

Bowl with incised inscription and underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

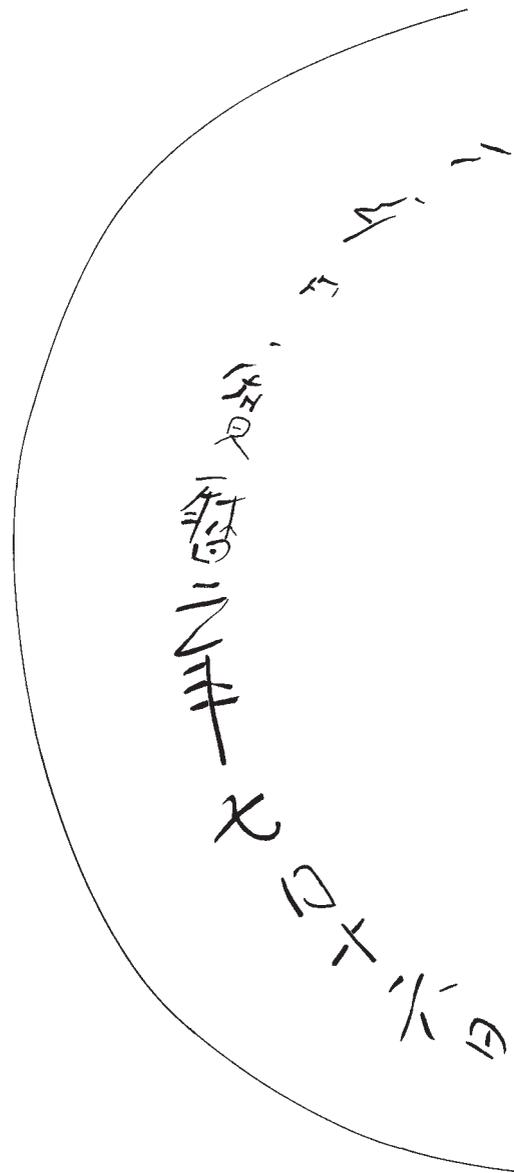
Changsha kilns, Hunan province

Ht. 5.1 cm, diam. rim 14.7 cm, diam. foot 5.5 cm

This Changsha bowl from the Belitung wreck significantly bears an inscription engraved on the outside wall that reads: ‘baoli ernian qiyue shiliu ri’ (the sixteenth day of the seventh month of the second year of the Baoli reign). The date is equivalent to 826. The piece is significant, not only for being an important addition to the small corpus of dated Chinese wares from the ninth century, but also for providing us with an important *terminus post quem* for dating the Belitung wreck. Inside it is decorated with an abstract landscape.

The earliest dated archaeological find hitherto known related to the Changsha ware is a mould for making trapezoidal lugs with tassel-like ornaments (see above p. 501 fig. 25). It was excavated from a Tongguan kiln site and dated by inscription to the third year of Yuanhe reign (808).¹

According to Chinese archaeologists, Changsha ceramics with underglaze decoration of phrases, aphorisms or poems began to appear in tombs from the mid-Tang period (780–835) onward.² An amber-glazed bowl in the Kyoto National Museum’s collection used to be the earliest known dated Changsha ceramic example, which bore decoration of aphorisms or phrases in calligraphy. It is dated by inscription to the third year of the Kaicheng reign (823).³



No. 171 Inscription on the outside wall (Sc. 3:4)

¹ Changsha Cultural Bureau 1980, 88–89, fig. 18; Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, 187, 194, fig. 521.

² See Zhou Shirong 1982, 513–514.

³ See *The World's Great Collections* 1982, monochrome pl. 42.



No. 171

Bowl with underglaze inscription and decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century
 Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting
 Changsha kilns, Hunan province
 Ht. 5.4 cm, diam. rim 15.2 cm, diam. foot 5.4 cm

Although used for many purposes, the bowls had long served mainly for wine-drinking. A small four-lobed bowl unearthed from a Tang tomb at Changsha bears the inscription *jiuzhan* (wine cup).¹ However, it is evident that the demand for bowls and ewers for tea-drinking, with which Changsha bowls were closely associated, was eclipsing that for wine drinking during the Tang era. Some Changsha bowls, including the present example with cloud-like motifs from the Belitung wreck, bear the inscription *chazhanzi* or *chawan* (tea bowl).² This seems to accord with contemporary social customs in the Tang dynasty. Both historical and literary records indicate that, as a result of social custom, an industry of tea-drinking had grown from the mid-Tang onwards. In his *Classic of Tea*, Lu Yu described the history of tea-drinking, the names of kilns well-known for their tea bowls, as well as different methods of making tea (cf. also above pp. 357–359). His accounts hinted that tea had become a commodity in demand throughout the empire. It was, in the words of the official Tang History, ‘no different from rice and salt’.³

¹ Zhou Shirong 1982, 511, fig. 2; Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, pl. 115.

² Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, pl. 248; Zhou Shirong 2000, 72–73, pl. 37.

³ For a brief discussion of this growing social custom and the industry of tea-drinking during the Tang, see Watson 1984, 34–35.



No. 172

173–175

Bowl, cup and dish with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 173: Ht. 6.4 cm, diam. rim 10.1 cm, diam. foot 4.6 cm

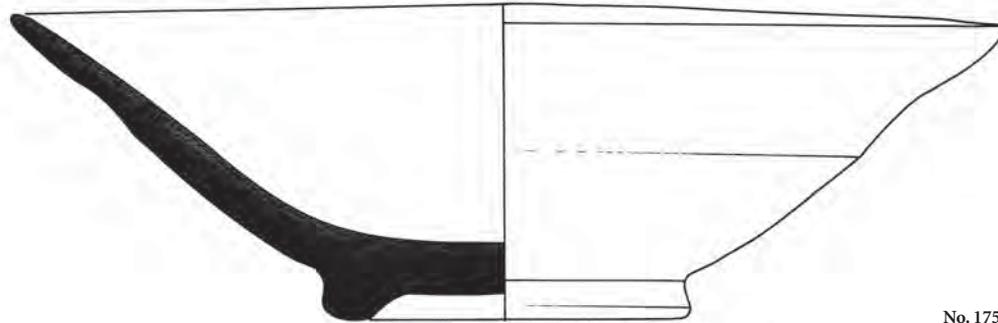
No. 174: Ht. 2.6 cm, diam. rim 12.0 cm, diam. foot 4.9 cm

No. 175: Ht. 4.3 cm, diam. rim 13.0 cm, diam. foot 4.9 cm

In the cup no. 173, the motif painted uniquely in underglaze red (see above pp. 480–481) and brown is a spiral with a curving tail crowned with a mushroom-like cloud (see also appendix II no. 1). Starting with such simple patterns, the Changsha potters developed more complicated cloud designs (cf. appendix I.1 nos 6–10, 96–100; appendix II nos 2–4).

The motif painted inside the four-lobed dish no. 174 shows a spiral crowned by several clouds superimposed upon one another. On the rim the dish is embellished with four groups of brown dots.

In the decorative repertory of Changsha bowls, one can see an obvious affinity between the form of the cloud and that of the fungus or even the pagoda (cf. nos 192–194). In some examples the Changsha craftsmanship leads the viewer's imagination to flit between the three imageries, as it is the case in the conical bowl no. 175. The glaze of this piece has almost completely vanished.



No. 175



No. 173



No. 174



No. 175

176–180

Dish, cup and bowls with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 176: Ht. 2.6 cm, diam. rim 11.6 cm, diam. foot 4.6 cm

No. 177: Ht. 6.8 cm, diam. rim 10.8 cm, diam. foot 4.7 cm

No. 178: Ht. 7.2 cm, diam. rim 19.8 cm, diam. foot 7.5 cm

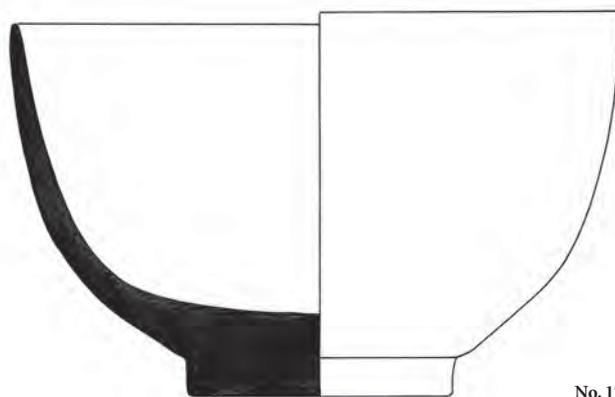
No. 179: Ht. 7.5 cm, diam. rim 19.9 cm, diam. foot 6.6 cm

No. 180: Ht. 7.3 cm, diam. rim 20.6 cm, diam. foot 7.4 cm

The vessels of this group are decorated with the foliage motif. The basic pattern, as shown in the small four-lobed dish no. 176, is a cluster of foliage resembling radiating beams. These could well be stylized illustrations of shrubs or trees. A vapour-like design is further depicted as if hovering on top of this cluster of foliage, while several freely scribbled strokes appear underneath the principal motif suggesting the earth. These vapour designs, together with spirals on the sides on other examples (cf. appendix I.1 nos. 21–23, 105 and appendix II no. 5), provide the foliage motif with a vivid, vibrant setting.

The cup no. 177 and the large bowl no. 178 show a grouping consisting of two clusters of foliage developed out of the

original simple design (cf. also appendix I.1 nos 27–31, 94, 107, 108, 143). Complex groupings exhibit more clusters of foliage, as exemplified by the large bowl no. 180, where a chief cluster of foliage is accompanied by five smaller ones. Similar in concept, the large bowl no. 179 shows a pattern where numerous clusters of foliage are arranged around a centre (cf. appendix I.1 no. 47). On other bowls the design shows just three clusters of foliage, which are often separated by a spiral or other elements (cf. appendix I.1 nos 32–35, 109). Irrespective of variations in composition, a lively rhythmic design conforms in all cases to the rule of proportion, harmony, and balance.



