consideration of Vietnamese ceramics as an instrument of political iconography.

Chapter II

Setting the Historical Stage

1. The Historical Context between Vietnam and China

Over centuries, present-day Vietnam has carried many names (*Nam Việt* [南越], *An Nam* [安南], *Đại Việt* [大越], *Lạc Việt* [雒越]²⁵) or simply as ‘Yue [越]²⁵’. As mentioned before, the term ‘Yue [越]’ was used in China for the categorization of various ethnic groups in present-day South China and present-day Northern Vietnam. The Chinese considered the ‘Yue’ people as ‘barbaric’, who, inter alia, tattooed their whole bodies. Linguistic research suggests that all the ‘Yue’ peoples were Austroasiatic²⁶ speakers.²⁷

The analysis of the term ‘Yue [越]’ and its association with the question of ethnicity and identity in the context of Vietnam and China is another discourse, which will not be further discussed in this dissertation. The last thing that is mentioned here regarding the term ‘Yue’ is that Vietnam is only a part of the bigger picture. The earliest term by which ancient Vietnam was known in Chinese official records is *Lạc* [雒]. The Chinese ethnically categorize the Vietnamese as people, or rather ‘barbarians’ from the South. The name ‘*Việt Nam*’ did not appear until the last empire of the *Nguyễn* dynasty [阮朝] (1802 - 1945). In 1803, the envoys of the *Nguyễn* dynasty traveled to the Manchu court in Beijing to establish diplomatic relations with the *Qing* Empire (1644 - 1911). The desire to name their country *Nam Việt* [南越] in Chinese met with strong opposition from the hosts, as it recalled the kingdom of *Nam Việt* founded by *Zhao Tuo*²⁸

²⁵ The Chinese character for ‘Yue’ 越 is a modern one, in addition ‘Yue’ can also be written with this character ‘粵’. It was first written using the pictograph “戣” for an ax (a homophone), in oracle bone and bronze inscriptions of the late Shang dynasty (c. 1200 BCE), and later as ‘越’. This character could have also indicated how the ‘Yue’ were known and that would be a race that hunted, perpetually moved, carrying bow and arrow, ax and javelin.

West, *Insight Guides Vietnam*, 29.

²⁶ Austroasiatic is a language that is spoken mainly in mainland Southeast Asia. Modern Vietnamese and Mon-Khmer identified as Austroasiatic.

Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 20.

²⁷ Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, 39-43.

²⁸ *Zhao Tuo* Triệu Đà (BCE 253 - BCE 137), who was a commander in the army of the *Qin* court, was the founder of the kingdom of *Nam Việt*. When Qin Shi Huang Di 秦始皇帝, the first emperor of the Chinese Imperial dynasty, died in 206 BCE his empire fell apart. *Zhao Tuo* used this weak phase and declared himself ruler of his new kingdom. Apparently after seizing power in the Red River Delta, he married a Vietnamese wife and ruled through the local aristocratic lords. The kingdom of *Nam Việt* existed until the reconquest of the *Han* court.

Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 158, 256.

Although *Zhao Tuo* was a Chinese general, Vietnamese historians remembered him as a king who defended Vietnam against Chinese aggressions. *Zhao Tuo* has a good reputation in China and in Vietnam. In China he is remembered as a maverick imperial official, who was the first Chinese ruler of a remote region, and the Vietnamese remembered him as a great ruler, who was against the *Han* dynasty.

Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, 26-27.

[趙佗], a former Official of the *Qin* court [秦朝] (221 BCE - 206 BCE), at the end of the third century near present-day *Guangzhou* [廣州] (Canton), which caused the *Qin* court a lot of trouble. Therefore, the name was finally reversed. At present, the Chinese term for ‘*Việt Nam*’ is *yuenan* [越南]. Before the request of the *Nguyễn* envoy, Vietnam was known as *An Nam Annan* [安南], literally meaning ‘Pacified South’. As mentioned before, this term emerged through the *Tang* dynasty (618 - 907 CE) when they declared Vietnam as the ‘Protectorate of Annam’ or Protectorate General to Pacify the South (*An Nam đô hộ phủ* [安南都護府]) in 679.²⁹

In the ‘Gazetteer of Foreign Lands’ *Zhu Fan Zhi* [諸蕃志], a *Song* dynasty [宋朝] (960 - 1279) work collection of countries and various products from outside China by *Zhao Rukuo* [趙汝适] (1170-1231), the ‘Maritime Trade Supervisor at *Quanzhou*’ (*Quanzhou* was imperial China’s major port for foreign traders), the northern part of Vietnam was mentioned under the name of *Jiaozhi Giao Chi* [交趾]³⁰ and part of the southern part of Vietnam was mentioned under the name of *Champa* (*Chăm Pa* [占城]). This two-volume work collection contains important information about the people and traded commodities in Southeast Asia during the *Song* dynasty. *Zhao Rukuo* composed this work in 1224 - 1225 based on information he gathered from earlier Chinese sources and foreign merchants whom he had interviewed himself.³¹ In 1911, Friedrich Hirth and William Woodville Rockhill translated the whole work, and in 2020, Dr. Shao-yun Yang, an Associate Professor at Denison University, published his revised translated version of the first volume.

According to the translations, the people of *Jiaozhi* were barefoot, and their land ‘*produces agarwood, Penglai agarwood, gold, silver, iron, cinnabar, pearls, cowries, rhinoceros horn, ivory, kingfisher feathers, giant clams, salt, lacquer, and kapok*’. They were in a tributary system with the *Song* empire, which meant that they annually presented the *Song* empire with goods. However, Dr. Yang remarked that the *Song* emperor tried to reconquer *Jiaozhi* in 981, but failed. So, in the end, the *Song* emperor agreed that *Jiaozhi* became a part of the Chinese tributary system (which will be further explained in the following). Furthermore, in the remarks, the work collection is speaking about the maritime trade relations between the *Song* dynasty

²⁹ May, *Die Nachbarn im Süden – frühe Keramik und Bronze aus Vietnam*, 7.

³⁰ *Giao Chi* is an ancient administrative term for the Red River Delta, which was used by the Chinese. It literally means ‘intertwined feet’ or ‘crossed toes’. This term may have derived from the Chinese belief that the ‘barbarians’ in the south slept in communal fashion with their feet together and their heads pointing outwards. Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 88.

³¹ ‘Gazetteer of Foreign Lands’, last modified May 13, 2024, <https://arcg.is/1Cj59u>.

and *Jiaozhi*, which were not on a private basis. For strategic reasons, the *Song* government consistently excluded *Jiaozhi* from its maritime trade system and only allowed overland trade through border markets.³²

Vietnam under Chinese Rule (Bắc thuộc [北屬])

The occupation of Vietnam by China throughout history can roughly be divided into four phases. From 111 BCE until 39 CE, the northern part of present-day Vietnam became a province of the Imperial Chinese Empire; this phase is also called the 'First Chinese domination'. The 'Second Chinese domination' in Vietnam was from 43 CE until 544 CE. The approximately three years that Vietnam evaded from China was the result of the revolt of the '*Trung* sisters (*Hai Bà Trưng* [仁婆徵])³³. The resistance did not last long and resulted in the 'Second Chinese domination'. The 'Third Chinese domination' lasted from 602 to 905 or rather 939, with the so-called 'Battle of Bạch Đằng River (*Trận Bạch Đằng* [白藤江之戰])'.³⁴ The 'Fourth Chinese domination' from 1407 to 1427 was also the last Chinese domination over Vietnam. The period when Vietnam was dominated under the rule of Imperial China is also known in Vietnam as *Bắc thuộc* and in China as [越南北属时期].

The 'Fourth Chinese domination'

The 'Fourth Chinese domination' may only have occurred because in 1400 *Hồ Quý Ly*³⁵ [胡季犛] (1336 - 1407), a powerful Vietnamese Mandarin, took advantage of the political turmoil in

³² 'Gazetteer of Foreign Lands', last modified May 13, 2024, <https://arccg.is/1Cj59u>

³³ The two sisters, *Trung Trắc* 徵側 and *Trung Nhị* 徵貳, were two highly educated daughters of a *Lạc* lord. They led the revolt against the Chinese administrators, after the dissatisfaction of the Vietnamese people when taxes were raised. The older sister *Trung Trắc* declared herself queen when she successfully banished the Chinese administrators. Although the rebellion of the '*Trung* sisters' did only last for approximately three years, they became cult figures in Vietnamese history for their role as heroic patriots.

Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 258.

³⁴ *Ngô Quyền* 吳權 (897 - 944) was a rebel leader who restored Vietnamese independence from Chinese rule in 939 CE. He fought off Chinese naval troops who sailed down the *Bạch Đằng* river. He embedded thousands of large wooden pikes embedded into the river bed and when the hundreds of Chinese naval troops were caught against the deadly traps, *Ngô Quyền* led his forces in the attack. Hundreds of trapped ships were burned and sabotaged and thousands of Chinese soldiers were killed, which led to a Vietnamese victory. After the battle, he declared himself king of the independent kingdom of *Nam Việt*. His new capital was in *Cổ Loa*, the former capital of Vietnam before the Chinese conquest.

In 1287, *Trần Hưng Đạo* 陳興道 (1228 - 1300) used the same tactics in the *Bạch Đằng* river and successfully fought off the Mongol invaders.

Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 23, 167-168.

Nowadays, in Vietnamese history the incident in the *Bạch Đằng* river is always told as an act of national pride. It is considered a prime example of how the Vietnamese people successfully defended themselves against the power from China. Precisely for this reason, there is much funding from the Vietnamese government, which is scientifically investigating this historical event.

³⁵ In Vietnam *Hồ Quý Ly* has a relatively bad reputation. But in his short lived *Hồ* dynasty 茹胡 (1400 - 1407) he was quite progressive. He attempted to resolve fundamental problems, which brought the downfall of the *Trần* dynasty. He launched a number of reforms in the fields of civil and military administration, education, and finance and tax system. He even limited the amount of land held by powerful mandarins and aristocracy. He had the misfortune to seize power in Vietnam when the Ming court was becoming increasingly powerful and who had plans to expand southwards.

Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 98.

Vietnam and China. He replaced the child emperor of Vietnam (the last of the *Trần* dynasty), with his son and proclaimed a new dynasty - the *Hồ* dynasty [胡朝] (1400 - 1407). *Hồ Quý Ly* sent tribute to the Chinese court to get recognition of the new Vietnamese dynasty. However, the *Ming* court (1368 - 1644) used this opportunity to invade Vietnam. They accused the establishment of a new dynasty by *Hồ Quý Ly* of being a treasonous act and the need to punish him to protect the Vietnamese people. Overall, he was accused of twenty crimes, the most serious of which was that he had murdered the legitimate *Trần* ruler and his family and that they had deceived and insulted the Chinese authorities by sending a criminal as an envoy. Allegedly, China wanted to restore the legitimate *Trần* dynasty and restore harmony and well-being to the country and the region. The *Ming* court used massive force, but they met fierce resistance. Eventually, tens of thousands were killed before the Vietnamese capital was taken and *Hồ Quý Ly* captured. The *Ming* court never had the intention of restoring independent Vietnamese rule. After the defeat, Vietnam was immediately incorporated into the Chinese imperial empire as a province under the old name of *Jiaozhi*.³⁶

The Transition Time between Chinese Rule and Vietnamese Independence

From the early *Qin* dynasty (221 BCE - 206 BCE) to the *Tang* dynasty (618 - 907 CE), until the first 'indigenous' Vietnamese dynasty, a pattern of resistance towards Chinese rulership developed in Vietnam. In addition, successful revolts like the rebellion of the 'Trung sisters', had shown that the Vietnamese had the will and capability to fight for their freedom. To get rid of Chinese rulership over Vietnam, the Vietnamese would take advantage of any Chinese weakness. The list of the so-called Vietnamese national heroes is very long, but some individuals stand out, like the example of *Lý Nam Đế* [李南帝] (503 - 548 CE). *Lý Nam Đế* was the first king of *Vạn Xuân* [萬春] (literal translation 'Ten Thousand Springs'), one of the many names under which present-day Vietnam was known for. He was of Chinese descent. At the end of the *Wang Mang* [王莽]³⁷ period, his ancestors fled to *Nam Việt*, where they remained for seven generations. He was a regional magistrate, who was frustrated at the rulership of the *Liang* dynasty [梁朝] (502 - 557 CE). In 541, he revolted and proclaimed himself ruler of *Nam Việt*. He built up an administration and a court. Although his regency did not last long, his

³⁶ Stuart-Fox, *A Short History of China and Southeast Asia: Tribute, Trade and Influence*, 81-82.

³⁷ *Wang Mang* (45 BCE - 23 CE) was a *Han* official before he himself proclaimed himself emperor of the new *Xin* dynasty 新朝 (9 - 23 CE).

Chapuis, *A History of Vietnam: From Hong Bang to Tu Duc*, 26.

example shows that even though he was of Chinese descent, he identified himself as a citizen of Vietnam. He fought for its residents and adapted to Vietnamese customs.³⁸

His short reign is also known as the 'Early Lý' dynasty *Nhà Tiên Lý* [家前李].

In Vietnamese history, two historical figures are considered to be significant fighters for Vietnamese independence from Chinese rule - *Ngô Quyền* [吳權] (897 - 944 CE) and *Đinh Bộ Lĩnh* [丁部領] (924 - 979 CE). The *Ngô* dynasty (939 - 965 CE) and the *Đinh* dynasty [丁朝] (968 - 980 CE) were both short-lived, but crucial for Vietnamese independence. The *Ngô* dynasty was the first independent dynasty in Vietnam after the detachment from Chinese domination. *Ngô Quyền* defeated the Chinese in the famous 'Battle of Bạch Đằng River' and afterward declared himself king of the kingdom of *Nam Việt*. He tried to send a tribute mission to the Southern *Han* [南漢] (917 - 971 CE) emperor, but at the time, China was also in turmoil, in addition to his own unstable reign. After his death in 944, the so-called 'Anarchy of the 12 Warlords (*Loạn 12 sứ quân*) [十二使君之亂]' prevailed. Only with the rise of the *Đinh* dynasty was peace restored. *Đinh Bộ Lĩnh* was the illegitimate child of a provincial governor under the *Ngô* dynasty and the most powerful lord among the twelve warlords. When he founded his new kingdom with the name '*Đại Cồ Việt* [大瞿越]' (968 - 1054 CE), he moved the capital to his hometown *Hoa Lư*, at the southern edge of the Red River Delta. To consolidate his legitimacy in relation to the previous dynasty, he married his wife, who was of the *Ngô* family. At first, he was careful not to receive negative attention from China, but eventually, he declared himself 'Emperor *Hoàng Đế* [皇帝]', thus declaring Vietnam's independence from China. However, several years later, he pacified the newly established *Song* dynasty by sending a tribute mission to demonstrate his kingdom's allegiance to the *Song* court. The new *Song* emperor recognized *Đại Cồ Việt* as a tributary state, and Vietnam was known as *Jiaozhi* in China again. *Đinh Bộ Lĩnh* and his eldest son *Đinh Liễn* [丁璉] (940 - 979 CE) were assassinated in their sleep in 979, leaving the throne to his sole surviving male *Đinh Đế Toàn* [丁帝璿] (974 - 1001 CE). The disturbances in Vietnam left the *Song* court an opportunity to try to invade Vietnam again in 981. However, *Lê Hoàn* [黎桓] (941 - 1005 CE), a general under *Đinh Bộ Lĩnh*'s army, prevented the reconquest by China. *Lê Hoàn* was rumored to be the lover of Queen *Dương*

³⁸ Chapuis, *A History of Vietnam: From Hong Bang to Tu Duc*, 34.

Vân Nga [楊雲娥] (? - 1000 CE), the wife of *Đinh Bộ Lĩnh*. When *Lê Hoàn* seized power, he declared a new dynasty - the Early *Lê* dynasty [家前黎] (980 - 1009 CE).³⁹

This period was also called the *Đinh-pre-Lê* period. During this period, it was the first time that the *Đại La Citadel*⁴⁰ [大羅城], which was built by the Chinese in the 7/8th century in present *Hà Nội*, was targeted to be the new fortification for the Early *Lê* dynasty. The *Đại La Citadel* is the predecessor of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* – ‘*Hoàng Thành Thăng Long* [昇龍皇城]’.

Excavations revealed many remains, including fifteen pieces of architecture of the *Đinh-pre-Lê* period, artifacts like red bricks with inscriptions, ceramics such as jars, bottles, etc., tiles with decorative motifs like lotuses or phoenixes, and earthen graves with one or two jars at the head. A burial custom, which was oriented towards the *Đông Sơn* burial tradition. Not only was the burial custom oriented towards the *Đông Sơn* culture, but also the decorative motifs on the ceramic objects. Furthermore, the construction bricks, which had inscriptions supporting the independence and sovereign *Đại Cồ Việt* state and were custom-made, demonstrate the strong Vietnamese spirit, which continued and completely flourished in the successive *Lý* dynasty.⁴¹

During the *Đinh-pre-Lê* period, *Lê Hoàn* conquered the northern part of the Champa kingdom, which brought some Cham influences on Vietnamese culture.⁴²

The Establishment of the Lý Dynasty

The establishment of the *Lý* dynasty had far-reaching effects on Vietnamese history. *Lý Thái Tổ*⁴³ [李太祖] (974 - 1028), the founder of the *Lý* dynasty, decided to move his newly established empire from *Hoa Lư* to the fertile Red River Delta and named it *Thăng Long* [昇龍] – ‘The Ascending Dragon’. The reason for naming this land *Thăng Long* is the story behind *Lý Thái Tổ* spotting a golden dragon image flying up into the sky. In 1010, he commissioned the construction of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. The commission of *Lý Thái Tổ* to build the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* is still very much appreciated by the Vietnamese to this day.

³⁹ Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 67-68, 166-168.

⁴⁰ The *Đại La Citadel*, was also called the *La Thành Citadel* 羅城, which was built on an ancient citadel site and was repaired and strengthened by the construction of a large earth wall in 791.

Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 59.

⁴¹ Tông, *Văn hiến Thăng Long - Bằng chứng khảo cổ học Thăng Long Civilization - Archaeological Evidence*, 155, 157.

⁴² West, *Insight Guides Vietnam*, 47.

⁴³ His personal name was *Lý Công Uẩn*. He was posthumously named as ‘*Lý Thái Tổ*’. There are many rumors about his family background. One of these rumors is that he is an orphan, who was raised in a Buddhist temple. Later on he became a palace guard at *Hoa Lư*, the capital at the time. Apparently, *Lý Công Uẩn* seized the throne through court intrigue. One of his actions as a new ruler was to move the capital from *Hoa Lư* to *Đại La*. He renamed it *Thăng Long*. He may have moved the capital because of economical and political reasons. The new capital was centrally located in the heart of the Red River Delta and offered space for a new administrative center for a growing society. The reign of *Lý Công Uẩn* provided a firm foundation for the next generations. Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 143-144.

Even after thousands of years, he is still revered as a folk hero, and his statue stands in the heart of the city of *Hà Nội* – the *Hồ Hoàn Kiếm* Lake [還劍湖]. *Thăng Long* officially became the capital of an independent and unified state. Hence, 1010 was the year people in *Thăng Long* (present *Hà Nội* [河內]⁴⁴) and throughout Vietnam used to determine the age of their capital city.⁴⁵

In some cases, Vietnam has indeed benefited from the Chinese occupation, but with certain limitations. Hence, the resistance of armed rebellions grew, and the result of this new feeling of national pride was the independence of Vietnam. The tenth century was a turning point in the history of Vietnam. After nearly ten centuries, the first consistent imperial Vietnamese dynasty was established – the *Lý* dynasty. Although they were not the first independent dynasty of Vietnam, it was during this time period that a strong nation began to emerge with a Vietnamese identity. The new dynasty established their new empire in *Hà Nội* and soon expanded their territory northwards over the hill tribes on the Chinese border and southwards into Cham territory. Maritime trade began to grow in Vietnam – previously, trade was only conducted with China by land routes – and ships were now also used as a means of transport.⁴⁶ The new *Lý* rulers strived to rebuild the country and tried to avoid the re-invasion by the Chinese *Song* dynasty. A new feeling of national pride arose, and the urge to restore the national culture simultaneously grew. Many handicrafts, like ceramics, weaving, bronze casting, and stone carving, were restored and developed. Ceramics made a further step forward and attained high quality, in terms of technique and art. For the first national Imperial court society, after the Chinese dominance, porous and glazed ceramics were diversely and finely produced, such as jars, cooking rice containers, teapots, etc. With the *Lý* dynasty, Vietnamese ceramics traditions began to become clearer. The main motifs on ceramic objects were flowers, leaves, birds, fishes, cocks, elephants, and sometimes human figures. Especially Buddhism had a deep impact on the ceramic decorative motifs.⁴⁷

During this period of time, kiln sites in *Bát Tràng* and *Chu Đậu* became two large ceramic centers.

⁴⁴ In present time the capital of Vietnam is known as *Hà Nội*. But following the complex Vietnamese history, the name of Vietnam's capital depends on its respective ruler. With the ascension of the *Lý* dynasty, the capital was called *Thăng Long*. With the ascending of the *Lê* dynasty, the capital was called *Đông Kinh* 東京 (literally meaning 'eastern capital'). It was only during the last Vietnamese *Nguyễn* dynasty in 1831 that the capital was called *Hà Nội*. The capital's name changed frequently, especially under the Chinese occupation. The term *Hà Nội* literally means 'within the river', and it was adopted from the surrounding territories. Although the name of the capital of Vietnam already changed in 1831, the old name 'Thăng Long' is still used by many factories and companies.

Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 91.

⁴⁵ Tổng Trung Tín and Bùi Minh Trí, *Thăng Long – Hà Nội Thousand-Year History Underground*. (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 2010), 1.

⁴⁶ Brown, *The Ceramics of South-East Asia: Their Dating and Identification*. *Oxford in Asia studies in ceramics*, 19.

⁴⁷ Chương, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 152.

2. The Chinese Cultural Sphere in Vietnam *Đông Á văn hóa quyển* [東亞文化圈]

Material and immaterial cultural goods shape the self-image of a society as well as its practices of communication. Literature, philosophy, music, or art play a crucial role in the cultural sphere. The term ‘cultural sphere’ needs to be understood as an ensemble of cultural events and activities that traverse historical, political, and economic realms. In this dissertation, the term ‘Chinese Cultural Sphere’ dominates throughout the researched subjects. Regarding the category of literature, the ‘Chinese Cultural Sphere’ refers to the geographical areas where classic Chinese was historically used by the elites and educated commoners. In these areas, the Chinese Confucian classical teachings about family and social order were prevalent, the official examination system was applied, and the imperial Chinese monarchy and bureaucracy served as models. For hundreds of years, into the twentieth century, the cultural groups in the areas we now know as China, Japan, Korea, Ryūkyū kingdom⁴⁸, and Vietnam shared many political and social values, religious beliefs, and artistic and literary traditions. These common cultural features were recorded and transmitted in the same basic written language - classical or literary Chinese (known as *guwen/wenyan* [古文/文言] in China, *Kanbun* [漢文] in Japan, *Hanmun* [한문] in Korea, and *Hán văn* [漢文] in Vietnam). The umbrella term for this shared written language is ‘literary Sinitic’ - a term designed to recognize the fact that although *guwen/wenyan* originally developed in China, it had a vibrant life of its own in other areas of East Asia. Unfortunately, past studies of documents written in literary Sinitic generally had a China-centered focus. It is important to recognize, however, that Japan, Korea, and Vietnam are not, and have never been, merely pale reflections of China. Their unique countries’ histories, diverse cultural approaches, and their individual use of the literary Sinitic should not be downplayed. Within the aforementioned countries, there were profound differences in dialects, languages, ethnic identities, local customs, and social classes. These countries once shared a common cultural aspect and replaced it with their individual systems of writing based on vernacular speech.⁴⁹

Just as the Chinese Cultural Sphere was ubiquitous in Vietnamese literature, political systems, music, and philosophy, so was the case in Vietnamese ceramic culture. Simultaneously, Vietnamese ceramic culture has never been merely a pale reflection of Chinese ceramic culture.

⁴⁸ The Ryūkyū kingdom was a kingdom in the Ryūkyū islands, which are a chain of islands of present-day Japan, from 1429 - 1879.

⁴⁹ Nanxiu Qian, *Reexamining the Sinosphere - Cultural Transmissions and Transformations in East Asia*, (New York: Cambria Press, 2020), Preface xiii-xiv, 221.

Concurrent to the term 'Chinese Cultural Sphere' is the term 'Indian Culture Sphere'. The 'Indian Culture Sphere' refers to the geographical areas where the Indian culture influenced the respective country. In this context, it is present in South Vietnam. However, the Indianization of South Vietnam is not the main focus of this dissertation, so only a few important dates and places are briefly mentioned in the following and will not be further discussed.

One important location is the port of *Óc Eo* in the *Thoại Sơn* District in the *An Giang* Province of southern Vietnam. *Óc Eo* belonged to the Kingdom of Funan *Phù Nam* [扶南], which occupied large areas of present-day South Vietnam and Cambodia from the 1st to the 6th century CE. This kingdom had an advanced agricultural civilization that cultivated rice, beans, cotton, raised pigs, sheep, and elephants. They worshiped Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva (all three of them are deities of Hinduism). Archeological excavations at the port side revealed artifacts such as Roman coins, Hellenic coins, Chinese bronze, pearls and jewelry, Indian rings, and many more. In exchange, the Kingdom of Funan exported gold, silver, bronze, copper, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, cotton, sandalwood, ivory, and many more.⁵⁰

Another important site is the *Champa*, Cham, or the kingdom of Champa. It was a former kingdom, which extended across the coast of present-day central and southern Vietnam. In Vietnam, it was also known as '*Chiêm Thành*'. Throughout the centuries, Vietnam and Champa were contesting powers. The Vietnamese policy was to expand their territory southward, but this meant confrontation with the kingdom of Champa. One of the reasons for the southward expansion was the increasing population in Vietnam. Over the years of the Vietnamese attacks, the Champa were forced to move further south, and at the same time, their military power decreased. In 1832, the *Nguyễn* dynasty annexed the last Champa territory, which was followed by intensive campaigns of wiping out the Champa cultural heritage through Vietnamization. At present, the Champa are a small ethnic minority in Vietnam.⁵¹

Although the culture of the Chams was annexed by the Vietnamese southward expansion, most of their brilliant architectural and sculptural vestiges related to their religious life can still be seen in present-day Vietnam. The religious belief of the Chams was polytheistic. They were influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, and the prevailing image was that of a woman, who was regarded as the mother of the nation.⁵²

⁵⁰ Helen West, *Insight Guides Vietnam*, (London: APA Publications Ltd, 1995), 30-31.

⁵¹ Trần Kỳ, Phương, and Bruce M. Lockhart, eds. *The Cham of Vietnam: History, Society and Art*. SINGAPORE: NUS Press, 2011. Accessed April 3, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1qv2rd>.

⁵² West, *Insight Guides Vietnam*, 77-78.

Indian culture spread throughout the major part of Southeast Asia. Hinduism, Buddhism, their accompanying architecture and religious art, and religious literary texts affected the pattern of state formation and eventually became part of their national identities.⁵³

The influence of Indian culture also plays an essential role in Vietnamese history. Especially in South Vietnam, the impact of Indian culture is still visible, but it will not be further elaborated on in this dissertation.

In Chinese imperial history, China has linguistically and politically identified itself as the center of the world. They labeled themselves as 'Middle Kingdom [中國]'. The neighboring countries like Japan, Korea, Ryūkyū kingdom, and Vietnam acknowledged Imperial China as the source of important cultural influences. In the early days of the Chinese Cultural Sphere, beginning with the *Qin* dynasty (221 BCE - 206 BCE) and particularly the *Han* dynasty [漢朝] (206 BCE - 220 CE), the invasions into Vietnam through the Imperial courts in China brought Chinese influences, including the Chinese written language and for this dissertation relevant pottery techniques. During the time span of 111 BCE to 939 CE, several dynasties of Imperial China occupied present-day Northern Vietnam. The historical relationship between Vietnam and China varies from conquest to trade and diplomacy. As a result of these contacts, the Vietnamese borrowed a wide range of Chinese political, military, legal, educational, and economic institutions, as well as philosophical, religious, artistic, architectural, musical, and literary facets. From the tenth century onward, cultural interactions between Vietnam and China increasingly took place within the framework of the so-called tributary system, which will be further analyzed in the following chapter.⁵⁴

From the end of China's nearly thousand-year occupation of Northern Vietnam in the tenth century until well into the French colonial era, most Vietnamese intellectuals engaged in some form of Chinese-style classical scholarship, aspiring to be part of a distinctively Sinitic 'domain of manifest civility Văn hiến chi bang [文獻之邦]'. From at least the thirteenth century onward (and especially from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries), the use of the unique *chữ nôm*

⁵³ Catherine Clémentin-Ojha and Pierre-Yves Manguin, *A Century in Asia The History of the École française d'Extrême-Orient 1898-2006* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2007), 130-131.

⁵⁴ Qian, *Reexamining the Sinosphere - Cultural Transmissions and Transformations in East Asia*, Introduction p. xxi-xxiii.

[字喃]⁵⁵ or *nôm* script had the effect of making works identified with other cultural traditions seem somewhat more ‘Vietnamese’. However, on the whole, in Vietnam, as in Korea and Japan, literary Sinitic tended to overshadow indigenously developed scripts.⁵⁶

Nowadays, written Vietnamese⁵⁷ is called ‘*Chữ Quốc Ngữ*’ (which literally means ‘script of the national language’). It is the modern Latin writing script or writing system for Vietnamese, which started with the early contacts with Jesuit missionaries in the 17th century. It uses the Latin script based on Romance languages, and the Vietnamese alphabet uses letters with diacritics, which can even stack twice on the same letter. Since 1945, with the proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, ‘*Chữ Quốc Ngữ*’ has been the official written language in Vietnam.⁵⁸

The classical Chinese language was extremely well suited for transnational circulations, not only because any text written in it could be read by literate elites and commoners in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, but also because these elites and commoners could exchange ideas in personal encounters through the practice of ‘brush-conversations’. The involved parties did not share a common spoken language, but they did share a common written language. The use of classical Chinese in this way enabled envoys from various countries in East Asia to communicate easily and efficiently. One example is the book ‘Classic of Changes (*Dịch Kinh Yijing*) [易經]. It is written in classical Chinese, therefore, it can be read by the elites and commoners in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. At the same time, however, the ‘Classic

⁵⁵ *Chữ nôm* literally means ‘Words from the South’. It is a written form of the vernacular Vietnamese, a language of resistance to Chinese rule. With the Chinese rule came the Chinese characters. Like many ancient societies not everyone in Vietnam was able to write and read. Only the elite and scholars had this benefit. The exact date of the introduction of *Chữ nôm* and the creator is unknown, but Professor *Dương Quảng Hàm* (1898-1946) from the ‘*Trường Trung học phổ thông Quốc gia Chu Văn An* (Chu Văn An High School)’ (one of the oldest High School in *Hà Nội*; established during the French colonization in 1908) discovered the official title of a folk hero *Phùng Hưng* 馮興, who in 791 temporarily successfully rose against the Chinese *Tang* rule, and for that reason receive the title ‘*Bố Cái Đại Vương* The Great King (who is like the) Father and Mother (of the people) 布蓋’. The Chinese characters does not make any sense, but in Vietnamese or rather *Chữ nôm* ‘*Bố Cái* 布蓋’ means father and mother. Although there is not much more than the mere title, Professor *Dương Quảng Hàm* assumed that *Chữ nôm* already existed in the late 8th century. Another evidence for *Chữ nôm* is the stele at *Hệ Thành Sơn* in Ning Binh Province, North Vietnam. The inscription on the stele is from 1343, under the rule of *Trần Dụ Tông* 陳裕宗 (1336 – 1369). The inscriptions listed twenty Vietnamese village names in *Chữ nôm*. In the *Chữ nôm* system every Classical Chinese character has a Vietnamese pronunciation. Basically, it is a combination of Chinese characters designed to transcribe the Vietnamese spoken language. Chinese loan words have been called ‘*Từ Hán Việt*’ 詞漢越 or ‘Sino-Vietnamese Vocabulary’. Although there was resistance against the Chinese influence, many Vietnamese scholars, poets, writers and the education system preferred to use Classical Chinese characters. For a long time *Chữ nôm* was not accepted by the elite, hence, there are rarely official documents in *Chữ nôm*. Nearly all official documents were written in Classical Chinese and only folk tales were usually written in *Chữ nôm*. *Chữ nôm* as well as Chinese characters were used until the introduction of the Roman script by Catholic missionaries in the 20th century.

Đình Hoà Nguyễn, “Chữ Nôm the Demotic System of Writing in Vietnam.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 79, no. 4 (1959): 270-74. doi:10.2307/595134, last modified December 18, 2018, www.jstor.org/stable/595134.

⁵⁶ Qian, *Reexamining the Sinosphere - Cultural Transmissions and Transformations in East Asia*, 22.

⁵⁷ The origin of spoken Vietnamese language remains a subject of debate. It is generally accepted to be a mixture of Austro-Asiatic languages sharing similarities with the Mon-Khmer, Thai and Muong languages. To this day Vietnamese still incorporates thousands of Chinese words. In addition to the official Vietnamese language, the ethnic minorities in Vietnam speak their own distinct languages and dialects.

West, *Insight Guides Vietnam*, 137.

⁵⁸ West, *Insight Guides Vietnam*, 137.

of Changes' was approached differently by each reader. It came to be used to validate or underpin other cultural traditions, including belief systems that were challenging to the state. Hence, Confucians found Confucian messages in the 'Classic of Changes'; Buddhists found Buddhist messages in it; Daoists⁵⁹ found Daoist messages in it; Muslims found Islamic messages, and so on. All along, the symbolism of the book could be found in everyday life, from popular drama, martial arts, science, and medicine to artistic, literary, and musical works.⁶⁰

The 'Classic of Changes' was probably introduced into Vietnam at about the same time that it reached Japan and Korea, but it did not become influential until the Lê dynasty (1428 - 1789).

During that period, Neo-Confucianism became state orthodoxy, and the 'Classic of Changes' was studied both as a Confucian⁶¹ classic at the Imperial College and as a divination manual at the Ministry of Rites. Throughout the Lê dynasty, ideas derived from the 'Classic of Changes' influenced many areas of Vietnamese culture, from politics, music, art, literature, and mathematics to medicine, agriculture, geography, religion, and a wide range of divinatory theories and practices. Most Vietnamese manuscripts on the 'Classic of Changes' are undated or anonymous, and some have been attributed to more than one author. Furthermore, there are very few extant printed books on the 'Classic of Changes' in Vietnam. One reason is that the printing technique in premodern Vietnam was not as well developed as it was in China. In addition, great numbers of Vietnamese books disappeared during centuries of warfare, were destroyed during the Ming dynasty's infamous book-burning in the early fifteenth century, and, in more recent times, were stolen or eradicated by politically inspired 'anti superstition' campaigns of the government. The book-burning event by the Ming court was particularly devastating because its draconian goal was to destroy all written and printed materials that promoted indigenous Vietnamese rites and customs.⁶²

By completely eradicating written records, the Ming court hoped for an easier 'takeover' of the

⁵⁹ Daoism or Taoism *Đạo giáo* 道教, was one of the major religions in Vietnam. Daoism originated from China and the philosophical approach of becoming one with the universe and harmony with nature resonated with Vietnamese needs at the time. Over the course of time, Daoism developed into a popular religion, which incorporated elements of spirit worship and deification of famous personalities.

Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 231.

⁶⁰ Qian, *Reexamining the Sinosphere - Cultural Transmissions and Transformations in East Asia*, 4-6.

⁶¹ Confucianism was initiated by Confucius *Khổng Tử* 孔子 (BCE 551 - 479). He is considered to be the greatest Chinese philosopher. The importance of Confucius lies in the direction he gave to Chinese thought, to its humanism, and to its social and political focus. He wanted to restore social order and moral propriety in an age of growing political anarchy and social chaos. According to Confucius, an ordered society required the inculcation of moral qualities, a defined social hierarchy and the proper example of those who stood at the apex of society.

Martin Stuart-Fox, *A Short History of China and Southeast Asia: Tribute, Trade and Influence*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 11-13.

⁶² Qian, *Reexamining the Sinosphere - Cultural Transmissions and Transformations in East Asia*, 22-23.

Vietnamese population by imposing their own culture and tradition.

Chinese civil service examination system in Vietnam

As part of the 'Chinese Cultural Sphere', Vietnam adopted the Chinese civil service examination system. The presence of the Chinese civil service examination system had far-reaching implications for Vietnamese culture. In China, the examination system was intended to produce a meritocracy, which is the key to both social and bureaucratic mobility. In the late Lê dynasty and the early Nguyễn dynasty, the civil service examinations followed the Chinese model, but the Vietnamese educational system was relatively undeveloped by Chinese standards. Furthermore, the Vietnamese examinations did not just include Confucian content, but also Buddhist, Daoist, and even geomantic themes.⁶³

The first civil service examinations⁶⁴ in Vietnam began in 1075, and according to some Sino-Vietnamese sources throughout Vietnamese history, these examinations put forth 1894 successful examinees. Prior to the adoption of modern education influenced by European models in the late nineteenth century, the Chinese civil service examinations were the primary producers of intellectuals and scholar-officials in Vietnam. In pre-1919 Vietnam, education was generally divided into two stages: 'primary education' (private schools in local villages), which would be the first stage of learning, preparing the examinee for the traditional imperial civil service examinations, and 'higher education' (public schools in higher administrative units).⁶⁵

The examinations in Vietnam took place at three levels: the baccalaureate took place annually in local centers, the master's took place in regional cities, and the doctorate took place triennially in the imperial palace in the capital. In the capital, the civil service exams took place at the 'Temple of Literature Văn Miếu [文廟]⁶⁶. Additionally, the Imperial Academy ('Quốc Tử Giám', which means 'academy for the children of the state or school for the sons of the nation') was established on the grounds of the 'Temple of Literature' in 1076. In the Imperial Academy, future officials for the bureaucracy in Vietnam were trained. It was established during the Lý

⁶³ Qian, Reexamining the Sinosphere - Cultural Transmissions and Transformations in East Asia, Introduction xxvii-xxviii.

⁶⁴ The civil service exam in Vietnam was intended to find potential candidates for the imperial bureaucracy in Vietnam. Only graduates, who achieved top levels, were placed on a list for the possible entrance into the imperial bureaucracy. But not all top graduates became officials, some preferred a life as a scholar, who taught at the academies. Furthermore, the civil service exam was not egalitarian, because women were excluded from the system. Once French Indochina was established the civil service exam system was abolished.

Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 46-47.

The term 'Indochina' was coined in the early nineteenth century, emphasizing the cultural influence of Indian and Chinese civilizations on the area. The term was later adopted as the name of the colony of French Indochina. French Indochina, also referred to since 1887 as L'Union Indochinoise, comprised present-day Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. At that time Vietnam was divided into Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina.

West, *Insight Guides Vietnam*, 30.

⁶⁵ Qian, Reexamining the Sinosphere - Cultural Transmissions and Transformations in East Asia, 113-114.

⁶⁶ The Temple of Literature was built by Lý Thánh Tông 李聖宗 (1023-1072) in 1070. The Temple of Literature was a place for princes and children of aristocrats and mandarin families to study. It was Vietnam's first National University Quốc Tử Giám 國子監. In the course of time the teaching of Confucius became more and more important, although Buddhism maintained its dominant position during the Lý and Trần dynasties. During the Lê dynasty it was the highest education institute.

Khac Khanh Nguyen and Dinh Quang Tu, "Thang Long in historical breadth," in *Hoàng Thành Thăng Long – Thang Long Imperial Citadel*, ed. Tổng Trung Tín (Hanoi: The Culture Information Publishing House, 2006), 189-190.

dynasty for solely sons of high mandarins. Only in 1433 was it opened to selected commoners recommended by provincial institutes.⁶⁷

Allegedly, during the devastating *Ming* invasion, when temples throughout Vietnam were destroyed, the Temple of Literature was spared out of devotion to Confucius.⁶⁸

From the beginning of the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century, Vietnam enthusiastically embraced the fundamental values associated with various strands of Confucianism. Although Confucianism might have been initially identified with Chinese culture, it transcended through space and ethnicity. Foreign conquerors of China, such as the Mongols and Manchus, employed it selectively for their own purposes, as did the rulers of the *Lê* dynasty and then the *Nguyễn* dynasty.⁶⁹

In the *Tây Sơn* dynasty⁷⁰ [西山朝] (1778 - 1802), the Confucian influence on the Vietnamese government and social system was the lowest. The Vietnamese court promoted the *chữ nôm* script through projects, which translated important texts into the *chữ nôm* script, and they included a section on *chữ nôm* poetry in the civil service examinations. Furthermore, they wanted to use the *chữ nôm* script as an administrative language in the capital. The promotion of an indigenous Vietnamese script suggests that the *Tây Sơn* dynasty deliberately tried to reduce Chinese cultural influences. Eventually, this effort did not work out.⁷¹

The Role of Vietnam as a Transition Zone

A short historical annotation, while present-day Northern Vietnam and *Yunnan* (a province southwest of present-day China) adopted Chinese culture, present-day Central/South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines, and Timor-Leste, were under the influence of Indian religions before splitting between, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. While *Yunnan* became completely absorbed by China, Northern Vietnam and Central/South Vietnam followed a long, strenuous journey toward independence.⁷²

Even though everything from the Vietnamese language to their eating habits reflects the incorporation of two cultural spheres, literature and government administration clearly show Vietnam's affiliation with the Chinese cultural sphere. This is the result of the success of

⁶⁷ Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 46, 108, 142-143.

⁶⁸ Diane Niblack Fox and Nora A. Taylor, *Văn Miếu – Quốc Tử Giám The Temple of Literature*, (Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 1994), 38.

⁶⁹ Qian, Reexamining the Sinosphere - Cultural Transmissions and Transformations in East Asia, 5.

⁷⁰ The *Tây Sơn* dynasty was a short-lived dynasty established after the *Tây Sơn* Rebellion in the 18th century. The *Tây Sơn* Rebellion was led by peasants. The rebellion started in South Vietnam by three brothers from the village of *Tây Sơn* in 1771 against corruption, misrule of the *Nguyễn* rulers and the demand for land distribution for the poor. After the defeat of the *Nguyễn* lords, they also attacked and defeated the *Trịnh* lords in North Vietnam.

Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 232-233.

⁷¹ Qian, Reexamining the Sinosphere - Cultural Transmissions and Transformations in East Asia, p. 27.

⁷² Chapuis, *A History of Vietnam: From Hong Bang to Tu Duc*, 39.

Chinese dynasties in enforcing cultural and political elements in Vietnam.⁷³

Over time, after Northern Vietnam gained its independence, the Vietnamese rulers expanded their territory southwards, incorporating the kingdom of Champa and part of the Khmer empire, which were both influenced by the Indian subcontinent. This merger was the foundation of present-day Vietnam.

As aforementioned, geographically, Vietnam belongs to Southeast Asia, but no other country in Southeast Asia has adapted to Chinese culture like Vietnam. If we take a look at the present Vietnamese culture, we can see the influence of which North and Central/South Vietnam were exposed.

Can Vietnam be considered a transition zone between the 'Chinese Cultural Sphere' and Southeast Asian regions, incorporating influences from both cultures? The historical background on how Vietnam became Vietnam allows Vietnam to be considered as a transition zone between the 'Chinese Cultural Sphere' and Southeast Asian regions. The role of Vietnam as a transition zone between the 'Chinese Cultural Sphere' and Southeast Asian regions plays an important role in Vietnamese ceramic culture. This difference manifests in the ceramic culture in Vietnam. The forms, glazes, and motifs of ceramic objects from Northern Vietnam and Central/South Vietnam differ from each other.

The Historiography of Vietnam

The historiography of Vietnam up until the French colonial era is a good example of the Chinese Cultural Sphere. All of the written records of historical Vietnam, which were mainly from the 13th to 15th centuries, were composed in classical Chinese, at the time the language of erudition. The most significant written records by Vietnamese are the *Lĩnh Nam chích quái*⁷⁴ 嶺南摭怪 ('Selection of Strange Tales in *Lĩnh Nam*' or 'Wonders Plucked from the dust of *Lĩnh Nam*'), the *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* [大越史記全書] ('Complete Annals of *Đại Việt*'), the *Việt điện u linh tập* [越甸幽靈集] ('Collection of Stories on the Shady and Spiritual World of the Viet Realm'), the *An Nam chí lược* [安南志略] ('Abbreviated Records of An Nam') and the *Đại Việt sử lược* [大越史略] ('Abridged Chronicles of *Đại Việt*'). These narratives and tales dealt with the many legends concerning the origins and early years of the Vietnamese people. Some mediated the image of Northern Vietnam as a powerful kingdom before the arrival of Chinese

⁷³ Keith Weller Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), introduction xxi.

⁷⁴ 'Selection of Strange Tales in *Lĩnh Nam*' was an anonymous historical work, which was written during the *Trần* dynasty. It dealt with the many legends concerning the origins and early years of Vietnamese people. William J. Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 2nd ed., (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow, 1998), 137.

rule, while others were more China-biased. These works are variously based on earlier records and writings, many of which have not survived to the present day, for various reasons. The eradication may be the result of warfare or the harsh weather conditions in Vietnam.⁷⁵

The *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, which is also called the ‘Complete Annals of Đại Việt’. It is a monumental official historical compilation of Vietnamese dynasties composed by many famous historians of Vietnamese history, from *Lê Văn Hưu* [黎文休] (1230 - 1322). Lê Văn Hưu was a renowned historian during the Trần dynasty. In 1272, he composed *Đại Việt sử ký* ‘Annals of Đại Việt’. The ‘Annals of Đại Việt’ had been officially commissioned by the Vietnamese court, and it displays a strong bias towards Confucian values, although at that time Buddhism was dominant at the court) from the Trần dynasty to *Phan Phu Tiên* [潘孚先] (1370 - 1462), *Ngô Sĩ Liên* [吳士連] (Lê dynasty, exact dates are unknown, but approximately the end of the 15th century), *Phạm Công Trứ* [范公著] (1600 - 1675), and *Lê Hy* from the Lê dynasty. Lê Văn Hưu started the compilation of the official historical text of the Trần dynasty and completed it in 1272. It was continued by *Phan Phu Tiên* and *Ngô Sĩ Liên* in the Lê dynasty.⁷⁶

In the ‘Annals of Đại Việt’ Lê Văn Hưu did not consider *Ngô Quyền* to be in the same category as *Đinh Bộ Lĩnh*, but he was more a transitional figure, who did not fully represent the Vietnamese independence history. However, in the ‘Complete Annals of Đại Việt’ *Ngô Sĩ Liên* considered *Ngô Quyền*’s reign as the beginning of the Vietnamese independence period. In the early 16th century the historian *Vũ Quỳnh* [武瓊] (1452 - 1516) adopted Lê Văn Hưu’s opinion that Vietnamese independence can only be attributed to *Đinh Bộ Lĩnh*. This point of view prevailed throughout all later Vietnamese historical writing.⁷⁷

Lê Văn Hưu’s ‘version’ is considered to be the first comprehensive account of the history of Vietnam. It is a 30-volume book, which covers the period from *Triệu Đà*, the first king of the *Triệu* dynasty, to *Lý Chiêu Hoàng* who was the empress regnant and the last ruler of the *Lý* dynasty. Because Lê Văn Hưu ‘version’ just covers Vietnamese history until the Trần dynasty, it is also called *Đại Việt sử ký* ‘Annals of Đại Việt’. The ‘Annals of Đại Việt’ and the ‘Complete Annals of Đại Việt’ should not be confused to be the same. The ‘Annals of Đại Việt’ was the predecessor work for the ‘Complete Annals of Đại Việt’. Parts of the ‘Annals of Đại Việt’ have been incorporated into the ‘Complete Annals of Đại Việt’. The oldest printed version of the ‘Complete Annals of Đại Việt’ was a printed wooden plank engraved in the 18th year of *Chính Hoà* (Also known as *Lê Hy Tông* [黎熙宗] (1663 - 1718), i.e., 1697, which was previously

⁷⁵ Keith Weller Taylor, “*The Birth of Vietnam: Sino-Vietnamese Relations to the Tenth Century and the Origins of Vietnamese Nationhood*” (PhD diss., The University of Michigan, 1976), 1.

⁷⁶ Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 131-133.

⁷⁷ Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, 270-271.

thought to be hopeless to be found. And the prints, which are still used, are those printed later, in the *Nguyễn* dynasty. The *Đại Việt* history book is an invaluable heritage of Vietnamese national culture.⁷⁸

After a business trip in France, *Phan Huy Lê* (1934 - 2018), a Vietnamese historian and Professor of history at the Vietnam National University (*Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội*) in *Hà Nội*, discovered the wooden plank-printed version from 1697 in Paris. In 1985, at the request of the Vietnam Committee of Social Sciences *Khoa học xã hội Việt Nam* (at present Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) *Viện Hàn lâm Khoa học xã hội Việt Nam*), Ms. C. Rageau, Director of the Library of the Ancient Far East School (EFFO), brought to Vietnam a microfilm printed by the Cabinet. Today, the official copy of the 'Complete Annals of *Đại Việt*' is kept in Paris, and the EFFO agreed to give Vietnam full rights to use this document.⁷⁹

This version of the 'Complete Annals of *Đại Việt*' has 24 books that compile all historical events from the *Hồng Bàng* dynasty [鴻龐] (2879 BCE - 258 CE) to 1675. It is divided into 3 sections: firstly '*Quyển thứ*', an introduction with forewords of *Ngô Sĩ Liên*, *Phạm Công Trứ*, and *Lê Hy*; secondly '*Ngoại kỷ*' includes a compilation of 5 books covering historical events from *Hồng Bàng* dynasty to the *Ngô* dynasty (939 - 967); and lastly '*Bản kỷ*' includes a compilation of 19 books recording historical events from the *Đinh* dynasty (968 - 980) to the *Lê* dynasty up to 1675.⁸⁰

The *Việt điện u linh tập* [越甸幽靈集] ('Collection of Stories on the Shady and Spiritual World of the Viet Realm') is a collection of Vietnamese history written in Chinese compiled by *Lý Tế Xuyên* [李濟川] in 1329. *Lý Tế Xuyên* was an official, whose position as custodian of the Buddhist scriptures was similar to that of a head librarian today. After some minor changes over the centuries, the 'Collection of Stories on the Shady and Spiritual World of the Viet Realm' nowadays contains twenty-seven accounts arranged under three headings - 'sovereigns', 'ministers', and 'superhuman powers'. The first two headings were concerned with actual historical persons, whose lives stirred the people to such an extent that after their deaths their spirits became objects of popular veneration. In the preface, the author indicated that he was concerned with presenting as factual an account as possible, to ascertain the relative merits of departed spirits. The 'Collection of Stories on the Shady and Spiritual World of the Viet Realm' is a significant source for the early history of Vietnam.⁸¹

⁷⁸ "Introduction," Complete Annals of *Đại Việt*, The University of Leipzig, last modified December 17, 2023, <https://www.informatik.uni-leipzig.de/~duc/sach/dvsktt/dvsktt-loigioithieu.html>.

⁷⁹ Complete Annals of *Đại Việt*, "Introduction."

⁸⁰ Complete Annals of *Đại Việt*, "Introduction."

⁸¹ Taylor, "The Birth of Vietnam: Sino-Vietnamese Relations to the Tenth Century and the Origins of Vietnamese Nationhood," 5-6, 9.

The *An Nam chí lược* [安南志略] ('Abbreviated Records of An Nam') is a historical text that was compiled and published in 1340 by the Vietnamese historian *Lê Tắc* [黎峴] (1263 - 1342), who submitted himself to the Chinese *Yuan* dynasty [元朝] (1279 - 1368) in 1285, where he remained for the rest of his life. During the 'Fourth Chinese domination', many valuable books of Vietnam were taken away by the *Ming* dynasty and subsequently were lost, hence the 'Abbreviated Records of An Nam', which was considered by Vietnamese historians as a work from a traitor and hence was ignored, became one of the few historical books about Vietnam that survive from the 14th and 15th centuries and it is considered the oldest historical work by a Vietnamese that has been preserved. The 'Abbreviated Records of An Nam' is topically arranged into twenty chapters. It derived almost exclusively from Chinese documents, except for details dating from *Lê Tắc*'s lifetime. It recounted the history and other aspects of Vietnam, from its beginning to the reign of the *Trần* dynasty. The title of the book means *Abbreviated Records of An Nam (Pacified South)*. Throughout history, it is stated that 'Abbreviated Records of An Nam' was written with a Chinese bias, but the 'Abbreviated Records of An Nam' still reflect his Vietnamese roots and thoughts that result in some materials about 'rebels' of Chinese authority, which one would not expect from a Chinese historian. It also contains valuable information about the geography, tradition, and culture of Vietnam such as the influence of Daoism in Vietnam. *Lê Tắc* made a detailed description of the Vietnamese tradition of singing, dancing, and musical instruments. From this account, it is known that Vietnamese people have an old tradition of creating songs in their native language together with tunes in Chinese.⁸²

The *Đại Việt sử lược* [大越史略] ('Abridged Chronicles of Đại Việt') is a historical text that was compiled during the *Trần* dynasty. It is also known as *Việt sử lược* [越史略] 'Abridged Chronicles of Viet'. The title change came about when the *Ming* invasion of Vietnam was raging and important documents were being transported to China. This work was one of them, but it was included in the official Chinese collection under this new title. As a result, it survived the invasion and is considered the earliest chronicle of the history of Vietnam that remains today. The 3-volume book covered the history of Vietnam from the reign of *Triệu Đà* to the collapse of the *Lý* dynasty.⁸³

⁸² Taylor, "The Birth of Vietnam: Sino-Vietnamese Relations to the Tenth Century and the Origins of Vietnamese Nationhood," 1-2.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

Apparently, the *An Nam chí nguyên* [安南志原] 'Records of Annam' was compiled by an unknown Chinese author during the *Ming* dynasty. The 'Records of Annam' serve as one of the main sources for the occupation period of the *Ming* court. This source revealed, inter alia, the structure of the province of *Annam* and the aims of the *Ming* court for their reintegrated province. The following information was taken from this source.⁸⁴

It was during the reign of the *Yongle* emperor [永樂帝] (1402 - 1424) that Vietnam fell into the claws of the *Ming* court. The establishment of *Jiaozhi* in 1407 meant that the Chinese court sent its officials to take charge of their reintegrated province. At the beginning of the Chinese administration, the Red River Delta and the northern mountains were divided into fifteen prefectures, forty-one subprefectures, and 210 districts. In the first eight years, the Chinese were occupied with the problem of pacification. After the situation in Vietnam seemed to be under control, they began their attempt to transform Vietnamese society. Their task included the development of agriculture, the collection of taxes (which was levied lightly in the first few years), the control of the sub-officials, the maintenance of land, and the recording of population. The transformation of Vietnamese society was not an easy task. They faced difficulties regarding the supply of their occupying soldiers, where they had to import a huge amount of rice from China. Furthermore, they faced difficulties with their sub-officials, who were mainly Vietnamese locals. These Vietnamese locals were opportunistic, but collaborators with the new Chinese administration, and much needed to maintain control and to gain the support of the locals. The constant scattered resistance movements also posed a threat to the Chinese administration. Because of the difficulties in Vietnam, the *Yongle* emperor sent out several edicts, which would show compassion for China; all crimes would be pardoned, the Chinese officials would help Vietnam to civilize, high official local ranks for those who would cooperate, and low taxes. All of his promises showed that he tried to adopt a lenient attitude towards unruly Vietnam. However, he did not harvest the seeds that he sowed.⁸⁵

The positions in Vietnam were undesirable posts for Chinese officials. Sometimes, unskilled and unsuccessful students from the Chinese civil service exams were sent to Vietnam. The lack of good and trained officials remained a serious problem for the Chinese court. Meanwhile, many Vietnamese turned out to be helpful to the Chinese in governing Vietnam. Vietnamese men, who proved to be talented and skilled, were even sent to China for official posts. The Chinese court sought for their Vietnamese officials to possess the ability and the willingness to rally the people, gather local troops, report everything that they hear in their surroundings, and keep the local Chinese community in line as well. During this occupation period, a couple

⁸⁴ John K. Whitmore, *Vietnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming: (1371-1421)*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1985), 97-99, 101-103.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 97-99, 101-103.

of thousands of Vietnamese traveled to *Nanjing* [南京] bearing gifts and thanks. In return, they were rewarded and promoted. Consequently, some privileged returned with wealth and power to become central figures in their local politics.⁸⁶

Besides the difficulties in providing for their own army and finding appropriate officials, the Chinese administration had problems 'civilizing' the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese thoughts, local cults, and beliefs were strongly influenced by Buddhism, Daoism, and Shamanism. They tried to control and transform Vietnamese society bureaucratically, legally, and academically. The Vietnamese had to act according to prefectural regulations, so they were not allowed to cut their hair short, and women had to wear a short jacket and a long skirt. The establishment of medical schools and schools of astrology helped the Chinese in controlling the local medical and magical practices while conveying new information and techniques. In general, education through schools was very important for the *Ming* court. The *Yongle* emperor ordered the compilation of the definitive edition of the Neo-Confucian canon, which comprised the 'Four Books and Five Classics [四書五經]', commentaries of *Zhu Xi* [朱熹] (1130 - 1200) and Zheng brothers.⁸⁷

The 'Records of Annam' provided a list of the annual revenues taken by the Chinese, probably from 1416 to 1423, when they had their tightest control over Vietnam. Vietnam delivered 500 tales of gold, 1.100 taels of silver, about 2.000 kingfisher feathers, 1.200 catties⁸⁸ of silk, 10.000 paper fans, commercial taxes worth about 34.000 strings of cash (made up of 3.800 in copper cash, and over 30.000 in paper money), 41.000 catties of salt, and fishing taxes worth 12.000 string of cash. Besides the listed contributions, lacquer and sappanwood went directly yearly to China.⁸⁹

Even though all the contributions were troublesome, especially the salt sector and the taxes were a thorn for the Vietnamese. The salt monopoly was imposed to meet their quotas, and as a result, the Vietnamese had to buy salt at inflated prices. In addition, some Chinese officials' greed in obtaining exotic goods from Vietnam was outrageous. For the Vietnamese, contact with the Chinese was just negative, and they felt heavy pressure from the exploitative acts of the Chinese administration.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Whitmore, *Vietnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming: (1371-1421)*, 114-116.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 120-123.

⁸⁸ An unit of weight.

⁸⁹ Whitmore, *Vietnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming: (1371-1421)*, 127-128.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 126-128.

Under Chinese rule, libraries and archives were taken to China, where they simply disappeared and were burned (also known as the infamous book-burning event, which was mentioned above). In addition, monuments and architectural treasures, like palaces and temples, were dismantled. The only things that survived the re-occupation of the Chinese were ceramics and somehow literature and music. This consistency probably makes them the most important remaining manifestations of Vietnam's cultural traditions. As resistance grew, the *Ming* Chinese could not keep Vietnam under their control, which eventually led to the victory of *Lê Lợi*⁹¹ [黎利] (1384 - 1433), who proclaimed the *Lê* dynasty in 1428.⁹²

These written records by Vietnamese historians disclose the earliest history of Vietnam and their relationship with China. Thus, they are important textual sources for this study.

The Political System in Vietnam during the *Đại Việt* Period - China as a Role Model

Remarkably, despite the conflict over centuries, the new Vietnamese ruler took China as a role model. One would think that the Vietnamese would try to fully detach themselves from the Chinese system after they gained their independence back, or one would understand that they even adopted the anti-China and anti-Sinicization attitude, but in reality, the contrary occurred. The Chinese bureaucratic procedures and principles of statecraft worked efficiently for the Vietnamese state. Particularly at the official level, the Vietnamese deem the Confucian concept as useful for providing an administrative and ideological foundation for the new Vietnam in the 11th century. Furthermore, the Chinese educational system, whose candidates trained in the core values of Confucianism, was also optimal for the Vietnamese imperial bureaucracy. Even with the choice of the name for independent Vietnam, the Vietnamese adopted the original Chinese name for Vietnam - *Đại Việt*. They understood how to use the overwhelming influence of the Chinese cultural sphere.⁹³

Đại Việt, which literally means 'Great Viet', was first adopted by *Lý Thánh Tông* [李聖宗] (1023 - 1072) in 1054. Before the name '*Đại Việt*' the name '*Đại Cồ Việt*' was used for Vietnam. '*Đại Cồ Việt*' combined the Chinese and Vietnamese language terms for 'great'. In 963 CE, *Đinh Bộ Lĩnh* founded the new kingdom of '*Đại Cồ Việt*', with its capital in *Hoa Lư*, far from the Red River Delta and far from Chinese rule.⁹⁴

⁹¹ *Lê Lợi*, was a successful civil service candidate, who entered the imperial bureaucracy under the short-lived *Hồ* dynasty. Like many Vietnamese, he was not fond of the restored Chinese rule. He began to organize a resistance movement to overthrow the Chinese reoccupation of Vietnam. Although he fought in the name of restoring the former *Trần* dynasty and for that purpose family members of the *Trần* dynasty were in his entourage, he was eventually persuaded to accept the throne. He then proclaimed the so-called Later *Lê* dynasty.

Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 128.

⁹² Young, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 17-18.

⁹³ Duiker, *China and Vietnam: The Roots of Conflict*, 4-5.

⁹⁴ Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 59-60, 67.

In Vietnam, the time spanning from the 10th to 15th centuries is considered the period with the most significant changes for *Đại Việt* in terms of politics, culture, religion, and society. With the support of Buddhism and monks, the *Lý* dynasty ascended the throne and moved the capital from *Hoa Lư* to *Đại La* (which later on during the progress of establishing a new dynasty changed its name to *Thăng Long*). After the necessary time needed to set up the capital in *Thăng Long*, the *Lý* dynasty, although from the ground up fully used Buddhism as the new foundation of the new dynasty, recognized Confucianism and not Buddhism as the ideal ideology of the ruler in managing the country. By using the ruling system of China, the Vietnamese government established a more effective administration than neighboring countries and developed a solid social, cultural and educational infrastructure. They developed steadily and attained an absolute monarchy based on the concept of Confucianism. During the *Lý* dynasty the administration with a centralized political system developed from the center to local communities. The state organization was more complete than those of the *Đinh* or Early *Lê* dynasties and it is structured as follows: the pavilion and the academy, which served as an assistant office for the new emperor; the chief chancellor, deputy chancellor, the Secret Institute, and the Six Ministries made up central authorities of the court; apart from the centralized authorities, the local-level administration included: prefectures (phủ, lộ) and sub-prefectures (châu) in the lowlands, and stations (trại) in the mountainous areas as the head administrative units of localities. Under prefectures and sub-prefectures there were district-level units (huyện or hương), communes, and villages.⁹⁵

The *Trần* dynasty further developed the central state structure under the absolute monarchy with a higher level of development than the *Lý* dynasty. The central court system was organized relatively completely. Under the emperor was the Chancellor (Tể tướng), and next was literary and military mandarins. Special offices were the pavilion, institute, agency, division, board, and department. The executive authority of the court was made up of six ministries that included public affairs, finances, rites, war, justice, and public works, together serving to manage the issues of administration, diplomacy, religion, economics, military, and law. Besides the administrative offices, the *Trần* dynasty developed specialized institutions such as the secretary's office, which was responsible for official correspondence and records, the Imperial College, the office for transport, the office for flood protection and dyke construction, the real estate office, and other cultural offices like the Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Imperial History, the Academy of Medicine and the Department of Rites (responsible for worship and music for worshipping ceremonies). The local administration system was systematically reorganized. The whole country had 12 lộ, and under these administration units

⁹⁵ Thi Hương Thảo Đỗ, "Đại Việt in the 10th-15th Centuries: Some Historico-Cultural Issues Quốc gia Đại Việt thế kỷ 10-15: Một số vấn đề lịch sử-văn hóa," in *Perspectives on the Archaeology of Vietnam International Colloquium, Hanoi 29th February - 2nd March 2012 Toàn cảnh khảo cổ học Việt Nam Hội thảo quốc tế, từ 29/2 đến 02/3/2012, tại Hà Nội*, ed. Andreas Reinecke (Bonn : German Archaeological Institute, 2015), 293.

were prefectures, sub-prefectures, districts, and communes. In the mountain areas, they were called trại (camp) and sách (station) respectively. This system guaranteed strong government control over all levels down to the commune.⁹⁶

Under the Lê dynasty, the administration and specialist system were gradually consolidated. In particular, hierarchy, rites, and official functions in the administrative system were regulated. In the court, under the direct authority of the emperor, there were the Six Ministries (Lục bộ), and the Six Departments (Lục khoa), which were responsible for monitoring and supervising the implementation of the Six Ministries' activities. The Six Courts were responsible for activities that the Six Ministries were not responsible for. The specialized offices at the court included the Academy of Imperial History, the Academy of Sciences, the Imperial College, the Nội thị sảnh Pavilion, etc. Regarding administration, the whole country was subdivided into 13 circuits. Under each circuit were 52 prefectures, 178 districts, 50 sub-prefectures, and other local units such as districts, communes, villages, hamlets, etc. The head of a circuit was called a chairman. Each circuit had three departments: the department of military, the department of public affairs (responsible for civil administration), and the department of management (responsible for investigations and supervision). Communes were divided into large, medium, and small. The commune-level mandarins were elected by the public. The total number of mandarins (from the commune level upwards) under Lê Thánh Tông's reign was 5,370 people, including 2,755 mandarins in the court and 2,615 mandarins in the localities, and the majority of them graduated through the examination system.⁹⁷

Many aspects of the political institutions, including law and education, of Đại Việt, manifested in marks of acculturation and cultural exchanges with the Chinese; however, it was not an unchanged imitation, passive reception, or the removal of their own national cultural traditions. In the history of Đại Việt from the 10th to 15th centuries, there was an emerging problem regarding the wars against invaders from the north. Thus, in view of the north, the emperors of Đại Việt under the Lý, Trần, and Lê dynasties always endeavored not to lose territory, in addition to being interested in harmonious relations with the strong nation of China. During the 15th century, under Lê Thánh Tông's reign, the relations between Đại Việt and neighboring countries, especially the Đại Việt-China relations, were gradually improved from an on-off period with ruling-ruled and confrontation-assertion relations to a period of concession, mediation, harmony, peace, and development by which the position of the Đại Việt nation was affirmed and raised more and more.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Đỗ, "Đại Việt in the 10th-15th Centuries: Some Historico-Cultural Issues Quốc gia Đại Việt thế kỷ 10-15: Một số vấn đề lịch sử-văn hóa," 293-294.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 294-295.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 311.

Buddhism during the Đại Việt Period

Buddhism was adapted to Vietnam during the period of Chinese domination. In the 2nd century, many Indian and Chinese monks came to Northern Vietnam, where a large Buddhist center was established at *Luy Lâu* (*Thuận Thành* district, *Bắc Ninh* province). At first, when entering Vietnam, Indian Buddhism was integrated into the native religion in order to find a position in the Vietnamese community. The integration process of Indian Buddhism with the native religion was archived in folk memory by Mahāyāna legend, which is clearly proved by the existence of a system of pagodas in *Dâu*, *Phi Tướng*, *Dàn* of the *Bắc Ninh* province, where there is currently the practice of worshiping the Four Deities (the Deity of Clouds, the Deity of Rain, the Deity of Thunder, and the Deity of Lighting). From the first period of integration to the 10th century, during the *Đinh* and Early *Lê* periods, Buddhism obtained its position as an ideology in society and occupied an important role. Many monks became chancellors to the king and were respected by the court. The monks *Khuông Việt* and *Pháp Thuận* were charged by the king to welcome envoys from China. King *Lê Đại Hành* consulted the monk *Vạn Hạnh* before leading troops to fight against the Chinese troops of the *Song* dynasty. Moreover, Buddhist scripture pillars, discovered by an excavation at an archaeological site in the *Hoa Lư* capital, provide evidence for the development and appreciation of Buddhism in the 10th century.⁹⁹

In 1009, after *Lý Công Uẩn* ascended the throne, three large religions, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, existed and developed peacefully beside one another. Of these religions, Buddhism made the biggest step forward in terms of development and obtained the position of 'national religion' in the spiritual life of society. The prosperity of Buddhism during the *Lý* and *Trần* periods was expressed in many different aspects and forms in social life. The court actively supported the construction of many pagodas all over the country with great financial means. Thus, many pagodas and towers were built during the *Lý* and *Trần* period. Due to the archaeological excavation in the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* in the first decade of the 21st century, many images of Buddha's tower with 7 or 9 floors pressed on bricks were found, along with many models of Buddha's tower made from terracotta or white porcelain in the *Lý* and *Trần* cultural layers. This supports the recorded strength of the development of Buddhism during that time. Among the great number of pagodas constructed during the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties, there are some that were Buddhist centers of the *Thăng Long* capital and have maintained this role until today, such as the *Khai Quốc* pagoda (currently the *Trần Quốc* pagoda), the *Diên Hựu* pagoda (the One Pillar pagoda), and the *Chân Giáo* pagoda. During the *Lý* and *Trần* periods, the monks (and followers) of Buddhism developed in terms of quantity and quality and had an important impact on the activities of the court. The mandarin system assisted the king to manage the administration and protect the rights of Buddhists. The role of

⁹⁹ Ibid, 299-300.

Buddhism in the Vietnamese imperial court was slowly replaced by Confucianism. The high level of appreciation of Confucianism in the *Lê* period, apart from the promotion of Confucian education and examinations, is demonstrated by the restriction of the impact of Buddhism and Taoism. During the *Lý* and *Trần* periods, Buddhism and Taoism existed in harmony, and many centers of Buddhism and Daoism were constructed and integrated into the folk religion. Under the *Lê* period, Buddhism and Daoism were controlled and restricted by the state by such means as expelling fortune-tellers and Taoism followers from the court. The court regulated the construction of new pagodas and centers, the establishment of Buddhist and Daoist offices, etc. by requiring permission. These activities demonstrate the position of favor that Confucianism and the Confucian education system occupied under the *Lê* dynasty.¹⁰⁰

Confucianism during the *Đại Việt* Period

In the early period of the Later *Lê* dynasty, the transition from Buddhism to Confucianism as the national religion in *Đại Việt* took place. The structure of the state, law, and examination system of *Đại Việt* was gradually completed under the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties. Emperors of the *Lý*, *Trần*, and Later *Lê* dynasties had an appropriate strategy for the development of the country and the protection of their national sovereignty. Under the *Lý*, *Trần*, and Later *Lê* dynasties, the feudal centralization of power was strengthened more and more, and the country was unified and promoted in every way.¹⁰¹

The Temple of Literature in *Hà Nội* is a good example of the Vietnamese adoption of Chinese Confucianism. Actually, the Temple of Literature was constructed as an altar to Confucius. It was modeled after the Temple of Confucius [孔廟] in *Qufu* (*Shandong* province), with the five courtyards representing the five essential elements of nature. In Buddhism and Confucianism, the number five has a special meaning. There are five basic virtues (humanity/benevolence, righteousness, civility, knowledge, and loyalty), five commandments (against murder, theft, lust, lying, and drunkenness), five sorrows (life, old age, sickness, death, and separation), five cardinal relationships (king and subjects, father and son, husband and wife, brothers, and friends), five essential elements (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth) and Five classics [五經] (Classic of Poetry *Kinh Thi* [詩經], Book of Documents *Kinh Thư* [書經], Book of Rites *Kinh Lễ* [禮記], Book of Changes *Kinh Dịch* [易經], and Spring and Autumn Annals *Kinh Xuân Thu* [春秋]).¹⁰²

As aforementioned, the temple not only served as an altar but was Vietnam's first university. The premises of the temple housed students' classrooms, dormitories, cooking facilities, and

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 300-304.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 293.

¹⁰² Fox, *Văn Miếu – Quốc Tử Giám The Temple of Literature*, 6-8, 31.

a print shop for school textbooks. The students of all ages studied together. An imperial decree from 1185 set the lower age limit at 15; there was no upper limit. The main educational focus was the memorization of the Five Classics and Chinese history and culture.¹⁰³

At the temple gate are four pillars bearing inscriptions that proclaim the greatness of Confucius and his doctrine. On each of the two tallest pillars resides a mythic beast, the *qilin*¹⁰⁴ [麒麟], that allegedly has the power to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil. It serves as a guard to let in the good and keep out the bad. To the right and left of the gate to the temple are friezes, which portray a dragon and a tiger. Over centuries, the dragon symbolizes royalty and mandarins. In the civil service examination, the dragon symbolizes the rank of a doctoral degree (*Tiến sĩ* [進士]) and the tiger symbolizes the rank of a bachelor's (*Cử nhân* [舉士]). In the third courtyard, there are 82 steles on the backs of stone tortoises to underscore the importance of learning. These steles represent a single civil service examination year, and record the names and native villages of those awarded the doctoral degree that year. In the early 15th century, with the development of Confucianism, the Lê dynasty built these doctors' steles to honor those with high academic records and preserve the tradition of learning to pass on to the next generations. Emperor Lê Thánh Tông [黎聖宗] (1442 - 1497) started this tradition in 1484; this honoring occurred until 1779. Erecting stone steles in honor of academic achievements was a tradition of Confucius temples, and the Vietnamese Confucius temple followed this tradition.¹⁰⁵

As mentioned above, Vietnam was divided into provinces, prefectures, and districts, above the historic communes at the village level. Leading administrators were chosen either from the royal family or the aristocracy, who were given the title 'king *Vương*'. They were responsible for maintaining security and raising taxes in the areas, which were under their administration. The legal system in Vietnam also followed the Chinese pattern. It was hierarchical, punitive, and communitarian rather than individualistic and imprecise. Small-scale disputes were handled by a neighborhood committee or the village council of elders, and major disputes were handled by a district magistrate. The legal system was subject to the Ministry of Justice. Like

¹⁰³ Fox, *Văn Miếu – Quốc Tử Giám The Temple of Literature*, 31.

¹⁰⁴ The *qilin* is referred to as *kỳ lân* in Vietnam. The Vietnamese *kỳ lân* is descended from the Chinese *qilin*, and shares many similar features, such as the head of a dragon or tiger, mane of a lion, the hooves of an ox or horse, the tail of a lion or ox, scales of a fish, and it can have either 1 or 2 horns or antlers.

¹⁰⁵ Fox, *Văn Miếu – Quốc Tử Giám The Temple of Literature*, 10, 18.

China, Vietnam had the so-called 'Six Ministries *Lục bộ* [六部]'. The six ministries were the Ministry of Civil Appointments, Finance, Rites, War, Works, and Justice.¹⁰⁶

After all these adoptions on the Vietnamese side, it should not be ignored that the adoptions mainly occurred among the upper to the ruling class. In varying degrees, all Vietnamese were exposed to Confucian ethics, but the Vietnamese population, who were mainly living in the countryside, were still living according to their local traditions.¹⁰⁷

In addition, the Vietnamese survival method was to grasp Chinese ways as role models. They invested great effort in acquiring and maintaining technical, administrative, and cultural skills simply to hold against their big neighbor in the north.¹⁰⁸

Local Communities at the Border between Vietnam and China and their Administration

Nowadays, the border between Vietnam and China is approximately 1300 km long. On the Chinese side are the provinces *Yunnan* and *Guangxi* [廣西], and on the Vietnamese side are the Northeast and Northwest regions. Historically, ethnically diverse communities (Zhuang [壯族]/*Tày*, Nong [儂族]/*Nùng*, Tai [傣族]/*Thái*, Hmong [苗族]/*H'Mông*, and Yao [瑤族]/*Dao*) lived in the areas between Vietnam and China. Even though they were so diverse, they shared the characteristics of tribal organization and leadership. Over centuries, these communities had had close relationships with the respective central government on the Vietnamese and on the Chinese side. And this connection between these communities and the Vietnamese and Chinese governments was also the cause of many disputes between these two countries. In particular, regarding the shifting allegiances of the local populations, as well as their kinship and trade networks. Both countries used this area as a buffer zone when it was also transformed into a borderland (during the *Song* dynasty and *Đại Việt* period). The struggle between Vietnam and China to gain the upper hand in the area of their border continued over the following years until the first official treaty of 1084, which clearly divided the space between these two countries. Although this treaty should have clarified the respective allegiance of these areas, these areas were under the direct control of local chiefs, which made it hard sometimes to impose the directives of Vietnam or China. For instance, *Nong Zhigao Nùng Trí Cao* [儂智高] from the Zhuang minority caused a lot of trouble for both sides. He proclaimed several kingdoms after he raised a rebellion and seized several prefectures and districts. From 1052 to 1054, present *Guangxi* and *Guangdong* were in turmoil because of his proclamations.

¹⁰⁶ Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 135, 139-140, 144-145.

¹⁰⁷ Duiker, *China and Vietnam: The Roots of Conflict*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁸ Taylor, *The Birth Of Vietnam*, 298.

This rebellion of *Nong Zhigao* had shown the potential threat of local forces. So, the Vietnamese and the Chinese had to change their strategy in dealing with local communities. During the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties, for example, the Vietnamese rulers entered alliances through marriages.¹⁰⁹

The history of local communities, which served as a buffer zone between Vietnam and China, is a history of interaction between a central government and local administration, alliances, and divisions. Conflicts between the central government and the local administration are not uncommon, and conflicts between the local communities are also not uncommon. When the latter occurred, the central government on both sides, in Vietnam and China, did intervene. These interventions did not automatically solve the conflicts, as the interventions had some limitations, like difficult terrain or the lack of clarity in the administration of the population of the local communities. This incomplete identification of the local communities complicated the efforts of the central state government.¹¹⁰

Signs of centralized decision-making, control, or governance can also reflect political power being heavily consolidated, institutionalized, and concentrated in the hands of very few people. Material signatures can come in the form of administrative centers and buildings, palaces, or temples. Centralized or integrated control can also be exhibited by the use of *corvée* labor, the collection and redistribution of taxes, tributary payments, and agricultural surplus. Accordingly, storage and redistribution centers might exist in the material record. Complex polities often possessed centralized control over physical power and the application of coercive sanctions, as manifested by a military or policing force and the manufacture of weapons. Monumental construction is discernible across culturally, spatially, and temporally disparate societies, and the presence of large-scale, labor-intensive monumental architectural features also indicates centralized control, possibly over slave or *corvée* labor. Such large-scale constructions can include palaces, temples, elite residences, fortifications, citadels, or some combination of these buildings. The discovery of a multi-tiered settlement hierarchy, especially if it forms a central-place lattice around a major city, can be a clue to the presence of a state.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Vũ Đường Luân, Contested Sovereignty: Local Politics and State Power in Territorial Conflicts on the Vietnam-China Border, 1650s-1880s, in *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, Volume 5, Number 2, November 1026, pp. 497-533. P.503-505.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 515, 522.

¹¹¹ Kim, *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam*, 52.

3. Vietnam as a Part of the Chinese Tributary System

The Chinese World Order

As aforementioned, China has linguistically and politically identified itself as the center of the world and therefore, labeled itself as the 'Middle Kingdom'. Not only did the Chinese consider themselves as the center of the world, but also their ruler to be the 'Son of Heaven', who was given the 'Mandate of Heaven' and consequently entitled to rule over his territory. The key elements of this worldview included the unity of Heaven, Earth, and humankind. The notion of Heaven as a moral force imposing a moral order and social harmony in Heaven's way, and because the ruler was the 'Son of Heaven', he resides and rules over the whole world, including non-Chinese. The Chinese civilization was seen as superior. Eventually, the Chinese were convinced that the non-Chinese, or rather the 'barbarians' (that is how the Chinese labeled their neighbors), would be drawn by the virtue of the ruler to recognize the superiority of Chinese civilization and voluntarily embrace it. Meanwhile, these 'barbarians' were expected symbolically to recognize that superiority by offering their tribute to the court and its ruler and gratefully receiving gifts in exchange. This system is also known as the 'tributary system'.¹¹²

China's foreign relations functioned accordingly hierarchically, and over the course of time, a network of Sinocentric foreign relations evolved, which is also known as the 'Chinese World Order'. The Sinocentric foreign relation was also divided into three zones: the first zone was the so-called Sinitic zone, which consisted of the most nearby and culturally similar tributaries (Korea, Japan, and Vietnam). The second zone was the Inner Asian zone, which consisted of tributary tribes and states of the nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples of Inner Asia. The people of Inner Asia were considered to be ethnically and culturally non-Chinese, but they were outside or on the fringe of the Chinese cultural area. The third zone was the Outer zone, which consisted of the 'outer barbarians'. Sometimes Japan, other states of Southeast Asia, South Asia, and even Europe were considered to be 'outer barbarians' that were supposed to send tribute when trading.¹¹³

Within China, the following world order was applied according to sex, kinship, and social function: Men were superior to women, and elders to juniors. But there was no caste system like in India. Above all, there is the 'Son of Heaven'. He, in theory, became omniscient, as he functioned as a military leader, administrator, judge, high priest, and patron of the arts. Basically, the unified concept of the Chinese world order was acknowledged at the Chinese end, periodically by its tributary contributors and by its trade partners.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Stuart-Fox, *A Short History of China and Southeast Asia: Tribute, Trade and Influence*, 21-22.

¹¹³ John K. Fairbank ed., *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968) 2.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 5-6, 12.

The Tributary System

A tributary system is basically a form of tax. The only difference is that tribute was defined by an imperial edict. Furthermore, the tribute's relationship to trade can also be described as a ritual appropriate to commercial activities.¹¹⁵

The whole tributary system is based on a formal footing. For instance, regulations were issued specifying how tribute was to be offered and how frequently. While Northern Vietnam was required to send tribute every three years *Champa* was required to send tribute only 'infrequently'. Regarding how tribute was to be offered - an elaborate ceremonial was put in place, Chinese court officials greeted the envoys and prepared them for the emperor's banquet at which the envoys present their goods. Additionally, the envoys were instructed on how to behave and when to kowtow. There was not just one banquet with the emperor, but less important banquets followed until it was time to leave the Chinese capital, escorted by an appropriate Chinese official. Inversely, there were also detailed instructions on how Chinese envoys were to be received by foreign courts, especially when bearing an imperial edict or seal of office for the investiture of the ruler as a Chinese vassal.¹¹⁶

In 1174, the fourth *Lý* ruler, *Lý Nhân Tông* [李仁宗] (1066 - 1128), was enfeoffed as 'the King of Annam' by the *Song* court, essentially establishing Vietnam's status as an independent country. By accepting Vietnam as an independent country, the *Lý* court sent tributary goods to the *Song* court. The goods, which were sent as tribute to China via *Qinzhou* [欽州] (*Guangxi* province, southern China) and *Lianzhou* [連州] (*Guangdong* province, southern China) from the sea route, or overland via *Yongzhou* [永州] (Hunan province, south-central China), included rhinoceros horn, ivory, tortoise shell, silk, pearls, frankincense, agarwood, gold wine vessels, gold crane and tortoise sets, gold and silver vessels, silver censers and basins, golden gongs, peacock tails, and tame elephants and rhinoceroses.¹¹⁷

Interestingly, before establishing the *Yuan* dynasty, the Mongol rulers tried to overtake Northern Vietnam in 1258, 1285, and 1287. The Mongols subsequently asked for tribute from the *Trần* dynasty, specifying as tributary gifts. Besides the common commodities like rhinoceros horn, tortoise shell, pearls, ivory, cotton, and so forth, they also demanded white ware cups, Confucian scholars, doctors, persons knowledgeable in Yin and Yang, and in

¹¹⁵ Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, 77, 84.

¹¹⁶ Stuart-Fox, *A Short History of China and Southeast Asia: Tribute, Trade and Influence*, 75-76.