No. 177 (Sc. 3:4)



No. 176



No. 177



No. 178



No. 179



No. 180

181–185

Dish and bowls with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 181: Ht. 4.1 cm, diam. rim 13.5 cm, diam. foot 5.0 cm

No. 182: Ht. 5.5 cm, diam. rim 15.2 cm, diam. foot 5.4 cm

No. 183: Ht. 5.4 cm, diam. rim 14.5 cm, diam. foot 5.7 cm

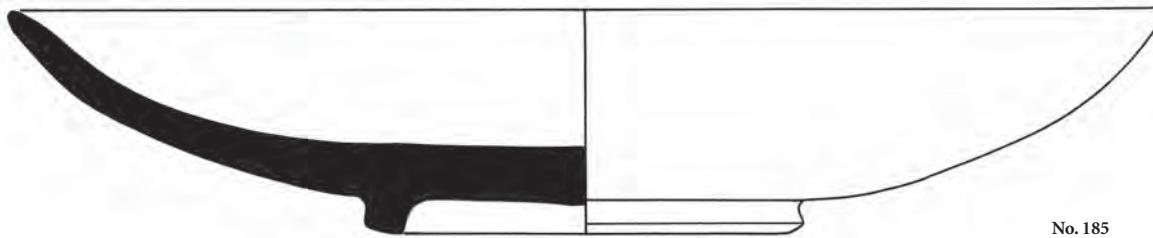
No. 184: Ht. 5.5 cm, diam. rim 15.4 cm, diam. foot 5.2 cm

No. 185: Ht. 3.0 cm, diam. rim 15.3 cm, diam. foot 5.9 cm

The most common stylized floral design on Changsha bowls is a rosette with four, five, six or more petals (cf. appendix I.1 nos 36, 37, 95, 110, 144; appendix II no. 6). Starting with the simple pattern of four petals, the painters of the bowls soon fancifully added more petals and embellished further the whole design with all sorts of adornments. The areas between petals were supplemented with spirals, tendrils, or small petals as on the conical bowl no. 181 (cf. also appendix I.1 nos 38–43, 111–114).

More complicated designs were derived by grouping more petals as on the bowls nos 182 and 183 (cf. also appendix I.1 no. 44). In the more elaborate bowl no. 184 with greenish-

blue underglaze decoration (see above p. 481), a four-petal rosette was embellished with spirals, petals, and other abstract elements, forming a design with a geometric quality (cf. also appendix I.1 no. 45). Moreover, on the dish no. 185, a unique shape among the Changsha ceramics recovered from the Belitung wreck, a square form with stamen replaced a rosette and is further embellished by four petals or other canopy-like patterns. The glaze of this piece has completely vanished.



No. 185



No. 181



No. 182



No. 183



No. 185



No. 184

186–188

Bowls and a cup with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 186: Ht. 6.1 cm, diam. rim 10.7 cm, diam. foot 4.7 cm

No. 187: Ht. 5.4 cm, diam. rim 15.4 cm, diam. foot 5.7 cm

No. 188: Ht. 5.1 cm, diam. rim 14.8 cm, diam. foot 5.3 cm

There are some floral patterns on the Changsha ceramics, which obviously derived from the stylized floral form but became highly abstract. Although the movement of lines and the arrangement of the elements are still reminiscent of the treatment accorded originally to the organic motif, they have lost every visible connection with a vegetal form. Here abstract and geometric characteristics play the major part. This pattern of rosettes appears also in a wide variety of forms. On the cup no. 186 for example, cloud-like forms are placed in a circle surrounding the usual radiating beam-like stamen, while, on the bowl no. 187 the stamens of the rosette are represented by foliage and the petals by cloud-like forms separated by spirals (cf. also appendix I.1 no. 46, 48, 115). In the bowl no. 188, the rosette seen in downward perspective is even turned into what appears to be a coiled snake-like form, unique design among the decorated Changsha ceramics from the Belitung wreck.



No. 186



No. 187



No. 188

189–191

Bowls with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 189: Ht. 5.4 cm, diam. rim 15.0 cm, diam. foot 5.3 cm

No. 190: Ht. 5.3 cm, diam. rim 15.1 cm, diam. foot 5.3 cm

No. 191: Ht. 5.3 cm, diam. rim 14.7 cm, diam. foot 5.3 cm

The lotus is one of the most frequently represented floral motifs on Changsha ceramics, though it is not often seen on the bowls from the Belitung wreck. On the recovered examples it has been depicted both in a naturalistic way and in a stylized manner. The naturalistic depiction of the lotus on the bowl no. 189 shows a plant spray in side-view as if just emerging from the water. On no. 190 the stylized manner follows the conventional form of a rosette that, from a downward perspective, shows a pod with pointed petals. Moreover, in the bowl no. 191 the lotus is depicted as a large pointed leaf with veins. The identification of the image as a lotus is reinforced by the small leaves next to it. Although stylized, this glimpse of leaves immediately recalls the natural prototype, a real lotus.

The lotus has played a significant part in Chinese literature and in folklore, and is one of the first flowers to appear in the *Book of Songs*, an anthology of sacrificial odes and folk songs collected around 1000 to 600 BC. The emergence of the lotus as the basis for a decorative pattern in the late Zhou period is proven from archaeological evidence.¹ In the Han dynasty, as the immortality cult rose to an unprecedented height, and stories linking flowers to mysterious phenomena flourished, the lotus was believed to possess the magic power of immortality. The enthusiasm for the lotus not only became a religious, literary and artistic fashion but found also expression in the daily life of the elite and the literati. Donghun Hou,

Emperor of the Southern Qi dynasty (r. 498–501), had lotus made of gold leaf strewn upon the ground for his concubine Pan to dance upon, and rapturously exclaimed ‘Every step makes a lotus grow!’. This remark thereafter became a cliché describing a woman’s elegant walking style.

Against this rich historical background, the lotus as a symbol of purity, perfection and spiritual attainment was easily assimilated into Indian Buddhist belief. To Buddhists, the lotus flower blooms above the water just as Buddha is born into the world but lives above the world. Its fruits are said to be ripe when the flower blooms, just as the truth preached by Buddha bears immediately the fruit of enlightenment. After the spread of Buddhist belief in China, the lotus was redolent with religious implications and known as the sacred flower of Buddhism. The great popularity of the lotus in China was not merely derived from its Buddhist connections, but also from the more general belief that the lotus, which grows out of mud but is not defiled, can be identified with noble purity and unflinching courage. In addition, the lotus motif carried various associations expressed in puns and word play. The image of a boy upon a lotus, often seen in Changsha wares, symbolizes vigorous fertility because the lotus pod contains many seeds – a pun for sons.² In addition, its name in Chinese (‘lian’) forms a pun on the word for ‘in succession’ (*lian*). In this way the image suggests the auspicious phrase *liansheng guizi* or ‘may you have many sons’.³

¹ For a general study of the lotus motif in the Chinese decorative art see Rawson 1984.

² Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, 139, fig. 408; see also below p. 536.

³ For puns and the symbolism of flowers in Chinese art, see Bartholomew 1985; Liu Yang 2000; Liu Yang and Capon 2000a.



No. 189



No. 190



No. 191

192–194

Bowls with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 192: Ht. 5.5 cm, diam. rim 15.7 cm, diam. foot 5.6 cm

No. 193: Ht. 10.0 cm, diam. rim 26.0 cm, diam. foot 7.6 cm

No. 194: Ht. 5.5 cm, diam. rim 15.4 cm, diam. foot 5.9 cm

One floral motif often seen on the decoration of Changsha bowls is the *lingzhi* or fungus. The general design of this motif consists of several cloud-like patterns superimposed one upon another with the largest unit at the bottom as seen on the bowl no. 192 (cf. also appendix I.1 no. 117, 118, 139). In the decorative repertory of the Changsha bowls from the Belitung wreck one can see an obvious affinity between the form of the fungus and that of a cloud or even a pagoda. In some examples the Changsha craftsmanship leads the viewer's imagination to flit between the three motifs, as is the case on the bowls nos 193 and 194.

The *lingzhi* or fungus in traditional Chinese art is an object full of symbolic meaning. It combined the ideas of portent and immortality and was said to grow and flourish when the monarch was merciful and humane. During the Tang dynasty, the Ministry of Rites ranked the fungus as an important auspicious token. At the same time it often figured as a key ingredient in elixirs with the promise that whoever ate it, attained eternal life.



No. 193



No. 192



No. 194

195–197

Bowls with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 195: Ht. 5.1 cm, diam. rim 14.9 cm, diam. foot 5.5 cm

No. 196: Ht. 5.2 cm, diam. rim 15.0 cm, diam. foot 5.8 cm

No. 197: Ht. 7.7 cm, diam. rim 20.7 cm, diam. foot 7.2 cm

These are among a few examples of mountain landscapes on Changsha bowls that attempt a realistic representation of natural scenery (cf. also appendix I.1 no. 119). Although simply executed, mountain ranges on these pictures were truthfully painted in fine outline without using *cun* or texture strokes for modelling terrain and cliffs. Solitary trees grow from peaks and emerge from ravines suggesting forested ranges (nos 195, 196). A few waving strokes in the foreground represent the water.

It is understandable that these landscapes were copies of the models and styles of metropolitan paintings: the sophistication and verve of original works was sometimes lost in duplication. On the other hand, the models that inspired the decoration of Changsha bowls included not only certain well-known contemporary works, but also earlier ones. The models and styles reproduced in the more isolated provinces, where change was slow, did not alter much over time. It is therefore not surprising to find that the depictions of landscape on Changsha ceramics, like on no. 197, preserved elements of the archaic. The mountains are painted like separate clods of earth set up straight one beside another, and bring to mind the schematized versions of landscape that could be traced back to the early landscape representations of the fourth century (cf. fig. 13, p. 489). The trees were placed without much concern for size or spatial relations, and the arrangement of the natural elements was artificial. The third dimension, depth, was yet to be conquered.



No. 197



No. 195



No. 196

198–201

Dish, cup and bowls with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 198: Ht. 7.4 cm, diam. rim 20.8 cm, diam. foot 7.0 cm

No. 199: Ht. 5.7 cm, diam. rim 15.5 cm, diam. foot 5.1 cm

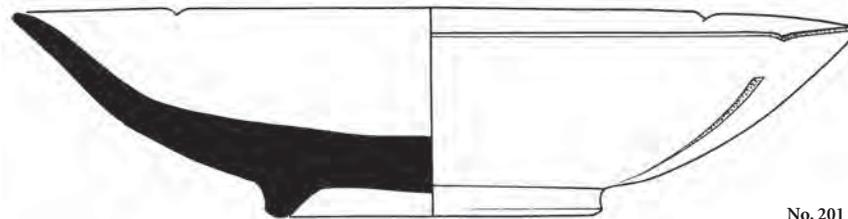
No. 200: Ht. 6.3 cm, diam. rim 10.5 cm, diam. foot 4.6 cm

No. 201: Ht. 2.7 cm, diam. rim 11.2 cm, diam. foot 4.5 cm

The cup no. 200, the four-lobed dish no. 201 (cf. no. 174) and the bowls of this group are decorated with what appears to be an abstract mountain landscape (cf. also appendix I.1 nos 52–70, 120–128, 145 and appendix II no. 8). The principal pattern is a mountain range rising and falling in the distance featuring a central towering peak flanked by smaller ones. Vapour or clouds gathered round the mountain peaks, half camouflaged below by mists in the form of stylized scrolls.