¹¹⁷ Yuriko Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, (Singapore: Springer, 2021), 132, 139.

divination, and three artisans, each of various crafts. The demand for white wares shows how the quality of *Trần* white wares was recognized as tributary goods. However, there is no subsequent record of Northern Vietnam having sent ceramics to the Mongols as tribute. Nor do any Vietnamese ceramic objects appear to have been found in excavations at the Mongol political base.¹¹⁸

According to Chinese administrative statutes from the *Song* dynasty (960 - 1279) to the *Qing* dynasty (1644 - 1911), tributary representatives from Vietnam were to offer tribute on a regular basis, traveling on prescribed routes and adhering to specific ritual requirements. Vietnam sent diplomatic envoys to the Chinese court on average once in three years. In the meantime, the Chinese court sent periodic missions to Vietnam. All this interaction was intended to foster Sino-Vietnamese diplomatic relations and to reinforce Chinese claims of political and cultural hegemony in Vietnam, but mutually beneficial trade was a clear goal. During periods when China prohibited maritime commerce (like the so-called '*Ming* Gap', which will be further explained), there were still mechanisms by which trade and the tributary system could be conducted. Through these and other mechanisms, the countries of East Asia and Southeast Asia were able to buy and exchange all sorts of commodities.¹¹⁹

Another important detail is that the tributary status was granted by the Chinese court not to a country but to a ruler. Moreover, the granting of the tributary status was a personal matter, which means that it is not transferable. So, if the tributary ruler dies, his legal and undisputed heir still has to go through the same process of acquiring the recognition of China. Overall, the conditions for this granting were the acknowledgment of China's superiority in the respectful language of his petitions and in the respectful manner of his envoys. Only by fulfilling these requirements was the ruler given the title 'king' by the Chinese emperor, and his tribute was accepted.¹²⁰

Vietnam as Contributor

In the case of Vietnam, for the Chinese, the ruler of Vietnam was a king, like any other ruler of kingdoms that presented a tribute to the Chinese court. For the Vietnamese, in their dealings with the Chinese court, this was accepted, because in the official correspondence with the Chinese court, the emperor of Vietnam designated himself as 'king', but in front of his own people the Vietnamese ruler held the title 'emperor'. Furthermore, the Vietnamese shared the Chinese worldview; the emperor of Vietnam also claimed to have the same relationship with Heaven and Earth as did the 'Son of Heaven'. So, the Vietnamese had the same relationship

¹¹⁸ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 158.

¹¹⁹ Nanxiu Qian, *Reexamining the Sinosphere - Cultural Transmissions and Transformations in East Asia*, (New York: Cambria Press, 2020), Introduction xxii-xxiii.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 179.

of hierarchical superiority over their supposedly less cultured neighbors. In the official Vietnamese dealings and their attitudes towards the Khmer, Cham, and Laos, the Vietnamese ruler designated himself as emperor. Strategically, the Vietnamese expansion to the south was undertaken with a cautious eye always on its vulnerable northern frontier. Vietnam followed a dual strategy in its relations with China, combining military strength with status recognition of Chinese superiority. This pattern, which was consistently applied over centuries, not only kept China at bay for most of the time, but also allowed the Vietnamese to deal with the Cham, who the Vietnamese considered their 'traditional enemies' in the south, and pursue the south expansion that over the next centuries would leave them in control of all coastal Vietnam, to the Mekong delta and beyond.¹²¹

One tradition that Vietnam felt a nuisance of was the requirement of Vietnamese rulers who had opposed the Chinese court to come to the capital to beg for pardon. Several factors foster the fear of Vietnamese rulers going to the Chinese capital. Whenever they could avoid going to the Chinese capital, they used that opportunity - hence the infrequency of their visits.¹²²

The envoys from Vietnam always felt the pressure to prove themselves equal, because Vietnam had to constantly fear that China would conquer them again. Over the course of thousands of years, the Vietnamese have repeatedly been conquered. Despite being taken over by the Chinese from the North, they still made the most of the occupation period.¹²³

In fact, the tributary system was, in some aspects, useful for Vietnam as they profited from the gifts they received from the Chinese court. The presents of the Chinese emperor were consistently of higher value than the tribute offered, in order to demonstrate imperial magnanimity and benevolence. The Chinese court pretended that it needed nothing material from these 'barbarians'. Tribute to China was a symbolic recognition and reinforcement of China's superior status in its own Sinocentric world order.¹²⁴

Vietnam functioned as a contributor to the Chinese tributary system from as early as the *Nam Việt* period and also during restless times until the French established a protectorate over Vietnam.

Tributary and Private Trade

Exchanges of cultural goods, agricultural goods, consumer goods, and so on, did not only occur through the tributary system but also through private trade. For instance, the *Yuan* dynasty (1279 - 1368) drew a distinction between tributary and private trade and encouraged

¹²¹ Stuart-Fox, *A Short History of China and Southeast Asia: Tribute, Trade and Influence*, 46-47.

¹²² Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, 174-175.

¹²³ Carol M. Young, Marie-France Dupoizat and Elizabeth W. Lane, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, (Singapore: Southeast Asian Ceramic Society, 1982), 20.

¹²⁴ Qian, *Reexamining the Sinosphere - Cultural Transmissions and Transformations in East Asia*, 33.

private trade. The Chinese court and Chinese merchants sailed to Southeast Asia and returned with lucrative cargoes. New trade networks were established, consequently, larger and more seaworthy ocean-going junks sailed between China and Southeast Asia.¹²⁵

Tribute and trade were neither tantamount nor completely independent operations. Between China and its trade/tributary partners, trade took place in three patterns. The first type of trade followed immediately upon the presentation of tribute to the emperor at the capital. Usually, merchants, who were permitted to trade in Beijing for a specified number of days, accompanied the tribute missions. Immediately after the completion of the tributary rituals, the merchants set out on their own trade mission. The second type of trade might take place in Beijing without the presentation of tribute. The third type of trade might take place along the border without the presentation of tribute.¹²⁶

During the *Lý* dynasty, there was a two-way interchange of cultural items between China and Vietnam. The ships, which left the ports on the Chinese coast, would go south and proceed westward along the northern side of Hainan [海南], and following the coast arrive at *Hạ Long* Bay. Continuing along the coast, they would enter the *Bạch Đằng* River, which connects with the Red River delta, where it finally reaches the capital, *Thăng Long*.¹²⁷

While the *Yuan* dynasty supported private trade, the *Ming* dynasty prohibited private overseas trade by Chinese merchants, and Chinese were forbidden to voyage abroad. The only officially approved trade was by merchants from countries that acknowledged Chinese sovereignty, and then only when it was accompanied by tribute missions. Three ports only were designated to receive tribute missions, it also depended on where they came from. The port for tribute missions from Southeast Asia was *Guangzhou*, also known as *Canton*.¹²⁸ Although private trade under the *Ming* dynasty was prohibited, smuggling did occur, which in turn encouraged piracy. The rulers from Southeast Asia were not reluctant to the official trade regime imposed by the Chinese court, because it also reduced competition from private traders. By contrast, private traders were most unhappy and tried to circumvent the new restrictions. Some became smugglers, but others even cooperated with official tributary missions. Some merchant families in China fled abroad for fear of prosecution. This had an impact on the resident Chinese population in Southeast Asia. These Chinese merchant communities redirected trade towards the muslim West, while waiting for the situation in China to ameliorate. Despite the increase in

¹²⁵ Stuart-Fox, *A Short History of China and Southeast Asia: Tribute, Trade and Influence*, 64.

¹²⁶ Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, 75-76.

¹²⁷ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 141.

¹²⁸ Stuart-Fox, *A Short History of China and Southeast Asia: Tribute, Trade and Influence*, 75.

smuggling and in the frequency of tribute missions, the total number of trade between Southeast Asia and China declined.¹²⁹

The reason for the new regulations on tribute and trade under the *Ming* dynasty was the interest of the new emperor in reimposing a Chinese world order, in which China obtained the old title of the 'Middle Kingdom', and all countries acknowledged the power of the emperor. Limitations of foreign travel and trade were imposed to minimize contacts between Chinese and non-Chinese that might cause friction in the future of the new dynasty after the *Yuan* dynasty, which was considered a foreign domination. After all, the *Yuan* dynasty is from Mongol descendants.¹³⁰

Eventually, the tributary system benefited both parties. In terms of dealing with a bordering country, which the Chinese rulers did not consider practical to control directly and yet wanted to keep revolving within the 'Chinese Cultural Sphere', the tributary system was clever and economically profitable. On the Vietnamese side, upholding the tributary system meant a way to remain relatively independent of their neighbor, and additionally, they were able to avoid the excessive cost and Chinese interference in their internal affairs.¹³¹

4. Conclusions

Over the course of nearly one thousand years (111 BCE until 938 CE), Vietnam was repeatedly conquered by Chinese rulers. The degree of Vietnamese self-sufficiency varied depending on the respective Chinese ruler. In the 'First Chinese Domination', the ruler was satisfied to govern indirectly through the local aristocracy. Whereas in the 'Second Chinese Domination', China attempted to make Vietnam a part of the Chinese empire, where Chinese officials directly ruled over the Vietnamese population. During this time period, Chinese political and social institutions were introduced to the Vietnamese locals. The Chinese rulers enforced their political system in Vietnam; in particular, the Chinese language became a central tool. At the administration level, it was indispensable to use the Chinese written language, and the bureaucracy was filled with officials from China. These measurements had a great impact on Vietnamese literature, art (ceramic culture), and architecture. All of these stated areas reflected Chinese motifs.¹³²

For the Vietnamese, being a part of the 'Chinese Cultural Sphere' had benefits. After Vietnamese independence, Chinese influence continued in Vietnamese society and culture. The new Vietnamese rulers found the Chinese political institutions useful in establishing a

¹²⁹ Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, 77.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹³² Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 222-223.

strong centralized state. They kept the Chinese administrative structure and the Chinese written language.¹³³

A strong and united China historically meant 'trouble' for Vietnam, because traditionally, the Chinese policy has been either to dominate Vietnam or to keep Vietnam weak and divided. For China, a strong and united Vietnam was perceived as a problem.¹³⁴

The reason why China was so keenly interested in Vietnam is based on several factors. The most notable factors were economic and strategic. Vietnam's geographical location is exactly where China can hold its favorable position against other Southeast Asian countries. Above all, they were better able to control the South China Sea there. Furthermore, Vietnam has various commodities, such as ivory, kingfisher feathers, tortoiseshell, rhinoceros horn, pearls, and many more. For these reasons, the respective Chinese rulers felt compelled to bring Vietnam under their control. However, these advantages for China imply impediments for Vietnam. The struggle for independence from China persists in Vietnam's history. Changing Chinese dynasties tried to reoccupy Vietnam more or less successfully in the following period.¹³⁵

As mentioned above, during the *Trần* dynasty, three invasions of the Mongols in 1258, 1285, and 1287 were successfully repelled. Three times, the Vietnamese resorted to guerrilla warfare, and additionally, heat and diseases took their toll on the Mongols. The Mongol army was forced to retreat, and they suffered heavy losses.¹³⁶

One reason why China accepted the tributary system with Vietnam was the high cost that invasions, wars, and the control of the Vietnamese population costs. In addition, over the course of time, China was able to bring the whole of South China under its control, which allowed it to conduct maritime trade with the ports facing the South China Sea. One of the reasons why they were interested in Vietnam. After disposing of this problem, it was sufficient to be accepted by Vietnam as superior, as the center of the world, and as the 'Son of Heaven', who was given the 'Mandate of Heaven', thus, Vietnam was obliged to pay tribute.¹³⁷

On the surface, the nearly one thousand-year-long Chinese domination over Vietnam brought some new developments. For instance, the construction of waterways and roads was supported. New waterways and roads improved access to harbors, but these developments were accompanied by ulterior motives, by strengthening the infrastructure to transport products, which the Chinese government was keenly interested in. In the sector of agriculture, the Chinese brought new tools and techniques, which improved the harvest. Language and

¹³³ Ibid, 223.

¹³⁴ Taylor, *The Birth Of Vietnam*, 297.

¹³⁵ Gabriele Fahr-Becker, Sabine Hessemann, Sri Kuhnt-Saptodewo, Michaela Appel and Michael Dunn, *The Art of East Asia*. (Cologne: Könemann, 1999), 450.

¹³⁶ Stuart-Fox, *A Short History of China and Southeast Asia: Tribute, Trade and Influence*, 62.

¹³⁷ Taylor, *The Birth Of Vietnam*, 300.

communication played a big part in the relationship between China and Vietnam. The struggles to communicate with the Vietnamese population were grave. Even though they tried to enforce the Chinese language on the Vietnamese population, they could not fully impose it on the Vietnamese population and were only successful on administrative and academic levels, as official documents were written in classical Chinese. Throughout the centuries of Chinese occupation, there have been repeated attempts to impose the Vietnamese script on the official level, but several attempts have failed. Some Vietnamese tried to introduce *Chữ nôm* to official documents, but did not really succeed. In many aspects of daily life, the Vietnamese were gradually affected by the Chinese influence. Starting with the Vietnamese elite, who adopted Confucian theories and principles. This may be explained by the fact that the elite were able to read the texts about Confucianism by themselves. Despite the fact that the Vietnamese adopted many Chinese cultural habits, there are still numerous cultural differences between the two countries. These differences included a higher social status of women in Vietnamese society¹³⁸, the absence of primogeniture, the custom of betel nut chewing, and non-Confucian religious ceremonies regarding the worship of the ancestors.¹³⁹

On the one hand, the Vietnamese could 'enjoy' classical Chinese poems and literature and through expressing themselves fluently in the same language as their 'superior' northern neighbor and proving themselves equal, they profited in terms of the development of their own ceramic culture and other areas, but on the other hand, the Vietnamese were quite fierce in their resistance against the Chinese government. The reason for this resistance was the already existing culture in Vietnam. Although the Chinese intervention did bring some new insights to Vietnam, which brings us back to the term 'Chinese Cultural Sphere', it was still perceived as a foreign intervention. The existing culture would have been assured even if China had not intervened. In addition to the already existing culture in Vietnam, the contact with the former kingdom of Champa and the Khmer empire, both empires had been influenced by the Indian subcontinent, showed Vietnam an alternative to the Chinese civilization.¹⁴⁰

It can also be expressed that despite all the efforts that the Chinese put into the assimilation of Vietnam politically and culturally into the Chinese empire, they could not control one factor - the Vietnamese sense of national consciousness. This national consciousness even affected officials, who were sent from China and who intermarried with the local population. They slowly identified with local concerns. Throughout Vietnamese history, there are many examples, among others: the emerging *Han*-Vietnamese ruling class during the *Han* dynasty, where intermarriage between Vietnamese locals and Chinese officials occurred and whose funerary ceramic objects had an enormous influence on Vietnamese ceramic culture; *Lý Nam Đế*, who

¹³⁸ For instance, in the law code of the *Lê* dynasty, it is clearly stated how strong female rights in their marriage and inheritance are.

Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, 130.

¹³⁹ John Stevenson and John Guy. *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*. (Chicago: Art Media Resources, 1997), 29-30.

¹⁴⁰ Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, 298-299.

himself was of Chinese descent but after six generations embraced Vietnam as his homeland.¹⁴¹

The Vietnamese did adopt many Chinese ways and did take China as a role model, but during this process, they kept their own language and their own culture. The survival of the Vietnamese language is attested by their clear separation from the Chinese. Throughout Vietnamese history, they also cherished people who revolted against the Chinese Empire. Vietnamese independence did not suddenly appear in the 10th century. As a result of the constant threat from the Chinese, the Vietnamese developed survival skills and a sharp awareness of Chinese intentions. Through this tactic, they were able to preserve their own culture and also adapt to a new one.¹⁴²

The relationship between Vietnam and China goes back over thousands of years and is very complex. Furthermore, there is no clear distinction between what is considered to be 'Vietnamese' and what is considered to be 'Chinese'. Firstly, the northern borders of present-day Vietnam and the southern border of present-day China shifted either 'in favor' of Vietnam or 'in favor' of China, depending on who won the border clash. Secondly, through the intensive and repeated mixing of people, it is hard to distinguish present-day Vietnam and China in terms of ethnicity. As mentioned before, nowadays, Vietnam consists of fifty-four groups of minorities, and China consists of fifty-six groups of minorities. A single ethnic identity of a group cannot be isolated because group identity is multi-dimensional. Northern Vietnam was in connection with China through a number of migration waves and cultural transmission since ancient times. Just to mention some migration waves, like the migration wave after *Wang Mang* declared himself emperor of the *Xin* dynasty, the migration wave after Ma Yuan successfully repelled the 'Trung sisters', or every time an imperial dynasty in China collapsed, the former ruler plus allegiances fled to, inter alia, Northern Vietnam. Vietnam became a melting pot for different ethnicities.

The historical encounter with China introduced critical new elements to the existing Vietnamese culture. It created the fear of losing their own national identity, but it also created opportunities to assimilate and Vietnamize the best of Chinese civilization and culture. For instance, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism were and still are highly accepted by the Vietnamese. Before the contact with these teachings, the Vietnamese believed in polytheism, shamanism, worshiped animistic religion and nature, and ancestor worship. After getting in contact with the teachings from China and India, they integrated their existing belief with the

¹⁴¹ Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 223.

¹⁴² Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, 300-301.

new teachings. In Vietnam, any kind of religious practice is an adaptation that has evolved from the original form.¹⁴³

For reasons of conciseness, the relationship between the two countries is reduced in the following chapters to the ceramic relationship.

It was important to go back to the beginnings of Vietnam to understand the already existing culture before the Chinese, but also the joint past of these two countries. In this way, Vietnam was able to acquire knowledge of the production of pottery.

In this sense, this dissertation outlines the history of Chinese and Vietnamese ceramics in the following chapter. As mentioned above, this is not a one-to-one comparison of Chinese and Vietnamese ceramics. Rather, a presentation of the historical development or types of glazes of the ceramic culture in both countries.

¹⁴³ West, *Insight Guides Vietnam*, 91, 93.

Chapter III

Representative Survey of Pottery in China and Vietnam

1. Earthenware, Stoneware, and Porcelain

Earthenware was made from clays collected along streams or on hillsides and consisted of materials like sand, crushed stone, ground mussel shells, and crushed fired clay. Plant fibers were added to prevent shrinkage and cracking during firing and drying. In prehistoric times, ceramics were commonly made using coiling, paddling, pinching, and shaping. For the coiling method, the potter rolled a lump of clay into a coil and gradually built up the vessel wall by adding more coils. Each coiled layer was pinched to the one beneath, and the coils were subsequently thinned by squeezing them between the potter's thumbs and fingers. Coil junctures were then smoothed. In the paddling method, a lump of clay was pounded into shape by holding the clay against a large stone and paddling it with a wooden paddle. If the paddle was covered with woven fabric or a cord, the patterned markings appeared on the clay. The lump of clay might also be pinched and shaped by hand. After air drying, the pot could be further thinned and shaped via scraping with a small piece of a sharpened clam shell. After that, a design could be applied by using fingernails or a tool such as an awl, stick, or wooden stamp. After the drying process, the next step was the firing process, which was an all-day affair. Usually, an area would be cleared, and a small open fire was built. Alternatively, the dried vessels were placed in kilns. In the open fire method, the objects would be placed a small distance from the fire and gradually moved closer to the fire. After a couple of hours, the pots would be placed directly on top of the hot coals, and wood was piled on to create a roaring fire. The fire was then allowed to burn down naturally and the objects were covered with ashes while they slowly cooled. Variation in coloring on the fired objects was a result of the amount of oxygen present during firing - red from an oxidized atmosphere and gray from a reduced atmosphere.

It is difficult to attribute a provenance to the fine quality of some ceramic objects. Furthermore, in China, the categorization of porcelain, stoneware, and earthenware differs from the Western categorization. The Western contemporary view is that pottery encompasses all three types, ranked according to the ware's material composition and to the temperature at which it is fired in a kiln.¹⁴⁴ The development from earthenware to stoneware to porcelain is closely related to the firing stage of high-fired ceramics. Earthenware is made from ordinary earthenware clay, with about 30 percent of the composition consisting of iron, calcium, magnesium, and very little aluminum oxide. In general, oxides can decrease the firing temperature of the clay, so earthenwares can be fired at only 700°C to 900°C. Earthenwares are not ideal for household use because of their rough texture and high absorbency. However, they are perfect as cooking

¹⁴⁴ Finlay, "The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History," 144 - 147.

pots, since they can withstand the heat of the cooking fire. If tapped on, a dull and weak sound is produced, and the body is not translucent.¹⁴⁵ If earthenware is fired above 900°C, it will slump, collapse, or melt. Usually, the potter added either crushed quartz or flint to help the plasticity of the clay mixture and improve the silica content. This clay mixture varies from one locality to another. What affected the clay mixture was the grain sizes, which varied from coarse to extremely fine and dense, and of course, the firing temperature.

Although stoneware is very similar to earthenware in its variability of color and texture, it is harder than earthenware.¹⁴⁶ Stoneware is produced at about 1,100°C to 1,250°C, resulting in a ceramic with a hardness that lies between that of earthenware and porcelain. The body of stoneware is vitreous (or glassy), almost entirely nonporous, resonant when struck, and varies in color from light gray to black.

Whiteness and translucency chiefly distinguish porcelain from stoneware. Porcelain is produced at temperatures above 1,300°C up to 1,400°C, undergoing a process of vitrification that renders the finished product resonant, wholly impermeable, very white, and translucent when thin. Since porcelain and stoneware are both high-fired wares, they are glazed merely to improve their appearance, not because they are porous.¹⁴⁷ In contrast to earthenwares, porcelain is ideal for the household. It can resist dirt and odors, and is very easy to clean, hence, ideal for serving food and drink. However, porcelain cannot be used for cooking vessels. These qualities are due to how porcelains are produced. First, porcelain clay, which is made of *kaolin* clay, contains, among other distinct elements, a high proportion of aluminum oxide and silicon oxide. Furthermore, the surface of porcelain is usually covered with a layer of glaze. The surface of porcelain is smooth and very dense, as well as more translucent. If porcelain is tapped on the sound is clear and distinctive, and it absorbs very little moisture.¹⁴⁸

Earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain are regarded as distinct categories in the West. The classification of stoneware and porcelain makes sense in terms of chemical and physical analysis, as there are genuine differences in mineral ingredients and material formation between the two ceramics. China, however, traditionally recognizes only two groupings: earthenware and high-fired ware [cí 瓷], the latter including both stoneware and porcelain.

¹⁴⁵ Quan Kuishan, Ding Pengbo, and Li Zhiyan, "Ceramics of the Xia, Shang, and Western Zhou Dynasties and the Spring and Autumn Period," in *Chinese Ceramics: From the Paleolithic Period to the Qing Dynasty*, ed. Li Zhiyan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 107.

¹⁴⁶ Margaret Medley, *The Chinese Potter: A Practical History of Chinese Ceramics*, (Oxford: Phaidon, 1976), 13-14.

¹⁴⁷ Finlay, "The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History," 144 - 147.

¹⁴⁸ Quan Kuishan, Ding Pengbo, and Li Zhiyan, "Ceramics of the Xia, Shang, and Western Zhou Dynasties and the Spring and Autumn Period," in *Chinese Ceramics: From the Paleolithic Period to the Qing Dynasty*, ed. Li Zhiyan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 107.

Quan Kuishan, "Ceramics of the Period of Division," in *Chinese Ceramics: From the Paleolithic Period to the Qing Dynasty*, ed. Li Zhiyan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 193.

Before the emergence of supposed ‘true porcelain’ at *Jingdezhen* in the *Yuan* dynasty, terms like ‘proto-porcelain’, ‘quasi-porcelain’, and ‘porcelaneous stoneware’ were often used to identify pottery made with some of the ingredients of porcelain and sharing some of its physical characteristics. The grouping of porcelain with stoneware was natural since the new material resulted from an incremental change within an established tradition, and was mainly a matter of adjusting the proportions of the known ingredients.

The first prototypes of low-fired earthenware are dated to around the Neolithic period. During the *Shang* dynasty [*Shāngcháo* 商朝] (1600 BCE - 1046 BCE), the attention switched from low-fired earthenware to high-fired ceramics - the so-called ‘proto-celadon’ wares. During the *Han* dynasty, they fully matured the technique of celadon wares [*qingci* 青瓷], literally ‘green porcelain’. In the following periods, other types of ceramic objects and glazes developed, including, eventually, porcelain. The innovations were especially remarkable during the *Song* dynasty. Some of these developments include ceramic object types such as the *Longquan* [龍泉] celadons and, of course, the famous *Jingdezhen* porcelains [景德鎮陶瓷], and new ways of glazing, as with the *Tang* [*sancai* 三彩] (better known as the polychrome *Tang* three-color wares). The *Song* court-patronized five famous kilns that produced the ‘*Ru* [汝]’, ‘*Guan* [官]’, ‘*Ge* [哥]’, ‘*Jun* [鈞]’, and ‘*Ding* [定]’ wares in addition to the pedestrian kilns of *Cizhou* [磁州窯], *Yaozhou* [耀州窯], *Jiayang* [建陽窯].

The invention of porcelain in China was an important development for ceramic production worldwide.¹⁴⁹ For centuries, China dominated the porcelain market until the early 18th century, when Johann Friedrich Böttger (1682 - 1719), a German alchemist, co-discovered with Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus (1651 - 1708) the secret of hard-paste porcelain. This discovery was very profitable for the Meissen company to this day. The Meissen company was the first European factory that also produce large-scale hard-paste porcelain.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Li Zhiyan, “Introduction,” in *Chinese Ceramics: From the Paleolithic Period to the Qing Dynasty*, ed. Li Zhiyan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 1, 4, 6.

Li Zhiyan, “Prehistoric Earthenware,” in *Chinese Ceramics: From the Paleolithic Period to the Qing Dynasty*, ed. Li Zhiyan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 32.

¹⁵⁰ Carswell, *Blue&White - Chinese Porcelain around the world*, 11.

The Term 'Porcelain'

Where does the term 'porcelain' originate from? The first recorded term 'porcelanas' was recorded in Barcelona in 1250. It referred to cowry shells that were imported from Alexandria.¹⁵¹ Apparently, Marco Polo, a Venetian traveler, who traveled to China in the late 13th century, used the Italian term 'porcellana' for two different commodities that he encountered during his visit. He used the term for the cowry shells, which served in the present-day province of *Yunnan* as currency, and he described 'porcellana' as fine pottery. This could be because of the shell-like appearance of the glaze.¹⁵²

For a long time, it was believed that porcelain was a mixture of two basic materials: *kaolin* (white china clay) [高嶺土 / 高岭土] and *petuntse/baidunzi* (pulverized porcelain stone) [白墩子]. This assumption was made by Père d'Entrecolles (1664 - 1741)¹⁵³, a French Jesuit priest, who visited *Jingdezhen*, in the *Jiangxi* province, at the beginning of the 18th century. *Kaolin*, which softens the paste, providing plasticity, smoothness, and whiteness, and *petuntse* derive from granite, when they are fired at a high temperature (around 1280°C), they merge into a hard and vitrified body. The body is impermeable, very white, and translucent when thin. It is precisely this property that made porcelain so popular. However, new research suggests that this mixture of components, which supposedly produces porcelain, is not necessarily accurate. According to Nigel Wood, a scientist and practicing potter, there is a major divide in porcelain composition between north and south China. These revelations are not surprising, as China is geographically the third-largest nation in the world, so the geological structure of these two regions differs significantly from one another. The northern regions of China have more loess in their clays due to the freezing, heating, and high winds of the igneous rocks of the Gobi Desert, whereas the southern regions, with their warm and wet climates, feature clays with a mixture of quartz, mica, and feldspar.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ John Carswell, *Blue&White - Chinese Porcelain around the world*, (London: British Museum Press, 2000), 18.

¹⁵² John Carswell, *Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain and Its Impact on the Western World*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1985), 13.

¹⁵³ François Xavier d'Entrecolles arrived in China in 1698. He spent time in Jingdezhen in the early 18th century and sent two letters to Europe in 1712 and 1722.

Anne Gerritsen, "Fragments of a Global Past: Ceramics Manufacture in Song-Yuan-Ming Jingdezhen," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52, no. 1 (2009): 123, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25651153>.

The two letters of Père d'Entrecolles containing the detailed description of the ceramic production in Jingdezhen are a highly valuable compilation because he was trained in scientific observation, so all of his letters contained information that helped with the study of Chinese ceramic production, though he may have misunderstood some work processes.

Masahiko Satō, *Chinese Ceramics: A Short History*, (New York: Weatherhill, 1981), 208.

In his letters, he described that the pieces prepared for firing were carried from workshops to the kilns by men on their backs. He reported that he was surprised to see a man balancing on his shoulders two long narrow planks on which the porcelain vessels were lined and that he walked through the busy streets without smashing his goods. Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, 219-220.

¹⁵⁴ Carswell, *Blue&White - Chinese Porcelain around the world*, 20-21.

1.2 The Pottery of Vietnam and China

As mentioned, the study of pottery can indicate advanced and sophisticated material technology, evidence of human occupation and activity, and global trade. All of these aspects are cross-disciplinary, encompassing the fields of archeology, art history, material science, and many others. Pottery presents striking evidence for artistic, commercial, and technological interaction between Vietnam and China. Furthermore, pottery is a part of the material culture that displays the assimilation and transmission of artistic symbols, themes, and designs across vast distances. It yields the most extensive physical evidence for sustained cultural encounters on a worldwide scale.¹⁵⁵

In Vietnam and China, each kiln site has its own individual and specific characteristics and represents different traditions or aesthetics; however, whether within a country or across the border, some ceramic products show a clear relationship or a mutual influence amongst the different kiln sites. These influences manifested themselves either through similarities in materials used, production techniques, or in form and decoration.¹⁵⁶

Styles and decorations changed over the course of history. Pottery adopted and transmitted artistic symbols, themes, and shapes from all other media, especially jade, lacquer, sculpture, metalwork, coins, textiles, engravings, woodblock prints, and painting. Complex designs were often applied through combinations of stamping, punctuating, and incising the surface. Some vessels were decorated with fabric or cordage by impressing a woven design or geometric patterns into the moist clay. This makes it possible to study ancient weaving techniques even though the cloth itself has not survived.¹⁵⁷ Decorative patterns and shapes journeyed from medium to medium, from country to country, were adapted to different cultures, took on innovative readings, and audaciously mingled cultural symbols. While China and its porcelain played a dominant role in this far-reaching exchange, the ecumene as a whole collaborated in the creation of a ceramic culture and visual language that in some measure transcended regions and peoples.¹⁵⁸

In general, Vietnamese and Chinese ceramic production centers are river- and ocean-based exchange networks. Major centers are located at the mouths, junctions, and sources of rivers.

In many cases, it is very difficult to identify ceramic objects of these regions as being distinctly Vietnamese or Chinese, though in other cases, it is a very easy distinction to make. The fact that categorization is sometimes difficult to achieve with confidence testifies to the intertwined ceramic cultures of Vietnam and China.

¹⁵⁵ Stacey Pierson, *Chinese Ceramics*, 7.

¹⁵⁶ Bùi Minh Trí and Kerry Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 2001), 135.

¹⁵⁷ Ancient Technology Series, "Prehistoric."

¹⁵⁸ Robert Finlay, "The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History," *Journal of World History* 9, no. 2 (1998): 180, doi:10.1353/JWH.2005.0099.

2. Chinese Ceramics

Chinese ceramic culture is so rich and varied that simply describing ceramic production in China is complicated. For example, some kilns or regions manufactured only a certain type of ceramic object, or, after some time, they switched from one particular glaze to another. Further, certain kilns experienced high levels of production during different imperial periods. These factors, in addition to the long and continuous period of production of ceramics in China, make it difficult to summarize Chinese ceramic aesthetics. Nonetheless, Chinese ceramic objects have been categorized by scholars into different groups based on historical periods, especially those marking particular dynasties, design and style, and names of places of production.¹⁵⁹

The *Jian* wares, which were produced in the *Jian* kilns [建窯] in the *Fujian* [福建] province in southeast China, are a good example of the complicated description of Chinese ceramic objects. These kilns were highly specialized, and they are known for their famous tea bowls known as *tenmoku/temmoku* [天目], after their Japanese name. Their production reflected the demand for the consumption of tea. The glazes of these tea bowls are also known as 'hare's fur' or 'oil spot' glaze. *Jian* wares have a distinctive chocolate brown body, which was obtained through the use of local sandy clay and a rich black or brown glaze.¹⁶⁰ Although these kilns were known for their tea bowls, in the *Tang* dynasty (618 - 907 CE), the *Jian* kilns fired celadon objects, and by the *Song* dynasty (960 – 1279 CE), they had begun to fire the famous *tenmoku* tea bowls in response to the increasing demand for tea-brewing utensils, along with bluish-white wares and white wares. In the beginning, these kilns were private, but in the Northern *Song* period, they fired the black-glazed tea bowls for the court.¹⁶¹

2.1 Fabric, Clay Forming, Glaze Techniques, and Firing Process

Fabric

Chinese ceramics are made mainly with a combination of kaolin, porcelain stone, feldspar, and quartz. In the Neolithic periods, the potters preferred soil with a high amount of aluminum as they were easier to form. This kind of soil was referred to as 'yellow earth' [huangtu 黄土] and was found around the Yellow River [黄河]. The soil was mixed with sand to make it lean and more resistant to fire. First, the clay was washed and then kneaded, thereby homogenizing the

¹⁵⁹ Pierson, *Chinese Ceramics*, 43.

¹⁶⁰ Pierson, *Chinese Ceramics*, 25-27, 55-57.

¹⁶¹ He Li, "Ceramics of the Song, Liao, Western Xia, and Jin Dynasties," in *Chinese Ceramics: From the Paleolithic Period to the Qing Dynasty*, ed. Li Zhiyan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 306.

mixture and de-aerating it so that the inevitable shrinkage during firing would take place as uniformly as possible.¹⁶²

Clay Forming

There are different ways to shape clay. One technique was to form a long clay strand, which was then spiraled into rings to form a vessel. Then the inner and outer surface is smoothed with wet fingers (which explains why some objects have fingerprints on them). This method does not require any special tools. In addition, this technique has the advantage that the mass could be made compact and resistant, which also explains the exceptionally good state of preservation of Neolithic pottery. Another technique is to use a mold or individual parts that were made and put together. After forming, the object was left to dry, and then the decoration was painted on or imprinted on. During the Neolithic period, motifs were often applied by scratching with a pointed object or a comb, by pressing fabric and basketwork, or with the help of a wooden stamp. The mediums were ground natural materials, such as chromite, which were applied directly to the dried clay before firing. Sometimes the potter covered his vessel with an engobe of colored clay. The first time that a potter's wheel was used occurred during the *Longshan* culture [龍山文化] (3000 BCE - 1900 BCE).¹⁶³

The use of molds was introduced at about the beginning of the 12th century. Molds were usually made of a slightly grayish, compact stoneware clay with an arched recess on the underside, and the upper surface was richly decorated with a design that was neatly carved (Fig. 40, 41, 42). The mold was placed on a turn-table with the decoration upwards, then a thick disc of clay was laid on it and was beaten over the mold with a wooden paddle while the other hand turned the table. Although the use of molds facilitated the work of the potter, carved pottery continued to be made.¹⁶⁴

Materials like lacquer, gold, silver, or metalwork in general served as models for form and shape types. Such imitation required technical mastery of the ceramic medium, which, over the years, developed to a great extent. Over the years, decorative techniques like incising, carving (intaglio and sgraffito), engraving, and molding developed.¹⁶⁵

Glaze Techniques

The glaze was applied either by dabbing with the fingers or the whole piece was dipped into the liquid glaze. In the case of very fine pieces that could not be touched, the glaze was blown onto the vessel using bamboo.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, 14.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 14-15.

¹⁶⁴ Medley, *The Chinese Potter: A Practical History of Chinese Ceramics*, 110.

¹⁶⁵ Pierson, *Song Ceramics: Objects of Admiration*, 13.

¹⁶⁶ Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, 219.

Firing Process

During the firing process, raw clay turns into ceramic through heating. It took some time until the perfect firing process was developed. Initially, the first ceramics were fired in a wooden fire. A distinction was made between oxidation and reduction firing. Most of the time it was an oxidation fire, which meant that ceramics were fired via an open furnace. The iron contained in the clay was transformed into iron oxide by the addition of oxygen, giving the fired earth its red color. The more intense this oxidation process was, the redder the piece became. The red pottery of the *Yangshao* period was created using this method. If the kiln's air supply was reduced, the clay burned yellowish or gray. The firing of ceramics with the furnace closed is referred to as reduction firing. Carbon monoxide is produced in the kiln, which itself converts into carbon dioxide by withdrawing some of the oxygen from the metallic oxides contained in the clay mass. Iron oxide - a weaker metallic oxide - then forms, giving the clay a gray color. When the iron content of the clay body is low, the oxidation or reduction effect is reduced, and the fired clay becomes almost white. Furnaces in Neolithic times were sometimes sack-shaped caves or slightly inclined cylinders. In both cases, the temperature of the combustion chamber was controlled through openings with tubes.¹⁶⁷

During the *Tang* dynasty and throughout the *Song* dynasty, cassettes/saggars (protective fire-resistant clay containers that also provide a more even distribution of heat), made of refractory clay, sometimes had stepped grooves on the inside, into which the bowls were placed with the mouth down. These cassettes were then placed on top of one another in the kiln so that the bottom of the lower one served as a lid. After the firing process, intact cassettes were reused.¹⁶⁸

The use of kiln implements, both setters and spacers, grew increasingly complex. The use of saggars helped the ceramic objects fire to an even temperature throughout, protected them from dirt falling from the roof of the kiln and, provided a barrier between the objects and direct contact with the flame. Through the invention of saggars, the potters could make use of the entire volume of the kiln.¹⁶⁹

The vessel was placed with the mouth down to distribute the weight of the vessel evenly over a wider area, so that during the firing process, the probability of warping was slightly reduced and a larger number of pieces could be fired at once. If a vessel was fired on the foot and not with the mouth down, each piece had to be put in one sagger, which would take up more space in the kiln. If several pieces were stacked in one sagger and tripods were placed in between them (Fig. 38), this prevented them from sticking together during the firing process and leaving spur or ring marks, marring the desired aesthetic. One disadvantage of the upside-down method was the unglazed mouth rim, which was mounted afterward with a metal rim (in

¹⁶⁷ Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, 15-16.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

¹⁶⁹ Quan, "Ceramics of the Period of Division," 195.

many cases a very thin copper alloy band). An unglazed mouth rim meant it was more prone to be damaged.¹⁷⁰

The *Yaozhou* wares were usually fired on the foot, but with a ring support to raise it off the bottom, and each piece was placed in a saggar, and the saggars were stacked one on top of the other. This firing technique left a reddish or blackish stain on the unglazed part of the base. In the final years of activity at the *Yaozhou* kilns, the potters became more negligent, and it was then common to stack the bowls and shallow dishes on top of another single saggar. To prevent the vessels from sticking together, an unglazed ring was placed in-between the unfired wares.¹⁷¹

The bowls from the *Jian* kiln were also usually fired on the foot, but with a ring support to raise it off the bottom, and each piece was placed in a saggar, and the saggars were stacked one on top of the other. Although the unfired bowl in the saggar was protected from flying ash and uncontrolled temperatures, they were not protected from unpredictable results.¹⁷²

The kilns consisted of bell-shaped chambers that were arranged beside one another in ascending order. At the bottom was a hearth with three openings in the front and one on the side. Five openings were made at the top of each chamber, but these were plugged with pot sherds during the firing. Before being placed in the furnace, the objects were placed in cassettes, the bottoms of which were sprinkled with sand and waste kaolin so that the objects did not stick to the cassette. Each large piece was placed in a box, while the smallest items were put together in a box, but to ensure that they did not touch and create deformities, each of them was placed on a carefully set ring. The bottom of the furnace was covered with a thick layer of gravel. To make full use of the space, the cassettes were placed one on top of the other in such a way that they sealed the content of the below. The finest porcelain was placed in the middle, the less fine in the background, and the pieces with thicker glazes came in front of the kiln. The joints of the kiln were carefully sealed with earth for durability. Then they walled up the entrances and set fire to the furnace. First, it was kept at a low temperature for 24 hours. Once the high temperature had been reached, two people constantly had to look after the fire. To assess the burning stage, the hole near the chimney, which was clogged with shards, was opened and a cassette was opened with fire tongs. When the firing was satisfactory and the color appeared in all its glory, the fire was stopped, and all openings were bricked up. Only three to five days after the fire had gone out, and depending on the size of the pieces, the kiln could be opened, and the fired wares taken out.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Medley, *The Chinese Potter: A Practical History of Chinese Ceramics*, 109-110.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 117, 165.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁷³ Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, 219-220.

2.2 Glaze Types

Glazes are classified in many ways (for example unleaded, raw, fritted, slip, etc.). The chemistry of the glaze is dependent upon the firing method. Learning to understand the relationship between chemistry and firing characteristics allows for much more control. Many physical factors also play a role in how a particular glaze fires (coating thickness, body to which it is applied, firing schedule, temperature and atmosphere, application method, etc.).¹⁷⁴ A glaze is a glassy coating that is applied to the interior or exterior surface of a ceramic object. By glazing the ceramic object, it becomes non-porous. The main constituent of any glaze is silica, most commonly found in nature as quartz or sandstone. Pure silica fuses to glass at about 1700°C. To lower the melting point, other material is added to silica (this addition is also called flux). Lead oxide and calcium oxide are the major fluxes in Chinese ceramics. Glazes fluxed with lead oxide have a high refractive index, and a very smooth, glossy surface texture, and are fired at 700-800°C. They respond well to coloring oxides. Glazes fluxed with calcium oxide (calcium oxide occurs as chalk and wood ash) have a higher firing temperature, around 1170°C. Calcium oxide is cheaper and safer to use than lead oxide. Besides lead oxide and calcium oxide, the third major constituent of Chinese glaze is alumina (aluminum oxide). While alkaline glazes fluxed with potassium and/or sodium oxide are not very common in Chinese ceramics, they were often used in Middle Eastern ceramic glazes. Besides the constituents, the oxidation or reduction firing process plays an essential role in the outcome of the fired ceramic objects. Oxidation occurs when the firing atmosphere inside the kiln is rich in oxygen. Reduction occurs when oxygen is excluded from the kiln atmosphere. For instance, all greenware glazes are the result of iron fired using the reduction method. Earthenware clays in an oxidized fire turn red, while the same clays in a reduced fire turn gray.¹⁷⁵

Ash Glazes

Ash glaze is a glaze that uses organic ash (like paper or wood) as a source of basic oxides. Ash is generally flaky and fibrous and does not sieve well. This consistency contributes to the variation in color and texture of the fired surface. For centuries, pottery glazes have been made from ash mixed with mostly clay and feldspar.¹⁷⁶ Wood ash glaze contains the fluxing agent calcium oxide. The earliest glazes were discovered by accident when wood ash in the kiln fell on the pots during the firing process, reacting to form a glaze.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Tony Hansen, "Ceramic Glaze," last modified June 20, 2024, <https://digitalfire.com/glossary/ceramic+glaze>.

¹⁷⁵ Shelagh J. Vainker, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*, (London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum by British Museum Press, 1991), 220-221.

¹⁷⁶ Tony Hansen, "Wood Ash," last modified June 20, 2024, <https://digitalfire.com/glossary/wood+ash+glaze#collapse1>.

¹⁷⁷ Shelagh Vainker, "Ceramics for use," in *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art*, edited by Jessica Rawson, (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 217.

Lime Glazes

Lime is a broad term for calcium oxide, quicklime, or calcia. The chemical formula is CaO. The main sources of lime in Chinese glazes are wood ash and limestone (calcium carbonate, CaCO₃). Limestone was burned to quicklime (CaO), then burned again to calcium carbonate (CaCO₃) to make it less caustic. The end product was an ultra-fine powder that turned to calcium oxide in the kiln.¹⁷⁸

Chinese lime glazes were easy to produce due to the accessibility of the materials used. They could be made from very ordinary rocks, clays, and ashes, and their physical toughness and chemical stability after firing made them a popular choice of glaze. Also, lime glazes have a relatively low maturing temperature - about 1,200-1,240°C - compared with some later Chinese lime-alkali glazes that mature in the 1,240-1,300°C range. Early lime glazes tend to be yellowish-brown, yellowish-green, or gray-green, depending on how well they were reduced in the kiln.¹⁷⁹

Lime-Alkali Glazes

The lime-alkali glazes were used for stonewares and porcelain glazes. The first time they were used was during the *Tang* dynasty; however, it was more commonly used for *Song* ceramics, such as *Jun* wares, *Yaozhou* wares, and *Longquan* celadons. Lime-alkali glazes have a smooth, translucent richness that has been compared to jade.¹⁸⁰ They were also less likely to develop glassiness or dullness typical of other lime glazes. In addition, they were less prone to run at high temperatures, so lime-alkali glazes could be applied more generously to ceramic objects than other lime glazes. During the 14th century, the use of lime-alkali glazes proved to be ideal for underglaze-blue painting, so they became the standard type for *Jingdezhen* underglaze-blue wares, from the 14th century to the present day.¹⁸¹

High-Lead Glazes

Before the production of true porcelain became common during the *Tang* dynasty, lead glazes were widely used on earthenware and remained important for low-fired products such as roof tiles. Lead glazes also have advantages over alkaline glazes during production, including a lower firing temperature requirement, better flowability, and a lower tendency to crack when cooling.¹⁸² Lead glazes also respond well to coloring oxides, leading to iron oxide (for yellow and brown colors) and copper oxide (for green colors), both being widely used as colorants.

¹⁷⁸ Jessica Rawson, *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art*, (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 364.

¹⁷⁹ Nigel Wood, *Chinese Glazes: Their Origins, Chemistry, and Recreation*, 1. Edition, (London: A & C Black, 1999), 30.

¹⁸⁰ Rawson, *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art*, 364.

¹⁸¹ Wood, *Chinese Glazes: Their Origins, Chemistry, and Recreation*, 50-51.

¹⁸² Kevin Greene, "Late Hellenistic and Early Roman Invention and Innovation: The Case of Lead-Glazed Pottery," *American Journal of Archaeology* 111, no. 4 (2007): 660. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40025267>.

Lead oxide has a low melting point and can provide a glaze at earthenware temperatures, from as low as 700°C to as high as 1200°C.¹⁸³

The most famous example of the high-lead glazes is the *Tang sancai* wares. Usually, these kinds of glazes use straw-white, amber, and green glazes, but during the *Tang* dynasty, in the second half of the 7th century, cobalt-blue lead glaze was introduced in addition to gray-black, brown-black, and turquoise glazes. Although the literal translation of *sancai* means 'three glazes', it did not reflect the real palette of colors. *Sancai* is a modern term that came about due to the first objects that were discovered featuring three colors, and when other colors were discovered, the term was already established.¹⁸⁴

The high-lead glazes from the *Han* dynasty differ from those of the *Tang* dynasty. Primarily, the clay itself is different. During the *Tang* dynasty, instead of the old reddish loessic clays, the *Tang* potters used white and buff-firing secondary *kaolin* and fireclays from coalfields. The *Tang sancai* glazes start to melt at 650°C, but the firing process has been estimated below 900°C and about 950°C, though there were *sancai* wares that were fired up to 1200°C. Wares that were fired in the temperature range of 1100°C to 1200°C were usually for the export market. This temperature range was used for firing the body, while the glazes were fired at a lower temperature. This method made the body more resistant to the trade journey. The effect of running the glaze was achieved by slightly overfiring the objects. The glaze was applied to the body by either pouring, dipping, or brushing. *Sancai* wares were mostly produced for funerary use and not for domestic use, because of their toxic traits.¹⁸⁵

Alkaline Glazes

Alkaline glazes are often brightly colored and fluxed with potassium and/or sodium oxides.¹⁸⁶ When colored with copper, manganese, and cobalt oxides, the glaze turns into shades of turquoise, aubergine, and royal blue, respectively.¹⁸⁷ They are low-fired.

This type of glaze, in particular an alkaline copper-blue glaze, was mainly used in the Islamic world, and gave the impression of deep, cool water. In China, potassium oxide was the main alkaline glaze flux, and sometimes saltpeter, quartz, or various lead-rich compounds were added to the mixture. Alkaline glazes were mainly used for glazing bricks, roof tiles, ridge tiles, and roof finials.¹⁸⁸

This dissertation focuses on several wares that have shaped the Vietnamese ceramic culture: white wares, celadons, *Jian* wares, *Cizhou* wares, and blue&white wares.

¹⁸³ Vainker, "Ceramics for use," 216.

¹⁸⁴ Wood, *Chinese Glazes: Their Origins, Chemistry, and Recreation*, 199.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 200, 203-205.

¹⁸⁶ Vainker, "Ceramics for use," 218.

¹⁸⁷ Rawson, *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art*, 360.

¹⁸⁸ Wood, *Chinese Glazes: Their Origins, Chemistry, and Recreation*, 213, 215, 223.

White Wares

During the *Shang* dynasty, white earthenware was produced in the style of ritual bronze vessels for funerary use. The choice of the color white may have been associated with mourning. In the following periods, white stoneware was produced and further developed. By the time of the *Song* dynasty, white porcelain was being produced, and this development had a lasting impact on the ceramic world. White wares originated from North China, perhaps because of the availability of a whitish clay - *kaolin* - in the area. Furthermore, the experience of snow may have also influenced the preference of the people of North China, as snow was associated with purity.

During the *Tang* and Northern *Song* dynasties, tea drinking became popular. For the tea-drinking ceremony, two types of white stoneware became popular: *Xing* ware [邢瓷] and *Ding* ware [定瓷]. *Xing* ware was produced in the kilns of *Neiqiu* [內邱縣] (*Hebei* province) during the 9th century and was also referred to as 'jade white'. They were sparse in decorations and eventually were surpassed by *Ding* ware. *Ding* ware was produced in the kilns of *Quyong* [曲陽縣] (*Hebei* province) during the 10th and 11th centuries and was also known as 'ivory white'. The reason for their demand for *Xing* ware was that its color nuance was seen as more suitable for the color of tea. Although white wares originated in North China, over time, the kilns in South China also produced white wares. The first major creation of white ware in South China was the *qingbai* porcelain during the 12th century. Another major creation of white ware from South China was the *blanc de chine* (a French term), which was produced in the province of *Fujian*.¹⁸⁹

The white *Ding* wares were among the finest pottery made during the *Song* dynasty. They were not a group of ceramics that were produced specifically for the imperial court, but for several classes of the population. However, some specimens were commissioned by the palace, especially for the imperial court. These often bear the character *guan* [官], which means 'official'. The major manufacturing center of this ware was discovered by the Japanese scholar *Fujio Koyama* [小山富士夫] (1900 - 1975) in 1941, 30 km north of *Quyong*. Between 1951 and 1965, excavations were performed there, and it was discovered that the kilns had already been producing white wares during the *Tang* period. Under the *North Song* period, these kilns became intensely active and remained that way until the *Jin* took power, where after activity dropped considerably.

¹⁸⁹ Tung Wu, *Earth Transformed: Chinese Ceramics in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 1. Edition, (Boston, Museum of Fine Art: MFA Publications, 2001), 56.

The following features are characteristic of *Ding* wares. The sherds are thin, hard, translucent, and have an orangey shimmer. The glaze appears to be oily or creamy, but not very thick, and has an ivory-colored tint. The rim may occasionally be unglazed, as sometimes bowls were placed with the rim down into internally grooved cassettes in kilns, so that six bowls could be stacked. Also, some bowls have a copper or silver hoop on the rim consisting of a single piece, though on some objects, it is composed of several parts, and the joints are visible. The base is covered with glaze but appears slightly rubbed because the vessel was placed on its base to dry before the firing process. The *Ding* wares sometimes feature an inscription which was engraved after firing, such as *Fenghua* [風華], *Cifu* [慈福], *Huayan* [花(?)], and *guan* [官]. It is believed that these were the names of some palaces. The practice of engraving palace names may also have been adopted in Vietnam (more on this in the 3.4 'Inscriptions' section). Decorative motifs were either scratched, incised, or modeled on, and the imagery was strongly influenced by *Song* painting, which heavily featured peonies, chrysanthemums, pomegranates, plums, lotuses, birds, ducks, pheasants, and even dragons and phoenixes. Some plates have a molding pattern on the inside and an incised, petal-like pattern on the outside.¹⁹⁰

The thin fabric of *Ding* wares was due to the use of extremely fine *kaolin*-type clay. This clay was fired at a high temperature, and the silicate and alumina in the clay crystallized, increasing the hardness of the clay. The rims of many *Ding* bowls are mounted with metal. The unglazed sandy rim was scraped off before the firing process and later on, mounted with a metal ring. The reason for scraping off the rim was so that the bowls could be fired upside down. The thin-walled *Ding* wares caused the wares to warp and crack during the firing process, so the *Ding* potters solved this problem by firing the bowls upside down, allowing for the foot ring to be completely glazed.¹⁹¹ This technique was not adopted by Vietnamese potters, perhaps because this stacking method may have taken up too much space in the kilns. The white glazed wares from Vietnam were undoubtedly influenced by the *Ding* and *Qingbai* wares.

Celadon

The use of the term 'celadon' in Europe goes back to two sources. According to some historians, it is a mutilation of the Egyptian sultan's name, 'Saladin', who sent 40 ceramics of a green-blue color to the sultan in Damascus in 1171. Also, it is the name of a shepherd from a famous 17th-century French novel, 'L'Astrée', who always wore pale green ribbons on his

¹⁹⁰ Cécile und Michel Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, (München: Hirmer Verlag, 1974), 116-118.

¹⁹¹ Satō, *Chinese Ceramics: A Short History*, 95-96.

suit. In China, this glaze color is denoted by the character ‘青瓷’, which literally means ‘green, blue, or color of nature’, but this character has multiple meanings and can also be translated as ‘blue green, black, and gray’ according to the context. The celadon green, olive green, or brownish glazed stoneware that was produced during the *Tang* period was not only traded throughout China but was exported to Samarra in Iraq, Susa in the Persian Gulf, Fustat in Egypt, as well as Korea, Japan, and the Southeast Asian islands. With the production of celadon wares, a distinction began to be made between stoneware and porcelain. Stonewares often show traces of the firing process (spur marks, ring marks), whereas porcelain wares were fired individually and therefore had no traces of the firing process. Porcelain objects were placed on a ring of refractory sand or a general five-spur firing support. Towards the end of the Five Dynasty period (907 - 979), it was placed in small cassettes of refractory clay that would protect the object from dust and flying ash so that the fired glaze appeared without any flaws.¹⁹²

Celadons were produced in different kiln sites throughout China. The fascination with green-colored wares in China is derived from the long tradition of the jade cult, particularly green jade. In ancient China, people believed that jade empowered them to communicate with divinities, and even gave them the power of immortality. In the so-called Jade Age, jade was used for tools, ritual ornaments, and burial deposits. During the *Shang* dynasty, the production of green wares occurred because of an accident. The unfired clay body was inadvertently covered with ash from wood or grass and then fired, unintentionally resulting in the invention of a yellowish-green alkaline glaze. In the following dynasties, this technique was further developed. A more translucent green glaze was produced in the Western and Eastern *Jin* periods and continued into the subsequent *Sui* and *Tang* dynasties. During the *Song* dynasty, a subtle, elegant, and translucent green glaze was preferred, and by the *Yuan* dynasty, the so-called *Longquan* celadons were being produced, which were characterized by a more intense green. The preference for the different nuances of green depended on different imperial dynasties.¹⁹³

In China, the nomenclature used for the different types of celadons depended on where the object was produced, such as the *Yuezhou*, *Yaozhou*, and *Longquan* celadon wares, with the name’s affix specifying the production place. The only exceptions to this are the famous *Ru* and *Guan* celadon wares of the *Song* dynasty.

Yueyao wares are ash-glazed pottery, which were first produced during the *Han* dynasty. Unlike its predecessors, the glaze of *Yueyao* wares improved and became progressively more even in texture and color. Due to the different temperatures of reduction

¹⁹² Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, 94-95.

¹⁹³ Wu, *Earth Transformed: Chinese Ceramics in the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, 12.

firing the colors ranged from bluish olive green to light green. The celadon wares made in the style of the *Yuezhou* regions were made throughout the provinces of the *Yangtze River* [長江], and were predecessors to the *Song* celadons. Celadon wares initially flourished in southern China, and it was not until the 6th century that the first celadon wares were produced in northern China. The glaze of the Northern Celadon wares tended to be cloudy, slightly mottled, and bluish-white due to the use of straw and fern ash, with a relatively high silicate content in the glaze mixture.¹⁹⁴

The Northern Celadon wares from the *Yaozhou* [耀州] kilns in the province *Shaanxi* [陝西] (northeastern China) are given the name 'Northern Celadon' to distinguish them from the celadons of the *Yuezhou* regions. It is necessary to make this distinction because both wares exhibit many similarities. The manufacturing centers in *Yaozhou* started their production sometime in the late 10th or early 11th centuries. *Yaozhou* celadon wares originated from the *Yueyao* wares, as they show similarities in their glaze tones and carving techniques. The kilns in the *Yuezhou* regions were supported by the *Qian* [錢] family, who were one of the kingdoms during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms periods. However, with the demise of the *Qian* family, the kilns in the *Yuezhou* regions lost their support, and production steadily declined. The *Yueyao* wares, which were procured after the fall of the patrons, do not show the same trace of their former excellence. With the decline of *Yueyao* wares, the production of Northern Celadon wares rose, suggesting a direct link between those two.¹⁹⁵

The Northern Celadon wares were not exported to Southeast Asia and the Middle East as early as the *Longquan* celadon because the manufacturing centers were relatively remote from the ports. Important centers producing the Northern Celadon were in *Ruzhou* [汝州] (in the province of *Henan*) and in *Yaozhou* (in the province of *Shaanxi*). The main manufacturing center was in *Yaozhou*, which existed as early as the *Tang* dynasty. During the *Northern Song* period, the kiln specialized in celadon wares. The following features are characteristic of northern celadon. The shards are thin, and hard, and the rings are made of dark gray porcelain-like stoneware. Without a glaze, it turned brown when the kiln cooled down as a result of the oxidation. The glaze was reduced-fired at a high temperature and is heavily glazed, semi-transparent and finely cracked. The color scale of these celadons ranges from pale green to olive green to gray-yellow, but the tonal nuances differ significantly from the celadons made in *Longquan*. The most well-known forms are bowls with a small base, plates with reinforced

¹⁹⁴ Satō, *Chinese Ceramics: A Short History*, 33-35, 46-47.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

edges, and jugs. Bottles and vases are rarer. The decoration of the northern celadon is either molded or impressed, and, more rarely, incised or excised. The glaze appears darker where it accumulated in the indentations, while it lies thinner on the areas in relief and therefore appears lighter. This modulation of the glaze colors creates a slightly shadowed effect that enhances the beauty of the clear and vibrant decorations. Motifs adorning the celadons include lotuses, chrysanthemums, and peonies.¹⁹⁶

The *Longquan* celadons [龍泉青瓷] in the *Zhejiang* province of eastern China began production sometime in the Five Dynasties period. In parallel, as mentioned above, the patronage of the *Yue* kilns ended with the demise of the *Qian* family. The carved design and olive-green glaze of the early *Longquan* celadons slowly replaced the *Yue* wares and inherited the technique of the *Yue* kilns. The term 'Longquan celadons' combines at least ten kiln sites in different locations, including *Dayao* [大窑] and *Jincun* [金村] in the *Longquan* County. *Longquan* celadons became known in many foreign countries through their exports. They are usually made of grayish-white, fine-grained clay with a glaze mainly composed of wood ash. The vessel was coated with several applications of glaze, a technique also used at the Southern *Song* imperial kilns. The design was usually carved onto the surface, but this technique was very time-consuming, so later on, motifs and patterns were molded separately and then luted onto the surface of the vessel with a clay solution. One type of *Longquan* celadon featuring motifs in relief left unglazed is particularly eye-catching. The unglazed area turned reddish in color due to the high iron content.¹⁹⁷

The kilns in the *Longquan* area were built in tiers on a hillside and were 30 to 50 m long; when in operation, they resembled what the Chinese said to be fire-breathing dragons. In the kiln, nearly 20.000 to 25.000 cassettes could be placed inside. Wood was used as fuel. The kilns in *Hebei*, *Henan*, and *Shanxi* [山西] (northern China) were much smaller, and coal was used as fuel. Many objects break during the firing process, and a loss rate of up to 50% is suspected due to the many kiln wastes and mounds of shards that were discovered around some kilns.¹⁹⁸

Jian Wares

As mentioned before, *Jian* wares are known for their famous tea bowls, also known as *tenmoku/temmoku*¹⁹⁹. Their production reflected the demand for the consumption of tea. The

¹⁹⁶ Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, 119-121.

¹⁹⁷ Satō, *Chinese Ceramics: A Short History*, 140-143.

¹⁹⁸ Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, 112.

¹⁹⁹ By the Kamakura (1185-1333) and Muromachi (1333-1568) periods, the custom of drinking tea had spread among the Japanese people. At that time, the kind of bowl used for tea drinking was the *temmoku* tea bowl, imported from China, in particular

glazes of these tea bowls are also known as 'hare's fur' or 'oil spot' glaze. *Jian* wares have a distinctive chocolate brown body, due to the local sandy clay and rich black or brown glaze.²⁰⁰ *Jian* wares are also called 'black wares'. The major production place of black wares was in northern China. The art of *temmoku* glazing was probably first developed during the *Song* dynasty in the kilns that produced *Cizhou*-like wares. This type of ware is also known as Henan *temmoku*, named after the Henan province [河南] in northeastern China, where the production center for *Cizhou* wares was located. The Henan *temmoku* ware is a light buff color since they were fired in an oxidizing atmosphere. The decorative technique of Henan *temmoku* ware is the same as the underglaze painted decoration of blue&white wares, and as a final touch, the ware was coated with a transparent black glaze.²⁰¹

Besides the province of *Henan*, the southern kilns of *Jian* and *Jizhou* [吉州窯] were the leaders in the production of *temmoku* wares. While it is known that Henan *temmoku* ware was produced before this southern version, it is not entirely clear whether the latter was influenced by the former or if it evolved independently. The *Jian* wares were made of clay containing iron that would turn blackish brown in color when they were fired in a reduction kiln. The *Jian* wares were wheel-thrown and usually had thick walls, possibly to consume hot tea. The most notable feature of the *Jian* wares is the mouth rim. The sides of the bowl gradually widen from the bottom, then become an edge towards the rim of the mouth, and then widen again.²⁰²

The 'hare's fur' pattern of *Jian* wares was influential for Vietnamese brown wares, as they also tried to manufacture this pattern (see Chapter 3.2, Glaze Types - Brown Wares).

Cizhou Wares

Cizhou 磁州 ceramics refer to stonewares with many variations that were produced in a large area north of the *Yangtze* River. The differences in clay, glaze, and technique depended on the area where it was produced. All these wares have been classified under the term '*Cizhou* ceramics' because they show basic uniformity in the application of a white slip over a gray

Jian wares. These black-glazed tea bowls were first brought back to Japan by Japanese priests, who admired them at a temple on the Tianmu Mountain (Tenmoku/Temmoku in Japanese) in China. The custom of drinking tea had spread, and the number of people who wanted to own tenmoku tea bowls grew. Because of the increasing numbers of tea bowl users the Japanese began to make tenmoku tea bowls of their own. At that time, the only place that made glazed ceramics was the Seto region (in present day Aichi Prefecture), so naturally Seto was the only place that could make the black-glazed tenmoku tea bowls. The ceramic objects made in Seto were excellent copies of the original Chinese bowls.

Yoshihiro Ono, "Tenmoku Teabowls," last modified January 02, 2019,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20150226204818/https://www.kyohaku.go.jp/eng/dictio/touji/tenmoku.html>.

²⁰⁰ Pierson, *Chinese Ceramics*, 25-27, 55-57.

²⁰¹ Satō, *Chinese Ceramics: A Short History*, 126-129.

²⁰² *Ibid*, 131-132.

body with a transparent glaze applied over the slip. Variation is seen in the range of decorative techniques, which include carvings, or motifs painted in black.²⁰³

Other variations of *Cizhou* ceramics refer to a large number of ceramics with yellowish, somewhat hard stoneware sherds and with a painted, incised, or scratched decoration on an engobe. This stoneware was made not only in the *Cizhou* area but in several Chinese provinces and not only during the *Song* dynasty but also under the *Yuan* dynasty and up to the *Ming* dynasty. *Cizhou* pottery seems to have been a commodity for the people, especially wealthy merchants. It was a time when paintings by famous masters adorned the walls of bourgeois tea houses. As little as these ceramics seem to have been sought after by Chinese collectors in the 18th and 19th centuries, they were valued by the Japanese for their rustic and folk-art character. The *Song* potters used various decorative techniques to provide the vessel with a white engobe, after which it was scraped or cut so that the body was exposed, and then it was glazed over. After firing, the contrast between the light engobe and the dark fabric under the glaze came into its own. Sometimes the decoration was also placed on a background of small circles or rings impressed with the help of, very likely, a metal tool, a decoration technique that was the hallmark of goldsmiths of the Tang period. In the eleventh century, there was a variant of this method in which the small rings were cut all over the engobe and then filled with red paint. Then the piece (generally headrests) was overlaid with glaze. Another type of decoration, the so-called 'sgraffito', which was used by the furnaces in the provinces of *Henan* and *Hebei*,²⁰⁴ featured two layers of engobe, with the design being cut out of the top layer and then the entire piece covered with a colorless glaze. The sgraffito technique provided a stronger contrast between the gray body and the white slip than when the motif was simply incised into the clay body. It also created the illusion that the motif was in raised relief. Usually, the sgraffito design was incised very lightly, only about one to two millimeters in depth; however, on some objects with large motifs, the design was cut deeply. There are some rare cases done in reverse, where only a motif was scraped out to leave a sunken white pattern on a black background. A transparent glaze was then applied over the vessel. The use of the contrasting white and black required skillful potters. A black slip was applied to the already-dried first coat of white slip. Then the black slip had to be scraped off quickly, without allowing the lower white slip to soften. If the scraping was delayed, the moisture of the black slip would soften the white slip underneath it, making the possibility of the potter cutting right through both layers of slip very high, and ruining the desired contrast of the design in the process. Therefore, the potter had to work quickly and skillfully.²⁰⁵

Collectively, the *Cizhou* kilns produced six types of wares that are technically related to dark-glazed ceramics: monochrome wares, wares with partridge-feather glazes, wares with

²⁰³ Satō, *Chinese Ceramics: A Short History*, 102.

²⁰⁴ Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, 126-128.

²⁰⁵ Satō, *Chinese Ceramics: A Short History*, 106-107.

oil-spot glazes, wares with painted decoration, wares with ribbed decoration, and wares with cut-glaze decoration.²⁰⁶ The earliest *Cizhou* type wares are monochrome russet or black vessels from the 10th century. Potters from *Cizhou* kilns often took inspiration from the *Ding* and *Yaozhou* wares. Some *Cizhou* type dark-glazed bowls even have white rims, which imitate the silver/copper bands on *Ding* wares. The potters used the same technique as in the *Ding* kilns. They immersed the piece in the dark glaze slurry and immediately wiped the rim clean, then the rim was dipped in opaque white slip, and if the vessel was dried, it was coated with clear glaze. At the beginning of the 12th century, the potters at the *Cizhou* kilns started to manufacture wares with cut-glaze decoration. First, the whole vessel was covered with a dark glaze, then the still moist glaze was incised with the outline of the decorative scheme and the glaze was shaved from the background; once completely dry, it was fired. This technique is also called sgraffito. As mentioned above, this labor-intensive technique involved two separate applications of slip, followed by the removal of portions of the upper layer. Once the decoration was complete, it still had to be glazed.²⁰⁷

The monochrome glaze and cut-glaze decorations are relevant primarily because they could have influenced the Vietnamese brown wares (specifically the russet wares) and brown pattern wares (see Chapter 3.2, Glaze Types - Brown Wares and Brown Pattern Wares for the discussion).

Blue&White Wares

During the *Yuan* dynasty (1279 - 1368) the development of the most famous glaze emerged - the blue&white pottery. The development of blue&white ceramics in China can be seen as one of the greatest contributions of Chinese potters to the history of the ceramic world, and the influence of its beauty on ceramics of other cultures is evident. To produce this fine ware, the Chinese potters mixed *kaolin* with china stone, which is related to feldspar, then decorated it with cobalt oxide before the clay body was completely dry. Afterwards, a transparent alkaline glaze was applied either on the exterior or over the entire clay body. It was then fired at up to 1.350°C in an oxidizing atmosphere.²⁰⁸

It is very well known that the Chinese *Yuan* dynasty was a foreign rule, a rule under the Mongols. It is believed that the driving force for the invention of *Yuan* blue&White was the desire to create a new type of porcelain that would appeal to the aesthetic sensibilities of the Mongol rulers while simultaneously symbolizing their power of uniting heaven and earth, the former associated with the color blue, and the latter with the color of pure white. Furthermore, under the rule of the Mongols artisans were given the freedom of experimentation, which was done so with high-quality cobalt pigments that were imported from Persia. Persian merchants

²⁰⁶ Robert D. Mowry, *Hare's Fur, Tortoiseshell, and Partridge Feathers: Chinese Brown- and Black-Glazed Ceramics, 400-1400*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Art Museums, 1996), 31.

²⁰⁷ Mowry, *Hare's Fur, Tortoiseshell, and Partridge Feathers: Chinese Brown- and Black-Glazed Ceramics, 400-1400*, 31-32, 35.

²⁰⁸ Wu, *Earth Transformed: Chinese Ceramics in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 94.

introduced the mineral cobalt in the form of smalt to the Chinese market. In a treatise on the manufacture of ceramics written circa 1300 by Abu al-Qasim Kashani, he mentions the source of cobalt ore (lajvard) as being from the mountains near Kashan (probably the Karkas Mountain chain), and the usage of cobalt blue to decorate pottery in the Near East predates its use in China by centuries. Therefore, the influence of Islamic culture must not be ignored.²⁰⁹

During the *Yuan* dynasty, it is very likely that the emperors began to give blue&white porcelain to foreign rulers and officials, as a large number of high-quality *Yuan* ceramics have been found in present-day Iran and Turkey. The *Yuan* wares found in the Iran Bastan Museum in Tehran were gifted in 1611 by the Shah Abbas/Abbas the Great (1571 - 1629) to the ancestral shrine at the ancient Ardabil Mosque as an act of piety. In the Topkapi Saray Museum (Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi) in Istanbul, the *Yuan* wares are part of a much larger collection of Chinese ceramics. In the 17th and 18th centuries, around 20.000 pieces of Chinese ceramics were claimed by the Ottoman government. The large dishes, which were well suited for the Muslim style of communal dining, accounted for nearly half of the wares found in the Topkapi Saray Museum alone. The close contact with foreign ambassadors, rulers, and their cultural heritage created motifs and designs that are linked to the textiles of central Asian Uighur, Mongol, and Islamic heritage. Blue&white porcelain symbolizes the goals the Mongol rulers sought to accomplish: to preserve their own culture while being honored as China's legitimate and worthy rulers.²¹⁰

New forms and shapes appeared concomitantly with the emergence of blue&white ceramics. The most striking new features were the large dishes, bowls, and jars that implied new influences in culinary habits. While the Chinese *Song* cuisine utilized numerous dishes and bowls for individual consumption, during the *Yuan* dynasty, the Mongols preferred large vessels for communal feasting. These new ceramic shapes and forms brought with them a range of new cuisines to China by the vast Mongol empire, which covered the whole of Asia from China to the Mediterranean, introducing diets of meat and milk products, and bringing new spices, condiments, and recipes.²¹¹

These large vessels were discovered in Mongol territories in China and elsewhere and featured a mixture of Buddhist, Taoist, and other symbols as decorations, with the most typical design being a floral scroll. Because of the sizes of these vessels, they were made upside down on molds and were thick enough that the foot ring would later be carved from the body with a sharp tool on a wheel. Due to the addition of *kaolin* to the material of the large dishes, the plasticity was enhanced and could therefore be constructed on a larger scale. The large dishes often had raised rims, and close inspections revealed the impression of a fine, muslin-like cloth on the center of the dish. This cloth was used to reduce the adhesive effects of the

²⁰⁹ Carswell, *Blue&White - Chinese Porcelain around the world*, 17, 21.

²¹⁰ Li, *Chinese Ceramics: From the Paleolithic Period to the Qing Dynasty*, 370-371, 373-374.

²¹¹ Carswell, *Blue&White - Chinese Porcelain around the world*, 23, 24.

clay when it was removed from the mold. The foot ring was often left unglazed, and, after the firing process, it took on an orange-red color due to the oxidation of the ferruginous clay. The foot ring of the bowls of the *Yuan* dynasty was carved from the body with a sharp tool on a wheel. The rims of the bowls were either inverted or everted. The large bowls with inverted rims could have been inspired by the metalwork of the Mamluk period.²¹²

During the *Yuan* dynasty, the famous pair of blue&white vases in the Sir Percival David collection was manufactured. The special feature of these vases are the inscriptions on the neck of the vases which state that they were made in 1351 for the altar of a Taoist temple in *Yushan* district, 120 km southeast of *Jingdezhen*, demonstrating that blue&white porcelain production was already well-established at *Jingdezhen* by 1351. Originally, the vases, which were modeled after bronzes, had porcelain rings attached through the elephant head-shaped handles and featured designs of chrysanthemums, ferns, peonies, lotuses, spiked lobed leaves, 4-clawed dragons, elephants, phoenixes, cloud scrolls, flames, lotus panels, and serpentine waves. The motifs of dragons and phoenixes are usually the main design on the objects, as seen on large dishes where usually the motifs are in the middle of the dish, while the rim was usually painted with a floral scroll that encircled the central panel. These large dishes were often created by different divisions of labor, with the central panel reserved for the artist/potter, while the rest was decorated by subsidiary artists, though this was not always the case for every object.²¹³

Yuan blue&white wares can be found throughout Central and Southeast Asia, India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and even the coast of East Africa. Two famous Chinese porcelain collections can be found in the Middle East: in the Ardebil shrine (present-day Iran) and in the Topkapi Saray. This geographical range favored mutual cultural exchange, with Persian and Mamluk metal and glass work influencing the Chinese blue&white porcelain. Chinese production responded to the market and reached its peak during the 18th century, when the Portuguese, Dutch, and British were active in trade in the region of East Asia and Southeast Asia. Two main routes were used for export to Europe and America: through the Indian Ocean and through the Pacific Ocean. Through the Pacific, the objects reached Mexico and South America, where a vast amount of silver was collected. At that time, the currency for export trade was silver. From Mexico, the objects from Asia (predominantly from China and India) were shipped across the Atlantic to Spain. Not only was Chinese porcelain traded, but also silk, lacquer, and furniture. This led to the supposed taste for chinoiserie in Europe.²¹⁴

Under the *Yongle* rule, the blue used to decorate the wares is intense but uneven in tone. Dark speckles can be seen in places where the cobalt is more concentrated. These small black dots that the *Jingdezhen* potters tried to copy in the 18th century were not intended by

²¹² Carswell, *Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain and Its Impact on the Western World*, 21.

²¹³ Carswell, *Blue&White - Chinese Porcelain around the world*, 39-40.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 12-14.

the *Ming* potters, and only gradually did they succeed in eliminating this technical error by using more refined cobalt, eliminating the impurities and better controlling the firing and the cooling of the kiln. During the *Yongle* reign the prestige of the blue&white porcelain increased, but apparently it was not quite worth having the reign inscribed on it, so few pieces with reign inscriptions are found from this period. During this time, the choice of motifs was very extensive, and floral decorations featuring chrysanthemums, peonies, and lotuses as well as fruits such as grapes and vine leaves were popular. Occasionally, motifs from the Islamic world were also used, such as stylized flowers.²¹⁵

The *Zhengde* reign [正德] (1491 - 1521) marks the end of the classic period of blue&white porcelain. In the beginning, dragons were winding in blooming tendrils and stylized motifs. However, the decoration that one encounters on plates, the rim of which shows a profusion of motifs, and on some vases, is very overloaded and no longer shows any free space. The blue is grayish, and the glaze is cloudy. In the second part of this period, an innovation was particularly characteristic of this time: Arabic or Persian characters and Koranic sayings were included in the decoration. According to some, this is due to the growing importance of Islam in China and, according to others, to the increasing influence of the Muslim eunuchs at court. Even the emperor himself appears to have converted to Islam.²¹⁶

The rise of blue&white porcelain during the *Ming* period is also due to exports, which intensified towards the end of the dynasty. Numerous specimens can be found not only in the collections of the Ardebil shrine in Iran, in the Topkapi Saray Museum in Istanbul, and in Indonesia, but also in museums and private collections in Japan and Europe. These pieces, most of which are not marked, were undoubtedly made in *Jingdezhen*. The shape and decor, however, do not correspond to Chinese tastes but are based on the demands of foreign customers.²¹⁷

2.3 Kiln Types

Ceramic variety also stemmed from kiln technology. The structure of the tunnel-like kilns meant that there were temperature differences of up to as much as 600°C between the firebox in the lower area and the chimney above. In a single operation, high-fired wares could be produced in the lower chambers and earthenware in the upper. To use all areas of the kiln and thereby reduce the enormous expense of firing with wood fuel, potters experimented with *kaolin* and chinastone, mineral substances that were chemically unique in their ability to withstand the hottest portion of the kiln, resulting in vessels that were whiter and harder than those previously made. This was a much-desired effect since it allowed ceramics to imitate the pale shades and

²¹⁵ Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, 178.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 182.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 186-187.

thin bodies of silverwork vessels, a medium introduced to China from Western Asia in the *Tang* period. In addition, the long cooling period required for the large kilns sometimes produced bluish-green shades on the glazed wares as a result of excess carbon monoxide in the chambers.²¹⁸

Three main types of kilns operated in China: the 'dragon' kiln, the 'Mantou' kiln and the 'Egg-shaped' kiln. In different dynasties, there were some modifications made to the kiln's structure and sometimes the unfired clay was placed directly into the kiln or in a saggars.

'Dragon' Kiln

The 'dragon' kiln is the major kiln type in South China.²¹⁹ It was named for its long and serpentine form that stretches up hillsides, a simple but extremely effective design that was developed during the Warring States period. It consisted of a tunnel built on a gentle slope, at the foot of which was located a large firebox for burning fuel. The floor of the tunnel was covered with a layer of sand or coarse quartz grit, upon which the unfired ceramic objects were placed in saggars on the floor. Early examples of the kiln measured only about six meters long and were substantially cooler toward the end of the chimney. Over time, the size became longer; the average length in the 1st century CE was 10 meters, but by the late 13th century, some kilns reached a length of 140 meters and were capable of firing hundreds of thousands of vessels in one firing process.²²⁰ For example, the dragon kiln found in *Dayao* in *Longquan* County had approximately 10 to 12 interconnected chambers, each a step higher up the hillside (Fig. 48). This kiln could fire about 20,000 to 25,000 pieces in a single setting. As mentioned above, the firebox and main stoke-hole were at the foot of the tunnel, with additional stoke-holes at intervals up the slope on one side. On the other side were peep-holes, so that the temperature could be checked throughout the whole firing process. The dragon kilns were fired from the lowest level (foot of the tunnel) first, with the very top chamber fired last. This firing system had its advantages and disadvantages. The control over a reduction firing was easy, but the wares in the lower chambers had a lower quality than the wares in the top ones due to the shorter time taken to raise the temperature in the lower chambers. Thus, the finest and most expensive wares usually came from the upper chambers. The vessels were placed on the floor of the tunnel, but always in saggars.²²¹

'Mantou' Kiln

'Mantou' kilns [饅頭窯] are particular to North China and were named after the shape of the steam-baked bread rolls that were popular in the region. They are small in diameter since the

²¹⁸ Finlay, "The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History," 148-149.

²¹⁹ Vainker, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*, 222.

²²⁰ Wood, *Chinese Glazes: Their Origins, Chemistry, and Recreation*, 33-35.

²²¹ Medley, *The Chinese Potter: A Practical History of Chinese Ceramics*, 147-148.

fuel used was charcoal (used from the 10th century onwards), which has a short flame, and the clay of the northern regions requires firing temperatures up to 1350°C, which were more easily achieved in a kiln of smaller dimensions.²²² As such, the kilns are typically three to four meters wide, and often quite high. They were either dug into the loess earth, with only the domes and chimneys visible, or they were built of bricks.

Another term for this kiln type is 'horseshoe-shaped' kilns, referring to the ground plan rather than the outer appearance of the dome. To better control the draught, two chimneys were placed side by side. The firebox was usually placed on the curve of the 'horseshoe', opposite the chimneys.²²³ Besides the chimneys, a series of vents set vertically from the ground level were placed in front of the chimneys. The side walls of the kiln, which were usually built of old saggars and firebricks, were surmounted by a domed roof. This deflected the heat and flame downward through the stacked wares. When reduction firing was needed, the stone doors outside the stoking area could be closed. This assumption was made after shattered stone doors were discovered in the stoking area. The *Yaozhou* wares were usually made in the 'horseshoe-shaped' kilns.²²⁴

'Zhenyao' Kiln/Egg-Shaped Kiln

This egg-shaped kiln type is particular to *Jingdezhen* and was introduced in the 15th century. It was long and domed and had one large chimney, which was usually as tall as the kiln was long- about 10 to 15 meters. The chimney was built by using spiral bricklaying and a fusible mortar to give maximum strength to its single-brick thickness. This new kiln type combined the best aspects of both the 'dragon' and 'mantou' kilns because a variety of wares and glazes requiring a range of different firing temperatures could all be fired within the same chamber due to the oval shape of the kiln.²²⁵ Pre-firing saggars and finishing monochrome porcelains were placed at the coolest part of the kiln.²²⁶

2.4 The Organization of Ceramic Production in China

The Organization of Private and Official Kilns

In the *Yuan* dynasty, about 100 households of artisans staffed the imperial kiln, which was also known as the 'Fuliang Porcelain Office' [浮梁瓷局], founded in 1278.²²⁷ In general, men manufactured porcelain, and women produced lacquered hats woven from horsehair, palm fiber, and rattan. The coordination of the artisans' activities, who were engaged in the

²²² Vainker, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*, 222.

²²³ Wood, *Chinese Glazes: Their Origins, Chemistry, and Recreation*, 95.

²²⁴ Medley, *The Chinese Potter: A Practical History of Chinese Ceramics*, 117.

²²⁵ Pierson, *Chinese Ceramics*, 36; Vainker, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*, 222.

²²⁶ Wood, *Chinese Glazes: Their Origins, Chemistry, and Recreation*, 67-68.

²²⁷ Morris Rossabi, "Mongol Empire and Its Impact on Chinese Porcelains," in *Early Global Interconnectivity across the Indian Ocean World, Volume II: Exchange of Ideas, Religions, and Technologies*, ed. Angela Schottenhammer (Cham: Springer, 2019), 256, Palgrave Series in Indian Ocean World Studies. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-97801-7_9.

production of luxury items for the palace (such as jewels, ivory, textiles, and pottery), was managed by the 'Bureau of Imperial Manufactures' with twenty-one departments. The 'Fuliang Porcelain Office', along with other suppliers and distributors, manufactured porcelain for the court. The 'Painting Office' designed the shapes and decorations for the potters, and the official shipping and receiving storehouse provided the artisans with valuable commodities such as cobalt ore for painting and gold foil for overglaze application.²²⁸

At the end of *the Yuan* dynasty, the porcelain workshop in *Jingdezhen*, which was under the control of the 'Fuliang Porcelain Office', produced white-glazed, bluish-white, white, underglaze blue, underglaze red, and monochrome red wares. Artisans from all over the country came to *Jingdezhen*, making it the 'porcelain capital', famous both in China and abroad. When the *Ming* rulers seized power over China, they continued to invest in *Jingdezhen* to make it the imperial factory for their dynasty. The government not only invested massive funds and sent eunuchs to administer the production, but also gathered talented potters, along with their families, to serve the emperor. The management of the households of the potters was extremely strict. At some point during the *Ming* dynasty, a permanent staff of more than 300 potters who were divided among 23 workshops that specialized in large bowls, saucers, plates, seals, cups, etc., was employed. To ensure the high quality of the ceramic objects, some of these talented potters were captured and forced to work in imperial kilns by the emperor. The emperor was the symbol of China's power; consequently, the production of porcelain for the emperor and the imperial court was considered a tremendous honor, and no potter dared show any hesitation in accepting this request. Because of the imperial context of this pottery manufacturing, special emphasis was placed on the use of dragon and phoenix designs, which were the symbols for the emperor and empress, respectively. Initially, the scale of production was quite small because of strict supervision. Also, the production quality of imperial kilns was of a higher quality than that of private ones. To distinguish them from those of the private kilns [民窯] (literally common people's kilns), the ceramic objects of the imperial kilns were referred to as 'official kiln wares' [官窯器].²²⁹

While the *Ming* rulers sent eunuchs to supervise the imperial kilns, the *Qing* rulers carefully selected and appointed high-ranking government officials to supervise production in *Jingdezhen*. The combination of governmental supervision and generous funding stimulated great advances in the artistry and production of ceramic objects in *Qing* imperial kilns. Moreover, the *Qing* rulers introduced a program of private kilns in collaboration with official ones. This program worked thusly: if the order for porcelain was too large for the imperial kiln to fill, the government would delegate a part of the order to be completed by private kilns. If

²²⁸ Barnes, "Yuan Dynasty Ceramics," 364.

²²⁹ Li, "Ming Dynasty Ceramics," 395-396.

the private kilns chosen to fulfill the remainder of the order were manufactured under this cooperative program, they would mark the appropriate symbol for the reign, as required for official wares. Once the order for the imperial court was fulfilled, the private kilns returned to their usual business of making ceramic objects for private customers. This program not only relieved some of the burden of the imperial kilns, but also encouraged the private kilns to improve their workmanship due to the stringent standards of the imperial court.²³⁰

During the Southern *Song* period, private kilns in *Jingdezhen* were regulated through the registration of each kiln according to its production capacity, employment potential, and approved sizes of vessels, which had to be paid to provincial and country governments. All kilns, whether imperial or private, had to pay tribute to the Chinese court. The *Song Ding*, *Yue*, *Jingdezhen*, *Yaozhou*, and *Jian* kilns not only paid taxes but also supplied the desired tribute wares to the court. Furthermore, only after paying a fee were the private kilns allowed to fire ceramic objects. Even a fine was imposed when the system was abused, or if government orders were not filled within a specified time. Under Mongol rule, potters were allowed to privately manufacture and sell their wares once quotas had been met. The ceramic objects of private kilns could resemble imperial wares, except for motifs and materials, which were exclusively for the emperor.²³¹

During the *Ming* period, private kilns not only produced domestic wares in addition to those for the overseas trade market, but also for the court on a contractual basis. The artistry of private kilns gradually improved, while the imperial kilns started to decline. The competition between imperial kilns and private kilns led to further advances in art. During the *Ming* period, it was even possible to gain wealth and social status through leading successful private kilns.²³² The quality difference between ceramic objects from imperial kilns and private kilns can be seen in porcelain from the *Hongwu* period [洪武] (1328 - 1398). It started with the quality of the clay. The clay from private kilns was sometimes impure, and the pieces were not delicately crafted; consequently, their supposedly white bodies are flecked with red and poorly trimmed. The glaze was thickly applied, making the surface not entirely smooth. The underglaze blue cobalt was not very bright, and it often seemed dim or gray, with blurred lines and brownish to blackish spots. The occasionally complex painting was executed with simple strokes. Often, the base was left unglazed because of the cost-effective stacking method during firing. The imperial kilns, on the contrary, were highly innovative and prolific. Due to their use of high-quality clay, the nature of the fabric shows a hint of lightness. In addition, the wares were whiter than those from the private kilns, which were generally egg white with a light bluish discoloration. Apart from the quality difference between imperial kilns and private kilns, there was also a quality difference between the *Yuan* and *Ming* dynasties, with the craftsmanship of

²³⁰ Ibid, 461.

²³¹ Barnes, "Yuan Dynasty Ceramics," 362, 366.

²³² Li, "Ming Dynasty Ceramics," 393-394.

the latter showing a clear advancement. The bases of large bowls were trimmed very smoothly and effectively with a knife, and sometimes even glaze was applied, as opposed to the *Yuan* method of slicing the foot with a knife and leaving the base unglazed.²³³

The patronage of the emperor did not always mean that the imperial kilns always had benefits. During the so-called 'Ceramic Interregnum' [空白期] (1436 - 1464), the imperial kilns slowed production and even stopped due to natural disasters, conflicts within the imperial family, and other social unrest. During this time, the private kilns studied the style of the imperial wares and improved their own craftsmanship.²³⁴

Another example of the downside of the imperial patronage of kilns is seen during the reign of the *Jiajing* emperor [嘉靖] (1507 - 1567). During this period alone, more than a million pieces were produced. The production in the imperial kilns was overwhelmed to achieve this massive number, and many officials in *Jingdezhen* were impeached or imprisoned because they could not finish the orders that were assigned to them. During the middle of the *Ming* dynasty, the imperial kilns slowly declined because of various reasons. One of them was the loss of imperial support and the associated financial support. Another reason was the corruption and greed of officials, who would embezzle funds and even steal porcelain. Even if they were not corrupt, their supervision was harsh, and they were very demanding of the potters. Consequently, it stifled the creativity of the potters and disheartened them. As a result, the potters hurried the production process, and the quality of the porcelain declined. Also, even if no corruption had occurred and the imperial patronage continued, the imperial kilns would still have declined due to the supply of raw materials being nearly exhausted from the intense pace of production.²³⁵

While the situation for the *Ming* imperial kilns declined, the situation for private kilns was different. Private kiln potters worked and lived among the lower classes of society, and their living circumstances lent to their creative vitality and originality. The potters of private kilns depicted scenes of ordinary life, such as a fisherman who waits for fish in a stream in winter.²³⁶

The Industrialization of Ceramic Production

The geology of the Chinese landmass was beneficial for ceramic production. They had very high-quality raw materials such as *kaolin*, which was necessary in the production of porcelain, as well as iron and copper, which were used in glazes. The ceramic production in China was industrialized; it was made in either factories or workshops. These production centers, which were generally places of mass production, were all over China. In some cases, ceramic production became the main industry of entire towns, such as in the most well-known case of

²³³ Li, "Ming Dynasty Ceramics," 398-401, 405.

²³⁴ Ibid, 426-429.

²³⁵ Li, "Ming Dynasty Ceramics," 450-451.

²³⁶ Li, "Ming Dynasty Ceramics," 453.

Jingdezhen. The expansion of the ceramic industry and the increasing number of specialist types of wares with new approaches to manufacturing and design indicated an increasing demand both in China and overseas for specialist products. The production usually followed at least nine steps, from sourcing the clay to wedging to remove air, forming, trimming, drying, decorating, glazing, and firing. Usually, they were located outside major cities and areas of habitation due to the pollution that was created as a result of ceramic production. Furthermore, the extensive usage of wood and coal as fuel caused air pollution and forest degradation.²³⁷

In the 11th century, a new firing method was introduced in the famous *Ding* kilns in the *Hebei* province of northeast China, where the characteristic ivory-toned glazed ceramic objects with detailed carved or incised decoration were produced. This method involved turning rimmed bowls upside down and stacking them in stepped firing boxes or saggars. Using this method, the potters were able to maximize the firing capacity, which can be considered an approach towards the mass production of ceramic objects. The only detriment was that the rims of the bowls had to be left unglazed, though later on they were covered with beaten copper bands.²³⁸ Prior to the upside-down firing technique, early *Ding* wares were all fired within saggars. The upside-down method could hold four or five times more than the saggars method, which was certainly more effective when mass production was the goal.²³⁹ The *Longquan* kilns in the *Zhejiang* province of southeast China could reach up to 60 meters long, and were known as 'dragon' or 'tunnel' kilns (Fig. 48). As mentioned before, they consisted of a very long main kiln chamber that sloped uphill and did not have chimneys, as the slopes created a draught. To facilitate continuous firing, along the length of the chamber, there were multiple stokes. These types of kilns were wood-fueled and devoured vast amounts of fuel during the firing season, which generated air pollution.²⁴⁰

The 'dragon' kilns were easy to build and, most importantly, they offered a large firing capacity. Over time, these kilns became longer, which gave rise to a new challenge - the difficulty of maintaining the required high temperatures throughout the entire kiln. The solution to this was the multi-stage 'dragon' kiln. Stoke holes were installed on each side of the roof at regular intervals along the kiln, and a separate combustion chamber was built under each fuel hole. Through this modification, fuel could be inserted into each fuel hole during the firing process. The improvement of the 'dragon' kilns allowed them to become increasingly longer, and by the *Song* dynasty, these kilns could reach up to 135 meters long.²⁴¹

With the industrialization of ceramic production, the shapes and designs of vessels changed. In the *Song* dynasty, the bowl- and saucer-shaped wares usually had an angular belly, and slanting walls, and the mouth rim was unglazed. The foot rim was shortened, which

²³⁷ Pierson, *Chinese Ceramics*, 11, 17, 19.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 20-22.

²³⁹ Li, "Ceramics of the Song, Liao, Western Xia, and Jin Dynasties," 271.

²⁴⁰ Pierson, *Chinese Ceramics*, 29.

²⁴¹ Quan, "Ceramics of the Period of Division," 193-194.

exposed the flat base. During this period, the kilns frequently used the upside-down firing method with ring setters, which left the mouth rim unglazed, but greatly increased production capacity. Furthermore, this firing technique required the unfired ceramic objects to be uniform, so bowls, jars, and vases were generally formed by a stamped mold.²⁴²

Regarding the knowledge transfer from China to Vietnam, there was a clear division of labor in *Jingdezhen*, so it would have necessitated the relocation not only of individuals but of a whole production line to Vietnam.²⁴³ Other kiln sites in China may have conducted their production on a smaller scale, but still divided the labor. Thus, there may not have been a direct knowledge transfer from potter to potter, but rather the potters were just 'normally' exposed to Chinese models, as in the case of the Meissen production in Europe, which was successful after years of research.²⁴⁴

The 'Ming Gap'

In 1371, during the *Ming* dynasty, the *Hongwu* emperor announced a policy that prohibited individuals from trading overseas. The decree limited the export of many Chinese products, inter alia, Chinese ceramic products. The term 'Ming Gap' was first introduced by Tom Harrisson in Malaysia in the 1950s to refer to the period when China limited its trade relations with other countries, and is based on data from shipwrecks. Indeed, shipwreck data revolutionized the identification and dating of Chinese as well as Southeast Asian wares. Shipwrecks introduced important archeological assemblages into the research world, which had formerly relied solely on stylistic analysis. For instance, shipwrecks found in the Gulf of Thailand and the South China Sea revealed a shortage of Chinese blue&white wares, as well as Chinese ceramics in general, that appears to have lasted for at least one century. Although there seems to be a connection between the trade ban in China and the rise of Southeast Asian export ceramics, the increasing number of Southeast Asian ceramics was not necessarily triggered by the ban directly, as there is no conclusive proof for the moment.²⁴⁵

In Roxanna Maude Brown's Ph.D. dissertation, she listed 15 shipwrecks with Chinese and Southeast Asian ceramics in the region and identified two types of shortages. The first is a general shortage of Chinese ceramics from 1325 to 1380. The second is a specific severe shortage of blue and white porcelain from 1352 to 1487. It rebounded from 1488 to 1505 during the *Hongzhi* reign and decreased again for the next 60 years. China regained its monopoly in the ceramic trade after 1573.²⁴⁶

²⁴² Li, "Ceramics of the Song, Liao, Western Xia, and Jin Dynasties," 305-306.

²⁴³ Truong, *The Elephant and the Lotus: Vietnamese Ceramics in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 7.

²⁴⁴ Carswell, *Blue&White - Chinese Porcelain around the world*, 11.

²⁴⁵ Roxanna M. Brown, *The Ming Gap and shipwreck ceramics in Southeast Asia – Towards a Chronology of Thai Trade Ware*, (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 2009), 18-21.

²⁴⁶ Tai, Yew Seng. "Ming Gap and the Revival of Commercial Production of Blue and White Porcelain in China," *Bulletin of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association* 31 (2012): 85. doi:10.7152/BIPPA.V3110.9437.

The reason for the 'Ming Gap' is manifold. According to historical sources, one of the reasons could be the founding of the *Ming* dynasty in 1368, when China underwent an internalization process to 'purify' themselves of the previous foreign Mongol *Yuan* dynasty and its influences and restore their Confucian roots.²⁴⁷

Another possibility is that from 1352 to 1487, a series of incidents interrupted the production of Chinese ceramics. The porcelain production department of the *Yuan* dynasty, 'Fuliang Porcelain Office' (*Jingdezhen*), probably partially stopped its operation during this time. The founder of the *Ming* dynasty, the *Hongwu* emperor, banned private voyages. Although his successor, the *Yongle* emperor, sent *Zheng He* [鄭和] (1371-1433) overseas to establish missions to undergo militaristic expansionism, they were different from commercial endeavors. The qualities, quantities, types, and distribution of ceramics were unavoidably affected.

Another important factor for the 'Ming Gap' was the *Ming* court's attitude towards porcelain, which was different from that of the *Song* and *Yuan* dynasties. The *Ming* dynasty set up the imperial kiln in *Jingdezhen* to produce ceramics for the imperial court. Unselected porcelains were smashed and buried in the compound of the *Zhuashan* kiln site in *Jingdezhen* so they would not enter the market. The Southern *Song* (1127 - 1279) imperial kilns handled some of their unselected ceramics the same way, but limited themselves only to imperial ritual wares, which they considered sacred. Whether or not there was an imperial kiln in the *Yuan* dynasty is unknown, but potters in *Jingdezhen* were working for the Porcelain Bureau of Fuliang. They were allowed to sell their products after they had fulfilled their duties, as were the other artisans in the *Yuan* dynasty. The methods of producing the new variant of porcelain (the blue&white wares) had proliferated. The *Ming* dynasty wanted to stop it, though the reasons for this may not have been economic; the presence of blue&white wares in *Ming* tombs demonstrates that they may have been awarded as honors to the generals who helped found the empire. Conversely, they may have played a role as ritual wares in said generals' funerals. If the blue&white wares were freely available, it would negate their significance.

In the early stage of blue&white porcelain production, during the *Yuan* dynasty, the cobalt used for underglaze painting was imported, the potters worked for the 'Porcelain Bureau' (Fuliang Ciju), and the designers were probably court artists. The imperial government controlled most of the important factors of production: imported materials, the designs, and the laborers. When resources were unavailable, commercial kilns were not able to produce this ware. The breakthrough probably occurred in the *Xuande* reign (1426 - 1435). According to the analysis of the cobalt on the fragments excavated from the imperial kiln sites, the *Hongwu* (1368 - 1398) and *Yongle* (1403 - 1424), blue&white porcelains used imported cobalt, which contain a high amount of iron and a low level of manganese. On the other hand, the fragments

²⁴⁷ Bobby C. Orillaneda, "Maritime Trade in the Philippines During the 15th Century CE," *Moussons*, no. 27 (2016): 92, doi:10.4000/MOUSSONS.3529.

from the *Xuande* stratum used local cobalt, which contains low levels of iron and high levels of manganese. This implies that, from the time of the *Xuande* reign blue&white porcelain production did not depend on imported cobalt. If one of the most important materials for producing blue&white porcelain could be obtained locally, commercial potters would be able to restart production. When said production sprang up like mushrooms in the early *Zhengtong* (1436 - 1449) reign, the emperor ordered the banning of colored ceramics. The first time when the ban started was the second year of the *Zhengtong* reign, which marked the reappearance of blue&white porcelain. In the third year of the *Zhengtong* reign (1439), blue&white porcelain was banned. This shows that the imperial court tried to stop the commercial production of blue&white porcelain. Ten years later, the court reiterated the order, which shows that the commercial production of blue&white porcelain was unstoppable; by 1490, it had developed into a major export product, as demonstrated by the ceramics recovered in the Lena Shoal shipwreck. By virtue of the banning of colored wares in 1438, commercial kilns were not allowed to produce yellow, purple, pink, green, navy blue, light blue, and 'blue-on-white-ground' wares. They were only allowed to produce white ware, brown ware, black ware, and celadon. In this context the discoveries of the shipwrecks of Turiang (1370 - 1400) and Longquan (1424 - 1440) are significant. Longquan contained an estimated 40,000 pieces of Chinese ceramics (40% of the cargo), mainly *Longquan* celadons and southern China white wares. On board the Turiang, 35% of the cargo was Chinese ceramics, mainly *Guangdong* wares (green-glazed, brown-glazed, and monochrome) and *Longquan* celadons. Their cargo reflects the types of ceramics allowed to be produced in China's commercial kilns during that period.

One thing to take note of is the severe punishment that was instituted for producing and selling blue&white porcelains and colored wares. Although the *Ming* dynasty had one of the toughest laws in Chinese history, the fourth emperor *Ren Zong* (1378, colored wares shows that these wares were considered sacred at this period. They may have been designed to be used in imperial rituals, presented to the generals, and given as gifts to foreign states, as it was forbidden to sell blue&white porcelain to foreigners. The nature of *the Ming Ban* was not to ban trading but to control pirating. To some extent, it did allow local Chinese traders to trade with the representatives of the heads of foreign states in China and for foreign traders to trade with the representatives of Chinese emperors overseas. This was a way to stamp out piracy, by controlling the ceramic production. If blue&white ware production for export was allowed in commercial kilns of China, there would be some traces of it overseas. Nonetheless, the ban made trading more difficult and may have caused some of the Chinese potters to set up their workshops overseas to circumvent the policy.²⁴⁸

To be clear, the decree of the *Hongwu* emperor ended four centuries of free trade, which had been very financially beneficial for China, but it did not halt the production of

²⁴⁸ Orillaneda, "Maritime Trade in the Philippines During the 15th Century CE," 89-90.

porcelain itself. Porcelain was still one of the most popular items, alongside silk, to present to foreign ambassadors or to send to a foreign country as a tribute to China. Despite the imperial decree of the *Hongwu* emperor, this practice continued throughout the *Ming* dynasty, as indicated by the approximately 19,000 items of porcelain that were sent abroad as official gifts in 1383. As mentioned above, the decree was issued mainly to control illicit trade.²⁴⁹

With the partial absence of Chinese ceramics in the international markets, other ceramic-producing countries like Thailand, Vietnam, and Burma stepped up their ceramic production. Eventually, the products of these countries filled the void of ceramic exports until the late 15th century, when Chinese private traders resumed their overseas trade activities.²⁵⁰

Jingdezhen

Jingdezhen, located in *Fuliang* County [浮梁县] of the *Raozhou* prefecture [饒州] in the *Jiangxi* province, grew into a ceramic production center in China because of its favorable location. The city of *Jingdezhen* was named after the *Zhenzhong* emperor [宋真宗] (968 - 1022) of the *Song* dynasty, and during his reign in the era of *Jingde* [景德] (1004-1007), the kiln center was established.²⁵¹ *Jingdezhen's* geographical location protected it from political unrest and military campaigns for centuries. It was far enough inland to avoid coastal attacks and far enough south to avoid the worst ravages of invasion by nomads from the north.²⁵² Apart from the favorable location, the abundance of porcelain stone deposits, large forests, and a river that flowed into two major river systems were optimal for ceramic production. This river system also allowed *Jingdezhen* to supply porcelain to the Chinese empire and the outside world.²⁵³

Nearly all the raw materials for ceramic production in *Jingdezhen* were brought in by water, and most of the finished pots were shipped out. At that time, rivers were South China's main communication arteries. In *Jingdezhen*, the *Yangtze* River and the *Boyang* Lake [鄱陽湖] were essential for ceramic production. Besides the infrastructure and location of *Jingdezhen*, marketing was also an important factor in its development. Before its rise as an industrial center, the town was a market. In the *Tang* and *Song* dynasties, it served as a distribution center for the various kilns scattered around northeastern *Jiangxi* province. The development of rural markets in this region during the *Song* dynasty laid a solid foundation for the commercial and industrial development that was to come. There was a proliferation of interconnected rural markets that replaced some of the officially controlled markets, and the guilds transformed from officially sanctioned districts consisting of merchant shops of the same trade into

²⁴⁹ Vainker, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*, 140.

²⁵⁰ Orillaneda, "Maritime Trade in the Philippines During the 15th Century CE," 92.

²⁵¹ Vainker, "Ceramics for use," 238.

²⁵² Michael Dillon, "Transport and Marketing in the Development of the Jingdezhen Porcelain Industry during the Ming and Qing Dynasties," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 35, no. 3 (1992): 279. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3632734>.

²⁵³ Vainker, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*, 176.

autonomous trade associations of brokers, wholesalers, and warehousemen. During this time, brokers developed their intermediary role and began to specialize. The trade network that developed proved flexible enough to accommodate the enormous expansion of production during the *Ming* dynasty. Although *Jingdezhen* became an industrial center, it also retained its function as a market and became the single most important market for porcelain in China. The complex marketing network surrounding the guilds served the industry well in its developing years.²⁵⁴

Jingdezhen porcelain was mostly shipped by water. Orders destined for North China, or the Imperial Palace, were loaded at the nearest port on the *Yangtze* River, reaching *Tianjin* [天津] (a coastal city in North China) via the Grand Canal. The way south to Canton had to be covered in several stages up to the border of *Jiangxi*. From there, the transport continued on carrier backs over the *Meiling* Pass, which separates the Canton region from North China. This steep passage led to the town of *Nianxiong*, from where one ascended to Kanton. The distance that had to be covered was about 900 km. Another route went along the *Yangtze* to *Nanjing* [南京] (a city in eastern China), then along the Chinese coast to Canton. This route, which was longer and more dangerous because of the pirates, was nevertheless the more expedient one. In the 18th century, export porcelain for the European market was transported this way to Canton, which was the only city in the Chinese Empire that was open to Europeans.²⁵⁵

Traditionally, pottery was sold within the city, although there were no large trading companies in the city to market it. Very little porcelain was transported out of the town before it was sold. Instead, prospective buyers would come to the town. Between the merchants and the porcelain manufacturers were the brokers who acted as middlemen, and without the licensed brokers, no deal could be carried out. There were fifty or sixty brokerage firms organized into groups with each group dealing with buyers from a particular area who belonged to the traveling merchants' association from that area. Although trade was highly decentralized, the brokerage system ensured a high degree of control over buying and selling and even over strangers entering the city, as no one other than a government-licensed broker was allowed to trade directly with the potters. Merchants from all provinces worked in *Jingdezhen*.²⁵⁶

The introduction of the silver cash tax system in 1570 replaced the old system of *corvée* labor so that artisans and owners of workshops could be more flexible with their allocation of time and labor. The large pool of available labor in *Jiangxi* meant that the owners of kilns at *Jingdezhen* could respond to the varying demands for porcelain with great flexibility. In addition to the changed tax system, the import of large quantities of silver from Spanish mines in Mexico

²⁵⁴ Dillon, "Transport and Marketing in the Development of the Jingdezhen Porcelain Industry during the Ming and Qing Dynasties," 279, 280.

²⁵⁵ Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, 220.

²⁵⁶ Dillon, "Transport and Marketing in the Development of the Jingdezhen Porcelain Industry during the Ming and Qing Dynasties," 284, 285.

(via Manila in the Philippines) and mines in Japan to China in the late 16th century had an enormous impact on all craft industries, including those of ceramics, furniture, and silk.²⁵⁷

Private and Official Kilns in *Jingdezhen*

Porcelain produced in *Jingdezhen* during the *Ming* and *Qing* dynasties can generally be divided into two groups: official wares and privately produced wares. However, the dividing line was not as clear as was sometimes assumed. Official ware was in general, of the highest quality and was designed and produced specifically for the court for palace decoration, gifts to senior officials, or to use in exchange for tribute from abroad. Official wares were never intended to enter the commercial market; rather, they were produced when an order sent by the Imperial Household was forwarded to the potters by the Board of Works and had to be delivered within a certain deadline. The method of financing this work changed over the centuries. During most of the *Ming* period, porcelain was supplied as a tax levy, but in certain periods of the *Qing* dynasty, it was purchased with central government funds. The court had maintained some sort of supervisory depot in *Jingdezhen* since as early as 621 CE during the *Tang* dynasty. In the *Song* and *Yuan* periods, supervision was more regular and formalized, and under the *Ming* dynasty, it developed into a fully staffed depot responsible for regulating the supply of imperial goods as well as their control, storage, and shipping according to the orders of the court. Prices, quantities, and styles were set by the palace in order, and for the officials in *Jingdezhen*, who had to ensure that the porcelain was delivered to the capital, it was more a matter of quality control, maintaining production to meet the deadline, and organizing shipments than marketing a commodity. This was the case whether the pottery was produced directly under the supervision of court-appointed officials or contracted out to private kiln owners.²⁵⁸

By the 16th century, the changes that had begun in the late *Yuan* period had made *Jingdezhen* the largest industrial operation in the world, with over 1,000 kilns, 70,000 workers, and a production process that anticipated modern methods of assembly-line manufacture. A sophisticated division of labor made possible improvements in quality along with a high increase in production. Always insistent on the finest wares, the imperial court ordered as many as 105,000 pieces of porcelain at a time.²⁵⁹

The official kilns in *Jingdezhen* produced wares of excellent quality because potters were able to concentrate their efforts solely on the development of their products, as the wares had to be produced in the taste of the emperor and his court. During the *Ming* dynasty, a considerable number of white porcelains were produced. Although blue&white wares could have been chosen as official ware, the *Ming* court tried to recommit themselves to their '*Han*

²⁵⁷ Stephen Little, "Economic Change in Seventeenth-Century China and Innovations at the Jingdezhen Kilns," *Ars Orientalis* 26 (1996): 49-50. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4629498>.

²⁵⁸ Dillon, "Transport and Marketing in the Development of the Jingdezhen Porcelain Industry during the Ming and Qing Dynasties," 283, 284.

²⁵⁹ Finlay, "The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History," 154.

tradition' and chose the monochrome white wares as the official wares for ritual use. These white wares usually bore writings like '內附' ('Inner court') or '官' ('Official').²⁶⁰

By the beginning of the 16th century, the ceramic industry in *Jingdezhen* could produce anything that was demanded. The potters of *Jingdezhen* were highly adaptable to changing fashions and markets. In addition to their adaptation skills, they were versatile in their decorative inventions. These skills were necessary in light of market competition. They were also not deterred from copying inscriptions in languages they were not familiar with, such as Arabic, Latin, and Sanskrit.²⁶¹

The increased demand for ceramic products at home and abroad led to the development of private kilns at several industrial complexes. Imperial orders alone, for example, increased from 2,570 pieces in 1529 to 105,770 pieces in 1571. During the reign of the *Hongwu* emperor (1328-1398), 20 kilns were commissioned in *Jingdezhen* to produce porcelain for the imperial household. During the reign of the *Xuande* emperor (1399-1435), 58 kilns produced porcelain for the palace. Between 1506 and 1530, the official kilns were supervised by a eunuch official from Beijing; after 1530, the same kilns were supervised by local officials. In 1593, eunuch control was restored and lasted until the end of *Ming* imperial patronage in 1620.²⁶²

Imperial patronage paved the way for *Jingdezhen* to become the major ceramic-producing center in China. The dominance of one production center was also a limiting factor for the development of the technological field. Consequently, during the *Ming* dynasty, fewer techniques were developed. Over time, *Jingdezhen* developed a standardization of designs and forms. Above all, wares for the imperial court were affected. The requirements for appropriate designs and forms facilitated the standardization. By the 18th century, *Jingdezhen* became a 'factory town', in which mainly porcelain was produced. In numerous Chinese and European texts, important details about manufacturing techniques, scale of production, wages, and raw materials were described. At that time, *Jingdezhen* was already the dominant ceramic production center for domestic and export wares.²⁶³

The longevity of *Jingdezhen* as the main ceramic production center was also due to its reorganization over time. In 1680, the *Kangxi* emperor ordered a commission to inquire into the state of the industry, and based on the report, the emperor appointed a superintendent to properly organize the ceramic production center to supply the palace. The old system by which a proportion of the workforce was forced labor was abolished, and from then on, the men were paid as craftsmen and laborers. In addition to improvements in the standards of the kiln, its

²⁶⁰ Satō, *Chinese Ceramics: A Short History*, 160-161.

²⁶¹ Medley, *The Chinese Potter: A Practical History of Chinese Ceramics*, 217.

²⁶² Little, "Economic Change in Seventeenth-Century China and Innovations at the Jingdezhen Kilns," 47.

²⁶³ Pierson, *Chinese Ceramics*, 30-33, 36, 41.

reorganization by the *Kangxi* emperor also introduced innovations in glaze types, which were due to his interest in European technical repertoires.²⁶⁴

Under the reign of the *Kangxi* emperor, six kilns in *Jingdezhen* were devoted to producing wares for imperial use, and 23 workshops were designated to a particular part of the production process. The imperial palaces in the Forbidden City in *Beijing* required huge amounts of porcelain. Among the porcelains needed for all the concubines, children, and other nobles, who lived inside the Forbidden City, there were still numerous temples, altars, and for the emperor's official and personal use. Other kilns were all privately operated and supplied both the Chinese domestic market and the export market.²⁶⁵

Ceramic Production in *Jingdezhen*

Jingdezhen retained imperial kilns until the end of the *Qing* dynasty in 1911. Until this day, *Jingdezhen* manufactures Chinese porcelain.²⁶⁶

As mentioned above, *Jingdezhen* had numerous attributes that made it ideal for ceramic production: the high-quality *kaolin* clay, a rich supply of firewood from the nearby pine forests, convenient water transport, and excellent craftsmen. In *Jingdezhen*, 'dragon' kilns [龍窯] were most commonly built. They were usually about 25 to 40 meters long and about two meters wide. This kiln type can fire up to 9,600 bowl-shaped ceramic objects at one time. The *Jingdezhen Hutian* kilns [景德鎮湖田] produced the best blue&white porcelains.²⁶⁷

The kaolin and petuntse were brought to *Jingdezhen* in the form of white bricks. They were washed in water and kneaded in the proper proportions to form a plastic dough. Typically, a worker standing barefoot in a tub did this work. The potter then took a lump of this kneaded material and placed it on his wheel. The wheel is a fairly heavy disc that rotates on an upright rod, usually mounted in a small depression. The potter spun this wheel with either his foot or a stick and, as it spun, he shaped the lump of clay with either his hand or a piece of wood. If the object he was making needed handles or other protrusions, he made them separately and attached them with a little water and kaolin after the piece was removed from the wheel. This process is called luting. The vessel was dried either by gently burning it or placing it in the sun. The piece was then ready for glazing. The glaze is a liquid that is a brittle solid when cooled to normal temperature, but becomes liquid and flows easily when heated. The vessels were coated with glaze either by dipping them into the glaze or by having the glaze blown or painted

²⁶⁴ Medley, *The Chinese Potter: A Practical History of Chinese Ceramics*, 240-241.

One of these innovations was the so-called 'famille verte' ('green family') porcelain. These wares combined underglaze designs in various colors. As the name suggests, the principal enamel color is green, just as the term 'famille rose' suggests a ware with predominantly pink decoration. The terms 'famille verte, rose, noire, and jaune' were characterized by a French collector, Albert Jacquemart, in the mid-19th century.

Vainker, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*, 200.

²⁶⁵ Vainker, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*, 200-201.

²⁶⁶ Barnes, "Yuan Dynasty Ceramics," 366.

²⁶⁷ Li, "Ceramics of the Song, Liao, Western Xia, and Jin Dynasties," 302-303.

on. To protect them from the direct flame of the kiln, they were placed in cases made of fireclay or saggars.²⁶⁸

In *Jiang Qi's* [蔣祈] 'Ceramic Memoir' [陶記], written in 1322, he describes some of the ceramic production process in *Jingdezhen*. He may have described the production of *Qingbai* ware and the distinction of the use of red clay (earthenware) for making saggars and molds. In addition, he mentions how brushwood was collected from the hills of *Yushan*, which was used in the preparation of glaze ash. He also describes how pieces were thrown on a wheel and further refined with a sharp tool. It is a very short (only consisting of 1,000 characters in total) but important text, as it states that a clear division of labor existed between potters and those who prepared the basic material and saggars. The short text starts with the number of active kilns in *Jingdezhen* (300 in total) and then describes which objects were preferred in which locations. For instance, in *Jiangnan, Hunan, Sichuan, and Guangdong, Qingbai* wares were popular.²⁶⁹

Père d'Entrecolles described in his letters how he experienced being in *Jingdezhen* in the early 18th century. 3,000 furnaces burned all year round, day and night. He described the city as lacking a city wall, which facilitated the movement of raw materials and the transport of goods by ship to the workshops. There were 18,000 pottery-making families. The wealthy merchants lived in special houses in the city, and the poor made their money by rubbing paint. There was such a thing as a mayor. Each street had one or more prefects, depending on its length, and each prefect in turn had ten sub-officials, each of whom was responsible for ten houses. The streets were closed off during the night with barricades and were guarded. Foreigners were not allowed to live in the city; they therefore lived on ships or lodged with their acquaintances, who were responsible for their behavior. Life in the city revolved around the production of porcelain, and it was the primary source of wealth. In one of his letters of 1712, Père d'Entrecolles describes all the stages of production, from the arrival of the ships loaded with kaolin to the transport of the finished pieces to *Beijing* and *Canton*, and to the port of embarkation for Europe. The first stage of work consisted of mixing the already crushed kaolin with petuntse. This was done in a large, well-lined pit. The resulting mass was divided into individual lumps, which were kneaded and rolled on large slabs of slate. The pieces were formed on the disc with the help of molds, and they were improved with a spatula. All these work processes were carried out as a production line. A porcelain vessel passed through the hands of 60 workers after the firing process. The parallel to modern working methods is striking. A small bowl, for example, is initially a small ball, which was handled by the first worker. A second worker places them on the pane, a third levels them, and a fourth smooths the edges

²⁶⁸ Laurance P. Roberts, "Chinese decorative arts," *The Brooklyn Museum Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (1938): 118-120. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26460722>.

²⁶⁹ Gerritsen, "Fragments of a Global Past: Ceramics Manufacture in Song-Yuan-Ming Jingdezhen," 135-136.

with a spatula.²⁷⁰ There were at least 30 different steps in the process of production in a kiln, including grinding the clay, throwing the vessel on a potter's wheel, mixing the glazes, applying the decorative motifs, and finally the firing process. In the system of labor division, each step was carried out by a highly skilled professional. The painting of the vessels, for instance, was not done by one person, but by several. The first artist painted only the first colored circle that is seen near the edges of the porcelain, then another artist traced the flowers, which were then painted by a third painter. The next artist in line was responsible for painting water and mountains, with yet another artist painting the birds and other animals. Because of this division of labor, each painter could perfect their specific skill. The whole process was supervised by directors, who made necessary adjustments during production and even advised the craftsmen. A highly skilled labor division with the intention of economic growth came into existence within the kilns. They were now equipped for mass production of porcelain to a high standard. Within the division of labor, there were different workshops for the different phases of production. The firing process was managed by a kiln master with semi-skilled labor, often on short-term contracts, to help with the setting, stoking, and unloading at the end.²⁷¹

The various kiln sites of *Jingdezhen* produced different types of wares. Because of the long-standing production in *Jingdezhen*, the firing process between the *Ming* dynasty and *Qing* dynasty was quite different due to the use of different glazes. *Qing* blue&white wares have relatively thin overglaze coating, so the kilns were larger than their *Ming* predecessors. Interestingly, the fuel consumption during the *Qing* dynasty was less, and the firing time and cooling processes were shortened. All these changes were part of economizing measures.²⁷²

The Chinese perfected the production steps in the process of their ceramic manufacturing. *Jingdezhen* is the best example of this: the kilns, materials, tools, techniques, inventions, and innovations, along with the patronage, fostered the perfect site for ceramic production. Chinese potters aimed for and frequently achieved perfect technique, characterized by colossal and almost mechanical production. The goal was an aesthetic ability to produce thousands of objects with the same motif and without flaws. Contrast this to the manufacturing of ceramics in Vietnam, where the outcome was sometimes left to chance. However, the Vietnamese aesthetic appeal is in the combination of informality and great technical skills that bring a certain charm and beauty to the ceramic objects. While Chinese influence is still very visible, the wares are nonetheless distinctly Vietnamese.²⁷³

3. Vietnamese Ceramics

The 400 years of the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties created unparalleled original ceramic styles.

²⁷⁰ Beurdeley, *Chinesische Keramik - Ein Handbuch*, 218.

²⁷¹ Medley, *The Chinese Potter: A Practical History of Chinese Ceramics*, 171.

²⁷² Satō, *Chinese Ceramics: A Short History*, 208-209, 214.

²⁷³ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 42-43.

During these two dynasties, vitality and singularity made an impact on the ceramic market. The originality during these two dynasties is characteristic of the arts in periods of transition from a previous political order. Creations that originated in a period after a transition tend to be less adventurous; the designs became less diverse because the potters tend to stick to types that have already proved to be successful. For instance, *Trần* brown pattern wares clearly followed the models of *Cizhou* wares. Furthermore, the spontaneous and impulsive manners were hallmarks of Vietnamese potters. If they borrowed motifs from different cultures, they interpreted them in their own way. They also modified Chinese shapes, like the alcohol jug bowl warmer, which was modified as an outer decoration in Vietnam instead of its original function.

While the Vietnamese ceramic market flourished, turmoil and political instability led to a decline in the quality of ceramics. The export market was neglected, and domestic wares lost their refinement. As more and more kilns became unprofitable, the craftsmen oriented themselves towards other profitable jobs. By that time, the import of Chinese ceramics had ultimately become cheaper than domestic products, which forced the remaining kilns in Vietnam to concentrate on the manufacturing of tiles and other architectural ceramics to be profitable. These developments did not support the once vast creativity of Vietnamese potters, and, eventually, there was no further progress in the Vietnamese ceramic tradition.²⁷⁴

The major difference between Vietnamese and Chinese ceramics is the fact that Vietnamese ceramics are not considered porcelain, but stoneware. Like Chinese ceramic culture, Vietnamese ceramic culture is so rich and varied that describing ceramic production in Vietnam can be complicated. Such a description here is further hampered by the fact that this dissertation project only works with the ceramic culture of northern Vietnam. The mere task of listing every type of ceramic that has ever been produced in Vietnam is quite overwhelming. For this reason, the following listing of Vietnamese ceramics does not follow a certain pattern. Like Chinese ceramics, Vietnamese ceramics are also diverse, and the description of ceramic production in Northern Vietnam can be complicated as well. As in China, some kilns or regions in Vietnam manufactured a certain type of ceramic object or used one type of glaze. It is also relevant to note that certain kilns experienced their prime in particular imperial periods. Unlike Chinese ceramics, which follow the Chinese periods, Vietnamese ceramic objects are categorized into different groups based on design and style or the names of places of production. This grouping depended on the point of view. In this dissertation, Vietnamese ceramics will be divided into Prehistoric wares, Terracotta, White wares, Green wares, Celadon Wares, Brown wares, Brown Pattern wares, Iron-black wares, Blue&White wares, Blue wares, Crackled glaze wares, and Overglaze Enamel wares/Polychrome wares. Each

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 31, 42, 125.

category will be further elaborated on in the following text.

Vietnamese ceramic culture is heavily influenced by Chinese ceramic culture, but over time and due to the usage of different materials, it is possible to distinguish between these two ceramic cultures. In some cases, Vietnamese ceramics were mistakenly recognized as Chinese ceramics. Thus, it is impossible to provide an overview of Vietnamese ceramics without mentioning their Chinese counterpart.

Vietnamese ceramic object categorization also follows some pattern like their Chinese counterpart; the categorization follows into different groups, for instance, historical periods, different dynasties, designs and styles, or names of places of production.

Another issue with Vietnamese ceramics is ascertaining the provenance of objects. A war-torn, occupied country compounded by a climate that is very destructive towards organic objects makes it difficult to trace ceramic production in Northern Vietnam, even with written records.

One of the earliest recent works on Vietnamese ceramics was done by Cheng Lammers within the framework of the catalog of the National Museum of Indonesia in 1974. She discovered early on that Vietnamese ceramic objects are semi-vitreous stoneware and that they never reached the stage of a porcelain object due to the low firing temperatures of Vietnamese kilns. However, the clay body was homogeneous, fine, and smooth, with the color of the clay body varying from pale buff to a grayish-white color. One characteristic that Lammers also noticed was the so-called 'chocolate bottom'.²⁷⁵ The term 'chocolate bottom' or 'base chocolatée' was characterized by R.Y. Lefebvre d'Argencé. The purpose of this characteristic is not clear, though it will be further explored in the context of Vietnamese ceramics in Chapter IV, 1.3: Fabric, Clay Forming, Glaze Techniques, and Firing Process.

3.1 A Short Overview of Northern Vietnamese Ceramics

The following section is a short overview of the development of Vietnamese ceramic culture. As it is nearly impossible to mention every single glaze type, this will cover the most important ones and the most famous Vietnamese ceramic objects.

Vietnamese Ceramics under Chinese Rule [Bắc thuộc [北屬]

The cultural encounter with China during its occupation of Vietnam began a new historical period characterized by the assimilation of Northern Vietnam as well as a rising feeling of Vietnamese national pride and resistance against the domination of foreign feudalism. In the process of economic and cultural exchange with China, Northern Vietnam absorbed many new technologies. For instance, the profession of iron forging and bronze casting was increasingly perfected, and the professions of weaving, knitting, mother-of-pearl inlay, and glass production

²⁷⁵ Cheng Lammers, *Annamese ceramics in the Museum of Pusat Jakarta*, (Jakarta: P.T. Foremost Jaya, 1974), 1.

were adopted.²⁷⁶ In the beginning, Vietnamese potters continued with their production of ceramics, as the workshops were in the hands of family clans. However, pottery production in Vietnam gradually absorbed the influence of China, especially after the unsuccessful revolt of the 'Trung sisters' during the 'Second Chinese Domination'. Pottery of this period is mainly found in brick tombs in some areas with ceramic kilns and brick kilns such as *Thuận Thành (Hà Bắc)* and *Tam Thợ (Thanh Hóa)*. In January 1937, people discovered pottery kilns scattered in the fields along both sides of the roads of *Thanh Hóa*. These brick tombs are also known as *Han* brick tombs, as they belonged to the *Han-Việt* social class, which emerged through the intermixture of Chinese immigrants and Vietnamese locals. 125 *Han* brick tombs were discovered by the Swedish archeologist Olov Robert Thure Janse during his three expeditions to Indochina between 1934 and 1939.²⁷⁷

The potters from this period used fast wheels and two-part molds. Additionally, in the course of Sinitization, the local potters adopted the dragon kiln for their local ceramic production. The dragon kilns had improved air-flow methods and thus were able to produce higher temperatures. The wares of this period had a thin, transparent, cream-colored, or greenish ash glaze and differed from the dark green lead-based glazes of *Han* Chinese wares. The shapes were adapted from Chinese ceramic culture, and the decoration was only used occasionally and limited to geometric designs. Green blobs of glaze were also characteristic of Vietnamese ceramics during this time. It is not certain whether they may have been formed accidentally by a molten residue of adhering flue ash or if they were deliberately made to imitate the dark green glaze of *Han* Chinese wares.²⁷⁸

In addition to several pottery kilns of the *Lý-Trần* dynasties, most of the kilns belonged to the *Han* dynasty. The excavations of the Institute of Archeology in 1969/1970 at *Bãi Định (Ninh Thuận – Hà Bắc)* show that during this period ceramic production was quite concentrated and more specialized. In terms of materials, in addition to traditional terracotta ceramics, which were traditionally decorated in a simple manner, there were ceramic products fired at high temperatures into brown earthenware and several products made from white clay with light green glaze on the body of porous crockery, which would be further developed in the *Lý-Trần* dynasties. In terms of products, there were more types of architectural ceramics, such as ordinary bricks, pomelo bricks for rolling construction, semi-cylindrical tubular tiles, and glazed pipe tops. In addition, there were small animal statues such as pigs and cows with sketchy patterns. Types of household ceramics were quite rich and included jars, vases, bowls, plates, cups, trays, pots, lids, lamps, incense vases, and spittoons. Most ceramic products were made

²⁷⁶ Ceramics," Gom Suu, last modified December 18, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20171016200956/https://gomsuu.com/gom-su-viet-nam-lich-su-phat-trien-qua-cac-thoi-ky/>.

²⁷⁷ West, *Insight Guides Vietnam*, 30.

The term 'Indochina' was coined in the early nineteenth century, emphasizing the cultural influence of Indian and Chinese civilizations on the area. The term was later adopted as the name of the colony of French Indochina. French Indochina, also referred to since 1887 as L'Union Indochinoise, comprised present-day Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. At that time Vietnam was divided into Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina.

²⁷⁸ May, *Verborgene Schätze - 2000 Jahre Vietnamesische Keramik*, 35-37, 40.

by turntables, but some were made by printing molds and then hand assembled. In this period, there were some more products with *Han*-style ceramic patterns or a combination of *Han* and Vietnamese patterns. Products with many additional forms, tubular products also appeared more than before, especially ceramics with ears attached to the shoulders, which was a prominent product in this period. Obviously, under Chinese feudalism, Vietnamese potters were required to make products according to Chinese standards and aesthetics, but through Vietnamese materials, the shape and style of ceramic products changed, preserving and developing their style by retaining the traditional art of previous eras while absorbing and elements borrowed from the outside.²⁷⁹

The aforementioned Olov Janse discovered glazed objects from the 'First Chinese domination' phase (111 BCE – 939 CE), consisting mainly of burial goods from the famous *Han* brick tombs in present-day Northern Vietnam. While the shapes are in the *Han*-Chinese style and were doubtless manufactured under the direction of Chinese rulership, they can nonetheless be clearly distinguished from Chinese wares. The most striking differences between the wares of these two countries lie in the color of the clay body and the glaze. The Chinese body was usually reddish-brown to buff, while the Vietnamese body was off-white. In addition, the Chinese glaze was an opaque green, whereas the Vietnamese glaze was slightly translucent cream-white, sometimes with pale greenish tinges. Also, the Vietnamese glaze was somewhat thick and often crackled. The *Han*-Chinese style wares in Vietnam were probably turned on a potter's wheel.²⁸⁰

'Independence period': Lý-Trần ceramics

Ceramic production under the Lý dynasty was heavily influenced by that of the Chinese *Song* dynasty. The bases or foot rings of vessels were fairly high, and the glaze types included white glaze, celadon, green glaze, and, towards the end of the dynasty, brown glaze and brown pattern glaze. The ceramic production under the Trần dynasty, on the other hand, was heavily influenced by that of the Chinese *Yuan* dynasty. The bases or foot rings were fairly low, and the glaze types included white glaze, celadon, green glaze, brown glaze, and brown pattern glaze. Towards the end of the period, the predecessor of blue&white ceramics developed - the so-called iron-black wares. In Vietnam, archeologists distinguished the ceramic objects according to the foot ring.

The 10th century marked a historical turning point. Vietnam gained its independence after more than 10 centuries of Chinese feudal domination and ushered in a period of national cultural renaissance. During the four centuries from the Lý to Trần dynasties, pottery production saw brilliant new achievements, successfully mass-producing white crockery. With great technical skill and artistry, the widespread use of white clay and white *kaolin* for the clay

²⁷⁹ Gom Suu, "Ceramics."

²⁸⁰ Brown, *The Ceramics of South-East Asia: Their Dating and Identification*. Oxford in Asia studies in ceramics, 9-10.

body and glaze created new, durable ceramics for the production of containers and architectural ceramics. Color glazes such as ivory, celadon, and brown enamel were made technologically stable so they could be mass-produced, especially white enamel. *Lý-Trần* enamel is still mainly ash glaze and earthen glaze. These glazes are mostly clear, becoming thick and white when met with high fire, and they flow into drops, called tears. Paint first appeared on *Lý-Trần* brown pattern glaze pottery. *Lý-Trần* ceramics created the initial 'transformation' between the requirements for use and materials. With decorative glaze, the painting element penetrates deeper into the ceramic. This is very important; it reflects the advancement in technology and art, and reflects the rational thought in the process of creating ceramics and applying it to life in the best and most appropriate way. *Lý-Trần* ceramics can be divided into three primary groups: household ceramics, decorative ceramics, and architectural ceramics.²⁸¹

The construction of religious monuments, particularly Buddhist monuments, generated an unprecedented demand for architectural ceramics and, in turn, led to the rapid development of the ceramic industry during the *Lý-Trần* period.²⁸² Regarding the shaping of household ceramics, in addition to inheriting and enhancing the shape of traditional terracotta and brown earthenware, many products were designed based on patterns in nature, such as flowers, fruits, or shapes of ancient bronze objects. Concerning the decoration of *Lý-Trần* pottery, it introduced a new pattern. If geometric patterns occupied the main and only position on earthenware and brown earthenware, on *Lý-Trần* pottery, it is only in a secondary position. The main motifs here are flowers, leaves, birds, elephants, tigers, and people.²⁸³ Nearly all the motifs selected by the *Lý-Trần* potters contributed to the celebration of national identity. For instance, the long-tailed bird or peacock was native to Vietnamese forests and often depicted on brown pattern wares (Fig. 61; see the *Nam Định* Provincial Museum BTND293 SS252). For Vietnamese people, this bird served to assert the identity and resilience of their culture, and it became an emblematic symbol of the South. Like other decorative motifs, this bird has a nuanced symbolism, which will be further elaborated in the next chapter.²⁸⁴

The kiln, in particular, took a huge step forward in terms of technology. Toad/frog kilns and maybe even dragon kilns were able to raise the firing temperature for products from 1200°C to 1280°C. In addition to the pottery kilns associated with agricultural villages, the appearance of clusters of kilns in *Thanh Hóa*, *Hà Nội*, *Hà Nam*, and *Bắc Ninh* demonstrates the formation of more concentrated and professional ceramic areas. From the 10th to the 14th century, Vietnamese ceramic art entered the stage of synthesizing three basic elements that create the beauty of ceramics: shapes, decorative patterns, and colored enamel. The above factors, combined with technological developments and high aesthetic standards during the

²⁸¹ Gom Suu, "Ceramics."

²⁸² Truong, *The Elephant and the Lotus: Vietnamese Ceramics in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 14.

²⁸³ Gom Suu, "Ceramics."

²⁸⁴ Truong, *The Elephant and the Lotus: Vietnamese Ceramics in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 16-17.

Lý-Trần dynasty, led to the creation of three famous types of pottery: embossed ivory white/white ceramic, brown pattern ceramic, and celadon.²⁸⁵ Ceramic objects of the *Lý* dynasty are rarely found outside of Vietnam, and it can therefore be assumed that ceramic production was mainly for domestic use and for architectural materials for the *Thăng Long* capital.

In contrast to the *Lý* dynasty, larger-scale ceramic production started in the *Trần* dynasty. In Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia, many early small and medium-sized Vietnamese early-type blue&white and iron-black products with simplified scroll designs, branches, and floral patterns have been found. These Vietnamese products imitated *Yuan* blue&white porcelain.²⁸⁶ The *Trần* dynasty potters relied on the knowledge of the *Lý* dynasty potters, though they refined the firing process and the amount, and the brown pattern ceramics reached their peak during the *Trần* dynasty. Slowly, blue&white ceramics were incorporated into the types of ceramics they produced, and the potters began to export to the Ryukyus in Japan and to regions of Southeast Asia like the Philippines and Indonesia.²⁸⁷

The ceramics of the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties are often grouped together because *Trần* ceramics directly inherited the ceramic décor of the *Lý* dynasty, and shapes and forms looked practically the same. This has made it difficult for researchers to distinguish between the two dynasties. However, the technique of making spur marks have helped to differentiate between the two dynasties. Generally, the spur-making techniques under the *Trần* dynasty were not as sophisticated as those of the *Lý*. In addition, the details of the motif under the *Trần* dynasty were also not as sophisticated as those of the *Lý*. Another noticeable characteristic is that the printed motifs under the *Trần* dynasty were much more diverse than those under the *Lý*. In general, ceramics from the *Trần* dynasty were gradually simplified with stronger shapes and sometimes plainer in decoration than those of the *Lý*.²⁸⁸

Vietnamese Ceramics under the Lê Dynasty

In Vietnamese history, there are three periods, which were named the 'Lê dynasty'. As a result, these three periods have additional designations: the 'Early Lê dynasty' (*Nhà Tiền Lê*) [家前黎] (980 - 1009), followed by the 'Primal Lê dynasty' (*Lê sơ triều*) [黎初朝] (1428 - 1527). Between the 'Primal Lê dynasty' and the 'Revival/Restored Lê dynasty' (*Lê Trung hưng triều*) [黎中興朝] (1533 - 1789) was the period of the *Mạc* dynasty (1527 – 1592). The Primal Lê dynasty and the Revival/Restored Lê dynasty collectively formed the 'Later Lê dynasty' (*Hậu*

²⁸⁵ Gom Suu, "Ceramics."

²⁸⁶ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 143, 149.

²⁸⁷ Tổng, *Văn hiến Thăng Long - Bằng chứng khảo cổ học Thăng Long Civilization - Archaeological Evidence*, 279.

²⁸⁸ "Pottery from Thăng Long Citadel," Vietnam Pathfinder, last modified March 25, 2022, <https://vietnampathfinder.com/news/Knowing-Vietnam/24017/Pottery-from-Thang-Long-Citadel.html>.

Lê triều) [後黎朝/家後黎] (1428 - 1789).²⁸⁹ To minimize confusion, in the context of this dissertation, the *Lê* dynasty refers to the Later *Lê* dynasty (1428 - 1789); otherwise, the additional designations will be used.

With the victory against the *Ming* army in 1428, the *Lê* dynasty was born, ushering in a highly developed period of centralized feudalism. Artistically, the ruling class tended to bring all political activities into the mainstream, with strict rules in the spirit of Confucianism. Only after nearly a century of peak development did the absolute monarchy begin to enter a periodic crisis that lasted from the 16th to the 19th centuries. This situation, combined with the expansion of the domestic market and trade with foreign countries, had a great impact on handicraft activities, including pottery. First, the formation of specialized ceramic production centers was well known, including *Bát Tràng (Hà Nội)*, which produced porous and white crockery, *Thổ Hà (Hà Bắc)*, which specialized in making all kinds of red colors (brown earthenware, *Phù Lãng (Hà Bắc)*, which made brown crockery covered with eel skin glaze, and *Hương Càng (Vĩnh Phú)*, which made brown earthenware jars. Vietnamese people often mention three famous pottery-making places since then: *Bát Tràng*, *Thổ Hà* and *Phù Lãng*. An old legend says that these three villages were built by three people with good pottery skills who chose a good day to set up a stage by the Red River to perform a professional transmission ceremony for the villagers. Large pottery villages are built in riverside areas to facilitate the transportation and use of raw materials (soil, coal, firewood) and for transporting finished products to localities. In addition, a lot of broken pottery pieces were found in the area of the ancient trading port of *Vân Đồn* (which will be further elaborated on in Chapter V under the point 'The Distribution of Ceramic Products in Northern Vietnam').²⁹⁰

Other kilns that were active during the *Lê* dynasty were the kiln sites in *Thăng Long*, *Hợp Lễ*, *Bình Giang*, and *Chu Đậu*. The kilns in *Hợp Lễ* and *Chu Đậu* evolved into large pottery centers during the early years of the *Lê* dynasty (Map 5). During the peak of *Lê* dynasty pottery production, they were able to manufacture blue&white wares, thin white eggshell ceramics, polychrome wares, polychrome wares with gold painting, and green ceramics. During this peak of production, these wares were perfectly made in terms of matrix quality, glaze, shaping, decoration, and firing technique. They were imported to Japan, the Philippines, and Indonesia. This period in the 15th century was also considered to be the golden age of Vietnamese exported ceramics, and this can be attributed to several factors.²⁹¹

Firstly, it coincides with the '*Ming* Gap', which was mentioned above. Secondly, it coincides with a short period of re-occupation by the Chinese and its associated Sinification process, whereby Chinese knowledge of ceramic production was introduced to Vietnam, either by commercial activity or direct knowledge transfer. Once the occupation ended, Vietnamese

²⁸⁹ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 121.

²⁹⁰ Gôm Suu, "Ceramics."

²⁹¹ Tống, *Văn hiến Thăng Long - Bằng chứng khảo cổ học Thăng Long Civilization - Archaeological Evidence*, 339.

potters may have continued to make use of the things they learned. Thirdly, this golden age is also concurrent with the 'Interregnum' period of Chinese ceramics. After the death of the *Xuande* emperor in 1435, the supplies of imperial porcelain were canceled. Then, in 1438, it was prohibited to decorate porcelains with imperial designs, and ten years later, it was prohibited to manufacture all porcelains with the exception of white ones. Violations could be punished by death. All these prohibitions led to a gap in Chinese porcelain supplies, which could have been filled by Vietnamese potters and other ceramic production centers in the region of East Asia and Southeast Asia.²⁹²

During the Revival/Restored *Lê* dynasty (1533 - 1789), European missionaries and merchants began to enter Vietnam. In the second half of the 17th century, the Dutch East India Company shipped tens of thousands of Vietnamese wares to Batavia in Indonesia.²⁹³

In contrast to the Golden Age of Vietnamese export wares in the 15th century, at the end of the *Lê* dynasty, Vietnamese ceramic production was on the decline. Although fewer and fewer kilns produced ceramic objects, it still did not reach a point where the Vietnamese completely depended on the Chinese ceramic market. For instance, in the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, Vietnamese local ceramic products were in the majority.²⁹⁴

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the most significant creations were large and imposing items for altars commissioned by Buddhist temples, especially candle stands and incense burners. The typical glaze was a cracked ivory-colored glaze, often ornately molded. These kinds of altar ceramic objects were primarily produced in *Bát Tràng*. Besides the name of the benefactors who commissioned the objects, the date of production, and even the potter's name were inscribed on the object (as on most of the objects). The inclusion of the potter's name suggests that the status of potters rose from anonymous artisan to named artist. Interestingly, several of the artisans named were women or husband and wife teams, indicating the relatively high status of Vietnamese women in Vietnamese society.²⁹⁵

The ceramic production under the *Lê* dynasty was heavily influenced by the ceramic production of the Chinese *Ming* dynasty. The glaze types that existed during this period were white glaze, celadon, and green glaze, and at the beginning of the dynasty blue&white glaze became more and more popular.

The Hội An/Cù Lao Chàm Shipwreck

The so-called *Hội An (Cù Lao Chàm)* shipwreck, which was discovered by Vietnamese fishermen in the mid-1990s near the historic port city of *Hội An*, revealed millions of pieces of ceramic objects. The shipwreck concealed countless treasures of Vietnamese ceramics, with

²⁹² Jochen May, *Verborgene Schätze - 2000 Jahre Vietnamesische Keramik*, (Berlin: Staatl. Museen zu Berlin - Preuß. Kulturbesitz, 2000), 160-161.

²⁹³ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 39.

²⁹⁴ Tống, *Văn hiến Thăng Long - Bằng chứng khảo cổ học Thăng Long Civilization - Archaeological Evidence*, 435.

²⁹⁵ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 40-41.

underglaze blue decorated wares representing the largest group. The ceramic objects can be dated to the mid to late 15th century - during the Lê dynasty. The ceramic items on the wrecked ship in *Hội An* seem to have been products of *Thăng Long* kilns, a theory now well supported by the many finds of high-quality blue&white glazed wares of similar shapes and motifs found along the river in the Imperial Citadel. The Vietnamese Institute of Archeology and National Museum of Vietnamese History conducted an excavation between 1997 and 1999 in partnership with Saga Horizon, a Malaysian marine archeology and salvage company. Over 150,000 intact pieces and 100,000 incomplete or deteriorated pieces were recovered from the *Hội An* shipwreck and illustrate the contribution of the kilns of present-day northern Vietnam to the international ceramic trade. The ship was a Sino-Southeast Asian ship (hybrid ship), meaning it featured Chinese and Southeast Asian ship-building components. The excavations also revealed Chinese blue&white porcelain, bowls, and small dishes, but the amount was so small that it is most likely that they were for the personal use of the ship's crew. The *Hội An* shipwreck represents one of the most important finds in the field of Vietnamese ceramic archeology because the ceramic objects close the circle between production and consumption.²⁹⁶

The discovery of the *Hội An (Cù Lao Chàm)* shipwreck is also a very important event for Vietnamese blue&white wares. The large cargo of blue&white wares found is evidence of the popularity of the ceramic type overseas. It is also a showcase of the high quality and the wide range of wares that were produced. Generally, the dating of these wares is established as 1480 - 1500. However, there is evidence that the date of production of the wares could be earlier. In the *Hội An* wreck, there were some Chinese blue&white that showed characteristics of the *Ming Chenghua* period [成化帝] (1447 - 1487). Another piece of evidence that supports a possible earlier dating is two Vietnamese blue&white cover boxes with floral motifs from the Royal Nanhai wreck. In the wreck, there were also some *Ming* interregnum period blue&white items. Hence, a dating of ca. 1460/1470 for the *Hội An* wreck is a possibility that should not be ruled out. Such blue&white wares were still found in the *Hongzhi* period [弘治帝] (1470 - 1505) and in the shipwreck of the so-called 'Lena junk' in the Palawan strait of the Philippines. However, the quality of the wares had deteriorated and it seems that by then, Chinese blue&white had taken over as the primary commodity demanded by the overseas customers. Also, the fact that it was the peak period of Vietnamese blue&white production is not coincidental. It occurred during the reign of emperor *Lê Thánh Tông* [黎聖宗] (1442 - 1497) when the *Lê* dynasty was at its strongest, both economically and politically. In the year 1471, the *Lê* Army decisively defeated Champa in Central Vietnam, ensuring the *Lê* dynasty's control

²⁹⁶ Pei-Kai Cheng, Guo Li and Chui Ki Wan, Proceedings of the International Conference: Chinese Export Ceramics and Maritime Trade, 12th – 15th Centuries, (Hong Kong: Chunghwabook, 2005), 107-118.

over the maritime trade route along the Vietnamese coast. This apparently had a positive impact on ceramic production and export, as more than 250,000 items were recovered from the *Hội An* wreck. The range of decorative motifs and designs and the form of vessels is numerous and this assemblage serves as a good reference to identify blue&white wares of 1450-1500. The majority are of good quality, and some are superb, such as those vessels in the form of animals or humans.²⁹⁷

Mạc Đăng Dung [莫登庸] (temple name *Mạc Thái Tổ* [莫太祖]) (1483-1541) usurped the *Lê* throne in 1527. A movement led by the *Trịnh* and *Nguyễn* clans to restore the *Lê* dynasty challenged him. The period of instability adversely affected the ceramics industry, with it most likely declining during the ensuing period of civil war after 1527. In addition to the domestic turmoil, it appears that during the 16th/17th century, Chinese blue&white also captured quite a large share of the Vietnamese market. Good indications were the numerous *Ming* blue&white of that period found in graves in provinces near *Hà Nội*. Comparatively, Vietnamese blue&white found in Vietnam dated to the 16th century is much rarer than those from the 15th century. Archeological surveys in recent years show that during the 16th century, blue&white were still produced in kilns in *Hải Dương* Province, mainly *Chu Đậu*. *Bát Tràng* also emerged as an important blue&white producer during the 16th/17th century and today is still an important ceramic production center. The blue&white motifs again showed clear characteristics of the *Hongzhi* period blue&white. Even the vessel form became more similar to that produced in China. During the late 16th/17th century, unique ritual vessels such as lampstands and incense burners were produced. Many have inscriptions that mention the date of production and the name of the donor of the vessel. They are usually large and elaborately decorated. Many of them were produced in the *Bát Tràng* kiln.²⁹⁸

The *Hội An* (*Cù Lao Chàm*) shipwreck was divided by bulkheads into 18 compartments, which was a typical Chinese pattern; however, the ship was made of teak, a type of wood only found during this time period in India, Burma, Java, and Thailand. The ship's hull measured 30 meters long by 7 meters wide. Among the hundred thousand ceramic objects found were lime pots, a ceramic object associated with betel chewing, which will be further explained in the next chapter of this thesis. This suggests that the ship may have been built and crewed by people from Southeast Asia. Other objects discovered that provide more specific indications about the origins of the ship were 30 large stoneware jars from the Ban Rachan kilns of Singburi, five Si Satchanalai jars, an earthenware *kendi*, four small Champa jars, bronze mirror handles, a *Yongle* coin, and a small number of Chinese vessels decorated with *vajra* and detached vegetal clusters and clouds with frilly edges dated to the Interregnum period (1436-

²⁹⁷ Nk Koh, "Vietnamese blue and white," last modified August 18, 2018, <http://www.koh-antique.com/vietceramics/vietceramics2.htm>.

²⁹⁸ Nk Koh, "Vietnamese blue and white."

1464). These objects suggest that the latest date for the ship is 1471. Furthermore, a radiocarbon date for the ship suggests a dating range of 1380-1499.²⁹⁹

Vietnamese Ceramics under the *Nguyễn* Dynasty

The pottery industry in Vietnam began to decline with the reign of *Nguyễn Gia Long* [嘉隆] (r. 1802-1820). Famous white ware kilns like *Bát Tràng* had to switch to producing red earthenware pottery. Since the decline of locally produced Vietnamese ceramics, the so-called 'Commissioned Patterned Porcelains' (*Đồ sứ ký kiểu*), also known as 'Bleu de Huế', were all imported from China according to the orders of the Huế court. In 1907, the Fine Arts School of Pottery and Bronze Casting was established in *Biên Hòa* (*Đồng Nai*) Province, and there developed a type of middle-fire glazed pottery, commonly known as "*Biên Hòa* pottery", with patterns quite detailed and rich in color.³⁰⁰

With the introduction of the *Nguyễn* dynasty, the central Vietnamese government moved southwards. However, as ceramic production in Northern Vietnam declined during the beginning of the 19th century, it is not clear if the *Nguyễn* government took along pottery knowledge to Central/South Vietnam. Although the aforementioned forms, glazes, and motifs of ceramic objects from Northern Vietnam and Central/South Vietnam differ from each other, it is still clear that there were cultural, technological, and commercial encounters between them. The biggest difference between the ceramic culture of Northern Vietnam and Central/South Vietnam is the apparent lack of access in Central and Southern Vietnam to cobalt blue, which is essential for the production of blue&white wares. Therefore, these provinces concentrated mainly on the production of monochromes, unglazed stonewares, and earthenwares.³⁰¹

3.2 Glaze Types

In the following section a short overview of Vietnamese glaze types is given with special emphasis on white wares, green wares/celadons, brown pattern wares, and blue&white wares. As mentioned, these four glaze types in Vietnam represent the adoption, the 'otherness', and the 'advancement' of Chinese culture. With 'adoption' the natural reception of Chinese culture in Vietnam is meant; with 'otherness' the influence of the Indian subcontinent and other Southeast Asian regions is meant; with 'advancement' the acceptance of Chinese culture but with Indigenous developments is meant.

²⁹⁹ John N. Miksic, *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Southeast Asia - Historical Dictionaries of Ancient Civilizations and Historical Eras, No. 18*, (The Scarecrow Press, Inc: Lanham, Maryland, 2007), 98-99.

³⁰⁰ Gom Suu, "Ceramics."

³⁰¹ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 114.

Terracotta

Although the category of Terracotta does not belong to the group of glaze types, this dissertation will still list this category as they are important in the findings of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*.

Terracotta is made of common clay and is fired at a temperature of around 600 - 800°C. The color of the paste depends on the iron content of the soil and can range from brick red to brown or dark gray. A plump shape generally characterizes Vietnamese terracotta objects. With the *Đông Sơn* period, dating from the Early Bronze and Iron Age, terracotta was more and more diversified in forms and size.³⁰² In terms of decoration, terracotta ceramics mainly have graphic patterns, focusing on sinking as the main means of expression. Some products were coated with yellow, red, or other colored soil, but were not yet enameled. Decorative patterns and shapes of ceramic products influenced the shaping and decoration of bronze wares at the same time.³⁰³

During the *Đại La* period, the main terracotta vessel types were vases, jars, cans, and pots with spherical bottoms. These vessels can be divided into two main types - the *Tang* style terracotta artifacts and the *Dương Xá* (a kiln in present Northern Vietnam) terracotta artifacts. As the term '*Tang* style terracotta artifacts' already indicates, these artifacts followed the design and manufacturing technique of the Chinese *Tang* dynasty. The typical vessel forms were vases and jars with egg-shaped bodies, vertical mouths, rolled or flattened rims, and featured four or six-strap handles on the shoulders. Their bodies were made with common clay that is purple or blackish-gray and after the firing process the final product was hard and solid. The *Dương Xá* terracotta artifacts were manufactured in the *Dương Xá* kilns, which were located in the *Bắc Ninh* province of northeastern Vietnam. The typical vessel forms were vases, jars, and round-bottomed pots. The vases and jars from this kiln are different from the *Tang* style ones. They commonly have short and cylindrical builds, lop-sided rims with beak-shaped ends, and shoulders with four small and flat handles. Their bodies were often thin and coarse, and inside is visible coiling or traces of pressing.³⁰⁴

During the 10th century – which will also be called the pre-*Thăng Long* period in this dissertation – the *Dương Xá* kilns further developed their production quantity. The characteristics from this period do not differ much from the *Tang* dynasty, but there are some noticeable changes in detail. The appearance and frequent production of small, short jars with curved shoulders, very short necks, and rolled and folded rims, as well as large-sized vases, which were high and slender with curved shoulders, very short necks, and wide mouths with

³⁰² Chương, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 159.

³⁰³ Gom Suu, "Ceramics."

³⁰⁴ Bùi Minh Trí and Đỗ Đức Tuệ, "New Perceptions of Terracotta Artifacts from the *Thăng Long* Imperial Citadel Site," *Vietnam Archaeology*, Number 5 (2010): 78-79.

rolled and folded lop-sided rims. The small, thin, and flat handles were attached to the shoulders while the clay was still wet.³⁰⁵

During the *Lý* dynasty, a huge number of terracotta objects were used in the construction of royal palaces, pavilion foundations, and for daily use at the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. The terracotta objects were discovered in wells, pillar-support features, and in between other ceramic artifacts. The main discoveries were mainly terracotta vases, jars, cans, and basins. The technique of rolling and folding the rims outside-in and pressing small, thin, and flat handles was used. The number of handles varied between three to six. The *Lý* dynasty terracotta produced vases and tubular jars with wide mouths, thick rims, necks forming hollow lines, with straight, tapering bodies, and flat bottoms. The surfaces were fairly smooth with visible white specks, and coiling traces on the inner surfaces. The outside-in but lop-sided rims were a distinctive feature of this period. Furthermore, because the potters mainly used red clay mixed with botanical residue or fine sand with thick matrices, it necessitated that firing temperatures be higher and therefore the end products were harder and more solid than their predecessors.³⁰⁶

During the *Trần* dynasty, the production of terracotta products did not differ very much from the *Lý* dynasty. However, there are small differences, like the appearance of vases and jars decorated with mat blade or cord-marked designs along the bodies, and engraved waves around the shoulders. Most of the artifacts were excavated in lakes and well features in the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. Other terracotta artifacts were discovered in the tombs of the *Trần* rulers in the *Đông Triều* and *Thái Bình* provinces of northeastern Vietnam. The most distinctive changes in the terracotta objects of the *Trần* dynasty include the appearance of short cans with very thick mouths that were rolled on the outside and lop-sided inside in addition to jars with curved shoulders, arched mouths, and small rolled rims. Also, the shoulders of vessels no longer featured handles, and were replaced by long, wavy decorative lines. Vessel forms like vases, jars, cans, basins, bottles, bowls, plates, wine pots, spittoons, lime-pots, and apothecary mortars were manufactured. These vessel forms demonstrate a much richer and more diversified repertoire of types than existed in previous periods.³⁰⁷

During the *Lê* dynasty, the production of ceramics and terracotta objects flourished. The quantity and diversity of forms increased, with the standard forms of vases, jars, and basins varying in form and size. The vases, jars, and cans of this period had raised rims with very thick, rolled, and flattened ends. Furthermore, unlike the vessels of the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties, the shoulders of vases and jars did not have handles. A huge number of partially intact terracotta objects of the *Lê* dynasty were found in ceramic clusters deposited in rivers, wells, and on the *Hội An (Cù Lao Chàm)* shipwreck. Through these discoveries, researchers

³⁰⁵ Bui and Đỗ, "New Perceptions of Terracotta Artifacts from the *Thăng Long* Imperial Citadel Site," 79.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

³⁰⁷ Bui and Đỗ, "New Perceptions of Terracotta Artifacts from the *Thăng Long* Imperial Citadel Site," 80.

concluded that many of the terracotta objects of this period were produced in the kilns of the *Bắc Ninh* province of northeastern Vietnam, along the *Ngũ Huyện Khê* River.³⁰⁸

The discovery of the rich and diverse collections of Vietnamese terracotta objects, inter alia, at the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, and the research results of the last years by Vietnamese researchers revealed an outstanding 1300-year-old production history of Vietnamese terracotta, lasting from the *Đại La* period to the *Nguyễn* dynasty. This important research also developed a classification method for terracotta objects, for which the provenance and dating of assemblages depend mainly on mouth structure and form, with the former being the key criterion. This can be contrasted to earthenware and porcelain, where identifying provenance and dating of assemblages depends primarily on glaze colors, matrix, decorative designs, and especially the technique used for making the base. These identification and classification methods were developed during the process of studying and classifying terracotta objects found at the site of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* by the researcher, ceramics specialist, and archeologist Prof. Bùi Minh Trí.³⁰⁹

White Wares

The 10th century was a turning point in the history of Vietnam. After nearly ten centuries of Chinese domination, the first consistent Vietnamese dynasty was established – the *Lý* dynasty. The new rulers strived to rebuild the country and to avoid re-invasion by the Chinese *Song* dynasty. A new feeling of national pride arose, and the urge to restore the national culture simultaneously grew. Many handicrafts, like ceramics, weaving, bronze casting, and stone carving, were restored and developed. Ceramics made a further step forward and attained a high level of quality in terms of both technique and art. Porous and glazed ceramics were diversely and finely produced for the first national Imperial court society after Chinese dominance in such forms such as jars, cooking rice containers, and teapots. With the *Lý* dynasty, Vietnamese ceramics traditions began to become more clearly defined. The main motifs on ceramic objects were flowers, leaves, birds, fish, cocks, elephants, and sometimes human figures. Buddhism especially had a deep impact on the ceramic decorative motifs of the time. During this period, the kiln sites of *Bát Tràng* and *Chu Đậu* became large ceramic centers.³¹⁰

Researchers have been deeply impressed by the pottery items of the *Lý* dynasty found in the Imperial Citadel area due to the high quality of the objects, which has allowed researchers to compare the quality of the pottery to the craftsmanship in China. White enameled ceramics under the *Lý* dynasty achieved the same smoothness and shine as *Song* ceramics, which are considered the pinnacle of ceramic artistic production. Imperial ceramics

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 82-83.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 83.

³¹⁰ Chương, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 152.

under the *Lý* dynasty feature elegant colors and decorations, and are described as being very sophisticated and of refined beauty³¹¹. The most widely used decorative images were still lotus flowers, chrysanthemums, dragons, fairies. As the quality of white enameled ceramics of the *Lý* dynasty and *Song* dynasty were similar, Vietnamese *Lý* ceramics were sometimes misjudged as Chinese *Song* wares. However, discoveries in the Imperial Citadel provide evidence for the production of sophisticated wares in Vietnam. At many sites, archeologists have found a number of high-quality ceramics with white, green, jade, brown, and yellow glazes from the *Lý* dynasty. Other convincing proof that these white wares were of Vietnamese origin is that deformed or over-fired and burnt bowls, plates, box lids, lotus-shaped lamp supports, and other vessels were found in the area of the Imperial Citadel. The discarded pottery confirms the on-site production of this pottery. This on-site kiln is also known as the 'Thăng Long kiln'.

Among the collection of the *Lý* dynasty pottery found in the Imperial Citadel, there were three basic types of design-making techniques, including embossing, carving, and printing with molds. Aside from the brown glazes, there are other high-grade pottery items with white, green, jade, and yellow glazes. The yellow glazes were a surprise since they were previously thought to be products of the *Lê* and *Nguyễn* dynasties. This type of glaze was often seen on architectural materials like yellow glazed tiles on the roofs of palaces (Fig. 66). After the excavation, yellow glazes were found to be ubiquitous among the artifacts found. There were also highly decorated and skillfully crafted utensils.³¹²

White wares required the mastery of glaze mixing, careful preparation, and a suitable firing technique. During the 11th to 13th centuries, Vietnamese potters produced many ivory white wares similar to those from the Chinese *Ding* kiln. There are two types of Vietnamese white wares. The first type is an ivory-white glaze, which was meant for bigger objects, such as jars, rice containers, or urns. The second type had a whiter glaze and was often used to manufacture smaller-sized objects, such as teapots or water droppers. Many of the vessels were decorated with lotus petals elaborately carved in high relief. Buddhism was actively promoted during the *Lý* dynasty, hence motifs like the lotus appear on many ceramic objects. The lotus is an iconic Buddhist symbol, and its portrayal on vessels is therefore hardly surprising. This distinctive form of lotus petals was particularly popular during the Northern *Song* period (960 - 1127).³¹³

As mentioned above, *Jingdezhen Hutian* kilns were not just famous for their high-quality Blue&White porcelain, but also for their *Qingbai* wares, which attracted both domestic and international consumers. The cool, icy, clear quality of the *Qingbai* wares was achieved by firing in a reduced atmosphere. Alternatively, the glaze became yellowish when oxidation

³¹¹ See catalog collection of Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* at the Rose Garden excavation 708.

³¹² Vietnam Pathfinder, "Pottery from *Thăng Long* Citadel."

³¹³ Chương, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 161.

occurred during the firing process. The colorant of the *Qingbai* glaze was the iron oxide in the raw materials, the precise amount of which was very important for determining the result of the color of the glaze. If the iron content reached about four percent, the ash glaze fired to a green color; if it reached six percent, the glaze fired to a chocolate brown. In Vietnam, the glaze was made from wood ash, which contains approximately two percent iron.³¹⁴ Generally, Vietnamese white wares appeared more whitish or light greenish.³¹⁵ However, Vietnamese white wares were clearly influenced by the *Ding* and *Qingbai* wares. In the collection of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* from the *Kính Thiên* Palace, from the excavations from 2017, object 17 DKT G1 (2) shows a clear influence from the *Qingbai* wares. This Vietnamese bluish white bowl from the *Trần* dynasty has a ring mark and internal wave motifs. The foot ring is not glazed. Although it has some impurities on the surface, the characteristics of *Qingbai* wares (especially the clear and icy light-bluish tone) are still noticeable. Besides the glaze, the carved and impressed techniques were also adopted for decoration. Different stacking methods, such as rings with spurs and other stacking utensils, left some knots on the surface.

Green Wares

Vietnamese scholars these days differentiate between green wares and celadon. The Vietnamese term for green wares, *đồ gốm men xanh lá cây*, literally means 'ceramic with leaf green glaze'. The term for celadon, *đồ gốm men ngọc*, translates to 'ceramic with jade glaze'. The '*xanh lá cây*' (leaf green) glaze is a bright green glaze that can be found in architectural elements such as tiles and commodities such as bowls. In the collection of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* there are many sophisticated examples of bowls featuring a dark green glaze with various types of decoration: ring marks (G 0.1); ring marks with a chocolate brown bottom (G8 L8 (9)); floral molding patterns (G18 L5//Gm 483); hexagon patterns (G17 L5 HDD019); chrysanthemum petals on the outside (G7 L7//Gm 702); chrysanthemum petals on the inside (Gm473). This collection also includes green glazed wares with tortoiseshell patterns (see catalog 'The Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* Collection, Rose Garden (Vườn Hồng) 2012 – 2014' object number G17 L5 HDD019).

These green glazed wares were produced during the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties. The range of green varied from dark spinach and turquoise green, a lead glaze with copper oxide as the colorant, to light green and apple green, its coloration based on iron oxide with the occasional admixture of titanium dioxide. In lead glazes, lead oxide provides the flux, and this type was produced in Vietnam only under the *Trần* dynasty. The most common shapes include small shallow dishes and bowls fired at low temperatures. If the temperature was too high, the glaze

³¹⁴ John Stevenson and Donald A. Wood, *Dragons and lotus blossoms: Vietnamese ceramics from the Birmingham Museum of Art*, (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2011), 70.

³¹⁵ Nk Koh, "A survey of Vietnamese Ceramics," last modified August 17, 2018, <http://www.koh-antique.com/vietceramics/vietceramics.htm>.

could not endure it. The green glazes are strongly iridescent and often have molded floral motifs inside.³¹⁶

Celadon

Another important ceramic type to look at is the celadon or jade glazed pottery. During the *Lý* dynasty, ceramic bowls and dishes were decorated with chrysanthemum motifs similar to the *Song* decorative style. Lotus-carved bowls and dishes were more typical of Vietnamese motifs. These jade glazes were of high quality and featured the popular dark celadon glaze.³¹⁷

Vietnamese celadons can usually be easily distinguished from their Chinese and Thai counterparts by their rather smooth and finely levigated whitish paste. Vietnamese celadons are never pure bluish-green, but rather have a yellowish or olive tinge. This glaze color is due to imperfect control of the firing atmosphere. The firing atmosphere is extremely important as green pieces can turn brown or ivory color.³¹⁸

As mentioned before, the color of the celadon glaze varies according to the firing process. It can vary from a matte yellowish-green (less oxygen and lower temperatures) to an olive-green with stronger vitrification of the surface (more oxygen and higher temperatures).³¹⁹

Sometimes it is hard to categorize Vietnamese celadons as celadons. The glaze takes on a whitish green, whitish blue, or more ivory colored glaze. If it takes on the whitish blue color, it may have been inspired by the *Qingbai* wares. It is not clear if the Vietnamese potters were perfectly able to control the firing atmosphere so that it would take on certain nuances. It is also difficult to date Vietnamese celadons, but the main period for Vietnamese celadon production was the 13th and 14th centuries. Pieces with metal forms or lotus petals in high relief show strong Buddhist influences and can be dated to the early 13th century. If the glaze is a deep green, it can also be dated to the early 13th century. A green apple glaze, on the other hand, can be dated to the 14th to 16th centuries.³²⁰

Vietnamese celadons are different from the Chinese early celadon wares of the same period. The Chinese early celadons are covered with green or yellowish glaze and have a grayish paste (Fig. 8). The Vietnamese version has a white paste, which is covered with a whitish/light greenish glaze, pooled into greenish patches in some areas on the vessel. Vietnamese celadon glaze pottery has three main colors – ivory-white, green, and brownish green. The enamel is sometimes so thick that it looks like jade. In fact, Vietnamese celadon never accomplished the pure bluish green of the Chinese version because Vietnamese potters were not capable of eliminating the amount of iron in the glaze necessary to make a white glaze, which then results in the celadon-like glaze. Approximately 4% of iron remained in the

³¹⁶ May, *Verborgene Schätze - 2000 Jahre Vietnamesische Keramik*, 95-96.