Such imagery is not only a reflection of natural phenomena, but also an echo of earlier traditions: Chinese painters have always looked on the mountains as the visible embodiment

of mysterious natural forces. In painting such a motif, the artisans worked only in outline: no texture strokes and graded ink washes, no recessions into depth were depicted. The mountain contours were brushed in quick decisive touches. The Changsha artisans were not the first to be inspired by the mountain motif, but they seemed to be more interested in abstract mountains than their predecessors.



No. 201



No. 198



No. 199



No. 200



No. 201

202, 203

Bowls with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 202: Ht. 7.7 cm, diam. rim 20.3 cm, diam. foot 7.2 cm

No. 203: Ht. 5.3 cm, diam. rim 15.0 cm, diam. foot 5.4 cm

It is possible for paintings to carry many levels of meaning beyond the flatness of the picture plane; for instance, poetic overtones or even symbolic meanings. Many botanical motifs, in particular motifs of herbaceous plants originally attractive to the Chinese for their medicinal qualities, also carried symbolic associations originating from their utilitarian functions. Some plants were thought to possess talismanic qualities.

During the Tang, the theme of trees and rocks became a popular subject in painting. Like bamboo and other plants, the theme had deep symbolic association. The various stages of life of the tree contained symbolic associations with those of man's life, such as birth and growth, maturity, old age and death. The young tree with its tender and delicate charm, for instance, was often associated with man's youth, love and affection. The old tree with rugged, battered trunk and twisted boughs still putting forth a few leaves, on the contrary was thought to convey an image of integrity, dignity and enduring strength.

The unique design on the bowl no. 202 from the Belitung wreck demonstrates vividly how the tree would look if depicted realistically. The decoration in the bowl no. 203, though quite abstracted, also alludes to a landscape of the riverbank lined with rows of trees.



No. 203



No. 202

204–206

Bowls with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 204: Ht. 5.3 cm, diam. rim 15.2 cm, diam. foot 5.5 cm

No. 205: Ht. 5.0 cm, diam. rim 15.0 cm, diam. foot 5.3 cm

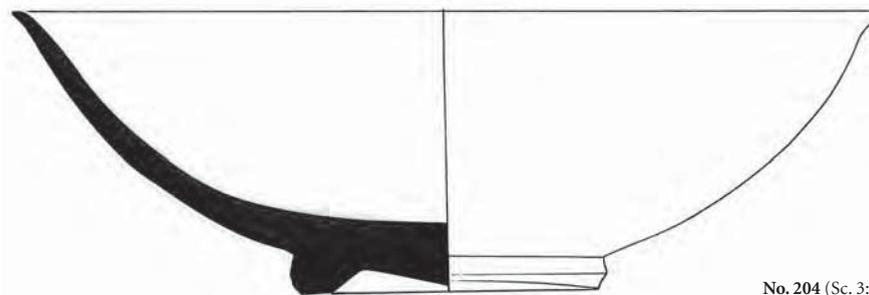
No. 206: Ht. 5.5 cm, diam. rim 15.0 cm, diam. foot 5.5 cm

The fish on these Changsha bowls from the shipwreck appears to have a grotesque head with large glaring eyes, wide-opened mouth, and sharp teeth. Its aggressive nature is further confirmed by its upturned snout and its horns or fleshy feelers, which extend back from the end of the snout. This creature is the *makara*, a motif not unfamiliar to the people of the Tang.

In Indian myth, *makara* is the vehicle of Varuṇa – the deity of the oceans. It also frequently appears on the banner of Kāmadeva, the god of love, and is as well the steed of various nature deities, *yaksha* and *yakshi*, and of the river-goddess Ganga. From the third century BC to the twelfth century AD, the *makara* was one of the popular decorative motifs, occurring in the spandrels of early tympanums, on the architraves of early *toranas* or archways, and in an analogous position on throne-backs. Its form has also been adapted as decorative ornament on head dresses, earrings, or other types of jewellery.¹

There are no records to indicate when this motif was introduced into China. The earliest mention of the *makara* in Chinese translation of Buddhist sutras dates back to the fourth century.² It is interesting to note that the Chinese conception of the *makara* seems to emphasize its aggressive nature. In Chinese Buddhist texts dating from the fifth to the ninth century, the *makara* was often referred to as a fierce creature that destroyed ships, harmed voyagers and engulfed everything in its path. It was called the king of fish, described as having an enormous body, a pair of sun-like eyes, and sharp teeth that resemble hills.³

It is apparent that the popularity of the *makara* image spread with Buddhist doctrines. The association of the motif with Buddhism in the Tang era is made clear by the adornments embellishing the *makara* on Changsha bowls like no. 206. Beside patterns such as waves and clouds, a flaming *cintamani* jewel is depicted as if the fish is chasing after it (cf. also appendix I.1 no. 72). This jewel, symbolising Buddha and his doctrine, was one of the ubiquitous motifs in Chinese Buddhist art.



No. 204 (Sc. 3:4)

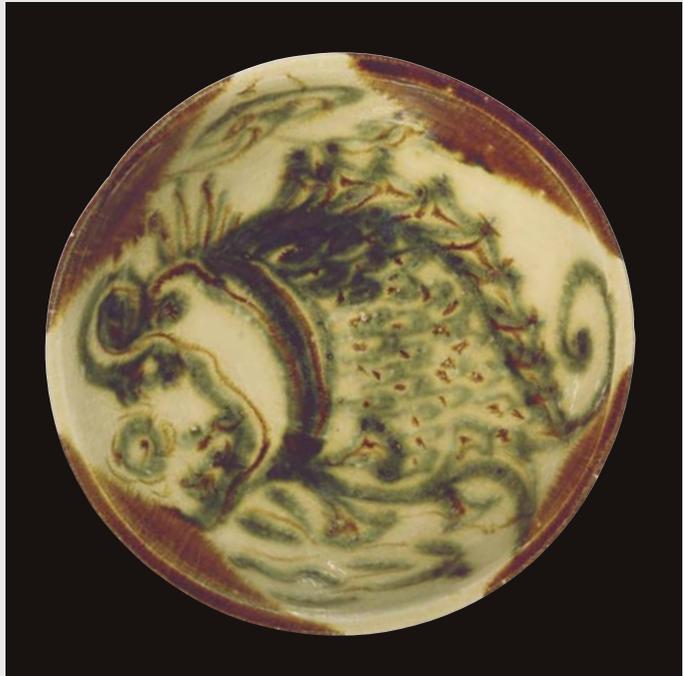
¹ See Coomaraswamy 1993, 143–153.

² For instance, a text entitled *Zhong ahan jing*, which was translated into Chinese in 397, mentioned the *makara*. See Takakusa J. and Watanabe K. 1927, vol. 1, 809.

³ See *ibid.*, 642; vol. 9, 779; vol. 23, 239; vol. 25, 109. See also Cen Rui 1983.



No. 205



No. 204



No. 206

207–212

Bowls with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 207: Ht. 5.5 cm, diam. rim 14.9 cm, diam. foot 5.3 cm

No. 208: Ht. 5.4 cm, diam. rim 14.9 cm, diam. foot 5.5 cm

No. 209: Ht. 5.6 cm, diam. rim 15.5 cm, diam. foot 5.2 cm

No. 210: Ht. 5.4 cm, diam. rim 15.2 cm, diam. foot 6.1 cm

No. 211: Ht. 7.3 cm, diam. rim 20.6 cm, diam. foot 6.2 cm

No. 212: Ht. 7.2 cm, diam. rim 20.7 cm, diam. foot 7.3 cm

All these bowls from the Belitung wreck are decorated with bird motifs. Most of the birds are depicted in flying posture. The patterns of cloud, spiral and foliage are added as a background, suggesting that the birds are in mid air. In no. 207, the body of the bird is shaped like a bow, as if changing direction in mid flight (cf. also appendix I.1 nos 83, 88, 89, 132). Moreover, on this bowl the airborne bird seems to hold a spray of tree leaves in its beak.

One of the most charming images of the bird is the depiction of it on the large bowl no. 212 in profile, standing on one foot, while the other is raised stretching forward.

The identity of these birds remains unclear. Their forms are so stylized that an active imagination could connect them with a number of different species of birds (cf. also nos 213, 214, 215 and above p. 494).



No. 207



No. 208



No. 209



No. 210



No. 211



No. 212

213, 214

Bowls with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

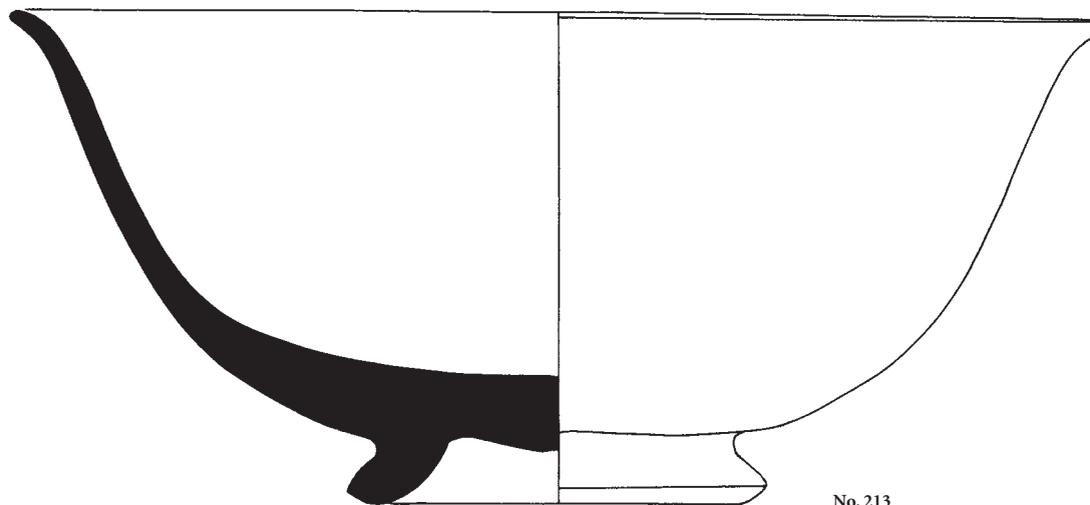
Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 213: Ht. 6.6 cm, diam. rim 14.3 cm, diam. foot 5.6 cm

No. 214: Ht. 7.5 cm, diam. rim 20.0 cm, diam. foot 7.9 cm

The picture of the bird on the deep bowl no. 213 is of significance because of its exquisite rendering and rich cultural associations. With its splendid plumage, particularly with the circular markings on its tail feathers, it appears to be the image of a peacock. Unlike other depictions of the bird inspired by pure fantasy (cf. nos 207–212 and appendix I.1 nos 74–91, 131–134), this image is a vivid combination of realism and imagination. The small bag with long tassels held in the beak of the bird further enforces the lively quality of the picture. The bird on the restored large bowl no. 214 also appears to be a stylized peacock.

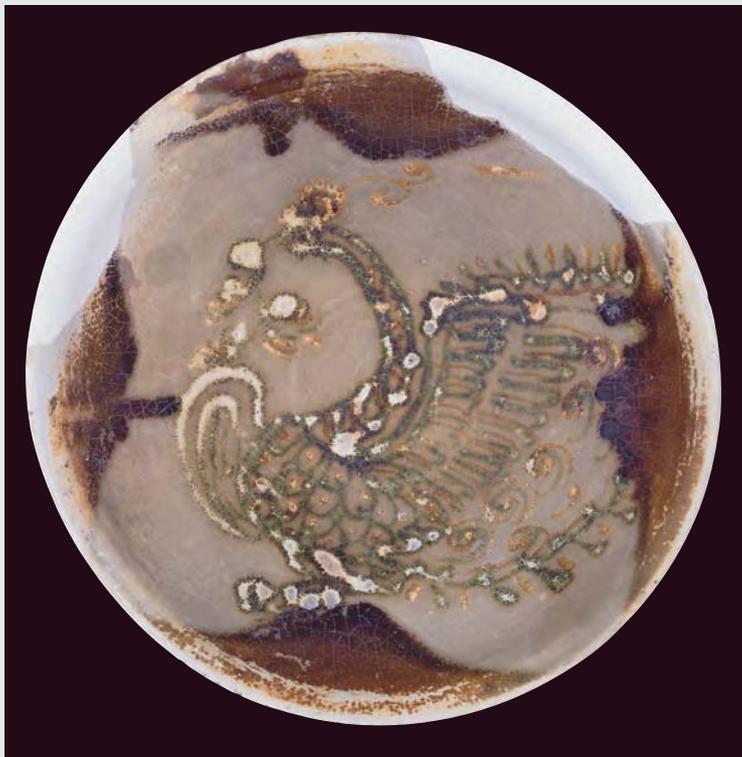
Though not originally a native of China, the peacock has been an emblem of beauty and dignity since long before the Tang era. Folklore had it that the pretty daughter of General Dou Yi in 562 painted a peacock on a screen and offered to marry the man who would be able to kill the bird with two shots of an arrow. Li Yuan, who later became the first emperor of the Tang dynasty (r. 618–907), was the lucky one because he put out both eyes of the bird with his shots. Therefore ‘selection by shooting the peacock screen’ became a synonym for choosing a husband.



No. 213



No. 213



No. 214

215

Large bowl with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

Ht. 9.7 cm, diam. rim 24.9 cm, diam. foot 8.1 cm

In this very large bowl from the shipwreck a pair of birds is depicted, which probably represents the *xiangsi'niao* or the red-billed *leiothrix*. This lovely bird always flies in pairs and takes only one mate. In the popular folklore of the region these birds were the incarnation of a couple who died for marriage and love. They symbolize marital happiness or marital fidelity.

The same motif occurs also very frequently on other forms of Changsha ceramics. It appears, for instance, on the applied moulded decoration on the sides of spouted ewers (cf. appendix III.1 nos 14–33).



No. 215

Bowl with incised decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century
Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting
Changsha kilns, Hunan province
Ht. 5.2 cm, diam. rim 15.3 cm, diam. foot 5.7 cm

In Chinese art flowers and birds are ubiquitous motifs, and are traditionally associated with each other. Early in the Southern and Northern dynasties period (420–589), Chinese artists turned their attention to the study of flower and bird subjects. During the Tang dynasty, flower and bird painting came to form a distinctive school of art, the third major genre of painting in addition to landscape and figure painting. Some painters were renowned for specializing in this genre, and their works served as models for later painters. The development of flower and bird painting during this period provided a creative spur for decorative art. In jade carving, for instance, a type of ornament in the form of flowers and birds became very popular. This popular trend is also reflected in the decoration of the Changsha bowls.

In this bowl from the Belitung wreck, different elements are unusually incised over the hardly visible, underglaze painted, abstract landscape, and carefully organized into a composition. Two birds, each flying in a distinct pose, are attracted by a spray of flowers depicted in between them. Heavy clouds float below. The design is a remarkable combination of ornamental forms with more or less realistic features. It is particularly important because, except those surviving on the tomb murals, very few Tang paintings of this subject have emerged to testify to the style championed by the imperial court and popular taste. This design, while still an early prototype in the flower and bird painting repertoire, exemplifies the popularity of the genre during the time.



No. 216

Bowl with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century
 Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting
 Changsha kilns, Hunan province
 Ht. 5.4 cm, diam. rim 15.4 cm, diam. foot 5.3 cm

During the Tang dynasty, Buddhism had asserted itself as being strong enough to stand on an equal footing with the traditional imperial beliefs. After a dynastic struggle for orthodoxy and prestige, it had grown in strength and public support and began to dominate Chinese ideologies. Its roots spread far and deep from the royal court to the villages. During the Tang era, numerous temples were dotted along the river shore and the Mount Heng range. The region was home to flourishing Buddhist communities.

The popularity of Buddhist belief in the region is attested by the frequent use of certain decorative motifs on Changsha ceramics that are associated with Buddhism. This bowl is decorated with the painting of a pagoda (or part of a pagoda), flanked by a pair of flags. Two swastika symbols appear on the base of the pagoda. The same swastika symbol, brushed with black ink by potters, appeared also on the bases of many Changsha bowls along with the potters' writings (cf. appendix I.2 nos 174–177). The fact that several groups of bowls with inscribed names were always accompanied by swastika symbols suggests that some potters may have tied their belief to Buddhism more firmly than others (see appendix I.2 nos 175–177 with the characters 'Zhao Yuan' or 'You'). Testimony to the popular belief in Buddhism was also

borne out by other decorative designs on Changsha ceramics. In addition to the lotus (cf. nos 189–191) and *makara* (cf. nos 204–206), there are some meaningful motifs that may be associated with Buddhism. While the image of a boy on the lotus can be viewed as representing vigorous fertility,¹ it may also be a representation of the reborn-soul in Amitabha's Western Paradise, the Pure Land. Chinese scholars even suggested that some designs of loose fronds seen on moulded appliqués on the sides of ewers might represent the foliage of the *bodhi* tree.² It is obvious that these decorative motifs are closely connected with prevailing thoughts and beliefs serving the needs of the people. Potters and artisans therefore made good use of these motifs.

¹ Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, fig. 408; see also above p. 516.

² *Ibid.*, 223–24, pl. 307.



No. 217

218

Bowl decorated with a poem

Tang dynasty, 9th century
Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting
Changsha kilns, Hunan province
Ht. 5.2 cm, diam. rim (restored) 15.5 cm,
diam. foot 5.5 cm

This fragment of a bowl from the Belitung wreck bears a poem in the five-character style. The poem is incomplete due to the damage of the bowl. However, it is not difficult to reconstruct the poem on the basis of similar poems found elsewhere in China. According to Chinese archaeologists, at least 23 out of the 248 poem-inscribed bowls unearthed at Lan'anzui near Changsha bear a poem similar to this.¹ The poem may be translated as:

‘Everyday I ponder over my journey ahead;
Every morning I bid farewell to my master.
Hiking amidst mountains and rivers,
everywhere I hear birds twittering new songs.’

219

Bowl decorated with a poem

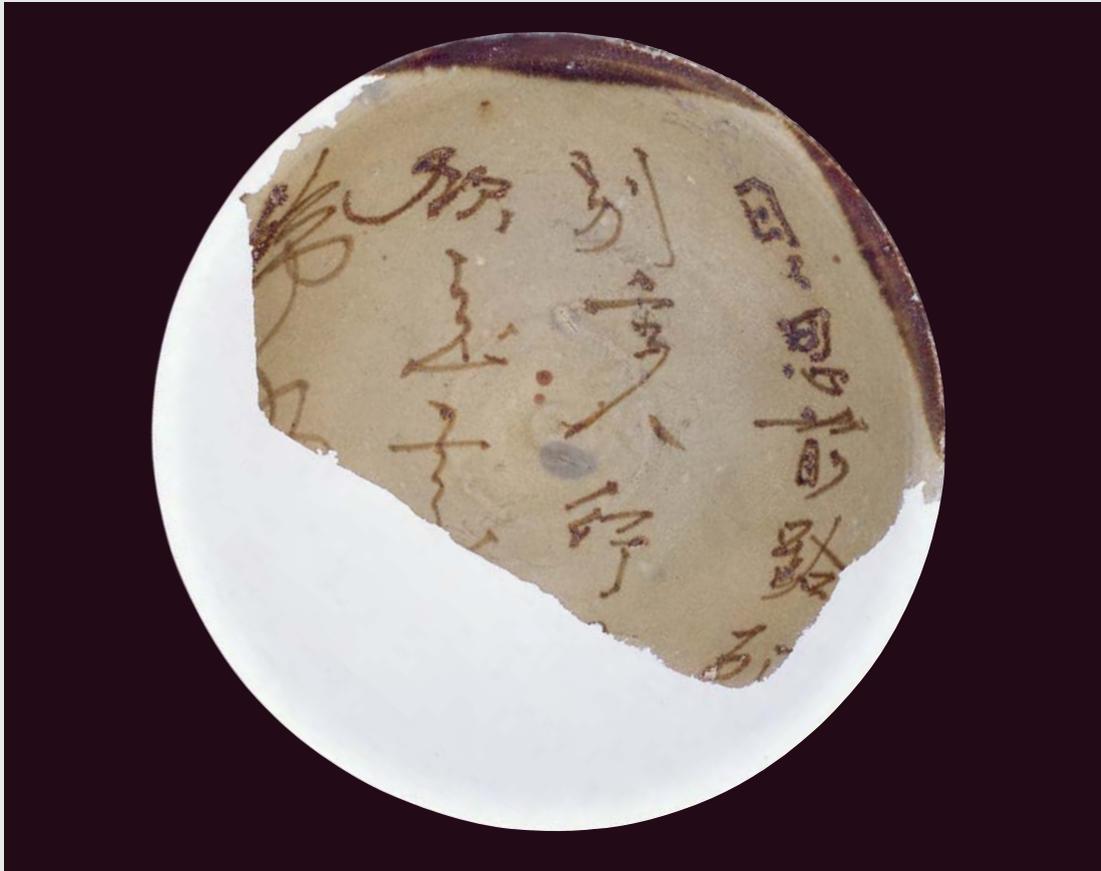
Tang dynasty, 9th century
Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting
Changsha kilns, Hunan province
Ht. 5.7 cm, diam. rim 15.4 cm, diam. foot 5.5 cm