³¹⁷ Vietnam Pathfinder, "Pottery from Thăng Long Citadel."

³¹⁸ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 129.

³¹⁹ May, *Verborgene Schätze - 2000 Jahre Vietnamesische Keramik*, 106.

³²⁰ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 142-143.

ash-derived glaze. Wares like this were recovered from *Han* tombs near *Thanh Hóa*. The Vietnamese celadon wares also showed clear characteristics of *Yaozhou* and later *Longquan* celadon wares. A great number of *Longquan* celadons have been found in Vietnam. One example of the impact of *Yazhou* wares is a bowl from the collection of the Birmingham Museum of Art. The molded decoration of this bowl exhibits characteristics of *Yazhou*, except for the visible five spur marks, which were left due to the usage of a tripod during the firing process.³²¹

Similar celadon bowls were also discovered in the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. The sherds, which were collected during the research trip, were unfortunately not intact; however, the influence is still visible in the bowl fragments (21 DKT 62, 21 DKT 52, 21 DKT 53, 21 DKT 54, 21 DKT 55). Most of the bowl bases also had spur marks. In the collection of the *Ninh Bình* Museum are three intact bowls, which clearly show the *Yaozhou* influence and the five spur marks (8, BTNB 11695 SS 1440, 79, BTNB 12425 SS 1639, 2, NB 5566 SS 624). Interestingly, the foot ring of the two bowls is very low walled, with one being particularly shallow. These two bowls show signs of being dipped into the glaze, as toward the foot ring, there is an accumulation of glaze drops. The foot ring of the third bowl is relatively large, and it was also dipped into glaze, but there is no accumulation of glaze, as seen on the other two bowls.

Vietnamese celadon bowls with chrysanthemum or lotus petals on the exterior are clearly inspired by *Longquan* wares. Vietnamese celadons with incised floral motifs on the interior were also influenced by *Longquan* wares. Vietnamese potters drew inspiration from Chinese potters, but then they added their own elements to it.³²² In the collection of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, there is one particularly striking celadon object. It is a plate with chrysanthemum petal motifs inside and outside, and an abstract peony in the middle with some discoloration of the foot ring and firing remains, which is very typical for Chinese *Longquan* celadon. Therefore, this plate could be either Vietnamese or Chinese (12VH G3 L4).

Most later celadons have biscuit stacking rings and can be dated to the 14th century or later. The most typical shapes for celadons are deep bowls with small foot rings, and chrysanthemum reliefs on the exteriors with glassy light green glazes. These types of celadons copied the Southern *Song* celadons. During the *Trần* period, celadons were produced with similar glazes, varying from yellowish green, glassy light green, and apple green to olive green. However, the shapes were more diverse. The 15th-century celadons show a relatively uniform dark green glaze. Though their jade-like quality is not so high, they still reflect a peak in the development of Vietnamese celadons. Regrettably, during the Restored *Lê* and *Nguyễn* dynasties, celadons, as a type of ceramics, no longer existed. Toward the early *Lý* dynasty, it seems that brown pattern wares, which will be elaborated later on, replaced celadons.³²³

³²¹ Koh, "A survey of Vietnamese Ceramics."

³²² Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 137-138.

³²³ "Celadon," Vietnam Heritage, last modified December 04, 2018, <http://www.vietnamheritage.com.vn/pages/en/1431312236828-A-history-of-Vietnamese-celadons.html>.

One object group that is particularly striking is the bowl bases with a tortoise molded in the middle of the bowl. During the excavation of the Rose Garden, several objects with tortoises in the middle of the bowl have been found, but the tortoise in the bowl is particularly detailed³²⁴. There is not only a stylized or silhouette of a tortoise, but even the shell of the tortoise is formed with precise details.

The Vietnamese celadon groups with vitrified glaze are also very striking (21 DKT 75, 21 DKT 203). The vitrification of the glaze can not only be seen in celadon wares, but also in brown wares.

Brown Wares

The brown glaze wares of Vietnam were a major glaze type in the *Lý-Trần* dynasties. The popularity of this glaze may be related to Khmer ceramics of the 11th to 13th centuries, where the most common glaze was brown wares, which were manufactured by using iron oxide.³²⁵ The brown wares used the same glaze technique as the brown pattern wares. The ash glaze contained six percent iron, and hence, during the firing process, the glaze turned a deep chocolate brown. The firing process was a long one, and the cooling process was slow, but the more quickly a piece is cooled, the blacker the glaze becomes.

Brown glazed wares were popular during the 14th to 16th centuries. The brown glaze of Vietnam has clear characteristics from the *Jian* wares of China, especially the black ware. This kind of glaze is known in Japan as *temmoku*. The decoration and shapes of brown glaze objects are diverse. The decorations range from chrysanthemums to lotuses, while the shapes range from bowls to vases. Another special feature of brown glaze wares is the interplay of contrasting colors. On the outside is the deep chocolate brown glaze, and on the inside is a white ivory glaze.³²⁶ The most common shape of this kind of ware, labeled 'two-glazed wares' by the author, was bowls. Either they had a floral molding pattern in the interior or were simply monochrome. Two-glazed wares were produced in the 13th and 14th centuries.³²⁷

As mentioned before, the so-called hare's fur pattern on *Jian* wares influenced the Vietnamese brown wares. In the collection of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, there is a sherd from the *Trần* dynasty that was unearthed during the excavations of 2021 in the *Kính Thiên* Palace that especially exhibits the influence. The monochrome brown ware sherd 21 DKT 129 has clear hare's fur patterns on its surface. Besides the *Jian* ware, the *Cizhou* ware influenced the Vietnamese brown wares. A monochrome brown bowl base with a spur mark and no foot ring, which is unglazed, (21 DKT 112) also from the excavations of 2021 in the *Kính Thiên* Palace, exhibits the influence from the *Cizhou* russet glaze.

³²⁴ See catalog 'The Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* Collection, Rose Garden (*Vườn Hồng*) 2012 – 2014' object number G6 L5.

³²⁵ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 34.

³²⁶ Stevenson and Wood, *Dragons and lotus blossoms: Vietnamese ceramics from the Birmingham Museum of Art*, 146.

³²⁷ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 34.

Brown Pattern Wares

A white glaze with a sunken brown decorative pattern characterizes the brown pattern pottery. There are two types that can be distinguished by their glaze color technique: pottery with brown patterns on a white background and pottery with white flowers on a brown background. The first type of object was produced in great quantities. They were predominantly king-sized objects like basins, but the most typical forms were jars of all shapes and sizes, sometimes with lids. The decoration was very diverse, with patterns inspired by everyday life – birds, flowers, tigers, etc. The technique of the second type did not differ from the first type, but they were manufactured in smaller quantities. The most common objects were also jars and bowls.³²⁸

Vietnamese brown pattern wares are sometimes also referred to as ‘brown inlaid glaze’.

The brown pattern jars range from 20 to more than 50 cm in height. The base of the jars is unglazed and flat. Interestingly, they sometimes show evidence of support marks, which also occasionally appear on the inside of the surface, indicating that larger jars sometimes served as saggars. Covered jars have often been found in tombs. The primary function of brown pattern jars was probably for food storage. The interior of these jars was either glazed or unglazed, which may have determined whether they were used for liquids or dry foodstuffs. Very rarely was the purpose of the jar inscribed on the jar lid.³²⁹

The earliest and most recognizable forms of Vietnamese ceramics were those wares with brown pattern motifs and a white glaze, usually with a tinge of green. They were produced during the *Lý* dynasty and continued to be produced until the early 15th century. This decorative method is also known as the *sgraffito* technique. In the basic form, the ware is first covered with a layer of slip, the outline of the motif is incised, and the slip outside the motif is scraped away. The ware is then covered with a transparent glaze and fired. In contrast, the Vietnamese version of the *sgraffito* method is different. No layer of slip is applied, and most of the vessels have a brown glazed motif. The decoration is done in the following manner: Firstly, the vessel is glazed. The outline of the motif is then incised, and the glaze within is removed. A layer of brown glaze is then applied to the unglazed motif. The Vietnamese brown pattern wares also have a distinctive Vietnamese character in terms of type and style of motifs and shapes of vessels. Floral scrolls were most popular during the *Lý* and *Trần* periods. A small number were decorated with a peacock-like bird motif (Fig. 61). A distinctive characteristic of the typical jar is a ring of lotus petals in high relief on the shoulder. The high relief lotus petals on the shoulders and lids of the brown pattern jars can be attributed to the prevalence of Buddhism during the *Lý-Trần* dynasties, the periods during which brown pattern wares were mainly produced³³⁰. In fact, the lotus, whether carved or molded, was the most common

³²⁸ Chương, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 162.

³²⁹ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 115.

³³⁰ See catalog of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long, Kinh Thiên* Palace 2021 excavation; 21 DKT 147, 21 DKT 149.

decorative motif on brown pattern wares and other vessels of the *Lý-Trần* dynasties.³³¹ High relief lotus petals were also popular on Chinese vessels of the Northern *Song* period.

The range of motifs became more varied during the *Trần* period, with motifs such as fish, human figures engaging in hunting or fighting (Fig. 69), village scenes with houses, and even ships.³³² Other animals that appear on brown pattern wares include long-tailed birds, tigers, and elephants (Fig. 70). The depiction of the long-tailed bird may have been influenced by the *Đông Sơn* culture, where birds frequently appeared on bronze objects. The depiction of elephants could also convey a distinctly localized character. Historically, the Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) can be found throughout the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and in the southernmost point of China (province of *Yunnan*). Through the tributary system, China obtained elephants through the tributary gifts from Champa. Similarly, ivory was sent from Vietnam to China as part of the tributary system.³³³

Besides these decorative motifs, in rare cases, inscriptions also appear. These inscriptions usually describe the content of the vessel. In the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, there is one rare case in the collection of the Clément Huet Collection. This vessel has the inscription ‘盃酒’, which labels the vessel as being for alcoholic beverages.

The first introduction to a new glaze decoration involving the application of a two-toned glaze on vessels was most likely accomplished by the *Cizhou* potters. The *Cizhou* wares were already popular in China by the beginning of the Northern *Song* dynasty. They were not exceptional in their raw materials, but they were often highly decorated with slip painting. Slip, or liquidized clay, is used in various ways on *Cizhou* wares. The technique was to create relief decoration by cutting layers of slip and in other colors besides black to create detailed narrative scenes or flower patterns.³³⁴

As mentioned before, the *Cizhou* kilns in the *Hebei* province of northeastern China have produced wares since at least 925 CE. Their prime time was during the Northern *Song* and *Yuan* periods. At one time, the *Cizhou* and *Jingdezhen* kilns competed for market share. To keep up with the competition, the *Cizhou* potters made their production more efficient and economical. During the *Song* period, potters covered the vessel with white slip, then black slip; the black layer was incised, which exposed the white layer, and then it was coated with a transparent glaze. During the *Yuan* dynasty, all these previous steps were simplified by cutting through one layer of brown glaze to expose a beige clay body before the firing process. The most common type of *Yuan Cizhou* wares featured black to blackish brown oxide slip painting on a beige clay body, which was coated with a transparent or peacock blue glaze. The most common motifs were fish, flowers, dragons, phoenixes, and human or animal figures in

³³¹ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 32.

³³² Koh, “A survey of Vietnamese Ceramics.”

³³³ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 15-16.

³³⁴ Pierson, *Chinese Ceramics*, 23.

landscape settings. The techniques that were used by *Cizhou* potters were versatile, from impressed designs to painting, incised designs, and sgraffito. During the later Northern *Song* period, a new kind of sgraffito design emerged, also known as 'white-glaze black sgraffito'. This type used two layers of slip, the lower one white and the upper black. On the upper black layer, a design would be outlined, and then the background area would be carved away. Lastly, a transparent or green glaze was applied. The peacock blue was first used during the *Jin* dynasty (1125 - 1234), and during the *Ming* dynasty, *Cizhou* kilns continued to create works with peacock blue glaze applied over black slip painting.³³⁵

The *Jizhou* kilns in the *Jiangxi* province of southeast China could have also been influential in the introduction of the brown pattern wares. These kilns fired, among other glazes, celadons, milky white glaze objects, black glaze, black glaze with paper-cutout decorations, and black glaze with sgraffito decorations. During the Southern *Song* period, these kilns were most famous for their black and white glaze and white with brown decoration. Black and white pillows were the most popular objects. Besides the glazes, the decorative techniques of paper-cut appliqué, impressed designs, sculpting, sgraffito, and painting were most distinctive in the *Jizhou* kilns. The *Jizhou* kilns combined various techniques from North and South China to produce something original. For instance, they used the popular upside-down firing technique with the resulting unglazed mouth rim, and they also produced ceramic objects with stamped designs.³³⁶

Although the influence of brown pattern wares may have come from the *Cizhou* and *Jizhou* wares, the originality of the Vietnamese technique should be emphasized. The technique may have been from China, but the motifs on the brown pattern wares were inspired by local motifs.³³⁷

It is also worth noting here that in North Thailand, in the Sukhothai kingdom (1238-1438), wares like the Vietnamese brown pattern ware were produced. It is not clear whether the Thai wares were influenced by the Vietnamese wares, though the similarities between them are striking. The biggest difference is the shape of the Thai wares. Usually, the Thai brown pattern wares are covered boxes, whereas the Vietnamese brown pattern wares are predominantly jars.

Iron-Black Wares

The earliest group of Vietnamese trade ware was underglaze iron-black decorated bowls and monochrome glazed bowls, which were discovered in Trowulan and date to the second half of the 13th century.³³⁸ The earliest examples have very simple floral motifs and were made for

³³⁵ Li, *Chinese Ceramics: From the Paleolithic Period to the Qing Dynasty*, 286, 342-347.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 308-310.

³³⁷ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 115.

³³⁸ Marie-France Dupoizat, "Vietnamese Ceramics in the Malay World," *Archipel*, volume 85, (2013): 112, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.2013.4386>.

the domestic market in Vietnam. However, by the 14th century, they were also exported overseas. The earliest datable evidence for Vietnamese trade ceramics is a shard that was found in *Dazaifu* in Kyushu Japan in what is believed to be a waste heap of a monastery known as *Kanzeonji* (Fig. 73). Simultaneously, it is the earliest excavated example of export iron painted floral ware, dating to either 1330 or 1350.³³⁹

The technique of iron-black painted ware is very similar to *Yuan* underglaze cobalt-blue wares from *Jingdezhen*. They both feature the painting of a single flower spray in an almost calligraphic way in the center of the interior and the sketchily drawn scroll around the outside walls. As such, it may be postulated that the emergence of Vietnamese underglaze iron-black is related to the uprisings in *Jingdezhen* around the mid-14th century, which led to a partial closure of some kilns. When customers approached Vietnamese potters for wares that they could no longer obtain from *Jingdezhen*, the potters may not yet have mastered the use of cobalt to produce underglaze blue wares like the Chinese potters and therefore could only supply underglaze iron-black wares.³⁴⁰ Alternatively, the source of inspiration for this method of decoration may have derived from what is now present-day *Guangdong*. The *Haikang* kiln in present-day *Lezhou* in *Guangdong* produced iron-brown/black painted wares from the *Song* period (960-1279) until the *Ming Hongwu* period (1328-1398).³⁴¹

The shape, color, glaze, and spur marks of monochrome glazed bowls are also quite similar to the underglaze iron-black wares. This could be proof that these two types were manufactured coterminously. Exported Vietnamese monochrome wares from the 15th century were not as numerous as the Vietnamese blue&white wares. These monochrome wares usually have a biscuit ring inside with a molded design on the cavetto under a creamy, yellow-brown, or apple-green glaze.³⁴²

There were three methods of manufacturing iron-black wares. In the first method, portions of the already applied ivory glaze were scraped away and replaced with an iron-black glaze. In the second method, an iron-black glaze was applied to cover the entire surface, and the glaze was scraped out to form the design. The desired design was left unglazed. In the last method, the iron-black glaze was painted on the design, and after that, an ivory glaze that covered the external surface was applied. When iron-black was applied by brush under an ivory-white glaze, the surface turned yellow-brown. Therefore, it was also called 'eel-skin color'.³⁴³

The fine crackling of the underglaze in iron-black glaze was common. Usually, this type of glaze was used for small-scale wares like bowls, saucers, plates, beakers, jars, and bottles. Another source of inspiration could be from underglaze paintings in iron-brown and copper-

³³⁹ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 50.

³⁴⁰ Dupoizat, "Vietnamese Ceramics in the Malay World," 107-108.

³⁴¹ Koh, "A survey of Vietnamese Ceramics."

³⁴² Dupoizat, "Vietnamese Ceramics in the Malay World," 108-109.

³⁴³ Phan Huy Lê, *Bát Tràng – 14th – 19th Centuries*, (Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 2004), 38.

green in *Changsha* wares. Kilns in *Guangzhou* (*Guangdong* province) and *Quanzhou* (*Fujian* province) appear to have produced these kinds of wares.³⁴⁴

The iron-black painted wares are sometimes also referred to as ‘pre-blue&white’ or ‘early blue&white’ wares. Gradually blue&white wares replaced iron-black/brown painted objects, as it seems like the consumers favored decoration with blue colors. In rare examples, there was the combined usage of brown iron-oxide and blue cobalt-oxide^{345, 346}

The iron-black wares suggest that the application of designs in color under the glaze was performed by several workers, especially wares that had iron-black and blue&white glaze. Usually, iron-black was used for drawing border lines, while cobalt blue was used for applying decorative designs. One worker may have specialized in line drawing while another in the execution of the main design. This arrangement is evident in the overlapping of the cobalt blue design on top of the lines drawn in iron black. The overlapping of iron black and cobalt blue can be seen on the wares of the *Trần* and *Lê* dynasties.³⁴⁷

In the collection of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* from the Rose Garden (*Vườn Hồng*) excavation of 2012 to 2014, several iron-black wares were discovered. Usually, the decorative motifs are stylized floral motifs³⁴⁸. Particularly on objects G8 L6 M80 18(?) and G1 L1, the stylized chrysanthemum flower is clearly depicted. Additionally, on object G1 L1, the combination of spur marks and stacking remains in the form of a ring is clearly visible. On the foot ring, there are even clay dots visible. These stacking remains demonstrate how different shapes of tripods were used in the firing process.

Blue&White Wares

In recent years, the discovery of the *Hội An (Cù Lao Chàm)* shipwreck and kiln waste in the Red River Delta helped to give a better understanding of the history of Vietnamese blue&white ware. According to Prof. *Bùi Minh Trí*, associate professor at the Institute of Imperial Citadel Studies (IICS), the starting point for Vietnamese blue&white glaze was the first half of the 14th century. In support of his theory, he mentions ceramic material found in archaeological strata and other related relics. Furthermore, he considered iron-black wares as predecessors to blue&white wares, and iron-black wares dated to around the early 14th century or even earlier.³⁴⁹

From the second half of the 14th century, blue&white wares developed quickly in Vietnam. This development is closely linked to that of the export market, where the quantity,

³⁴⁴ Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia: Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries; with a Catalogue of Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai Wares in Australian Collections*. Oxford in *Asia Studies in Ceramics*, 46.

³⁴⁵ See catalog of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* G17 WC017//Gm 423.

³⁴⁶ Stevenson and Wood, *Dragons and lotus blossoms: Vietnamese ceramics from the Birmingham Museum of Art*, 170.

³⁴⁷ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 104.

³⁴⁸ See Gm 484, G20 L1//Gm 476, G8 L6 M80 18(?), G1 L1, Gm 422, and G12 L8//Gm 433.

³⁴⁹ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 105-106.

production techniques, new forms, and higher quality changed. Political turmoil with the proclamation of the *Hồ* dynasty (1400-1407) and the recapturing by the *Ming* dynasty (1407-1427) may have aggravated the ceramic production in Vietnam, but the market seems to have recovered relatively quickly.³⁵⁰

The majority of the late 14th/early 15th century Vietnamese blue&white consisted of wares decorated with floral or cloud-like motifs. There are spur marks on the inner bases of bowls and plates. Archeological surveys revealed that iron-black/early blue&white were produced in Northern Vietnam at places like the *Đại La* complex in *Hà Nội*, *Bát Tràng*, *Chu Đậu*, and many other kilns. By the late 14th/early 15th century, the Vietnamese potters were already capable of painting highly sophisticated blue&white decorations, and pieces from that period showed strong characteristics of Chinese *Yuan* blue&white decoration.³⁵¹

Vietnamese blue&white of the pre-1450 phase could be identified by their *Yuan*/early *Ming* form and *Yuan*-style decorative elements. The second half of the 15th century was the golden period of Vietnamese blue&white. During this period, the Vietnamese potters introduced their unique styles of decoration and many new innovative vessel forms. The majority of the Vietnamese blue&white found overseas were from this period.³⁵²

In the beginning of the blue&white wares production in Vietnam, lime-ash glaze made from rice husk and burnt lime was used. The finely textured stoneware body was a good base for painting designs. The Vietnamese blue&white wares never reached the white surface of the Chinese counterpart, even though they applied a thick liquid to the clay body in the later years of the blue&white technique. Occasionally, traces of the liquid clay are visible at the edge of the foot.³⁵³

The cobalt used for *Yuan* blue&white wares, known as Samarra blue or Sumatra blue, was rich in iron and produced a glaze with dark blue spots due to the accumulation of iron oxide in certain areas. This effect is also known as the 'heaped and piled'.³⁵⁴ It is not clear whether this effect was imitated by Vietnamese potters; however, it is frequently discovered on Vietnamese blue&white wares.

In the 15th century, the kilns in Northern Vietnam were the only ceramic centers outside China that produced blue&white wares for the export market in Southeast Asia. Vietnamese blue&white wares differ from Chinese blue&white wares in a few details. While the design often resembles the Chinese model and even the cobalt for the signature color was obtained from the same source – either South China (*Yunnan*) or the Middle East – it is nevertheless usually obvious which blue&white ceramic is from Vietnam. The overall feeling of Vietnamese

³⁵⁰ Ibid, 108-109.

³⁵¹ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 38.

³⁵² Koh, "Vietnamese blue and white."

³⁵³ Larry Gotuago, Rita C. Tan and Allison I. Diem, *Chinese and Vietnamese Blue and White Wares found in the Philippines*, (Manila: Bookmark, 1997), 191.

³⁵⁴ Joan Ho, "Blue&White," last modified June 22, 2024, <https://www.christies.com/en/stories/shades-of-blue-subtle-differences-in-chinese-blue-and-white-porcelain-775ffe5d69b54ed08e65ac8a625a1287>.

blue&white wares is often more coarse and bolder, with the paintings usually much freer in composition compared to their Chinese counterparts. Also, the usage of cobalt from the Middle East in the Vietnamese wares was limited as it was more expensive than the Chinese one. On top of that, the biggest difference between Vietnamese and Chinese blue&white ceramic is in the base material – clay. In China, the application of *kaolin* was available for the production of ceramic objects; thus, the biscuit could be fired at a higher temperature and was later categorized as porcelain.³⁵⁵

Besides the base material for the clay, the cobalt pigments played an essential role in the production of blue&white wares. Even if the cobalt blue imported to Vietnam would have been from the same place as that imported to China, this was not a guarantee that the same shade of blue would be achieved. Cobalt blue pigments applied on ceramics always vary in color intensity because of various technical factors, including, and especially, the kiln firing technique, as the color of cobalt changes with different kiln temperatures.³⁵⁶

The Vietnamese potters were affected by the blue&white decorative styles of *Jingdezhen* porcelain ceramics and later produced wares in both underglaze iron and underglaze cobalt. *Bát Tràng* and *Chu Đậu* (both Northern Vietnamese kiln sites) were famous for their blue&white pottery. However, unlike iron-black cobalt blue was always used as an underglaze. The use of cobalt blue occurred around the same time as when the hairbrush was used to apply decoration on ceramics. There are three categories of blue&white wares – the first category was produced for household use, such as wine pots, lime pots for betel nut consumption, and wine jars. The decoration was simple, with spiral-shaped deep sides and low bases. The second category was produced for the overseas market and included items ranging from small bottles to boxes. The third category was produced for rituals of worship and included objects such as incense burners and lamp bases. The color of blue&white wares during the 16th century varied from black/blue to deep black/blue. The richness of the color at this time can be attributed to the relatively high quality of the cobalt blue. Another noticeable element in some Vietnamese blue&white ceramic is the brown colored bottom of the base, hence the name ‘chocolate bottom’.³⁵⁷

Prof. *Bùi Minh Trí* divides the development of Vietnamese blue&white wares into four phases: the ‘early stage’ (14th century), the ‘development and prosperity stage’ (15th to 16th centuries), the ‘declining stage’ (17th to 18th centuries), and the ‘recovery phase’ (19th century).³⁵⁸ The early stages were divided into the first and second halves of the 14th century. In the first half of the 14th century, the blue&white wares were not blue, but rather iron black. In the preceding section, ‘Iron-black Wares’, it is mentioned that before the Vietnamese

³⁵⁵ Julie Emerson, Jennifer Chen and Mimi Gardner Gates, *Porcelain Stories – from China to Europe*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 88.

³⁵⁶ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 105.

³⁵⁷ Chương, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 163.

³⁵⁸ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 137.

blue&white glaze eventually appeared, it was preceded by the iron-black wares. Furthermore, it is considered that the development of iron-black wares had an influence on the technique used in the production of brown pattern wares. In general, the main forms during this stage were a variety of bowls, dishes, ewers, and jars of different kinds and sizes, which were used in daily life. The glaze was commonly light bluish, grayish white, or ivory white. It seems that the radiant white hue that Chinese blue&white glaze is known for was not achieved by the Vietnamese potters. Normally, the glaze covered the whole exterior body, including the foot, where sometimes a cluster of light bluish or light greenish glaze can be seen. The base was usually unglazed, but the so-called chocolate bottom covered the base. In the center of the vessel, there were usually four or five spur-firing marks, which are indicators for the usage of kiln supports/tripods. The common motifs during this stage were *lingzhi* (mushroom with an auspicious symbol) and chrysanthemum spray.³⁵⁹

Prof. *Bùi Minh Trí* and his staff members discovered that the blue&white bowls in the first half of the 14th century often had a smaller and lower base compared to the later ones. The later bowls tend to be taller, and the feet are also higher. In the second half of the 14th century, new forms appeared, such as vases, jars, the so-called *Tỳ Bà* vases/wine bottles, large dishes, *kendi*, and stem cups. The most common motifs during this stage were a combination of floral scrolls, lotus petal bands, and border bands. These motifs were often drawn with cobalt blue, which slowly replaced the iron-black drawings.³⁶⁰

The 'development and prosperity stage' during the 15th and 16th centuries were fostered by the appearance of major ceramic production centers in the province of *Hải Dương*. During excavation works, large quantities of 15th century wares were discovered in the ceramic production centers in Vietnam as well as overseas, which is evidence of the most prosperous period of Vietnamese blue&white wares. This prosperity continued into the 16th century. The decorative designs of 15th-century wares were either a sophisticated style or a simple style with tight or sparse composition, depending on which kiln site manufactured them. In general, the floral designs were always composed of a floral scroll on the cavetto, a floral spray on the interior center, and a lotus petal band on the exterior, often with a chocolate bottom. The glaze was clear and glossy and applied over a slip. The colors of the glaze were either whitish, bluish white, or opaque white. The vessel walls were on the thicker side. A Raman spectroscopy analysis was made for samples of *Chu Đậu* and *Hợp Lệ*. The results indicate that the vessels had been fired at a temperature of 1200-1400°C, showing characteristics of porcelain. During the firing process, they were placed in a cylindrical saggur. Wares of this period were stacked either directly or indirectly. In the indirect method, the vessel (normally a dish or a bowl) was placed directly on top of the other, but the foot of the upper vessel was unglazed, and it laid on the stacking ring, which was placed on the interior of the bottom vessel. In the direct method,

³⁵⁹ Ibid, 137-138.

³⁶⁰ Ibid, 139.

the vessels were stacked mouth-to-mouth. This means that at the rim, the glaze wore off. During the *Trần* dynasty, kiln supports/tripods with five spurs were used, which left a five-spur firing mark on the vessel. This method was not popular during the *Lê sơ* period (1428-1527). The mouth-to-mouth stacking method did not necessitate the use of kiln supports/tripods, which meant that there were no firing marks left behind on the vessels.³⁶¹

The 'declining stage' during the 17th and 18th centuries started off with prosperity for the trading ports all over Vietnam as trade with neighboring countries flourished. A flourishing economy allowed the ceramic industry to develop and prosper, but the export of ceramics did not encourage Vietnamese blue&white decorative and technical aspects to develop; rather, the quality became less sophisticated and the decorations simpler. This development was encouraged by the nature of the mass production of export ceramics. Although Prof. *Bùi Minh Trí* classifies this period as a declining stage, it should be noted that the number of Vietnamese ceramic objects in the Japanese market increased. The Japanese market, especially that of the Japanese tea ceremony, relished Vietnamese ceramic objects.³⁶²

In sum, archeological evidence in recent years confirmed Prof. *Bùi Minh Trí's* assumption that underglazed painted wares of the early 14th century were the beginning of Vietnamese blue&white wares. Further developments in the following years led to the establishment of the 15th century as the zenith period for Vietnamese blue&white wares. Exceptionally large amounts of 15th-century blue&white wares of high quality were found in Vietnam and beyond. New archeological evidence also shows that during this period, many ceramic-producing villages emerged. All of these villages demonstrated their own traditions and characteristics, but at the same time, they used similar materials, and their vessel forms and decoration designs show similarities, indicating at least mutual exchange and influence among each other. The diversity of Vietnamese blue&white wares caught the attention of their neighboring countries in the 17th century, leading to a flourishing Vietnamese ceramic export market, which in turn influenced the form and designs of Vietnamese ceramics.³⁶³

Blue Wares

Vietnamese blue wares were heavily influenced by Chinese *Ming* blue wares. The cobalt-blue color was applied by not dipping the piece in the glaze but by blowing the coloring particles on the white slip while it was still moist. The Chinese *Ming* blue wares influenced this technique. The monochrome-blue wares from Vietnam were produced almost exclusively for the export market, and findings of blue ceramics are very rare. These types of glaze colors were particularly popular in the 15th century in countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia, as these countries preferred ceramic products with a blue glaze. Cobalt blue is used to achieve

³⁶¹ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 142, 146, 148.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 153-154.

³⁶³ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 155.

this color glaze, and the shade of color ranges from navy blue to almost black. Although only a few blue wares have been found so far, the forms found with this glaze range from traditional jars to miniature vessels, pouring vessels to water droppers, and *kendi* to vases. The location of the kiln that produced this kind of glaze has been recently identified in *Mỹ Xá* in *Nam Định* County, approximately 85 km south of *Hà Nội*.³⁶⁴

Crackled Glaze Wares

Crackled glazed wares feature a decorative network of irregular cracks in the glaze caused by unequal contraction rates of shrinkage between the clay body and glaze during cooling. From the *Song* dynasty onward, crackles seem to have been intentionally produced as decoration. Crackle decoration is found on *Song* dynasty wares such as *Ru*, *Guan*, and *Ge*. Traditionally, the crack types are distinguished as a large, bold crackle, termed ‘crab’s claw’, and a much closer and smaller network, termed ‘fish roe’ crackle, with the latter developing first. It should be noted that cracking of the glaze on some excavated wares might not be intentional, but the result of burial. Crackled porcelain typically also occurs as a defect when the ceramic piece is not fired at a high enough temperature and remains somewhat soft. A dull sound with no ring when a dish is tapped, plus crackles, clearly point to it being somewhat underfired.³⁶⁵

According to documented evidence, crackled glazed wares in Vietnam were only produced in *Bát Tràng* from the late 16th to early 20th century. The earliest example of crackled glazed ware is in the form of the lower part of an incense burner from a well-known potter couple, *Đỗ Phủ* and his wife, *Nguyễn Thị Bản*³⁶⁶, as indicated by the inscriptions on the incense burner. The color of the glaze is grayish ivory with crackled lines running horizontally and vertically. A later example is a pair of lampstands, with a surface color of yellowish ivory, also made by *Đỗ Phủ* and *Nguyễn Thị Bản*. The forms of crackled glazed wares are diverse and include vases, incense burners, candlestick holders, and water containers.³⁶⁷

Overglaze Enamel Wares/Polychrome Wares

‘Polychrome’ decoration literally means ‘decorated in many colors’, as opposed to monochrome (‘decorated in one color’). The technique of the polychrome wares in Vietnam did not differ from the Chinese technique, which began in the early *Ming* dynasty with the technique of onglaze enameling *Jingdezhen* porcelain. The colors were derived from metallic ores, including iron, manganese, cobalt, and copper. Manganese was used to achieve a brown

³⁶⁴ May and von der Schulenburg, *Die Nachbarn im Süden – frühe Keramik und Bronze aus Vietnam*, 134, 136.

³⁶⁵ Jan-Erik Nilsson, “Crackled glaze,” last modified December 06, 2018, <http://gotheborg.com/glossary/crackle.shtml>.

³⁶⁶ Allegedly, this couple from *Bát Tràng* reflects a Vietnamese ceramic tradition that men are potters and women are painters. Đinh Chiến Nguyễn and Quốc Quân Phạm, *2000 năm gốm Việt Nam - Years of Vietnamese Ceramics*, (Hà Nội: Công ty Cổ phần In Trần Phú, 2005), 60-61.

³⁶⁷ Lê, *Bát Tràng*, 50-51.

shade, copper for green, cobalt for blue, and iron for red and black. The Chinese were even able to make pink from gold, white from lead arsenate, and yellow from lead stannite.³⁶⁸ In Vietnam, the technique of polychrome wares developed at the end of the 15th century. The discovered polychrome wares had lost their once bright color due to the technique used to produce them, i.e., the colors were added gradually and were re-fired at a lower temperature.³⁶⁹ Almost all the larger overglaze enamel wares have been found abroad rather than in Vietnam, which suggests that they may have been manufactured for export.³⁷⁰

In the first production step, an underglaze blue design was applied, and then the object was fired at a high temperature, about 1350°C, and in the 16th century up to 1450°C. In the second step, a more extensive design in bright green and brilliant red was applied over the first coat, and then the object was fired at about 700°C to 800°C. The reason for the lower firing temperature is that the metal oxides used as coloring agents (iron oxide for yellow, red, and copper oxide for green) could not survive higher temperatures without some defects. The shape and designs of polychrome wares are very similar to the repertoire of blue&white ceramics.³⁷¹

3.3 The Knowledge Transfer

China has a strong ceramic tradition, which heavily influenced Northern Vietnamese ceramic culture. There are many legends surrounding how the knowledge transfer between Vietnam and China occurred, including the legend of the Chinese potter *Hoàng Quang Hưng* [黃光兴], who established his first kiln in the Red River Delta during the 2nd century BCE and taught pottery skills to his Vietnamese disciples. Out of gratitude, temples were dedicated to him, and he is even worshiped as a local deity today. Another legend concerns three Vietnamese scholars who went to China on a diplomatic mission in the Northern *Song* Dynasty. These scholars were *Hứa Vinh Kiều*, *Đào Trí Tiến*, and *Lưu Phương Tú*, who brought their knowledge of pottery to Vietnam. All legends surrounding the origins of pottery-making in Vietnam follow a similar theme that addresses the responsibility of the Chinese for this transfer of knowledge and that a great cultural debt is owed to China for this, while simultaneously emphasizing fierce independence from China.³⁷²

During the *Han* dynasty China directly administered Northern Vietnam, and it was around this time that the impact of Chinese ceramics on Vietnamese ceramics was at its highest point. There were no innovative movements among the Vietnamese potters, and they strictly adhered to Chinese designs; nonetheless, the ceramics produced during that time

³⁶⁸ Gordon Lang, "Polychrome decoration on Chinese Porcelain," last modified December 23, 2018, <https://www.chinese-porcelain.com/news/5-polychrome-decoration-on-chinese-porcelain/>.

³⁶⁹ Stevenson and Wood, *Dragons and lotus blossoms: Vietnamese ceramics from the Birmingham Museum of Art*, 182.

³⁷⁰ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 38.

³⁷¹ May, *Verborgene Schätze - 2000 Jahre Vietnamesische Keramik*, 181-182.

³⁷² Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 23.

cannot be classified as Chinese ceramics, as the base material already differed from that of Chinese ceramics. Only after gaining their independence from China did Vietnamese potters become more creative and adventurous, with ingenious shapes, techniques, and decorative motifs being developed. The growing demand for Vietnamese ceramics on the international market was a recognition of their inventiveness.

The knowledge transfer between Vietnam and China may have occurred over thousands of years with varying intensity. During turbulent times that witnessed shifts in power structures, there was often an increase in emigration. For example, during the 13th-century Mongol invasion of northern China, many Chinese fled to neighboring regions. One theory of knowledge transfer is that with these waves of emigration, Chinese potters may have brought their knowledge with them and practiced their old craft in the new country. This theory is also suspected for Thai ceramic production, as there are many similarities in ceramic production and motif selection between ceramics from China, Vietnam, and Thailand.³⁷³ The influence of a wave of Chinese merchants and artisans fleeing the Mongol invasion has been postulated for the increased commercial activity in Northern Vietnam. Hence, increased commercial activity and exposure to Chinese models, rather than direct manufacture, could be a more valid interpretation of how Chinese immigration may have affected Vietnamese and Thai ceramic production.³⁷⁴

There is a theory that Vietnamese potters learned the technique of blue&white ceramics directly from the Chinese potters during the reoccupation period from 1407 to 1427. However, this theory is questionable because the resistance of the Vietnamese population was strong during these almost 20 years, and the country was affected by rebellions and retaliations. As such, there would have been little time and willingness to learn from the Chinese potters, who were regarded as invaders. Another theory is that it was shared by the Chinese potters who had migrated to Northern Vietnam during the invasion of the Mongols. However, this theory is also debatable because at that time it was unlikely that Chinese potters would have shared their knowledge of the production of their blue&white porcelain, the demand for which was very high. By sharing their knowledge, they would have created competitors themselves. Therefore, the exact date of the production of Vietnamese blue&white is unknown. The only thing that is known for certain is that the start of the production of blue&white wares began with the introduction of the material cobalt blue. With the use of cobalt for underglaze painted objects, the underglaze iron-black and monochromes started to slowly disappear.³⁷⁵

In general, knowledge transfer is never one-sided. In the case of China, other cultures did influence its own ceramic production. The commercial contact with West Asia through the

³⁷³ Barbara Seyock, "Trade Ceramics from the Gotō Islands (Japan), Circa Sixteenth to Early Seventeenth Century: The Yamami Underwater Site (Ojika) and Related Issues," *Asian Perspectives* 46, no. 2 (2007): 349, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42928721>.

³⁷⁴ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 32.

³⁷⁵ Brown, *The Ceramics of South-East Asia: Their Dating and Identification*. Oxford in Asia studies in ceramics, 25.

Silk Road inspired many shapes and forms in Chinese ceramic culture. This was also the case for Vietnamese ceramic culture. One outstanding example is the warmer for alcohol jugs, which was produced in Vietnam, but without knowing the purpose of the warmer. Hence, the original two-piece object (warmer and alcohol jug) became a one-piece alcohol jug in Vietnam. In addition, when ceramic production in Vietnam declined, and the ceramic wares produced in China were cheaper than the domestic wares, there was mutual influence between Vietnam and China. The 'Commissioned Patterned Porcelains', which were produced in China at the end of the 18th century for the Vietnamese market, did have some influence on the export wares from China. For instance, many Vietnamese motifs were used on these 'Commissioned Patterned Porcelains' to fulfill the demands of the Vietnamese market. Among the dishes and plates of the 'Commissioned Patterned Porcelains', China also produced lime-pots for the Vietnamese market, although they did not have lime-pots in their own repertoire.

3.4 The Motifs on Vietnamese Ceramics

The motifs on Vietnamese ceramics are a good example of the impact of the Chinese Cultural Sphere. Chinese ceramic design and technology influenced many countries throughout Southeast Asia, in addition to Vietnam, such as Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar. The ceramic industry of Vietnam essentially changed to either copying Chinese ceramic forms and/or importing Chinese ceramic products to produce local copies.³⁷⁶

Symbolism plays an essential role in Chinese and Vietnamese culture. The motifs on Vietnamese pottery are not well-researched. It can just be assumed that the choice of motifs in Vietnamese ceramic culture is again strongly based on Chinese ceramic culture. The Chinese Cultural Sphere was ubiquitous in Vietnamese ceramic culture.

The motifs on Vietnamese ceramics are as diverse as their own history. The Vietnamese potters could choose from their Indigenous culture, Chinese culture, Indian culture, or the Muslim world (which came into being when the Vietnamese ceramic market exported their goods). Of course, they were dependent on the market demand, but they had a variety of decorative assortments to choose from.

It must not be forgotten that the meaning of symbols in any given society is dynamic. In China, the symbols evolved uniquely because of the pictographic nature of the written language. The language initially used stylistic depictions, and these eventually developed into written characters. The Chinese language is tonal³⁷⁷, which means that each verbal sound has different meanings. This thesis will not delve too far into the linguistic discourse, though, as a final comment, it should be noted that some of the same tonal expressions have different

³⁷⁶ Geoff Wade, "An Early Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia, 900-1300 CE," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40, no. 2 (2009): 256-57, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27751563>.

³⁷⁷ In Chinese Mandarin there are four tones.

meanings that can only be understood by the context of the sentence. Because of the pictorial nature of Chinese characters, visual puns are often depicted in art. An example is the depiction of fish on ceramic objects. Fish has been an important food source in addition to serving as an ancient symbol of rank and power. For example, the carp symbolizes a scholar who successfully passed the Chinese Civil Service Examination System. The Chinese character for fish is ‘魚’ (yú), which is phonetically identical to the word meaning ‘abundance’ [裕]. In contemporary China, serving a whole fish as a meal for a guest is symbolic of a wish for abundance.³⁷⁸

Important themes that play a role in the symbols in the Chinese language and the motifs used on ceramics are war, folklore, nature, economics, disease, life expectancy, shamanism, and Ancestor Worship. Religion, especially the three great religions of China - Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism - with their myths, rituals, and ideology, were of major importance in Chinese culture, and serve as a good example of how symbols take on different meanings over time. Buddhism entered China via travelers along the Silk Road from India. When Indian Buddhism entered China, it changed as Chinese followers adapted it for their own use. For example, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (Sanskrit ‘Hearers of the laments of the suffering beings’) is the symbol of mercy. Although there is no gender affiliation, female representations of Avalokiteshvara (Guanyin [觀音], Quán Thé Âm, Kannon [聖觀音]) have developed and become very popular in China, Vietnam, and Japan. Once adopted into Chinese culture, Guanyin became a symbol of goodness to all Chinese, not just her followers. Another example is Shoulao [壽老], the Taoist God of Longevity. Nowadays, he remains the symbol of longevity, though he is no longer associated directly with any religion; rather, he took on the role of wishing a long life for all Chinese people. After political changes in the late 20th century, many motifs lost their symbolism and were used only as decorative motifs.³⁷⁹

When analyzing the display of the Chinese cultural sphere in the context of Vietnamese ceramic culture, the following aspects are especially important: the selection of motifs, the aspect of symbolism, and the aspect of technique. Vietnamese potters used different kinds of motifs, and their symbolism is practically the same as that in China. For instance, the lotus flower in Vietnam and China symbolizes purity, and Buddhism, or the color red, is auspicious in Vietnam and China.

In general, the depicted motifs on Vietnamese ceramic objects were flowers, such as chrysanthemums, lotus, peonies, apricots,³⁸⁰ yellow mai flowers, peaches or plum

³⁷⁸ Jing Pei Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, (Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 2004), 1-3, 79.

³⁷⁹ Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 3-7, 16.

³⁸⁰ The apricot symbolizes the beauty of a woman, and it represents the second month of the year. Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 14.

flowers/blossoms,³⁸¹ and hibiscus.³⁸² Other motifs were plants, such as bamboo,³⁸³ *lingzhi*,³⁸⁴ pine trees, water weeds, and bodhi trees/leaves.³⁸⁵ Other motifs include clouds, fire or flames, and landscapes. Animal motifs such as dragons, phoenixes, tortoises,³⁸⁶ tigers,³⁸⁷ fish (carp, goby/catfish),³⁸⁸ shrimp, cranes, geese, elephants,³⁸⁹ parrots, peacocks, deer, horses, ducks, donkeys, and dragonflies were also popular. Human figures, such as warriors, were also depicted. Other motifs include boats and weapons, such as spears. Inscriptions, such as the Chinese characters for longevity [壽], happiness[福], and peace [平安] were also popular.

The choices of motifs on ceramics depended on the glaze used and the historical period. For instance, during the *Lý-Trần* period, the motifs were limited to florals, especially lotus flowers and chrysanthemum flowers. The depiction of animals slowly increased over the course of the period and can be seen in the use of birds or elephants on Vietnamese brown pattern wares. When the Vietnamese blue&white glaze appeared in greater quantity during the *Lê* dynasty, the variety and combinations of motifs significantly increased. For instance, the dragon motif was often combined with a lotus scroll or lappets. Lotus scroll, lotus pond, lotus spray, lotus petal band, chrysanthemum scroll, wave pattern, cloud pattern, flame clouds, coin motif/lemon flower motif, diaper trefoils and cinquefoils, lappets, dotted diaper, interlocking band, keyfrets, scrolls often accompanied Vietnamese blue&white wares.

The following sections will break down the most popular motifs, particularly on brown pattern wares and blue&white wares. The motifs on the brown pattern wares play an important role. Besides the motif of the lotus flower - the national flower of Vietnam - the peacock motif.

³⁸¹ The plum tree is one of the so-called '3 Friends of Winter', the other 2 are the pine tree and bamboo. The plum blossoms represent survival of hardship, endurance, and perseverance, because they can survive the harsh winter conditions. The 5-petal plum blossom also represents female youth and is the emblem of the first month of winter.

Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 152.

³⁸² The hibiscus symbolizes spring.

Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 98.

³⁸³ The bamboo symbolizes humility, endurance, righteousness, flexibility, and gracefulness. Characteristics that a scholar should possess.

Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 18.

³⁸⁴ The *lingzhi* fungus is a sacred mushroom and is also known as the fungus of immortality. It is said that only a deer or a phoenix can find the immortal *lingzhi*. It is believed that consuming a *lingzhi* mushroom can prolong life. The depiction of it expresses a wish for long life.

Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 113.

³⁸⁵ The Bodhi tree is the place where Sakyamuni Buddha sojourned and meditated while seeking to reach Nirvana. It is the place where Sakyamuni Buddha reached enlightenment. Therefore, it is a very important symbol for Buddhism.

Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 27.

³⁸⁶ The tortoise is one of the four great mythical animals in Chinese culture. It symbolizes strength, endurance, and longevity. The shell of the tortoise symbolizes the universe. The upper shell is heaven, and the lower shell is earth. In ancient China, tortoise shells were used for oracle reading. In some folktales in China, it is believed that tortoises are the guardians of graves and shrines.

Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 184.

³⁸⁷ The tiger is a symbol of strength and therefore used in military regalia. The tiger is the king of the wild beasts and the king of the forest, he can protect against evil, and can ward off evil spirits. In Daoism he and the dragon symbolize the west and the east and are the elements of fire and metal.

Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 181-182.

³⁸⁸ When fish are depicted as a pair, it is one of the Eight Buddhist symbols. The paired fish symbolizes harmony; therefore, it is also a symbol for conjugal harmony.

Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 141.

³⁸⁹ The elephant was once native to present-day South China. It was used for transportation of people and items. It therefore symbolizes strength and astuteness. The elephant plays a significant role in Buddhism and is seen as an auspicious motif. The Chinese character for elephant is '大象 dàxiàng' and it is a homonym for the word happiness.

Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 74.

Played an essential role in brown pattern wares. The focus, however, is on the motifs of the Vietnamese blue&white wares from the 15th and 16th centuries.

The Dragon and Phoenix

The dragon is ubiquitous in Chinese history, folklore, religion, and art, and symbolizes goodness and power. In China, it is said that dragons were in control of the earth and the heavens, from which the rains came to nourish crops. The dragon may have derived from the crocodile, which once lived in the rivers of China but is now extinct. During the *Song* dynasty, the dragon had three claws; it is not known how the 5-clawed dragon became the symbol of the Chinese emperor. Especially during the *Qing* dynasty, the depiction of dragons was very strictly regulated. Imperial robes with 3-clawed or 5-clawed dragons were reserved for the emperor and his family. 4-clawed dragons were reserved for nobles and other high-ranking officials. The inception of dragons being the symbol of the Chinese emperor began in the 3rd century BCE with the Gaozu emperor [漢高祖] (256/247 BCE - 195 BCE), the founder and first emperor of the *Han* dynasty. He claimed that his mother was impregnated by a dragon, and a dragon fathered him.³⁹⁰

In Vietnam, the dragon motif was not only associated as an emblem of the king but also with Buddhist and Vietnamese legends. In Buddhism, dragons or naga are one of the eight classes of demigods. A dragon prince turned into a nine-headed cobra to protect Buddha during meditation on a stormy night. In addition, the Vietnamese are believed to be descended from a dragon father and a fairy mother.³⁹¹

The selection of certain motifs in Vietnamese ceramics may have been politically motivated. In particular, the choice of a 5-clawed dragon was symbolic of the political situation in Vietnam. The symbol of the dragon is closely related to the claim of political leadership. The dragon motif was initially chosen to legitimize the status of the Vietnamese government towards the Chinese government. Another reason for the selection of certain motifs is aesthetics, and because of the symbolism in Vietnamese culture.

As mentioned, the motif of the dragon connects Vietnam with China. In the days of imperial China, the emperor was the only one allowed to use dragons with five claws as a decorative motif, whether on his garments or ceramics. However, according to Vietnamese myths, the Vietnamese are descendants of dragons. The Vietnamese rulers were well aware of the fact that the dragon motif was reserved only for the emperor of Imperial China. Still, they regarded themselves as the emperor of the southern areas. Thus, with their logic, they had the right to the usage of the dragon motif.³⁹²

³⁹⁰ Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 59-61.

³⁹¹ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 168.

³⁹² Stevenson and Wood, *Dragons and lotus blossoms: Vietnamese ceramics from the Birmingham Museum of Art*, 35.

The images of dragons appear in architectural decorations in Royal Palaces, temples, pagodas, and tombs. The Vietnamese dragon looks lithe and more floating than in China. The S-shaped curves are indispensable. A dragon decorated in pagodas and palaces always has its head up, its wide mouth holding a jade, a flame-like crest, and its body flying together in one movement, creating a close-fitting structure. The image of the dragon has been modified over time, with certain iconographic details on historical relics or architectural pieces indicating from which dynasty they date. In Vietnam, the dragon image reflects people's desire to free themselves from restrictions and limitations. The dragon can fly, hide in the clouds, swim, walk, and crawl. The dragon symbolizes human aspiration for strength and freedom to live a better life.³⁹³

The application of the dragon motif became more prevalent during the *Lý* dynasty. As the symbol was associated with the imperial family, it decorated palaces and temples that were regularly visited by the ruler. The *Lý* rulers followed the example of the Chinese emperors and restricted the use of the dragon motif on architectural elements as well as on ceramic objects. The architectural features of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* were adorned by several dragons in the form of roof decorations (Fig. 66), railings (Figs. 81 and 82), and ornaments (Figs. 83, 84, 85). The dragons of the Imperial Citadel resemble snakes, as they are thinner than the Chinese ones. The body often has an S-shaped crest, a form of a dragon related to the *nāga*, the Sanskrit word for a deity in the form of a snake. Another difference is that on some architectural features, dragons appear within a *Bodhi* leaf, which represents the tree under which *Siddhārtha Gautama* found his enlightenment.

One particularly unique motif found on a brown pattern jar depicts two warriors armed with spears and shields, which are adorned with dragons. The two warriors are also tattooed with serpentine patterns on their thighs and are accompanied by an elephant. The warriors are bare-chested, their waist cloths are wrapped around their thighs, and their long hair is put up in buns and secured with a tie or comb (Fig. 69). The serpentine tattoo was a popular tattoo among warriors in Southeast Asia. In the past, Vietnamese men tattooed themselves with dragon designs, which represent the lords of the water, to protect themselves from hostile spirits. The dragon motif has a ubiquitous presence in Vietnamese ceramics. Surrounding the dragon are many legends that are associated with the aquatic aspects of creation. Interestingly, the Chinese identified tattooing as one of the distinguishing ethnic characteristics of the so-called *Baiyue* tribes, who were comprised of various ethnic groups that inhabited the regions of southern China and northern Vietnam.³⁹⁴

During the excavations at the *Kính Thiên* Palace, many objects with the motif of the dragon were found. Sometimes the dragon was simply depicted³⁹⁵. Sometimes the dragon

³⁹³ "Sacred Animals," The Voice of Vietnam, last modified December 19, 2023, <https://vovworld.vn/en-US/culture/sacred-animals-in-vietnamese-culture-and-architecture-166542.vov>.

³⁹⁴ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 16-17.

³⁹⁵ See 18 DKT 2, 18 DKT 3.

motif was combined with the ‘官’ inscription³⁹⁶. On some objects, the dragon motif was combined with the ‘敬’ inscription³⁹⁷. On some objects, the number of claws is visible³⁹⁸. With the depiction of the dragon motif, the usage of cobalt is visible. Sometimes the blue is very clear and has a deep hue³⁹⁹. Often, it is a little blurry, and the blue tends to be more blackish blue⁴⁰⁰. Sometimes the blue has some air bubbles⁴⁰¹, and often it can be seen where the paint has started, as the accumulation of the paint resulted in a darker hue there⁴⁰².

In China, the phoenix symbolizes the sun, good luck, abundance, and longevity. As it is the empress of birds, it is also the emblem of the empress. The phoenix is said to be in control of the sun and only appears at times of peace and prosperity. It symbolizes virtue, duty, correct behavior, humanity, and reliability. The Chinese character for the phoenix is ‘鳳凰’. Nowadays, Chinese brides sometimes wear robes with a phoenix motif, because according to traditions she is the ‘empress for a day’.⁴⁰³

The phoenix is a beautiful and noble bird. The Vietnamese people believe that a phoenix bodes well for those areas where it settles. The combination of the dragon and phoenix represents lovers’ happiness, good luck, status, and fame.⁴⁰⁴

During the excavation at the Rose Garden, the phoenix motif was found on two kiln wastes⁴⁰⁵. In the private collection of *Nguyễn Văn Việt*, a celadon bowl with a phoenix and cloud motif was found (42). In the collection of the *Nam Định* Provincial Museum, there is a celadon bowl with a phoenix motif (BTND1914 SS815). Alongside the phoenix motif are floral motifs, and both were molded.

The depiction of the dragon and phoenix was first seen in paintings on lacquer from the State of Chu (500 - 223 BCE), and by the time of the Han dynasty, they had become the symbols of the emperor and empress. Eventually, they also symbolized the power of the empire. By the end of the *Qing* dynasty, they also became the symbol of husband and wife. The dragon and phoenix motif on Chinese porcelain became popular motifs for export porcelain in the 19th century and eventually lost their original symbolism and were merely decorative motifs.⁴⁰⁶

³⁹⁶ See 18 DKT 34, 18 DKT 35 and 18 DKT Gm.LS 01.

³⁹⁷ See 18 DKT Gm.M 45, 18 DKT Gm.LS 46, 18 DKT Gm.LS 47, and 18 DKT Gm.LS 48, 21DKT G29.

³⁹⁸ See 18 DKT Gm.LS 24, 18 DKT Gm.M 42, 18 DKT Gm.LS 28, and 18 DKT Gm.LS 40.

³⁹⁹ See 18 DKT Gm.LS 47.

⁴⁰⁰ See 18 DKT Gm.M 45, 18 DKT Gm.LS 46, and 19 DKT 21.

⁴⁰¹ See 18 DKT Gm.LS 48, 19 DKT 11, 21 DKT G19, and 21DKT G28.

⁴⁰² See 18 DKT Gm.LS 40, and 19 DKT 19.

⁴⁰³ Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 150-151.

⁴⁰⁴ The Voice of Vietnam, “Sacred Animals.”

⁴⁰⁵ See G21 L3 and G21 AH048.

⁴⁰⁶ Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 61-62.

Peacock

During the *Ming* and *Qing* dynasties, birds with long tail feathers [綬帶鳥] were also called paradise flycatchers or ribbon birds. They were popular motifs for paintings, porcelain, and embroideries. In the 19th century, they were popular in the export market for their colors and visual appeal. Again, as with other animal motifs, birds with long tail feathers served as visual puns. The literal meaning of ‘綬帶鳥’ is ‘bird with silk streamers’, and it is a symbol of longevity.

The word for ‘silk ribbon’, which is attached to an official seal or medal, is ‘shòudài’ [綬帶] and forms the pun for the word ‘longevity’. Because of this pun, the motif of a peacock was popular on ceramic objects.⁴⁰⁷

The peacock was introduced to China from countries in the south and was a very popular motif in Chinese culture. The peacock is a symbol of beauty and dignity, and also of the rank of an official. During the *Ming* dynasty, it was the first time that the peacock represented a ranking. In the *Ming* and *Qing* dynasties, the peacock represented a third-rank civil official⁴⁰⁸. In very rare cases, the peacock feather was woven into the robe of a very wealthy official during the early 18th century.⁴⁰⁹

These kinds of birds were often used in brown pattern wares. In the collection of *Nam Đĩnh* Provincial Museum, there is a brown pattern sherd featuring a very clearly visible peacock (BTND293 SS252). This bird motif is often combined with abstract vegetal motifs or lotus flower motifs.

Another metaphor for peacocks in Vietnam and China is the association with longing for home. In many poems, Chinese officials serving in Vietnam and Vietnamese diplomats dispatched to North China expressed their homesickness through the call of a peacock. The green peafowl (*Pavo muticus*) is a peafowl species native to the tropical forests of Southeast Asia, in the past from southern China, especially Yunnan, eastern and north-eastern India, southeastern Bangladesh, northern Myanmar, extending through Laos, and Thailand into Vietnam, Cambodia, Peninsular Malaysia, and the island of Java in Indonesia.⁴¹⁰

The long-tailed bird is a local Vietnamese motif associated with pride, as the tail feathers of these birds were so impressive that they were sent as tributes. According to official documents from the *Tang* dynasty, tail feathers are recorded as part of the tribute sent from Vietnam to the *Tang* court.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 24.

⁴⁰⁸ During the *Qing* dynasty the symbol for a first-rank civil official was a crane, for second rank it was a golden pheasant, third-rank peacock, fourth-rank goose, fifth-rank silver pheasant, sixth-rank egret, seventh-rank mandarin duck, eighth-rank quail and for a ninth rank a paradise flycatcher.

Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 125.

⁴⁰⁹ Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 144.

⁴¹⁰ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 14.

⁴¹¹ Guy, *Ceramic Traditions of South-East Asia*, 46.

Lotus

The motif of lotuses appears very frequently in Vietnamese ceramics, especially those of the 11th to 14th centuries. The significance of Buddhism affected its use, as the religion flourished during the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties. The lotus plays an important role in Buddhism, where it is associated with purity. The lotus rises unblemished from the mud and is considered sacred by Buddhists. For these reasons, it was seen as an appropriate motif for objects used in temples or tombs.⁴¹²

On the Chinese side, the motif of lotuses was also introduced through Buddhism. It is also a symbol of Buddha himself, beauty, and purity since it rises from mud. The lotus is also a symbol of fruitfulness and many offspring because its pods have many seeds. It was quickly assimilated into Chinese culture.⁴¹³

The lotus flower is depicted in many ways in Vietnamese ceramics. Sometimes it is very abstract⁴¹⁴. Sometimes the lotus flower attracts attention because of its beautiful depiction⁴¹⁵, which was often made through a molding pattern. Regardless of the glaze type, this molding pattern can be found in white ware, green ware, and brown ware. One very sophisticated form is the so-called 'lotus pedestal dish', where layers of skillfully carved lotus petals surround a circular tray or dish. These carved lotus petals may be related to the lotus petal neck on ivory glazed and brown pattern jars. Sometimes there are two or three tiers of petals. On the inside of the tray or dish, a lotus flower is often incised. In addition, the inside was often not glazed. It is not very clear how these dishes were used, though it is assumed that they were inkstones or ink slabs. Because of the prominence of the lotus motif, these kinds of wares may have been used for small offerings of flowers, grains, or fruits. Offerings were made in temples, communal buildings of a traditional Vietnamese village 'Đình' [亭/庭] (usually honoring a deity or local hero), and home altars.⁴¹⁶ In the collection of the *Ninh Binh* Museum, there is a very beautiful example of an ivory-white glazed lotus pedestal dish⁴¹⁷. Another lotus pedestal dish from the collection of the Rose Garden features a light green glaze⁴¹⁸. Interestingly, no equivalents have been found in China.

Another sophisticated use of the lotus petal is seen in the so-called 'lotus petal neck', which was often used in white ware jars or brown pattern jars. The collection of the Imperial Citadel has beautiful examples of the lotus petal neck⁴¹⁹, as does the collection of the *Ninh Binh* Museum⁴²⁰.

⁴¹² Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 113.

⁴¹³ See Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 119.

⁴¹⁴ See 18 DKT Gm.M 14, 18 DKT Gm.LS 52, 19 DKT 9, 18 DKT Gm.M 48, and 18 DKT Gm.M 49.

⁴¹⁵ See G8 L11//Gm 437, Gm 417, G8 L5//Gm 428, and G17 L1//Gm 424.

⁴¹⁶ See Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 117.

⁴¹⁷ See 49, K 古 BTNB 17/NB 502 SS98.

⁴¹⁸ See G7 L4.

⁴¹⁹ See 21 DKT 147 and 21 DKT 149.

⁴²⁰ See 39, K 古 BTNB 7, 40, NB 5421 SS 490, and 42, NB 5496 SS 559.

The lotus calyx is another special depiction of the lotus flower. It can be found as molding in green wares and brown wares. The lotus calyx is depicted in the middle of the bowl, often with other molded floral motifs. It can be found in the collection of the Imperial Citadel⁴²¹. This special motif was also found in the collection of *Nguyễn Văn Việt*, in a brown bowl (50).

The motif of the lotus flower also appears as a stylized form. An example is the so-called 'lotus lappet' or 'abstract lotus flower petal', which can be found on Vietnamese blue&white ware above the foot ring. In China, the lotus lappet can be found on blue&white porcelain, either above the foot ring or at the neck of a vase, or it forms a band of decoration around and above the foot ring of bowls, dishes, and vases. This design probably derives from the Buddhist lotus throne. Auspicious objects like clouds or *lingzhi* fungus are often framed inside this 'abstract lotus flower petal'. Because the 'abstract lotus flower petal' is very stylized in many Vietnamese blue&white wares, the object inside resembles scrawled circles, and sometimes, it is just a dot or a dot in a circle. These 'abstract lotus flower petals' occur frequently in the collection of the Imperial Citadel⁴²².

Motifs on Vietnamese Blue&White Wares

Blue&white wares are a good example of the ceramic relationship between Vietnam and China. During the 15th century, the production of blue&white wares in Vietnam showed clear similarities to 14th-century Chinese blue&white ware, including large porcelain dishes. The motifs on Vietnamese blue&white ceramic included dragons chasing flaming pearls, breaking waves, lotus panels with auspicious emblems, fish advancing through swirling waterweeds, among others. Although the Vietnamese potters chose the same motif as those found on Chinese blue&white porcelain, their execution is Vietnamese in character, thus enabling the wares to be distinguished from each other. However, it is not always an easy task.

The inspiration for Vietnamese blue&white wares derived from China. Inspiration was based on commercial interest, specifically, to export to the Islamic market. However, it must be noted that the Vietnamese potters did not merely copy the Chinese designs. Rather, they developed a wide repertoire of motifs themselves, from flora like lotus blossoms and peonies to animals like birds and fish, in addition to landscapes. The fish motifs were quite popular (see the collection of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*: 18 DKT Gm.LS 54). Besides the fish motif, the dragon was also quite popular. The motifs were usually not depicted by themselves but were supported by other design elements like lotus scrolls, petal panels with pendant cloud motifs and lotus blossoms, breaking waves with white crests, or just the classic scroll border with floral or abstract motifs.⁴²³ For instance, in the collection of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng*

⁴²¹ See G18 L5, G8 L8 HDD038//Gm 427, G17 L1//Gm 424, G8 L8//Gm 426, 21 DKT 102, and 21 DKT 103.

⁴²² The ones with the scrawled circles (18 DKT Gm.LS 26, 18 DKT Gm.M 20, 18 DKT Gm.LS 29, 18 DKT Gm.LS 30, 18 DKT Gm.M 19, 18 DKT Gm.LS 28, 19 DKT 11, 21 DKT G20). The ones with just a dot (18 DKT Gm.M 25, 19 DKT 15 (1)). The ones with a dot in the circle (18 DKT 1).

⁴²³ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 38, 151.

Long at the excavation of the *Kính Thiên* Palace, there is a blue&white bowl with a five-claw dragon motif and blue circles on the inside. On the outside, a dragon and auspicious cloud motif are depicted (18 DKT Gm.M 42). The motif of the dragon was often combined with the ‘敬’ inscription (18 DKT Gm.M 45, 18 DKT Gm.LS 46, 18 DKT Gm.LS 47, 18 DKT Gm.LS 48, 19 DKT 11, 21DKT G28, 21DKT G29). It is usually seen on bowls or small plates and the dragon motif with four or five claws is depicted on the outside. In one rare example (19 DKT 19), a 5-clawed dragon is depicted on the inside and outside of a small plate. The foot ring is unglazed, and the glaze on the whole object is very faded, particularly the white glaze. Because of the faded glaze, it is easier to see how the blue was used to draw the body of the dragon. There is some accumulation of the blue color, resulting in some darker blue spots.

Vietnamese blue&white wares applied the motifs of the late *Yuan* and early *Ming* dynasties in their decoration repertoire. This included the usage of the chrysanthemum, peony, and clouds, as well as the use of the diaper border, key-fret design, classic scroll, floral scroll, and lotus petal panels.⁴²⁴ The Vietnamese blue&white wares are not as neatly executed as the Chinese blue&white porcelain. Often the motifs are blurry, and the blue does not have a deep hue, appearing as a more blackish blue. However, it is precisely for these reasons that Vietnamese ceramics are so charming. The designs were not meticulously executed in completely straight lines, and not every object resembles the other. Each piece almost has a life of its own.

Chrysanthemum

In China, the chrysanthemum belongs to the group of the so-called ‘Four Nobles’. It is emblematic of a pleasant life, generosity, and retirement from public places. It is the symbol of late summer/early autumn and joviality. The Chinese character for chrysanthemum is ‘菊花’ (júhuā) and it is a homonym for ‘wait’, suggesting patience and reflection. If the chrysanthemum is combined with plum, peony, and lotus, it is symbolic of the four seasons. In Chinese medicine, sun-dried chrysanthemum flowers are used for teas brewed to reduce body heat.⁴²⁵ In Vietnam, the motif of the chrysanthemum is associated with a secluded and easy life. In the *Trần* dynasty, King *Trần Minh Tông* [陳明宗] (1300-1357) wrote a poem where he celebrated the chrysanthemum.⁴²⁶

The motif of the chrysanthemum can be found on white wares, green wares/celadon, brown wares, and blue&white wares. The motif was extremely versatile, with the petals often used as decorative shapes on external surfaces or in the middle of the ceramic object. The

⁴²⁴ Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia: Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries ; with a Catalogue of Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai Wares in Australian Collections. Oxford in Asia Studies in Ceramics*, 106.

⁴²⁵ Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 43.

⁴²⁶ Truong, *The Elephant and the Lotus: Vietnamese Ceramics in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 18.

decorative shape was a very stylized form of a chrysanthemum petal. In the collection of the Imperial Citadel (from the excavation of the Rose Garden and the *Kính Thiên* Palace), sometimes the chrysanthemum petal shape on the outside was very visible⁴²⁷, while other times it was vague⁴²⁸.

Peony

In China, the peony is also known as the 'flower of the emperor', the 'queen of flowers', and the 'flower of flowers'. With these names, the peony symbolizes the beauty of the female, riches, and good fortune. It is usually an omen of good fortune, but if the peony suddenly withers or dies, it is a bad omen. In addition, it symbolizes late spring or early summer.⁴²⁹

Unlike the lotus flower and the chrysanthemum flower, the peony was not used as a decorative shape. The peony flower was used only as a motif. In the collection of the Imperial Citadel, there are many examples of the outstanding use of the peony. Sometimes, it is featured as the main motif; if it were the main motif, then it would be depicted in the middle inside⁴³⁰. If the motif of a peony flower was used in a floral molding pattern, then it was smaller in size and not in the middle⁴³¹.

Clouds

In China, it is believed that clouds are formed by the union of yin and yang. It is symbolic of the celestial realm, happiness, and good fortune. During the *Song* dynasty, the stylization of clouds took on a lobed form that appears like the head of a lingzhi fungus. During the *Ming* and *Qing* dynasties, clouds were depicted as winding, with a flamelike appearance. Often, clouds were included on the robes of scholars as part of the larger depiction of the universe, where the emperor was the divine ruler. On the robes, the clouds are depicted in the vast areas of the sky above the mountain and water. Over time, the clouds on the robes became more and more stylized.⁴³²

Sometimes the cloud pattern is hard to differentiate from the wave motif, like in the two examples in the collection of the museum in *Nam Định* and *Ninh Bình* (BTND2475 SS1106, 103, NB 8854 SS 1984). The wave motifs on Chinese porcelains, on the other hand, were more defined. In the collection of the Imperial Citadel, the cloud motif can be found on white wares, celadons, and blue&white wares (G8 L7 (5), 17 DKT G1 (1), 17 DKT H1 L1 Gm241, 18 DKT 34, 18 DKT 35, 18 DKT G1 (1), 21 DKT 60, 21 DKT 65).

The cloud motif was often combined with the dragon motif (18 DKT Gm.M 42, 18 DKT Gm.LS 24).

⁴²⁷ See Gm 482, Gm458, G7 L7//Gm 702, 21 DKT 70, 21 DKT 73, and 21 DKT 71.

⁴²⁸ See G8 L5// Gm469, G5 L6 AH048, G18 L5//Gm 479, and 21 DKT 232.

⁴²⁹ Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 147.

⁴³⁰ See 12VH G3 L4 and 21 DKT 26.

⁴³¹ See G8 L5//Gm 428, G18 L5, G17 L1//Gm 424, G5 L7, G11 L6 AH008 and G21 L5 (5).

⁴³² Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 45.

Inscriptions

Inscriptions can be very helpful in giving the exact date and provenance of a ceramic object; in some cases, the text may have been applied to assist with this in the future. However, some inscriptions could have been added by later generations in memory of the owner, or in many cases, added in an attempt to make a ceramic object appear older than it is. Inscriptions on Vietnamese and Chinese ceramic objects can be found in two forms. The first form can be found either in the middle or on the foot ring of the ceramic object. Usually, these kinds of inscriptions reveal the production year or for whom it was produced. The second form of inscription can be found as poems or narrations on ceramic objects. Usually, it was placed in the middle of the ceramic object.

Unlike Chinese ceramics, Vietnamese ceramics did not commonly have reign marks, which were also called 'nianhao' [年號]. Only with the so-called 'Commissioned Patterned Porcelains', which were produced for the Vietnamese market by Chinese potters, reign marks were used in the same way it was used in Imperial China. Starting from the *Ming* dynasty, the ceramic objects had reign marks, which are normally arranged in two columns and were often enclosed in a rectangular frame as if it were a seal mark. These marks were usually written in vertical columns and were read from top to bottom, starting from right to left.⁴³³

For instance, if the object was manufactured during the reign of the *Yongle* emperor, the object would bear the following inscription (read from top to bottom, starting from right to left):

樂	大	Occasionally, the first two characters [大明] were omitted.
年	明	This inscription can be translated as 'Made in [製] the
製	永	<i>Yongle</i> period [永樂年] of the Great [大] Ming [明] dynasty'.

Inscriptions in Vietnam are somewhat complicated. In Vietnam, Chinese characters were used, but with the introduction in the 15th century of the so-called '*chữ nôm*' script in Vietnam, their use became more complicated. While Chinese characters continued to be used in '*chữ nôm*', they took on a different pronunciation in Vietnamese. Chinese characters were first introduced to Vietnam after the *Han* dynasty and were used up to the early 20th century. Formal writing in Vietnam was indistinguishable from contemporaneous classical Chinese works produced in China, Korea, and Japan. Inscriptions on Vietnamese ceramics followed the Chinese model and hence had the same meaning as their Chinese counterparts. However, in Vietnam, inscriptions were rather reign marks, cyclical marks, or they demonstrate to which residency they belonged, auspicious meaning if it is used for official use, the regency of a ruler, or

⁴³³ Duncan Macintosh, *Chinese Blue & White Porcelain*, 2nd ed. (Hong Kong: Book Marketing Ltd., 1987), 135, 138.

seldomly found ranking of officials. In particular, on Vietnamese blue&white wares this kind of inscription system was used.

Inscriptions on Chinese ceramic objects were also sometimes poems. Only in the late 17th century were there also poems on Vietnamese ceramics. The inscriptions are usually placed inside in the middle. If it stands for a certain residency, the inscription was usually placed on the foot ring.

Beginning in the *Trần* dynasty it seems that Vietnamese potters started to incorporate Chinese characters as inscriptions. However, it was not until the *Lê* dynasty that inscriptions became more widespread. The following inscriptions or marks can be found on Vietnamese ceramics: ‘官’, ‘敬’, ‘福’, ‘壽’, ‘正’, ‘王’, ‘玉’, ‘內附’, ‘史’, ‘天長’, ‘三公’, ‘長樂’, ‘長樂宮’, ‘長樂庫’, ‘正宮’, ‘皇宮’, ‘東宮’, ‘春 - 夏 - 秋 - 冬’, ‘德’. Of course, there are more inscriptions, but these are the characters that were the most frequent, and what the author herself discovered during her research. Ceramic objects with these inscriptions can be found in the catalog of this dissertation.

The character ‘官’ means governmental, official, public or communal. This character was most frequently found in Vietnamese ceramics. During the excavations in the *Kính Thiên* Palace, several objects with the inscription were found⁴³⁴. It was also combined as ‘窯官,’ which stands for the ‘Official Kiln’. In the excavation at the Rose Garden, this character was found on a light green bowl (G6 L5), in the *Kính Thiên* Palace, also on a light green bowl (21 DKT 77), and on a brown bowl (21 DKT 110). A two-glazed bowl in the collection of the *Ninh Bình* Museum (111, NB 8868 SS 1098) also bears the ‘窯官’ inscription. Ceramic objects with this inscription belong to a very important group for this dissertation. If Vietnamese potters followed the Chinese system, these inscriptions may indicate that private and official kilns existed in Vietnam.

The character ‘敬’ means to respect, honor, or present, as in to offer (alcohol, food, tea, etc.). This inscription was often found on Vietnamese blue&white wares. During the excavations of the *Kính Thiên* Palace, several objects with the inscription were found⁴³⁵.

The character ‘福’ means blessing, happiness, prosperity or good fortune. During the excavations at the Rose Garden, this character was found in a kiln waste (two agglutinated blue&white bowls: G15 L6 AH01). This character was often written in a very free manner; thus,

⁴³⁴ See 18 DKT 34, 18 DKT 35 and 18 DKT Gm.LS 01.

⁴³⁵ See 18 DKT 1, 18 DKT Gm.M 20, 18 DKT Gm.LS 29, 18 DKT Gm.LS 30, 18 DKT Gm.M 45, 18 DKT Gm.LS 46, 18 DKT Gm.LS 47, 18 DKT Gm.LS 48, 19 DKT 11 and 21 DKT G29.

it is sometimes hard to decipher. This is also true for the blue&white bowl bases⁴³⁶ from the excavations in the *Kính Thiên* Palace.

The character ‘正’ means right, proper, correct, upright, pure, authentic or true. During the excavations in the *Kính Thiên* Palace, several objects with this inscription were found⁴³⁷.

The character ‘玉’ means jade, pure or beautiful. It can be a recommendation or an indication for use by a specific person or in a specific setting. During the excavations in the *Kính Thiên* Palace, several objects with the inscription were found⁴³⁸.

The characters ‘長樂’, ‘長樂宮’, and ‘長樂庫’ stand for ‘*Trường Lạc chang yue*’ [長樂], ‘*Trường lạc khố chang yue ku*’ [長樂庫] (Storehouse), or ‘*Trường Lạc Cung chang yue gong*’ [長樂宮] (Palace). As recorded, *Trường Lạc* was the palace of *Nguyễn Thị Hằng* [阮氏暉] (1441-1505), the wife of Emperor *Lê Thánh Tông*.⁴³⁹ The ceramic objects related to the *Trường Lạc* palace reveal that these were royal palace utensils and were solely produced for the Imperial Citadel. The location of the excavation, with all the architectural relics, has been identified in the western part of the *Kính Thiên* palace.⁴⁴⁰

During the *Lê* dynasty, from the reign of *Lê Thái Tổ* (1385-1433) to the reign of *Lê Uy Mục* [黎威穆] (1488-1510), palaces were all given names at the beginning of construction or upon completion. The palace of *Nguyễn Thị Hằng* was named after the empress. Many ceramics with the inscriptions ‘長樂宮’ and ‘長樂庫’ were discovered in the Imperial Citadel. These ceramics are embossed with chrysanthemums with five or six petals, or printed with phoenixes, or without patterns. The ceramics and pieces of pottery excavated at this location do not have the appearance of a 5-clawed dragon image, a symbol of kingship, nor does the inscription ‘宮’ at the bottom appear. Thus, it can be affirmed that the area where these relics were dug is the location of the former *Trường Lạc* Palace.⁴⁴¹

The discovery of ceramic objects with inscriptions of the *Trường Lạc* Palace may indicate that there were clear divisions as to which ceramics should be used for which palace. Furthermore, the fact that a separate storehouse was needed could indicate that there was a large number of ceramic objects, so an extra storehouse was needed for storage.

⁴³⁶ See 18 DKT Gm.LS 66, 19 DKT 17 and 21 DKT G18.

⁴³⁷ See 18 DKT Gm.M 53, 18 DKT Gm.LS 45, 18 DKT Gm.LS 35, 18 DKT Gm.LS 61, 19 DKT 9, 19 DKT 12, 21 DKT G18 and 21 DKT G21.

⁴³⁸ See 18 DKT Gm.LS 36 and 21 DKT G10.

⁴³⁹ Vietnam Pathfinder, “Pottery from Thăng Long Citadel.”

⁴⁴⁰ Vietnam Pathfinder, “Pottery from Thăng Long Citadel.”

⁴⁴¹ “Truong Lac,” Hoàng Thành Thăng Long, last modified June 22, 2024, <https://hoangthanhthanglong.vn/blog/2023/05/15/phan-hien-khao-co-cham-dut-mot-nghi-van-ve-cung-truong-lac-2/>.

The inscriptions showed which palace each object belonged to, expressions of wishes or where the object was made. Interestingly, there is rarely a mark from the potter himself. This could be because ceramic production corresponds to the system of division of labor; specifically, this means that several workers work on an object.

A striking object is the small blue&white plate with a possible 'ط' or 'ظ' inscription on the inside, suggesting that there may have been an attempt at imitating Arabic inscriptions. Up to now, it is a one-of-a-kind discovery, as no similar object has yet been discovered. There are lotus flowers on the outside, and the foot ring is not glazed. The inverted foot ring wall is typical of the *Mạc* dynasty, whereas the motif inside resembles Abbasid ceramics (18 DKT Gm.M 47).

Inscriptions on Bricks

Besides the inscription on tableware, inscriptions on bricks can also be found in Vietnam, and usually indicate where the bricks were manufactured. Individual exceptions only occurred around the 15th century⁴⁴². The bricks with the inscriptions *Jiangxi* [江西] (province name), *Jiangxi jun* [江西軍] (*Jiangxi* Army), and *Jiangxi zhuan* 江西磚 (*Jiangxi* brick) are the earliest bricks from the *Đại La* Citadel. The *Jiangxi* Army was sent by the Chinese *Tang* court to defend their position in Vietnam. It seems that during their stay in Vietnam, they were either forced or paid to build citadels, erect ramparts, and make bricks and tiles for the constructions. Many of these kinds of bricks with inscriptions were excavated in the area of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*.⁴⁴³ Bricks with inscriptions that stated which army manufactured them were quite often discovered. Usually, the army inscribed their bricks after each province they were sent from. It seems that the military units had to contribute to the construction of the imperial palaces, and the reason why they had inscribed their unit location was so that the quality of their products could be inspected, as well as to retrace who was responsible for the product (who to punish and who to reward).⁴⁴⁴

The bricks found that date from the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties exhibit Chinese inscriptions indicating places of production, like the 'Workshop of *Vĩnh Ninh/Vĩnh Ninh trường*'. *Vĩnh Ninh* in *Quảng Bình* Province on the north-central coast of Vietnam was a famous brick kiln in the *Trần* dynasty. Besides Chinese characters that indicate the production place, the bricks also indicate the dates of production. For instance, bricks with the character '李家第三帝龍瑞太平四年造' (*Lý gia đệ tam đế Long Thụy Thái Bình tứ niên tạo*) indicate the year 1057. Many bricks

⁴⁴² See the famous vase in the collection of the Topkapi Saray Museum; Fig. 159.

⁴⁴³ Đò, "Bricks tell their stories," 142.

⁴⁴⁴ Đò, "Bricks tell their stories," 148, 158.

from the Lê dynasty exhibit inscriptions with connections to the military, for instance, the Trang Phong army '*Trang Phong quân*' [壯述軍] or Jiangxi army [江西軍] (Fig. 99 and 100).⁴⁴⁵

The *Chu Đậu* Inscription

Out of the many ceramic objects that were produced in *Chu Đậu*, the most famous is the blue&white vase. It is the earliest dated and provenanced Vietnamese blue&white ceramic. The vase is famous for its signature.

How was the vase discovered? Mr. Makoto Anabuki, the former first secretary of the Japanese Embassy in *Hà Nội*, was on a business trip in Istanbul. In the Topkapi Saray Museum, he saw the vase and he noticed the exceptional inscriptions. He wrote to the Party secretary of *Hải Hưng* province to ask if archaeologists could show him the place where the piece was produced.⁴⁴⁶

It was signed by the craftsman or rather the craftswoman whose name is '*Bùi Thị Hý*' and it was inscribed in the eighth year of *Thái Hoà* reign, which equates to 1450. The inscription not only provides information about the manufacturing location – making it traceable back to the *Nam Sách* district – but it also provides the name of the potter. The inscriptions read as follows: *Da he ba nian nan ce zhou jiang Pei shi xi bi* [大和八年南策州匠裴氏戲筆]. It can be translated as: 'Brushed in the eighth year of the *Thái Hoà* reign in the *Nam Sách* district by a lady artisan called *Bùi Thị Hý*'.⁴⁴⁷ This is one version of the interpretation of this inscription. For several years now, some scholars have argued that the right translation of the inscription is: 'Brushed at leisure/playfully in the eighth year of the *Thái Hoà* reign in the *Nam Sách* district by an artisan called *Bùi*'. The subject of the disagreement is the characters '裴氏戲'. One side argues that the right translation of the characters is the name '*Bùi Thị Hý*', while the other side argues that it is not a whole name, but rather that each character should be translated on its own, making it 裴 = *Bùi* (family name), 氏 = 'clan name', and 戲 = 'at leisure/playfully'.

The mystery around the inscription is quite understandable. Unusually, the potter inscribed the objects in such an obvious way; not only did the potter provide the manufacture year and location, but also her name. There are a few stories surrounding the name '*Bùi Thị Hý*', the most important concerning her background. In one narrative, her alleged descendants found some family annals that provide evidence about their relation to a long family tradition of ceramic production in *Chu Đậu*. These annals supposedly reveal that the *Bùi* clan moved to this area to flee from the *Ming* invasion in 1407, and *Bùi Thị Hý* was a young woman talented in literature, writing, and drawing. She disguised herself as a man to sit in the royal exams and

⁴⁴⁵ Lê "The Global Values Of The Central Area Of The Thăng Long Imperial Citadel," 19-20.