The sorrow of parting is expressed in the poem written on this intact bowl from the Belitung wreck, that reads:

‘How far is the southern sky in the eyes of a lone wild
swan?
The chilly wind strikes terror into one’s heart.
I miss my beloved who is travelling afar, beyond the
Great River,
and my heart flies to the frontier morning and night.’

This piece is rather significant because the poem has never been seen before amongst some eighty distinct poems found to date.

¹ Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, 141–142.



No. 218



No. 219

220, 221

Bowls decorated with poems

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 220: Ht. 4.1 cm, diam. rim 13.9 cm, diam. foot 5.3 cm

No. 221: Ht. 5.4 cm, diam. rim (restored) 15.5 cm,
diam. foot 5.9 cm

There are some poems expressing the joy of the seasons and extolling nature. An example on a conical bowl from the Beilitung wreck (no. 220),¹ which has not been seen elsewhere, reads:

‘This year, this night is drawing to an end,
[The stride of] the approaching year and day can be
heard.
Gone with this night the winter chill,
Spring creeps in with the dawn.’

Another poem inscribed on the fragmentary bowl no. 221 of standard shape and size is only partially visible:

‘The spring ponds are full of spring rain,
In spring the spring grass sprouts . . .’

The incomplete poem can be reconstructed on the basis of the same poem inscribed on an intact ewer excavated at Lan’anzui and another in Hunan Provincial Museum’s collection:

‘The spring ponds are full of spring rain,
In spring the spring grass sprouts.
Spring people gather to sip spring wine,
Spring birds sing spring songs.’²

Variations of the first line of the poem also read: ‘When spring water ripples, the spring ponds are full’, or ‘When spring water ripples, everywhere is permeated with the spring atmosphere’. The poem must have been popular during the Tang, and was recorded in several Tang manuscripts preserved at the Buddhist cave temples in Dunhuang.³ The prototype of the poem can be traced back to Emperor Yuandi’s (r. 552–555) ‘A poem of Spring’.⁴

¹ For the form cf. above no. 175.

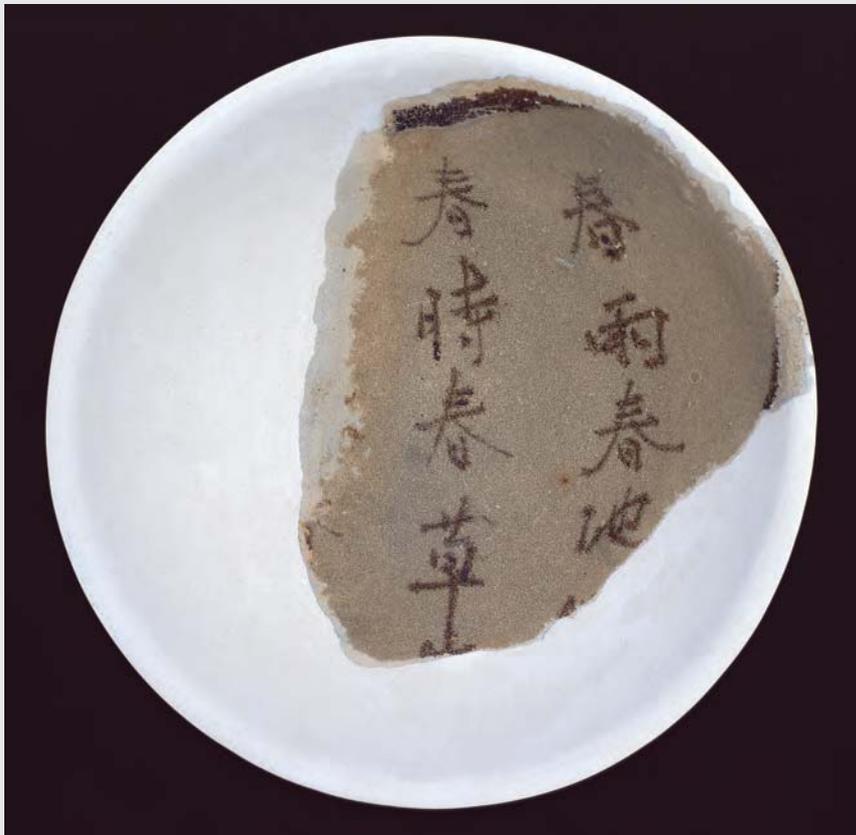
² Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, 146, 204, pl. 65.

³ See, for instance, a manuscript in French National Library’s collection (Pelliot 3597).

⁴ Lu Qinli 1982, 25: 3, 2045.



No. 220



No. 221

Bowl with foreign figure

Tang dynasty, 9th century
 Glazed stoneware with underglaze painting
 Changsha kilns, Hunan province
 Ht. 5.7 cm, diam. rim 15.2 cm, diam. foot 5.6 cm

The Tang dynasty developed a cosmopolitan culture in China. Thriving commerce attracted merchants from everywhere. Large foreign communities formed within China, and talented aliens attained fame and fortune (see above p. 61). Central Asian music and dance were extremely popular in China from the sixth century to the Tang period, and male and female dancers were imported from Samarkand and Tashkent in Sogdiana. A popular theme in Tang art and literature is the exotic dancing scene. Dancers from Central Asia are shown performing what Chinese called the *hutengwu* or 'Sogdian whirl' frequently described in poems or painted in decorative art. Similar dancing figures are seen on the decoration of Changsha wares.¹

Changsha potters adopted freely the decorative motifs from foreign cultures. One of the frequently used motifs was the date palm, a subtropical plant alien to Chinese tradition. The foreign elements Changsha potters embraced are not limited though to ornaments. Depictions of foreign figures were found on the Changsha ceramics excavated from kiln sites in the area of Changsha.² These figures all have obvious Western

features with deep-set eyes and high-bridged noses; some have also thick beards. They probably are of the ethnic type from the Transoxanian region of Central Asia between the two rivers known today as Amu Darya and Syr Daya. Their clothing, utensils, musical instruments and the dances being performed have a strong Persian or Central Asian flavour.

Interestingly, the depiction of a non-Chinese figure is also found on this bowl from the Belitung wreck. Though not perfectly painted, this head with strong curly hair shows an obvious Western identity. It provides a further significant example in our understanding of the dynamics of intercultural exchange that shaped the characteristics of a golden age in Chinese history, the Tang era.

¹Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, pl. 60; see also above p. 500, fig. 24. For a discussion of the Westerners among the figurines of the Tang dynasty see Mahler 1959

²Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, pl. 170.



No. 222

223, 224

Bowls with underglaze decoration

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Stoneware with underglaze decoration

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 223: Ht. 5.0 cm, diam. rim 15.1 cm, diam. foot 5.4 cm

No. 224: Ht. 5.2 cm, diam. rim 14.4 cm, diam. foot 5.6 cm

Two bowls of standard size and shape (cf. no. 204, drawing). A glassy brown glaze covers the grey stoneware body of no. 223 ending outside in an uneven line with some drops down towards the foot; it is flaking off partly on the rim. Through the brown glaze the decoration of a foliage motif is visible (cf. appendix I.1 nos 21–23). A gap on the interior exposes a small part of it in the green colour. It seems that the piece was first made as a green glazed bowl with underglaze decoration, and then a brown glaze was applied. The effect may well be the result of an accident or of the fact that the potter was not satisfied with the underglaze painting, or simply an experiment.

The same explanation may be applied to the bowl no. 224 with underglaze decoration, where the usual four brown patches on the rim are replaced by a ring of brown glaze.



No. 223 Overview (*above*) and bottom (*below*)



No. 224 Overview (*above*) and bottom (*below*)

225

Dish with unglazed square-design

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Green-glazed stoneware

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

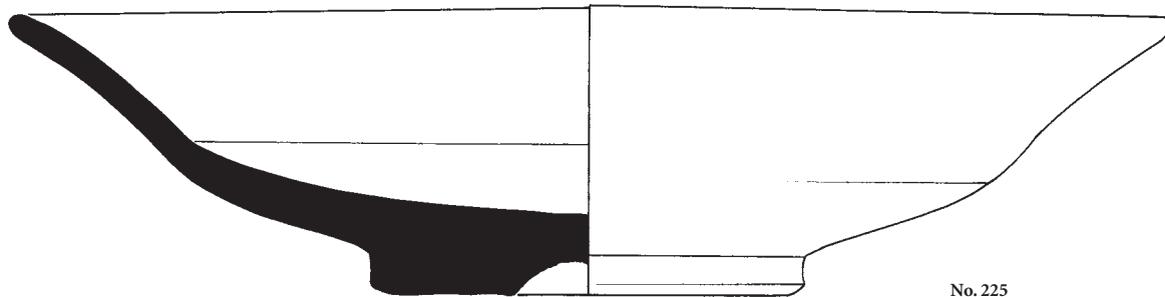
Ht. 3.8 cm, diam. rim 15.0 cm, diam. foot 5.6 cm

The dish has a slightly flared rim and a low wide foot ring with a deep recessed centre, shaped like a jade-*bi*-disc. The piece is covered with a pale yellowish-green glaze, except for a blank square area in the centre of the front and back. Four pieces of this type have been found on the shipwreck.