⁴⁴⁶ Bá, *Gốm Chu Đậu - Chu Đậu ceramics - Chudaу tōjiki*, 19.

⁴⁴⁷ Lê, *Bát Tràng*, 15.

made it to the third round before being exposed and subsequently expelled. Later, she married a rich businessman from *Chu Đậu*, and this is when she became involved with pottery. The source is not quite reliable because the original annals were written down on cloth, and the paper version was copied in 1932. According to her relatives, there are two more inscribed ceramic objects that she produced.⁴⁴⁸

In another narrative, Prof. *Tăng Bá Hoàn*, who took the view that this vase was manufactured by a craftswoman with the name *Bùi Thị Hý*, met two family members of the *Bùi* clan (*Bùi Đức Lợi* and *Bùi Xuân Nhạn*). These family members showed him two original pages written in Chinese *Han* script that depicted their whole family tree. With this source, Prof. *Tăng Bá Hoàn* elaborated the family's history. Allegedly her father was a man whose name was *Bùi Đình Nghĩa*, son of *Bùi Quốc Hưng*. *Bùi Đình Nghĩa* was born in 1387 in present-day *Hà Tây* province. In 1407, he moved to present-day *Hải Dương* province to avoid the invasion of the *Ming* soldiers. According to the family annals, he had two children - a daughter, *Bùi Thị Hý*, who was born in 1420, and a son, *Bùi Đình Khôi*, who was born in 1423. Because of his involvement and merits in the insurgent army against the *Ming* dynasty, he was awarded 55 hectares of land after the defeat of the *Ming* invaders. He then became the head of the *Bùi* clan in *Quang Ảnh* village. His eldest daughter, *Bùi Thị Hý*, was an intelligent girl with a talent for painting. During her attempt to disguise herself as a man to probably attend the civil service examination, she was exposed and forced to leave. Later, she married a potter from *Chu Đậu* in the *Nam Sách* province, whose name was *Đặng Sĩ*. She probably learned her pottery skills from her husband. Prof. *Tăng Bá Hoàn* would even go so far as to state that this couple was the founder of *Chu Đậu* pottery. In 1452, she and her husband helped her younger brother to establish a kiln site in the *Nam Sách* province. These newly established kilns were able to produce ceramics that were suitable for the Vietnamese royal family, as tributes to China, and as exports to Japan and several other countries. Through the major success of the ceramic production, the *Bùi* clan made a fortune, and they became successful potters and merchants. Unfortunately, upheavals at the end of the 16th century forced the *Bùi* clan to change their name several times, and they lost their pottery and trade business. Allegedly, *Bùi Thị Hý* never had children, so in her later years, she moved back to her ancestral *Quang Ảnh* village. She died in 1499.⁴⁴⁹

At present the vase is in the collection of the Topkapi Saray Museum in Istanbul. Supposedly, *Bùi Thị Hý* manufactured two vases that bear her signature. The vase at the Topkapi Saray Museum and a so-called *Tỳ Bà* vase. The latter one has not been discovered yet. These two vases are also known as the husband-and-wife vase and form a pair. However, this is just a presumption; further details must be clarified.

⁴⁴⁸ "The mystery of Chu Dau ceramics," *Southeast Asian Archaeology*, last modified January 03, 2019, <https://www.southeastasianarchaeology.com/2007/10/08/the-mystery-of-chu-dau-ceramics/>.

⁴⁴⁹ Lê Thị Hoài Linh, "Chu Đậu Pottery," *Studies on Vietnamese Fine Arts Scientific Information Bulletin* (2008): 208-209.

The shape of the vase is not traditionally Vietnamese. The long cylindrical neck and squat spherical body of the vase suggest that it was produced for the foreign market. Furthermore, the floral scroll designs on the vase bear a *Yuan* Chinese characteristic. However, the *Han*-Chinese characters inscribed on the vase's shoulder show its Vietnamese origin as well as its date of production. The vase is the oldest example of an inscribed ceramic object from Vietnam. The subsequent example of an inscribed ceramic object is approximately 116 years later. The gap between these two objects is still not clarified. One explanation can be that objects with inscriptions have not been found yet.⁴⁵⁰

3.4 Form and Shape Types

To give an overview of Vietnamese ceramics, it is necessary to mention the forms and shape types that exist in Vietnamese ceramic culture: ewer, vase, jar, jar with lid, bowl, basin, plate, large dish, jarlet, lampstand, pedestal, box with cover, spittoon, water dropper, planter, wine bottle, stemcup, cup, pilgrim flask, gourd bottle, high footed bowl, hookah, kendi. In Vietnam, researchers subdivide some forms and shapes in terms of type and style, which is based on the foot ring/base. This means that bowls are subdivided by how high or wide their foot rings are.

Specially shaped figurines, such as a kendi, parrot, kinnari, human figurines, an elephant's trunk as a water dropper, and a brush washer in the shape of a peach with a parrot, were also produced. Wall tiles also exist, but as of now, it seems that they were specially produced for the Indonesian market, due to their not having been found anywhere else.

3.5 Kiln Types

In Vietnam, there are traditionally two types of kilns - long and short. The shorter type kiln is known as 'frog kiln (*Lò ếch*)' or 'toad kiln,' and the longer type kiln is also known as 'dragon kilns *lò rồng*.' However, Vietnamese 'dragon kilns' were different from the Chinese ones, as they were shorter. From time to time, other types of kilns appeared, like the sectioned kiln, gourd kiln, or chambered kiln. The sectioned kilns '*lò dàn*' had a long chamber divided into sections and could reach higher temperatures than the other two kiln types. Each section of the sectioned kiln had a small side vent for supplying and controlling the fire. The gourd kiln works similarly to the dragon kiln. It had from five to ten chambers. It is complicated to generalize the structure of Vietnamese kilns because there are limited excavations and research on kilns. The frog kiln is the oldest kiln.⁴⁵¹ The kiln remnants of the *Bắc Ninh* Museum may have been a 'frog kiln' type.

⁴⁵⁰ Southeast Asian Archaeology, "The mystery of Chu Dau ceramics."

⁴⁵¹ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 89.

Dr. Nishimura excavated a kiln and a brick tomb from the *Bắc thuộc* [北屬] period (when Vietnam was under Chinese rule) in the province of Bắc Ninh (near the capital *Hà Nội*). The remnants of the kiln and the brick tomb are stored outside the *Bắc Ninh* Museum (Figs. 87 and 88). The remnants of this kiln are different from those in China, and in fact, are very similar to the kilns of Thailand. Due possibly to space constraints, the kilns in Vietnam are smaller than those in China. This kiln type resembles the 'mantou' or 'zhenyao' kilns, which are more oval and elongated. It is unclear whether it had a chimney or not.

Chapter IV

The Organization of Ceramic Production in Northern Vietnam and Its Distribution

1. The Organization of Ceramic Production in Northern Vietnam

There were many mechanisms by which people, texts, ideas, products, practices, and skills traveled across land and sea borders. Through the Chinese occupation of Northern Vietnam (111 BCE - 938 CE), formal and informal missions sent from Vietnam by land and sea, classical Chinese writing, and many other cultural influences were brought to Vietnam.⁴⁵² Among them is the art of pottery. Unfortunately, studies on the organization of ceramic production and its distribution are quite underdeveloped in Southeast Asia. However, recent archeological excavations in the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* have helped to further our understanding of the organization of ceramic production, its distribution, and knowledge transfer between China and Vietnam.

Ceramic production is a very labor-intensive craft. Besides the potter himself, several other parties are involved, like the wood chopper for the fuel or the supplier, who transports the finished ceramic product to the customer. Furthermore, the individual steps of ceramic production were divided among different workers. One worker was responsible for the clay composition, the forming process, and the decoration, which depended on the shape and function of the end product, but was roughly divided among drawing, carving, molding and application of the glaze. The firing process was very important because it decided whether the end product was a success or not. The worker responsible had to carefully control the temperature. One piece of evidence for the division of the work process was, among others, inscriptions on some ceramic products. At that time, the illiteracy rate was high, and not everyone was able to write Chinese characters.

Because there are no written sources regarding Vietnamese ceramic production, it is highly speculated how the transfer of this knowledge occurred between Vietnam and China, with most of it focused on the Chinese influence on Vietnamese ceramic production. One theory is that Chinese potters who fled from the Mongol invasion during the *Yuan* dynasty found their new home in neighboring countries like Vietnam and Thailand. However, one important aspect cannot be disregarded: in Vietnam, before the Chinese domination, there already existed a ceramic culture that was tightly controlled by family clans or village communities, who also owned the clay deposits. Thus, establishing separate ceramic centers directed by Chinese potters would have been extremely difficult. Furthermore, for several centuries, ceramic production processes had been based on a division of labor where different individuals or groups were responsible for every phase of the process. Having an established

⁴⁵² Qian, *Reexamining the Sinosphere - Cultural Transmissions and Transformations in East Asia*, 4.

labor division would, again, be extremely difficult for Chinese potters to discard. Additionally, the adaptation was mainly influenced by examples of imported ware and rather less by a significant number of Chinese potters. However, it should not be disregarded that Chinese potters could have passed on their expertise to Vietnamese potters. However, given that no written sources can verify this, one must consider other ways that this transfer of knowledge could have occurred that have not yet been considered. For instance, the strictly synchronized labor division of Chinese ceramic production could have been partially integrated in Vietnam. Another plausible theory of knowledge transfer could be the gradual adoption of Chinese design models by Vietnamese potters, in addition to the migration of Chinese potters.⁴⁵³

Due to a lack of written sources, it is also not very clear how pottery kilns were organized in Northern Vietnam. However, the presumption is that ruling clans had been major patrons and supporters of certain kiln sites during the *Lý-Trần* dynasties. The lower standards under later dynasties may be explained by the declining power and influence of the Vietnamese imperial courts. Eventually, the Vietnamese imperial court even turned specifically to China when it wanted high-quality ceramics. They commissioned underglaze cobalt-painted porcelain from Jingdezhen, also known as 'Commissioned Patterned Porcelains'/'Bleu de Hue' (which will be further elaborated on in Chapter VI under point 5.1: 'Bleu de *Huế*' from China/'Commissioned Patterned Porcelains').⁴⁵⁴

The intensity of maritime and riverine commerce encouraged the specialization of production. Entire villages exclusively devoted to pottery were developed, which were located close to the source of the crucial raw material. Numerous specialist quarters of craftsmen sprang up in the suburbs of each city. However, despite their highly developed skills, specialist craftsmen did not develop into large-scale producers with their own capital. The essential unit of production throughout the Southeast was the household and its relatives or apprentices working for the craftsmen. Rather than working consistently to accumulate a large stock, such household units tended to produce only when commissioned. For instance, numerous lacquerware, silk, and ceramic workers in the capital of Northern Vietnam would only produce when trading vessels arrived and advanced the money to have these goods produced. It seems that these craftsmen were loath to take the risk of using expensive materials and workload without a prior paid order. In some cases, a temporary bond of patronage and protection with the buyer was established. However, without a patron to protect or guarantee payment, the craftsman could not (or simply did not want) to take that risk.⁴⁵⁵

According to Dr. *Nguyễn Văn Anh*, a lecturer at the VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities in *Hà Nội*, the potters did not even work full-time, and he suggests that this was likely due to how the climate of Northern Vietnam affected ceramic production. He

⁴⁵³ May, *Verborgene Schätze - 2000 Jahre Vietnamesische Keramik*, 110.

⁴⁵⁴ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 41.

⁴⁵⁵ Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450 - 1680*, 100-102.

postulates that during the rainy season, it was too humid for the unfired ceramic products to dry. To support his thesis, he presents the kilns as evidence. It can be seen in the kiln itself that in the rainy season, the kiln was not used. Therefore, he concludes that these potters may have also been farmers who engaged in pottery-making when the climate allowed them to fire their products. Other evidence that supports this is the location of some kiln sites, some of which were located at the same site as other craft villages or rice-growing villages. The kiln sites were also often surrounded by rivers, mountainous areas, and forests. Rivers were important for the transportation of the finished ceramic objects, while the mountains possessed large deposits of clay, and the forests provided firewood for fuel and other raw materials. These kiln sites and craft or rice-growing villages encircled *Hà Nội*, and in this ecological environment developed and thrived. It was profitable for both parties. The capital was provided with food and ceramic objects, and the ceramic/craft/rice villages had a recipient.⁴⁵⁶

1.2 Different Kiln Sites - Kiln Sites in Northern Vietnam

Kilns are incredibly important to the study of ceramic production, as they can be used as a categorizing tool. Kilns can be indicators of place, style, and time/period as well as interconnected materialities, bringing to our attention points of interaction, competition, copying, mobility, migration, and integrated histories.

The earliest archeological excavations of ancient kilns were made in the 1930s. A large quantity of ceramics was found in the province of *Thanh Hóa*. Hence, in France, the term 'les céramiques de Thanh-hoa' was used. Between the first excavations of these ancient kilns and the following excavation in the province of *Hải Dương*, several wars occurred. The 'First Indochina War', also known as the Anti-French Resistance War (1946 - 1954), and the 'Second Indochina War', also known as the 'Vietnam War' or the 'Resistance War against America' (1965-1972). The kilns *Chu Đậu* and *Hợp Lệ* were excavated in the province of *Hải Dương* in 1983.⁴⁵⁷

From the 11th century onwards, some unofficial kilns emerged in present-day Northern Vietnam. They produced highly sophisticated ceramics, which marked an advanced stage of such production. Some of the kiln sites still manufacture ceramic objects to this day, while others are inactive. Kiln centers in the northern river plains were in densely populated areas on major transportation routes. During the peak phase of ceramic production, waterways were especially relevant for the transportation of ceramic objects. Some excavations in Northern Vietnam in the 1970s revealed remnants of small 'frog kilns' (*lò cóc*) at some sites. Besides the 'frog kilns', the longer 'dragon kilns' were also found.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁶ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 114.

⁴⁵⁷ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 85.

⁴⁵⁸ Gotuago, Tan and Diem, *Chinese and Vietnamese Blue and White Wares found in the Philippines*, 186.

The following is a list of kiln sites that are discussed in no particular order. Furthermore, this is not an exhaustive list of every kiln site that ever existed in Northern Vietnam. These kiln sites were once active in a certain period, where they were important for a certain style/pattern/glaze or rulership. The only exceptions are the kiln sites in *Bát Tràng* and *Kim Lan*, which are still active to this day. It should also be noted that it was very rare that complete kilns were excavated. Rather, kiln remains, agglutinated kiln wastes, and firing tools like saggars and kiln supports were discovered. These findings support the assumption that ceramics had been produced at these sites.⁴⁵⁹

Bát Tràng (Hà Nội)

Bát Tràng [鉢場] was famous for blue&white pottery, incised pottery, crackled glaze pottery, and color glaze pottery. As mentioned above, in *Bát Tràng*, objects such as lamp bases (Fig. 63) and incense burners were incised with the craftsman's name, the production date, and the production place. Objects like this help us to classify the place of origin.⁴⁶⁰ The *Bát Tràng* kilns are located about 10 km southeast of *Hà Nội*, a location that conveniently allows the transport of the products because it lies on the bank of the Red River. The area also had numerous deposits of white clay for its ceramic production. In the Sino-Vietnamese meaning, the word '*Bát*' [鉢] is the monk's alms bowl, and the word '*Tràng*' [場] (which also can be read as '*Trường*') means 'the big courtyard'. According to the village elders, the left Chinese character (radical) of the word '*Bát*' '金' stands for wealth, and the right side of the Chinese character '本' means the source and origin. Currently, in the communal house, temple, and pagoda in *Bát Tràng*, they still use the Chinese characters 鉢場 for their nameplate. The name '*Bát Tràng*' has found its way into many Vietnamese folk songs and proverbs. Vietnamese people associate the place with high-quality ceramics. The name first appears in 1352 in the Vietnamese annals *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* [大越史記全書], with the first reference to ceramic production dated to 1435. The site is still active today. One belief state that people from *Chu Đậu* founded it, while local legend assigns credit for the foundation of the *Bát Tràng* kilns to the three Vietnamese scholars, *Hứa Vinh Kiều*, *Đào Trí Tiến*, and *Lưu Phương Tú*, who went to China on a diplomatic mission in the Northern *Song* dynasty. They completed their task and visited a ceramic factory in *Guangdong*, bringing back the technical knowledge that would be used at *Bát Tràng* to make certain ceramic objects. *Hứa Vinh Kiều* taught the technique of the white glaze, while *Đào Trí Tiến* taught the production of red glaze in another region, while *Lưu*

⁴⁵⁹ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 115.

⁴⁶⁰ See Chương, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 155.

Phuong Tú instructed on the use of dark yellow glaze in a third region. Other evidence points to the *Thanh Hóa* province as the ancestor of the *Bát Tràng* industry. According to this legend, the ceramic manufacturing in *Bát Tràng* coincided with the Northern *Song* period. However, up to now, there has not been historical evidence that would confirm the existence of these three scholars.⁴⁶¹

In *Dư địa chí* [輿地誌], a written geographical compilation by *Nguyễn Trãi* [阮鷹] (1380-1442) in 1435, *Bát Tràng* is mentioned as ‘a village that produced bowls and dishes’ and ‘supplied 70 sets of these toward each tribute payment to *Ming* China’.⁴⁶² This written reference verifies that *Bát Tràng* ceramics were selected by the *Lê* rulers in the 15th century to send as a tribute to China. Unfortunately, there is a lack of chronology for Vietnamese wares from the 14th to the 17th centuries. Like other kiln sites in Vietnam, *Bát Tràng* wares reached their peak of production in the 15th and 16th centuries, coinciding with the ‘*Ming* Gap’, when Chinese wares were banned from being exported. In addition, the authorities supported *Bát Tràng* as an industrial and commercial place. Because of some export restrictions on the Chinese side, Japan approached Southeast Asian countries for some goods, and as such, large quantities of Vietnamese wares were imported into Japan. In present-day Japan, a large number of Vietnamese wares can be found in museums and private collections. Vietnamese wares in particular were used in Japanese tea ceremonies. The Japanese consumers enjoyed Vietnamese ceramics for their form and glaze.⁴⁶³

In the early days of *Bát Tràng*, potters used only frog (*Lò ếch*) and toad kilns, though occasionally other types of kilns appeared, such as the sectioned kiln, chambered kiln, dragon kiln, and vertical kiln to fire their pottery. The frog kiln is the oldest kiln type, and has been used widely for centuries. It was seven meters long and three to four meters wide, with the entrance measuring 1.2 meters wide. On one side was an opening measuring one meter high and 1.2 meters wide for packing and removing the objects. There were three chimneys, each 3-3.5 meters high. Unglazed bricks were used to strengthen the interior of the kiln. The fuel for the frog kiln usually consisted of straw, wood, dried rice stalks, and bamboo, though wood eventually became the main source of fuel. Nowadays, this kind of kiln is nowhere to be found in *Bát Tràng*. The sectioned kiln appeared in the mid-nineteenth century. It has a nine-meter-long chamber that rises 2.6 meters in height. The interior is divided into ten equal sections, with the last section connected to the smoke-extracting chamber. The kiln opening measures 1.2 meters high and 0.9 meters wide. This kiln type can reach temperatures up to 1300°C. The dragon kiln appeared in the early 20th century. The furnace is usually divided into five to seven chambers, though sometimes up to ten. The furnace had a continuous dome roll perpendicular

⁴⁶¹ Lê, *Bát Tràng*, 11.

⁴⁶² Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 119.

⁴⁶³ Lê, *Bát Tràng*, 15-16.

to the axis of the furnace, like pieces of shells turned upside down. Refractory bricks are used to build the coil arch of the kiln. The length of the kiln is approximately 15 meters long, including a two-meter-high chimney. This kiln type can also reach temperatures up to 1300°C. The most recent type of kiln is the vertical kiln, which has developed in the last 40 years. It usually has a height of five meters and a width of 0.9 meters. The simple construction, its small size, and low operating cost are the reasons why many potters nowadays use this kind of kiln. The main source of fuel for the vertical kiln is coal dust, with wood only being used for starting the fire. This kiln type can reach temperatures of up to 1250°C. In recent years, gas kilns have appeared in *Bát Tràng*. During the combustion process, the temperature is monitored through the fire gauge, and the temperature adjustment, which is essentially the fuel increase or decrease, is done semi-automatically or automatically, making the firing process much simpler. However, these are not the traditional kilns of *Bát Tràng*.⁴⁶⁴

Bát Tràng potters were able to produce high-quality products that met the demand of the aristocracy; hence, many aristocrats became patrons. Inscriptions on *Bát Tràng* wares show that many high-ranking officials and members of the Royal family were patrons. Additionally, these inscriptions also revealed that the potters included their names and the year of production, a custom that began in the 15th century. Astonishingly, these names included male and female potters, sometimes even husband and wife. Well-known couples in *Bát Tràng* included *Đỗ Phủ* and his wife *Nguyễn Thị Bản*,⁴⁶⁵ and *Đỗ Xuân Vi* and his wife *Lê Thị Ngọc*.⁴⁶⁶

In the 16th and 17th centuries, many pieces made at *Bát Tràng* attest to the revival of Buddhism in Vietnam. In particular, censers for altars were produced. Vietnamese ceramics of this period are most famous for their blue&white wares. The origin of this method of decoration is uncertain, but the introduction of cobalt for underglaze painted decoration affected the demand for other motifs and techniques, like the underglaze iron black, the monochrome wares, and previous decorative motifs and shapes.⁴⁶⁷

Until this day, *Bát Tràng* manufactures Vietnamese ceramics. Many families continue the craft tradition of their ancestors. Because it is located close to the capital, it is a popular tourist place. In today's *Bát Tràng*, tourists find one ceramic shop after another. However, ceramic production has changed over the centuries. In the past, ceramic potters used wood to fire their pottery; nowadays, conventional wood kilns have given way to more effective and cheaper gas kilns. What remained, however, is the craftsmanship, with much of the pottery still being produced by hand (Fig. 170 and 171). Furthermore, a ceramic museum opened its doors in *Bát Tràng* in 2018. Here, the visitor can learn more about *Bát Tràng*'s history and its modern handicrafts, and even try their hand at pottery-making in the workshops of the museum.

⁴⁶⁴ Lê, *Bát Tràng*, 26-27.

⁴⁶⁵ *Đỗ Phủ* and his wife *Nguyễn Thị Bản* are also known for their production of crackled glazed wares.

⁴⁶⁶ Lê, *Bát Tràng*, 14-15.

⁴⁶⁷ "Bat Trang," Southeast Asia Ceramic Society, last modified August 18, 2018, <http://www.museum.seaceramic.org.sg/vietnam/bat-trang/>.

Kim Lan (Hà Nội)

The kiln sites in *Kim Lan* and in *Bát Tràng* were most likely one ceramic village. They are only separated by a branch of the Red River - the *Bắc Hưng Hải* canal. This place, alongside *Bát Tràng*, is one of the cradles of ancient *Thăng Long* ceramics with a long history of ups and downs. Archaeologists who surveyed this area from 2001 to 2003 discovered several ceramic objects when the riverbank collapsed due to soil erosion. These objects suggest that the history of *Kim Lan* ceramics dates as early as the 7th century (*Tang* dynasty). Furthermore, the range of the discovered ceramic objects dates up until the late *Lê* dynasty (1428 – 1788). The glaze types ranged from celadons, ivory white glaze, brown glaze on the exterior and white glaze on the interior, iron-black glaze to blue&white glaze. The quality and decorative motifs of the blue&white glaze objects resemble objects that were found in the Philippines and the kiln sites in *Chu Đậu*. These discoveries led to the assumption that *Kim Lan* pottery was also made for the export market. Further research revealed that the largest numbers of wares are from the *Trần* and the *Lê* dynasties. The examined area also revealed kiln wasters and saggars, which is proof of production, even though no intact kiln was found.⁴⁶⁸

While *Kim Lan* ceramics played an important role in the supply of *Thăng Long* and the export market, they were forgotten for a couple of centuries. It was not until the 1980s that the villagers restored their craft. With devotion and enthusiasm, the residents of present-day *Kim Lan* have preserved and promoted their village's traditional pottery making. Thanks to the efforts of residents like *Nguyễn Văn Hùng* (born in 1935), a leading expert for *Kim Lan* pottery and whose private residence accommodates a sizeable private collection of *Kim Lan* wares, the kilns in *Kim Lan* are actively producing ceramic products again.⁴⁶⁹ In the years from 1990 to 1993, *Kim Lan* had about 750 ceramic kilns, mainly making dishes. Despite the high number of kilns, their output was limited due to the manual production method. Regardless, the product was very popular at that time. If *Bát Tràng* is famous for fine art ceramic products, *Kim Lan* is considered the hometown of household ceramics. The product variety of the pottery village is wide and diverse, including smaller objects such as toothpick-holders and candlesticks as well as larger vessels such as pots, vases, etc. In addition to dishes, teapots, and other common household items, *Kim Lan* potters also produce valuable products such as urns, crests, and altar lamps. Additionally, they focus on producing ceramic products for construction, such as bricks, decorative tiles, and balustrades.⁴⁷⁰ The collection of Noriko Nishino and Dr. Masanari Nishimura features good examples of ivory white glazed ware and brown ware.

⁴⁶⁸ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 120.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid, 120.

⁴⁷⁰ Ngân Hà, "Kim Lan," last modified February 2, 2023, <http://sovhth.hanoi.gov.vn/net-dep-gom-kim-lan/>.

Thăng Long (Hà Nội)

Unlike the other kiln sites, the *Thăng Long* kiln site is less well-known. It is assumed to be an ancient kiln site during the days of the former Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, hence the name. Excavations have indeed revealed a kiln within the Imperial Citadel that was at least active from the *Lý* dynasty to the *Lê* dynasty. After further research, it is said that the *Lý* potters were able to produce all kinds of glazed ceramics, the most common being white, celadon, yellow, and brown enamel wares.⁴⁷¹

Archaeological findings of ceramic sherds, kiln wasters, by-products of the ceramic production process, and remnants of a kiln in the area of the Imperial Citadel prove that the Imperial Citadel had its own kiln site that produced tableware and architectural elements for the court.⁴⁷²

Ceramics for daily royal use were often imprinted with the Chinese characters 'guan' [官], meaning 'official', and 'jing' [敬], meaning 'respect/veneration'. These inscriptions can refer either to the object as a product of an official kiln or as official ware for use in the imperial court.⁴⁷³ Not only do these inscriptions on the daily wares indicate royal use, but ceramics featuring motifs symbolizing imperial power, such as dragons and phoenixes, are also symbols for the royal family. These kinds of wares have been found in the excavation area of the Imperial Citadel in addition to fused kiln wasters and tools for applying decoration to ceramics. These discoveries indicate that these ceramics were manufactured in the Imperial Citadel and were meant to be used there.⁴⁷⁴ These ceramics had to be high in quality because they were produced exclusively for the ruling upper class. The glazes varied from white, celadon, green, yellow, brown, and brown inlaid to blue&white ceramics. There were also various shapes, such as vases, bowls, jars, plates, pots, boxes with lids, and dishes. The decorations for these ceramics were skillfully crafted with symbols of nobility like dragons, lotuses, chrysanthemums, and phoenixes.⁴⁷⁵

Thăng Long white glazed ceramics, including mainly small-sized bowls and dishes, were as thin as an eggshell, featuring a five-clawed dragon incised, cavetto designs, and the word 'guan' incised or painted blue in the center. These types of thin white ceramics have never been found anywhere in *Việt Nam* except for in the royal tombs in *Lam Kinh* (in *Thanh Hóa*) and *Thăng Long*. These ceramics were fired one at a time and were glazed on the bottoms and on the rims of the spurs. The spurs were very thin and were rolled, not cut, and

⁴⁷¹ Tổng, *Văn hiến Thăng Long - Bằng chứng khảo cổ học Thăng Long Civilization - Archaeological Evidence*, 225.

⁴⁷² See catalog of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* G19 L2, G11 L7, G18 L3, G0.3, G11 L6 AH008, G19 L2, G1 L7, 12VM G12 L09, G21 L3, G21 AH048, G18 L2 AH2, G18 L4, G18 L4 (1), G15 L6 AH01. Chương, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 153.

⁴⁷³ See catalog of the excavation of the *Kính Thiên* Palace 18 DKT 1, 18 DKT Gm.M 20, 18 DKT Gm.LS 29, 18 DKT Gm.LS 30, 18 DKT Gm.M 45, 18 DKT 34, 18 DKT 35, 18 DKT Gm.LS 01.

Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 106.

⁴⁷⁴ Lê, Nguyễn, Tổng and Nguyễn, *Khu Trung tâm Hoàng Thành Thăng Long - Hà Nội - Di sản văn hóa thế giới. The Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hà Nội - A World Heritage Site*, 83.

⁴⁷⁵ Tổng and Bùi, *Thăng Long - Hà Nội Thousand-Year History Underground*, 54.

the glaze on the rim was not scraped. This is the technique that made pottery from *Thăng Long* different from other kilns from that period. Additionally, there were other vessels printed with Han-Vietnamese characters such as ‘*Trường Lạc*’ [長樂] (Fig. 103), ‘*Trường Lạc Storehouse*’ [長樂廩] or ‘*Trường Lạc Palace*’ [長樂宮]. The amazing sophistication and aesthetic beauty of ceramics with official inscriptions as well as the royal motifs (a dragon with 5-claws and a phoenix) reveal that these were royal palace wares and were solely produced for the Imperial Citadel. *Trường Lạc* is the palace of *Nguyễn Thị Hằng* [阮氏暉] (1441-1505), the wife of emperor *Lê Thánh Tông*. The location of the palace was identified by archaeological excavations in the western part of the *Kính Thiên* palace.⁴⁷⁶

The *Trường Lạc* Palace is exceedingly important because it was the palace of *Nguyễn Thị Hằng*, wife of the emperor, who later became ‘Queen Mother’ and ‘Queen Grandmother’. It was the largest of all the palaces of the Imperial Citadel during the *Lê* dynasty. Although *Nguyễn Thị Hằng* did not hold the title of Empress, but of Royal Concubine, her background and the ascension of her son to the role of Emperor cemented her place in this prestigious palace. The discoveries of ceramics with clear inscriptions indicating that they were produced to be used specifically in the palace underline the significance of the place. Furthermore, these ceramics are evidence for the exclusive production of wares for the Royal family, in this case for the *Trường Lạc* Palace. These ceramic objects were usually ivory-white glazed with inscriptions in dark blue glaze either on the underside of the vessel or on the inner part of the ceramic object. The characters were inscribed on the wet clay surface, covered with white glaze, and then fired. Hence, they are still visible today. The *Trường Lạc* Palace had the most special service system of both human attendance and material supply. The ceramic objects had either been ordered from the ‘in-house’ *Thăng Long* pottery kiln or kilns from outside the palace, but with private models to prevent them from being confused with other ceramic objects that were produced in the same kiln.⁴⁷⁷

Pottery featuring inscriptions of ‘*Trường Lạc*’ [長樂] (Fig. 103), ‘*Trường Lạc Storehouse*’ [長樂廩] or ‘*Trường Lạc Palace*’ [長樂宮] seemed to be produced arbitrarily, with the inscriptions themselves resembling calligraphy (Fig. 103). Although these wares were produced for the Royal household, financial and other reasons of convenience contributed to the quality of these wares. They must have been produced by the hundreds and should not be considered artistic objects, but rather as commodities. Furthermore, the pottery inscribed with ‘*Trường Lạc*’ [長樂] (Fig. 103), ‘*Trường Lạc Storehouse*’ [長樂廩] or ‘*Trường Lạc Palace*’ [長樂

⁴⁷⁶ Vietnam Pathfinder, “Pottery from Thăng Long Citadel.”

⁴⁷⁷ Van Ninh Do, “Queen grandmother’s Truong Lac Palace,” in *Hoàng Thành Thăng Long – Thăng Long Imperial Citadel*, ed. Tổng Trung Tín (Hanoi: The Culture Information Publishing House, 2006), 54-56, 59.

宮], ‘*guan*’ [官], meaning ‘official’, and ‘*jing*’ [敬], meaning ‘respect/veneration’, are very important objects underlining two aspects. The first is that the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* had its own on-site ceramic supplier. There are two reasons to operate an on-site kiln. Firstly, the supplier could reduce costs on transportation. Secondly, it was easier to commission orders for the Royal household, as these kilns were familiar with the specific expectations regarding the quality of the wares. With the commission of the Royal Complex, the founder of the *Lý* dynasty established not only a place for his allegiance but also a representative symbol. As the Imperial Citadel grew in importance and size, it was natural that the needs of the residents grew alongside it. By establishing the *Thăng Long* kilns, this need was satisfied.

In recent years, Prof. *Bùi Minh Trí* postulated that many ceramic objects from the *Hội An (Cù Lao Chàm)* shipwreck were manufactured at the kilns in *Thăng Long*, and excavations in the area of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* seem to support his proposition.

Chu Đậu (Hải Dương)

It is estimated that the production in *Chu Đậu*, in *Nam Sách* County, 60 km east of *Hà Nội*, began in the 13th century, reaching a peak in the 15th and 16th centuries, and declining in the 17th century.⁴⁷⁸ The kiln sites in *Chu Đậu* –also known as *Chu Đậu-Mỹ Xá*– formerly comprised one ceramic village until a dike was constructed in the 1940s, separating them. Usually, the ceramic findings in the area of *Chu Đậu* and *Mỹ Xá* are referred to as *Chu Đậu* ware only.⁴⁷⁹ There are some experts who would go so far as to call *Chu Đậu* the *Jingdezhen* of Vietnam. *Chu Đậu* pottery ranges from terracotta to brown, porous and white earthenware, blue&white, celadon, bronze-green, and three-color pottery.⁴⁸⁰

The location of *Chu Đậu* was ideal as its transport facilities were favorably connected with Northern Vietnam’s second largest river, itself connected to five additional waterways. As such, the ceramic objects could easily be sent by boat to the capital of *Thăng Long* as well as the ports of *Vân Đồn* and *Phố Hiến*. The kaolin deposit that served the area was more than sufficient to supply the necessary ceramic production, and the fuel supply of wood was also ample.⁴⁸¹

During the *Lê* dynasty, *Chu Đậu* was a small village in the *Thanh Lâm* district, which was part of the eastern region of the county of *Nam Sách*. The first time that *Chu Đậu* ceramic objects were found was in 1983. From 1986 to 1999, an excavation team led by archaeologist Prof. *Tăng Bá Hoàn* found ceramic fragments and piles of burned and agglutinated ceramic objects. The area of *Mỹ Xá*, covering an area of about 70,000m², was just excavated by about 2%. Because of the historical significance of *Chu Đậu* kilns, much research has been

⁴⁷⁸ “Chu Dau,” Southeast Asia Ceramic Society, last modified June 18, 2021, https://www.seaceramic.org.sg/ceramics_of_sea/vietnam/.

⁴⁷⁹ *Bùi* and *Nguyễn-Long*, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 121.

⁴⁸⁰ *Chương*, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 155.

⁴⁸¹ *May*, *Verborgene Schätze - 2000 Jahre Vietnamesische Keramik*, 146-147.

conducted. In this respect, it was discovered that the *Chu Đậu* kilns belong to kiln sites from the *Hải Dương* province. Overall, 14 ancient kiln sites were discovered in the *Hải Dương* province. Conspicuously, all of these kiln sites are distributed along rivers, which are linked to the ceramic distribution through waterways.⁴⁸²

The excavations in *Chu Đậu* and *Mỹ Xá* revealed tens of thousands of objects. In the western sector of *Chu Đậu*, two plots were dug in 1996. In Plot I, an area of 20m² (4 x 5m) was excavated. The excavation team mainly discovered kiln supports that were disc-shaped or tubular in form, with three legs. They divided the plot into 6 layers (0 - 120cm). Besides the kiln supports, in the layer between 0 to 60 cm, they discovered stacks of bowls, bowl fragments, fused dishes that were over-fired in an underglaze blue and under-fired light yellow glazed product. In the layer from 60 to 120 cm, they mainly discovered saggar fragments, which comprised 50% of the waste material, along with bowl and dish fragments. In Plot II, which was 15 meters north-west of Plot I, an area of 15m² (5 x 3m) was excavated. The discoveries also included kiln supports, saggar fragments, bowls, and dishes. New additions to the discoveries were cinders, raw clay material, incised bowl fragments, small bases, pots, jars, and covered boxes.⁴⁸³

As mentioned above, out of the many ceramic objects that were produced in *Chu Đậu*, the most famous is the blue&white due to its signature. It was signed by the craftsman, or rather the craftswoman, whose name is '*Bùi Thị Hỷ*', and it was inscribed in the eighth year of the *Thái Hoà* reign, which equates to 1450 CE. The inscriptions read as follows: *Da he ba nian nan ce zhou jiang Pei shi xi bi* [大和八年南策州匠裴氏戲筆]. This translates to: 'Brushed in the eighth year of the *Thái Hoà* reign in the *Nam Sách* district by a lady artisan called *Bùi Thị Hỷ*'.⁴⁸⁴ The inscription not only provides information about the manufacturing location, making it traceable back to the *Nam Sách* district, but also provides the name of the potter.

The white ceramic objects of *Chu Đậu* are very similar to those from the kilns in *Thăng Long*. It could therefore be postulated that *Chu Đậu* also manufactured for the imperial court; however, according to Prof. *Bùi Minh Trí*, items from *Chu Đậu* were heavier and thicker with poorer glaze quality than those of *Thăng Long*.⁴⁸⁵

According to Prof. *Tăng Bá Hoàn*, in the late 16th to early 17th centuries, some potters from *Chu Đậu* kilns migrated to other places due to social and market upheavals in *Nam Sách* County. It seems it was not an insignificant number, as the rapid decline of the kilns in *Chu Đậu* occurred subsequently.⁴⁸⁶

While the *Chu Đậu* kilns created such enormously famous ceramic objects like the vase currently in the Topkapi Saray Museum, the kilns could not survive the high level of competition,

⁴⁸² Bá Hoàn Tăng, *Gốm Chu Đậu - Chu Đậu ceramics - Chudeau tōjiki*, (Hanoi: Kinhbooks, 1999), 5-11, 20.

⁴⁸³ Ibid, 21-22.

⁴⁸⁴ Lê, *Bát Tràng*, 15.

⁴⁸⁵ Vietnam Pathfinder, "Pottery from Thăng Long Citadel."

⁴⁸⁶ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 125.

unlike at *Bát Tràng*. However, in recent years, there has been a revival of these kilns due to this specific vase. Additionally, the status of *Chu Đậu* kilns is still highly valued today, and a company with the same name '*Chu Đậu*' emerged to produce the same wares a couple hundred years ago.

Láo, Ngói, Cây, Bá Thuỷ and Hợp Lệ (Hải Dương)

Along the *Kẻ Sặt* river and the *Tứ Kỳ* river in the *Hải Dương* province are five kiln sites: *Láo*, *Ngói*, *Cây*, *Bá Thuỷ*, and *Hợp Lệ*. While the kiln site in *Láo* has not been excavated, the surface stratum has been investigated several times, revealing a substantial amount of 15th- to 17th/18th-century ceramic products.⁴⁸⁷

The kiln site in *Ngói* was discovered in 1984. Overall, four excavations in 1989, 1990, 1995, and 1999 revealed ceramic products of high quality, ranging from celadon, dark brown glaze, ash glaze (bluish-white) to blue&white glaze. The forms and shapes were fairly diverse, including bowls, dishes, ewers, covered urns, vases, basins, wine bottles, stem cups, covered boxes, and small lampstands, all manufactured in different glaze types. The dark brown and ash glazes were mainly produced in the 15th century. Furthermore, many of the ash glaze wares bear the inscription 'guan' [官], meaning 'official'. This suggests that the kilns of *Ngói* were either official kilns or at least produced for the imperial court. The *Ngói* kiln mainly produced blue&white glaze wares, which were first produced in the 15th century alongside the dark brown and ash glazed wares. This conclusion was made by the excavators because all three glaze types were found in the same stratum. Moreover, the excavation team found blue&white bowls and dark brown bowls agglutinated together.⁴⁸⁸

In the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, the current author also found agglutinated celadon bowls and brown ware bowls (G19 L2, G1 L7). This kiln waste was found during the excavations from 2012 to 2014 in the area of the Rose Garden and the parking lot of the National Assembly building. The stacking process of unfired ceramic products was oriented towards the aim of saving space in the kilns as much as possible, and as such, wares of different glaze types were stacked together. For instance, some bowls were stacked on top of each other/into one another, while others could only be stacked mouth-to-mouth. As a space-saving measure, these two stacking methods were combined.

The blue&white glaze of the *Ngói* kilns had an opaque white color with a blue tinge, a thick glaze due to the application of a slip layer, followed by a glaze layer. The slip was grayish white or light bluish, and it completely covered the exterior of the foot ring. The usage of the slip layer may have been because of the not-so-white nature of the clay body. For the

⁴⁸⁷ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 129.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 127.

blue&white bowls of the *Ngói* kilns, the potters did not use a stacking ring/tripod, but rather the glaze at the rim was wiped off for mouth-to-mouth stacking.⁴⁸⁹

The *Ngói* kilns began manufacturing ceramic products in the 15th century and continued until the 17th century. Production reached its peak during the 15th and 16th centuries. The style of the ceramic products of the *Ngói* kilns is very similar to the ones in *Chu Đậu*, and it is therefore sometimes difficult to distinguish the wares from these two kiln sites. Furthermore, in the collection of the Museum of Jakarta, some objects are highly suggestive of the *Ngói* kiln decorative style, which suggests that the *Ngói* kilns also produced for the export market.⁴⁹⁰

The kiln site in *Cậy* was discovered in 1984. Overall, three excavations were conducted in 1986, 1989, and 1990, but the high density of the settlement did not allow large-scale excavations. Nevertheless, one important discovery was made during the small-scale excavations. Numerous types of kiln supports/tripods were discovered in piles in the area, implying that these kilns specialized in the production of firing tools. Furthermore, the material evidence represented two types of kiln support/tripods: ring kiln supports/tripods and disk kiln supports/tripods. Apart from the various kiln supports, a large number of shells were discovered and were likely used for ceramic production.⁴⁹¹

Due to the previous insights, it is assumed that kiln sites in *Bá Thuỷ* were an important site, which, alongside the kiln sites in *Cậy* and *Ngói*, started its ceramic production in the 15th century until approximately the 17th century.⁴⁹²

The kiln site in *Bá Thuỷ* was discovered by the Hai Duong Museum in 1984. The main glaze groups are comprised of celadon, dark brown glaze, and blue&white glaze. The ceramic objects from this kiln feature inscriptions, which provide important data regarding the production place. For instance, a blue&white lampstand in the collection of the National Museum of Vietnamese History, manufactured in the third year of *Đoan Thái* [端泰], is decorated with dragon, phoenix, *qilin*⁴⁹³, and cloud motifs, and bears two inscriptions. One of the inscriptions consists of eight Chinese characters in front of the head of the dragon, and reads as follows: 'Potter *Nguyễn Nghiêm* of the *Bá Thuỷ* commune made this for sale' [滑(?) 水村匠人阮儼賣]. The other inscription comprises 16 characters above the foot ring, indicating

⁴⁸⁹ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 127.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 132.

⁴⁹³ The *qilin* 麒麟 is a mythical creature. The *qilin* is referred to as *kỳ lân* in Vietnam. The Vietnamese *kỳ lân* is descended from the Chinese *qilin*, and shares many similar features, such as the head of a dragon or tiger, mane of a lion, the hooves of an ox or horse, the tail of a lion or ox, scales of a fish, and it can have either 1 or 2 horns or antlers. The body resembles a deer with scales, horns in the center of its head, a tail like an ox, a forehead like a wolf, hooves like a horse, and backward antlers. It represents happiness.

Fang, *Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art: Figures, Bugs, Beasts, and Flowers*, 156.

that it was made for the *Đại Bi* Pagoda in the present-day *Quảng Ninh* province (1588).⁴⁹⁴ Unfortunately, it was not on display in the National Museum of Vietnamese History during this research project, so the 16 characters could not be fully seen by the current author. Nevertheless, the reading of the inscriptions is particularly important, as this lampstand was previously mistaken for a product of *Bát Tràng*. In fact, the decorative style of the wares of *Bá Thuỷ* often led to their being identified with *Bát Tràng*, but with objects such as this lampstand and others that contain inscriptions, future researchers will be able to distinguish between the products of *Bá Thuỷ* and *Bát Tràng*. Besides these important inscriptions, the excavation team also found large quantities of firing tools, including a complete mold 14-16 cm in diameter with carved flower petal sections featuring lotus petals and chrysanthemum designs. Dark brown glaze bowls with precisely this imprinted design were found during excavations in *Cây*, *Bá Thuỷ*, and *Hợp Lệ* in the 15th-century stratum.⁴⁹⁵ In December 2023, preliminary reports were announced in the conference in the province of *Hải Dương*. In particular, tripods, firing discs and kiln wastes were exhibited.

The kiln site in *Hợp Lệ* was discovered in 1984 and three excavations were conducted in 1986, 1987, and 1989. They revealed workers' quarters, a dumping area for kiln wastes, a kiln floor, and thousands of firing tools. In addition to the firing tools excavated, a potter's wheel made of ironwood from the 15th century was discovered by the local residents. The excavations revealed the kiln floor, which was in the shape of a trapezoid and measuring 14.25 meters long, with the rear wall 5.4 m wide, and the kiln opening 0.62 m wide. The kiln floor and walls were made out of clay, and the rear wall was built on the foundation of broken bricks. The most notable part of the kiln floor was the 115 saggars impressions. On the basis of the remaining intact rows of saggars, each row had 41 saggars, and the entire kiln floor could have accommodated 250 saggars. One saggars could hold around nine to eleven bowls. As such, in each firing session, thousands of objects were fired. The main glaze types found were celadon, dark brown, blue&white and white. It should be noted here that the blue&white glazed objects from the kilns of *Hợp Lệ* have also been found in Japan.⁴⁹⁶

Vạn Yên (Hải Dương)

The ceramic production center in *Vạn Yên* (also called *Xóm Hống*) lies 30 km from the city *Hải Dương* and 90 km east of *Hà Nội*. The *Thương* River (*Sông Thương*) crossed this kiln site. During the *Trần* dynasty, *Vạn Yên* was an important defense post for protecting the capital *Thăng Long*.⁴⁹⁷ Furthermore, it was an estate of *Trần Hưng Đạo* [陳興道] (1231-1300), the

⁴⁹⁴ *Đoan Thái* is just the era name of the ruler *Mạc Mậu Hợp* 莫茂洽 (1560 - 1593). He was the fifth and effectively last reigning emperor of the *Mạc* dynasty from 1562 to 1593. Overall, he had six era names during his reign.

⁴⁹⁵ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 131.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 133-134.

⁴⁹⁷ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 118.

imperial prince who repelled the Mongol invasions, and it is speculated that ceramic production was conducted at residential bases of the royal family, such as that of the *Trần* dynasty. This is backed by the fact that many celadons, white ware bowls with molded designs, brown pattern wares, two-glazed wares, and blue&white wares were found at *Vạn Yên* during archaeological excavations.⁴⁹⁸

The kiln sites were discovered in 1984. Overall, three excavations were realized in 1987, 1989, and 1996. The excavation in 1996 by the Institute of Archeology, the National Museum of Vietnamese History, and the *Hải Dương* Museum was the largest one. The results of the excavation have provided important new information regarding glazed ceramic objects from the *Trần* dynasty. The main forms that were excavated were bowls, dishes, and ewers of various glazes, including celadon, brown glaze, two-glazed (white glaze interior and brown exterior), and ivory white glaze. Primarily found were celadon bowls with molded or incised decoration on the interiors. The excavations did not reveal a kiln, but stacks of agglutinated bowls and dishes, as well as remnants of kiln walls, were found. Additionally, saggars and 5-spur kiln supports were discovered. Therefore, although no intact kiln was found, the discovery of agglutinated kiln wastes and firing process tools proves that kilns operated in this location under the *Trần* dynasty.⁴⁹⁹

Thiên Trường (Nam Định)

Thiên Trường (in the present *Nam Định* province of southeast Northern Vietnam) was a prefecture during the *Trần* dynasty. Two of the well-known ceramic production centers are *Túc Mịch* and *Cồn Chè*.⁵⁰⁰

Not only was *Thiên Trường* the center of politics, economy, and culture, it was also considered to be a solid defense line and an important rear of *Thăng Long* in the resistance war against China. As mentioned above, during the three great victories over the *Yuan* Mongols, in the face of the Mongol Empire's strength, the *Trần* army and people all strategically withdrew to *Thiên Trường*, using military strategies and counterattacking strategies to defeat the enemy. From *Thiên Trường*, it is possible by waterway from *Vĩnh Giang* to cross the Red River to *Thăng Long*, or from *Vĩnh* River through *Vị Hoàng* River to *Đáy* River to reach the *Trường Yên* base (*Ninh Bình* province, southwest of *Nam Định* province).⁵⁰¹

As mentioned before, under the *Trần* dynasty, this land enjoyed many royal privileges because it was the hometown of the first *Trần* ruler, King *Trần Thái Tông* (1218-1277). In 1239, he ordered the construction of a palace in his hometown – the *Thiên Trường* Palace. In 1258, when he became '*Thái Thượng Hoàng*' (the title for an abdicated emperor, which can be

⁴⁹⁸ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 4.

⁴⁹⁹ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 119.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 116.

⁵⁰¹ Lê, "Hành trình "Theo dấu người xưa"."

translated to 'Retired Emperor'), he returned to the *Thiên Trường* Palace and spent the rest of his days there. From then on, the emperors who abdicated the throne in favor of the crown princes all resided in this palace. Surrounding the palaces were the residences and fiefdoms of high-ranking generals in the court. During the 175 years of the *Trần* clan reign, *Thiên Trường* Palace was considered the second capital, a solid pole in the south of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. *Thiên Trường* became the second largest political, economic, Buddhist, cultural, and educational center after the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. In terms of political and administrative institutions, the difference between the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties was the introduction of the so-called '*Thái Thượng Hoàng*' system, where the incumbent emperor abdicated in favor of the crown prince to ensure his favorite successor ascended the throne and to be able to guide the future emperor. Since the construction of the *Thiên Trường* Palace, it has become the residence of at least eight *Thái Thượng Hoàng*, from emperor *Trần Thái Tông* to emperor *Trần Nghệ Tông* [陳藝宗] (1321-1395).⁵⁰²

Through the intensive support of the *Trần* clan, *Thiên Trường* also became specialized in the production of handicrafts such as ceramics, iron forging, and bronze casting in order to meet the material demands of the members of the clan. Thousands of pieces of pottery, terracotta bricks, and tiles were discovered marked with '*Vĩnh Ninh Trường*' and '*Thiên Trường phủ chế*' [天長府制], which translates to 'manufactured in the *Thiên Trường* prefecture', proving that this was a center of production and trade. The '*Thiên Trường phủ chế*' mark further indicates the existence of kiln sites in the prefecture of *Thiên Trường*. According to Vietnamese Annals, in 1262, the village of *Túc Mặc* was renamed to '*Thiên Trường* division' by order of Emperor *Trần Thánh Tông* [陳聖宗] (1240-1290).⁵⁰³

Many relics dating back to the *Trần* dynasty were discovered in the area of *Thiên Trường*, such as an ancient well containing 152 firing saggars at the back of the *Phổ Minh* temple (*Chùa Phổ Minh* [普明寺]) (Figs. 167 and 168) and some kiln wastes. The firing saggars were between 19-27 cm high with an average diameter of 25-30 cm wide. On some of these saggars, the kiln supports were adhering to the base. Also discovered inside the well were ceramics and kiln support, providing further evidence for the existence of ancient kilns in this area.⁵⁰⁴

Besides the well, brown pattern glaze ceramic products, tiles, dragon heads, and crockery were discovered in the area of *Thiên Trường*. Through the excavations, inter alia from the Institute of Archeology, six pieces of pottery with the words '*Thiên Trường phủ chế*' were

⁵⁰² Lê Việt Thắng, "Hành trình "Theo dấu người xưa", last modified March 23, 2023, <https://baonamdinh.vn/channel/5087/201101/Hanh-trinh-Theo-dau-nguoi-xua-2030837/>.

⁵⁰³ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 117.

⁵⁰⁴ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 117.

found, leading to speculation that maybe around *Thiên Trường* was the ‘starting point’ of brown pattern glaze pottery. Furthermore, at the same time, the kilns in *Thiên Trường* produced high-class ceramic products along with the kilns in *Thăng Long* and *Tam Thọ*. In 2006, archaeologists excavated the area of *Hậu Bồi*, *Vạn Khoảnh*, *Đệ Tam Tây*, *Lưu Phố* and the field between *Phổ Minh* and other *Trần* temples, covering a total area of 2100m². As a result, tens of thousands of relics were discovered dating from the 13th to the 19th centuries. For instance, there were thick and large (40 cm x 40 cm x 7 cm) decorated bricks with wire pattern arranged in a winding way curled in a square, any type of tiles, flat tiles with both wide and long or curved shapes, roof decorations with the motif of a large dragon or phoenix attached, traces of stone embankments, courtyards, brick foundations, architectural vestiges such as the ‘lemon-flower design’ (a foundation band built with bricks arranged like a flower), octagonal squares in the shape of flower beds, pillars, small dishes of celadon, and round and flat crockery baskets. At the *Thiên Trường* temple, which was constructed to worship the *Trần* clan, an underground drainage line was found. Around this area 0.2m-0.3m underneath the ground, ancient tiles could be found in any place. The discoveries at *Thiên Trường* show that the architectural vestiges here have similarities with the *Trần* architecture in the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*.⁵⁰⁵

At the kiln site of *Túc Mặc* was once a river, which is now completely dried up. In this area, signs of ceramic production were discovered, such as saggars, tripods, kiln wastes, etc. It is also called *Hạ Lan*, and it covers the *Phổ Minh* temple and *Trần* temple area.⁵⁰⁶ The *Hạ Lan* site is considered to be the harbor for the *Thiên Trường* Palace. Ceramics have been found in large amounts in archaeological surveys in this area. Among these were celadon bowls with the famous ‘*Thiên Trường phủ chế*’ [天長府制] inscription.⁵⁰⁷

Luy Lâu/Dâu (Bắc Ninh)

Following China's conquest of *Nanyue*, *Luy Lâu* [羸婁] was the first capital of the *Han* commandery of *Jiaozhi* (*Giao Chi*) from 111-106 BCE. It was also the headquarters of the larger province of *Jiaozhou* (*Giao Châu*) and the center of China's maritime trade on the Gulf of Tonkin and the South China Sea. The old citadel is located in *Xã Thanh Khương* in *Thuận Thành* in the province of *Bắc Ninh*.

Luy Lâu pottery has aristocratic associations as it is named after an ancient Vietnamese citadel, the *Luy Lâu* Citadel, which functioned during the period of northern Chinese domination in the old land called *Dâu* in the 2nd century. In 2015, archeologists collected a large number of architectural vestiges, such as bricks and tiles, in addition to houseware, such as ceramics

⁵⁰⁵ Lê, “Hành trình “Theo dấu người xưa”.”

⁵⁰⁶ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 116-117.

⁵⁰⁷ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 145.

and cooking tools, dated between 100 BCE and the 14th century CE. Field excavations conducted in 2016 in *Thuận Thành* have demonstrated that the *Luy Lâu* Citadel was the country's largest and oldest center of politics, economics, trade, culture, and religion. Here lie the ancient *Luy Lâu* ramparts with the relics of the once splendid pagodas, residences, and monuments. The *Luy Lâu* ceramic products were often crafted with glaze in an elegant, warm olive-green color by the most skilled artisans exclusively for the royals and aristocrats. Although they are from an era when heating technology was still very rudimentary, and thousands of years of social and historical changes have taken place, this ceramic line is nevertheless considered to be the epitome of technique and art. The red pottery products in the *Dâu - Luy Lâu* region were considered exemplary, meeting the specific technical-artistic standards of the southern ceramic line that scientists have long named Song Hong (Red River) pottery. However, they also found that due to many historical incidents, including the fall of the northern domination, the *Luy Lâu* pottery line seemed to have moved through the *Luộc*, *Đuống*, and *Thái Bình* rivers, leading to the creation of new ceramic centers in the *Hải Dương* and *Thái Bình* provinces.⁵⁰⁸

At the *Luy Lâu* Citadel, several excavations have been conducted. The first project was in 1969-1970 by the Institute of Archeology (*Hà Nội*). The most recent excavation was a cooperation of the National Museum of Vietnamese History, the Eastern Asian University (Japan), and the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of *Bắc Ninh* Province from 2014-2015. During the excavation, especially in the area of the inner rampart, terracotta architectural materials were found. The decorative designs on the tubular tile-ends consisted of Chinese inscriptions: ‘君宜高官’ (appropriate for a high-ranking official); ‘位至三公’ (a place reach for the three lords), the ‘three lords’ being the collective name for the three highest officials in ancient China; ‘萬歲’ (long live the emperor), cloud shapes, lotuses, and human face-shaped. The tubular tile-ends with human face-shaped were the most outstanding.⁵⁰⁹

Most of the tubular tile ends with a human face-shaped were made from well-refined clay mixed with sand and were fired at a low temperature. The color of these tiles was red or yellowish red. The tubular tile ends human face-shaped that were fired at a high temperature, were blackish-gray and were fairly hard. In general, the human face on the surface has eyes, eye rims, eyebrows, a nose bridge, a hairline, lips, teeth, and a beard. The faces are not of a common human being. Most of them have a beard, which symbolizes divine men with witchcraft to eliminate catastrophic fires and bad omens. Similar types of tiles were found at other sites from the first half of the first millennium in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. The ones at the *Luy Lâu* Citadel were divided into five main types: Type A, which is subdivided into A1,

⁵⁰⁸ “Luy Lau, “Vietnamnet Global, last modified December 19, 2023, <https://vietnamnet.vn/en/entertainment-travel/luy-lau-ceramics-feature-the-soul-of-an-ancient-citadel-751119.html#inner-article>.

⁵⁰⁹ Đặng Hồng Sơn, Nguyễn Văn Anh and Nguyễn Minh Hùng, “Human Face-Shaped Tile Ends at the Luy Lâu Site (Việt Nam),” *Vietnam Archaeology*, Number 13 (2018): 73-74.

A2a, A2b, A3, A4, and A5; Type B, which is subdivided into B1 and B2; Type C; Type D; and ‘other type’ as they were so damaged that it was impossible to reconstruct them, but based on the broken fragments it can be ruled out that they are like the other established types.⁵¹⁰

Đông Triều (Quảng Ninh)

Since 1299, the *Trần* dynasty has clearly shaped the historical site in *Đông Triều*. The retired Emperor *Trần Nhân Tông* [陳仁宗] (1258-1308) came to *Yên Tử* to practice and establish the Zen sect ‘*Thiền phái Trúc Lâm*’ [竹林禪派]. By the end of the 14th century, many tombs of the *Trần* emperors were built or moved to *Đông Triều*. Along with the construction of tombs, the court also built temples and shrines to worship the ancestors, and many religious architectural works to serve the practice and preaching. Therefore, this place became a sacred ‘holy land’, where many unique buildings bearing the imprint of the *Trần* dynasty are concentrated. *Đông Triều* is also considered one of the typical historical and cultural centers, and the ‘Buddhist Center’ of the *Đại Việt* under the *Trần* dynasty. This place of relics has a current total protected area of 22,063,054.5m², including a system of tombs, temples, shrines, and religious works associated with the history of the *Trần* dynasty, and the Zen sect ‘*Thiền phái Trúc Lâm*’. In addition to the architectural value of the *Trần* dynasty, the historical site in *Đông Triều* also preserves many relics and antiquities, including steles, bricks, decorative tiles, ceramics of all kinds, stone towers, and statues of elephants, horses, and many more.⁵¹¹

The kiln sites in *Đông Triều* are still active to this day.

Tam Tho (Thanh Hóa)

The Chinese occupation of Northern Vietnam reached as far south as the *Thanh Hóa* province (about 150 km south of *Hà Nội*). *Thanh Hóa* was excavated in the 1920-30s due to French public works. Burial wares of the 1st to 3rd centuries and 10th to 13th centuries were found. These wares also became known as *Thanh Hóa* ware, and were recognized as Vietnamese in their own right, and not Chinese. The first exhibition of these artifacts was held in 1931 at the Musée Guimet in Paris. From 1925, severe looting of the area caused the authorities to enact laws prohibiting illegal digging. This, unfortunately, did not prevent amateurs of ceramics from amassing substantial collections. Moreover, there was a constant problem of poorly-kept records, both in the excavations and collections. In this early stage of excavations, no kiln sites for glazed wares were found, but 20 cross-draft kilns –the source of unglazed, high-fired

⁵¹⁰ Đặng, Nguyễn and Nguyễn, “Human Face-Shaped Tile Ends at the Luy Lâu Site (Việt Nam),” 75-79, 82, 84.

⁵¹¹ Nguyễn Khắc Đoài, “Đông Triều,” last modified December 19, 2023, <http://dsvh.gov.vn/khu-di-tich-lich-su-nha-tran-tai-dong-trieu-2972>.

reddish-bodied wares— were discovered. The kilns, which produced the *Han* period cream or slightly greenish glazed, white-bodied wares, were not found.⁵¹²

Just a couple of decades later, the *Tam Thọ* kiln was discovered under the guidance of the Swedish archeologist Olov Janse. *Tam Thọ* is a small village in the *Thanh Hóa* province. In the years from 1934 to 1939, Janse excavated eight ancient kilns, though, unfortunately, there were no intact furnaces in the *Tam Thọ* area. It was nevertheless discovered that the type of furnace in *Tam Thọ* resembles that of *Chu Đậu*. The *Tam Thọ* kilns are located in the central part of the *Thanh Hóa* province, near the *Đô Canal*, *Hoàng River*, and *Nấp River*. The white clay deposits of the area are the result of river sediment deposition in the mountain areas such as Mount *Đa Sĩ*, Mount *Nhồi*, Mount *Nấp*, and Mount *Hoàng Nghiêu*. The *Tam Thọ* potters used the water transportation route to reach across the plain and mountainous areas of *Thanh Hóa*. The southwest hilly area of the pottery kilns may be the main source of fuel.⁵¹³

The *Tam Thọ* kilns specialized in the production of terracotta objects. These kilns may be the oldest yet discovered kilns in Northern Vietnam, dating around the 1st to 3rd centuries (*Han* dynasty). Subsequent discoveries of kilns at *Thanh Lang* (*Hải Dương* province [海陽] ‘Ocean Sun’), *Lũng Hòa* (*Vĩnh Phúc* province [永福] ‘Everlasting Fortune’), and *Dương Xá* (*Bắc Ninh* province [北寧] ‘Northern Serenity’) have contributed to a clear identification of terracotta production in Northern Vietnam.⁵¹⁴

Another kiln site in the *Thanh Hóa* province, which appeared in the late 19th century, was the kilns in *Lò Chum*. They were famous everywhere for their diverse and unique products. According to some local legends, the pottery village was formed by former potters from *Thổ Hà*, *Hương Canh* and *Bát Tràng*.

Lam Kinh (Thanh Hóa)

Lam Kinh (Thanh Hóa) was the homeland of *Lê Thái Tổ* (1384/1385-1433), the first *Lê* king, who freed the Vietnamese from the last Chinese domination (1407-1427). Nowadays, *Lam Kinh* is a historical site located 50 km from *Thanh Hóa* province. After defeating the *Ming* dynasty, *Lê Thái Tổ* built a citadel called *Lam Kinh*, also known as *Tây Kinh* (West Citadel), and he renamed the capital *Thăng Long* to *Đông Kinh* (East Citadel). He planned to use *Lam Kinh* as a second, spiritual citadel for the *Lê* dynasty. Just like *Thiên Trường* served as an architectural complex of shrines and tombs for the *Trần* rulers (a place of worship), so did *Lam Kinh* for the *Lê* rulers. In *Lam Kinh*, the EFEO (École française d'Extrême-Orient) conducted four archaeological excavations within the timeframe from 1905 to 1942. The Vietnam National

⁵¹² “Thanh Hóa,” Southeast Asia Ceramic Society, last modified June 04, 2021, https://www.seaceramic.org.sg/ceramics_of_sea/vietnam/.

⁵¹³ May and von der Schulenburg, *Die Nachbarn im Süden – frühe Keramik und Bronze aus Vietnam*, 27.

⁵¹⁴ Bùi and Đỗ, “New Perceptions of Terracotta Artifacts from the *Thăng Long* Imperial Citadel Site,” 78.

Museum of History also excavated there in 1996, revealing three different cultural layers. The deepest layer was from the 14th century, the second layer was the so-called 'royal architecture' layer of the 15th and 16th centuries, and the top layer was from the 17th century. In these layers, a huge number of ceramic sherds were discovered. The most exceptional are the white glaze ceramics with a molding pattern and 'guan' [官] inscribed. These objects are very fine and thin and are therefore sometimes referred to as eggshell glaze ceramics. The glaze at the rim and bottom of the foot has been scraped away on these wares, which marks a different production method from the earlier white wares, giving the sense of a technical gap between the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties.⁵¹⁵ Most of the mouth rims are unglazed, suggesting that they were stacked mouth to mouth during the firing process (like with the *Ding* wares from China). The *guan* inscription suggests that these kinds of wares were manufactured in state-organized ceramic manufactories or, as mentioned above, were meant for use in the imperial court. It is not clear if the excavated objects in *Lam Kinh* were also manufactured in the kilns from this region or if these wares were transported here for the use of the imperial court. There are four main decorative motifs: dragons, waves and clouds, apricot flowers, and chrysanthemums. The dragon motif is found on the majority of the wares (over 60%) and is displayed as two dragons following each other clockwise, molded inside the object.⁵¹⁶

At the ancestral shrine of the *Lê* dynasty emperors at the *Lam Kinh* site, mostly Vietnamese blue&white and white ware artifacts were found. There were also numerous finds of Chinese porcelain in the same context with celadons, blue&white, and overglaze enamels. The celadons consisted of thick-walled bowls produced in *Fujian* or *Guangdong* with lotus petal patterns executed in line drawing, under a thin celadon glaze. As for the blue&white, there were many *Zhangzhou* dishes with folded rims featuring birds or flowers drawn on the inner bottom, with sea wave designs drawn on the edges. These are products from the second half of the 16th to the beginning of the 17th century. In addition, *Zhangzhou* bowls and dishes with floral plant patterns or bird designs drawn in red were found.⁵¹⁷

1.3 Fabric, Glaze Techniques, and Firing Process

Fabric

As mentioned above, the major difference between Vietnamese and Chinese ceramics is the fact that Vietnamese ceramics are not considered porcelain, but stoneware. In the past, Vietnamese potters acquired knowledge from Chinese ceramic production, but they did not

⁵¹⁵ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 186.

⁵¹⁶ Nguyễn Văn Đoàn and Bùi Kim Đĩnh, "Gốm quan, men trắng vẽ in ở Lam Kinh (Phần 1)," last modified August 14, 2023, <https://baotanglichsu.vn/vi/Articles/3101/61824/gom-quan-men-trang-van-in-o-lam-kinh-phan-1.html>.

⁵¹⁷ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 201.

have the same resources. Although the soil in Vietnam provided the potters with sufficient material, they lacked *kaolin*, which was essential in producing porcelain. Therefore, ancient kiln sites in northern Vietnam produced stoneware, but not porcelain.

Vietnamese stoneware objects are typically more heavily potted than their Chinese counterparts. The body is a thick paste, the color is a mixture of pale beige and gray-white, and it is relatively free of impurities. Usually, the bases are left plain, are painted with a transparent glaze, or have the 'chocolate bottom'. For the different types of wares, there seems to be no discernible pattern to the treatment of bases.⁵¹⁸

In Northern Vietnam, the clay used in ceramic production was sourced from the Red River (*Sông Hồng*) and Ma River (*Sông Mã*). The deposits of clay are smooth, gray-white, and homogeneous. The texture of the clay makes it easy to form into fine ceramic vessels. Since the clay body was not as white as that of Chinese wares, a white slip was applied many times before the glaze. In China, petuntse or baidunzi [白墩子] was added to *kaolin* to manufacture porcelain. Vietnam did not have deposits of porcelain stone, high in secondary mica. Although Vietnamese high-fired ceramics sometimes ring like porcelain, they are not translucent, and true porcelain has not been manufactured in Vietnam. Vietnamese potters were able to achieve high temperatures in the kilns, which could fire porcelain objects, but the function of the material was not porcelain.⁵¹⁹

Glaze Techniques

The glazes of the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties were mostly ivory-colored ash glazes, green glazes, and brown glazes. During the *Lý* dynasty, the ivory-colored wood ash glazes were the basic glazes, while brown glazes were obtained with the addition of iron. The glazes in Vietnam tended to be runny, though they are generally thicker than the Chinese *Ding* and *Qingbai* glazes of the same period. Vietnamese potters did not share the Chinese fondness for the color of jade in their ceramics. Therefore, celadons in Vietnam had a range of different glaze colors from straw yellow to olive, with the most common being a transparent light green.⁵²⁰

Another special characteristic of Vietnamese ceramics is the 'chocolate bottom', though it was not standardized, and varied from object to object. Sometimes, it took on a redder shade, and other times it was a dark, nearly black color. However, as the name suggests, the most common tone was of a chocolate brown. The term 'chocolate bottom' or 'base chocolatée' was characterized by R.Y. Lefebvre d'Argencé.⁵²¹ Among a variety of theories, one centers on the religious purpose of ceramic objects with the 'chocolate bottom'. R.Y. Lefebvre d'Argencé

⁵¹⁸ Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia: Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries; with a Catalogue of Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai Wares in Australian Collections*. Oxford in *Asia Studies in Ceramics*, 105.

⁵¹⁹ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 36.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 34, 111.

⁵²¹ May und von der Schulenburg, *Die Nachbarn im Süden – frühe Keramik und Bronze aus Vietnam*, 88.

suggested that ceramic objects with chocolate bottoms were reserved for temple use.⁵²² As such, the 'chocolate bottom' became a marker for temple objects. However, later excavations revealed ceramic objects with 'chocolate bottoms' that were not used in temples. Another theory relates to the decorative aspect of the color as some kind of potter's mark, or that it was influenced by *Cizhou* brown wares, the so-called 'chicken-foot' pattern. The glaze of this pattern is dark brown, but with no inlays. The 'chicken-foot' was applied like a stamp. This pattern is very rare, with just a few examples found in the *Thanh Hóa* province that date to the 12th to 13th century, corresponding to the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties. Another theory is based on the imitation of *Jian* wares. The so-called dripping glaze bowl of *Jian* shows a brownish clay body with generally dark glazes that cover nearly the whole clay body except for the bottom. The glaze is uneven and shows some drips. Vietnamese potters could have imitated the brownish body by using a brown glaze to cover the bottom part of their ceramics. Vietnamese potters may have also used the 'chocolate bottom' to cover up the unglazed part of Vietnamese ceramics, which would have revealed a not-so-white clay body as compared to the ones from China. Alternatively, it was intentionally colored brown to protect the foot ring from the glaze. The final theory is that the 'chocolate bottom' could have been used to protect the unglazed clay body from the environmental impacts of the humid climate in Vietnam.

In 1974, while working with the catalog of the National Museum of Indonesia, Lammers noted the variety in the appearance of these chocolate bottoms, concluding that there was no standard color used and that the application technique varied from object to object. In general, it was applied with a brush while the object was still turning on the potter's wheel. In some pieces, the chocolate bottom was very unevenly applied, apparently sometimes purposely to produce a paler ring along the outer portion of the base.⁵²³ It was also applied in a spiral form, with the density of the color varying. Sometimes it covered the entire base, or just a part of it.⁵²⁴

The purpose of this characteristic is not clear. The 'chocolate bottom' can also be found on ceramic wares from ancient kiln sites in North Thailand. It is not clear whether the 'chocolate bottom' in Vietnam and Thailand has direct connections or was just a coincidence.⁵²⁵

Although the 'chocolate bottom' was more common in Vietnamese ceramics, this characteristic was also found in some examples in Chinese ceramics. For example, on *Song* period wares.

Firing Process

During the firing process, Vietnamese potters used stacking utensils in order to stack the unfired clay objects and to prevent them from sticking together, which left behind either a five-

⁵²² Lammers, *Annamese Ceramics in the Museum Pusat Jakarta*, 1.

⁵²³ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 130.

⁵²⁴ Lammers, *Annamese Ceramics in the Museum Pusat Jakarta*, 1.

⁵²⁵ Young, Dupoizat and Lane, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 27.

spur mark, a ring-shaped unglazed area, or an elevated ring mark from the usage of a white powder to prevent sticking. Chinese potters, on the other hand, used saggars to prevent such marks from being left behind on their ceramics, which took up a lot of room in the kilns. For reasons of saving space and expenses, Vietnamese potters did not always use saggars. As Chinese potters preferred a flawless surface, only a few Chinese ceramic objects had marks, which became characteristic of Vietnamese ceramic objects.

The application of glaze on Vietnamese ceramics also differs from the Chinese technique. For instance, the glaze on bowls seems to have been carelessly applied. The area inside the foot ring was left unglazed, and the transitional area between leading up to the glaze was uneven. This seems to be one of the reasons why the Japanese grew fond of Vietnamese ceramics for their tea ceremonies, as they placed enormous value on blemished tea bowls and other tea paraphernalia. According to Japanese belief, beauty lies in imperfection, not in perfect and homogeneous objects. The imperfections resulting from coincidental mistakes can give great vigor to a ceramic object, yet these results cannot be calculated, or the ceramic work would lose its quality of spontaneity. This preference will be further elaborated in Chapter VI: 'The Japanese tea ceremony'.

There were three methods used to stack the ceramic objects in the kilns: disc-shaped supports (unglazed stacking rings), upside-down stacking (mouth rims to mouth rims), or simply, before stacking the objects, the unfired glaze was wiped away. To use the unglazed stacking ring, the potter had to remove a circle of the freshly applied, still viscous glaze using a straightedge tool while the biscuit was on the wheel. This stacking utensil left a ring-shaped unglazed area. The use of the support continued to be popular in Vietnamese wares until the introduction of underglaze blue, whereafter the marks became rare.⁵²⁶ The typical kiln construction design is referred to as a 'frog kiln', because of their resemblance to a frog. In the kilns, during the firing process, different kinds of utensils and methods are used to stack the unfired clay bodies and to separate the unfired clay bodies with either saggars, tripods, spur discs, and firing discs. The technique of stacking ceramics during the firing process was very important, as it directly affects the outcome of the ceramic objects.

During the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties, tripods that would leave spur or ring marks on the fired objects were used. These tripods had either three, four or five stands or were simply clay discs that prevented the unfired glazed objects from sticking together (Fig. 163, 164, 165). The ring mark was used by removing a circle of the newly applied, still viscous glaze, using a straightedge tool while the object was still on the potter's wheel.⁵²⁷

Another way to keep the stacked objects from sticking together is the so-called 'white powder ring' (*bột chống dính/ vòng bột màu trắng*). A white powder was sprinkled on the still

⁵²⁶ Brown, *The Ceramics of South-East Asia: Their Dating and Identification*. Oxford in Asia studies in ceramics, 16-21.

⁵²⁷ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 35.

viscous glaze and then the other object was stacked on top. This method would leave behind a circular ring mark with the hardened white powder.⁵²⁸

In the kiln sites of *Mỹ Xá (Chu Đậu)* and *Vạn Yên (Kiếp Bạc)*, stacking rings were found, with some even still attached to the bowl. These five-spur stacking rings share many characteristics with those typical of the *Trần* dynasty. This discovery is very important because it confirms a continuation of the ceramic tradition from the late *Trần* dynasty. Later on, the potters from the *Lê* dynasty seemed to have abandoned these stacking rings, as no such type has been found that can be dated to this period.⁵²⁹

Besides stacking rings, tripods, and white powder, the unfired objects were sometimes also placed in saggars to protect them from uncontrolled heat and flying ashes. These saggars were usually flat-bottomed and made of coarse clay. They were quite heavy, and because of their sturdy nature, they were reused. As mentioned above, the ancient well made by 152 firing saggars at the back of the *Phổ Minh* temple (Fig.168). During excavations in the provinces of *Hải Dương* and *Nam Định*, saggars were also found. Noticeably, these saggars are all the same size. This could indicate the standardization of objects, at least in terms of their diameter. Although the saggars were used to protect the unfired ceramic objects from the kiln environment, the stacked objects still needed to be separated from each other. Due to the cost factor, ceramic production in Vietnam was not as meticulous as in China. The obvious markings from the tripods and dividers are clearly visible on Vietnamese ceramic objects. In China, they could afford not to fire the unfired objects densely, but not in Vietnam, as they did not have the same capacity. In Vietnam, sometimes larger jars were used as saggars, with small vessels being placed inside them. If this method were used, a ring mark would be left inside the larger jar. Sometimes wares with unglazed rims were fired mouth-to-mouth, as at the *Ding* kilns in China. The most common stacking method in Vietnam is the usage of stacking rings, tripods, or white powder.

In China, Japan, and Thailand, hollow cylindrical supports have been found. These supports were used to be able to place the ceramics higher in the kiln, where the heat was greatest.⁵³⁰ While these hollow cylindrical supports have not yet been found in Vietnam, it is likely that this technique was also used there. The kiln types in Vietnam are very similar to those in Thailand; hence, the arrangement of the unfired objects in the kilns, as well as the use of certain firing tools, such as tripods and hollow cylindrical supports, were likely also similar.

After the 'Fourth Chinese domination', Vietnam was left in turbulent times, with many factions claiming power over Vietnam. Only with the establishment of the later *Lê* dynasty was stability restored. For Vietnamese ceramic culture, the short re-occupation period of Chinese rulership could have meant that most of the traditional local shapes and designs may have

⁵²⁸ See the catalog of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* 21 DKT 12, 21 DKT 15, 21 DKT 17, 21 DKT 31, and 21 DKT 223.

⁵²⁹ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 109.

⁵³⁰ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 90-91.

been replaced by Chinese ones. The usage of saggars became common, as did the technique of stacking pieces upside-down, which consequently led to less frequent use of stacking rings, tripods, and spur supports. As such, the characteristic ring or spur marks on the objects also disappeared.⁵³¹

2. The Distribution of Ceramic Products in Northern Vietnam

Ports and waterways in general played an important part in the distribution of ceramic products, which were one of the major commodities that were carried by ship in Vietnam. As such, ceramic kiln sites in Vietnam were often built near rivers. Transportation by water reduced the risk of damage during transport, and the upswing of maritime trade facilitated the emergence of new ports all over East and Southeast Asia during the *Đại Việt* period (1054 - 1527). Furthermore, at that time, the infrastructure of Northern Vietnam was not developed, and the transport of fragile and heavy ceramics was very troublesome. For example, Bactrian camel caravans were used for transportation across Central Asia. In order to protect the fragile objects, they were placed in a container, which was then filled with a mixture of sand, earth, soya bean, and wheat. This mixture was sprinkled with water, and the mass set, becoming very hard. If the container arrived at its destination, it was sprinkled with water again, and the mixture dissolved, leaving the objects intact. Such difficulties regarding overland transportation led to a preference for the transport of ceramics via waterways.⁵³²

Vân Đồn Port

In the past, across the northern border of *Đại Việt*, the forests and mountains overlapped, and the roads were difficult. As the waterways were more convenient and safer, Vietnamese people and people from all over the world chose to travel from the North to the South by waterway. On that maritime route, *Vân Đồn* 雲屯 (northeast of present-day Vietnam) was the first stop.⁵³³

The Vietnamese place name *Vân Đồn* remains in use as a modern administrative rural district and will be used here to designate both the historic port and as a modern place name and archaeological site, with the distinction being made clear in context. According to the 'Complete Annals of *Đại Việt*', the trade port *Vân Đồn* was set up by the *Lý* dynasty in the 12th century,⁵³⁴ and it was the main port for *Đại Việt* in the *Trần* and *Lê* dynasties. The location of the main port was not randomly chosen; its remote and isolated location, gave Vietnamese rulers the

⁵³¹ May, *Verborgene Schätze - 2000 Jahre Vietnamesische Keramik*, 125.

⁵³² Carswell, *Blue&White - Chinese Porcelain around the world*, 76.

⁵³³ Minh Cường, "Vân Đồn - thương cảng sầm uất nhất Việt Nam trong bầy thế kỷ," last modified August 20, 2023, <https://vnexpress.net/van-don-thuong-cang-sam-uat-nhat-viet-nam-trong-bay-the-ky-3641633.html>.

⁵³⁴ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 4, 37, 137.

ability to have overseas trade far away from the capital. Also, *Vân Đồn* was located on the main waterway that connects Vietnam and China.⁵³⁵

The first time that the *Vân Đồn* port was mentioned was in the ‘Complete Annals of *Đại Việt*’, which states that *Lý Anh Tông* [李英宗] (1136 - 1175), the sixth ruler of the *Lý* dynasty, permitted open trading with *Trảo Oa* (Java), *Lộ Lạc* (unknown present-day location), and *Xiêm La* (Siam, present-day Thailand). The port probably operated until the 16th century. Following the establishment of other trading ports along the Vietnamese coastline, the *Vân Đồn* port slowly lost its significance and it was no longer used.⁵³⁶

In the ‘Notes Answering from the land beyond the Pass ‘*Lĩnh ngoại đại đáp*’ [嶺外代答]⁵³⁷ the following is written: “From *Châu Khâm* (present-day *Qinzhou* [欽州], a city in the southwestern province of *Guangxi*), taking the road going south west, one needs one day to *Châu Vĩnh An*, following the *Đại Bàn* compound (present-day *Kế Bào* island) to *Vĩnh Thái*, then from *Vạn Xuân* (*Vạn Kiếp* area of *Lục Đầu* river) to *Thăng Long* (the capital), it will take five days by boat.” This description was describing the most convenient sea route from present-day South China to the capital of present-day Vietnam, revealing the important trade relations between Vietnam and China.⁵³⁸

In the 12th to the 16th centuries, the trading port *Vân Đồn* was not simply a port, but a system of commercial marinas on many islands in the bay of *Bái Tử Long*. The convenient route was not only used for northern warships carrying troops to invade *Đại Việt*, but also as an international trade route. During the thousand years of northern domination, despite the massive influx of *Han* economy and culture, the valuable products of the Vietnamese people still had an allure, and merchant ships from other countries frequented *Đại Việt*. With the imperial edict of *Lý Anh Tông* in 1149, *Vân Đồn* became the first trading port of *Đại Việt*. In order to protect national security, the court stipulated those foreign ships, whether near or far, must anchor at *Vân Đồn* and were not allowed further inland. Foreigners were only allowed to trade in certain locations and were subject to state control. This system was not only executed in Vietnam, but also in China and Japan, which had certain ports specifically for foreign trade.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁵ Li Tana, “A View from the Sea: Perspectives on the Northern and Central Vietnamese Coast,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37(February 2006): 95-96, doi:10.1017/S0022463405000433.

⁵³⁶ Jun Kimura and Mark Staniforth, “Defeating the Fleet of Kublai Khan: the Bach Dang River and Van Don Naval Battlefields Research Project,” *Archeologia Postmedievale* 18 (2014): 31-32.