A similar dish was unearthed from the Wang Qing tomb of the Tang dynasty at Changsha, dated to the sixth year of the Dahe reign (832).¹ Some 72 pieces of the same type of wares

were also excavated at the kiln sites near Changsha. In some cases, the interior squares were embellished with floral and bird designs, or decorated with poems or short phrases. There were examples covered in monochrome brown glaze.²

The archaeological excavations carried out at Changsha and elsewhere make it clear that dishes with such decoration became fashionable during the mid-Tang period.³



¹ Zhou Shirong 1982, 511, 518, 512, fig. 1:5.

² Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, 52, 57; Zhou Shirong 1982, 511, pl. 18:1. A similar example is seen in the collection of the Museum Pusat, Jakarta: *The World's Great Collections* 1977a, fig. 50.

³ Quan Jinyun 1986, 1131.



No. 225

Four-lobed bowl

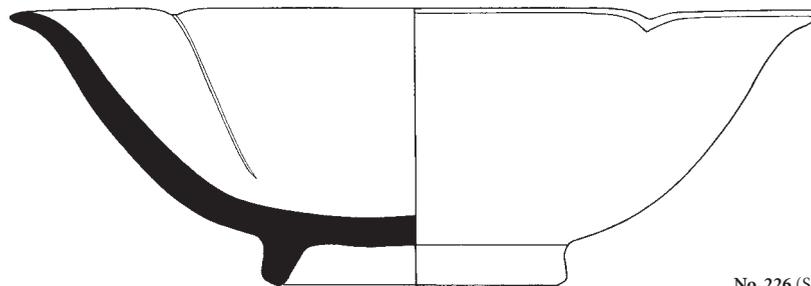
Tang dynasty, 9th century
 Green-glazed stoneware
 Changsha kilns, Hunan province
 Ht. 4.9 cm, diam. rim 14.1, diam. foot 5.4 cm

The bowl with round flaring sides is divided into four lobes by notches around the everted rim, which continue in four faintly raised ribs on the interior. The rounded four-lobed sides form a *kuihua xing* or hollyhock shape, as Chinese archaeologists have termed it. Thick mottled green glaze covers the entire body unevenly except for the splayed foot ring. Fifteen pieces of this type have been recovered from the Belitung wreck.

Although underglaze painted wares seem to be concentrated at the Changsha kilns during the ninth and tenth centuries, there are also large quantities of green-glazed Changsha

wares, as exemplified by this bowl (see also below nos 227–231, 233–238). They are easily distinguished from the Yue ware of Zhejiang by the different tint of the green glaze (cf. above p. 363, note 29).

Bowls with lobed flaring sides were a new form of the Tang period. Other kilns such as the Yue in Zhejiang also produced bowls of similar shape.¹



No. 226 (Sc. 3:4)

¹ See examples published in National Administration for Cultural Relics 1996, 230, pls 182, 183; cf. also above nos 123–125.



No. 226

227, 228

Conical bowls with *bi*-disc foot

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Green-glazed stoneware

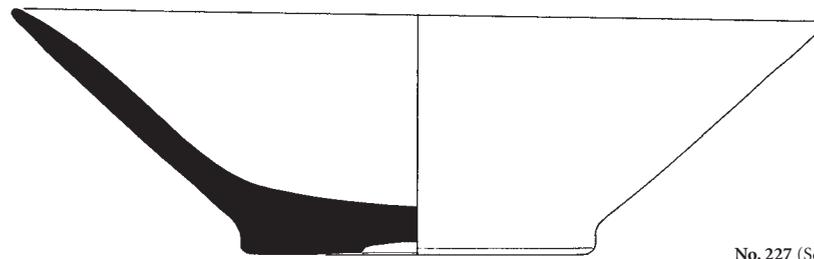
Changsha kilns, Hunan province

No. 227: Ht. 4.5 cm, diam. rim 14.0 cm, diam. foot 6.1 cm

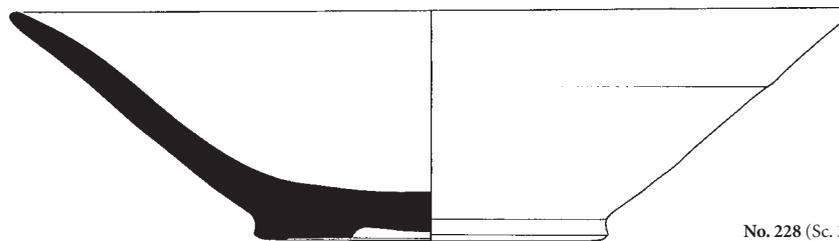
No. 228: Ht. 4.4 cm, diam. rim 14.6 cm, diam. foot 6.1 cm

Both bowls have straight conical sides and rest on a low foot ring resembling an archaic jade-*bi*-disc or *yubidi*. The buff stoneware body of no. 227 (two pieces recovered) is covered by an off-white slip and cracked thick green glaze. The broad foot ring remains unglazed except for the small recessed base. On the bowl no. 228 (twenty-two pieces recovered), a yellowish-green glaze, which has partly degraded, leaves only the foot ring free.

The bowl with *bi*-disc foot had long been produced in Hunan, and was the typical product of the Yuezhou kilns – the predecessors of the Changsha kilns. Some 192 out of 230 conical bowls unearthed in 1983 at Changsha were modelled with *bi*-disc foot and covered with green glaze without any decoration.¹



No. 227 (Sc. 3:4)



No. 228 (Sc. 3:4)

¹ Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, 50; cf. also above no. 110 from the Yue kilns.



No. 227



No. 228

Rounded bowl

Tang dynasty, 9th century

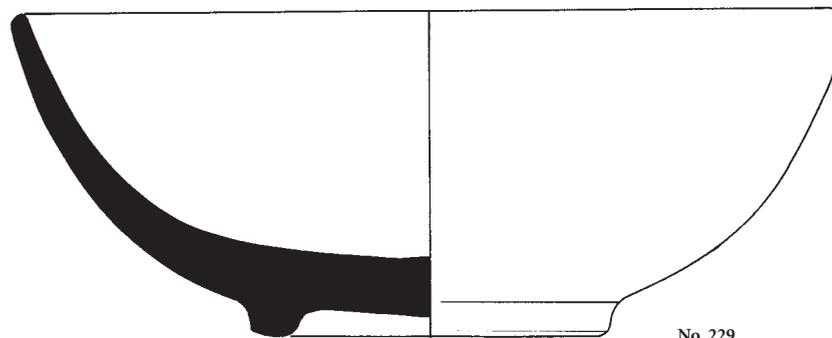
Green-glazed stoneware

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

Ht. 4.4 cm, diam. rim 10.8 cm, diam. foot 4.2 cm

The bowl, unique among the ceramics recovered from the wreck, has rounded sides and rests on a thick foot ring, which is narrower than the *bi*-disc form but broader than the usual, thin, splayed foot ring. Chinese archaeologists thought the foot ring of this shape resembles the jade *huan*-ring form.¹ The strongly crazed green glaze that originally covered the thick stoneware body of this bowl including the broad recessed base, has largely vanished. The foot ring remained unglazed.

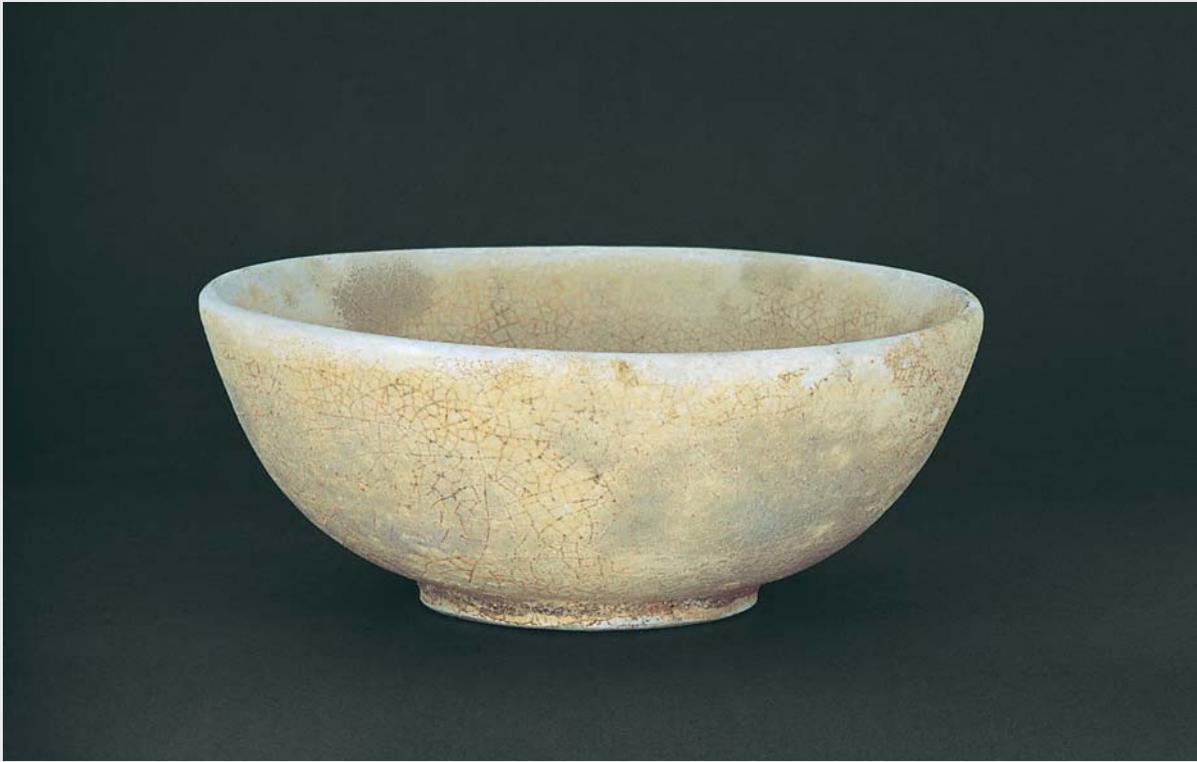
According to the archaeological research carried out in 1983 at Changsha, bowls with rounded sides are the most typical Changsha products. Some 912 out of 1,325 pieces belonged to this type. They all have low feet, which show three different forms: the broad and flat *bi*-disc form, the *huan*-ring form and the narrow splayed form. The majority of the bowls in this category were plain and covered with green or amber glaze.²



No. 229

¹ Disc *bi* and ring *huan* are the major forms of ancient ritual jade, existing as early as the fifth millennium BC in China. The term *bi* has been applied to the discs with proportionally small central holes. If the hole is larger, the jade is generally known as a *huan*.

² Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, 50.



No. 229

230

Square dish with rounded edges

Tang dynasty, 9th century

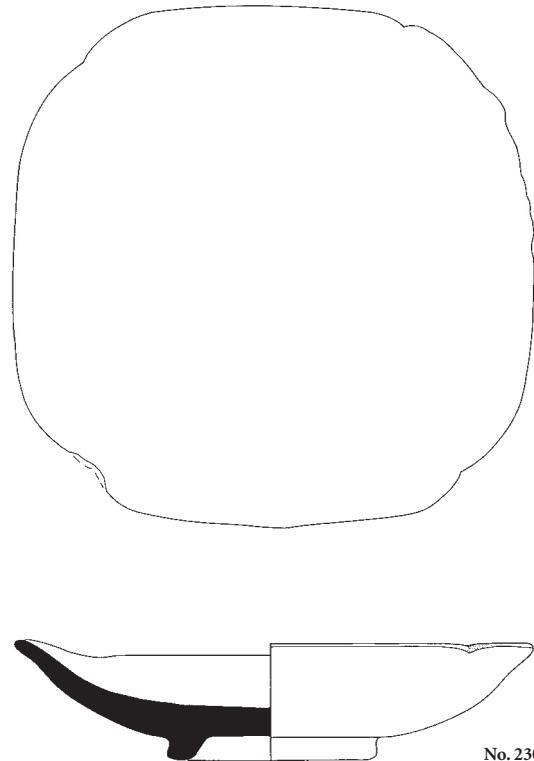
Green-glazed stoneware

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

Ht. 3.1 cm, diam. rim 14.0–14.5 cm, diam. foot rim 5.3 cm

This four-lobed dish, unique among the ceramics recovered from the Belitung wreck, shows a semi square shape, or the shape of the Chinese character *ya*. The narrow foot ring is slightly splayed both inside and out. A green glaze with a distinct crackle covered originally the whole vessel over a white slip, leaving only the foot ring free.

Dishes in this form were produced rather rarely in the Changsha kilns (cf. above the Yue examples nos 132–134 and the gold vessels nos 3, 4). Only two specimens were unearthed in the 1983 excavation. The archaeological research at the Changsha kiln sites suggests that dishes in this form only appeared at the very end of the Tang and during the Five Dynasties period (907–960).¹



No. 230 (Sc. 1:2)

¹ Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, 234–235.



No. 230

231

Straight-sided cup

Tang dynasty, 9th century

Stoneware with turquoise-green glaze

Changsha kilns, Hunan province

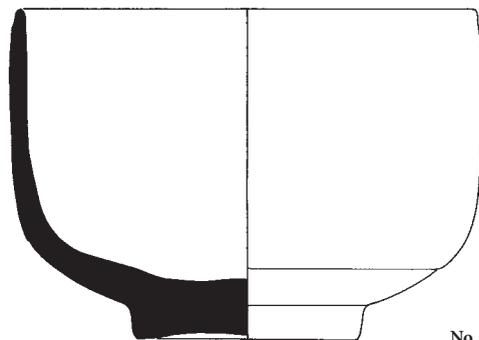
Ht. 6.0 cm, diam. rim 8.0 cm, diam. base 2.8 cm

This deep, straight-sided cup has a narrow, solid, straight foot with flat base. A thick, finely crazed, bluish-green or almost turquoise-tinged, or *baoshilü* (diamond green) glaze covers the off-white stoneware body, stopping quite evenly well above the foot, except for a heavy drop. In the area where the glaze stops, the biscuit shows a reddish tinge. Twenty-four pieces of this type were found on the Belitung wreck.

Specimens of cups in similar shape unearthed at Changsha kiln sites were often found together with a cup stand. Moreover, cups of this type bore sometimes underglaze decoration inside (cf. nos 173, 177, 186, 200 and appendix II), or were

painted outside with iron-brown patches under a greenish-tinged glaze. Specimens with brown or green decorations under a creamy glaze were also excavated.¹

According to Wood, by adding copper oxides to the milky-white emulsion glazes, blue-green glazes of a curious mouldy hue could be produced. With enough heat these blue-green glazes could show almost turquoise tones, as their optical-blues were combined with their copper-green colours.²



No. 231 (Sc. 3:4)

¹ Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, 65.

² See Wood 1999, 43.



No. 231

Straight-sided cup

Tang dynasty, 9th century
 Red- and green-glazed stoneware
 Changsha kilns, Hunan province
 Ht. 5.6 cm, diam. rim 8.6 cm, diam base 3.2 cm

The shape of the cup is very similar to no. 231, but the sides of this example are less straight. Although there are extensive losses in the glaze, it is still quite clear that a red (sometimes mixed with amber) glaze with a distinct crackle originally covered the cup inside and out stopping well above the foot.

The decorative copper-red effect on this bowl is evidently achieved by using a copper oxide, although it cannot be ascertained whether this effect is the result of accidental reduction of a copper-green glaze, or a deliberate achievement. Some other examples with copper-red glaze are seen in the group of bowls with underglaze decoration from the Belitung wreck, where copper-green and copper-red stripes were applied alternately (cf. fig. 8, p. 480 and no. 173). In the example under discussion amber patches are scattered among the dominant red glaze, which may suggest that the copper-red glaze has been a deliberate creation.

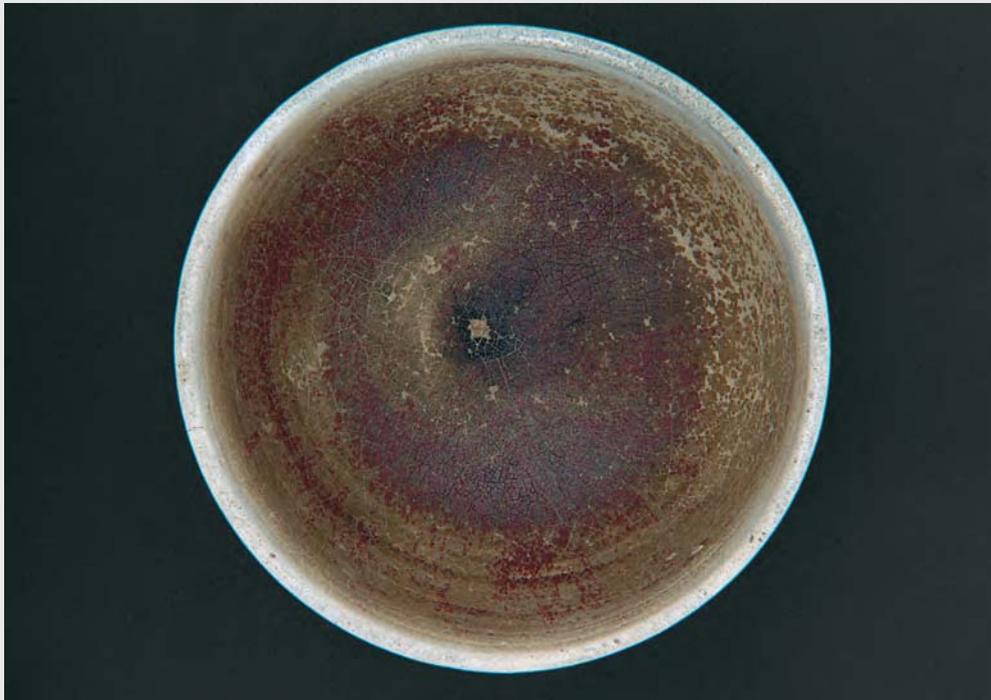
Some scholars believe that the Changsha copper red evolved from the Changsha green and blue-green copper glazes, which are two of the standard glaze effects on Changsha stonewares.¹ This piece may provide evidence also for such an assertion. Here the change from green to red can be seen as a result of a reducing flame, which has caught most of the vessel.

Whatever the explanation, pieces such as this provide interesting evidence concerning the decoration of the Changsha wares, which gave them an important position in the development of Chinese ceramics.

¹ Wood 1999, 169.



No. 232 Detail of the glazed surface



No. 232

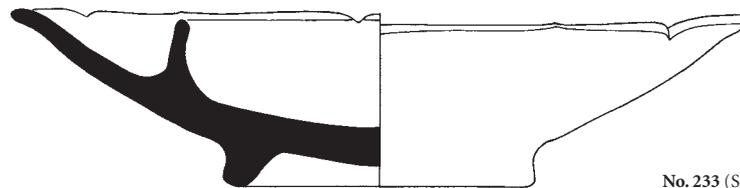
Zhantuo cup stand

Tang dynasty, 9th century
 Green-glazed stoneware
 Changsha kilns, Hunan province
 Ht. 3.0 cm, diam. rim 12.8 cm, diam base 5.9 cm

This saucer-shaped cup stand with six-lobed sides, a splayed foot ring and a circular ridge in the centre, forms what looks like the downward perspective of a flower in full bloom. Chinese archaeologists have distinguished two forms of lobed sides: while the lobes with rounded side are termed *kuihua xing* or hollyhock shape, those with pointed tip are named *lianhua xing* or lotus form, as is the case in this example. The rich green or almost turquoise-tinged glaze has largely vanished on the exterior and on the rim. Originally it covered the whole off-white body except for the foot ring and, perhaps, the rim of the circular ridge in the centre. Two pieces of this type were found on the shipwreck.

Were the set complete, a cup like no. 231 or 232 would sit on the stand. In the Changsha kilns, a *tuozhan* (cup with stand), a vessel form with cup and cup-stand potted as a single item, was also manufactured. Some 36 pieces of cup stands with various features were unearthed in 1983 at Changsha. In addition to the type under discussion, there are at least three other general groups: (1) those with circular rim and flared foot ring; (2) those with round, flat base, and (3) those, where the central circular ridge is higher than the lobed-rim.¹

Although the earliest known literary mention of the cup stand is seen in the Tang text *Zixiaji* by Li Kuangyi, which refers to the cup stand as *chatuozi*, the archaeological finds suggest that the cup stand in this form emerged in southern China during the Eastern Jin period, and was one of the noticeable celadon products. Excavations of the Tang tombs at Changsha suggested that cup stands with lobed sides began to appear in tombs of the mid-Tang period, but were popular during the late Tang to the Five Dynasties period.² During the late Tang, in addition to Changsha, Ding kilns also produced cup stands (see also above nos 89, 90).