⁵³⁷ The ‘Notes Answering from the land beyond the Pass’ is a 12th century geographical treatise written by Zhou Qufei 周去非. The book consists of 383 pages, divided into ten volumes. It contains information on the geography, history, social custom and economy of territories of southern China, the present-day province of *Guangxi*. More significantly it also provides knowledge of distant lands in China during the *Song* dynasty, and includes descriptions of oversea states as far away as Africa and southern Spain. Of relevance are two chapters in the book, which describe how to reach *Jiaozhi* (present-day North Vietnam) through waterways.

Qiong Zhang, *Making the New World Their Own: Chinese Encounters with Jesuit Science in the Age of Discovery* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 132-135.

⁵³⁸ Cương, “Vân Đồn.”

⁵³⁹ Cương, “Vân Đồn.”

The Lý dynasty (1010 - 1225) introduced many policies to encourage foreign trade, leading to the development of trade in *Vân Đồn*. Goods exported by foreign ships were mainly agarwood, pearls, ivory, cinnamon bark, rhinoceros horn, gold, silver, copper, saltpeter, and seafood. Imported foreign goods included brocade. Foreign trade was exclusively controlled by the state, and the private sector was not allowed to participate. By the Trần dynasty (1225-1400), the world market for spices was vibrant, and the navigation of the sea route from China to Egypt pushed up the pace of international trade. The commercial port at *Vân Đồn* was consequently vibrant, expanding its trade with many countries such as Japan, Mongolia, the Philippines, as well as with Europe. The preservation and management of foreign trade in the *Vân Đồn* area was assigned by King Trần to high-ranking princes and ministers, the most prominent among them being Prince *Nhân Huệ Trần Khánh Dư* [陳慶餘], a prominent general of the *Đại Việt* army against the second and third invasions of the Yuan dynasty. He was considered one of the most skilled commanders of the Trần navy who was credited with the victory of Đại Việt in the Battle of *Vân Đồn* in 1287. At this time, *Vân Đồn* was closely guarded, with wooden fences being erected around the island's key shops and beaches. *Trần Khánh Dư* also prevented Chinese troops from infiltrating *Vân Đồn*. In addition to trading, the Trần kings also built many large-scale pagodas and towers, such as the temple of *Lám, Trong, Cát,* and *Bảo Tháp* in the *Thống Lợi* commune to meet the religious needs of residents, traders, and merchants.⁵⁴⁰

During the early Lê dynasty (1428 - 1527), many strict policies towards foreign trade were implemented, with the court very clearly regulating operations in *Vân Đồn* commercial port. These regulations were laid out in the so-called *Hồng Đức Code*, the code of law issued during the regency of King *Lê Thánh Tông* [黎聖宗] (1442 - 1497). Foreign ships that wanted to come to the *Vân Đồn* site to trade and who wanted to stay for long periods were required to submit a request to the authorities. If they did not follow this rule, they were fined. Due to this strict control, commercial activities in *Vân Đồn* were lower than in the Lý and Trần dynasties, but still occupied an important position under the early Lê dynasty.⁵⁴¹

In contrast, by the Mạc dynasty (1527 - 1677), with their open-door policy of trade, foreign trade activities at the *Vân Đồn* trading port flourished again. During the *Lê trung hưng* period (1533-1789) (also called the Later Lê Restoration period), trade in *Vân Đồn* was still very active. At the end of the 17th century, *Kẻ Chợ (Thăng Long)*, *Phố Hiến (Hưng Yên)*, and *Hội An (Quảng Nam)* opened their doors to merchant ships from China, Japan, the Netherlands, and England. The *Vân Đồn* commercial port lost its role as a commercial center. Foreign trade activities still took place, but were no longer as active. By the early 19th century, during the

⁵⁴⁰ Cương, "Vân Đồn."

⁵⁴¹ Cương, "Vân Đồn."

Nguyễn dynasty (1802 - 1945), the *Vân Đồn* trading port was no longer active. Residents of some ancient wharves moved to other places, and the treasures of the yards were gradually damaged. Commercial marinas were transformed into wharves to serve the local demand for fishing. Over time, and with the sedimentation of the sea, the formerly bustling commercial port of old *Vân Đồn* was no longer visible.

Currently, on the shores of the ancient marinas, there are still millions of pieces of broken or intact pottery, house floors, communal houses, and pagoda floors.⁵⁴² The first documented major excavation was performed by Japanese scholar Tatsuro Matsumoto between 1936 and 1938. Further surface surveys were conducted by Vietnamese archeologists. The discoveries so far indicate that trade continued at least until the 18th century, and the ceramic sherds date broadly from the 14th to the 18th centuries.⁵⁴³

Phố Hiến Port

By the latter half of the 16th century, as the emperors of the *Lê* dynasty became powerless puppet rulers, the actual reins of authority were held by the *Trịnh* clan [主鄭] in northern Vietnam, and the *Nguyễn* clan [主阮] in the central regions of the south, the former land of Champa. Also, as European countries began to participate in maritime Asian trade, the northern part of Vietnam under the *Trịnh* clan came to be called *Tonkin*. The VOC established a *Tonkin* factory (trading post) in 1637. Around this time, *Phố Hiến* [庸憲] began functioning as a distribution base for Vietnam and its role as a trade port.⁵⁴⁴

The name *Phố Hiến* first appeared at the end of the 15th century during the regency of *Lê Thánh Tông*. However, it was not until the 17th century that *Phố Hiến* became a political-economic center with many international exchanges. At the peak of commercial trade in *Phố Hiến*, ships from China, Japan, Spain, Portugal, England, France, and the Netherlands arrived. In the past, *Phố Hiến* was located close to the left bank of the Red River, but due to alluvial deposition, today it is about two km from the river. By river, *Phố Hiến* is 55 km from *Hà Nội*. Previously, it took about two days from *Thăng Long* to go down to *Phố Hiến* by boat, and vice versa, three days upstream from *Phố Hiến* to the capital. The location of *Phố Hiến* had a particularly important role for waterway traffic routes of the Red River-*Thái Bình* River system located in the Northern Delta. By waterway, from *Phố Hiến*, it was possible to reach most localities in *Son Nam*, *Hải Dương*, and *An Quảng*. Along with river trade routes, coastal trade routes have linked *Phố Hiến* with markets further afield. Since the *Trần* dynasty, Chinese

⁵⁴² Cương, "Vân Đồn."

⁵⁴³ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 50.

⁵⁴⁴ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 93.

traders in *Xích Đằng* have had connections with the ports of *Hội Triều* (*Thanh Hoá*), *Cần Hải*, and *Hội Thống* (*Nghệ An*).

The trading artery of *Phố Hiến* is the *Xích Đằng* River and the *Nhị Hà* River section that flows close to *Phố Hiến*. This is the transit and convergence point of the river routes from the East Sea to the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. The *Phố Hiến* port is where foreign ships stopped to check in and apply for permits to proceed to the capital. Along with the river port were some busy markets, such as the *Vạn* market at *Xích Đằng* wharf, and the *Hiến* market next to *Son Nam* capital. These markets went beyond the framework of local markets to transport goods into inter-regional markets. Boats from *Thăng Long - Kẻ Chợ* and towns near and far in the country, as well as abroad, came here to trade and exchange goods. During the 17th century, the Dutch (1637 - 1700) and the English (1672 - 1683) trading posts were set up in *Phố Hiến*. This was the representative office and warehouse of the Dutch and British East India Companies.⁵⁴⁵

Notably, the architecture in the region of the *Phố Hiến* port was a mix of Vietnamese and Chinese architectural styles (with the nuances of *Fujian* province in southern China) as well as European architectural styles, like the Gothic *Phố Hiến* Christian church. Just like in other Vietnamese cities, besides brick and tile architecture, most houses are made of bamboo and wood. Historically, *Phố Hiến* was a multi-national city in which the majority were Vietnamese and Chinese. Other foreigners here were Japanese, Siamese (Thai), Portuguese, Dutch, British, and French. Most of the Vietnamese living in *Phố Hiến* came from other localities to live and do business. Besides the Vietnamese community, a large number of Chinese people have come to reside in *Phố Hiến*. This Chinese community established many shops, which sold the required goods for their daily life, and they built many communal houses, temples, pagodas, shrines, and halls to worship Chinese gods. When trade between Western countries and *Phố Hiến* declined, the Chinese merchants remained, almost monopolizing foreign trade activities. At this time, there was also the phenomenon of some Chinese traders in *Phố Hiến* migrating to *Thăng Long* - the capital. To this day, there are still 14 families of Chinese descendants living in *Phố Hiến*. The Japanese also came to *Phố Hiến* in the early 17th century. They often brought silver and copper to buy in exchange for silk or silk fabrics. Others were Japanese missionaries and laity, who followed and served Western missionaries who came to *Hà Nội* to preach. Because they lived in Vietnam for a long time, these Japanese people often did several jobs, such as navigating ships to the river mouth, interpreting, and brokering.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁵ "Phố Hiến," Department of Culture, last modified August 27, 2023, <https://sovhntdl.hungyen.gov.vn/portal/Pages/2019-3-15/Pho-Hien-tinh-Hung-Yen-trong-lich-suqfo66a.aspx>.

⁵⁴⁶ Department of Culture, "Phố Hiến."

In 1650 and 1663, the Lê dynasty tried to confine foreigners to live in settlements and forbade Christianity. In 1687, legal restrictions were strengthened, prohibiting foreigners from living in the capital without permission or chaperones. Following these restrictions, the Chinese community collectively moved to *Phố Hiến*, and for a time, a lively business district flourished from the end of the 17th into the 18th century.⁵⁴⁷

Besides the Chinese and Japanese, in *Phố Hiến*, other Asian traders came from Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Apart from the Dutch and British, some Portuguese and French traders also came to *Phố Hiến*. The Portuguese were the earliest Westerners in *Phố Hiến*. They were independent traders and did not set up a company. Many French people also lived in *Phố Hiến* in the 80s of the 17th century. The trading post of the French-Indian Company was established in *Phố Hiến* in 1680. The Dutch merchants were the earliest Westerners to set up shop in *Phố Hiến*. In the first decades, the Dutch trading business in *Phố Hiến* went smoothly and was favored by the Lê - *Trịnh* rulers over other foreigners. After the *Trịnh - Nguyễn* war ended, the *Trịnh* Lords gradually showed a cold attitude towards the Netherlands, adding to the competition of other Western merchants, especially the British. The British arrived at *Phố Hiến* later than the Dutch. In the early years, the British trading house in *Phố Hiến* was relatively prosperous, competing with the Dutch and Chinese merchants, partly thanks to William Gyfford, an English trade representative and the first chief factor of the English East India Company's factory in Tonkin.⁵⁴⁸

Today, *Phố Hiến* still preserves many valuable historical and cultural relics, such as the Temple of Clouds in *Xích Đằng*, the *Trần* temple (worshiping *Trần Hưng Đạo*), and the Temple of Literature in *Xích Đằng*. There are also many communal houses and temples. Many festivals associated with the relics are maintained every year, recreating the image of *Phố Hiến* several hundred years ago, attracting tens of thousands of domestic and foreign tourists.⁵⁴⁹

3. Trade Currency

It is not clear if trade in Vietnam was conducted as barter, with coins, or with another currency. However, besides ceramic objects, coins from various Chinese dynasties were discovered in the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. These findings suggest economic and social interactions between the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* and China.⁵⁵⁰ Furthermore, in *Jingdezhen*, the introduction of the silver cash tax system in 1570 replaced the old system of corvée labor, so that artisans and owners of workshops could be more flexible with their allocation of time and labor. The large pool of available labor in *Jiangxi* meant that the owners of kilns at *Jingdezhen* could respond to the varying demands for porcelain with great flexibility. In addition to the

⁵⁴⁷ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 246.

⁵⁴⁸ Department of Culture, "Phố Hiến."

⁵⁴⁹ Department of Culture, "Phố Hiến."

⁵⁵⁰ Tống and Bùi, *Thăng Long – Hà Nội Thousand-Year History Underground*, 45.

changed tax system, the import of large quantities of silver from Spanish mines in Mexico (via Manila in the Philippines) and mines in Japan to China in the late 16th century had an enormous impact on all craft industries, including the ceramic, furniture, and silk industries.⁵⁵¹

This system may have also been used in Vietnam. In addition to the Chinese coins in circulation, coins with square holes had been cast since the time of the *Đinh* dynasty.⁵⁵² Coins were also issued in the *Lý* dynasty, but since finds at sites are rare, the circulation volume was probably very low, and mainly Chinese coins were in circulation. Vietnam issued a truly wide variety of cash coins over a 1000-year period that rival those issued in China. The Historical Cash Coins of Vietnam is the definitive reference on the official cash coins issued from 960 CE to the early 20th century. Coins were the most important imports in the Revival Lê dynasty, which were initially brought in by Japanese merchant ships. When the Japanese were banned from traveling overseas due to the isolation policy *Sakoku* [鎖國] (locked country), Chinese merchants or the VOC (Dutch East India Company) took over the transport, and trade was conducted within the Asian trading area. The VOC paid for raw silk from northern Vietnam with Japanese silver, but when the Edo Shogunate stopped silver exports, payment was made with copper coins, and in the 1660s-1670s, there was a massive influx of coins from Japan. Until the first half of the 15th century, the Northern *Song* dynasty was the main form of currency. From the mid-15th to the 17th centuries, distribution extended south to central Vietnam, suggesting that the use of coins spread to more peripheral areas. Although these are not mass finds, coins have been found together with Chinese and Hizen ceramics in graves in the mountainous region of *Lâm Đồng* Province. Coins acquired through barter and exchange of forest products with coastal regions are rarely found in such mountainous regions, and it is difficult to imagine that they were used as a means of payment for transactions in the mountains.⁵⁵³

In Vietnam, the government issued coins only sporadically, leading to a persistent shortage of means of payment. The coin shortage continued into the 15th century and was exacerbated by the *Ming* dynasty's occupation in 1427. However, imported Chinese coins continued to dominate local markets in Vietnam. The Portuguese merchant Tomé Pires, who was in Melaka in 1512-15, reported that in North and Central Vietnam, Chinese coins were used for everyday purchases, while commercial transactions and overseas trade were conducted using foreign gold and silver coins. A Jesuit missionary who visited *Hà Nội* in 1627 reported that there were generally two types of coins in circulation there: large coins imported

⁵⁵¹ Little, "Economic Change in Seventeenth-Century China and Innovations at the Jingdezhen Kilns," 49-50.

⁵⁵² Vietnamese cash is a cast round coin with a square hole that was the official currency of Vietnam from the *Đinh* dynasty in 970 to the *Nguyễn* dynasty in 1945. Although the majority of Vietnamese cash coins throughout history were copper coins, lead, iron (from 1528), and zinc coins (from 1740) were also in circulation alongside them, often at fluctuating rates. The cash coins produced in Vietnam typically carried the era name of the period it was produced in.

"Coins," Coins and Banknotes of Vietnam and French Indochina, last modified June 18, 2024, <https://art-hanoi.com/todoa/06>.

⁵⁵³ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 217-218, 226.

by Chinese and Japanese traders and accepted throughout the Vietnamese empire, and small native coins circulated only in the immediate vicinity of the royal capital. Vietnam suffered from a never-ending shortage of cash and was heavily dependent on imported coins. The coin shortage was particularly critical during the period of strong growth of maritime trade in the 16th and 17th centuries. Japan became the source of new coins, which consisted almost exclusively of privately issued imitations of Chinese coins.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁴ Richard von Glahn, "Chinese Coin and Changes in Monetary Preferences in Maritime East Asia in the Fifteenth-Seventeenth Centuries," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 57, no. 5 (2014): 637-640, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43303607>.

Chapter V

The Ceramic Collection

For the purpose of accompanying this dissertation, a catalog has been compiled. It is referenced throughout the text and is intended to assist the reader in visualizing the objects discussed. Readers who wish to consult it will find it labeled as Volume 2: Catalog. The access to the objects was hard to obtain, but in the end, it was possible to compile an assemblage, which can help answer many questions relating to the Chinese Cultural Sphere in Vietnam and serves as a visual Indicator for cultural encounters between Vietnam and China.

1. The Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long Collection

Historical Context and Building History

The Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* was built in the year 1010 by the Vietnamese emperor *Lý Thái Tổ*, marking the independence of the *Đại Việt*. The land on which the new citadel was built was of great historical importance. Hundreds of years before its construction, this site had been marked by power struggles between Vietnam and China. It was built on the remains of a Chinese fortress — that is also known as *Đại La Citadel* and dates back to the 7th century — on drained land reclaimed from the Red River Delta in *Hà Nội*. The Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* was an area, which consisted of several walls, gates, and building complexes. These building complexes served, inter alia, as residences for the royal family and a reception hall. The buildings of the Imperial Citadel and the remains in the 18 *Hoàng Diệu* Archeological Site reflect a culture that was at the crossroads of impacts coming from China in the north and the ancient Kingdom of Champa in the south. It expresses a set of intercultural exchanges in Vietnam. Different archeological levels and monuments are evidence of different administrations. The Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, with its political function and symbolic role, is associated with numerous important cultural and historical events, in relation to philosophical, artistic, and religious ideas. For these reasons, UNESCO granted the Imperial Citadel a World Heritage Status in 2010. The Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* was the residence of the Vietnamese rulers from the *Lý* to *Lê* dynasties. The rulers of the *Nguyễn* dynasty (1802 - 1945) abandoned it in the 19th century and decided to move their residence to *Huế*. In 1887, the French colonizers took over the former imperial residence and used the buildings for their needs. Most of the structures were destroyed in the 19th century and are now being restored and rediscovered.⁵⁵⁵

The historical site nowadays consists of the '18 *Hoàng Diệu*' archeological site (next to the Vietnam National Assembly), the *Ba Đình Square* (the site, where *Hồ Chí Minh* once

⁵⁵⁵ "Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi," UNESCO, last modified August 09, 2018, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1328>.

proclaimed the Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945), the Citadel itself, including the Flag Tower, *Đoan Môn* Gate (Main Gate), *Kính Thiên* Palace, the Dragon Steps, *Hậu Lâu* Palace and *Chính Bắc Môn* (North Gate) (Fig. 93), the modern military citadel, the military history museum, the presidential palace and *Hồ Chí Minh's* mausoleum.

At the end of the 19th century, when the French colonizers demolished parts of the Imperial Citadel, they accidentally found artifacts from the 7th century to the *Nguyễn* dynasty. However, archeological excavations did not occur. The artifacts, which have been found during the demolition process, were later studied by Henri Ernest Jean Parmentier (1871 - 1949)⁵⁵⁶, a French architect, art historian, and archeologist, René Mercier (1886 - 1974), a French engraver; and Louis Bezacier (1906 - 1966)⁵⁵⁷, a French architect, art historian, and ethnologist. Since the 1970s, Vietnamese archeologists have gradually studied the Imperial Citadel. During the excavation process the attention was given to the cultural strata. The cultural strata contain the cultural remnants from human activities in the past, thus it reflects the history and culture of humans. The thicker the strata, the longer the inhabitants stayed. The cultural strata at the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* has many different cultural layers, which can be divided into: The cultural stratum of the *Hoà Bình* culture, which is about 0.7m to 1.5m thick; the *Phùng Nguyên* culture stratum, which is about 0.7m to 2m thick; the *Động Đầu* [洞頭區] culture stratum, especially the *Vườn Chuối* site, which is about 0.2m to 0.7m thick; the *Đông Sơn* culture stratum, with a depth of 1.6m upwards; the *Đình-pre-Lê* stratum is 0.24m thick; the *Lý* culture stratum is 0.58m to 0.64m thick; the *Trần* culture stratum is 0.36m thick; the Revival *Lê* culture stratum is 0.7m thick; and the stratum from the 19th to early 20th century is 0.7m thick. In general, the layers that overlapped, interrupted, and continuously connected each other for more than a thousand years are the most complicated to study.⁵⁵⁸

Besides the historical importance of the location where the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* is built on, it is also a favorable location to facilitate trade and the exchange of goods. The Red River is the starting point of numerous land and sea-based trade routes out into the many provinces in Vietnam and the maritime trade network in Asia.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁶ Henri Ernest Jean Parmentier was recruited by the EFEO when it was established. Even after his retirement in 1933 until he died in Phnom Penh, he remained attached to the EFEO. Of all the members of the EFEO, he was the most active. From 1909, he directed the construction of the first museum, which was set up in *Hà Nội*. The museum in *Đà Nẵng* (present-day central Vietnam) was even named after him.

Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin, *A Century in Asia The History of the École française d'Extrême-Orient 1898-2006*, 103.

⁵⁵⁷ Louis Bezacier was appointed to the EFEO in 1935, he took the role as the curator of the monuments of North Vietnam. He was known for his restoration works, for instance, he perfected the process of completely dismantling and reassembling wooden structures, he could even replace worm-eaten wood.

Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin, *A Century in Asia The History of the École française d'Extrême-Orient 1898-2006*, 93.

⁵⁵⁸ Tổng, *Văn hiến Thăng Long - Bằng chứng khảo cổ học Thăng Long Civilization - Archaeological Evidence*, 31-37.

⁵⁵⁹ Phan Huy Lê, "The Global Values Of The Central Area Of The Thăng Long Imperial Citadel," *Vietnam Archaeology*, Number 5 (2010): 19.

The architectural hybrid design and style of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* showcase the influence of Chinese and Indian culture, but also the indigenous interpretation of these influences. For instance, the Vietnamese followed the Chinese theory of *fengshui* 風水 (the science of winds and waters and their harmonious synergy). When Emperor *Lý Thái Tổ* chose *Thăng Long* as the new capital for his empire, he took into consideration that the location of *Hà Nội* has many lakes and rivers. According to his interpretation, the chosen location was sacred, as it was protected through the Red River, which surrounds the city on the left (East), and the *Tản* Mountain, which shields the city on the right (West).⁵⁶⁰

Buddhism plays an essential role in the visualization of the Chinese and Indian influence. This religion came from India, but the Vietnamese adopted the Chinese interpretation of Buddhism. Especially during the *Tang* dynasty, when Buddhism flourished in China, it was dramatically introduced into Vietnam. In Vietnam, Buddhism reached its peak during the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties. The spreading took place throughout society and profoundly affected the entire cultural life of the Vietnamese people. Most emperors during the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties practiced Buddhism, resulting in the construction of pagodas and temples. The site of the Imperial Citadel and 18 *Hoàng Diệu* reflect the adoption of Buddhism. Many images of Buddhist towers and patterns of Bodhi leaves and lotus flowers, which are the hallmarks of Buddhist art, were discovered. Direct Indian influence can be seen in the depiction of apsaras (female spirits of clouds and waters), the *nāga* like (Sanskrit word for a deity in the form of a snake) appearance of dragons, and Sanskrit character inscriptions on bricks.⁵⁶¹

As aforementioned, in 1802, the *Gia Long* emperor [嘉隆帝] (1762 - 1820) moved the capital from *Hà Nội* to *Huế*. His reason may be in recognition of his desire to unite the North and South. Apparently, the imperial palace in *Huế*, its adjacent buildings, and gates were patterned after the style of 17th-century French architect Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633 - 1707).⁵⁶²

Another reason for the relocation from *Hà Nội* to *Huế* could be the domination of the *Nguyễn* clan over present-day South Vietnam. While the *Trịnh* lords [主鄭] ruled over present-day Northern Vietnam and used the *Lê* rulers as puppet rulers, the *Nguyễn* clan ruled from present-day *Huế*. After the *Tây Sơn*⁵⁶³ rebellion defeated both the *Nguyễn* and *Trịnh* clans,

⁵⁶⁰ Lê, "The Global Values Of The Central Area Of The Thăng Long Imperial Citadel," 20.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, 23.

⁵⁶² Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 106.

⁵⁶³ The *Tây Sơn* dynasty was a short-lived dynasty established after the *Tây Sơn* Rebellion in the 18th century. The *Tây Sơn* Rebellion was led by peasants. The rebellion started in South Vietnam by 3 brothers from the village of *Tây Sơn* in 1771 against corruption, misrule of the *Nguyễn* rulers and the demand for land distribution for the poor. After the defeat of the *Nguyễn* lords, they also attacked and defeated the *Trịnh* lords in North Vietnam. Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 232-233.

and established their short-lived dynasty, the *Nguyễn* clan regained their power and henceforth ruled Vietnam from *Huế*.⁵⁶⁴

It is not very clear whether the artifacts of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, including ceramics, architectural elements, coins, knives, etc., which have been excavated from the area of the Royal complex in *Hà Nội*, were handed down from generation to generation. It is very likely that with the moving of the capital during the last Vietnamese imperial dynasty the valuable contents were moved to *Huế*. Unlike the treasures from the National Palace Museum in Beijing and Taipei, all the artifacts, which are currently located in the Museum of the Imperial Citadel and the Institute of Imperial Citadel Studies, have been excavated. In contrast, staff members of the National Palace Museum in Beijing have saved treasures from the former Forbidden City since the demise of Imperial China. The staff members had the duty to prevent the treasures from falling into the hands of the Imperial Japanese Army. Because experts were in control of the transportation of the artifacts, they were packed professionally so that all artifacts survived the tumultuous travel. It is not very clear whether the Imperial Vietnamese rulers cherished artifacts in the way like their Chinese counterparts did and whether the Vietnamese also had an Imperial Collection of treasures. There are no written records of this activity. Furthermore, it is not clear which treasures the first *Nguyễn* emperor took with him when he moved his imperial residence to *Huế*, and whether his descendants inherited his bequest, including the ceramics.

The Excavation Site

In 1998, permission to excavate around the *Hậu Lâu* Palace and *Chính Bắc Môn* (North Gate) area was granted to the excavation team, and in 2000, they were allowed to excavate around the area of the *Đoan Môn* Gate (Main Gate).⁵⁶⁵

During the first major excavations from 2002 to 2009, led by the Institute of Archaeology of the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, real treasures were found. Potteries from several dynasties were found in an area of more than 33,000m² (Fig. 94, 95, 96). The type and origin of the artifacts were exceedingly diverse. The kind of pottery found included a variety of glazed terracotta. The origins of the pottery varied from Vietnamese, Chinese, and Japanese to West Asia. Besides pottery, artifacts, and relics from pre-*Thăng Long* to the *Nguyễn* dynasty were discovered. The excavations reveal the former splendor of the Imperial Citadel. Water wells⁵⁶⁶ (Fig. 97 and 98), drainage systems, construction material, porcelain and ceramic wares,

⁵⁶⁴ Nguyen, "Thang Long in historical breadth," 193.

⁵⁶⁵ Tong Trung Tin and Bui Tuyet Mai, "Forbidden City - Imperial Citadel through excavations," in *Hoàng Thành Thăng Long – Thang Long Imperial Citadel*, ed. Tổng Trung Tín (Hanoi: The Culture Information Publishing House, 2006), 13.

⁵⁶⁶ Having a well in the Imperial Citadel in Hà Nội made the Vietnamese imperial court a highly developed culture, equal to the 'Forbidden City' in Beijing (China), the palace in Nara (Japan) and the palace in Sila (Korea). The well is the most civilized water source of the high-class in ancient society. The 'commoners' just shared water from their villages' wells, ponds or rivers. Van Anh Nguyen and Pham Văn Trieu, "Wells in the Imperial Citadel," in *Hoàng Thành Thăng Long – Thang Long Imperial Citadel*, ed. Tổng Trung Tín (Hanoi: The Culture Information Publishing House, 2006), 131.

utensils of the Royal family, weapons, copper coins, and traces of ponds exemplify this splendor. In total, there have been 24 wells discovered dating from different periods, from the *Đại La* period (618 - 906) to the *Lê* dynasty. Some of these wells contained ceramic and terracotta vessels. All the bricks were arranged like fish bone and the bottom was paved with square bricks. Moreover, the archeologists were able to identify 95 building foundations, 16 encircling walls, and 33 sewers. The construction materials, such as tiles, paving bricks, and column plates, show the impact of Chinese culture, but with Vietnamese adaptations. Apart from the bricks that were manufactured in Vietnam with Chinese characteristics, the excavations also revealed bricks that were manufactured in China and imported to Vietnam. The findings are a lively and convincing demonstration of the many aspects of the social, cultural, and economic life of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* throughout history. Over recent decades, Vietnamese researchers have performed many archeological investigations at Neolithic and Metal Age sites scattered throughout northern Vietnam. The mounting data have served to refine our understanding of the region's prehistory, resulting in important ramifications for the underpinnings of life in the Imperial Citadel. Of all the archeological sites in Vietnam, it is the only site that features such a long and uninterrupted history and culture as the national seat of Power.⁵⁶⁷

The excavation work from 2002 to the end of 2003 was carried out on a 40,000m². The site is located on *Hoàng Diệu* Street in the *Ba Đình* district in *Hà Nội*. About 20,000m² were excavated and divided into four sections: A, B, C, and D. Each of the sections was dug in about four meters. At a depth of one meter underground is the most recent cultural stratum. In this stratum, artifacts from the 19th to 20th centuries (*Nguyễn* dynasty) have been unearthed. These artifacts consisted of two wells built of stone and bricks, ceramic bowls, plates, jars, containers, incense burners, and bottles. The different colored glazes (blue, white, gray, etc.) and different decorative patterns (flowers, bamboo, etc.) revealed that these ceramic objects must have been produced in *Phù Lãng* and *Bát Tràng*. At a depth of one to two meters, the artifacts are attributed to the 15th to 18th centuries (*Lê - Mạc* dynasty). In this stratum, the artifacts consisted of fragments of brick foundations from buildings, ceramic bowls, plates, jars, jugs, cups, pots, food containers, and lime-pots. Most of the uncovered objects exhibit 5-clawed dragons, '*Trùng Lạc* [長櫟]' or '*Trùng lạc khố* [長櫟褱]' inscriptions, which indicate that these artifacts belonged to the royal family. At a depth of two to three meters, the artifacts are attributed to the 11th to 14th centuries (*Lý - Trần* dynasty). During the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties,

⁵⁶⁷ Phan Huy Lê, Quang Ngọc Nguyễn, Trung Tín Tổng and Văn Sơn Nguyễn, *Khu Trung tâm Hoàng Thành Thăng Long - Hà Nội - Di sản văn hóa thế giới. The Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hà Nội - A World Heritage Site*, (Hanoi: Publishing House, 2010), 36, 77.

the ceramics shared many similarities. In this stratum, the artifacts consisted of the foundation of ancient buildings (typical *Lý - Trần* stone column bases with lotus decorations), foundations with brick-paved edges, red brick wells, a square pond filled with construction materials, ceramic bowls, boxes with covers, lamp-plates, replicas of towers, big jars, and pots. Again, the decorations indicate that these ceramic objects belonged to the royal family. In addition, the uncovered bricks are carved with Chinese characters showing that they were produced in 1057. At a depth of three to four meters, the artifacts are attributed to the *Đại La* period, when Northern Vietnam was ruled by the Chinese *Tang* dynasty. This stratum consisted of artifacts from the 7th to 10th centuries, primarily the 9th century.⁵⁶⁸

The structure of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long

The Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* was constructed with three rings of fortifications, which were named *Đại La* Citadel, Imperial Citadel⁵⁶⁹, and Forbidden Citadel. In between these fortifications, the respective rulers built palaces, pavilions, pagodas, temples, and shrines, which served as working and residential quarters for the royal family and the imperial court. Nowadays, there is not much left of this former magnificence. Wars and colonial times destroyed the former residence of the Vietnamese rulers.⁵⁷⁰

The Forbidden Citadel, which was called *Tử Cấm Thành*, was the smallest and most inner enclosure where the king, queens, and concubines lived in seclusion. Apart from the royal residence, the royal court conducted their work, audiences were given, and ceremonies were carried out. The Forbidden Citadel was entered by a single gate called *Đoan Môn* Gate (Main Gate). The Imperial Citadel, which was called *Hoàng Thành*, was the second fort (the middle ring), where the royal court, offices, and residences of mandarins were located. Under the *Lý*, *Tran*, and *Lê* dynasties, the Imperial Citadel was entered through four entrances. During the *Nguyễn* dynasty emperor *Gia Long* then ordered the demolition of the walls surrounding the ancient *Thăng Long* citadel, reasoning that it only acted as a northern defensive fortification, and requested the building of a new, smaller citadel called *Hà Nội* citadel. The outer fort was *Kinh Thành* (imperial city), where the general public lived.⁵⁷¹

According to the 'Abridged Chronicles of *Đại Việt*', during the reign of *Lý Thái Tổ*, the *Càn Nguyên* palace was the center of the Forbidden Citadel. Only during the reign of *Lê Thái Tổ* 黎太祖 (1385 - 1433), the *Càn Nguyên* Palace was renamed as *Kính Thiên* Palace. The *Kính Thiên* Palace served as an audience hall.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁸ Tổng Trung Tín, "Vestiges of different historical periods," *Vietnam Cultural Window*, no. 80 (2005): 8-9.

⁵⁶⁹ Originally it was named *Long Phượng* (Dragon and Phoenix) Citadel. It has been referred to as 'Imperial Citadel' since the 15th century.

⁵⁷⁰ Tổng and Bùi, *Thăng Long – Hà Nội Thousand-Year History Underground*, 40.

⁵⁷¹ "Citadel," *Fact and Details*, last modified August 10, 2021, https://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Vietnam/sub5_9j/entry-6601.html.

⁵⁷² Tong and Bui, "Forbidden City - Imperial Citadel through excavations," 14.

The *Cần Nguyên* Palace, as the center of the Forbidden Citadel, was the most important piece of architecture where the king gave audiences and conducted royal ceremonies. It was built on Mount *Nùng*, and in addition, its architecture bore sacred geomantic patterns.⁵⁷³

In 1788, Emperor *Quang Trung* [光中] (1753 - 1792), also known as *Nguyễn Huệ* [阮惠], the second emperor of the *Tây Sơn* dynasty, moved the capital from *Hà Nội* to *Phú Xuân* [富春] (renamed *Huế*). The Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* became the headquarters of *Bắc Thành* [北城] (North Citadel), which was responsible for administering eleven districts in Northern Vietnam. In 1802, when the *Nguyễn* rulers came to power, *Phú Xuân* was still their capital. As aforementioned, Emperor *Gia Long* even destroyed the Forbidden Citadel and part of the other citadel complexes. He ordered the construction of a new citadel in the style of Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban, a French military engineer, famous for his principles for fortifications. The new citadel was built on a north-south axis, similar to the Forbidden Citadel. The Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* was renamed *Hà Nội* Citadel, which was the headquarters of the established province *Hà Nội*. The *Hà Nội* Citadel was used as temporary lodging whenever the *Nguyễn* rulers visited the north or received foreign ambassadors.⁵⁷⁴

Nowadays, only parts of the former palaces remain. For instance, the main gate is nearly intact, and from the *Kính Thiên* Palace, only ruins of steps and palace foundation remain (Fig. 81 and 82). During the French colonization at the end of the 19th century, French colonialists destroyed the *Kính Thiên* royal step-over palace and built a headquarters of artillery. After October 10th, 1954, when the Vietnamese Army took over the capital, this area became the headquarters of the Ministry of Defense. The dragon steps of the *Kính Thiên* Palace were a masterpiece, representing the sculpture of the early *Lê* dynasty. The dragons at the staircase were carved with green rock, big heads, round, convex eyes, long horns, a mane gliding back, and a half-open mouth holding a gem. The bodies of the dragons formed many small waves, and they got smaller toward the palace foundation; on the back, there was a long fin heaving like clouds or fire. The overall appearance of the dragons resembled Chinese dragons, away from the *nāga* like appearance.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷³ Lê, *The Global Values Of The Central Area Of The Thăng Long Imperial Citadel*, 12.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 14-15.

⁵⁷⁵ "Kính Thiên Palace," Hoàng Thành Thăng Long, last modified August 03, 2018, <http://www.hoangthanhthanglong.vn/en/dien-kinh-thien/1391>.

The Kinh Thiên Palace

The *Kinh Thiên* Palace is a central relic among the overall relics of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. It was the central Audience Hall and the most important palace, where the most solemn ceremonies of the royal court were held, where foreign envoys were welcomed, and where important national affairs were held in court. According to the ‘Complete Annals of *Đại Việt*’, *Kinh Thiên* Palace was built in 1428 during the reign of *Lê Thái Tổ* and completed during the reign of *Lê Thánh Tông*. *Lê Thái Tổ* named the Audience Palace *Can Nguyễn* as the center of heaven and earth, where he sat on the throne to rule the country. Succeeding the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties, the *Lê* dynasty continued to construct the fortress system.⁵⁷⁶

In 1802, when the Nguyễn rulers transferred the capital to *Huế*, the *Kinh Thiên* Palace was reduced to a temporary lodgment for the rulers when they were on inspection tours to the north.⁵⁷⁷

Currently, a team of experts is trying to restore the *Kinh Thiên* Palace construction using archaeological findings and research results of this area. In December of 2023, a part of the splendid main hall architecture was animated, and an exhibition took place at the Hanoi Museum.

1.1 The Ceramic Collection of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*

Ceramic Objects

The collection of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* consists not only of Vietnamese ceramics but also Chinese and other ceramics from Japan and West Asia. Currently, it is impossible to say how many Chinese, Vietnamese, and other ceramic objects are in the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. The reason is that there is still ongoing research on ceramic shards. Undamaged ceramic objects are open to the public in the exhibition of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. The discovery of all the artifacts during the excavation has raised many questions, such as the role, function, social context, etc., of the objects used in the royal warehouses, kitchens, accommodations, halls, etc. Sometimes it is hard to answer these questions, as identifying typical features, dates, provenances, and so on cannot be answered because the historical, social, and cultural context is missing.

Vietnamese Ceramics

The ceramic objects that were found during the excavation works can be divided into different periods: pre-*Thăng Long*, *Lý*, *Trần*, and *Lê* dynasty.

⁵⁷⁶ Hoàng Thành Thăng Long, “Kinh Thiên Palace.”

⁵⁷⁷ Lê, Khu Trung tâm Hoàng Thành Thăng Long - Hà Nội – Di sản văn hóa thế giới. The Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi – A World Heritage Site, 39.

The ceramic objects from the pre-*Thăng Long* period were also named ‘*Đại La* ceramics’ (because of the *Đại La* citadel). The most common type of ceramic object was a bowl with five unglazed square traces and no foot ring at all.

The pottery under the *Lý* dynasty not only surprised experts from China but also experts from Vietnam. The quality of the pottery can be compared to the skill of pottery from the *Song* dynasty. Before the excavation of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, the lack of evidence caused all pottery from the *Lý* dynasty to be presumed to be from China, with the exception of some brown pattern glaze pottery. The quality of white, celadon, and jade glaze ceramics was so high that this misunderstanding occurred. It was just presumed that at that time period, the progress of Vietnamese technology was not able to produce such quality. With the excavation work in the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, archeologists discovered a number of high-quality pottery pieces with white glazes, green glazes, jade glazes, brown glazes, and yellow glazes from the *Lý* dynasty. In particular, *Lý* white glaze ceramic objects reached a level of quality equivalent to that of the *Song* dynasty. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish *Lý* white glaze ceramic objects from *Song* white glaze ceramic objects. The key differences between these are in the brightness of the glaze color, motifs, and underlining shape. The dragon motifs and floral motifs on *Lý* white glaze ceramic objects were similar to the stone-carved motifs on pagodas and towers. These two motifs were influenced by Indian culture; hence, the dragon in Vietnam resembled snakes. Evidence for the Vietnamese production was the on-site findings of deformed or burnt because of over-firing bowls, plates, box lids, lotus-shaped lamp supports, etc. In addition, these findings are proof of production on the premises of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*.⁵⁷⁸

Besides those white ceramics with chrysanthemum or dragons, with the character ‘*guan*’ incised or painted blue in the center, there were other pottery printed with *Han*-Vietnamese characters such as ‘*Trường Lạc* [長樂]’ (Fig. 103), ‘*Trường lạc khố* [長樂庫] (Storehouse)’ or ‘*Trường Lạc Cung* [長樂宮] (Palace)’. As mentioned above, the amazing sophistication and aesthetic beauty of potteries with official inscriptions as well as the symbolized royal motifs (a dragon with 5-claws and a phoenix) reveal that these were royal palace utensils and were solely produced for the Imperial Citadel. As recorded, *Trường Lạc* is the palace of *Nguyễn Thị Hằng ruan shi xuan* [阮氏暉] (1441 - 1505), the wife of Emperor *Lê Thánh Tông*. The location of the excavation, with all the architectural relics, has been identified as on the western part of the *Kính Thiên* Palace.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁸ Bùi Minh Trí, “Pottery from *Thăng Long* Citadel,” *Vietnam Cultural Window*, no. 80 (2005): 12-17.

⁵⁷⁹ Vietnam Pathfinder, “Pottery from *Thăng Long* Citadel.”

It is nearly impossible to mention every ceramic group, which has been excavated from the Imperial Citadel. In this dissertation, the objects are divided according to their storage location. As mentioned before, the excavated objects are divided into four warehouses. Unfortunately, access was granted only in two storage rooms. Thus, the objects are divided into two major groups, the first is the objects from the excavation from 2012 to 2014 underneath the Vietnam National Assembly (*Tòa nhà Quốc hội Việt Nam*) and its parking lot, which was also called the Rose Garden (*Vườn hồng*) (Fig. 105, 106, 107, 108, 109). The second is the objects from the excavation works in the *Kính Thiên* Palace (*Điện Kính Thiên*) (Fig. 111, 112, 113). It was designated as 'Excavation Area Kinh Thien'. Particularly, access to the objects of the excavations from 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2021 was available.

Architectural Elements

Architecture at the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* includes large-scale palaces and pavilions. They were built with the best materials by the most skilful builders. The architectural elements overlapped and interposed over various periods of occupation, which included the *Lý* to the *Lê* dynasties. Workers from different provinces were mobilized to build these constructions. Building materials included different types of bricks and tiles, as well as terracotta statues. The bricks that were found from the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties exhibit Chinese inscriptions indicating places of production like 'Workshop of *Vĩnh Ninh/Vĩnh Ninh trường*'. *Vĩnh Ninh* in Quảng Bình Province, north-central coast of Vietnam, was a famous brick kiln in the *Trần* dynasty. Besides Chinese characters that indicate the production place, the bricks also indicate dates of production. For instance, bricks with the character '[李家第三帝龍瑞太平四年造] *Lý gia đệ tam đế Long Thụy Thái Bình tứ niên tạo*' indicate the year 1057. Many bricks from the *Lê* dynasty exhibit inscriptions with connections to the military. For instance, the 'Trang Phong army *Tráng Phong quân* [壯述軍]' or 'Jiangxi army [江西軍]' (Fig. 99 and 100). The terracotta statues were mainly found as decorations on rooftops and roof rims. These statues took forms such as dragons, phoenixes, ducks, Bodhi leaves, etc. (Fig. 114).⁵⁸⁰

Bricks

The bricks in the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* were found in large quantities, these included rectangular, square, trapezium, and parallelogram shapes, dating from the *Han* to the *Nguyễn* dynasty. The bricks from the *Han* dynasty were generally shaped like rectangles with decorative designs. These bricks could have been reused at the *Đại La* Citadel, which dates back to the 7th century. During the construction of the *Đại La* Citadel, gray square bricks with

⁵⁸⁰ Lê "The Global Values Of The Central Area Of The Thăng Long Imperial Citadel," 19-20.

the average dimensions of 39-41 x 39-41 x 6cm were used. These bricks were either undecorated or decorated with decorative motifs, including images of crocodiles, lotuses, and many different geometric patterns. However, plain bricks with smooth surfaces were the most commonly used types. The rectangular bricks from the *Đại La Citadel* were also mainly gray. On them were Chinese characters like ‘*Jiangxi army* [江西軍]’ (Fig. 99 and 100). During the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties, square bricks were used for paving yard foundations and architectural structures. The decorations on the bricks did not change much; lotuses were still preferred. The rectangular bricks from this period were more diversified and plentiful, having been made in different sizes. Big rectangular bricks with dimensions of 80 x 40 x 8cm were used to pave the bottom of the sewer canal within the water drainage system. For small-scale sewers, bricks with trapezium and parallelogram shapes were used. The trapezium-shaped bricks were used at the bottom of the sewer, and the parallelogram-shaped bricks were used for the sewer walls.⁵⁸¹

As mentioned above, the bricks with the inscriptions *Jiangxi* 江西 (province name), *Jiangxi jun* [江西軍] (translation: *Jiangxi Army*), and *Jiangxi zhuan* [江西磚] (translation: *Jiangxi brick*) are the earliest bricks from the *Đại La Citadel*. The *Jiangxi Army* was an army that was sent by the Chinese *Tang* court to defend their position in Vietnam. It seems like during their stay in Vietnam, they were either forced or paid to build citadels, erect ramparts, make bricks and tiles for the constructions. A large number of these kinds of bricks with the inscriptions were excavated in the area of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*.⁵⁸²

Bricks with inscriptions, which stated which army manufactured them, were quite often discovered. Other examples are ‘三字軍’, ‘忠威軍’, ‘杜達軍’, etc. Usually, the army inscribed their bricks after each province they were sent from. It seems like the military units had to contribute to the construction of the imperial palaces, and the reason why they had clearly inscribed their unit location was to be able to inspect the quality of their products and retrace who was responsible for the product (who to punish and who to reward).⁵⁸³

Terracotta Statues

The terracotta dragon has a special appearance. The dragon’s head has no ears, the upper edge of the mouth forms an extended, tall horn or a single sensor; it resembles a regular

⁵⁸¹ Nguyễn Văn Anh and Bùi Thu Phương, “The Global Values, Authenticity and Integrity of the Central Thăng Long - Hà Nội Imperial Citadel: Archaeological Analysis and Evaluation,” *Vietnam Archaeology*, Number 5 (2010): 71-72.

⁵⁸² Do, “Bricks tell their stories,” 142.

⁵⁸³ Do, “Bricks tell their stories,” 148, 158.

vineyard spout, tapering towards the end. Usually, the fangs of the dragon can be seen in the upper and lower jaw, and it sometimes carries a ball. If the entire body of a dragon is depicted, it forms small waves and has a *nāga* like appearance (Fig. 81 and 82). Besides the terracotta dragons, there were terracotta ducks or phoenixes, which were used to ornament the roof.

Roofing Tiles

The originality of the art roof decoration of the *Lý* dynasty can be recognized through various materials of the roof. The most typical roof forms were tubular tiles for roof edges. These tile-ends were decorated with lotus or dragon designs and attached with *Bodhi* leaves having two symmetric raised dragons or phoenixes. These roof decorations indicate the special and creative Vietnamese characteristics of ancient architecture.⁵⁸⁴

The roofing tiles of the *Lý* and *Trần* periods were narrower toward their ends. The pieces that were used as verges were attached with a round head and decorated with lotus or dragon motifs. The head was attached to the front of the tile, while a fig leaf with a dragon image was attached to its back. The tubular tiles were made in molds, with some refinements. The tails were made together with the body. Typically, they were joined via tenons and reinforced from the inside. The tile heads either featured lotuses or dragons (Fig. 66). The lotus leaf tiles were made in molds, and lotus leaf tiles that were used for verges also had *Bodhi* leaves attached to the back. The key motifs printed on these *Bodhi* leaves were the dragon and phoenix. The two most typical decorative motifs on tube tiles were the dragon and phoenix, which exhibited outstanding features that can only be found during the *Lý* and *Trần* periods. Dragons and phoenixes were the symbols, which represented the power of the royalty in Vietnam, and lotuses are the symbol in Buddhist ideology. Since Buddhism was very popular during the *Lý* dynasty, it was inseparable from the decorative arts. The material was fine-grained soil, the unfired clay was red, while the enamel glaze colors were created using *kaolin* and white or pink bones. The green and yellow enameled tiles were made from two types of fabric - white and normal clay.⁵⁸⁵

The decorative symbols on architectural elements from the *Trần* dynasty were inherited from the *Lý* dynasty, but later in the period, the simpler and more liberal the decorative arts developed.⁵⁸⁶

The roofing tiles of the *Lê* dynasty were moderate, with the body and tail of roughly the same dimensions. The whole body had equal thickness. The tail was about four to six centimeters long, curved to resemble a baluster. The verges of the tiles had additional tops decorated with flowers, mainly apricot blossoms or dragons. The body and tail were made

⁵⁸⁴ Bùi and Tổng, "The Global Values, Authenticity and Integrity of the Central Thăng Long - Hà Nội Imperial Citadel: Archaeological Analysis and Evaluation," 37.

⁵⁸⁵ Nguyễn and Bùi, "The Global Values, Authenticity and Integrity of the Central Thăng Long - Hà Nội Imperial Citadel: Archaeological Analysis and Evaluation," 73-75.

⁵⁸⁶ Tổng, *Văn hiến Thăng Long - Bằng chứng khảo cổ học Thăng Long Civilization - Archaeological Evidence*, 279.

separately before joining together. Furthermore, the tile heads and bodies were attached via only inside reinforcements, without tenons. During the *Lê* dynasty, dragon motifs were still the main subject of decoration, while the lotus motifs were nearly completely replaced by apricot flower motifs. The reason for this replacement was the transition from Buddhism as the state doctrine to Confucianism. The apricot flower was the equivalent in Confucianism. Moreover, the depiction of dragons (especially five-claw dragons⁵⁸⁷) was not only used as a decorative motif, but the dragon image was politicized. The motifs were either imprinted on the pantiles of the roof verge or were made in molds, without finishing steps, which suggests quicker production and standardization. These tiles were made from heterogeneous materials - red clay mixed with brown.⁵⁸⁸

In general, roofing tiles can be divided into two groups - curved and flat. Curved roofing tiles included tubular tiles and gutter tiles that were used as gutter liners and roof toppings. Flat roofing tiles included lotus leaf shapes and leaf-end shapes. The gray tubular tiles and pantiles were made from fine-grained soils, and a combination of spreading and molding techniques was used to form the shape. The main body and end part were integrally cast, while the tiles that were used as verges had additional tails. The tails of pantiles were usually twice as thick as the other parts. Two major types of decorative motifs were sacred animal faces, flowers, and leaves (mainly lotus leaves). While the tubular tiles and gutter tiles in the *Đại La* period were only gray in color, these tiles were red in the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties. Regarding the shapes and sizes of the pantiles during the *Đại La*, *Lý*, and *Trần* periods, the bodies were thick and uneven, while those from the *Lê* dynasty were thinner and more equidimensional.⁵⁸⁹

Chinese ceramics

During the research stay, the author came across porcelain from various Chinese dynasties. From the *Tang* dynasty, the most abundant wares were the *Changsha* wares; from the *Song* dynasty, the most abundant were the bluish-white porcelains (*Qingbai* ware), and from the *Ming* and *Qing* dynasties, the most abundant wares were from the blue&white ceramic group. The earliest types of Chinese ceramics discovered in the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* belong to the *Tang* dynasty. One object is a lion statue. This celadon lion statue was manufactured in the kilns of *Xicun* (Tây Thôn) (present Guangdong). From the *Tang* period, various jars with a dark-green glaze were discovered. Beside this statue, various celadon ceramics with underglaze brown patterns, as well as the alcohol jars from the kilns of *Changsha* (present *Hunan* province), were found.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁷ Like mentioned above, the depiction of five claw dragons was only reserved for the emperor, the Son of Heaven, the one who has the mandate of Heaven. Originally, only the emperor in China claimed this title, but the Vietnamese ruler did the same.

⁵⁸⁸ Nguyễn and Bùi, "The Global Values, Authenticity and Integrity of the Central *Thăng Long* - Hà Nội Imperial Citadel: Archaeological Analysis and Evaluation," 73-75.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

⁵⁹⁰ Tống and Bùi, *Thăng Long – Hà Nội Thousand-Year History Underground*, 45.

The potters from *Changsha* were relatively isolated from the *Tang* court, commercial centers, and other kilns; thus, they developed a distinctive design repertoire. These designs varied from Chinese inscriptions to possible Arabic inscriptions, from bird motifs to floral motifs and from clear pattern motifs to abstract pattern motifs. All featured brown, green, and occasionally red pigments (Fig. 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132). These characteristics were favored by foreign customers. *Changsha* wares were not often discovered in shipwrecks.⁵⁹¹

One shipwreck is known for the *Changsha* wares - the so-called Belitung shipwreck, also called the Tang shipwreck or Batu Hitam shipwreck. It was found by local fishermen off the Indonesian island of Belitung in 1998. The Arab ship may have sailed between Oman and China in the 9th century CE, and there is evidence that it traveled on the Maritime Silk Road. The ship sank on the return journey, and according to this claim, an interesting point about the Belitung Shipwreck is its location: it is unclear why the ship deviated so far from the route it was supposed to take. In fact, on their return journey from China, ships would have sailed through the South China Sea, passing through southern Vietnam, the Singapore Strait, and the Strait of Malacca between the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra. Belitung lies to the southeast of the Singapore Strait, far from this expected route. Wrecks of this age are rare finds, and this shipwreck was, in fact, the only ship of this 9th century origin found to date. Two important archaeological discoveries were made on the Belitung: the cargo and the hull. The bulk of the recovered cargo (60,000 pieces) is made of ceramics, most of them *Changsha* ware. The cargo also represents the largest collection of *Tang* dynasty artifacts found in one place, and is therefore also called the '*Tang* Treasure'. In addition, the wreck of the Belitung is the first Arab dhow discovered in Southeast Asian waters. The dhow is a traditional sailing vessel with one or more masts and lateen sails used in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. It is disputed whether this type of vessel was invented by the Arabs or the Indians.⁵⁹²

The *Xicun* kilns were one of the primary coastal kilns that made export wares for the Southeast Asian market. These kilns used bluish-white glaze the most, then blue, green, or celadon glaze. Black or low-fired green glaze was rarely used in these kilns. Many of these ceramic objects, such as small vases and jars, were different from those popular in China, because their main market was the Southeast Asian market, and therefore, they adapted to entice it.⁵⁹³

The *Qingbai* wares from the Song dynasty were also discovered in large quantities. During the excavation at the Rose Garden, many bowl bases were discovered (Fig. 133, 134, 135, 136,

⁵⁹¹ Regina Krahl, *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds*, (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2010), 56.

⁵⁹² "Belitung," UNSECO, last modified June 3rd, 2024, <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/silk-road-themes/underwater-heritage/belitung-shipwreck>.

⁵⁹³ Li, *Chinese Ceramics: From the Paleolithic Period to the Qing Dynasty*, 310.

137). Song dynasty celadons were also discovered at the Rose Garden excavation (Fig. 138) and during the excavation at the *Kính Thiên* Palace (Fig. 139).

As mentioned above, besides ceramic objects, coins from various Chinese dynasties were discovered in the Imperial Citadel. These findings suggest the economic and social interactions between the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* and China.⁵⁹⁴

Unfortunately, it is not obvious how Chinese ceramic objects were treated at that time. Either they were highly appreciated and respected as a status symbol, or they were considered native ceramics and thus integrated into daily life. Either way, the discoveries are proof of the cultural exchange between Vietnam and China.

Other ceramics

The findings of pottery from West Asia and Japan indicate that the Imperial Citadel also conducted economic and cultural exchanges with these countries. Compared to Chinese ceramics, the discoveries of West Asian or Japanese ceramics are very few in number, but they do just as well prove an interaction between Vietnam and West Asia and Japan.

From Japan, in particular, *Hizen*⁵⁹⁵ wares were found. There are many blue&white bowls and dishes, with dishes drawn with dragons, fish, flowers, or insects on the inside. They were manufactured between 1650 and 1663. Besides the Japanese *Hizen* wares, the collection of the Imperial Citadel also included fragments of blue ceramics from Western Asia. The experts from the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* categorized these blue ceramic shards to the 9th to 11th centuries, some having two raised bands in parallel and others with V-shaped designs in the manner of a flowing water pattern on the outside (Fig. 141, 142, 143, 144, 145).⁵⁹⁶ The turquoise glaze with a silver-like coating is a characteristic of how Abbasid ceramics decomposed.

Unfortunately, there is not much information about ceramics from Japan and West Asia. Besides the ceramics from West Asia, Japan, and China, the collection also included objects from present-day South Vietnam (in the form of ceramic objects from the ancient Cham, ancient Khmer, and present South Vietnam kilns).

⁵⁹⁴ Tống and Bùi, *Thăng Long – Hà Nội Thousand-Year History Underground*, 45.

⁵⁹⁵ *Hizen* is an ancient place in Japan, where the ingredients necessary for the ceramics industry were available. This is the place where Japanese porcelain was born.

⁵⁹⁶ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 137, 201.

Chapter VI

Vietnamese Ceramics as an Instrument of Political Iconography

1. Ceramic as Economic Factor - Export Ceramic Objects

Ceramics became a commodity very early on. In Europe, people first came into widespread contact with ceramics from the 'Far East' around the 16th century. Especially, when the European aristocrats got infected with the so-called 'porcelain disease'. A 'disease' where they obsessively desire to possess ceramics from mainly China. European merchants traveled to the 'Far East' for spices, tea, and silk. Porcelain held a unique position in trade between the 'West' and the 'Far East'. As mentioned before, the monopoly of porcelain trade remained in China until the early 18th century, when in Germany the alchemist Johann Friedrich Böttger (1682 - 1719) discovered European hard-paste porcelain with the help of early research of Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus (1651 - 1708). With this discovery, the famous Meissen porcelain factory produced the first European hard-paste porcelain.⁵⁹⁷

The demand for high-quality Chinese glazed ceramics was also widespread in the islands of Southeast Asia and the Middle East. When present-day Baghdad was the capital of the Abbasid Empire, there was already a trade network between *Chang'an* (at the time the capital of the *Tang* dynasty). They were linked by commerce, transported via overland and maritime silk routes. As the maritime silk route could carry a much greater load than the overland silk route, the maritime route from East Asia through Southeast Asia to South and West Asia became incredibly important for the trade network. All ships, which sailed between West Asian ports and Chinese ports, had to pass through either the Strait of Malacca (which lies between the Malay Peninsula and the island of Sumatra) or the Sunda Strait (which lies between Sumatra and Java).⁵⁹⁸

Countries like Thailand and Vietnam also had a small proportion in the ceramic export market. Although they numerically could not compete with China, from the 15th to 17th century, Thai and Vietnamese ceramics occupied a major place in Southeast Asian trade. The transport of ceramic objects was preferably done by waterways, because of less damage and the potential of loading more objects than on a road route.⁵⁹⁹

Toyotomi Hideyoshi [豊臣秀吉] (1537 - 1598), the *daimyō* (feudal lord) of Japan, attacked Korea in 1592 and 1598, during which time, produced magnificent pottery. These attacks are sometimes also called 'the Potters' Wars', because the Japanese captured hundreds of Korean ceramic craftsmen and brought them to *Kyushu* in southern Japan, where

⁵⁹⁷ Finlay, "The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History," *Journal of World History* 9, no. 2 (1998): 142-143.

⁵⁹⁸ Krahl, *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds*, IX, 16.

⁵⁹⁹ Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450 - 1680*, 105.

they introduced Chinese kiln technology and craftsmanship, as well as the use of *kaolin*. Vietnam also developed a sophisticated pottery tradition that represented a distinctive style in the context of the Chinese Cultural Sphere. In the first century CE, armies of the *Han* dynasty conquered what is now northern Vietnam ('First Chinese Domination'). From this point on, even as Vietnam freed itself from Chinese control, the development of Vietnamese ceramics paralleled that of Chinese potteries. In the early *Ming* period, the *Yongle* Emperor re-invaded Vietnam for about 20 years. As a result of the conflict, Vietnamese potters shifted entirely to the production of blue&white ceramic. Traders in *Tonkin* exported Chinese-style Vietnamese pottery to Japan and Southeast Asia and blue&white tiles were shipped to the Hindu-Javanese court of Majapahit (Indonesia). In the late 16th century, entrepreneurs shipped some Vietnamese ceramics to Persia, where potters copied their designs - mainly variations on motifs from 15th-century *Ming* pieces - onto Persian earthenware, some of whose decorative patterns also came from Chinese porcelain. In return, Chinese potters sometimes copied Vietnamese styles on their own exports to Southeast Asia. The people of Thailand in the lower Mekong Basin lived far enough from China to avoid invasion, yet close enough to benefit from the effects of Chinese culture and technology (Chinese Cultural Sphere). Chinese merchants exported porcelain to Angkor soon after its establishment in the 9th century, and the kilns of Sukhothai and Sisatchanalai produced vessels with heavy influences from China. One theory is that during the *Yuan* period, Chinese potters migrated to Thailand, where they built kilns in Sukhothai and then Sawankhalok. However, there is no evidence for this. For a time, Thai goods sold well in maritime Southeast Asia, but in the 16th century, political unrest in Thailand and an increase in Chinese trade in ceramics reduced Thai exports. Maritime Southeast Asia reacted to porcelain completely differently from Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. During the *Tang* dynasty, the peoples of the Southeast Asian archipelago first came into contact with Chinese ceramics. The importance of the trade is illustrated by the porcelain shards that lie scattered on the beaches of Southeast Asia and buried in trash heaps in the highlands of Sumatra, Borneo, and the Philippines. It is clear that many tribes there viewed ceramics in the context of the supernatural world. Since the ships also came to the islands as valuable foreign goods, they acquired great political and symbolic importance. Porcelain utensils (and other prestigious trade goods) conferred wealth and power on those who controlled their distribution, while their mysterious origins from distant, powerful empires increased their value.⁶⁰⁰

Vietnamese trade in ceramics reached its destination through the maritime trade routes. These trade routes were influenced by several factors; the layover ports and route direction depended on where the voyage started and its destination. Furthermore, changing local politics and shifts in the political and economic climate also influenced the maritime routes. During the early years

⁶⁰⁰ Finlay, "The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History," *Journal of World History* 9, no. 2 (1998): 159-162.

of maritime trade, spices were very popular. Especially spices, which only exist in certain countries. Technological innovations involving trading countries brought developments and improvements to maritime transport and consequently increased commercial interests.⁶⁰¹

Regional ports around the 'maritime silk road' emerged in Vietnam (Champa), Cambodia, Burma, Sumatra, and Malaysia (Melaka) during the 12th to 15th centuries. In these ports, traders from all over the world meet and exchange a wide range of commodities. The cultural interactions between different ethnicities with their own religious systems, practices, and norms shaped social development, economic development, and cultural change in these regions. The first Chinese trader to write about Southeast Asia was Wang Dayuan 汪大淵 (1311 -1350). In 'Description of the Barbarians of the Isles [島夷誌略]', which he compiled in 1349, he described two main maritime trading routes: the Eastern Sea route crossed the China Sea, then passed through Taiwan to the islands of Luzon and Mindanao to Sulu, then to Borneo, and then finally to the Moluccas; the Western Sea route was along the Chinese coast to Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, then to Java, Sumatra, Bengal, India, and then finally to Mecca.⁶⁰²

The maritime zone in Southeast Asia plays an essential role in the exchange and interaction across Southeast Asia because Southeast Asia as a region is primarily characterized as an archipelagic region, comprising thousands of islands that together form a tightly interconnected network. The sea route for the transportation of ceramics is much more important than the land route. Although the Silk Road, which connected Central, East, South, and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, East Africa, and Southern Europe, was more popular, the sea route had the capacity to transport ceramic objects.⁶⁰³

Since the 1980s, maritime archeological projects have commenced in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries. The conducting of maritime excavations is costly; consequently, many projects depend on private-public partnership programs. These programs many times involve the sale of the excavated cargo. Another challenge of maritime excavation is the issue of territoriality. Despite all the challenges, the conduct of shipwreck

⁶⁰¹ Bui and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 170.

⁶⁰² Orillaneda, "Maritime Trade in the Philippines During the 15th Century CE," 83-84.

⁶⁰³ Derek Heng, "Ships, Shipwrecks, and Archaeological Recoveries as Sources of Southeast Asian History," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, (September 2018): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.97>.

research provides much information on the evolving maritime traditions in Southeast Asia, including shipbuilding, usage of construction materials and techniques, navigational technologies, shipping passages, and commodities carried by ships. Furthermore, shipwrecks provide a different form of archeological data; they reflect the patterns and characteristics of the shipping trade between two economic regions at the moment that the ship sank. It is like a snapshot of the economic interaction between two regions.⁶⁰⁴

Several factors help with the dating of the shipwreck. The ship's content and its hull (specifically components of the structure, such as the frames, bulkheads, and mast steps), coins with reign marks, or the organic samples (radiocarbon dating). Besides the shipwreck dating, the vessel construction can reveal where the ship was built. The shipbuilding tradition of a particular geographical region varied in its technique. There are, for instance, the dowel-peg and lashed-lug method, the sewn-stitched method, the iron-nail method, the dowel-peg and iron-nail hybrid method, and the nail-fastener method. In the Southeast Asian shipbuilding tradition, the lashed-lug method was used. It utilizes dowels to fasten the edges of the wooden board together, while plant fiber ropes are used to tie the planks onto the frame of the vessel. In the West Indian Ocean and the Middle East, the sewn-stitched method was used. Wooden planks with drill holes along the edges are sewn together by using ropes made of plant fibers. The Chinese shipbuilders used the iron-nail method. Wooden planks are attached with diagonally driven iron nails to form the hull of the vessel. During the late 14th to early 16th centuries, Southeast Asian shipbuilders used the dowel-peg and iron-nail hybrid method, which combined Chinese and Southeast Asian shipbuilding traditions. This hybrid method was also called the 'South China Sea Tradition', which was evidence of cross-cultural assimilation between South China and Mainland Southeast Asia. This shipbuilding tradition may have been influenced by the migration of South Chinese mariners and merchants to Southeast Asia and by the adoption of Chinese manufacturing technologies, including ceramic production, by Southeast Asians.⁶⁰⁵

The usage of ceramic objects varied in which context they were used. For instance, in Southeast Asia, imported Vietnamese ceramics were usually used as burial goods. Excavation of tombs in the Philippines displayed Vietnamese ceramics placed near the head part of the deceased. However, the use of Vietnamese export ceramics was not confined to burial goods only, but they were also used in daily life. In Japan, imported Vietnamese ceramics were used in their tea ceremonies.

Chinese blue&white porcelain was not only popular in Europe, but also in Muslim countries. Forms and shapes like plates, dishes, bowls, vases, jars, or ewers were exported to these

⁶⁰⁴ Heng, "Ships, Shipwrecks, and Archaeological Recoveries as Sources of Southeast Asian History," 1-4, 9.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-12.

countries. Most of the dishes were large. These large dishes were used for the shared food culture. Chinese blue&white porcelain was also popular in the Southeast Asian market. Countries like Indonesia and the Philippines preferred boxes of various kinds and sizes, jarlets, or ewers.⁶⁰⁶

When the Chinese production, whatever the circumstances, could not deliver, the Vietnamese market stepped in.

Chinese Trade Ceramics

Early on, China came into contact with neighboring countries, with which it started trade. During the *Tang* dynasty (618 - 907), when present-day *Xi'an* (also known as *Chang'an* [長安]) was the capital, many merchants from all over Asia came to trade at Chinese cities, which also marked the easternmost point of the famous Silk Route. The influx of merchants from all over the world contributed to the capital's rich diversity of nationalities and religions. For instance, the large camels and figures from West Asia heavily influenced the *Tang sancai* wares.⁶⁰⁷

The Chinese ceramic trade was maintained throughout the *Song* dynasty (960 - 1279), the succeeding *Yuan* dynasty (1279 - 1368), and, with a few interruptions (keyword 'Ming Gap'), the *Ming* (1368 - 1644) and *Qing* (1644 - 1911) dynasties as well. Although the markets were concentrated in different regions at different times, the influence of China's pottery has been sustained worldwide, affecting the ceramic industry of almost every importing country. Chinese pottery influenced the ceramics of the importing countries and, in return, was also influenced by them. For instance, when importers commissioned certain shapes or designs for their market, these new inputs often found their way into the repertoire for the Chinese domestic market. In this way, ceramics were the material evidence for a worldwide cultural exchange. The ceramic trade market was long dominated by China. To receive a share in the profits, within Asia, the potters of Korea, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam successfully reproduced Chinese pottery. In Europe, like the aforementioned, the 'porcelain disease' took over. Many attempts were launched to imitate Chinese porcelain. With the English and the Germans' success in making comparable wares in the 18th century, China faced a worthy competitor.⁶⁰⁸

In the Middle East, green wares, in particular celadon wares, were very much fancied, because it was believed that they would sweat or even break in the presence of poison. Two of the largest Chinese ceramic collections in the Middle East are in the Topkapi Saray Museum in Istanbul and the Ardebil Shrine in Iran. The Topkapi Saray Museum comprises Chinese

⁶⁰⁶ Medley, *The Chinese Potter: A Practical History of Chinese Ceramics*, 178, 186.

⁶⁰⁷ Vainker, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*, 62.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 134, 136.

ceramics of the *Yuan* to the *Qing* dynasties (about 10,358 objects). The Ardebil Shrine comprises about 1162 pieces of Chinese ceramics, from the 14th to the end of the 16th century. Objects from Vietnam also appear individually in these sheer numbers. The inventory of the Ardebil Shrine is unfortunately rather vague; however, the very fact of the collection's inventory at a place of such religious and political importance does imply that Chinese ceramics occupied a significant role in Iran in the early 17th century.⁶⁰⁹

During the *Yuan* dynasty, Muslim merchants occupied a large quarter in the port town of *Quanzhou* [泉州市] (in the province of *Fujian*) on the east coast. Other principal ports were *Ningbo* [寧波市] (in the province of *Zhejiang*), further north on China's east coast, and *Guangzhou* [廣州市] (in the province of *Guangdong*) on the south coast. The wares of the kilns in *Jingdezhen* were handled by the ports of *Quanzhou* and *Guangzhou* (for export). From these ports, the markets of the countries of the Middle East acquired the very popular Chinese blue&white porcelain and celadons. Corresponding to the *Ming* dynasty, Syria, Egypt, Turkey, and Persia tried to imitate the popular Chinese wares. While the Middle East tried to imitate Chinese porcelain, China in turn was manufacturing large quantities of blue&white porcelain in Islamic shapes and decorated with Arabic calligraphy. Most date from the reign of the *Zhengde* emperor [正德] (1491 - 1521). The workmanship of Arabic calligraphy was sometimes even indecipherable and consisted of Persian proverbs or verses from the Quran.⁶¹⁰

Chinese ceramics first reached Europe in the 14th century, and the first Europeans to trade directly with China were the Portuguese. Although they first arrived at the port of *Guangzhou* in 1517, they were denied access. They were allowed to settle at Macau [澳門]. Only twice a year were they permitted to sail to *Guangzhou* to purchase goods. Some of these purchased goods were sold throughout Asia, and smaller quantities were imported to Portugal, where the famous porcelain room in the Santos Palace was constructed. It is a chamber with a pyramidal ceiling, which was set with 260 Chinese bowls and dishes, dating from around the 16th to 19th centuries.⁶¹¹

During the 16th century, both the Portuguese and Spanish imported Chinese porcelain and sold small quantities to other European countries; they mostly concentrated on trade within Asia, and only imported a small fraction to satisfy the demand in their own country. This gap in the European market was filled in by the Dutch. In 1602, various companies joined forces

⁶⁰⁹ Vainker, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*, 136-137.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 138-140, 142.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, 143-144.

and established the Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie, better known as the Dutch East India Company or VOC. The relatively late Dutch involvement was due to the reluctance to confront the Portuguese in Asian waters. Trading in the South China Seas was not easy because only Portuguese vessels were permitted to sail to *Guangzhou* to purchase goods. Then again, Chinese ships were not allowed to land in foreign ports. Therefore, Dutch traders established themselves on the island of present-day Taiwan, and Chinese ships obtained permission to sail there. Trade in the late 17th century was interrupted by the change of power in China. Only with the reign of the *Kangxi* emperor (1654 - 1722) was Chinese porcelain available for trade. At that time, Dutch traders got competition from English traders, who were already trading in Amoy (also known as *Xiamen* [廈門市]) and Macau. The English established the English East India Company. Their purchased goods were shipped to London and from there to the colonies in America, the Caribbean, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. In the 18th century, Europeans established their own offices in *Guangzhou* (the English in 1715, the French and Dutch in the late 1720s, the Danes and Swedes in the late 1730s, and the Americans in 1784). In Europe, Chinese porcelain was treated as an object of wonder. In royal collections, Chinese porcelain was often mounted in silver. The initial utilization of certain objects was not comprehended; eventually, they were used for their own purposes. Eventually, there were wares, which were made specifically for export only. Like the so-called 'Kraakporselein', also known as kraak ware. This term was coined by the Dutch for an easily recognised type of blue&white ware produced mainly during the reign of the *Wanli* emperor [萬曆] (1563 - 1620). Kraak wares are distinguished by the arrangement of their decorations into panels. The motifs usually depicted deer, horses, birds, and plants. The most frequent shapes were deep bowls and wide dishes. Alongside the commissioned work, the Dutch sent samples of wares and colored designs on paper for the Chinese potters to reproduce. Not every commissioned work could be executed, because some shapes were too difficult to make. Such complicated works took months to execute and hence were quite expensive. Such unprofitable wares were not commissioned anymore. Simple designs and shapes, or rather known designs and shapes, Chinese potters were able to manufacture, and these commissioned works could be shipped to Europe in the same season in which they were ordered. Eventually, in the 18th and 19th centuries, more and more European countries were able to manufacture porcelain

themselves, so the Chinese export market declined in the 19th century because it was quite expensive by comparison.⁶¹²

*Kendi*⁶¹³ is a remarkable example of the fusion of influences typical of the process of mutual influence/cultural exchange. *Kendi* is a Malay word deriving from the Indian *kundika* (water pot) and it is the term for a metallic vessel used for ritual ablution and drinking since the third century BCE. To avoid the drinker's lips, the shape of the *kendi* is a bulbous body and a long, narrow neck (Fig. 79). Along with other ritual equipment associated with Hinduism and Buddhism, it spread into mainland Southeast Asia by the early centuries of the Common Era. Chinese Potters first copied *kendi* into porcelain in Tang China. It was used by Confucian scholars as water-droppers in calligraphy. Miniature Chinese versions of the ware were sold by merchants in the Philippines and Java, where tribes incorporated them in marriage ceremonies, burial rites, and folk divination. In the 17th century, China also exported *kendi*, often in fanciful animal forms, to Japan and western Asia, where artisans copied them in earthenware. Even German potters replicated these zoomorphic *kendis*, sometimes embellished with Dutch versions of Chinese designs. In the 17th century, Persian potters transformed the *kendi* into a hookah or smoking pipe (*kendi-qalian*) for tobacco. In the course of this transformation, the *kendi* shed all connections with Indian religious rituals and became a utensil instead and curio for the elite of various cultures.⁶¹⁴

The cultural encounter is never one-sided. For instance, during the so-called 'Ceramic Interregnum' (1436 - 1464) period in China, Vietnam was one of the ceramic production centers that filled in a small portion of China's large ceramic market share. During this time, Vietnamese potters used a unique style of peony spray, which was so popular that they influenced Chinese ceramic production after the 'Ceramic Interregnum'.⁶¹⁵

Another example of cultural encounter was a lotus petal shaped bowl for a jug. As mentioned above, Vietnamese potters took the Chinese ceramics as a template and sometimes reinterpreted the shapes. The alcohol jug in China is a two-piece object, comprising the jug itself and a bowl, which keeps the alcohol warm. In Vietnam, the initial two-piece jug and bowl became a one-piece jug.

⁶¹² Vainker, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*, 147,151-154.

⁶¹³ The *kendi* is a vessel, which was mainly used in Southeast Asia. The term is Malay for water vessel and was used for both drinking and cleansing the hand. The form is related to the Indian water vessel *kundika*. It has played a significant role in the rituals and daily life of the region since ancient times. It was used as a ritual container for holy water, collected from sacred rivers and blessed by the gods. In Indonesia and the Philippines, it served as furniture accompanying the dead to their graves. The *kendi* was treasured enough in these two countries that it became heirloom to be passed on from generation to generation. The earliest examples of *kendi* so far known were found in China and date from the Tang dynasty.

Dawn F. Rooney, "Kendi in the Cultural Context of Southeast Asia - A Commentary," last modified September 07, 2018, http://rooneyarchive.net/articles/kendi/kendi_album/kendi.htm.

⁶¹⁴ Finlay, "The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History," *Journal of World History* 9, no. 2 (1998): 180-187.

⁶¹⁵ Truong, *The Elephant and the Lotus: Vietnamese Ceramics in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 8.

The History of Vietnamese Trade Ceramics

One of the most interesting characteristics of Vietnamese ceramics lies in their flexibility to respond to specific changes in demand. This flexibility does not only apply to the domestic market but also the export market. The range of Vietnamese glaze types reflects the desire to emulate Chinese wares in an attempt to obtain a share of the lucrative export market for high-fired glazed ceramics.⁶¹⁶

Ceramics were exported alongside other goods like spices or textiles. The trade between Southeast Asia and China was dependent on ships.⁶¹⁷ The Vietnamese ceramic export market did not follow a steady pattern, as the demand for Vietnamese ceramics was only high when there were shortages from period to period in the Chinese ceramics market. However, this does not suggest that Vietnamese ceramics came into existence only to fill a vacuum created by the so-called 'Ming Gap', though this overseas trade prohibition did provide an important stimulus. Before the 'Ming Gap', Vietnamese ceramics already had a long history of development. Either way, the 14th century marks a milestone in Vietnamese trade history - the transition from only domestic production to export production.⁶¹⁸

Marie-France Dupoizat, a French art historian and former employee of the Musée Guimet, had expressed the opinion that these exported Vietnamese ceramics first imitated certain patterns of Chinese ceramics, but later on, some Vietnamese ceramic types were sought after for their own value. Bowls, dishes, and covered boxes are the most frequently exported wares. The greatest quantity of Vietnamese export ceramics can be found in Southeast Asia. Hence, the most important market for Vietnamese ceramics was Southeast Asia, in particular, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Nowadays, various museums in Southeast Asia exhibit these wares in their museums. The majority of these objects have been recovered from shipwreck sites.⁶¹⁹

Vietnamese ceramic was also exported to the Middle East. Abu'l-Qasim Ubaydallah ibn Abdallah ibn Khordadbeh, commonly known as Ibn Khordadbeh, was a high-ranking

⁶¹⁶ Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia: Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries ; with a Catalogue of Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai Wares in Australian Collections. Oxford in Asia Studies in Ceramics*, 105.

⁶¹⁷ In the beginning of maritime trade, the ships from Southeast Asia were really simple built. The ship consisted of planks and other components, which were held together with a variety of stitches and lashings made from sugar palm fiber. On the other side were the Chinese ships. They were more developed and Chinese shipwrights even used iron nails and iron clamps for their ships. Another special feature was the bulkheads that divided the ship into separate cargo compartments. Later on in the thirteenth to 14th century Southeast Asian ships adopted the Chinese structural design with bulkheads, but they still used wooden dowels instead of iron nails and clamps. Excavated shipwrecks show an unknown hybrid type of ship, which included Chinese and Southeast Asian components. These types of ship were built out of woods, which were only used by Southeast Asian shipwrights, and additionally iron nails. This hybrid ship may be a result of the Ming Gap. Chinese merchants, who settled down in Southeast Asia, ordered these ships after moving their activities from China.

Roxanna M. Brown and Sten Sjostrand, *Maritime Archaeology and shipwreck ceramics in Malaysia*, (Kuala Lumpur: Reccex Sdn. Bhd., 2004), 23-25.

⁶¹⁸ Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia: Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries ; with a Catalogue of Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai Wares in Australian Collections. Oxford in Asia Studies in Ceramics*, 45.

⁶¹⁹ Dupoizat, "Vietnamese Ceramics in the Malay World," 105-108.

bureaucrat and geographer of Persian descent in the Abbasid Caliphate. He is the author of the earliest surviving Arabic book of administrative geography. When he wrote a description of his journey to China, he mentioned visiting the port of Luqin (Long Biên 龍編, a district in present-day Hà Nội).⁶²⁰

Vietnamese ceramic objects have been found in Syria and even some fragments in East Africa, on the island of Kilwa in Tanzania.⁶²¹ The ceramic production for the Muslim market was one of the major drives for Vietnamese ceramic production. The Ardebil Shrine⁶²² contains a Vietnamese dish decorated in underglaze blue with a peony spray surrounded by a band of scalloped petals, a lotus scroll on the cavetto, and a classical scroll on the rim. The inscription on the dish confirms that the dish entered the Ardebil shrine before 1611. Another Vietnamese ceramic object in the collection in the Middle East is the famous vase in the Topkapi Saray Museum.⁶²³

Vietnamese wares were found in various countries in Southeast Asia, and the percentage of Vietnamese ceramics was low relative to Chinese and Thai ceramics. Vietnamese exports were apparently sporadic. Only in Indonesia, on Java, were the percentages of Vietnamese wares relatively higher than elsewhere. Although minor amounts of Vietnamese export ceramics are documented, the shipwrecks nonetheless offer provisional evidence that Vietnam introduced the technique of underglaze-painted decoration earlier than Thailand.⁶²⁴

Uncountable numbers of Vietnamese ceramic objects were discovered in Southeast Asia, Japan, and West Asia. Although the number of Vietnamese ceramics cannot be compared to the number of Chinese ceramics, Vietnamese ceramic objects should not be overlooked in the

⁶²⁰ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 49.

⁶²¹ Carswell, *Blue&White - Chinese Porcelain around the world*, 62.

⁶²² The collections of Chinese porcelain in the Topkapi Sarayı Müzesi in Istanbul, which was collected over 500 years, by the Ottoman Sultans, and in the Ardebil Shrine, which Shah Abbas in 1611, presented a collection of Chinese porcelain pieces in memory of the spiritual founder of his line, the Sufi Sheik Shaykh Safi al-Din, to be housed in his shrine in Ardebil, are two important Chinese ceramics collections outside of China. Unfortunately, these collections are little researched and little known even inside Iran. In 1956 John Alexander Pope at the Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, wrote a book, *Chinese Porcelains from the Ardebil Shrine*. This volume constitutes not only an excellent catalog of an important collection of Chinese porcelains in the Ardebil Shrine in Iran but also a major contribution to the understanding of Ming wares as a whole. This important but little-studied collection of Chinese porcelain was amassed by Shah Abbas the Great and presented by him to the Shrine of Sheikh Safi at Ardebil in 1611. According to a contemporary chronicle, there were some 1162 vessels of various sorts. In 1956 the collection, however, consisted of only 805 pieces, of which more than three-quarters were blue-and-white, eighty were plain white, fifty-eight were celadon, and the balance was a miscellaneous group of polychrome and monochrome wares. In the opinion of Dr. Pope, most of the pieces in this collection probably came as trade goods by land and by sea over a rather lengthy period. In general, the average quality of these "export" porcelains is very high, and a sizable group is of the finest quality. The Ardebil shrine, the Azerbaijan Museum in Tabriz as well as the Islamic Art Museum in Tehran all have ceramics from the Shah Abbas donation on display, the largest number in Tehran. There are various Chinese ceramics with the incised mark of the donation. Not all ceramics at the Ardebil shrine are from the 17th century, however, although the labels say so.

Jan-Erik Nilsson, "Ardebil Shrine," last modified December 21, 2023, https://gotheborg.com/glossary/ardebil_shrine.shtml.

⁶²³ Young, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 32.

⁶²⁴ Brown, *The Ceramics of South-East Asia: Their Dating and Identification*. Oxford in Asia studies in ceramics, 23.

question of their quality and diversity. The different ratio can be attributed to the fact that the size of the Chinese industry is by far much bigger than that of the Vietnamese. To produce quickly in large quantities and quality, and additionally, at an affordable price, was the key factor for Chinese superiority in this matter. The presence of Vietnamese ceramic objects in West Asia shows the Vietnamese participation in long-distance trade, the appreciation of Vietnamese ceramics in countries of West Asia, and that Vietnamese ceramics met the technical standards and aesthetic tastes of West Asia.⁶²⁵

Although the demand for Vietnamese export ceramics was not high, stylistic differences between ceramics for export and ceramics for domestic use can be seen. The shape of the *kendi* and the large flat serving dish⁶²⁶, which were popular in the Islamic market, were specially produced for export. Large flat serving dishes were developed for the Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian markets, as they suited the communal eating habits of the Islamic world. The Vietnamese domestic ceramic market had quite different requirements, such as distinctive altar wares and lime-pots for the consumption of betel nuts.⁶²⁷

Ceramic products, which were intentionally produced for the export market, show a distinct aesthetic of the country of the order, but the products still bear characteristics of Vietnamese ceramic culture.