No. 233 (Sc. 3:4)

¹ Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, 66.

² Zhou Shirong 1982, 512, 515.



No. 233



No. 233 Bottom

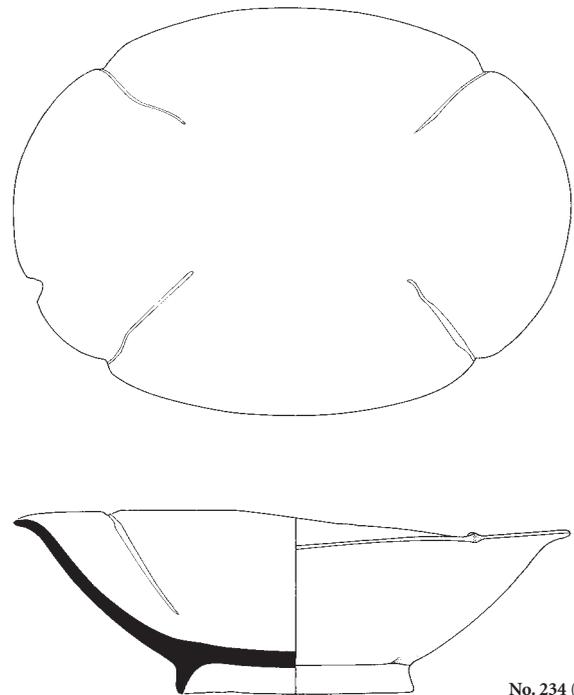
Oblong four-lobed bowl

Tang dynasty, 9th century
 Green-glazed stoneware
 Changsha kilns, Hunan province
 Ht. 4.3 cm, l. 14.6 cm, w. 10.8 cm,

The oblong bowl has an everted rim with four indentations, which continue in four sharp raised ribs inside. It rests on a high, thin, almost straight-cut foot ring. For the most part the glaze has vanished, but it is evident that the bowl was covered with a finely crazed green glaze, stained red. Two pieces of this type have been recovered from the Belitung wreck.

This form seems to derive from a popular type of contemporary gold or silver drinking bowls (cf. above fig. 16 on p. 492 and nos 5–7), which may have borne some influence of Sassanid silver wares. Silver bowls of similar shape have long been imported into China, as is evidenced by an oblong silver polylobed bowl excavated in 1970 in a hoard from the Northern Wei ruins near Datong in Shanxi province (see fig. 17 on p. 492).¹

During the late Tang, the Changsha kilns also produced oblong bowls or bowls on a wide flared stem decorated inside with impressed designs under a greenish tinged glaze.² Similar products but with more pronounced lobes and decorated inside with moulded designs under a greenish-white glaze were also manufactured around the ninth–tenth century at the Xing kilns.³

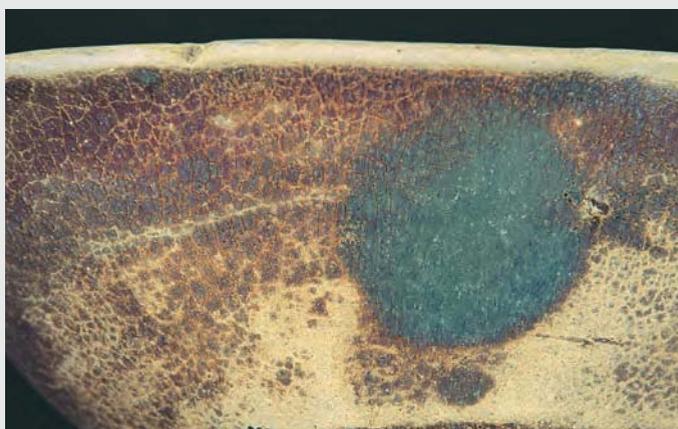


No. 234 (Sc. 1:2)

¹ The excavation was reported in *Wenwu* 1972: 1, 83–84.

² Research Team of Changsha Kilns 1996, 68, figs 112, 113.

³ Two examples are seen in *The World's Great Collections* 1977, figs 22, 23.



No. 234 Detail of the glazed surface



No. 234



No. 234 Bottom

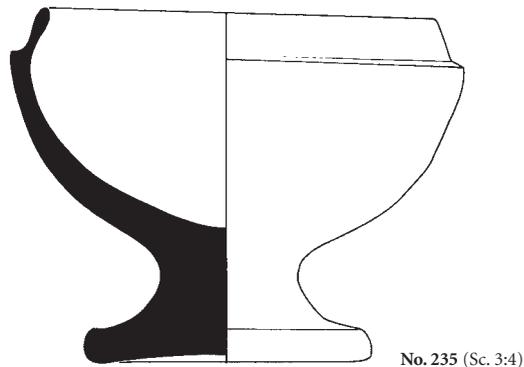
235

Stemcup

Tang dynasty, 9th century
Green-glazed stoneware
Changsha kilns, Hunan province
Ht. 6.2 cm, diam. rim 7.9 cm, diam. base 4.9 cm

This piece is unique among the ceramics recovered from the shipwreck. It is potted with a deep rounded bowl on a narrow short stem, which flares out to a wide foot with flat base. It resembles an archaic *dou* stemmed jar of the Eastern Zhou (770–256 BC). The bowl has a recessed rim to receive a cover, which is missing. A green glaze, turning almost turquoise where it is thicker, covers the cup outside including the stem. The circular foot is left unglazed revealing the off-white stoneware.

Cups of this shape bear strong influence of the contemporary vessels in gold and silver.¹



No. 235 (Sc. 3:4)

¹ See, for instance, National Administration for Cultural Relics, 1996, *Volume of Gold, Silver, Jade and Stone Works*, 101, pls 47, 48.

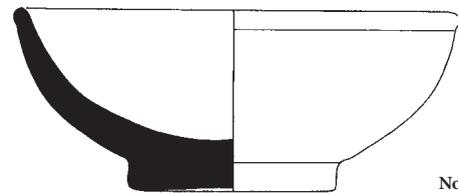
236, 237

Small bowls

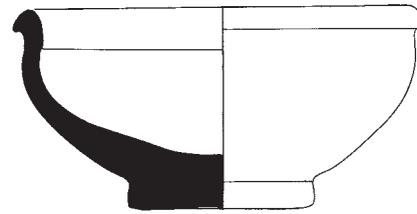
Tang dynasty, 9th century
Green-glazed stoneware
Changsha kilns, Hunan province
No. 236: Ht. 3.2 cm, diam. rim 7.7 cm, diam. base 3.5 cm
No. 237: Ht. 3.5 cm, diam. rim 7.2 cm, diam. base 2.8 cm

The bowls are of shallow rounded form and have rolled lip and straight solid foot with flat base. A green glaze originally covered the upper part of their body including the rim on the interior, but has almost completely vanished. Four pieces like no. 236 have been found on the Belitung wreck, no. 237 being unique among the ceramics recovered.

Similar bowls were excavated from Tang tombs at Changsha and bear strong affinity with specimens from the Yuezhou kilns.¹



No. 236 (Sc. 3:4)



No. 237 (Sc. 3:4)

¹ Zhou Shirong 1982, 512, 518, pl. 22: 6.



No. 235



No. 236



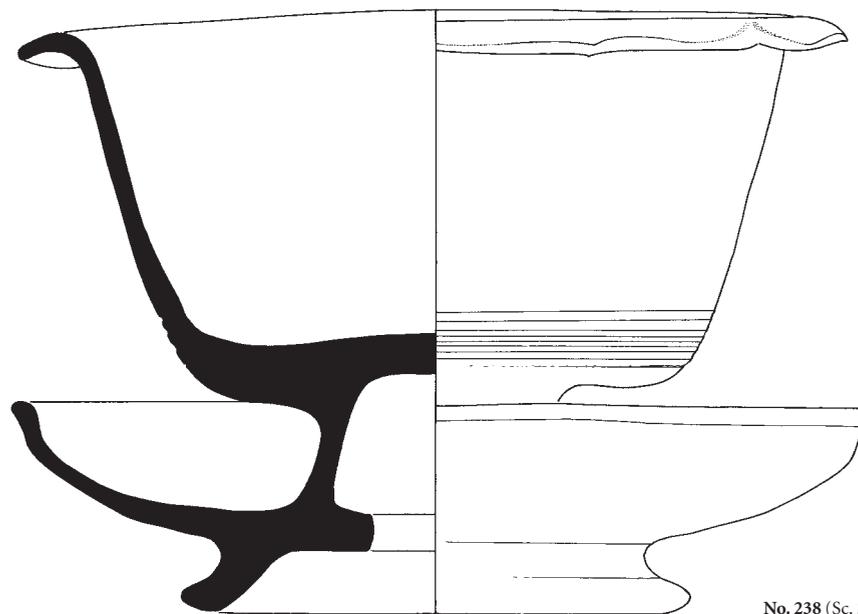
No. 237

Basin with stand

Tang dynasty, 9th century
 Green-glazed stoneware
 Changsha kilns, Hunan province
 Ht. 10.6 cm, diam. rim 14.6 cm, diam foot 9.0 cm

The vessel, unique among the ceramics found on the Belitung wreck, consists of a bowl-shaped upper body with a stem and a stand. The deep bowl is almost straight-sided with strongly flared rim and six-lobed sides in the form of lotus petals (cf. no. 233). It is decorated with three horizontal grooves on the lower part of the body. The short stem is linked to a wide, saucer-shaped stand with flared foot. The recessed base has a small perforation in the centre. Except for the base, the whole vessel was originally covered with a rich green glaze which has partially vanished.

The exact purpose of this vessel has not been conclusively explained, and no matching specimen was found at the Changsha kiln sites. As for the origins of this form, a possible link can be suggested with the earlier *dou* stemmed jar of the Eastern Zhou (770-256 BC) and the *boshan* incense burner of the Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) that has a bowl-shaped body with a lid in the shape of a mountain, and a supporting vertical stem standing on a circular foot or a shallow dish.





No. 238 Detail of the glazed surface



No. 238