There seems to be a close connection between Vietnamese, Chinese, and Thai ceramic wares. In particular, the export ceramics wares of these three countries show similarities in designs and shapes, indicating that the wares were made at roughly the same time and that potters were aware of their competitors. The similarities can be connected to the demand of the importers of ceramic wares, as they themselves searched for the cheapest producer of their desired products. Importers from that period of time were Southeast Asian countries like the Philippines and Indonesia. They triggered the competition between the three countries and the mutual impacts. In many shipwrecks, ceramic objects from Vietnam, China, and Thailand were often found alongside. For instance, the kilns in *Sukhothai* and in present-day Northern Vietnam exhibit similarities in their underglaze iron-black wares with floral center designs. The resemblances can be traced back to a possible impact of Vietnamese potters on Thai potters. Nothing is proven yet, but merely based on speculation; one certain fact is that Thai and Vietnamese ceramics fall in the category of the general tradition of Chinese ceramics.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁵ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 188-189.

⁶²⁶ Almost all larger flat dishes and larger blue-and-white wares have been found abroad rather than in Vietnam. However, the early Chinese blue-and-white wares were also believed to have been made only for the export market, but recent discoveries in China suggest that it was also produced for the domestic market. This situation could also concern the Vietnamese larger dishes. Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 38.

⁶²⁷ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 54-56.

⁶²⁸ Young, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, 25-27.

Hence, the close links between Vietnamese and Thai wares are based on the impact of Chinese pottery. Besides the Chinese impact, there have also been diplomatic exchanges between Vietnam, present Cambodia, and present Thailand in the 13th to the 18th century (in particular the *Trần* and *Lê* dynasties). According to the 'Complete Annals of *Đại Việt*', the Vietnamese ceramics came with merchant ships that traded goods between Northern Vietnam and the old *Ayutthaya* Kingdom (present-day Thailand). Numerous examples of Vietnamese ceramic shards, mostly blue&white, have been found from sites at *Sukhothai* and *Si Satchanalai* (both sites are in present-day North Thailand).⁶²⁹

The underglaze black wares from the kilns in *Sukhothai* and *Sawankhalok* show many similarities with Vietnamese and Chinese blue&white wares. It is not very clear whether Thai ceramic culture was more influenced by Vietnamese or Chinese ceramic culture. For instance, the kiln types, which were used in Thailand, show more similarities with Vietnamese kiln types than Chinese ones. These brick kiln constructions seem to have been found in *Tam Thọ* (*Thanh Hóa* province; northern Vietnam).⁶³⁰

In the Philippines, the custom of burying objects with the dead has been practiced for thousands of years until the coming of the Spaniards during the 16th century (Fig. 190). Ceramic objects were valued items at that time; hence, they were interred with the dead. The two main reasons to execute this tradition were to provide for the afterlife and to give reassurance to the deceased in the spirit world by virtue of familiar surroundings. Fortunately for the scientist, this ritual provided valuable information about the way of life of the people. As mentioned before, due to the durability of pottery and metallic items, most of these kinds of burial goods were discovered.⁶³¹

As a result of gradually abandoning burying the deceased with ceramics, from the 18th century onwards, the quantity of Vietnamese ceramics decreased. Vietnamese potters turned to the domestic market, furnishing temples with their stylistic ceramics in a prodigious range of new shapes and glaze colors, marking a new phase in Vietnam's ceramic history.⁶³²

The Dutch East India Company (VOC) was especially involved with Vietnamese products. VOC purchased quantities of Vietnamese ceramics to resell them in the Southeast Asian and Japanese markets. Even before the European intervention, Vietnamese ceramics played a bigger part in trade relationships in Southeast Asia. For instance, there was regular maritime trade between Jakarta and Northern Vietnamese kiln sites. The so-called Tongkin wares were repeatedly ordered by the VOC and shipped to Batavia (Jakarta), mainly in contracted Chinese junks (ships). Official records of the VOC show that in 1663, a ship from Tongkin with about

⁶²⁹ Guy, *Ceramic Traditions of South-East Asia*, 4.

⁶³⁰ Brown, *The Ceramics of South-East Asia: Their Dating and Identification*. *Oxford in Asia Studies in Ceramics*, 57, 59.

⁶³¹ Adrian Malcom Joseph, *Chinese and Annamese Ceramics Found in the Philippines and Indonesia*, (London: Moss., 1973), 11.

⁶³² Lê, *Bát Tràng*, 59.

10,000 ceramic objects was on its way to Batavia. This record indicates two findings. Firstly, a large shipment implies the pre-existence of a substantial ceramic center in Tongkin. Secondly, the Vietnamese were capable of shipping their own ceramics on native craft.⁶³³

In 1669, 250,000 items of Vietnamese ceramics had been brought by Chinese merchants to Batavia. Also, in 1669, the VOC Tonkin factory purchased 381,200 items of crude Vietnamese ceramics and sent them to Batavia. From then until the early 1680s, the VOC was exporting Vietnamese ceramics to markets in the Indonesian maritime region.⁶³⁴

When the ceramic trade in Vietnam diminished, the English East India Company closed its factory in *Hà Nội* in 1698. The Dutch closed its factory in 1704. Although the VOC was directly involved with Vietnamese export goods, there are no records of Vietnamese ceramics being directly traded to Europe.⁶³⁵

In general, export wares can be divided into two big groups - the ceramic objects were either specifically manufactured for the country of destination, or they were manufactured for the domestic market, but still exported overseas.

The exported Vietnamese wares can be divided into three groups. The first group comprises ceramics from the late 13th and early 14th century. They often consisted of monochromes and underglaze iron-black wares. The second group comprises underglaze blue and is often found in Indonesia and the Philippines in association with Chinese ceramics and Thai ceramics dating from the 15th to the 16th century. The third group comprises blue&white plus multi-colored overglaze enamel wares, dating from the 17th to 18th century.⁶³⁶

2. Vietnamese Ceramics in the Philippines

The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,641 islands, and it is divided into three major island groups: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The shipwrecks 'Pandanan', 'Lena Junk', and 'Santa Cruz' were discovered in the eastern part of the Philippines, which indicates that the eastern part was used as a maritime route during the 15th century.⁶³⁷

Vietnamese ceramics were then traded to the Philippines following the route along the strings of the islands and islets from the South because there are more numerous in the central and southern islands. For example, on Mindoro Island, the central island of the Philippines a small number of probably *Chu Đậu* wares were found. There have also been discoveries on islands like Negros, Cebu, Cuyo Islands, Calamian Islands, and Palawan. On Cuyo Island, Vietnamese ceramics were discovered alongside Chinese ceramics dating from the *Yuan* through to the *Ming* period and Thai wares. Although the Calamian Islands are pretty scattered,

⁶³³ Brown, *The Ceramics of South-East Asia: Their Dating and Identification*. Oxford in Asia studies in ceramics, 29.

⁶³⁴ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 242.

⁶³⁵ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 55, 60.

⁶³⁶ Brown, *The Ceramics of South-East Asia: Their Dating and Identification*. Oxford in Asia studies in ceramics, 23.

⁶³⁷ Orillaneda, "Maritime Trade in the Philippines During the 15th Century CE," 85.

Vietnamese ceramics have been discovered on several islands. They must have been traded through Chinese merchants.⁶³⁸

Near the island of Palawan, the 'Lena Junk' mixed wares from various countries were discovered. This island has a rich archeological heritage. In the nearby Calamian islands, Chinese records described trade with local communities by signaling their presence with a drum beating. The local traders came out with their boats to bargain on the water with goods like beeswax, cotton, pearls, tortoise shells, betel nuts, etc.⁶³⁹

In the Philippines, a large quantity of Chinese ceramics, alongside Southeast Asian ceramics, have been found. These discoveries, which have been mostly discovered from burial sites (Fig. 190), are the material evidence for the maritime trade in the South Seas. Unfortunately, written documentation of the early trade between the Philippines and China/Southeast Asia is insufficient.

The first documented trade contact between an island in the Philippines and China, *Guangzhou* to be precise, dates back to the year 982. Ceramics are also mentioned in connection with the traded goods. At the beginning of the 10th century, a new international sea route emerged that enabled the Philippines to participate in trade. Initially, the trade was not operated by Chinese merchants, but by Arabic and Persian merchants. At the time, the economic and governmental system in the Philippines was rather undeveloped; consequently, only a modest number of Chinese trade goods entered the Philippines. It was only later in the 13th century, due to better economic organization and larger tribal federations, that a tremendous number of ceramics were imported, such finds being made mainly in the northern islands.⁶⁴⁰

Political developments in Thailand in the 14th century promoted the influx of ceramic exports from Thailand to the Philippines. In 1349, the Sukhothai Empire was conquered by the Ayutthaya. As a result of this conquest, the Sukhothai and Sawankhalok kilns from the former Sukhothai Empire received a connection to Ayutthaya and simultaneously also got a connection to overseas trade. Besides the influx of ceramic exports from Thailand, the Philippines also received export ceramics from Vietnam. As mentioned above, the so-called 'Ming Gap' benefitted ceramic production in Vietnam and Thailand. Therefore, ceramic findings from this period were numerous. Chinese goods were not exported to the Philippines again until the late 15th century, but now of lower quality. In 1521, Ferdinand Magellan, looking for a new sea route to the Moluccas, discovered the Philippines and took possession of them for the Spanish crown. The final conquest of the Philippines for Spain only began in 1565 under

⁶³⁸ Lê, *Bát Tràng*, 60-61.

⁶³⁹ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 175.

⁶⁴⁰ Ulrich Wiesner, *Chinesische Keramik auf den Philippinen: die Sammlung Eric E. Geiling*; [Ausstellung], (Köln: Museen der Stadt Köln, 1978), 18-19.

Legazpi, who founded a permanent settlement in Cebu that year, had another conquest of Panay in 1569, and in 1570 and 1571, Manila, which he made the capital of the Philippines.⁶⁴¹

Santa Ana

Santa Ana is situated on a hill surrounded on three sides by the Pasig River. The geographic location thus corresponds to a situation found in many pre-Hispanic cemeteries in the Philippines: it is elevated and close to navigable waters. As mentioned above, until the arrival of the Spaniards, it was customary in the Philippines to bury gold jewelry, clothing, ceramics, and other precious everyday objects with the dead. During observed excavations, it was found again and again that ceramics - determined according to shape types - had been distributed over individual body parts of the corpse, so a magical idea was suspected behind this practice. The burial customs of the inhabitants of the Philippines were radically changed after the arrival of the Spaniards through forced Christianization. Last but not least, the location of the convent and church of Santa Ana, which lie in the middle or above a burial ground from pre-Hispanic times, indicates this change. The fact that graves in the Philippines also contained valuable objects was not lost on the Spaniards, and so a Spanish governor issued a ban on grave plundering for the first time in 1565. The Spaniards were less interested in ceramics than in gold and jewels.⁶⁴²

In 1920, the first major excavations were performed by Otley Beyer. He divided the excavation area into two different settlement areas from about the 10th century to the 14th century and from the 15th to the 17th century. From 1961 to 1962, the second major excavations were performed by Leandro and Cecilia Locsin. They put their focus area on the convent and church of Santa Ana, where they discovered a major burial ground.⁶⁴³

The second excavations performed by Leandro and Cecilia Locsin illustrate the great value of Chinese and Vietnamese ceramics to the early Filipinos and the intensity of the pottery trade during the proto-historic period. At Santa Ana, in a large Filipino burial site contemporary with the *Song* dynasty, 1,516 pieces of Chinese pottery in 202 graves. The Santa Ana excavations are the first systematic and intensive excavation within the Philippines of a burial site containing large numbers of Chinese and Vietnamese pottery. The Santa Ana district is known to be one of the oldest districts of Manila. According to tradition, Santa Ana, then called the Kingdom of Sapa, was a flourishing community several centuries old when the Spaniards arrived in the 16th century. In ancient times, trading was common along the Pasig River, as small boats could navigate upstream and reach the different communities that dotted the river banks. The abundance of celadons, *Qingbai* wares, gray-glazed wares, and other monochrome types, and blue&white pottery types are commonly associated with the 14th and

⁶⁴¹ Wiesner, *Chinesische Keramik auf den Philippinen: die Sammlung Eric E. Geiling*, 19-20.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, 12.

15th century sites. However, it should be noted that just because the pottery from China is from this period does not mean that the burial sites are from that period. The dating of the graves turns out to be relatively difficult, however, as already mentioned, it is assumed that there are two time periods involved.⁶⁴⁴

The most striking feature of the ceramics found in Santa Ana is the small size of their format. These 'miniatures' are not very usual for classical Chinese ware. Whereas in Vietnam, miniature ceramic objects were mainly produced in the 16th and 17th centuries for the export market. Although all of these pieces are designed to be functional and therefore usable, their small size means they were not of any practical use.⁶⁴⁵

Vietnamese wares, which were discovered, were mainly blue&white wares and other monochrome types. Noticeably, the forms and shapes of the Vietnamese blue&white wares seemed to be especially manufactured for the export market. There are *kendi* bottles and very large dishes. Two forms, which were not used in the Vietnamese domestic market.

Apparently, the spirals on the foot ring on Vietnamese ceramics unwind from the center in an anticlockwise direction, whereas those on Chinese ceramics do the opposite. This could suggest that the Vietnamese potters' wheel turned in the opposite direction to that of the Chinese, and this would be like the potters' wheel of Japanese potters.⁶⁴⁶

The Shipwrecks

The Pandanan shipwreck was discovered in 1993. Analysis suggests that the shipbuilding technique was probably from South China or Vietnam. Iron nails were used to join the keel to the hull. There were seven compartments or bulkheads that held the cargo in the lower hull. The dimension of the ship was estimated to be 25-30 meters long and about 6-8 meters wide. The content of this shipwreck is important for the trade relationship between Vietnam and the Philippines. About 4,700 artifacts were retrieved, and about 70% were of Vietnamese origin. These wares included Champa stonewares, which were produced in the *Gò Sành* kilns in the province of *Bình Định* (southeast Vietnam), and blue&white objects from the kilns of *Chu Đậu* (*Hải Dương* province; northeast Vietnam). These findings suggest direct trade between Vietnam and the Philippines. Alongside Vietnamese ceramic objects, a smaller amount of Thai ceramic wares (from Sukhothai and Sawankhalok), Chinese *Jingdezhen* blue&white porcelain, *Longquan* celadons, metals, glass beads, and Chinese coins from the *Yongle* period (1360 - 1424) were discovered. Analysis of the morphological and stylistic characteristics of the ceramic objects suggests that the Pandanan shipwreck is from the middle or late 15th century.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁴ Joseph, *Chinese and Annamese Ceramics Found in the Philippines and Indonesia*, 10.

⁶⁴⁵ Wiesner, *Chinesische Keramik auf den Philippinen: die Sammlung Eric E. Geiling*, 12-13.

⁶⁴⁶ Joseph, *Chinese and Annamese Ceramics Found in the Philippines and Indonesia*, 138.

⁶⁴⁷ Orillaneda, "Maritime Trade in the Philippines During the 15th Century CE," 85-86.

The 'Lena Junk' was discovered in 1996. More than 7,000 artifacts were retrieved. This included high-fired ceramic trade wares from China, Thailand, Vietnam, and Burma, earthenware, elephant tusks, tin ingots, glass beads, bronze bracelets, and gongs. The 'Lena Junk' sank around the late 15th century, probably during the Hongzhi period 弘治 (1470 - 1505).⁶⁴⁸

There were 28 artifacts of northern Vietnamese blue&white and white ware among the salvaged items. They are regarded as products of *Chu Đậu*, and as blue and white, there are bottles, kendi ewers, octagonal small jars, lidded containers, and large bowls, and jars as white ware. Among the ceramics from central Vietnam, there were many iron-black-glazed four-handled jars. The age of the ceramics from this shipwreck is said to be from 1480 to 1490. The motif on the *kendi* of the Lena Shoal shipwreck is a chrysanthemum flower scroll design often drawn in Vietnamese blue and white bowls of the 16th century, but the manner of drawing the scrolls is simplified. Since such products are not found in the Chàm Islands shipwreck or the Trowulan site, they are regarded as one phase newer, and placed at the end of the fifteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. From artifacts at kiln sites, there is a possibility that they were produced at the *Ngói* kiln of *Hải Dương* province.⁶⁴⁹

Its starting port was probably in the *Zhejiang* or *Fujian* province, but its destination remains an enigma. It was loaded with ceramics, some of which originated from the kilns at *Jingdezhen*, *Longquan*, and *Guangdong*. Besides ceramics, it was loaded with various other merchandise such as bronze gongs and bracelets, frying pans, and iron ingots. In Siam (present-day Thailand), the junk loaded some ceramic wares and made its way to the coast of the Malay peninsula and Sumatra, where perhaps the tin ingots and copper utensils were loaded. Although the presence of Siamese goods on the shipwreck suggests that the junk followed the coastal route along the Chinese borders in order to get to Malacca, where the cargo would then be exported towards the Middle East, this wreck was discovered northeast of Palawan, nearly 3,700 km from a Siamese port or the Malacca Straits.⁶⁵⁰

Besides ceramic findings from China, the other ceramic objects were manufactured in Thailand, Vietnam, and Burma. Due to the typology of the ceramic wares (mainly the Islamic-influenced ceramic shapes), it is suggested that part of the ship's content was destined for the Islamic communities of Southern Philippines or other Islamic communities in Southeast Asia. The lower part of the wooden hull is about 18 meters long and five meters wide. It was well preserved because of an overlying layer of sand and archeological materials. It could be a

⁶⁴⁸ Orillaneda, "Maritime Trade in the Philippines During the 15th Century CE," 86.

⁶⁴⁹ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 185-186.

⁶⁵⁰ Jan-Erik Nilsson, "Lena Junk," last modified December 21, 2023, <https://gotheborg.com/glossary/lenajunk.shtml>.

combination ship from South China and Southeast Asia due to the shipbuilding technique (edge-joining using wooden pegs and bulkheads). The overall length of the ship could be up to 24 meters with a carrying capacity of approximately 100 tons.⁶⁵¹

The contents of the 'Santa Cruz' shipwreck were retrieved in 2001. Almost 15,000 artifacts were retrieved, including high-fired glazed stoneware and porcelain from China, Thailand, Vietnam, and Burma. Alongside the ceramic objects, iron cauldrons and ingots, bronze weaponry, gongs, tin ingots, glass beads and bracelets, and carnelian beads were discovered. The majority of the objects had their origin in China, followed by Thailand, Burma, and then Vietnam. Analysis of the wares and shipbuilding suggests that the ship originated from Thailand. Its starting port was probably in Thailand, as the Thai stoneware jars were loaded in the lower cargo holds. After the loading of the Thai wares, the Burmese wares were loaded, then the Vietnamese wares, and finally the Chinese wares. The fully loaded ship may have passed through Taiwan, then went southwards to the Philippines, where it unfortunately sank near eastern Luzon.⁶⁵²

These three shipwrecks prove that the archipelagos of the Philippines were a part of the Southeast Asian trading network. 18 shipwrecks from the 15th century were identified, including five from Thailand, four from Malaysia, three from the Philippines, three from Vietnam, two from Indonesia, and 1 from Brunei. The dating of these shipwrecks builds upon the stylistic and morphological analysis of the high-fired and glazed stonewares and ceramics from China, Thailand, Vietnam, and Burma.⁶⁵³

The Pandanan shipwreck contains the largest load of Champa and Northern Vietnamese wares and the largest percentage of Chinese ceramics during the 15th century, which was determined for the Southeast Asian market. Noticeably, it could be one of the last trading ships from the Champa kingdom, as shortly after, it was invaded by Northern Vietnam. The Pandanan shipwreck could also be considered as a 'bridge' between the mid-and late 15th century, when Chinese private trade resumed despite the export ban issued by an imperial decree by the Chinese *Ming* emperor. The shipbuilding technique of the Pandanan shipwreck was either from South China or Vietnam because the use of iron nails and bulkheads shows the Chinese shipbuilding technique. The shipbuilding technique of the Lena Junk and the Santa, with the bulkheads and iron nails, which are from the Chinese shipbuilding technique, and the v-shaped hull and planks edge-joined with wooden dowels, from the Southeast Asian shipbuilding technique, both ships belong to the South China Sea shipbuilding tradition. Furthermore, the Lena Junk, Santa Cruz, and the Brunei shipwrecks represent the

⁶⁵¹ Orillaneda, "Maritime Trade in the Philippines During the 15th Century CE," 87.

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, 87-88.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, 91.

private Chinese trade resumptions. The loads of the shipwrecks contain predominantly Chinese blue&white porcelain, celadons, and stonewares from different Chinese kiln sites. The Chinese private merchants were working with high-ranking officials from the government, so they could engage in illegal overseas trade despite the imperial decree banning overseas trade.

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The Cebu Settlement Site

The Cebu Settlement site is the country's oldest settlement. It is very much influenced by Spanish heritage. When Ferdinand Magellan, the Portuguese navigator and explorer, landed there in 1521, he observed that Cebu was a bustling commercial transshipment port with a large and mixed ethnic population. Archeological findings, including ceramics, slag, and manufactured iron, glass, stone, wood, as well as faunal remains (animals and shells), and grave goods from two burials, from the research project conducted by Dr. Masanari Nishimura, revealed that Cebu was an important commercial port before the arrival of the Spanish in the early 16th century. Local merchants exchanged local goods with traders from Java, Sumatra, Ayutthaya, and China. Strikingly, foreign trade ceramics and other foreign trade goods were used by the elite community. Findings of glazed ceramics all over Cebu demonstrated that during feasts of the elite, glazed ceramics from China, Thailand, and Vietnam were used as food containers. They were also gifted to distinguished guests, as they were potent symbols of power. The demand for foreign trade goods by the elites in Cebu made them dependent heavily on foreign trade networks. Trade was carried out by using multiple trade routes and multiple partners to maintain stability and counter unpredictable incidents like natural disasters or piracy.⁶⁵⁵

The Calatagan Burials

All over the Philippines, burials served as archeological bases. Burial goods are useful as sources of information in interpreting ancient lifeways. The Calatagan burials are the burials on the west coast of Calatagan, Batangas in western Luzon. In 1959, Dr. Robert Fox excavated around 700 burials, which contained objects like foreign ceramics, metals, beads, and even some organic remains of flora and fauna. Based on the analysis, the site was dated to the late 14th to mid 15th centuries. Noticeably, the placement of burial goods was very important. For example, the plain or decorated earthenware was placed in different locations of the skeleton remains. These earthenware served different functions, including as ritual objects, as early status markers, and as symbols of shared cultural identity. Foreign ceramics were status-wise placed higher than local ceramics; in a way, foreign ceramics were prestige markers. Foreign ceramics and local ceramics were discovered in the same burial, which indicates the

⁶⁵⁴ Orillaneda, "Maritime Trade in the Philippines During the 15th Century CE," 92.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid, 88-89.

combination of old beliefs and cultural ties with the community. Of the large number of foreign ceramics, it can be assumed that access and trade to foreign countries appeared to be unrestricted. As a result of this, local pottery production did not further develop a high degree of specialization, which could have led to the mass production of standardized pots. Local pots were instead produced at the household level by possibly part-time female potters. These produced local wares were used as utilitarian or burial goods.⁶⁵⁶

3. Vietnamese Ceramics in Indonesia

Vietnamese Ceramics in Indonesia can be found alongside ceramics from China, Japan, Thailand, and Europe. Its distribution occurred between the 14th to the 18th centuries. During the 15th century, the Vietnamese trade connection to Java, Sulawesi, and Eastern Indonesia was the most active. From the archeological data from the National Museum and the Adam Malik Museum (both located in Jakarta), discoveries of Vietnamese ceramics were fewer in number than Chinese and European ceramics, but more than Japanese and Thai ceramics. The most common forms of Vietnamese ceramics in Indonesia are bowls and boxes with lids, and the very sparse forms are vases, bottles, and cups. This could be because of the usage of certain forms. A very special Vietnamese ceramic object, which can only be found in Trowulan, is the wall tiles, which were used in the mosque. The accumulation of Vietnamese ceramic objects occurred in localities of former centers of ancient states or in localities of strategic significance for maritime trade.⁶⁵⁷

The National Museum of Indonesia

The National Museum of Indonesia was also known as the Museum Pusat Jakarta (literally translated as 'Central Museum'). In its ceramic collection, Vietnamese ceramic plays an important role. Its first museum catalog was about 'Annamese Ceramic'.

For some objects, the provenance is not certain; sometimes, just the purchasing location is known. Apparently, the majority of antique dealers in Java come from West Sumatra. These antique dealers claimed that the ceramics were excavated or looted from Chinese graves in Sulawesi. This claim was made because in the Muslim community, burial of material goods is forbidden. In some graves of indigenous Indonesian graves, burial goods were found, which could suggest that pre-Muslim traditions were still carried on in some cases.⁶⁵⁸

The collection of the museum contains various Vietnamese ceramics. The most abundant was the blue&white wares. The forms and shapes varied from jars to bowls, from jarlets to covered boxes, and from dishes to vases. There were also zoomorphic figurines

⁶⁵⁶ Orillaneda, "Maritime Trade in the Philippines During the 15th Century CE," 90-91.

⁶⁵⁷ Naniek Wibisono, "Vietnamese Ceramics from Archaeological Site in Indonesia," *上智アジア学 = The Journal of Sophia Asian studies* (1993): 140-141, <https://digital-archives.sophia.ac.jp/repository/view/repository/00000004470>.

⁶⁵⁸ Lammers, *Annamese Ceramics in the Museum Pusat Jakarta*, 101.

(elephants, birds, cows). There were some objects, which are very rarely seen. Maybe this was like the wall tiles, which were commissioned for the Indonesian market.

Kota Cina (North Sumatra)

Kota Cina, in northeast Sumatra, today part of the northern suburbs of Medan, a city of over two million inhabitants, capital of the North Sumatra province, is located less than ten kilometers away from the harbor of Belawan on the Strait of Malacca.⁶⁵⁹

Kota Cina ('Chinese Stockade') lies on the inner edge of the delta formed by the Deli River, which flows from the highlands near Lake Toba. The river's hinterland provided important export goods that were in demand in medieval China. Archaeological excavations in the 1970s uncovered large quantities of Chinese ceramics, coins, and gold artifacts dating from 1080 to 1260 CE. Kota Cina is one of the most mysterious sites of the 11th to 13th centuries. The presence of large quantities of Chinese pottery and other artifacts, as well as the name of the site itself, suggests that Chinese people may have lived there, but no Chinese evidence has been found. The site is important because it is the largest *Song* dynasty port yet discovered in Southeast Asia.⁶⁶⁰

Since 2011, studies have been conducted on the old settlement site of Kota Cina in the framework of a French-Indonesian archaeological project. In Kota Cina, two types of features, in particular, indicate ancient settlements: shell middens of varying thickness, which represent accumulations of household waste, and wooden posts, which can be traced through fragmentary remains or post holes. These multiple layers indicate a dense but irregular occupation. The presence of wood remains is one of the features that make Kota Cina an exceptional archaeological site in the northern half of Sumatra, whose humid environment allows the preservation of organic remains such as wood. According to a preliminary count, 200 wood fragments - most of them post remains - were collected between 2011 and 2015. Among the ancient settlement sites in North Sumatra that have been the subject of extensive research recently, Kota Cina undoubtedly appears to be the richest site, be it in terms of earthenware, stoneware, porcelain, or faunal remains. These findings elevated Kota Cina to be a major reference site in Indonesia, and more widely in Southeast Asia, for finds of this type between the second half of the 11th and the beginning of the 14th century.⁶⁶¹

Not only are the ceramic finds important for the research, but the discovery of Chinese coins also plays a relevant role in understanding trade in this region. It is likely that port settlements in the Strait of Malacca with a significant Chinese presence, such as Kota Cina,

⁶⁵⁹ Daniel Perret, Heddy Surachman, Repelita Wahyu Oetomo, Churmatin Nasoichah, Deni Sutrisna, et al., "The French-Indonesian archaeological project in Kota Cina (North Sumatra): the 2014-2015 excavations," *Archipel*, 91, (2016): 3-4, <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01885266>.

⁶⁶⁰ Miksic, John N., "Chinese Ceramics on the Maritime Silk Road: The Importance of Context," In *The Maritime Silk Road: Global Connectivities, Regional Nodes, Localities*, edited by Franck Billé, Sanjyot Mehendale, and James W. Lankton, (Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 192-193. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2x00w7b.11>.

⁶⁶¹ Perret, Surachman, Oetomo, Churmatin, Sutrisna, "The French-Indonesian archaeological project in Kota Cina (North Sumatra): the 2014-2015 excavations," 7-8, 11-12.

appear to have adopted Chinese currency as a means of conducting trade with Chinese traders, as a complement to the barter and currencies of the Indian Ocean coastal areas that were prevalent in the region at the time. The presence of one- and two-cash coins at Kota Cina suggests that facilitating transactions with Chinese traders was an important factor in the adoption of the currency, and this led to a degree of synchronicity with the monetary system in China. Chinese copper coins were most likely a medium of exchange for transactions between local residents and Chinese traders. It is very likely that the copper coins were accepted not only from Chinese traders but also from Vietnamese traders, in exchange for products prepared locally for export. In the 10th to 14th centuries, Chinese copper coins served two main functions in the Strait of Malacca: as a Chinese trade product and as a medium of exchange. As a trade product, Chinese copper coins remained in circulation for only a very specific period between 1074 and 1126.⁶⁶²

Allangkanangge ri Latanete (South Sulawesi)

The Allangkanangge ri Latanete site in South Sulawesi (Indonesia) has remarkable quantities of earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain. Allegedly, this site is the location of the palace of the vanished Bugis kingdom of Cina (13th to 16th centuries). Cina is one of the oldest kingdoms in South Sulawesi. The rulers of Cina converted to Islam, and near the summit of the hill old Islamic graves were excavated, which were dated not older than the 16th century. The frequencies of the excavated objects indicate that during the 13th century, there was a light occupation of the site, the main period of habitation was between the 14th and 16th centuries and during the 17th century, the habitation declined.⁶⁶³

The Allangkanangge Hill today is free of permanent dwelling and is planted with vegetables, tobacco, cacao, maize, and other cash crops. On the raised earth platform are a dozen substantial stone graves, built in a variety of Islamic Styles; these are claimed to be the graves of the rulers of Cina. The earth platform is edged with stone retaining walls that appear to be original and largely undisturbed. This was likely the location of the palace from which the hill obtained its name. In July 1999, the 'Origin of Complex Society in South Sulawesi Project (OXIS)' mapped five locales on the hilltop and opened a 1m to 1m test pit on the raised earth platform. In June and July of 2005, archaeological work was resumed by an international team of researchers. The site was divided into 41 zones, and in 19 out of these zones, surface materials were collected, assisted by the recent clearing of the hill surface for planting crops. The available surface collection of trade wares includes 251 collected in 1999 and 1869

⁶⁶² Derek Thiam Soon Heng, "Export Commodity and Regional Currency: The Role of Chinese Copper Coins in the Melaka Straits, Tenth to Fourteenth Centuries." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2006): 195, 202, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20072706>.

⁶⁶³ Budianto Hakim, Stuart Hawkins, David Bulbeck, Ian Caldwell, Stephen Druce, and Campbell Macknight, "Material Culture at Allangkanangge Ri Latanete in Relation to the Origins of Bugis Kingdoms," in *The Archaeology of Sulawesi: Current Research on the Pleistocene to the Historic Period*, edited by David Bulbeck, Sue O'Connor, and Juliet Meyer, (Canberra: ANU Press, 2018), 287. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv8bt3bw.22>.

collected in 2005, making a total of 2120 shards. In an early study, a total of 14,611 imported ceramics classified by the local Archaeological Service included five *Tang* dynasty identifications, and about 10% of the total were identified as *Song* ware and 1% as *Yuan* ware, with the remaining parts identified as post-*Yuan* Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese and European. In 1994, Kaharuddin sketched the location of a royal installation stone, stone graves, and old wells. During his stay, he did a surface collection, which contained earthenware and 151 tradeware shards. Nearly half of the imported ceramics were classified as 'yellow and brown' and half of the remainder as 'blue' (blue and white), followed by small percentages of celadons, whitewares, blackwares, and brownwares. Later, Kaharuddin further classified 34 of the sherds by vessel form: eleven martavan/martaban jars, ten plates, seven bowls, and six jars.⁶⁶⁴

Through the frequency of the excavated objects and the two deepest radiometric dates obtained from TP1, the initial occupation of Allangkanangnge can be securely dated to the 13th century. However, in spit 6 in TP1, a brown ware sherd from Vietnam/Guangdong and olive green ware sherds in TP1 and TP3 suggest that an earlier occupation (namely the 12th century) can also be proposed. However, there are two reasons why the occupation of Allangkanangnge in the 12th century should not be considered. First, the identification of small trade ware sherds can be very difficult; second, trade wares may have remained in use long after the time of production. Furthermore, the assumption of the occupation of Allangkanangnge in the 13th century corresponds to the radiometric dates. The last occupation of Allangkanangnge until the 16th/17th centuries is indicated by the most recently excavated trade ware sherds, the 17th-century dating of a large number of sherds from the surface collection, and by the charcoal date from TP4.⁶⁶⁵

The excavated trade ware sherds consisted mainly of large stoneware jars (17 to 39 sherds, 44%), which are assumed to be produced mainly from production centers in China or Vietnam. This ratio also applied to the surface collection (1048 of 2120 sherds, 49%). Two remarkable features of the tradewares from Allangkanangnge are the high frequencies of early whitewares and *Jizhou* iron-painted wares, alongside relatively low concentrations of early monochromes and 16th century Chinese Blue&White sherds. The high proportion of early whitewares may be attributed to the importance of Cina as an early Bugis kingdom. As for the high proportion of *Jizhou* sherds, it may reflect the frequent association of *Jizhou* wares with the pre-Islamic palace centers.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁴ David Bulbeck, Ian Caldwell, Stephen Druce, Budianto Hakim, and Campbell Macknight, "Imported Tradeware Ceramics and Their Relevance for Dating Socio-Political Developments in South Sulawesi, with Special Reference to the Allangkanangnge Ri Latanete Site," in *The Archaeology of Sulawesi: Current Research on the Pleistocene to the Historic Period*, edited by David Bulbeck, Sue O'Connor, and Juliet Meyer, 269-70. Canberra: ANU Press, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv8bt3bw.21>.

⁶⁶⁵ Bulbeck, Caldwell, Druce, Hakim, and Macknight, "Imported Tradeware Ceramics and Their Relevance for Dating Socio-Political Developments in South Sulawesi, with Special Reference to the Allangkanangnge Ri Latanete Site," 279-280.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 280.

Historical records and archaeological excavations indicate that on the one hand, lowland Bugis of areas including Sawitto, Soppeng, Sengkang and its vicinity, and Bone (Lamuru to Watampone), between the 14th century, used large imported urns for burying the cremated remains of the deceased. Furthermore, the discoveries point out that the South Sulawesi lowlanders converted to Islam in the early 17th century. On the other hand, in the area of Makassar and Selayar, speakers evidently buried a range of imported ceramics with extended burials in late pre-Islamic times, before turning to the curation of tradewares as cherished household possessions during pre-Islamic times. The central Bugis and Makassar/Selayar traditions were followed by the pre-Islamic Luwu Bugis and their Lemolang neighbors. They buried the ashes of the deceased in large jars, but also accompanied the departed with a wealth of other ceramics.⁶⁶⁷

The archaeological discoveries from Allangkanangnge provide clear evidence that by the 13th century, the process of social complexification or state formation in Bugis-speaking areas of South Sulawesi was underway. The availability of foreign prestige goods, like Chinese and Southeast Asian ceramics, was closely linked to this process. The presence of foreign prestige goods as symbolic luxury goods promoted social hierarchy and political control. Although the population was relatively small, the extensive fertile lowlands in South Sulawesi, where they had, in most years, produced more rice than its inhabitants could consume, paid for these foreign goods.⁶⁶⁸

Majapahit Kingdom (East Java)

The Majapahit kingdom⁶⁶⁹ was an early customer of Vietnamese ceramics. In 1976, the excavations in Trowulan, which was the capital of the politically and commercially powerful Majapahit kingdom, revealed a large number of decorative, ornamented, colorful glazed ceramics. Huge quantities of high-quality 14th to 16th centuries ceramics from China, Vietnam, and Thailand were excavated by the Indonesian National Research Center for Archaeology. Unfortunately, the area has been severely disturbed. Although quantitative data are sparse and no overall report has been published, glazed ceramics have been analyzed. Preliminary analyses show that in systematically acquired collections, 81 percent of imported wares found at Trowulan are ancient Chinese ceramics: 17 percent are from Southeast Asia (Thailand and Vietnam), and two percent from 'other' sources (mainly 19th-century Europe). Wares from Vietnam outnumber those from Thailand by a ratio of four-to-one.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁷ Bulbeck, Caldwell, Druce, Hakim, and Macknight, "Imported Tradeware Ceramics and Their Relevance for Dating Socio-Political Developments in South Sulawesi, with Special Reference to the Allangkanangnge Ri Latanete Site," 270.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid, 282.

⁶⁶⁹ The Majapahit kingdom (1293 - 1527) was at the peak of its power in the second half of the 14th century. In 1377 their conquered territory included ports and land from Sumatra to New Guinea and the southern islands of the Philippines. Their rapid expansion was stopped by forces from Demak and its final demise was in 1527.

Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 177.

⁶⁷⁰ Miksic, "Chinese Ceramics on the Maritime Silk Road: The Importance of Context," 198.

A special type of Vietnamese tiles, not found elsewhere in the region and probably specially ordered, was discovered in these excavations. These tiles come in a range of shapes, the largest group was blue&white glaze, but also in iron-black and polychrome glaze. Apparently, 300 kg of tile fragments were collected. The shades of blue on the underglaze tiles varied from brilliant blue to light blue and to a blackish blue. The thickness of the color also varied, which caused Indonesian researchers to assume that the production of underglazed blue&white tiles was in an early stage of development. At the time of the peak of the Majapahit palace complex, it was described by a court poet. The architectural elements were featured in open pavilions constructed of wood with tiled roofs, the timbers carved with raised work, and ornamented with figures. The Vietnamese tiles may have been used as decorative elements in the wooden structures.⁶⁷¹

Many designs of the tiles are similar to 15th century Vietnamese export ceramics. Some flower motifs resemble the flower on the famous bottle of the Topkapi Saray Museum. Others have cranes, phoenixes, qilin, and other mythical creatures. Each tile appears to function as an independent architectural ornament. The largest number of Vietnamese tiles can be found in the Demak Great Mosque, where the tiles were set into the wall. Another example of Vietnamese tiles used in architectural ornaments is the mosque at Kudus. One tile, now in the private collection in London, which was discovered in East Java, demonstrates that these kinds of tiles were specifically made for the Javanese market. On the tile is a kala monster mask, which is depicted uniquely in Javanese style. The kala monster with extended fangs and lower jaw can be predominantly found on decorative motifs in temple architecture in Java. Although there is no evidence for the commissioned work. However, the practice was that the commissioner would send a template to the manufacturer, which was a common practice between the VOC and *Jingdezhen*.⁶⁷²

The Demak Great Mosque (Masjid Agung of Demak) (Java)

The Demak Great Mosque (Masjid Agung of Demak) is one of the oldest mosques in Indonesia. The glazed wall tiles on the facade of the prayer hall were specially ordered. Furthermore, these glazed wall tiles can only be found in Java, notably in Demak, Kudus, Kapara, and Cirebon. As mentioned above, the Demak Great Mosque has the largest group of these tiles preserved today, a total of 65. The tiles are variously shaped: round, rectangular, octagonal, etc. They are mostly painted in underglaze blue, sometimes combined with red and green enamels. The decorative repertoire includes floral sprays and small animals inspired by local designs.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷¹ Bui and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 178.

⁶⁷² Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 58-59.

⁶⁷³ Bulbeck, Caldwell, Druce, Hakim, and Macknight, "Imported Tradeware Ceramics and Their Relevance for Dating Socio-Political Developments in South Sulawesi, with Special Reference to the Allangkanangnge Ri Latanete Site," 285.

In 1949, Van Orsoy de Flines, the curator of the National Museum of Indonesia, Jakarta, published his own research on foreign ceramics found in Indonesia. He observed that these tiles have a close connection to a large group of glazed stoneware tile fragments collected in the vicinity of Trowulan. These fragments were not found in their original architectural settings; they were scattered among the brick and terracotta remains of the site. As aforementioned, these glazed wall tiles were specially ordered from the Majapahit court, which were then produced in northern Vietnam. This commissioned work was probably in the fifteenth to the early sixteenth century.⁶⁷⁴

Before Van Orsoy de Flines did his research on foreign tiles in Indonesia, H. Maclaine Pont, a Dutch architect and a member of the Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, had already done his research on these tiles. He thoroughly researched the sites in Trowulan and Demak, including the extensive archeological excavation during the 1920s and early 1930s. After long years of research and excavation, most of the ceramic shards were kept in his own house, while a small number of them were contributed to the Museum of the Batavian Society in Batavia, now the National Museum of Indonesia, Jakarta. Today, these Trowulan recoveries, including the shards of Vietnamese tiles, are still exhibited in this museum. About 40 years after Maclaine Pont's research, Mayuyama Yasuhiko [藤山康彦], a Japanese ceramics scholar, published a report relating to Vietnamese tiles in the Great Mosque of Demak. In his research paper, 66 tiles found in this old mosque were introduced in detail. Besides Mayuyama, John Guy, a specialist in Vietnamese ceramics, published his own views regarding these Vietnamese tiles. In his research paper, Guy points out that some features of the tiles bear similarity to other styles, for example, the cartouche form or kara design, which is comparable to decoration from Hindu Javanese architecture. Among his discoveries, the most important is the similarity between the peony arabesque motif found on the tiles of Demak and the famous bottle in the Topkapi Saray Collection. Additionally, he also explained the 'Persian influence' on the hexagonal form. No findings of Vietnamese wall tiles have been found outside Java,

⁶⁷⁴ John Guy, "The Vietnamese Wall Tiles of Majapahit," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, vol. 53 (1988-89): 27-28. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342248323_%27The_Vietnamese_Wall_Tiles_of_Majapahit%27_Transactions_of_the_Oriental_Ceramic_Society_1988-89_vol_53_27-46.

and no glazed wall tile shards have not yet been found in any kiln sites in Vietnam. Ceramics specialist and archeologist Prof. *Bùi Minh Trí*, based on findings during a study of kiln sites, indicated the possibility of Vietnamese blue&white wares being produced especially for customers' orders during the 15th century.⁶⁷⁵

Dr. Sakai Takashi, an archeologist and professor at the Department of Art History at the National Taiwan University, documented the relevant decorative elements of all Vietnamese tile shards recovered in Java and in the surrounding area of Indonesia. According to his data, there are several locations in Java and elsewhere where Vietnamese tile shards and wall decorations of similar form can be found. He divided the discoveries into four categories and where they were found. The first group is the tiles, which can be found in Trowulan, the Demak Great Mosque, the Minaret Mosque of Kudus, and the Mausoleum of Sunan Bonang (Tuban). The second group is the Brick decorations, which can be found in the Bangkal Temple, Empu II Temple, the Minaret and the Mausoleum of Sunan Kudus, Mosque and Palaces in Cirebon, and the Mausoleum of Gde ing Suro (Palembang, southern Sumatra). The next group is the stone decorations, which can be found in the Mosque of Mantingan and Panataran Temple. The last group is the wood decorations, which can be found in the Mausoleum of Sunan Kudus and the Mausoleum of Sunan Giri (Gresik). The places where Vietnamese tiles have been found all share characteristics that connect them to Islamic activities in Java around the 15th and 16th centuries. Additionally, Takashi divided the tiles into glaze colors and motifs. 59 examples of Blue-and-white wares are classified into four different blue colors: clean blue, deep blue, dark blue, and grayish blue. The majority of them belong to the categories of dark and grayish blue. While polychrome ware with two examples is used with overglaze green and red underglaze blue, the white ware with one example is colored with yellowish white. In the category motif, he distinguished between three kinds of motifs: the Vietnamese motifs with 49 examples, other motifs with five examples, and combinations of Vietnamese and other motifs, which have eight examples. The Vietnamese motifs are composed of either peony, lotus, or chrysanthemum arabesques, animals (for example, birds or qilin/lion), and clouds, while motifs, which he categorized in the 'other' group, comprise some geometric designs and white leaf/arabesque.⁶⁷⁶

Through these categories, he further divided the tiles into style categories. The Cartouche-effort style (which can be further divided into two sub-styles: single or double lines are drawn along the rim of the form), the Oblong sub-style, the Quatrefoil sub-style (the overall form is diamond-like, and the edge style is divided into straight and curved), the Circle style,

⁶⁷⁵ Sakai Takashi, "Preliminary Study of Vietnamese Decorated Tiles found in Java, Indonesia," 美術史研究集刊 第二十五期 (民國 97 年) Art History Research Collection Issue 25 (Republic of China 1997): 134-135.
http://ntur.lib.ntu.edu.tw/bitstream/246246/281796/1/0025_200809_4.pdf.

⁶⁷⁶ Takashi, "Preliminary Study of Vietnamese Decorated Tiles found in Java, Indonesia," 137, 140-141.

the Cross style (which can be divided into two sub-styles: Standard sub-style and Transformation sub-style), the Flower style (may have some relationship to the cross style transformation-combination type and spiral style), the Hexagonal style, the Spiral style, the Square style, and the Triangle style. In each site, the variety of forms differs slightly; the recoveries from Trowulan are of a wider variety of forms than those from Demak.⁶⁷⁷

Takashi suggests a possible influence of Islamic tiles on the development of Vietnamese tiles. The tradition of the production of Islamic tile had spread from Central and Western Asia to South Asia by the second half of the 14th century. Subsequently, tile production developed in Punjab, and in the 15th century, from here it was introduced to other Islamic areas, including Gujarat. By the beginning of the 15th century, several Islamic missionaries had brought the Islamic tile tradition to Java, which had links with Gujarat. In these missionary activities, the actual quantities of Islamic tiles brought to Java were very small. Hitherto, Islamic architects had not played an important role. Before the tile trade network, the ceramics trade between Java and *Đại Việt*/Northern Vietnam had already been established. Because of the Chinese policy of trade restrictions, Java approached Vietnam and ordered Islamic tiles in larger quantities.⁶⁷⁸

No findings of Vietnamese wall tiles have been found outside Java, suggesting that these tiles were commissioned just for the *Majapahit* kingdom.⁶⁷⁹

4. Vietnamese Ceramics in Japan

Vietnamese ceramic objects exported to Japan were not numerous. The Japanese market was not as important as the Southeast Asian market.

In the 17th century, Vietnam exported goods like silk, sugar, lacquerware, ceramics, etc to Japan. Trade at that time was quite difficult because of Japanese restraints on foreign merchants. Trade between Vietnam and Japan was negotiated through the VOC. They negotiated a commercial treaty in *Tonkin* and established a trading factory at the *Phố Hiến* port in 1636. Despite the aggravated trade relations between Vietnam and Japan, Japanese tea ceremonies valued Vietnamese ceramics for their aesthetic compatibility. In this so-called *Chadō* 茶道 (literally ‘the way of tea’), Vietnamese tea bowls and water jars were very much appreciated for their imperfections, like running glaze (Fig. 194 and 195).⁶⁸⁰

Individual Vietnamese pieces have been preserved as heirloom objects. Among the most prominent is the bowl known as ‘beni Annan [紅安南]’, from the collection of the

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid, 144-145.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid, 158.

⁶⁷⁹ Dupoizat, “Vietnamese Ceramics in the Malay World,” 111-112.

⁶⁸⁰ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 183-184.

Tokugawa clan [徳川氏] (a Japanese dynasty that produced the Tokugawa shoguns who ruled Japan from 1603 to 1867 during the Edo period [江戸時代] (1603 - 1868)).⁶⁸¹

The Ryūkyū kingdom became an important location for maritime trade between Southeast Asia and East Asia. The Rekidai Hōan [歴代宝案], also known as ‘Precious Documents of Successive Generations’, is an official compilation of diplomatic documents of the royal government of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, which covers the period from 1424 to 1867. The fact that some documents of this compilation got lost over time and some copies are flawed explains that although numerous Vietnamese ceramics were discovered in the Ryūkyū kingdom, only one Ryūkyūan expedition is recorded to Vietnam. Usually, Vietnamese ceramics were found at the fortified residences of the regional rulers. The most famous and important location in the Ryūkyū Kingdom, where Vietnamese ceramics were discovered, is the Shuri Castle [首里城]. Excavations at this location revealed about 1,300 Chinese, Japanese, Thai, and Vietnamese ceramic objects. Of all these countries, the number of Vietnamese ceramics was the smallest. It was listed that Vietnamese blue&white ewers and bowls were discovered.⁶⁸²

According to the book ‘Japanese Pottery (La céramique Japonaise)’ by Oneda Tokomosouke (La Roux Publishing House, Paris, 1873), during 1596 - 1873, there were many good potters in Japan who imitated Vietnamese antique pottery, which they called ‘Giao Chi (Kotchi)’ pottery. The typical types of ceramics that represent the technique and art of Vietnamese ceramics in this period are blue-flowered ceramics with high-legged bowls and plates painted with liberal blue flowers and mature white crockery. Very delicate embossed ceramics, such as lampstands and incense burners, combined with painted blue flowers, are made of white wares or covered with multicolored glazes that are very diverse. Various types of jars and incense burners made of brown or brown wares covered with eel skin enamel have a delicate artistic level and have their own identity. There is also a type of glazed ceramic that the Japanese used to love in the tea ceremony, called ‘*Hồng An Nam*’. Technically, large-sized dragon furnaces have been used quite widely, and the temperature and heating mode, fire control are progressive and active. Rice husk ash, yeast, and tree ash are used a lot.⁶⁸³

In the 15th and 16th centuries, ships loaded with up to tens of thousands of pieces of pottery from China and Southeast Asia sailed between the coasts of South China, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Japan. The route to Japan was either through the

⁶⁸¹ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 51.

⁶⁸² Bui and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 171, 173.

⁶⁸³ Gom Suu, “Ceramics.”

Taiwan Strait or the East China Sea, crossing ports in *Ningbo* [寧波] (Zhejiang province [浙江], northeastern China) along the *Ryūkyū* islands. During the 16th century, European merchants and ships also got involved in the world trading system.⁶⁸⁴

The Kanzeon-ji [觀世音寺] Buddhist Temple

A small quantity of Vietnamese ceramics reached Japan in the 14th century. As aforementioned, Vietnamese sherds were found in *Dazaifu* in Kyushu. It was found in what is believed to be a waste heap or a small pond adjacent to monks' living quarters of a monastery known as *Kanzeon-ji* [觀世音寺] in *Dazaifu*, Fukuoka Prefecture, in Kyushu. The old city of *Dazaifu* served as a government headquarters for the island and regulated contacts with China and Korea until the late 11th century. Still, after the 11th century, *Dazaifu* remained a thriving center for foreign commerce. Vietnamese glazed ceramic sherds found in *Dazaifu*-related sites were fewer than thirty sherds. All of these sherds were found in *Kanzeon-ji*. One of the *Dazaifu* sherds has been published many times because it is associated with a date of 1330. This sherd is a bowl base with an underglaze iron-black stylized chrysanthemum motif in the middle and a chocolate bottom. As mentioned above, it was excavated along with a wooden grave marker inscribed in ink with a date, which corresponds to 1330. Besides the Vietnamese ceramic sherd and the wooden grave marker, large quantities of Japanese earthenware and Yuan dynasty porcelain were discovered. It is not certain whether the wooden grave marker really helps with dating the Vietnamese ceramic sherd, but these kinds of wares were produced in Vietnam in the mid-14th century. Although the dating is not certain, it can be framed between the early 14th to late 14th century.⁶⁸⁵

The Gotō Islands [五島列島]

The *Gotō* Islands have participated in international trading networks since ancient times. They once functioned as the starting point for direct sea travel across the East China Sea between the Chinese mainland and Japan. At the time, *Nagasaki* [長崎] served as an important port. Noticeably, Japan had something similar to the 'Ming Gap'. In Japan, during the *Edo* period 江戸時代 (1603 - 1867), the so-called 'Sakoku' Edict was enacted. *Sakoku* [鎖国] literally means 'locked country', which was the isolationist foreign policy. Relations and trade were restricted

⁶⁸⁴ Seyock, "Trade Ceramics from the Gotō Islands (Japan), Circa Sixteenth to Early Seventeenth Century: The Yamami Underwater Site (Ojika) and Related Issues," 336.

⁶⁸⁵ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 50, 74-75.

to certain ports like *Nagasaki*. It was the only port that served as a trading post for the Portuguese and subsequently the Dutch. For over 200 years, it was the central port for foreign trade and cultural exchange with Japan and other countries. The artificial island *Dejima* [出島] was constructed in the port of *Nagasaki*, and it was the only Japanese territory open to Westerners.⁶⁸⁶

The *Ojika* Island [小値賀町] is the smallest of the *Gotō* Islands, but about 70 percent of all trade ceramics have been found at *Ojika* sites. Close to the coast of *Ojika* Island, ceramic shards were discovered. These findings comprise mainly Thai stonewares, some Chinese blue&white porcelain pieces, and Vietnamese specimens. They have all been collected from the seafloor. This area was also called the Yamami underwater site; it is situated near *Ojika* Island. The Thai stoneware could be from the kilns of Sukhothai, Sawankhalok/Sisatchanalai, and Pitsanulok. The quantity of Thai wares falls exactly in the period of the 'Ming Gap', which suggests that Thai kilns profited from the non-availability of Chinese wares. Usually, Thai wares were found in the Southeast Asian market in higher quantities. Most of the Thai jars found in Japan date to the late 16th to mid-17th centuries. There are written sources that state more than 150 ship voyages to Thailand were carried out by Ryūkyūans between 1385 and 1570. The *Ryūkyū* Islands were quite involved in trade.⁶⁸⁷

The Yamami find, which was mainly from Thailand and China, allows a small direct insight into the maritime trade business in West Japan. These findings point to a direct connection between West Japan and Southeast Asian seas. During the mid-16th century, Thai ships came directly across the East China Sea. It is not very clear if the findings of the Yamami underwater site were from a shipwreck or not.⁶⁸⁸

The Japanese Tea Ceremony

To conduct a proper tea ceremony, various objects are needed: bowls for sipping the tea, caddies for holding the powdered tea, vessels for holding and pouring water, side dishes for sweets and cakes, covered boxes for incense, vases for flower arrangements, and candle holders. Even the environment plays an essential role. It should be a tranquil, secluded room or garden pavilion, where the participants can settle, talk, and enjoy the rituals as well as the accouterments associated with the ceremony.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁶ Seyock, "Trade Ceramics from the Gotō Islands (Japan), Circa Sixteenth to Early Seventeenth Century: The Yamami Underwater Site (Ojika) and Related Issues," 338-340, 345.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 340-343.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 353-354.

⁶⁸⁹ Honda and Shimazu, *Vietnamese and Chinese Ceramics Used in the Japanese Tea Ceremony*, 1.

The Japanese tea ceremony, also known as *sadō/chadō* [茶道] 'The Way of Tea' or *chanoyu* 茶の湯, involves the ceremonial preparation and presentation of *matcha* [抹茶], green tea ground into powdered form. The custom of tea drinking originated in China. Tea drinking had begun in Japan by the Nara period (710 - 784). In two anthologies from the Nara period, the consumption of tea at court functions was recorded. Later on, when the capital moved from Nara to Kyōto, the practice of consuming tea at Buddhist temples and religious or seasonal ceremonies at the court was continued. Eventually, tea drinking became an important part of banquets, which were held at the end of royal ceremonies. In China, during the *Tang* period, tea was consumed in private rooms while reciting poetry, often accompanied by music. This custom was also practiced in Japan. It was customary for Japanese Buddhist monks to travel to China to study Buddhism. When the monk *Myōan Eisai/Yōsai* [明菴栄西] (1141 - 1215) returned to Japan from his study trip, it is said that he popularized Zen teachings alongside *matcha* tea (the *matcha* powder is whisked into hot water, instead of steeped) and tea bowls. The distinctive tea culture in Japan began with Buddhist temples, and over time, it also became available for non-religious consumption. Although tea drinking became secular, the rules of conduct and the setting of tea consumption still give tea drinking a special meaning, which sets it apart from the routines of daily life. During the early Muromachi period (1336 - 1573), the term '*chanoyu*' (also known as the tea ceremony) first appeared in the records. In these tea ceremonies, which were often set in the garden, the tea was prepared nearby by young male servants. During these tea ceremonies, it became the norm to display the tea objects. Primarily, the tea bowl (as mentioned before, also known as *tenmoku/temmoku*) and the tea caddy were on display. Other glazed types, like white porcelain and celadons, were also sometimes used in the ceremony. At the beginning of the development of tea ceremonies, blue&white wares were used only for the waste-water jar. For Japanese tea ceremonies, Chinese tea bowls and jars were imported in high numbers, because they were very highly regarded. To garner a small portion of the lucrative trade in tea wares, Japanese potters started to imitate the sought-after tea bowls in the second half of the 14th century. The Japanese tea bowls closely mimicked the Chinese prototypes in shape, but the color, in the beginning, was not correctly

copied. The kilns in Seto [瀬戸] (Aichi Prefecture) and Mino [美濃] (Gifu Prefecture) were the only Japanese kilns that produced the tea bowls. For the Japanese tea ceremonies, Chinese tea bowls were still very popular. Only in the mid-16th century did locally produced ceramics gain acceptance.⁶⁹⁰

The Japanese required specific pieces for use in the tea ceremonies. A certain design request was made by the tea masters and a small group of their followers. Thus, the orders were small, and the prices consequently high. The commissioned work was accompanied by paper patterns and wooden models for the Chinese potters to work from. These commissioned wares were often much admired; they were even preserved in family collections. Strikingly, there are invariably flaws in the ceramic objects. It is not clear whether the blemishes on these pieces were due to carelessness or not.⁶⁹¹

Vietnamese ceramics, which have been discovered in Japan, were heirlooms in the form of utensils used to prepare and serve matcha for the Japanese tea ceremony. These wares consisted of freshwater jars, vases, and waste-water containers. They were either unglazed wares or underglaze-cobalt blue wares (or simply blue&white wares). These unglazed wares were also known as 'namban' [南蛮] (from the Chinese use of 'southern barbarian') or 'shimamono' [島物] (literally means 'island objects'; it is a generic term for Japanese tea utensils produced outside Japan, Korea, and China, mainly from Southeast Asia). The blue&white wares, which were initially produced for the domestic market for rice bowls, had unusually high foot and were used as tea bowls (chawan [茶碗]). The aesthetic for the tea ceremonies was to give positive value to mismatched groupings of utensils. So fine ceramics wares were used with coarser wares. Japanese collecting of Vietnamese ceramics is important for the understanding of Vietnamese ceramic production as a whole because the Japanese profusely documented the objects themselves and their role they had in the tea ceremony. The

⁶⁹⁰ Mowry, *Hare's Fur, Tortoiseshell, and Partridge Feathers: Chinese Brown- and Black-Glazed Ceramics, 400-1400*, 43-46, 49, 52-53.

⁶⁹¹ Vainker, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*, 150.

documents include the collection inventory, textbooks on connoisseurship, and diaries of tea ceremony gatherings.⁶⁹²

Vietnamese ceramics tend to have some 'blemishes' like firing marks, ring marks, or uneven glazing. Whereas Chinese ceramic objects tend to be more flawless, without firing marks. Chinese ceramics were manufactured with a perfect technique, characterized by their almost mechanistic ceramic production. The technique of encasing dishes individually in saggars in the kiln was also practiced in Vietnam, but the stacking technique differed, which resulted in these 'blemishes'. The saggars did protect the unfired objects, but it was occupying a lot of space, which meant the production cost would rise. The 'blemishes' of Vietnamese wares could be seen as flaws and a lower quality, but precisely because of that aesthetic, the Vietnamese wares were used in Japanese tea ceremonies. The art of 'Finding the Beauty in Imperfections wabi-sabi [侘寂]'. This view encourages people to appreciate that nothing is truly perfect or permanent. The Vietnamese ceramics were regarded as unpretentious craftsmanship. Japanese collectors tend to appreciate vagueness more than clarity and thus appreciate the Vietnamese blue&white wares with smudgy design (like the blue&white bowls with higher foot ring in the collection of the *Ninh Binh* Museum 74, BTNB 11603 SS 1385, 11, TT 136, 107, BTNB 10172 SS 1297, 84, BTNB 10173 SS 1298).⁶⁹³

The bowls with higher foot rings were probably used as bowls for sipping the tea, and the Vietnamese jars as vessels for holding water.

Vietnamese ceramic objects have been discovered all over Southeast Asia, Japan, the Middle East, and, seldom, in North Africa. These discoveries reflect Vietnamese participation in international maritime trade.

⁶⁹² Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 64, 66.

⁶⁹³ Honda and Shimazu, *Vietnamese and Chinese Ceramics Used in the Japanese Tea Ceremony*, 6, 88.

5. Vietnamese Import Ceramic Objects

At some point in the 18th century, the kilns in Vietnam dramatically decreased their production or rather also imported ceramic objects from China. The reason for that is versatile. During the *Nguyễn* and *Trịnh* era trading restrictions were imposed. Furthermore, during political turmoil times, the quality of Vietnamese ceramics declined. The quality became rough and careless.⁶⁹⁴ Ceramic production was not financially worthwhile anymore. The prime time for Vietnamese export ceramics was between the mid-16th and late 17th century. After the production declined in Vietnam, the clients of these kilns had to find an alternative. Thus, they approach, inter alia, China for commissioning their wares.

5.1 'Bleu de Huế' from China/'Commissioned Patterned Porcelains'

'Bleu de Huế' wares are Chinese blue&white export porcelain for the Vietnamese market in the 18th to 20th centuries. Most of them were produced in *Jingdezhen* with special designs and marks. In the 19th century, as the middle class in Vietnam increased in size and economic power, not just at *Jingdezhen* but at other *Jiangxi* kilns, 'Bleu de Huế' wares were manufactured. The designs are special and have a touch of Japanese aesthetic. Some have poems on them. It seems that on most of the courts, 'Bleu de Huế', the designs were done by Vietnamese artists, and were then commissioned in China. One common two-character mark reads 'Nei Fu [內府]', and can be translated as 'Inner Court'. The marks on 'Bleu de Huế' are quite puzzling, because sometimes they appear to be readily legible, but that can be deceiving, because the meanings derive from adaptations of Chinese script. Sometimes the characters are used in the Chinese sense, and sometimes they represent Vietnamese pronunciations or phrases.⁶⁹⁵

Historical Context - The *Trịnh* Lords and the *Nguyễn* lords

The rivalry between the *Trịnh* clan [主鄭] and the *Nguyễn* clan 主阮 already started in the 16th century. During the *Trịnh* era (1545 - 1787), which existed simultaneously with the royal *Lê* dynasty and the *Nguyễn* lords, the *Trịnh* lords, who were a powerful family, controlled the area of Northern Vietnam. The *Lê* dynasty, which continued to occupy the royal throne in *Thăng Long* (modern-day *Hà Nội*) was overthrown by the *Mạc* rulers. Only with the help of the *Trịnh* lords were the *Mạc* rulers driven out of *Thăng Long*. Now the *Lê* rulers were without real power because they had to depend on the *Trịnh* lords. The *Trịnh* lords, however, never controlled Central and South Vietnam; it was controlled by the *Nguyễn* lords.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁴ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 40.

⁶⁹⁵ Jan-Erik Nilsson, "Bleu de Hue," last modified December 21, 2023, <https://gotheborg.com/glossary/bleudehue.shtml>.

⁶⁹⁶ Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 257.

The *Nguyễn* lords were a powerful aristocratic family, which over time, founded the *Nguyễn* dynasty. This family clan was already active during the *Lê* dynasty. Towards the end of the *Lê* dynasty, Northern Vietnam was controlled by the *Trịnh* lords, and South Vietnam was controlled by the *Nguyễn* lords. The *Lê* rulers did not have any power anymore; they were mere puppets. At first, the *Trịnh* lords and *Nguyễn* lords cooperated against the *Mạc* dynasty. However, once their mutual enemy was defeated, they became rivals.⁶⁹⁷

The short-lived *Tây Sơn* dynasty [西山朝] (1778 - 1802) was established after the *Tây Sơn* Rebellion in the 18th century. The *Tây Sơn* Rebellion was led by peasants. The rebellion started in South Vietnam by three brothers - *Nguyễn Nhạc* [阮岳] (1743 - 1793), *Nguyễn Lữ* [阮侶] (1754 - 1787), and *Nguyễn Huệ* [阮惠] (1752 - 1792), from the village of *Tây Sơn* in 1771 against corruption, misrule of the *Nguyễn* rulers, and the demand for land distribution for the poor. After the defeat of the *Nguyễn* lords, they also attacked and defeated the *Trịnh* lords in Northern Vietnam. *Lê Chiêu Thống* [黎昭統] (1765 - 1793), the last emperor of the *Lê* dynasty, escaped from the *Tây Sơn* Rebellion and fled to China, where he called for help. In 1788, the *Qing* court sent an expeditionary corps to conquer the divided Vietnam. One of the *Tây Sơn* brothers - *Nguyễn Huệ* - proclaimed himself emperor *Quang Trung* 光中, to save the nation he overran the Chinese troops, pacified the northern part of the country from the Chinese border, reorganized the administration and economic development. As mentioned above, he even tried to replace classic Chinese with *chữ nôm*. With his death, all his efforts went in vain.⁶⁹⁸

With the death of Emperor *Quang Trung*, *Nguyễn Phúc Ánh* [阮福暎] (1762 - 1820), a nephew of the last *Nguyễn* lord, saw his opportunity to seize power. He was supported by a French missionary and *Ming* Chinese, who had fled from the *Qing* court and settled in South Vietnam. Eventually, *Nguyễn Phúc Ánh* became the emperor of *Gia Long*, the founder of the *Nguyễn* dynasty.⁶⁹⁹

The term 'Commissioned Patterned Porcelains *Đồ sứ ký kiểu*'

As mentioned above, 'Bleu de *Huế*' is the term that applied to porcelains, which were usually decorated in cobalt blue and made in China, and exported to Vietnam. In particular, these porcelains were imported by the *Lê - Trịnh* court (1533 - 1788) in *Đàng Ngoài* (literal translation

⁶⁹⁷ Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 179.

⁶⁹⁸ West, *Insight Guides Vietnam*, 50-51.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 51-52.

‘the Outer Region’), also known as Bắc Hà ([北河], ‘North of the River’) or *Annam Kingdom*, which was an area in present Northern Vietnam and the *Nguyễn* lords court (1558 - 1774) in *Đàng Trong* (literal translation ‘the Inner Region’), also known as Nam Hà [南河], ‘South of the River’), which was the South region of present Vietnam, the *Tây Sơn* dynasty (1778 - 1802) and *Nguyễn* dynasty (1802 - 1945). These commissioned high-quality porcelains were specifically commissioned by Vietnamese envoys, who traveled to China for diplomatic relations. These journeys were tribute missions, where the envoys also had to purchase goods for the court, including porcelain. Another term, by which this kind of porcelain is known and is often used is ‘Cobalt blue underglazed porcelain of Huế (*Đồ sứ men lam Huế*)’, but according to Dr. *Trần Đức Anh Sơn* the term ‘Commissioned Patterned Porcelains *Đồ sứ ký kiểu*’ is more suitable for this kind of ceramic ware. The term ‘*đồ sứ*’ is used because it means ‘porcelain’, not ‘*đồ gốm*’, which means ‘ceramic’. The term ‘*Ký kiểu*’ means sending the models and patterns to the kilns in China, where the porcelain pieces would be made as commissioned.⁷⁰⁰

The term ‘Bleu de Huế’ appeared for the first time in Louis Chochod’s article ‘La Question de la Céramique en Annam et les Bleus de Huế’, in *Bulletin du Comité de l’Asie France (BCAF)* in *Sài Gòn* in December 1909. The article dealt with the porcelain displayed in the royal palaces in Huế, which, according to the author, had been commissioned from China. In his book ‘*Huế. La Mystérieuse*’, however, is the misconception that the porcelains were made in Huế. The second time the term was mentioned was by a French priest and scholar, L. Cadière, in his book ‘*Index du BAVH 1914 - 1923*’. In the book, L. Cadière ascribed that these pieces were made at the kiln ‘Stoke Upon Trent’ in England in the 1780s before being purchased by the *Minh Mạng* emperor [明命帝] (1820 - 1841), who then had them decorated and inscribed with his reign mark for subsequent stocking in the palace for royal use. The first Vietnamese scholar who used this term was *Vương Hồng Sển* in his article ‘*Les Bleus de Huế à décor Mai Hạc*’ in *Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises (BSEI)*. Unlike L. Cadière, who denoted that ‘Bleu de Huế’ porcelains are of European origin, *Vương Hồng Sển* denoted that those porcelain pieces that the Vietnamese commissioned are from the kilns in China and not Europe.⁷⁰¹

It was also *Vương Hồng Sển* who used the technical phrase ‘*Đồ sứ men lam Huế*’ for the first time. In his articles for ‘*Bách khoa thời đại, Văn hóa nguyệt san*’, published in *Sài Gòn*, and for the book series ‘*Hiếu cổ đặc san*’ (6 volumes), which were published before 1975. In the year 1993 - 1994, *Vương Hồng Sển* published two more books, ‘*Khảo về đồ sứ cổ men*

⁷⁰⁰ Trần Đức Anh Sơn, “Đồ sứ ký kiểu: The Chinese Porcelains Made for The Vietnamese Courts from The 17th Century to The Early 20th Century,” *Đông Á nghiên cứu* 제 37 권 1 호 (통권 74 집, 2018): 96, 100-101.

⁷⁰¹ Trần, “Đồ sứ ký kiểu: The Chinese Porcelains Made for The Vietnamese Courts from The 17th Century to The Early 20th Century,” 94-96.

lam Hué (A Study of Bleus de Hué)' and '*Khảo về đồ sứ men lam Hué (A Study of Cobalt Blue Underglaze Porcelains)*', in which he used the terms '*Đồ sứ men lam Hué*' to denote porcelains, which the kings, the lords, the mandarins and the common Vietnamese people had commissioned from China from the Lê Restoration era to the Nguyễn era (18th century to 20th century). Coined by *Vương Hồng Sển*, the phrase '*Đồ sứ men lam Hué*' has become popular among antique collectors and researchers.⁷⁰²

Besides the term '*Bleu de Hué*' and '*Đồ sứ men lam Hué*' various terms have been suggested, such as '*Đồ sứ men trắng vẽ lam (White underglaze porcelains with blue designs)*'; '*Đồ sứ ngự dụng và quan dụng thời Lê - Nguyễn (Porcelains used by the king and porcelain used by the mandarins during the Lê - Nguyễn era)*'; '*Đồ sứ ký kiểu của triều Nguyễn (Commissioned patterned porcelains under the Nguyễn dynasty)*'; '*Gốm men xanh trắng của triều Nguyễn (Ceramics with a blue and white glaze of the Nguyễn dynasty)*'; '*Gốm lam Hué (Cobalt blue ceramics of Hué)*'; '*Đồ sứ đặc chế (Porcelains made by special order)*'; '*Đồ lam Hué (Blue wares of Hué)*' and '*Đồ sứ đặt hàng (Ordered porcelains)*'. All these terms are, according to Dr. *Trần Đức Anh Sơn*, not precise enough. Therefore, as mentioned above, in his opinion the term '*Commissioned Patterned Porcelains Đồ sứ ký kiểu*' is the most suitable for this kind of ware, because of various reasons. Firstly, the term reveals that these objects are porcelain (and not conventional ceramics), which were produced after an order. Secondly, not only the Nguyễn court in Hué commissioned porcelain from China, but the Lê - Trịnh court in Đàng Ngoài and the Nguyễn lords court in Đàng Trong did the same as well. Besides, this group of porcelains was commissioned not only by the royal family and the mandarins of the Lê - Trịnh court and the Nguyễn court but also by a lot of merchants as well. There were items for the royal family's and the mandarins' use, and others for the common people. Additionally, if the term, which was used to describe these objects, contains the word '*Hué*', it could be misunderstood that they were made in Hué. In sum, he has the opinion that his suggested term clarifies three things: the material used to make an object, how it was made, and when it was made. For this reasonable argument, this dissertation will also use his suggested term.⁷⁰³

The Progress of 'Commissioned Patterned Porcelains Đồ sứ ký kiểu'

The social status of the people who commissioned '*Đồ sứ ký kiểu*', determined the quality, decorative designs, glaze color, and drawing style of the pieces. The porcelains, which were commissioned by the emperor, are called '*Đồ sứ ngự dụng*'. The marks are usually the dynastic title of the emperor. Sometimes they are substituted by symbols such as the coiling dragon (*viên long*). '*Đồ sứ ngự dụng*' were made at the imperial kilns or official kilns, which were the kilns managed by the Qing dynasty. These pieces use excellent clay, high-quality glaze,

⁷⁰² Trần, "Đồ sứ ký kiểu: The Chinese Porcelains Made for The Vietnamese Courts from The 17th Century to The Early 20th Century," 96-97.

⁷⁰³ Ibid, 98-99.

pigment, and exquisite drawings. Porcelains commissioned to be used in the palaces or those commissioned by the mandarins for their own families are called *Đồ sứ quan dụng*. These pieces were sometimes produced by the official kilns, but usually, they were made at the common people's kilns, also known as private kilns. They do not have as good quality *kaolin* as imperial wares. Porcelains commissioned by the common people are called *Đồ sứ dân dụng*. They were mainly produced in private kilns. The kaolin, the glaze, the designs, and drawings are of lower quality in comparison to those of the *đồ sứ ngự dụng*; however, the quality and aesthetics of these pieces can sometimes be comparable with those of the *đồ sứ quan dụng*. The decorations on the *đồ sứ dân dụng* are diverse, but they must not include forbidden designs as determined by the court.⁷⁰⁴

Although these porcelains were made in China, they bear the 'Vietnamese features'. Firstly, the decorations on the pieces feature Vietnamese landmarks, like *Hải Vân* Mountain, *Thúy Vân* Mountain, *Tam Thai* Mountain, *Thuận Hóa* Market, *Thiên Mụ* Pagoda, *Hà Trung* Lagoon, and so on. Secondly, the poems inscribed on the pieces are either in *Chữ Nôm* script, which is a writing system formerly used to write the Vietnamese language, and it uses Chinese characters, which were not used in China, or in *Hán* script but composed by Vietnamese authors such as *Đào Duy Từ*, *Lord Nguyễn Phúc Chu*, *King Thiệu Trị*, *King Tự Đức*. Lastly, the reign marks on the porcelains are the dynastic titles of Vietnamese kings such as *Gia Long* [嘉隆] (r. 1802 - 1820), *Minh Mạng* (r. 1820 - 1841), *Thiệu Trị* [紹治] (r. 1841 - 1847), *Tự Đức* [嗣德] (r. 1848 - 1883), *Khải Định* [啟定] (r. 1916 - 1925). The years marked thereon coincide with the years when the Vietnamese delegations were sent to China. Those porcelains were reserved for the Vietnamese only and could not be found in the Chinese markets at the time.⁷⁰⁵

Until the end of the Vietnamese monarchy, Vietnamese ceramic culture maintained close contact with China. Ceramic production in Vietnam almost ceased completely, so the Vietnamese imperial court turned to China for porcelain supply.

5.2 Vietnamese Lime-Pots from Copeland & Garrett

Besides the 'Commissioned Patterned Porcelains' from China, Vietnam also ordered ceramic objects from France and Great Britain. One of the factories was Copeland & Garrett. In particular, lime-pots were ordered from this factory.

⁷⁰⁴ Trần, "Đồ sứ ký kiểu: The Chinese Porcelains Made for The Vietnamese Courts from The 17th Century to The Early 20th Century," 143-144.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid, 101-102.

The ownership of the Spode company, the factory in Church Street, Stoke-on-Trent, London, together with other businesses is complicated. Some books before 1997 do not have the correct information about the early history of the Spode factory. The lime-pots, which were commissioned by the Vietnamese court, were during the Copeland & Garrett ownership of the Spode company between 1833 and 1847. Typical wares produced during the Copeland and Garrett periods were in the Rococo style, fashionable at the time.⁷⁰⁶

The design of the lime-pots, which were commissioned by King *Minh Mạng*, is similar to the ones used in Vietnam under the *Nguyễn* dynasty: the body is spherical, the top is embossed with a flat circular shape, with a small knob, through the arc, at both ends of the handle, with a flame embossed shape. During that time, only one mission went to London to commission porcelain. At the end of 1839, after the British victory in China, King *Minh Mạng* sought to deal with Western countries through diplomatic negotiations. The king sent an embassy to France and England to investigate the situation, using the pretext to buy goods. The arrival of the Vietnamese entourage in France has attracted much attention. King Louis Philippe of France, because of facing difficulties in the country, did not receive the Vietnamese entourage. After the failure in France, the entourage boarded a ship to England in February 1840. They were entertained by the British Prime Minister, but they did not have much success. Their stay was so limited that they could not receive the commissioned lime-pots. These items were then sent to the Governor-General of India for delivery to *Huế*. In 1845, the Governor-General of India sent an embassy to thank King *Thiệu Trị* (r. 1841 - 1847). For the first time, the documents mention the court receiving gifts. Copeland & Garrett lime-pots were among the gifts. Two years later, the British came to Vietnam again, and King *Thiệu Trị* refused to allow an audience. So, Copeland & Garrett lime-pots are the first type of porcelain commissioned by the *Nguyễn* dynasty kings in Europe.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁶ "Copeland and Garrett," Spode Society, last modified December 21, 2023, <https://www.spode-society.co.uk/copeland-garrett>.

⁷⁰⁷ "Bình vôi," Wordpress, last modified December 21, 2023, <https://khanhhoathuynga.wordpress.com/tag/binh-voi/>.

Chapter VII

Results and Discussion

1. The Presentation of the Results

1.1 The Vietnamese Ceramic Culture in the Context of the Chinese Cultural Sphere

The relationship between Vietnam and China is very complex. There is no clear distinction between what is considered 'Vietnamese' and 'Chinese'. The northern borders of present-day Vietnam and the southern border of present-day China were dynamic and shifted in favor of one or the other, depending on who won the border clash. Northern Vietnam has been connected with China through several migration waves and cultural transmissions since ancient times. These historical encounters with China introduced critical new elements to Vietnamese culture.

The degree of Vietnamese self-sufficiency varied depending on the respective Chinese ruler. In the 'First Chinese Domination', the ruler was satisfied to govern indirectly through local aristocracy, whereas in the 'Second Chinese Domination', China attempted to incorporate Vietnam into the Chinese empire, ruling directly over the Vietnamese population. Chinese political and social institutions were introduced to the Vietnamese locals during this period. The Chinese rulers tried to enforce their political system in Vietnam through the integration of the Chinese language in Vietnamese society, which became a central tool. At the administrative level, it was indispensable to use the Chinese written language, and the bureaucracy was filled with officials from China. This had a great impact on Vietnamese literature, art (including ceramic culture), and architecture, all of which would incorporate Chinese motifs.⁷⁰⁸

This research sheds light on the complexity of Vietnamese ceramic culture as it developed within the context of the Chinese cultural sphere. The development of Vietnamese ceramic culture is closely related to Chinese ceramic culture. Vietnamese ceramic production developed under substantial Chinese influence, especially during periods of Chinese domination. Under Chinese rule from 111 BCE to 938 CE, Vietnamese artisans adopted Chinese ceramic techniques. This is evident in both the technical aspects—such as kiln technology, glazing methods, and decorative motifs—and in the forms and functions of ceramic wares. However, rather than passive adoption, Vietnamese artisans engaged in a dynamic process of selective appropriation and transformation. Vietnamese ceramic culture evolved into a distinctive and sophisticated art form that reflects both external influences and indigenous creativity. Ceramics served not only utilitarian purposes but also as symbolic media reflecting broader cultural narratives. In the Vietnamese context, ceramics were vehicles for expressing national identity, particularly during and after the periods of Chinese rule.

⁷⁰⁸ Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 222-223.

Although Chinese influence on Vietnamese ceramics, particularly in terms of technological transmission and aesthetic inspiration, is undeniable, the results presented here demonstrate that this influence was neither one-sided nor solely determinative. Rather, the findings support a more sophisticated model of cultural interaction, characterized by adaptation, the ‘otherness’, and the ‘advancement’ of Chinese ceramic culture. Vietnamese artisans did not passively copy Chinese ceramic styles but selectively incorporated external elements and recontextualized them according to local aesthetic preferences, social values, and symbolic frameworks. This challenges previous interpretations that positioned Vietnam as a cultural periphery or derivative extension of Chinese civilization. Rather, ceramic history reveals a rich syncretic tradition in which foreign elements were reinterpreted to meet indigenous needs and sensibilities.

1.2 The Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*

Vietnamese ceramic culture stands as a vivid testament to the country’s rich, layered history—a narrative deeply rooted in indigenous traditions while being continuously shaped by regional dynamics, particularly the Chinese cultural sphere. Nowhere is this cultural symbiosis more apparent than in the artifacts unearthed at the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, that is both a political and cultural symbol of Vietnamese continuity and resilience. Excavations at the site have revealed a treasure trove of ceramics that reflect centuries of technological mastery and aesthetic evolution. Many of these wares—ranging from celadon and white-glazed pieces to the iconic blue&white ceramics—demonstrate a complex dialogue between Vietnamese creativity and Chinese stylistic influence.⁷⁰⁹ Recent archaeological research from the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* contributed to the study of Vietnamese ceramic culture. This study mainly worked with objects from the excavations from 2017 to 2022 of the *Kính Thiên* Palace and from the 2012 to 2014 excavations of the Rose Garden. These objects include many important ceramic groups of the Vietnamese ceramic culture.

The objects from the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* are representative of the preferred aesthetic of the imperial court in Vietnam. Vietnamese potters have made almost unlimited use of Chinese motifs. However, these ceramics are not mere imitations. They express a localized identity, characterized by distinctive glazes, motifs (such as lotus flowers and mythical creatures native to Vietnamese folklore), and firing techniques adapted to local materials and sensibilities. Furthermore, the findings of kiln waste at the Rose Garden highly supported the theory that ceramic production occurred inside the Imperial Citadel. The ceramic collection of the Imperial Citadel also includes porcelain from various Chinese dynasties. From the *Tang* dynasty, the most abundant wares were the *Changsha* wares, and from the *Song* dynasty,

⁷⁰⁹ “Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Hanoi”, UNESCO, last modified August 09, 2018, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1328>.

bluish-white porcelains (*Qingbai* ware). From the *Ming* and *Qing* dynasties, the most abundant wares were from the blue&white ceramic group. Besides Chinese porcelain, there is also pottery from West Asia, indicating that the Imperial Citadel also conducted economic and cultural exchange with these countries. Compared to Chinese ceramics, the discoveries of West Asian ceramics are significantly fewer, but they just as well prove the interaction between Vietnam and West Asia.

On the whole, the numerous objects in the collections of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* attest to the ability of Vietnamese potters to adjust to the market and the ability to fill a gap in the trade market. Furthermore, it attests to the diversity of the Vietnamese glaze types. Nearly every type of glaze is represented: from terracotta wares, white wares, green wares, and celadons, to brown wares. Only blue wares, crackled glaze wares, and the overglaze enamel wares/polychrome wares are not represented in this research project.

1.3 Vietnamese blue&white wares

In this dissertation, the main motifs, particularly on white wares, celadon/green wares, brown pattern wares, and blue&white wares, were analyzed along with their Chinese counterparts. These glaze types in Vietnam represent the ‘adaptation’, ‘otherness’, and ‘advancement’ towards Chinese ceramic culture. With ‘adaptation’, the natural reception of Chinese culture in Vietnam is meant; with ‘otherness’, the influence of the Indian subcontinent and other Southeast Asian regions is meant; and with ‘advancement’, the acceptance of Chinese culture, but with local developments, is meant.

One of the most significant aspects of Vietnam’s ceramic heritage is its blue&white ware. These ceramics were viewed primarily through a Sino-centric lens for a long time, often dismissed as derivative or provincial versions of Chinese porcelain. However, recent scholarship has repositioned Vietnamese blue&white ceramics as important artifacts in their own right, with distinct stylistic characteristics and historical roles. Vietnamese artisans naturally received the Chinese technique, but simultaneously slipped in the influence of Southeast Asian regions, and ultimately slipped in local motifs and techniques. Decorative motifs in Vietnamese blue&white ceramics exhibited a blend of Chinese inspiration and local innovation. Vietnamese blue&white wares represent the ‘adaptation’, the ‘otherness’, and the ‘advancement’ of Vietnamese ceramic culture. While blue&white porcelain production in Vietnam in the 15th century clearly drew inspiration from *Yuan* and early *Ming* China, with the motifs often integrating indigenous symbols such as lotus flowers, dragons of local stylizations, and scenes from Vietnamese folklore. The shift from imitation to innovation illustrates the agency of Vietnamese potters in reinterpreting dominant cultural models to suit local tastes and socio-political needs.

Excavations and archival research reveal that during the 15th and 16th centuries, particularly under the *Lê* dynasty, Vietnamese blue&white wares were exported in large

quantities throughout Southeast Asia, Japan, and even the Middle East. Their unique forms, like the jars with stylized lotus and dragon motifs, show both a mastery of cobalt decoration and an intentional departure from Chinese forms. These pieces served not only functional purposes but also embodied cultural pride and diplomatic prestige. The high-temperature firing achieved vitrification in many pieces, indicative of advanced kiln control. The presence of inscriptions on ceramics is particularly noteworthy, and they served both practical and marketing purposes. On one hand, they marked the origin of the wares, establishing Vietnam's identity in international trade. On the other hand, inscriptions with auspicious messages increased the cultural value of the wares, especially among overseas buyers familiar with Chinese characters and symbolism.

The most relevant Vietnamese blue&white wares for this study are the objects with the '窯官' and '官' inscriptions. The data support the theory that they are the material evidence for the existence of official kilns in Northern Vietnam. However, it is noticeable that the use of the inscription '窯官' and '官' is different from that in China. In most cases, the inscription is at the bottom of the foot ring, but in Vietnam, the inscription is on the inside in the middle. Based on the locations of these objects, it can be assumed that the Vietnamese potters were aware of what the inscription meant. Furthermore, the inscription is not limited to a particular glaze type; in this collection, it can be found on ivory white wares, green wares, brown wares, and two-glazed wares. In the ceramic collection of this study, most of the objects that bear the '窯官' inscription were from the *Trần* dynasty. They are not numerous, but in the Rose Garden, one light-green bowl was discovered with this inscription. In the *Kính Thiên* Palace, two bowls were discovered with this inscription: a light-green glazed bowl as well as a brown glazed bowl.

1.4 Vietnamese Ceramic Production, Organization, and Distribution

The Vietnamese ceramic production, organization, and distribution were explored in this thesis with the help of Chinese ceramic production, as there are few to no sources on the Vietnamese side. As mentioned, Vietnamese ceramic culture was strongly shaped by the Chinese, but was still independent. The data suggest that Vietnam may also have had official and private kilns like the ones that operated in *Jingdezhen*. Inscriptions and decorative motifs on Vietnamese and Chinese ceramic objects played a central role in answering this question. The major difference between Vietnamese and Chinese ceramics is the fact that Vietnamese ceramics are not considered porcelain, but stoneware. In the past, Vietnamese potters acquired knowledge from Chinese ceramic production, but they did not have the same resources. Although the soil in Vietnam provided the potters with sufficient material, they lacked *kaolin*, which was essential in producing porcelain. Therefore, ancient kiln sites in Northern Vietnam produced stoneware, not porcelain. Furthermore, there is a major difference in how it was

produced in Vietnam. Chinese ceramic production perfected the production steps in its process, with *Jingdezhen* being the best example of this. The kilns, materials, tools, techniques, inventions, innovations, and patronage fostered the perfect production site for ceramic production. Chinese potters aimed for and frequently achieved perfect technique, characterized by colossal and almost mechanical production. The goal was an aesthetic ability to produce thousands of objects with the same motif and without flaws, whereas in Vietnam, perfection was not the goal. Whether the same level of aesthetic precision was not sought after or simply could not be achieved with the existing techniques and materials is indeterminable, though it seems that the outcome of Vietnamese ceramic production was more often left to chance. However, the Vietnamese aesthetic appeal is the combination of informality and great technical skills, and it was from these conditions that the charm and beauty of Vietnamese ceramic objects were born. While Chinese influence is still very visible, they are clearly Vietnamese in character.⁷¹⁰

1.5 Vietnamese Kiln Sites

Vietnamese kiln sites were not specialized kiln sites. Some kilns produced nearly every glaze type, and the supply and demand system prevailed. In *Bát Tràng*, crackled glaze ware and blue&white wares were predominantly produced, and around the 17th/18th centuries, altar wares were predominantly produced. In *Kim Lan*, ivory white glazed wares and brown wares were predominantly produced. In *Thăng Long*, from ivory white wares, celadon wares, brown wares to blue&white wares, nearly every glaze type was produced in these kilns. In *Chu Đậu*, *Láo*, *Ngói*, *Cây*, *Bá Thuỷ*, *Hợp Lệ*, and *Vạn Yên* seem to have mainly produced blue&white wares. One thing that these kiln sites have in common is their proximity to rivers.

Under the *Trần* dynasty, the kiln sites of *Thăng Long*, *Bát Tràng*, *Kim Lan*, *Thiên Trường*, and *Vạn Yên* were quite active. During the *Trần* dynasty, it is noticeable that the major ceramic production centers like *Thăng Long*, *Thiên Trường* or *Vạn Yên* had a close relationship with the government, or rather the *Trần* clan.⁷¹¹ It may indicate that these production centers had imperial patronage, like in China. In particular, the kiln sites in *Thăng Long* and *Thiên Trường* with the imperial palaces demonstrate the close relationship between production centers and imperial patronages. Furthermore, these two production places could also be seen as 'official' kilns or imperial kilns, but it is not clear if this meant that these kiln sites produced solely for the imperial palaces.

⁷¹⁰ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 42-43.

⁷¹¹ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 115.

1.5 The Role of Vietnamese Ceramics Outside of Vietnam

Vietnamese ceramics from the 11th to the 16th centuries were highly valued in various regions across Asia and the Middle East, particularly during periods when Chinese exports were disrupted. These ceramics were admired for their craftsmanship, aesthetic appeal, and technical quality, and they often filled the gap left by declining or restricted Chinese exports, especially during the *Ming* Gap in the 15th century. As a result, Vietnamese wares became prominent in international trade networks, transported by both overland routes and maritime trade through the South China Sea and beyond.⁷¹²

In Southeast Asia, Vietnamese ceramics were widely traded and well-received in countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Archaeological excavations in these regions have uncovered large quantities of Vietnamese ceramics, especially blue&white porcelain and celadon wares. These objects were not only used for everyday purposes but also held ceremonial and elite value, suggesting that they were considered high-status items. Vietnamese ceramics were sometimes preferred over local products due to their refined decoration and advanced glazing techniques.⁷¹³

In East Asia, particularly in Japan, Vietnamese ceramics also found a market. Japanese tea culture embraced imported ceramics, including Vietnamese wares, which were admired for their rustic charm and natural beauty. Some Japanese tea masters deliberately sought out Vietnamese pieces for use in tea ceremonies, valuing their subtle glazes and imperfect, organic qualities.⁷¹⁴

Further west, Vietnamese ceramics reached the Islamic world, especially in the Middle East. This was largely due to the region's longstanding interest in fine ceramics and the established trade routes that connected Southeast Asia with ports in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. Vietnamese ceramics found among shipwrecks and excavation sites in the Middle East demonstrate their widespread distribution and commercial appeal. In these markets, the high-quality glazes and artistic designs of Vietnamese pottery were appreciated and collected, often mistaken for Chinese wares due to their similarity in style.⁷¹⁵

Overall, Vietnamese ceramics were well-received abroad for both their practical utility and artistic beauty. They played a crucial role in global trade during a time when Chinese exports were inconsistent, and they helped establish Vietnam as a significant player in the international ceramics industry.

⁷¹² Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia: Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries; with a Catalogue of Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai Wares in Australian Collections*. Oxford in *Asia Studies in Ceramics*, 45.

⁷¹³ Lê, *Bát Tràng*, 59.

⁷¹⁴ Honda and Shimazu, *Vietnamese and Chinese Ceramics Used in the Japanese Tea Ceremony*, 1.

⁷¹⁵ Krahl, *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds*, IX, 16.

1.6 The Knowledge Transfer

Another important topic is the question of possible knowledge transfer between Vietnam and China. From the 11th to the 16th century, Vietnamese potters acquired much of their ceramic knowledge and techniques through close and sustained contact with Chinese potters. Kiln construction (e.g., the use of dragon kilns), glazing methods, and stylistic elements such as intricate carving and painting techniques testify to contact with Chinese technologies. These early influences laid a strong foundation for the development of Vietnamese ceramics, even after the country regained independence. In the centuries following independence, cultural and commercial ties with China remained strong, further deepening Vietnamese ceramic knowledge. Trade and diplomacy played a significant role in these exchanges. As part of the regional trade network and the Chinese tribute system, Vietnam regularly sent tribute missions to the Chinese court and maintained trade routes through which Chinese ceramics reached Vietnam. Vietnamese potters studied these imported wares—particularly the highly prized porcelain of the *Song* and *Ming* dynasties—and learned to replicate their forms, glazing techniques, and decorative styles. The popularity of Chinese ceramics on the domestic and international markets provided a strong incentive for Vietnamese artisans to master and adapt these foreign techniques.⁷¹⁶

Because there are no written sources of Vietnamese ceramic production, it is highly speculated as to how this knowledge transfer occurred between Vietnam and China. Given that Chinese ceramic culture heavily influenced Vietnamese ceramic culture, much of the speculation has been devoted to the Chinese influence on Vietnamese ceramic production. As mentioned before, one theory is that Chinese potters who fled from the Mongol invasion found their new home country in neighboring countries like Vietnam and Thailand. However, one important aspect cannot be disregarded: in Vietnam, before the Chinese domination, there already existed a ceramic culture, which was tightly controlled by family clans and village communities, who also owned the clay deposits. Thus, the establishment of separate ceramic centers directed by Chinese potters must have been extremely difficult. Furthermore, for several centuries, ceramic production processes were based on labor division, where different individuals or groups were responsible for every phase of the process. Again, it would have been extremely difficult for Chinese potters to infiltrate this well-established structure of labor.

Also, the adoption of Chinese design models in Vietnam occurred gradually. Adaptation was influenced primarily by imported ceramics rather than by the mass migration of Chinese potters. However, it should not be overlooked that Chinese potters may have passed their expertise onto Vietnamese potters. While Vietnamese ceramics were heavily influenced by Chinese models, Vietnamese potters also adapted their techniques to suit local tastes, materials, and traditions. Over time, this fusion of Chinese methods with indigenous creativity

⁷¹⁶ Kikuchi, *A History of Maritime Trade in Northern Vietnam, 12th to 18th Centuries Archaeological Investigations in Vandon and Phohien*, 132, 139.

led to the development of unique Vietnamese ceramic styles. Kilns such as those in Chu Đậu and Bát Tràng became centers of innovation, producing high-quality ceramics that were not only consumed domestically but were also exported to Asia and the Middle East. These ceramics retained Chinese stylistic features, such as blue and white painting, but often incorporated distinctive Vietnamese motifs and forms, thus demonstrating influence and originality.⁷¹⁷

1.7 Vietnamese Ceramics in Regional Trade Networks

One of the most interesting characteristics of Vietnamese ceramics lies in their flexibility to respond to specific changes in demand. This flexibility not only applied to the domestic market but also to the export market. The range of Vietnamese glaze types reflects the desire to emulate Chinese wares in an attempt to obtain a share of the lucrative export market for high-fired glazed ceramics.⁷¹⁸

Vietnamese ceramics played a key role in regional trade networks and diplomatic exchanges, particularly during the heyday of the *Đại Việt* kingdom. Export wares found at archaeological sites in Southeast Asia and the Middle East indicate that Vietnamese ceramics were not merely variations of Chinese models but possessed value in their own right. This economic influence challenges the notion of Vietnam as a mere periphery of the Chinese cultural sphere and instead presents it as a participant in a broader transregional cultural economy.

The Vietnamese ceramic export market did not follow a steady pattern, as the demand for Vietnamese ceramics was only high when there were shortages in the Chinese ceramic market. However, this does not suggest that Vietnamese ceramics came into existence only to fill a vacuum created by the 'Ming Gap', though this overseas trade prohibition did provide an important stimulus. Before the 'Ming Gap', Vietnamese ceramics already had a long history of development. Either way, the 14th century marks a milestone in Vietnamese trade history: the transition from solely domestic production to export production.⁷¹⁹

An incalculable number of Vietnamese ceramic objects were discovered in Southeast Asia, Japan, and West Asia. Although the number of Vietnamese ceramics cannot be compared to that of Chinese ceramics, Vietnamese ceramic objects should not be overlooked in terms of their quality and diversity. The greater quantity of Chinese ceramics can be attributed to the fact that the size of the Chinese industry was far larger than that of Vietnam. To produce quickly in large quantities and quality, and additionally, at an affordable price, was the key factor for Chinese superiority in this matter. The presence of Vietnamese ceramic

⁷¹⁷ May, *Verborgene Schätze - 2000 Jahre Vietnamesische Keramik*, 110.

⁷¹⁸ Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia: Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries; with a Catalogue of Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai Wares in Australian Collections. Oxford in Asia Studies in Ceramics*, 105.

⁷¹⁹ Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia: Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries; with a Catalogue of Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai Wares in Australian Collections. Oxford in Asia Studies in Ceramics*, 45.

objects in West Asia shows the participation of Vietnam in long-distance trade, the appreciation of Vietnamese ceramics in countries of West Asia, and that Vietnamese ceramics met the technical standards and aesthetic tastes of West Asia.⁷²⁰ Moreover, the appearance of distinctly local themes and the integration of Southeast Asian artistic elements in Vietnamese ceramics reflect a conscious cultural positioning. This supports the argument that while Vietnam operated within the Sinosphere, it was never culturally subsumed by it. Instead, Vietnamese ceramics testify to a dialogic relationship in which external influences were indigenized, resulting in a syncretic cultural expression. The Chinese cultural sphere is a multidirectional and negotiated space rather than a one-way flow of influence. Vietnamese ceramics exemplify how cultural forms can be simultaneously influenced and influential, shaped by and shaping the dynamics of regional interaction.

Furthermore, the role of Vietnamese ceramics in regional trade networks underscores the country's active participation in the economic and cultural exchange that characterized the pre-modern maritime world. Archaeological finds of Vietnamese wares throughout Southeast Asia and the Middle East indicate a dynamic export industry that flourished independently of Chinese control. This finding refutes conventional narratives that portray Vietnam solely as a recipient of culture and instead positions it as a self-sufficient producer of desirable and distinctive goods. The widespread distribution of Vietnamese ceramics not only indicates their commercial value but also highlights how Vietnam projected its cultural identity beyond its borders. The circulation of these wares contributed to shaping regional tastes and aesthetic norms and suggests that Vietnam played a formative role in the broader cultural ecology of Asia.

2. Interpretations of the Results

The results of this study demonstrate that Vietnamese ceramic production reached a high artistic and technical level from the 11th to the 16th centuries. Decorative motifs combined Chinese influence with local creativity, while inscriptions and forms reveal a keen awareness of national and international markets. Export evidence confirms that Vietnamese ceramics enjoyed high prestige abroad, serving not only as trade goods but also as cultural ambassadors of *Đại Việt's* craftsmanship and identity. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of Vietnam's role in regional and global networks during a period often dominated by narratives of Chinese production. They also underscore the importance of material culture for interpreting historical processes of cultural exchange, adaptation, and economic strategy.

One of the most important implications of this study is the recognition of Vietnamese ceramics as a means of expressing national identity, particularly during the periods of

⁷²⁰ Bùi and Nguyễn-Long, *Gốm Hoa Lam Việt Nam Vietnamese Blue&White Ceramics*, 188-189.

autonomy following Chinese rule. The integration of local motifs, such as stylized dragons, lotus flowers, and narrative scenes from Vietnamese folklore into wares otherwise conforming to Chinese formal conventions reveals a conscious attempt to emphasize cultural distinctiveness within a shared East Asian visual language. This synthesis of local and imported elements suggests a deeper cultural process in which Vietnamese potters not only responded to external pressures but also used ceramics to express place and identity. The production of uniquely Vietnamese wares during the *Lý* dynasty (1009-1225), *Trần* dynasty (1225-1400), and Primal *Lê* dynasty (1428-1527) coincided with efforts to consolidate national identity and distance the Vietnamese polity from its former imperial rulers. Ceramics thus served not only as aesthetic or utilitarian objects, but they also became symbolic tools through which cultural resistance and self-definition were expressed.

The findings of this study invite a critical reassessment of the concept of the Chinese cultural sphere itself. Rather than viewing it as a hierarchical or hegemonic system with China at the undisputed center, insights from Vietnamese ceramics support a more flexible and interactive understanding. Within this model, cultural flows are multidirectional, and local actors exert considerable influence on the reception and transformation of imported traditions. Vietnamese ceramics embody this dialectical process. They reflect the appeal of Chinese culture while simultaneously giving voice to local reinterpretations that often redefined the region's shared cultural codes. This perspective not only honors Vietnamese material culture but also contributes to a more comprehensive and decentralized view of East Asian cultural history—one that recognizes the contribution of so-called peripheral cultures in shaping the region's heritage.

Chapter VIII

Conclusion

1. Summary of Key Findings

This dissertation has examined Vietnamese ceramic culture within the broader historical and cultural framework of the Chinese cultural sphere. Vietnamese ceramics cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the historical influence of the Chinese cultural sphere and exploring the complex interplay between external influence and the local innovation of Vietnamese ceramic culture. The theoretical implications of this study extend beyond the case of Vietnam. By applying a critical lens to the concept of the Chinese cultural sphere, this dissertation contributes to broader debates in art history, cultural studies, Southeast Asian studies, and East Asian studies concerning the nature of cultural flows, regional identities, and postcolonial resistance.

The political developments in Vietnam from 1054 to 1527 significantly shaped the trajectory of its material culture, particularly in the realm of ceramic production, its distribution, and consumption. The establishment of the centralized *Đại Việt* state fostered conditions conducive to the development of highly organized ceramic production centers, such as those at *Bát Tràng* and *Chu Đậu*. These centers were supported both by court patronage and by expanding commercial networks, reflecting the dual role of ceramics as both objects of everyday use and symbols of cultural and political identity.⁷²¹ Vietnamese ceramic culture during this period must be understood within the broader context of the Chinese cultural sphere. While heavily influenced by *Song*, *Yuan*, and early *Ming* models in both form and decoration, Vietnamese potters did not merely imitate Chinese styles; they adapted and localized them, producing hybrid forms that bore distinctive regional signatures.⁷²²

While Vietnam does owe a huge cultural debt to China, it has simultaneously maintained fierce independence from its powerful neighbor. Despite the countless cultural elements that Vietnam shares with China, it is the differences between the two cultures that are constantly emphasized on the Vietnamese side. The persistent topic of maintaining independence is seen in the indigenous nature of many shapes, glazes, and surface decorations in the Vietnamese ceramic tradition. During the *Han* dynasty, China directly administered Vietnam, and it was around this time that the impact of Chinese ceramic traditions on Vietnamese ceramic production was at its most visible. Although the Vietnamese potters strictly followed the Chinese designs, the ceramics produced during that time cannot be classified as Chinese, as the base material differed from that used in China.⁷²³

⁷²¹ Miksic, *Southeast Asian Ceramics: New Light on Old Pottery*, 88-93.

⁷²² Brown, *The Ceramics of South-East Asia: Their Dating and Identification*, 2nd ed., 44-48.

⁷²³ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 31, 42, 125.

The major difference between Vietnamese and Chinese ceramics is the fact that Vietnamese ceramics are not considered porcelain, but stoneware. Although the Vietnamese did not manufacture porcelain, Vietnamese ceramic culture has a lot in common with that of China, and its development paralleled that of Chinese wares. However, Vietnamese potters did not merely copy Chinese models; they developed a wide repertoire of motifs, glaze types, and shapes themselves. The evolution of glazed ceramics in Vietnam has parallels with the evolution of Chinese ceramics, in particular from the *Han* period onwards, with respect to form and style. Simultaneously, the Vietnamese potters gave expression to elements of cultural identity that are essentially Vietnamese. This can be seen distinctively when ceramic forms and decorative repertoires incorporate motifs and design elements unknown in the Chinese tradition. In addition, the many motifs that were borrowed from China were reinterpreted through the use of Vietnamese elements, which resulted in ceramic objects that differ significantly from the Chinese originals and represent a variation rather than simply provincial reflections of metropolitan taste.⁷²⁴

The archaeological remains from the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and political center of *Đại Việt*, reveal a material culture that was both cosmopolitan and distinctly Vietnamese, where imported wares from China and other regions coexisted with locally produced ceramics of high technical and aesthetic quality.⁷²⁵ The ceramic assemblages excavated from *Thăng Long* offer a crucial material lens through which to reassess the dynamics of cultural interaction, adaptation, and artistic production in premodern Vietnam within the context of the Chinese cultural sphere. Through a combined art historical and archaeological analysis, this study underscores the significance of ceramics not only as functional objects but as culturally embedded artifacts that articulate shifting socio-political ideologies, regional identities, and transregional exchanges. Material evidence from the Imperial Citadel demonstrates a complex and multi-scalar relationship with the ceramic traditions of *Tang*, *Song*, *Yuan*, and *Ming* China. Typologically, many forms such as high-footed bowls, celadon-glazed dishes, ewers with carved lotus and floral motifs, and underglaze blue&white wares reflect a clear dialogue with Chinese aesthetic paradigms. Yet the ceramics of the Imperial Citadel do not merely replicate Chinese models, but rather exemplify localized reinterpretations that reveal both aesthetic selectivity and technological agency. From an art historical perspective, the visual grammar of the Imperial Citadel ceramics articulates a unique synthesis of imported and indigenized aesthetics. The choice of motifs, ranging from cloud scrolls and chrysanthemum panels to stylized dragons and Buddhist symbols, reveals a court-centered cultural taste that was both cosmopolitan and rooted in Vietnamese courtly and religious traditions. Iconographically, the material culture reflects a nuanced negotiation of

⁷²⁴ Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia: Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries; with a Catalogue of Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai Wares in Australian Collections*. *Oxford in Asia Studies in Ceramics*, 104-105.

⁷²⁵ Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, *Thang Long – Hanoi: History and Cultural Heritage* (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 2010), 115-129.

Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist themes, often localized to reflect vernacular narratives and political legitimation strategies. Archaeologically, the context of these finds, often in palatial, ritual, or elite residential zones, provides insights into the role of ceramics as instruments of statecraft and expressions of cultural sovereignty. As portable objects with high symbolic value, ceramics circulated within tributary exchanges, diplomatic gifts, and regional trade networks, thus functioning as active agents in Vietnam's negotiation of its place within the Sinic world order. Yet their production and use also served to delineate cultural boundaries and affirm local artistic traditions. This duality is central to understanding how *Đại Việt* maintained its autonomy while selectively engaging with Chinese cultural hegemony.

In synthesizing both formal analysis and archaeological context, this study affirms that Vietnamese ceramics from the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* occupy a pivotal position within the discourse of East Asian art history and interregional material culture. They exemplify the entangled nature of cultural production in the premodern period, wherein transmission and transformation occurred simultaneously. Far from being peripheral or derivative, the ceramic tradition of the Imperial Citadel represents a sophisticated, adaptive, and distinctly Vietnamese articulation of broader East Asian artistic currents. These findings contribute to a growing reappraisal of the cultural agency of non-Chinese polities in East Asia and underscore the value of integrated archaeological-art historical methodologies in the study of transregional artistic exchange.

The growing demand for Vietnamese ceramics on the international market was a recognition of their inventiveness and ingenious shapes, techniques, and decorative motifs. The 400 years of the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties created unparalleled original ceramic styles. During these two dynasties, vitality and singularity made an impact on the ceramic market. The originality during these two dynasties is characteristic of the arts in periods of transition from a previous political order. Creations that originated in a period after a transition tend to be less adventurous, with designs becoming less diverse as potters tended to produce types that had already proved to be successful. However, spontaneous and impulsive manners were hallmarks of Vietnamese potters. If they borrowed motifs from different cultures, they interpreted them into their own versions. They also modified Chinese shapes.

The Vietnamese ceramic market flourished, but turmoil and political instability eventually led to a decline in the quality of ceramics. The export market was neglected, and the domestic wares lost their refinement. As more and more kilns became unprofitable, the craftsmen oriented themselves towards other profitable jobs. By that time, the import of Chinese ceramics had ultimately become cheaper than domestic products, which forced the remaining kilns in Vietnam to concentrate on the manufacturing of tiles and other architectural ceramics in order to be profitable. These developments did not support the once high

inventiveness of Vietnamese potters, and eventually, there was no further progress in the Vietnamese ceramic tradition.⁷²⁶

One of the central contributions of this dissertation is the hypothesis that the Vietnamese ceramic production centers had imperial patronage, like in China. In particular, the kiln sites in *Thăng Long* and *Thiên Trường* within the imperial palaces demonstrate the close relationship between production centers and imperial patronage. Furthermore, these two production places could also be seen as 'official' kilns or imperial kilns, but it is not clear if this meant that these kiln sites were solely for the imperial palaces. Ceramic objects from the kilns in *Thăng Long*, *Chu Đậu*, and *Hợp Lệ* were often found outside Vietnam, which indicates that these kilns also produced for the overseas market.

Vietnam's participation in regional maritime trade networks further enhanced the reach and influence of its ceramic production. By the 14th and 15th centuries, Vietnamese ceramics were being exported widely across maritime Asia, including to Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and even as far as the Middle East.⁷²⁷ These exports underscore the degree to which Vietnam was integrated into transregional trade systems and reflect the capacity of Vietnamese artisans to cater to a wide array of external markets while maintaining aesthetic and technical integrity.⁷²⁸ Thus, the intersection of internal political consolidation, cultural negotiation within the Chinese cultural sphere, and active participation in regional maritime trade resulted in a richly layered ceramic tradition. This tradition is not only a testament to Vietnam's artistic and technological achievements but also a critical lens through which to understand its complex position within premodern Asia. The enduring legacy of this period, as exemplified in the artifacts and structures of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, reveals Vietnam's dynamic engagement with both regional power structures and global economic networks.

Equally important is the role of Vietnamese ceramics in regional trade and diplomacy, which has often been neglected in conventional art historical narratives. Archaeological evidence of Vietnamese export ceramics found across Southeast Asia, Japan, and the Islamic world underscores Vietnam's position as a producer and disseminator of high-quality goods. This regional and transcontinental mobility challenges any reductive interpretations of Vietnam as a cultural periphery, instead highlighting its economic and cultural agency within premodern global trade systems. Vietnamese ceramics, therefore, not only reflected aesthetic values but also functioned as instruments of soft power and cultural outreach.

⁷²⁶ Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics – A separate Tradition*, 31, 42, 125.

⁷²⁷ William Willetts, *Ceramics of Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Southeast Asian Ceramic Society, 1971), 102-105.

⁷²⁸ Nguyen Dinh Chien, *Vietnamese Ceramics in the Maritime Trade Network* (Hanoi: National Museum of Vietnamese History, 2014), 22-38.

2. Contributions to the Field

When reviewing the material culture found at the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, the knowledge transfer and trans-Asian connection become abundantly clear, especially when looking at ceramics. The compilation of the numerous objects in the collections of the Imperial Citadel helps to clarify the many previously unanswered questions regarding Vietnamese ceramic organization, production, and distribution. Some new insights were gained in the area of motifs, especially in the area of inscriptions. It seems that starting from the *Trần* dynasty, Vietnamese potters started to incorporate Chinese characters as inscriptions. However, it was not until the *Lê* dynasty that inscriptions became more widespread.

This thesis also proposes, for the first time, that imperial and private kilns also operated in Vietnam as they did in China. The ceramic groups presented here, featuring the inscriptions ‘窯官’ and ‘官’, which were often discovered in the kilns of *Thăng Long*, may be material evidence for the existence of ‘official kilns’ in Northern Vietnam. This could indicate that Vietnam also had ‘official kilns’ and private kilns, like in China. However, it is noticeable that the use of the inscription ‘窯官’ and ‘官’ is different from that in China. In most cases, the inscription is at the bottom of the foot ring, but in Vietnam, the inscription is on the inside in the middle. Based on the locations of these objects, it can be assumed that the Vietnamese potters were aware of what the inscription meant. Furthermore, the inscription is not limited to a particular glaze type and can be found on white wares, green wares, and brown wares.

It is not clear whether the ‘official kilns’ in Vietnam were also financially supported by the imperial court, like in China. Having imperial patronage over ceramic production was not always beneficial. Financial support was helpful, but the high demand for quantity and quality would have exhausted the workers. During the Southern *Song* period, private kilns in *Jingdezhen* were regulated through the registration of each kiln according to its production capacity, employment potential, and approved sizes of vessels, which had to be paid to provincial and country governments. Basically, all kilns, whether imperial or private, had to pay tribute to the Chinese court. The *Song Ding*, *Yue*, *Jingdezhen*, *Yaozhou*, and *Jian* kilns not only paid taxes but also supplied desired tribute wares to the court. Furthermore, only after paying a fee were the private kilns allowed to fire ceramic objects. Even a fine was imposed when the system was abused or if government orders were not filled within a specified time.⁷²⁹

The kilns in Vietnam often showcase the influence of Chinese ceramic production. The possible existence of the ‘official kilns’ in Vietnam shows again how much the Vietnamese ceramic culture relied on that of China, adopting many of the structures of ceramic production there. This also applies to the choice of motifs, which, in Vietnam, depend on glaze types and the period. For instance, during the *Lý-Trần* period, the motifs were limited to floral motifs

⁷²⁹ Barnes, “Yuan Dynasty Ceramics,” 362, 366.

(especially lotus and chrysanthemum flowers). Slowly, the depiction of animals was more frequent (like the bird or elephant depiction on Vietnamese brown pattern wares). When the Vietnamese blue&white glaze appeared in greater quantity during the Lê dynasty, the variety of motifs significantly increased. In particular, the motifs were often combined together. For instance, the dragon motif was often combined with a lotus scroll or lappets. The selection of certain motifs in Vietnamese ceramics may have been politically motivated. In particular, the choice of a 5-clawed dragon was symbolic of the political situation in Vietnam. The symbol of the dragon is closely related to the claim of political leadership. Apparently, the dragon motif was initially chosen to legitimize their status with the Chinese government. Another reason for the selection of certain motifs is aesthetic, and because of the symbolism in their own culture. The same shapes and forms, nearly the same choices of motifs, and firing processes are evidence for the cultural encounter and knowledge transfer between Vietnam and China. However, it is not clear how the knowledge transfer took place.

Another group of ceramics with the inscriptions ‘長樂宮’ and ‘長樂庫’ was discovered in the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*. The location of the excavation has been identified as on the western part of the *Kính Thiên* palace. The discovery of ceramic objects with such an inscription may indicate that there were clear divisions as to which ceramics should be used for which palace. Furthermore, the fact that a separate storehouse was needed could indicate that there was a large number of ceramic objects that required storage.

The discovery by the author in the collection of the *Kính Thiên* Palace that may best demonstrate Vietnam's ability to adapt to the global market is the small blue&white plate with a possible ‘ط’ or ‘ظ’ inscription on the inside, which indicates the imitation of Arabic inscriptions. Up to now, it is a one-of-a-kind discovery, as no similar object has been discovered. There are lotus flowers on the outside, and the foot ring is not glazed. The inverted foot ring wall is a typical foot ring of the *Mạc* dynasty, whereas the motif inside resembles Abbasid ceramics. This small plate could indicate the Vietnamese supply for an Islamic market, likely for the Indonesian market.

In this dissertation, using the results of excavations of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, the present author has traced the mutual relationships of the artifacts for each stage of the process of production, organization, and distribution. The project has elaborated on the historical relations between Vietnam and China, with a focus on the question of the Vietnamese organization of ceramic production and its distribution, as well as the question of knowledge transfer and the selection of motifs. It has also shed light on Vietnam's role in the Southeast Asian trade market by discussing these aspects together with Vietnam's foreign trade policy. In addition to the ports dealt with in this research, the kiln sites and the excavated objects themselves were important to understanding ceramic production, organization, and distribution.

The ongoing excavation work that will surely yield new and interesting finds, and the relationships between individual ports and kiln sites are subjects for the future.

3. Limitations of the Study

While this study offers valuable insights into the development of Vietnamese ceramic culture and its relationship to the Chinese cultural sphere, several limitations must be acknowledged. In times of a global pandemic, it was not easy to build a network and a solid foundation for this dissertation project. The study of Vietnamese ceramic objects turned out to be difficult because periods of social disorder, wars, economic instability, and battles of resisting invaders in the past led to declines in production and the loss of many ceramic production centers.

As discussed, access to comprehensive archaeological data remains limited, and much of the analysis has necessarily focused on select regions and time periods. Due to the vast chronology of ceramic production in Vietnam and the long duration of Sino-Vietnamese interaction, this study necessarily focused on representative periods, such as the *Lý* dynasty (1009- - 1225), *Trần* dynasty (1225 - 1400), and the Primal *Lê* dynasty (1428 - 1527), to illustrate broader trends. However, this approach may inadvertently simplify or overlook important developments in earlier or later periods, such as pre-Sinicized indigenous pottery traditions or the impact of colonial and post-colonial dynamics on ceramic heritage. A more exhaustive, diachronic approach would be necessary to fully trace the evolution of Vietnam's ceramic culture across different historical and political contexts. Moreover, much of the existing knowledge on Vietnamese ceramics is derived from excavated materials in select regions, such as the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, *Bát Tràng*, and *Chu Đậu*. However, many archaeological sites remain underexplored or have been compromised by looting, modern development, or inadequate preservation practices. This uneven distribution of evidence may result in a skewed representation of the full diversity and regional variation in Vietnam's ceramic production. Furthermore, limited access to comparative data from Chinese, Southeast Asian, and international collections, especially in private hands or undocumented holdings, has constrained the ability to conduct more detailed cross-cultural comparisons.

In addition, this study is primarily based on visual, stylistic, and historical analyses, which, while foundational in art history and material culture studies, may overlook other important dimensions, such as the technological composition of ceramics (e.g., clay sourcing, chemistry), production methods, and the socio-economic organization of pottery workshops. Integrating material science techniques or GIS-based spatial analysis in future research could yield a more holistic understanding of production networks and technological transfer across regions. The lack of such data in the current study limits the precision with which certain patterns of influence, innovation, and interaction can be confirmed.

Furthermore, while the study engages with the concept of the Chinese cultural sphere, it does so primarily through a Vietnamese lens. There remains an inherent challenge in defining

and deconstructing the Sinosphere without relying on the very Sino-centric frameworks the study seeks to critique.

Finally, language and source limitations must be acknowledged. Much of the secondary literature on Chinese and Southeast Asian ceramics remains in Chinese, Vietnamese, or Japanese, and although efforts were made to consult a range of multilingual sources, language barriers may have restricted the study's engagement with certain primary texts or archaeological reports. Collaborative research with regional scholars and translators could address this gap in future work.

In sum, while this study provides a meaningful contribution to understanding Vietnamese ceramics in relation to the Chinese cultural sphere, its conclusions should be viewed within the context of these methodological and contextual limitations. Future research that integrates scientific analysis, broader regional comparisons, and interdisciplinary collaboration will be crucial in expanding and refining the insights presented here.

4. Recommendations for Future Research

Based on these conclusions, there are still many unknown aspects of Vietnamese ceramic culture. Ceramics have a long tradition of production and consumption in Vietnam. It is unrealistic to illustrate phenomena such as ceramic production in each Vietnamese era simply as events that took place simultaneously across Asia. Further research is needed, the interpretation of which also requires more in-depth research into the situation of Vietnamese society and its economy.

These results have supplemented the research about the history of the ceramic production and trade policy of Vietnam, which has been mainly built up from the study of Chinese ceramic production thus far, while also raising new challenges from the viewpoint of global history. Vietnamese-Chinese relations, the question of Vietnamese organization of ceramic production and its distribution, and the role of Vietnam in the Southeast Asian maritime trade have been addressed by the results of this dissertation project. To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could address the problematic historical relationship between Northern Vietnam and South China, and to what extent historical South China could be more culturally assigned to Northern Vietnam is a discourse that should receive more attention in the future. In addition, the discourse of the different cultures between the present-day Chinese coastal areas and those in the hinterland, and how to differentiate them from the *Yue* culture, can be further pursued in the context of the research on Vietnamese ceramic culture.

Despite these limitations, the challenges encountered in this study reveal not only the constraints of current knowledge but also promising opportunities for future scholarship. The lack of comprehensive archaeological data, for instance, highlights the need for more

systematic excavations and interdisciplinary research collaborations that can fill in regional and chronological gaps.

Moreover, the conceptual ambiguity of the Chinese cultural space offers fertile ground for further theoretical work. This study has attempted to transcend the traditional center-periphery paradigm. However, there remains much potential to refine and apply alternative approaches that better capture the nuances of cultural adaptation, hybridity, and agency. Engaging with postcolonial theory, network theory, or world-systems analysis could provide deeper insights into how Vietnam has navigated its position in a region shaped by hegemonic and pluralistic forces.

In addition, further comparative studies are needed to place Vietnamese ceramics in a genuinely Southeast Asian context. While this dissertation focuses on the Vietnamese-Chinese axis, future work could consider interactions with the material cultures of Champa, Angkor, Java, or the Philippines, thus painting a more comprehensive picture of regional cultural dynamics. Likewise, greater consideration of post-15th-century developments, including the influence of colonialism, globalization, and modern revival movements, could shed light on the continued development and significance of ceramic traditions in contemporary Vietnam.

Finally, linguistic and documentary limitations underscore the importance of collaborative, multilingual research efforts that transcend national and disciplinary boundaries. Cross-institutional partnerships, joint publications, and open-access digital archives can democratize access to sources and promote a more comprehensive approach to Asian ceramic history.

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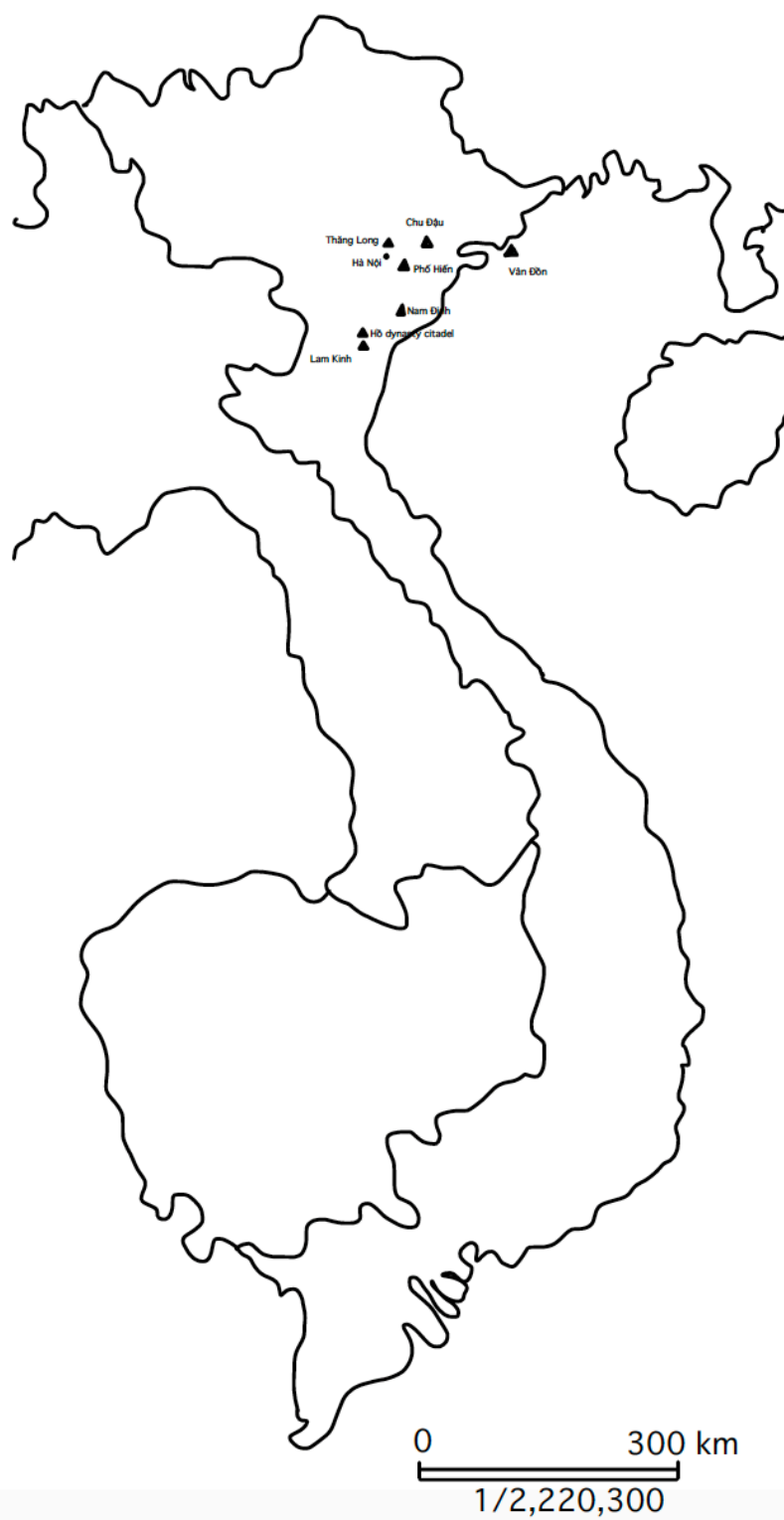
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List of Maps

Major kiln sites in North Vietnam



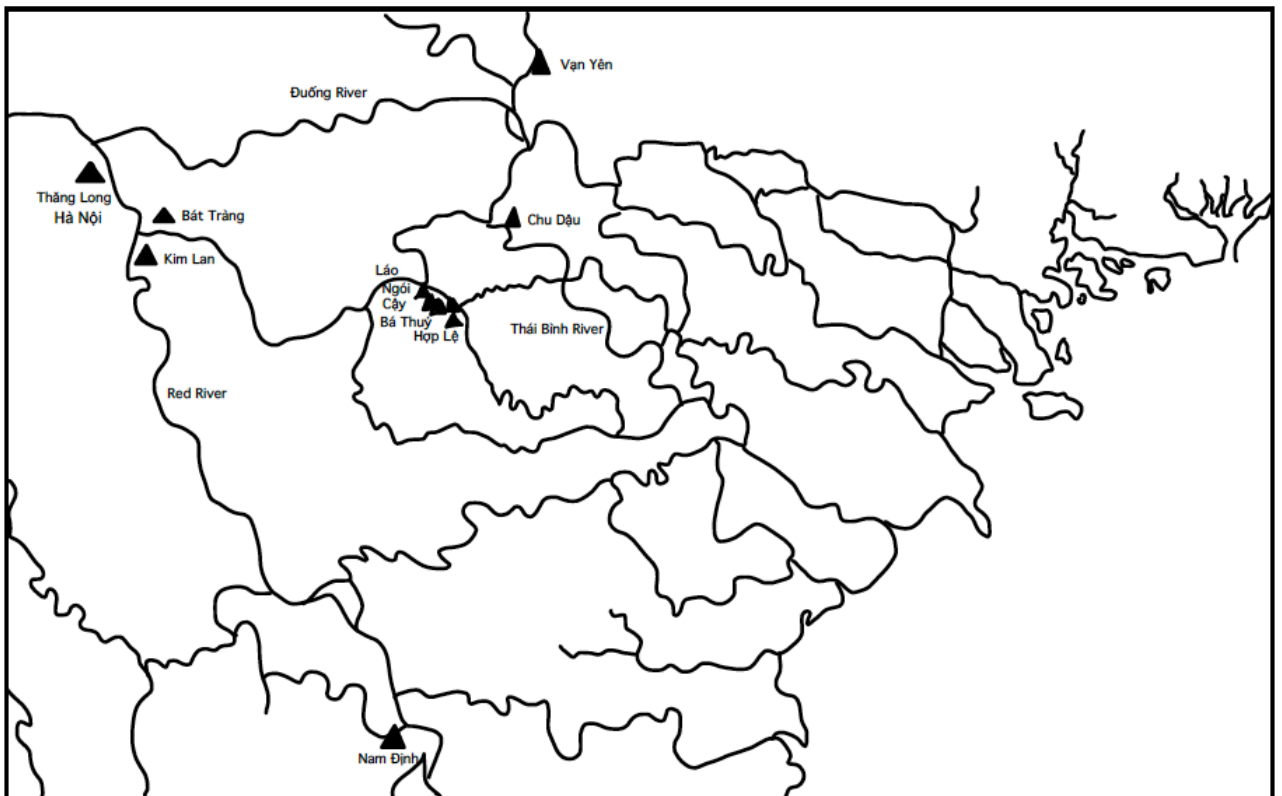
Map 1 Major Kiln Sites in Northern Vietnam (Drawing by author)

The Chinese Cultural Sphere



Map 2 The Chinese Cultural Sphere (China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Ryukyu Kingdom, and Vietnam) (Drawing by author)

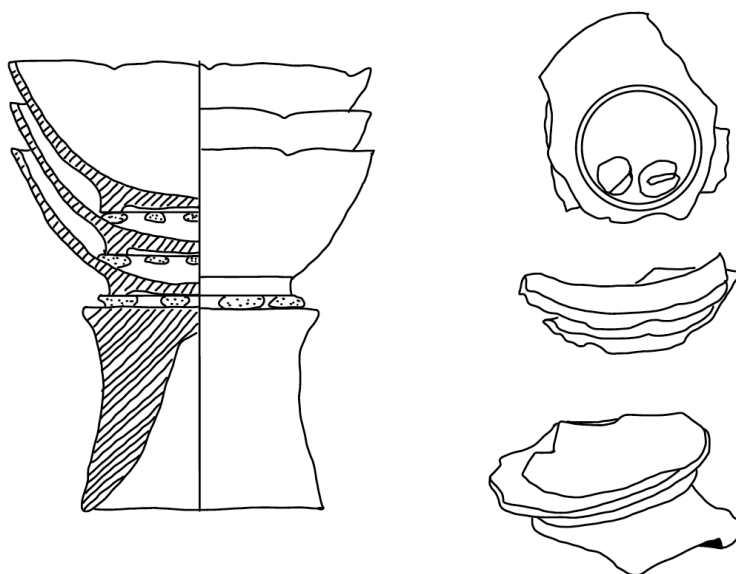
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Map 5 The Kiln Sites in Northern Vietnam (Drawing by author)

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Fig. 38 Porcelain sherds with spherical stacking tools, drawing by author

Fig. 39 is not included in this version for copyright reasons.

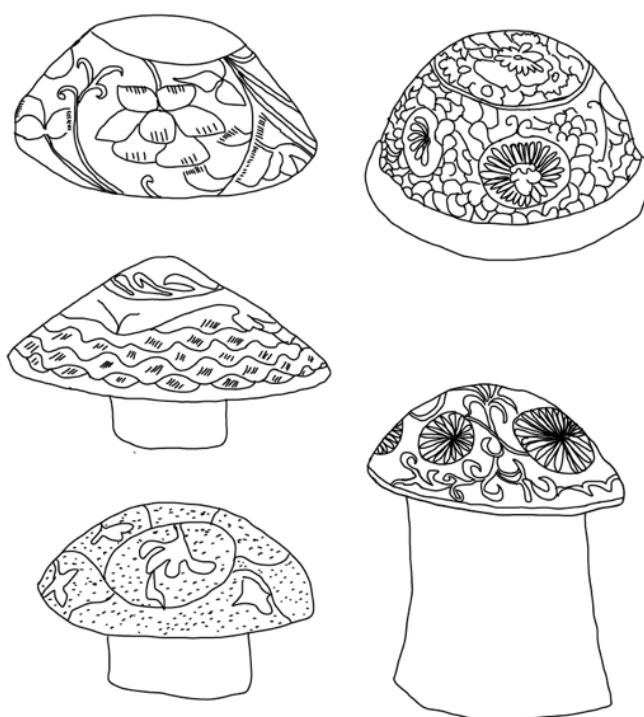
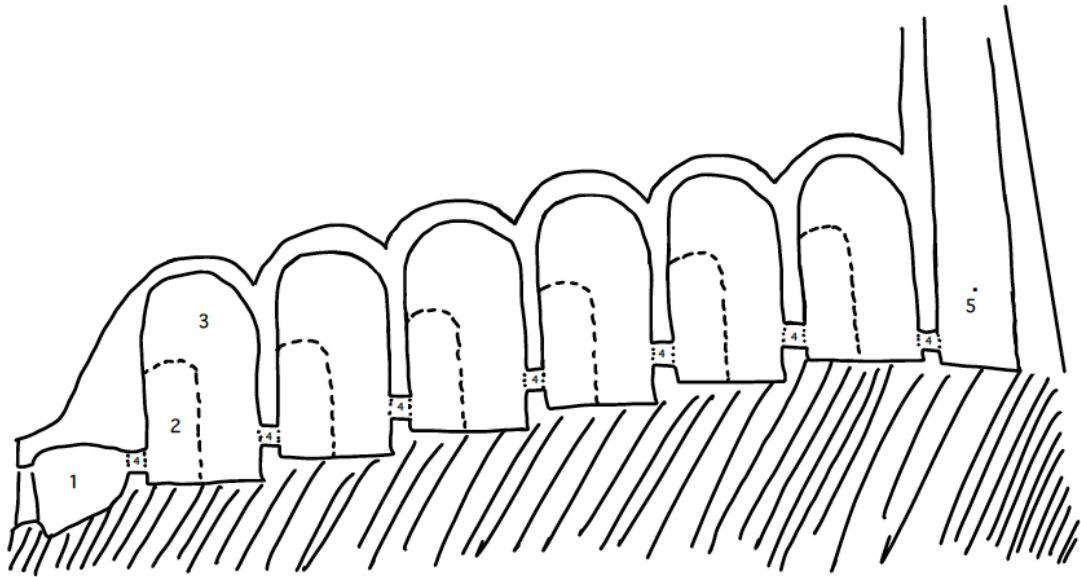


Fig. 40 Different types of Chinese molds (Drawing by author)

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Longquan 'dragon kilns': 1. Fire box; 2. Entry to chamber; 3. Firing chamber; 4. Fire vents; 5. chimney

Fig. 48 Drawing by author

Fig. 49-60 are not included in this version for copyright reasons.

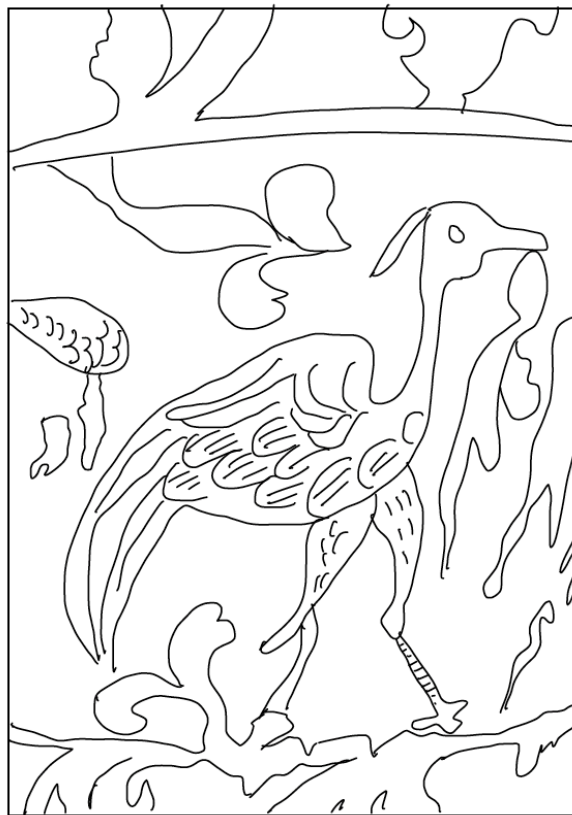


Fig. 61 Long-tailed bird or peacock motif on Vietnamese brown pattern wares (Drawing by author)

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Fig. 66 Yellow-glazed tubular tiles in the shape of a dragon, 15th century, (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, photo taken by author)

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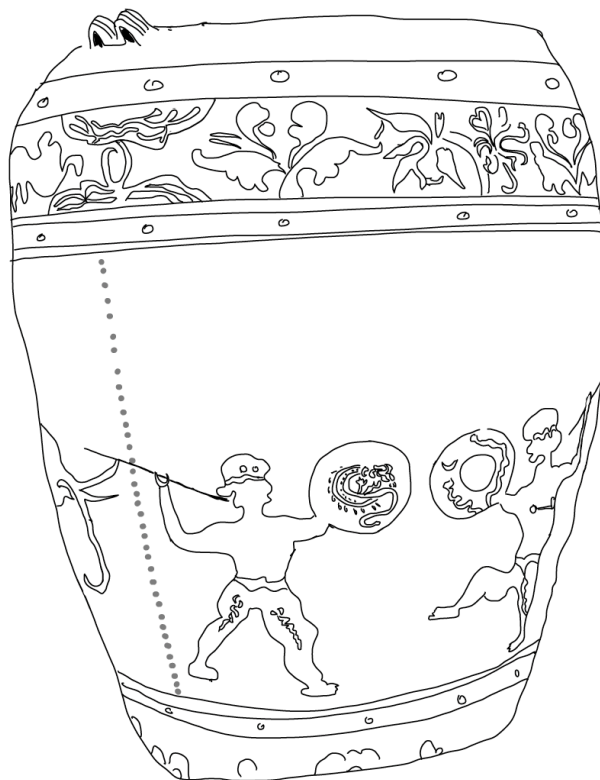


Fig. 69 Brown pattern jar fragment with hunting scene (warriors are tattooed with serpentine like decorative), *Trần* dynasty, (Drawing by author)



Fig. 70 Brown pattern jar with elephant motifs, *Trần* dynasty, (drawing by author)

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Fig. 81 Dragon steps to the *Kính Thiên* Palace (2018) with metallic support, 15th century, (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, photo taken by author)



Fig. 82 Dragon steps to the *Kính Thiên* Palace (2022) with stone support, 15th century, (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, photo taken by author)

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Fig. 93 The 'Đoan môn gate' (Main Gate) of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long*, photo taken by author)



Fig. 94 Excavation site of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long, '18 *Hoàng Diệu*' archeological site (next to the Vietnam National Assembly), (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long, photo taken by author)



Fig. 95 Excavation site of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long, '18 *Hoàng Diệu*' archeological site (next to the Vietnam National Assembly), (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long, photo taken by author)



Fig. 96 Excavation site of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long, '18 *Hoàng Diệu*' archeological site (next to the Vietnam National Assembly), (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long, photo taken by author)



Fig. 97 Well at '18 *Hoàng Diệu*' archeological site (next to the Vietnam National Assembly), (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long, photo taken by author)



Fig. 98 Well at '18 Hoàng Diệu' archeological site (next to the Vietnam National Assembly), (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long, photo taken by author)

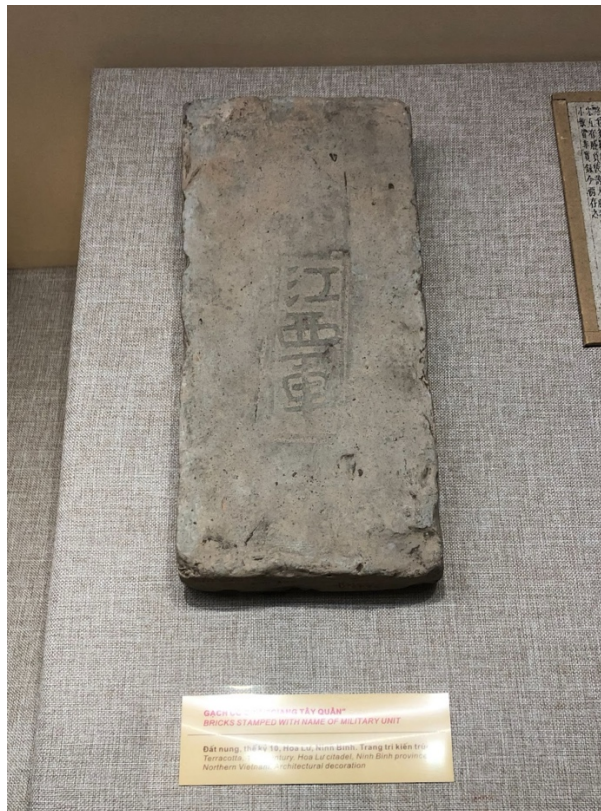


Fig. 99 Terracotta brick with Chinese characters 'Jiangxi jun 江西軍' (military unit), (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long, photo taken by author)



Fig. 100 Terracotta brick with Chinese characters 'Jiangxi jun 江西軍' (military unit), (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long, photo taken by author)

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Fig. 103 Small plates with 'Trưởng Lạc 長樂' inscription, 15th century, (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long, photo taken by author)

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Fig. 105 Storage room of the excavation from 2012 to 2014 underneath the Vietnam National Assembly (*Tòa nhà Quốc hội Việt Nam*) and its parking lot (also known as the Rose Garden/*Vườn hồng*), (Photo taken by author)





Fig. 106 Storage room of the excavation from 2012 to 2014 underneath the Vietnam National Assembly (*Tòa nhà Quốc hội Việt Nam*) and its parking lot (also known as the Rose Garden/*Vườn hồng*), (Photo taken by author)



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Fig. 109 Storage room of the excavation from 2012 to 2014 underneath the Vietnam National Assembly (*Tòa nhà Quốc hội Việt Nam*) and its parking lot (also known as the Rose Garden/*Vườn hồng*), (Photo taken by author)

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Fig. 114 Terracotta architectural elements, 11th – 14th centuries, (Photo Courtesy of the Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long, photo taken by author)

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Fig. 117 Changsha Ware, bowl base with floral motif in the middle, discovered during the excavation at the Rose Garden Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* (Photo taken by author)



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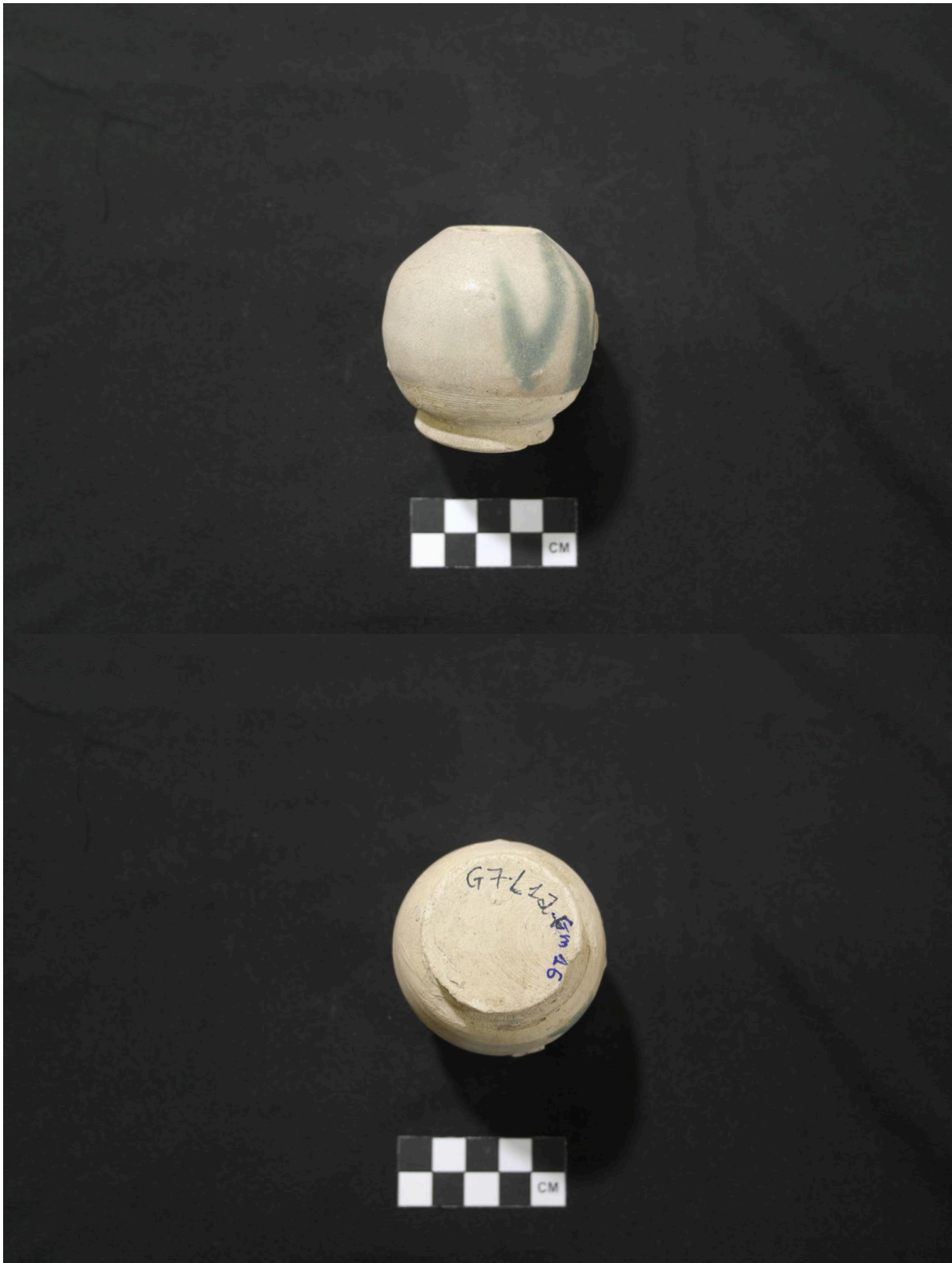


Fig. 131 Changsha Ware, small jarlet, discovered during the excavation at the Rose Garden Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* (Photo taken by author)



Fig. 132 Changsha Ware, small jarlet, discovered during the excavation at the Rose Garden Imperial Citadel of *Thăng Long* (Photo taken by author)

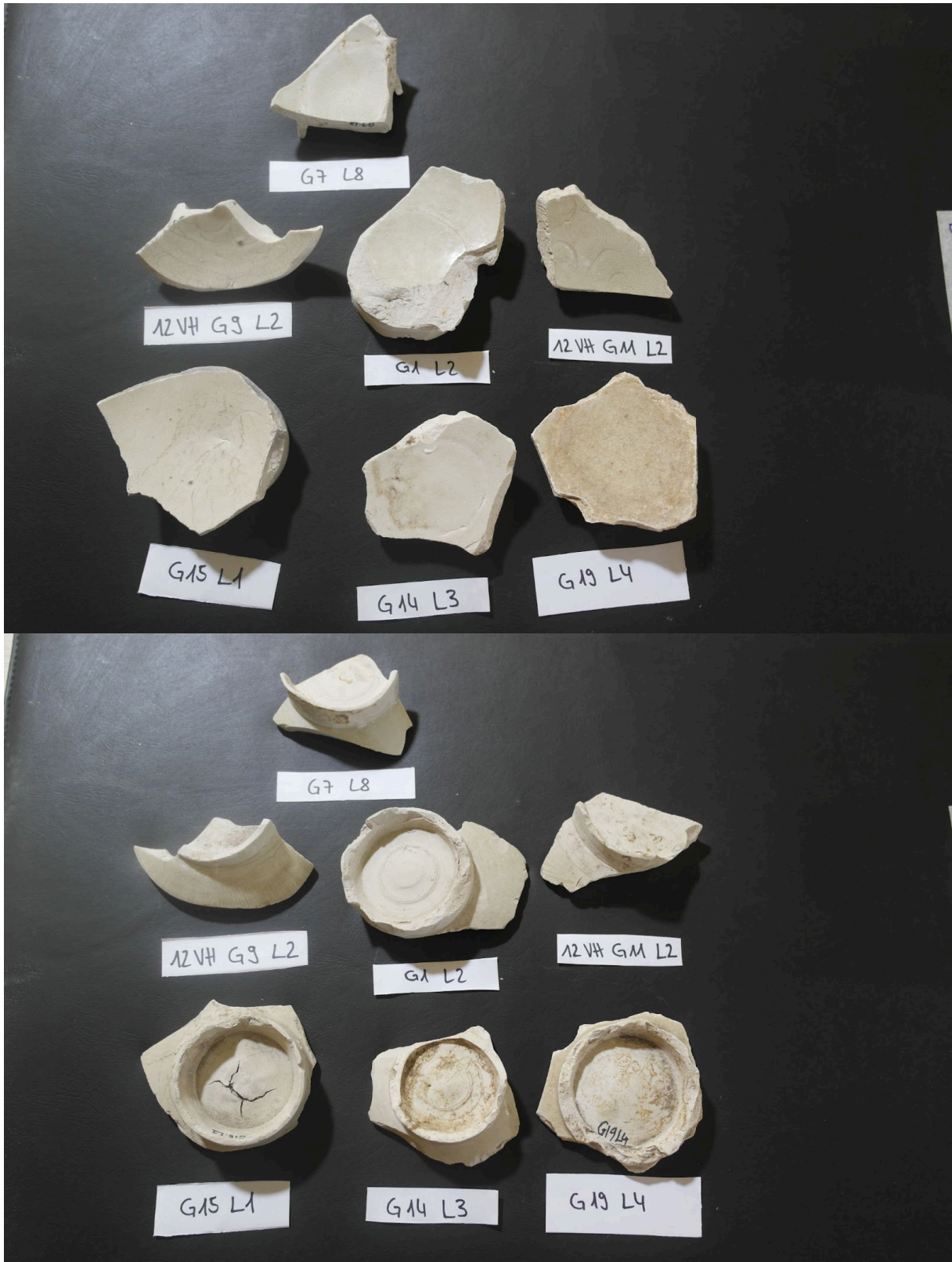


Fig. 133 Qingbai bowl bases (excavated at the Rose Garden 2012 - 2014), (Photo taken by author)



Fig. 134 Qingbai bowl bases and sherds (excavated at the Rose Garden 2012 - 2014),
(Photo taken by author)

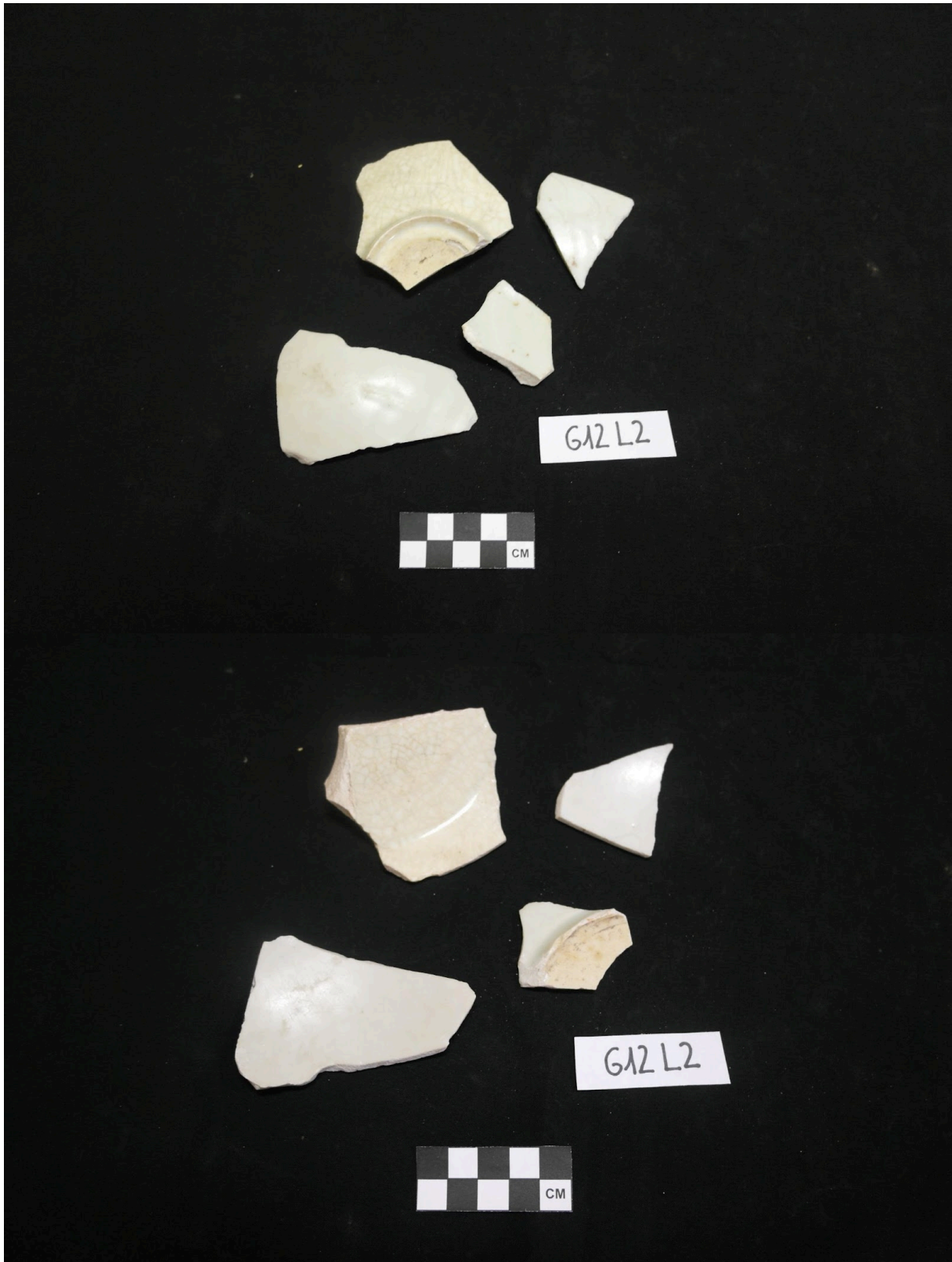


Fig. 135 Qingbai bowl bases and sherds (excavated at the Rose Garden 2012 - 2014),
(Photo taken by author)



Fig. 136 Qingbai bowl bases (excavated at the Rose Garden 2012 - 2014), (Photo taken by author)

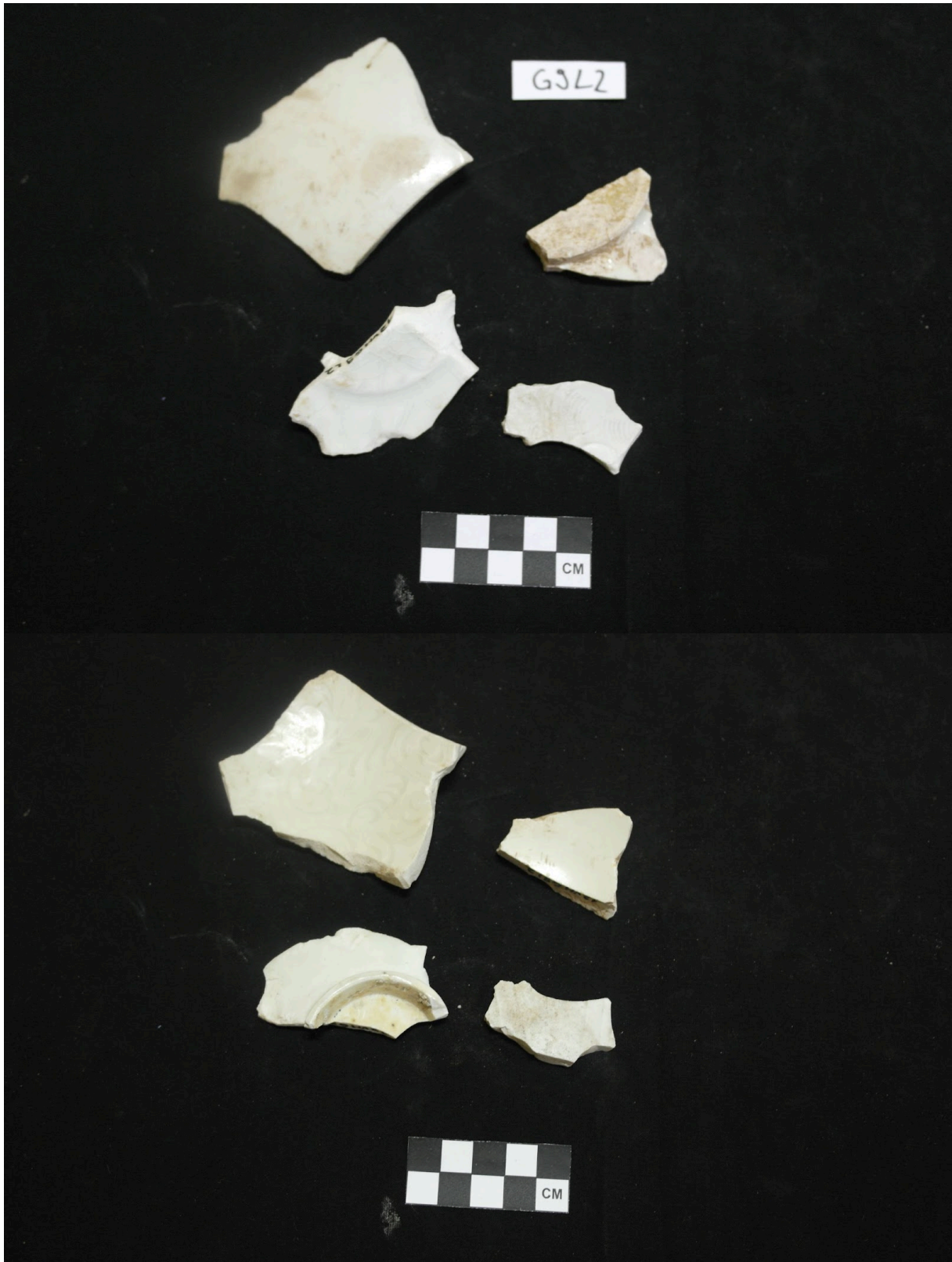


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Fig. 141 Blue and brown glazed sherd from West Asia, probably Abbasid 9th century, (excavated at the Rose Garden 2012 - 2014), (Photo taken by author)

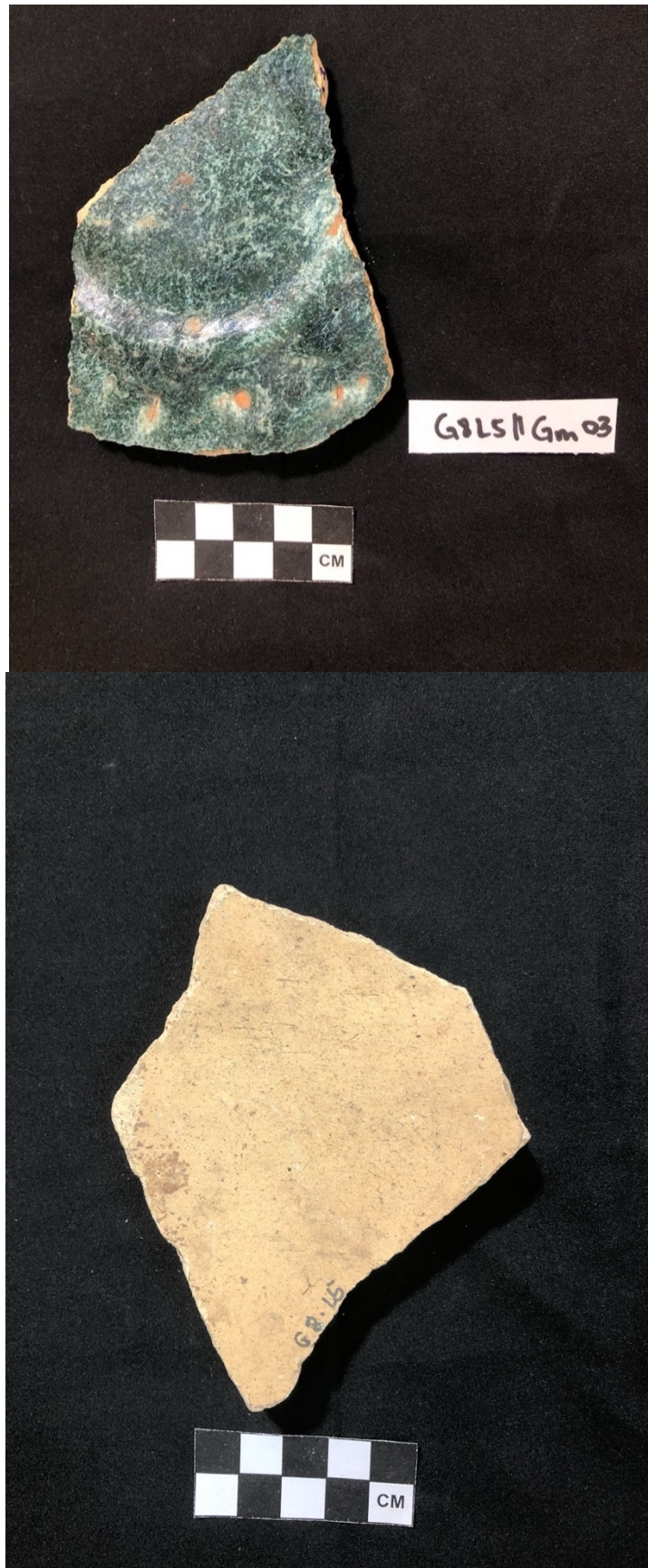


Fig. 142 Blue glazed sherd from West Asia (?), (excavated at the Rose Garden 2012 - 2014), (Photo taken by author)

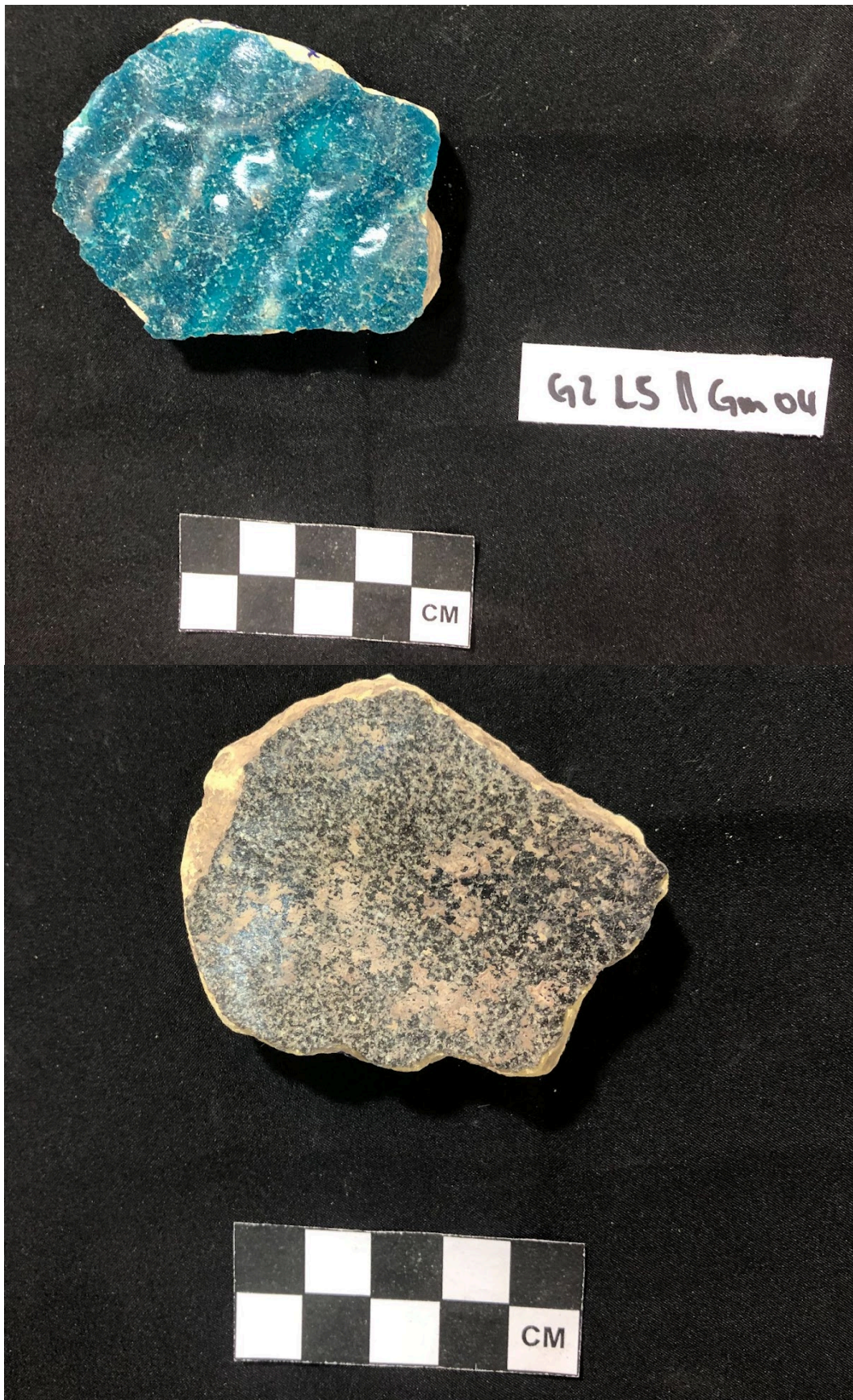


Fig. 143 Blue and brown glazed sherd from West Asia (?), (excavated at the Rose Garden 2012 - 2014), (Photo taken by author)



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Fig. 145 Blue glazed sherd from West Asia (?), (excavated at the Rose Garden 2012 - 2014), (Photo taken by author)

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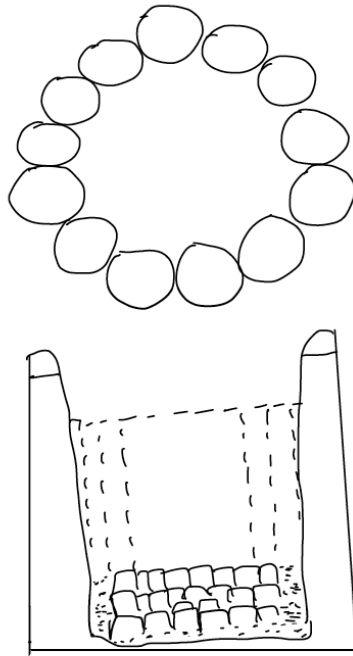


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Fig. 170 *Bát Tràng*, workers hand paint ceramic objects, (Photo taken by author)



Fig. 171 *Bát Tràng*, gas kiln, (Photo taken by author)